

REASON,

THE

ONLY ORACLE OF MAN;

OR A COMPENDIOUS

SYSTEM OF NATURAL RELIGION.

BY COL. ETHAN ALLEN

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INTRODUCTION.

COLONEL ETHAN ALLEN, the author of *Oracles of Reason*, was the son of Joseph Allen, a native of Coventry, Connecticut, a farmer in moderate circumstances. He afterwards resided in Litchfield, where Ethan was born in the year 1739. The family consisted of eight children, of whom our author was the eldest. But few incidents connected with his early life are known. We are apprised, however, that notwithstanding his education was very limited, his ambition to prove himself worthy of that attention which superior intellect ever commands, induced him diligently to explore every subject that came under his notice. A stranger to fear, his opinions were ever given without disguise or hesitation; and an enemy to oppression, he sought every opportunity to redress the wrongs of the oppressed.

At the breaking out of the Revolutionary War, he raised in Vermont, where he had resided, a company of volunteers, consisting of two hundred and thirty, with which he surprised the fortress of Ticonderoga, May 10, 1775, containing about forty men, and one hundred pieces of cannon. He was unfortunately taken prisoner in September following, in an attempt on Montreal, and suffered a cruel imprisonment for several years. For an account of which, the reader is referred to his narrative, contained in a memoir of the author, by Mr. Hugh Moore, Plattsburg, 1834.

Soon after the close of the revolution, Col. Allen composed following work; which, on account of the bold and unusual manner, particularly in this country, that the subject of religion is treated, he had great difficulty to get published. It lay a long time in the hands of a printer at Hartford, who had not the moral courage to print it.

It was finally printed by a Mr. Haswell, of Bennington, Vt. in 1784. Not long after its publication, a part of the edition, comprising the entire of several signatures, was accidentally consumed by fire. Whether Mr. H. deemed this fire a judgment upon him for having printed the work or not, is unknown – but, the fact is, he soon after committed the remainder of the edition to the flames, and joined the Methodist Connection; so that but few copies were circulated.

COL. ALLEN died in the town of Burlington, Vt., on the 12th of February, 1789, of apoplexy.

PREFACE

I see no reason to apologize for this work. It would be better to simply never publish in the first place rather than apologize. Instead, since I feel I have as much a right to publish my thoughts as a service to mankind as anyone else does, I offer this work for honest public criticism without apology. I expect no mercy from my critics, and because I would not wish to pervert the truth, I hope they will point out any errors that I may have inadvertently introduced.

Of the great number of people who know me, most have called me a Deist. I have never disputed this label. I am not a Christian, unless being baptized as an infant makes you one. I would not know if I am a Deist or not, since I have never studied any Deist writings. I will let my work speak for itself and let others decide. I have written openly and honestly, without prejudice towards any man, sect or party, and I wish only to promote good sense, truth and virtue, while pointing out deluded thinking, superstition and false religion. I will gladly correct any errors that may be brought to my attention.

Your most obedient and humble servant,

ETHAN ALLEN

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Editor's Notes

What motivated me to begin modernizing *Oracles of Reason*? I honestly don't remember, but once I started, I just *had* to complete this work. In the course of modernizing Allen's treatise, I came to the conclusion that *Oracles* belongs in the same category as Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* as a representation of American Classical Deism. Unfortunately, many readers never finish reading this work, because it is just too convoluted. Readers have always had to fight their way through a dense fog of words to try to get to Allen's meaning. I wanted to change that.

I approached the modernization as I would a translation. I read and analyzed the original until I arrived at the meaning of the passages – not just the words – and then I rendered my understanding into modern English. Where possible, I tried to maintain Allen's style, but not at the expense of comprehension. Clarity was always the primary goal, so I broke long sentences into shorter ones, did away with many pronouns and substituted the original noun, replaced archaic words, updated the text with modern spellings and tried to eliminate some redundancies. I leave it to you to judge the result.

I am sure I made more mistakes than my reviewers could find. Do not hesitate to bring these to my attention at any time. It took 224 years for the first update. I can update it again. After spending well over a year working on this modernization, I don't mind a little more effort to improve it.

This modernization is a copyrighted work, and I reserve all rights afforded under copyright law. I intend to formally publish an expanded version of this work at a later date. This release is based on the 1854 publication that is freely available on the Internet. Certain passages from Allen's 1784 edition were edited from the 1854 edition. I plan an update to incorporate the rest of Allen's original work. To ensure the widest readership, I offer this first edition of the modernization without charge for private use in Adobe .pdf format. I do not authorize it to be incorporated into any commercial work or to be sold for profit. Nor do I authorize this work to be reverse-engineered and edited. I thank you for allowing me to share this work with you. I hope I have in some way assisted Ethan Allen in promoting good sense, truth and virtue.

Note: Most modern readers will not be familiar with the term "imputation". Allen explains imputation in Chapter XI. Imputation is the Christian concept that sin or righteousness can be transferred to others by the declaration of God independent of their actions. Thus, the sins of Adam were imputed to his descendents, and the righteousness of Jesus can be imputed to his devotees. As you will read, Ethan Allen considered imputation a false concept.

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CHAPTER I

SECTION I – THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF TURNING MAN AWAY FROM SUPERSTITION AND ERROR

Curious and wise men have always thirsted for knowledge, and the result has been the improvement of the arts and sciences throughout the world. Man has improved philosophy, astronomy, geography, history, and many other branches of science to a great degree of refinement.

Unfortunately, even in the most advanced nations, most people understand only superstition and misunderstand God, His nature, creations, providence and their duty to Him. It is imperative that those who study philosophy and nature should spare no efforts in persuading mankind to turn away from ignorance and delusion. They should use all lawful, wise and prudent means to enlighten the minds of men with the truth about God and his providence. Such enlightenment will help men understand their moral obligations in this life and the next and will have a positive effect on their happiness and well-being.

Though "none by searching can find out God, or the Almighty to perfection", I am convinced that if Man would focus his powers of reasoning as much on spiritual matters as he does on everyday life, he would rid himself of blindness and superstition. People everywhere would have a greater understanding of the obligations of man to God and to one another. They would be delighted and blessed with an understanding of the morals that guide us, would be better members of society, and would be more strongly disposed towards moral conduct, which is the greatest perfection man can achieve.

SECTION II – ON THE NATURE OF GOD

The laws of nature dictate that man is utterly dependent on something greater than himself, something greater than mankind. It is through nature that man has come to understand that there exists a superior principal. Such a concept could have come only from nature. The fact that man is thus dependent is evident from experience and reasoning on the facts that surround us every day. The fact that we are so dependent has established among all rational people uniformly the idea that there exists a ruling power, or God, which is the same thing.

The wonder of Earth, the motion of the planets, and the magnificence of the starry heavens astound our senses and confound our sense of reason. They instruct us about God so generously that we are apt to be lost in our ideas about the divine, although the sensible among us understand that our existence and preservation come from God. But we are also prone to confuse God for his works and vice versa. So barbarous and backwards nations have imagined that, since the sun is beneficial to them in the spring, causing plants to grow and produce food, that the sun is their God. Other societies have elevated other parts of creation to the status of God. Even animals and images have been substituted as gods by man due to wickedness or weakness or

both. Since comprehending the true God is so difficult, it seems that in most ages and parts of the world that mankind has been fond of creating deities in its own image to please the outward senses. Here man has held supernatural conversations with and ascribed divinity to invisible and mere spiritual beings. As a result, the character of the true God has been neglected. The result of this neglect has been the diminishment of truth, justice and morality in the world. Man cannot be uniform in his religious opinions or worship God wisely if he cannot form a consistent arrangement of ideas about the character of God.

Try as we may, we cannot look back at the succession of causes, all of which are dependent on a prior event, and find the single source that was the cause of all things. Nor can we trace the order of these successive events back to that cause that existed before time. That First Cause is eternal and infinite and cannot be discovered by following a sequence of events that must remain within the boundaries of time. And the succession of all causes, which must obey the laws of time, still fails to compare to the eternity and infinity of God. And even if we are not capable of tracing the sequence of causes back to the original and eternal First Cause, the fact that one cause must precede another is perpetual and conclusive evidence that God exists. A collection of causes in its entirety can be nothing more than the effect of the First Cause. And each cause must depend as much on the First Cause as the cause immediately preceding it. So we must be convinced that system of nature, which is made up of natural causes, is as dependent on a self-existent First Cause as any member of a species is dependent on its parents for its existence. This is the way we understand nature to operate, and we call this cause and effect. Thus, we must reasonably conclude that the vast system of causes and effects are connected in the natural world, and they all are dependent on a self-existent First Cause. We must admit the existence of this independent cause along with the fact that it is self-existent, for if it was not self-existent, it could not be independent, and therefore could not be a God. But our finite capabilities do not allow us to comprehend eternity or understand how a self-existent and independent being can exist. But the fact that our faculties are so limited is not an argument against the existence of God, it is an essential argument in favor of the theory that God exists. For if we could comprehend God, He would not be God. He would be a finite being like we are. So despite the fact that God exists, we cannot fathom His essence, His eternity or the manner of His existence. We should always keep these facts in mind as we reason on His being, perfection, eternity and infinity, and as we analyze His creation and providence. Our understanding of Nature equates to our understanding of God's character, for the understanding of Nature is the revelation of God. If we conceive a concise theory about the harmony of the universe, it is the same as calling God by the name of harmony. There could be no harmony without regulation, no regulation without a regulator, and that regulator would fulfill our concept of God. Nor would it be possible to distinguish order from disorder without the concept of creation, and therefore a Creator, which is another name for the Divine Being who exists independent of his Creation. Furthermore, there could be no proportion, figure or motion without wisdom and power. They require perfect wisdom to plan and perfect power to execute, so when we see these things in nature, they signify the existence and guidance of God. If we consider nature to be matter, figure and motion, we include the idea of God in that motion. For if there is motion, there is a mover, much as Creation requires a Creator. If we consider the composition, texture and tendency of the general universe to be of general good for mankind, we implicitly admit that this good by another name is God, and that what we see is his providence. And our obligations to love and adore God come from this

providence, because He provides for us and is beneficent towards us. If you take away the concept of goodness from the character of God, we would have no such obligations. We would hate and detest Him as a tyrant. Ignorant people are superstitiously misled into the conceited idea that they hate God. Instead, they should hate and be ashamed of the idol of their own imagination. If such persons were to connect the ideas of power, wisdom, goodness and all possible perfection to the character of God, their hatred would be transformed into love and adoration.

By broadening the scope of our ideas, we will move beyond our dependence on the Earth and its oceans which clothe us so splendidly and feed us so bountifully. We next extend our thoughts to the sun, whose fiery mass beams its brilliant rays to our watery planet with amazing velocity. The sun's region of inexhaustible fire supplies it with a burning heat, which creates our vegetation and gilds the various seasons of the year with ten thousand charms. The sun is not the achievement of man. It is the workmanship and providence of God. But we do not know how the sun is supplied with materials to perpetually supply its kind benefits. Although we do not understand the mechanism or source that makes this fiery globe operate, we cannot deny the reality of its beneficial influences. Will anyone deny the reality of nutrition by food, just because we do not understand the minutest details of the secrets of animal digestion? None would be so stupid as to deny these realities. It would be equally absurd to deny the providence of God by "whom we live, move, and have our being" just because we cannot comprehend Him.

We know that earth, water, fire and air in their various compositions are subservient to man. We also know that these elements lack intelligence, reason or design. It is easy, therefore, to infer that a wise and understanding being has designed them to be subservient to us. Could blind chance create such order and organization and provide these things for us as a result? It is absurd beyond argument to think that a nonentity, that chaos, confusion and old night* are the source of wisdom, order and design? To believe this would be to believe that there exist effects without a cause, i.e. that are produced by a nonentity, or that chaos and confusion could produce power, wisdom and goodness. We must either believe such absurdities or admit to the existence of a self-existent and providential being.

**Translator's note: The term "Old Night" comes from John Milton, "Paradise Lost":*

*Sonorous mettal blowing Martial sounds:
At which the universal Host upsent
A shout that tore Hells Concave, and beyond
Frighted the Reign of Chaos and old Night.*

In modern terms we might well substitute "the Big Bang" for "chaos, confusion and old night".

SECTION III – DISCOVERING THE MORAL PERFECTIONS AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

I have so far offered in a concise fashion a variety of indisputable reasons to prove the existence and providence of God, who supplies man with goodness through nature and natural causes. We will now consider God's moral perfections. Even though no finite being has a perfect

understanding of morality, any more than they understand perfection itself, we can still use our intelligence to get some idea of His divine perfections. Even though the human mind bears no proportion to the divine, there are some similarities between them. For instance, God knows all things, and we know some things. And even in those things that we do not understand, what we do know is still in concert with God's knowledge. In the context of a single thing, to do more than know that thing is impossible, even for someone who is omniscient, because knowledge is the same, whether it is inside a finite or an infinite mind. To know a thing means to have right ideas about it. Truth is uniform in all rational minds, including the mind of God. One cannot deny that, in plain and common matters, mankind can differentiate justice from injustice, truth from falsehood, right from wrong, virtue from vice and praiseworthiness from blame-worthiness. If men could not do this, they could not be held accountable. Accepting this, we can form a complex idea of a moral character. And if we use the greatest wisdom, deliberation and reason that is in our power to muster, we can conceive of a morality that approaches that of divine perfection. In the same way that a study of the works of nature gives us some insight into the power and wisdom of God, a study of our own rational nature can give us some insight into the moral perfections of God.

From what we have observed about the moral perfections of God, we can infer that all rational beings who understand justice, goodness and truth have some concept of the moral perfections of God. It is reason that enables us to form an idea of a moral character, whether we are speaking of the character of God or of Man. It is reason that gives supremacy over the irrational part of Creation.

SECTION IV – THE CAUSE AND CURE FOR IDOLATRY

Since God has no earthly body, and we cannot detect him with our senses, we must infer from God's providence and our own rational nature some concept of the divine character. Whether through inattention, ignorance, natural mental weakness, through trickery, or a combination of these reasons, men have been divided on their notions of God. Many have been so lost that they have mistaken the creation for the Creator and have worshipped "four footed beasts and creeping things." And some have treated the sun, moon or stars as divine. Still others have become inspired to worship dumb, senseless and unintelligent idols. These idols have derived their divinity partly from the craftsmen who gave them form, proportion and beauty and partly from priests who gave them their characteristics. Followers of these idols were at times so overwrought that they would cry out in zealous ecstasy, "Great is Diana." It is possible that man's delusions about the proper object of divine worship have been caused by the plotting of treacherous men who prey upon the weakness of the vulgar masses. But it is more likely that some of delusions and the indecencies and immoralities of superstitions have been due to the weakness of uncultivated reason, which deduced a visible rather than an invisible God from the works of nature. Be that as it may, mankind has generally agreed on the existence of God, however mistaken or misled men may have been about the object of worship. This notion of a God, as I have already noted, must have originated from Man's universal sense of dependence on something that is wiser, more powerful and more beneficent than mankind. Had this not been the case, Man would not have perceived any superintending principle in the universe and therefore

would never have sought after a God. Man would have had no concept of His existence, nor could treacherous men have imposed false gods on their beliefs. But by taking advantage of the common belief that there is a God, some artfully deceive their followers about the rightful object to adore. There are other sorts of idols that exist only in the human mind. These are far and away the most numerous idols, and they are distributed more or less evenly all over the world. Not even the wisest of men are exempt, if one considers all wrong concepts of God to be idolatrous. For example, the concept of a jealous god is such a false idol. Jealousy takes place only in finite minds. It stems from ignorance, which makes us suspicious and distrustful. But where there is clear understanding, there can be no jealousy. Knowledge precludes it. To describe God as jealous is to impugn his omniscience. [NOTE: "The Lord thy God is a jealous God."]

The notion of a revengeful God is similarly false, but since this concept of God comes from a savage nature, it need not be refuted any more conclusively. The idea of a God who (as we are told by certain priests) decreed from heaven in his sovereignty that some few men would have eternal life, while the rest were condemned to eternal damnation, adds another false representation of a deity. Whatever traditions have later contributed to support this notion, this concept of God surely is a reflection of the great, powerful and wicked tyrants among men, although I suspect that the primary reason adherents of this doctrine are induced to believe it is because they think they will be among the blessed. This is a selfish and inferior notion of a God, one devoid of justice, goodness and truth. Such a view of God has a tendency to impede the cause of true religion and morality in the world. It is diametrically opposed to the truth of the divine character. For such a notion to be true would mean the overturn of all religion. It would mean that men have no influence over their own salvation or damnation, since the decision would be the sovereign right of a tyrannical and unjust being. This notion is offensive to reason and common sense and undermines the concept of moral rightness in general. But since it was not my intention here to conclusively refute the many false representations of God, but rather to present just and consistent ideas of the true God, I will turn away from this discussion with the final remark that all false representations of God detract from His true character. To remedy these false representations of God, we must replace them with right and consistent ideas.

Discovery of truth is the only way to eliminate error from the mind. As dependent beings, men must form some concept of God, and if they are not so fortunate as to conceive of a just God, they will substitute erroneous and delusive ones instead. It does mankind no good to conclusively refute our idolatrous opinions about God without replacing them with just ideas of the true God. Otherwise, the exercise is futile. As we have seen, right or wrong, men will develop their own concept of God or adopt someone else's notion. This is universally true, which is a conclusive argument that God exists, no matter how inconsistent man's concepts of Him may be. The fact is that mankind readily perceives that God exists because they feel their dependence on Him, and as they explore his works and observe his providence, a providence too sublime for mere mortals to understand, they have become confused on the path to discovering that God is just and His authority is moral. Therefore, we should exercise great care when we try to speculate on the Divine character. We must accompany such efforts with a sincere thirst for the truth and not attribute anything to His perfections or government that is inconsistent with

reason or the best we can perceive from moral virtue. We must be at least wise enough to not charge God with injustices and contradictions that we would not want to be charged with ourselves. No king, governor or parent would wish to be accused of being prejudiced. "Is it fit to say unto Princes, ye are ungodly? How much less to him that regardeth not the person of princes, or the rich more than the poor? For they are all the work of his hands."

CHAPTER II

SECTION I – THE ETERNITY OF CREATION

Since creation was the result of eternal and infinite wisdom, justice, goodness and truth formed by infinite power, it is as mysterious as its great author. We will never have a complete understanding of how creation was accomplished or in what manner the creation was undertaken.

Whether we are considering duration, existence, action or creation, we cannot comprehend eternity, but neither do we see inconsistencies in our concepts of eternity. We are incapable of finding anything inconsistent if it is beyond our comprehension. On the other hand, we will also be unable to perceive its rationality or consistency. We are certain that God is a rational, wise, understanding Being because He has, to a certain degree, made us so. We can see His wisdom, power and goodness in His creation and His regulation of the world. These facts, not our comprehension of His being, perfection, creation or providence, persuade us to recognize his existence. If we were able to comprehend God, He would cease to be what He is. The ignorant among men cannot comprehend what wise men understand, much less the perfection of God. Nevertheless, as has already been argued, by our logical reasoning upon the works and harmony of nature, we must concede that there is a self-existent and eternal cause of all things. At the same time, it is mysterious to us that there should be a self-existent and eternally independent being. So we believe in God, but we cannot comprehend anything of the how, why or wherefore of God's possible existence. And since creation was the work of this incomprehensible and perfect being, creation must also be a mystery to us. We can be certain that creation is as eternal and infinite as God.

Since the universe abounds with creation, the omniscient, omnipresent, eternal and infinite force of God in creation is incomprehensible and beyond the understanding of Man. Only an infinitely penetrating, wise and uncreated intelligence can understand the power God exerted in creating the universe.

SECTION II –OBSERVATIONS ON MOSES' ACCOUNT OF CREATION

The preceding theory of creation and providence will probably be rejected by most people in this country since they are prejudiced with the theology of Moses, which says creation had a beginning. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In the preceding part of this chapter it has been argued that creation and providence could not have had a beginning. They are not bound by borders. They are unlimited. Yet it seems that Moses limited creation to a perspective view of the heavens and the firmament that could be observed only from Earth. And if creation actually was that limited, so God's dominion and His display of providence and perfection would have been limited. But if Moses' idea of the creation of "the heavens and the earth" was immense, some few days of progressive work could never have finished such a boundless creation. A progressive creation is the same as a limited one since each day's work would be bounded by a successive measurement, and the entire six day's work added together could only be restricted, not infinite. This would limit the concept of God's perfections and

providence, which is incompatible with a true idea of the eternity and infinity of God, as has been argued in the preceding pages.

There are a variety of other blunders in Moses' description of creation, one of which I shall mention. In his history of the first and fourth days of God's work, "And God said, let there be light, and there was light; and God called the light day, and the darkness he called night; and the evening and the morning were the first day." Then he proceeds to the second and third day's work, and so on to the sixth. But in his chronicle of the fourth day's work, he says that "God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." This appears to be inconsistent with the history of the origin of light. Day and night were ordained on the first day, and on the fourth day the greater and lesser lights were made to serve the same purposes. But it is likely that many errors have crept into his writings through variations in learning and the corruptions of translations, not only of his works, but of other ancient authors. Besides, one must acknowledge that those ancient writers labored under great difficulties, considering the infant state of learning and knowledge in the world of their day. Consequently, we should not criticize their writing harshly, just enough to dispel any notion that they are infallible.

SECTION III –THE ETERNITY AND INFINITUDE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

When we consider our solar system, with its fiery center and planets moving in their several orbits with regular, majestic and periodical revolutions, we are charmed by the prospect and contemplation of all these worlds of motion. We adore the wisdom and power by which they are attracted and their velocities are regulated and perpetuated. And when we reflect on the fact that the blessings of life are derived from and are dependent on the properties, qualities, constructions, proportions and movements of that stupendous machine, we gratefully acknowledge God's beneficence. When we extend our thoughts and senses to the vast regions of the starry heavens, we become lost in the immensity of God's works. Some stars appear fair and luminous. Others are barely visible to the eye. Lenses allow these faint stars to become brilliant and let us extend our feeble powers of discovery to others that are far more remote, indistinguishable by the naked eye. These discoveries of the works of God naturally prompt the inquisitive mind to conclude that the author of the astonishing part of this creation we view has extended his creation still farther, so if it were possible for any of us to be transported to the farthest star we can see from here, we would see from there worlds as distant as that most distant star, and so on "ad infinitum".

Furthermore, it is altogether reasonable to conclude that the heavenly bodies we know about, as well as others throughout the universe, are also possessed or inhabited by some kind of intelligent beings, even though they may perceive or communicate much differently than we or other intelligent beings do. It seems to us wise and consistent with God's perfection that He would have created intelligence in those other worlds as he has in ours. And we can feel completely certain that our God's providence is consistent on other worlds throughout the universe.

To suppose that God has confined his goodness to this world and to no others is as fanciful as the beliefs of some that they and those of their faith are the exclusive favorites of heaven. These are narrow and bigoted concepts, offensive to any rational person and utterly unworthy of God, about whom we should hold only exalted ideas.

One might object that man cannot live on the sun, but one cannot also conclude that God cannot or has not created any being who can live on the sun and breathe its fire as naturally as we breathe air. There are many kinds of fish and animals that can live only in the water, in which other animals, with the exception of amphibians, would drown. Other animals creep upon the ground or fly in the air. There are various animals that live without food during the winter, and many insects who may be frozen, but once warmed by the sun, are revived. And if this variety can exist upon the earth, imagine what an inconceivable variety of life, including intelligent and organized beings, might be possible on innumerable other worlds. As far as replenishing his universal creation with moral agents, it is certain that no factor such as temperature on any of those worlds would have been any barrier to God Almighty. The unlimited perfection of God could perfectly well supply every part of His creation with whatever sort of beings He might choose to bring into existence. Since God is perfect, one can rationally conclude that His immense creation is replete with rational beings, and that it has always been so. One must also believe that the display of divine goodness must have been as perfect and complete in the previous eternity as it has in the present.

From this theological discussion of the creation and providence of God it appears that all of nature, all of perfectly regulated creation, was eternally connected by the creator as an answer to the same all-glorious purpose, the display of God's own nature, His desire that all beings exist and be happy. So creation operates according to the laws of nature. God, the self-existent eternal cause, sustains it in perfect order and correctness, in accordance with the eternal wisdom, unalterable righteousness, impartial justice, and immense goodness of His divine nature. It is the established order of nature that summer and winter, rain and sunshine and then moonshine, refreshing breezes, sowing and harvest, day and night, all interchangeably succeed one another and bring their extensive blessings to man. Every enjoyment and support of life is from God. He uses those laws to provide for His creatures. Nature is the medium and method through which God dispenses his benevolence to mankind. The air we breathe, the light of the sun, and the waters of the murmuring rills are all evidence of his providence. These good things are given in such great profusion that the rich cannot monopolize them and thus deprive the poor of His bounty.

When we undertake a thorough study of nature, we are certain to be lost in the immensity of God's works and wisdom. Nevertheless, as rational and contemplative beings, we find for ourselves usefulness, affinity and a sustaining quality in a variety of things. From this we are prompted to infer that God is universally uniform and consistent in the infinity of His creation and providence. Due to our imperfections, we cannot comprehend all that consistency, yet we are morally sure that, of all possible plans, God's infinite wisdom must have eternally adopted the best, His infinite goodness must have approved it, and His infinite power must have perfected it. Since the well being of creatures in general must have been God's ultimate goal in creating and

governing His creatures, His omniscience could not have failed to have their welfare always under his watchful eye. Universal nature must, therefore, ultimately be attracted to the well being of His creatures, and infinite perfection must have eternally displayed itself in creation and providence. From all this we infer that God is as eternal and infinite in His goodness, as his self-existent and perfect nature is all-powerfully great.

SECTION IV –GOD’S PROVIDENCE DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH THE AGENCY OF MAN

The doctrine of Fate has been used by armies to induce soldiers to face danger. Mohammed taught his army that the "term of every man's life was fixed by God, and that none could shorten it by any hazard that he might seem to be exposed to in battle or otherwise." I find it quite strange, however, that the doctrine of Fate should be introduced into peaceable and civil life and be patronized by any teachers of religion. This doctrine subverts religion in general and renders the teaching of religion unnecessary unless one concludes that it is necessary for them to teach the doctrine of Fate. I oppose such teaching, that this law of fate forces us to behave in certain ways. And I have another proposal, that we simply stop employing the public teachers of this doctrine and spend their salaries in an economical manner. Doing that might better make us happy. We might as well spend the money on good wine or old spirits to make our hearts glad while we laugh at the stupidity or cunning of those who would consider us mere machines.

Some advocates for the doctrine of fate will also maintain that we are free agents, but at the same time they tell us there has been a string of causes and events that has reached from God down to this time, and which will continue eternally. This sequence of events has and will control and cause every action of our lives. There is nothing in nature more certain than the fact that we cannot act involuntarily and voluntarily in the same action and at the same time. Still, it is hard for those who truly believe that they are elected and predetermined by God as his special favorites to give up the idea that God does not predetermine all events. Their election and everlasting happiness is nonsensically founded upon this system of Fate. On the other hand, it is also hard for them to reject the law of nature (or the dictates of conscience), which shows us intuitively that man exercises free will. They are therefore forced to support both parts of the contradiction. Thus they must try to believe that they act according to the dictates of Fate, but they also have free will. It is upon this contradictory principle that such people have endeavored to maintain the dictates of natural conscience, along with their darling folly of being elected and exclusively favorites of God.

CHAPTER III

SECTION I – CONSIDERING THE DOCTRINE OF INFINITE EVIL AND SIN

That God is infinitely good in the eternal displays of his providence has been argued in the third section of the second chapter. From this argument we infer that there can be no infinite evil in the universe, since it would be incompatible with infinite good. Still, there are many who believe in the concept of the infinite evil of sin. Their argument to support this doctrine is that one should not measure the greatness of the sin, or the appropriateness of its punishment, nor should one judge the viciousness of the sin by the capacity or circumstances of the offender. One should instead measure the sin by the capacity and dignity of the person against whom the sin was committed. And since every transgression is against the law and authority of God, the sin is therefore against God. And since God is infinite, sin is an infinite evil. From this argument one can infer the infinite and vindictive wrath of God against sinners. One can infer that his justice will doom them to what some call infinite, and others call eternal misery – misery beyond measure or without end.

Accepting any maxim that sins are measured by the dignity and infinity of God, would mean that all sins would be equal. This concept would confound all of our notions about degrees of sin, so killing one's neighbor or killing his horse would be viewed as equivalent sins. If sin were to always be measured in this way, there could no more be degrees in sin or guilt than there could be degrees of perfection in a God we all agree is infinite. If God is infinite, He cannot be more perfect or less perfect. Therefore, since there are certainly degrees of sin, one cannot measure them against the infinity of God. So this alone strongly refutes the doctrine of the infinite evil of sin, since no one would be so stupid as to not recognize that there are varying degrees of sin.

I recall the words of a scholarly cleric who supports this doctrine. He first proposed that, "Moral righteousness is infinitely pleasing to God," from which he deduced that, "Anything contrary to righteousness is, therefore, infinitely displeasing to God and infinitely evil." One cannot dispute the fact that the absolute moral righteousness of the divine nature of God is infinitely pleasing to Him, but nature cannot produce anything that is infinitely contrary to His nature. Nor can nature produce any being that is infinitely evil or in any way infinite unless we admit that nature itself is an independent being that is infinitely diabolical, and that is too absurd to even bother to contradict. Therefore, since all possible moral evil must be caused by finite beings deviating from the rules of eternal order and reason or righteousness, we must conclude that even if all the finite beings in the universe did nothing else but sin and rebel against God, reason and righteousness, their efforts would still fall far short of being infinite. Even though finite minds bear a resemblance to God, as has already been argued, these minds cannot match His infinity. No matter how you consider it, there is, therefore, no being or agency of a being that has the capacity to be infinitely evil and detestable in the sight of God. The actions or agency of finite beings must also necessarily be finite. Both the vices and virtues of man are finite and limited. Therefore, moral evil is finite and bounded.

There can be no dispute that there is only one infinite good, and that is God. Nor can it be disputed that God judges all things, all beings and their acts for what they are. But to judge a finite evil to be infinite would be infinitely erroneous and disproportionate. As surely as there is a distinction between infinity and a lack of limits, a finite sinful act cannot be infinitely evil. Finite offenses cannot be infinite. Nor is it possible that even the greatest sinners should deserve infinite punishment. One might as well be supposed to be infinitely happy or miserable. The place of finite beings in the universe prevents them from being infinitely happy or miserable. They can, of course be happy or miserable or progressively good or evil. We will conclude our discussion of the doctrine of the infinite evil of sin by observing that, since no creature can tolerate infinite misery or punishment, the wisdom of God could not allow creatures the capacity to sin beyond his ability to adequately punish them for it.

SECTION II – GOD’S MORAL GOVERNANCE IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

We can be certain that eternal punishment would never have divine approval or be inflicted on any intelligent being under the infinite authority of God. An endless punishment defeats its very purpose, which, as is the case with all wise and good governments, is to rehabilitate offenders and to set examples for others. A government that does not believe in reform and repentance must unavoidably treat its subjects miserably, because all creatures will commit errors and inconsistencies. A wise governor, which we must admit God to be, would take into consideration the nature and capabilities of the governed and would alternate His beneficence and His punishment in order to drive them away from sin and wickedness and towards morality. He would convince them through transitory suffering that sin and vanity are their greatest enemies. So by rehabilitating them from wickedness and error to the truth and to the love and practice of virtue, he would provide them the opportunity to glorify Him for the wisdom and goodness of his government, and they would ultimately be happy under His authority. But we are told that to eternally damn some of mankind increases the happiness of those who are delivered, a much smaller number. What a diabolical attitude for the saved to have. What a narrow and petty notion of infinite justice and goodness. Who would put the Deity’s actions on par with the despots of this world? What a horrible, horrible impeachment of Divine goodness! Let us instead nobly suppose that God has had the ultimate best good in mind for all, that He will reward the virtuous and punish the vicious. All punishment will end in the ultimate betterment of the punished. This is intended to serve the great and important goals of Divine government and to promote the restoration and happiness of all rational creatures.

We have already offered the most substantial arguments we can deduce from the divine nature. God’s ultimate goal in His creation and providence is to provide the greatest good to all beings. Consequently, the ultimate goal of punishment in the Divine government must be to reclaim and restore and to bring sinners back to embrace righteousness and be ultimately happy. An eternal punishment would defeat the very reason for punishment itself, and no good could ever come from everlasting destruction. A total, everlasting and irreparable evil would be visited on anyone sentenced to eternal and unremitting damnation. This would lead us to conclude that God’s creation or His governance, or both, are imperfect.

SECTION III - HUMAN LIBERTY, ACTIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY CANNOT RESULT IN ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES, EITHER GOOD OR EVIL

From the preceding section we see that in this life men will not be judged for all of eternity, but they will be eternally judged. To suppose that our actions or transgressions during this temporary life will be met with happiness or misery for all of eternity is inconsistent with God's governance and the evolving and retrospective knowledge of the human mind. God has not given us the capacity to plunge ourselves into eternal woe and perdition. Human liberty is not that expansive. Our allotted span of years bears no resemblance to the eternity that follows, so no finite human act (as a result of liberty of action) could be proportional to any supposed eternal consequences of happiness or misery. Our liberty is limited to our power to act. It cannot be more or less since our liberty is our ability to act. Liberty could also be defined as the power to act. We could perhaps say that action is the effect of liberty, and liberty is the cause of action. This preserves a distinction between action and the power to act. Nonetheless, our acts cannot exceed our liberty. To think otherwise would be like thinking it is possible to have action without the power to act or effect without a cause. Therefore, since our actions do not lead to eternal happiness or misery, neither can liberty, which is our power to act. It is sufficient in this life that virtuous minds should keep their "Consciences void of offense to God and towards man," (Acts 24:16) and that when they enter the afterlife they remember their actions and remain conscious of a well-lived life. With their habit of virtue, they can enjoy a rational happiness out of the reach of the physical travails that end when life ends. And in all rational probability they would be evolved to a more exalted and sublime state of being, knowledge and action than we can even conceive. They will achieve a state where joy and pain are left behind, an elevated mental state where virtuous minds will be able to contemplate the superlative beauties of moral fitness in a clearer and greater manner. And they will enjoy this life with ecstatic satisfaction despite the fact that they will forever retain some imperfections in actions, ability and endeavor, which must ever be the case for finite minds.

As to the vicious who have violated the laws of reason and morality, who have lived a life of sin and wickedness, who are as unhappy as they are immoral, these sinners will find that the afterlife will begin with tremendous horror, self-condemnation and guilt. Their minds will know greater anguish when they understand that there are no worldly pleasures there to divert the mind from its guilt. Their sense of guilt will be all the more heightened as their minds are greatly expanded and more capable of sorrow, grief and conscious woe as they reflect on their wicked lives.

SECTION IV – PHYSICAL EVILS

Physical evils are naturally inseparable from animal life. Life begins with them, and they accompany us throughout our lives. Nature gives us both life and physical ailments. They are inseparable. They depend on one another and only end with our death and dissolution. This is the natural order of things, and it applies to all animal species. This is true of the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea, reptiles and all animal life. Pain, sickness and death are in no way punishment by God for sin. Nor, on the other hand, is sensual happiness a reward for virtue. Rewarding moral actions with a glass of wine or a shoulder of mutton would be as inappropriate as measuring a triangle with sound. Virtue and vice are of the mind, and as we

have said, their merits and demerits affect the conscience. But animal gratifications are indiscriminately common to the human race as well as to the beasts of the field. Physical ailments affect everyone and everything randomly and universally so "That there is no knowing good or evil by all that is before us, for all is vanity." It was never possible that animal life would be exempt from death. Omnipotence itself could not have made life manifest and incapable of decay, because the self-same nature that constitutes animal life subjects it to decay and dissolution. Life cannot exist without death, just as there cannot be mountains without valleys. I cannot exist and not exist at the same time. God does not create such contradictions in nature. All such contradictions are absolutely incompatible with nature and truth. Nature is predicated on truth, and the same truth that creates mountains makes valleys at the same time. They could not exist separately. And the same truth that affirms my existence denies my non-existence. This same law of nature produces animal life and sustains it for a season, after which it wears out, and the course of nature reduces it again to its constituent elements. The vegetable world demonstrates the same cycles of production and dissolution, and the complexity of elements is beyond our comprehension. But the dissolution of forms is not the dissolution or destruction of matter. Nor can matter be created. It is through physical alterations of the particles of matter that animal and plant life are produced and destroyed. At no time during the creation, decay or destruction of either animal or plant life is matter itself added or subtracted. Eternal nature continues its never-ending operations, most of which remain mysterious to us, under the unerring guidance of God's providence.

Animals are made up of a variety of organic parts. These parts have a particular and necessary dependence on one another. They work together to constitute a whole animal. Blood seems to be the source of life. There must be proper circulation from the heart to the extremities and back again to provide every constituent part with blood and vital warmth. But the brain is evidently the seat of sensation, which is conveyed through the nervous system to every part of the body, providing feeling and motion and constituting a living being. These animal machines could never have been produced or have functioned on any other sort of world other than this one, a constantly changing world that produces food for its inhabitants. An unchangeable world could neither be productive nor destructive. It would be unchanging; which would preclude the existence or nourishment of creatures such as we are. Nutrients are extracted from food by unexplained digestive processes, the mysterious operation of which suffuse the circulatory fluids and supply animals with vital warmth, strength and vigor. This nutritive process requires a continuous resupply of materials, which are perpetually being incorporated into the body supplanting waste matter, which is constantly discharged due to its ultimate tendency to be toxic to animal life. Thus it manifestly appears the natural laws and the animal constitution of man comprise a uniform arrangement of cause and effect. And according to these laws, animal life is propagated and sustained for a season, and by these same laws, decay and death are the necessary consequences.

CHAPTER IV

SECTION I - SPECULATION ON THE DEPRAVITY OF HUMAN REASON

In the course of our speculation on Divine Providence we proceed next to the consideration of the doctrine of the depravity of human reason. This doctrine is derogatory to the nature of man, and degrades his character. Admitting that this doctrine is true would overturn our knowledge and science and would render learning, instruction and books useless. Reason itself would be as depraved and spoiled and would be as irrational as it would be in the mind of a raving madman. If we were to admit that reason is depraved, it would unavoidably follow that mankind would be too depraved to be capable of judging what is reasonable. Without the exercise of reason, we cannot understand what reason is, and without this understanding we could not tell reason from its inverse. Knowing what reason is and being able to distinguish it from the irrational is incompatible with the concept that our reason is depraved. For all intents and purposes, to know what reason is and to distinguish it from that which is marred or spoiled is an exercise in reason. And if this is reason, then it cannot be depraved. That would be like knowing that we are exercising reason, but saying we are not.

Perhaps some who subscribe to the doctrine that human reason is depraved will admit that it may not actually be totally depraved, but that "it is in a great measure marred or spoiled". The preceding arguments apply equally well to the supposition that human reason is partially depraved. To judge whether our reason is partially depraved required that we know what reason was supposed to be before its supposed depravity. So, to know reason would be the same as exercising and enjoying reason in its luster and purity. That would preclude the notion of partial depravity, because we could not judge except by comparing reason that is depraved against reason that is not depraved. But for depraved reason to make such a comparison is contradictory and impossible. If our reason was depraved, we could no more have conceived reason than a beast could. Men of small reasoning ability cannot comprehend the sophisticated reasoning of their superiors. How could depraved reason comprehend uncorrupted and pure reason? To suppose that it could would be an acceptance that depraved reason and undepraved reason are the same thing, and that would end the dispute.

There is a great contradiction in applying the term "depraved" to "reason". The two concepts do not go together since the terms convey different ideas. If reason is spoiled, marred or robbed of its perfection, it is no longer rational and should not be called reason. If reason is supposed to be deprived of its nature, it should also be deprived of its name. Subterfuge would be a better term for it.

Those who invalidate reason should seriously consider "whether or not they argue against reason using reason. If they are using reason, then they are validating the very thing they are arguing against." But if their arguments lack reason, which their own arguments say they must, then they cannot be rationally convinced, nor do they deserve a rational argument.

We are told that the concept of depravity of reason was first transmitted to mankind through the

direct inspiration of God. But if human reason is supposed to be depraved, how could the irrational human soul receive or understand the inspiration? How could this knowledge of the depravity of mankind's reason be impressed on those who were supposedly inspired? A rational inspiration must consist of rational ideas, which presupposes that the minds of those inspired were already rational, which would be completely contradictory to the content of the inspiration. The reason behind the inspiration was to teach us that human reason is depraved, a lesson we could not understand without reason, but if we do possess reason, we would understand that the inspiration was false.

Will any advocates for the theory of the depravity of reason suppose that inspiration instills reason into the human mind? Were that so, those so inspired could understand nothing of reason before the inspiration, nor would this supposed inspiration prove to those receiving the inspiration that their reason had ever been depraved. All that such a person supposedly so inspired could know about reason would be after the inspiration took effect and made them rational beings. Instead of being taught by inspiration that their reason had formerly been depraved, they could have no such knowledge of such depravity before being inspired. Nor could a person thus inspired communicate this supposed revelation to others of the species, since they would not yet have a rational nature, and they would not be able to understand reason.

There can be no dispute that there are varying degrees of knowledge and capacity to learn among rational people. But in all the degrees of graduation from the superior reasoning of a Locke or a Newton down to the lowest of the species, reason is still reason, and it is not depraved. A lesser degree of reason does not equate to a depravity. Nor does the imparting of reason support the concept of depravity because what remains to be exercised is still reason. There is not and cannot be such a thing as depraved reason, for whatever is rational is reasonable and cannot be depraved, irrespective of the level of knowledge at which it is exercised.

A blow to the head or fracture of the skull, as well as many palsies and other damage to our senses, can retard or prevent the exercise of reason for varying lengths of time. And sometimes in the course of a human life under such circumstances reason is not depraved. It may be missing to a greater or lesser extent or may completely cease to function due to damage to the sensory organs. But if the organs are healed and the senses recover, the exercise of reason returns, free of blemish or depravity. The cessation of reason in no way depraves it.

From what has been argued on this subject in this and in preceding chapters, it appears that reason is not and cannot be depraved. Human reason resembles divine reason. It is the same kind of reason. The nature of reason is as uniform as truth, and truth is the test of reason. Divine reason is eternal and infinite, but human reason is eternal only with respect to our immortality and finite in terms of capacity. Any person who believes their reason can be depraved can easily be led by the nose and duped into superstition by those whom they trust. And in superstition they remain from generation to generation. Because when they abandon the reason God gave them, their sole guide to direct them in their consideration and duty, they may come under the influence of ignorant or insidious teachers. They also become susceptible to their own irregular passions and to the folly and enthusiasm of those around them. Only reason can prevent or restrain such things. It is not rational to suppose that the average person would be convinced that

their reason was depraved unless someone told them so. And it is whispered that the first insinuation of this concept came from the priests, although the Armenian clergymen with whom I am acquainted have debunked these rumors. If we were to accept the theory of depravity of reason, it would affect the priesthood or any other teachers of that doctrine as equally as it would the rest of mankind. For depraved creatures to receive and give credit to a depraved doctrine is the greatest weakness and folly imaginable. This folly comes nearer to being a proof of the doctrine of total depravity than any of the arguments supporting that doctrine.

SECTION II - A DISCOURSE ON THE LAW OF NATURE AND THE MORAL SYSTEM WITH OBSERVATIONS ON SUBSEQUENT RELIGIONS

One cannot dispute that mankind is endowed by nature with sensation and reflection, which are the source of reason and understanding. By the magnificent simplicity of nature, the senses are well designed to identify external objects and communicate images of them to the mind. This opens up an extensive field of contemplation to our understanding. The mind can thus examine the natural causes and consequences of things. We can investigate the knowledge of moral good and evil, which, together with our power to act, comprises the human conscience. This is the origin of moral obligation and accountability, which is called natural religion. We would not be rational or accountable creatures without the ability to tell truth from falsehood or right from wrong, justice from injustice, and we require the ability to act of our own free will to choose between right and wrong. Undoubtedly, it was our Creator's ultimate design in creating us and furnishing us with those mental powers and sensitive aptitudes that we should use these faculties to serve and honor Him. And we should use those united capacities to seek out and understand our duty to Him and to one another, employing our capabilities to whatever extent might be necessary in this life. To deny that natural religion is sufficient for the best ultimate good of mankind is to denigrate the wisdom, goodness and justice of God who provides this religion. Besides, if natural religion is deficient, what assurances do we have that revealed religion is not also deficient? If a first God-given religion is deficient, what guarantee do we have that any subsequent religion He gives us would not also be deficient? Why would a second religion given to us by God not be as insufficient or as defective as the first one He gave us? If we infer that natural religion is insufficient to teach mankind and make us ultimately happy, then that is the end of religion in general. But as surely as God is perfect in wisdom and goodness, natural religion is sufficient and complete. Natural religion has divine approval and, of course, has a rational nature. It is as universally well known to mankind as reason itself. But to the disadvantage of the subsequent revealed religions, be they inspired, external, supernatural, or whatever, they came too late into the world to be essential to the well being of mankind, or to show the way to heaven and everlasting blessedness. The greatest part of mankind that ever lived in this world departed this world before the eras when such revelations were taught. Besides, those revelations, which came after the law of nature, began as all human traditions do, in out-of-the-way places in the world, and they have spread as time, chance and opportunity have allowed. Does this look like a contrivance of heaven and the only way to salvation? Or does this not sound more like a worldly thing and the contrivance of man? Undoubtedly, the great parent of mankind laid down a just and sufficient foundation for the salvation of us all. Otherwise, those

who would appear to be overlooked would have valid complaints against His providence or moral governance for condemning them to an eternally wretched and miserable existence. Such an assessment makes God out to be more unjust than the most barbarous despots who ever lived.

But let us return to our speculations on the law of nature. The following quotation beautifully illustrates that divine law surpasses all human institutions of law ever created to the same extent that the wisdom and goodness of God exceeds that of man:

"But it may be said what is virtue? It is the faithful discharge of those obligations dictated by reason. And what is wisdom itself, but a portion of the intelligence the creator furnished us to direct us in our duty? It may be further asked, what is this duty? Where does it come from, and by what law is it prescribed? My answer is that the law that prescribed it is the immutable will of God. And true reason obliges us to conform ourselves to this law, and virtue consists in this conformity. No law created or repealed since the creation can constitute virtue. Mankind could not be bound to observe such a law before it came into existence. But mankind was certainly obligated to be virtuous from the beginning. Princes may make laws and repeal them, but they can neither make nor destroy virtue. The Deity himself could not do that. Virtue is as immutable in its nature as the divine will that created it. [NOTE: Virtue did not derive its nature merely from the omnipotent will of God, but also from the eternal truth and moral fitness of things. That is the eternal reason they were eternally approved of by God, and immutably established by Him, to be what they are. And since our duty is connected with those eternal measures of moral fitness or we can act upon them, we call such actions or habits virtue or morality. But when we write or say that virtue is grounded on the divine will, we should also remember that, in constituting virtue, the divine will was eternally and infinitely reasonable.]

A Prince may command his Subjects to pay taxes, or he may forbid them to export certain commodities, or import things from a foreign country. The faithful observance of these laws makes men obedient subjects, but it does not make them virtuous. Would anyone seriously think he was virtuous just because he has not dealt in painted calico? Or if the Prince should use his authority to repeal these laws, would anyone say he had repealed virtue? So it is with all human laws. They all have a beginning. They all have exceptions, and they may be dispensed with and even abolished. One law alone, etched on our hearts by the hand of our Creator, is unchangeable and obligates us universally and eternally. This law, says Cicero, is not a human invention, nor an arbitrary political institution. It is eternal and binding on us all. The violence Tarquin offered to Lucretia was a breach of that eternal law, and though the Romans at that time might have had no written law condemning such crimes, his offense was no less heinous. For this law of reason did not go into effect when it was first written down. Its origin is as ancient as the Divine mind. For the true, primitive and supreme law is none other than the unerring reason of the great Jupiter. And in another place He says that this law is founded in nature. It is universal, immutable, and eternal. It is not subject to change. It is the same anywhere, anytime. It extends invariably to all ages and nations, like the sovereign dominion of the Being who is its author."

This supreme law was made known to all creatures, as far and as wide as was reason, and it is binding on all intelligent beings in the universe. This law is that eternal rule of what God deems to be fitness. It is the law by which the Creator conducts his infinite providence, and by which he

governs morality according to the absolute perfection of his nature. From this we infer that subsequent revelations, which some claim to be the inspired laws of God, are consistent with the laws of nature. However, these revealed laws cannot be considered as anything other than mere transcripts of the original, which have been circulated promulgated to certain favorite nations, while at the same time all of mankind was blessed with the original.

The moral principles contained in Moses' Ten Commandments to the people of Israel were previously known to every nation under heaven, and in all probability they adhered to them as much as the tribes of Israel did. Designating the seventh day of the week as a sabbath was an arbitrary imposition of Moses, (as were many other of his edicts) and not included in the law of nature. But Moses' laws, or those of any other legislator, are part of natural law if they are morally right. For instance; the commandments "Thou shalt not covet or kill" are positive laws that cannot add anything to the law of nature. The law of nature is already an entire and perfect system of morality. Nor can any injunctions or commands of ordinary human origin enforce the authority of natural law. Nor can these commandments impose any additional moral obligation on those people who are supposed to obey. Natural religion was already as binding as we can reasonably imagine. Natural religion was as binding as God's sense of order and moral righteousness can make it.

To illustrate the obligatory nature of natural law let us reverse the ten commandments and imagine that Moses had said thou shalt covet; thou shalt steal and murder. Would anyone have concluded that these injunctions were obligatory? Surely not, for an ordinary human command to violate the law of nature could not be binding on any rational being. How then can the injunctions of Moses, or of any others, be binding just because they coincide with the law of nature? We answer that the obligatory sanctions of natural law do not depend at all on the authority of Moses or of any other lawgiver other than He who is eternal and infinite. Nor is it possible that the Jews, who adhere to the law of Moses, should be more obligated to the moral law than the Japanese, or that the Christians are more obligated than the Chinese. The same God extends the same moral government over universal rational nature, irrespective of Popes, Priests and Levities. But regarding all mere human institutions, injunctions, rites and ceremonies that do not fall under the jurisdiction of the law of nature, they are mere political matters. They may be enacted, extended, dispensed with, abolished, re-enacted, compounded or diversified, as convenience, power, opportunity, inclination, or interest, may dictate. They are not founded on any stable or universal principle of reason. They change with the customs, fashions, traditions and revolutions of the world. They have only interest, power and advantages of a temporary nature at their core.

If the Creator and Governor of the universe was to erect a particular academy of arts and sciences in this world, directly answerable to Him, with tutors rightly organized, and intellectually qualified to carry on the business of teaching, His college might instruct its scholars like other colleges (and maybe even better). But it is contradictory and by nature impossible to think that God would have given a revelation to mankind of His will, as His perpetual law, a revelation that is assumed to be beyond their comprehension. Nor could a revelation to mankind, something made known to them, be educational or instructive, for it is a

contradiction to call something a revelation if it is either beyond my comprehension, or something I already understand through natural wisdom. It is contradictory and impossible to tell me or inspire me with something I already know. That would reveal nothing to me. It is equally contradictory and impossible to reveal something to me that is supernatural or incomprehensible. But the truth of the matter is that mankind, as has been argued before, is restricted by the law of nature to acquire knowledge or science progressively. We thus infer that it would be improper, and therefore impossible for God to have ever given us any written copy of his eternal law. In order to reveal His law He would have had to first simplify it down to the same elementary level of knowledge then in the world, or else fishermen, shepherds, and illiterate people could not have understood it. Simplifying it to this degree would prevent it from being instructive or beneficial to later generations after their progressive advances in science and wisdom.

CHAPTER V

SECTION I – A GENERAL CRITIQUE OF SUPERNATURAL AND MYSTERIOUS REVELATION

Nothing has contributed as much to deluding mankind in religious matters as mistaken ideas about supernatural inspiration or revelation. These ideas fail to consider that all true religion originates from reason and can only be understood by the exercise and improvement of reason. People who do not understand this, therefore, are apt to be confused by such inconsistencies. In the following discussions on this subject we shall argue against supernatural revelation in general by covering the doctrine of inspiration, the sudden illumination of the mind. We will first assume that a revelation consists of a group of rational ideas, intelligibly presented and comprehensible by its target audience. Otherwise they could not understand it as revelation. It would be contradictory to suppose there could be a revelation that is irrational, inscrutable, or incomprehensible. Such a revelation could contain nothing but double talk, which would be the same as to reveal and not to reveal. A revelation, therefore, must consist of a set of rational ideas, intelligibly communicated to those who are supposed to share in it or receive it. This must be true about every single revelation. But any such revelation could only be a transcript of the law of nature, predicated on reason. It would be no more supernatural than the reason of man. The simple definition of supernatural is that which is "beyond or above the powers of nature," i.e. something that can never be understood by mankind, including those who first spread the concept of revelation. Such a revelation, doctrine, precept or instruction must be capable of being comprehended, contemplated or understood by us within the powers of our nature. And if it does not, it will be incomprehensible and unknown to us; consequently, we cannot understand it to compose any part of revelation.

The author of human nature gave us certain sensory capacities and mental powers. The only way that apprehension, reflection or understanding can be exerted or produced in the compound nature of man is in the manner prescribed by the Creator. It would, therefore, be a contradiction in nature to inspire, infuse, or communicate the comprehension, reflection or understanding of anything whatsoever that might be beyond man's natural aptitudes into our human nature. Consequently, it would be impossible for God, since mental powers of that nature are of God's own production and constitution. Attempting this would be the same as inspiring, infusing, or revealing comprehension, reflection or understanding to something other than human nature. Acting outside of or beyond or above the powers of nature would mean that there could be nothing to operate upon. There would be nothing to receive the inspiration or infuse the revelation into. One might as well be inspiring or making a revelation to some nonentity as to act in this fashion towards man. There is a void beyond man's essence or nature where one can find no more sensation, apprehension, reflection and understanding than one would expect to find in a nonentity. Therefore, the only revelation from man or God that mankind could perceive or understand is one that is adapted to his nature and capacity. Supernatural revelation no more applies to us than it does to beasts, birds or fishes. Neither we nor they can be acted upon supernaturally. Since they respect the natural or moral world, all the possible exertions and operations of nature are truly natural. God no more deviates from His righteousness in matters of

inspiration, revelation or instruction to the moral world than He does in His government of the natural world.

The infinite wisdom of God's creation, providence and moral government will eternally remain supernatural to all capacities that are finite. For that very reason we can never fully comprehend it no matter how much we may evolve. Human development can never attain the infinite. No matter how eternally proficient in knowledge we may become, we cannot exceed the natural. That would be impossible for us. This infinite knowledge is not supernatural to God, because His perfection is also infinite. Breaking beyond the limits of our capacity and understanding any single supernatural thing, something which is beyond the power of our natures, would be the equivalent of understanding all things. We would thus surpass the confines of our finite nature. We would become superior beings compared to our current position in the universe, and we would comprehend the knowledge of infinity. From this we infer that, no matter how much we may improve, every kind and degree of comprehension, reflection and understanding that we can attain can be no more supernatural than our natural ability to perceive and understand. Nor has God Almighty ever revealed Himself to mankind in any other way or manner other than that which is truly natural, nor could He.

SECTION II - COMMENTS ON THE PROVIDENCE AND AGENCY OF GOD IN THE NATURAL AND MORAL WORLD WITH GENERAL CRITIQUES OF REVELATION

We all experience a dependence on something superior to ourselves in wisdom, power and goodness, and from this we infer the concept of God. Our senses disclose to us the works of God that we call nature, which is a manifest demonstration of his invisible essence. Thus it is from the works of nature that we deduce the knowledge of a God, not because we have, or can have, any immediate knowledge of Him or revelation from Him. On the other hand, all our understanding of God, or intelligence from Him, is communicated to us through natural means, not through divine intervention. This is what we call natural revelation. Such revelation is immediately made known to us by our senses and from our general ability to perceive objects external to ourselves. The entire universe, every part we can conceive, exists outside the nature or essence of God. As has been before observed, it is naturally impossible for us to receive from God, or for God to communicate to us, any inspiration or revelation to us, except through intermediate means. Therefore, any notions of the direct impression of divine illuminations, inspiration, or infusion of ideas or revelations into our minds, are merely enthusiasm and deception. Neither the divine mind nor finite intellects can make any impression on our external senses except through some adequate, intermediate cause. The same is true of person-to-person communications or communicating with mankind in general. The only way we can communicate is through the medium of our senses, since this is the only possible way in nature through which we can receive any notices, perceptions, or intelligence from either God or man.

Because God is infinitely powerful, it seems entirely reasonable to suppose that he can, therefore, inspire or infuse perception, reflection or revelation into the minds of men, even though that manner is incompatible with the aptitudes and powers of their nature. Such a revelation would be as impossible for God as it would be for normal being. Although it is a general truth, "That with God all things are possible," one must consider that contradictions and

impossibilities are not part of the definition of things, but are diametrically opposite. The definition of the word *things* is "whatever is." In nature or truth, which includes all things, there is no contradiction; therefore, the maxim is true, "That with God all things are possible," i.e. all things in nature are possible with God. But contradictions are falsehoods that do not, in fact, exist. They are the inverse of *things*, the opposite of nature, which understands, "Whatever is.;" Contradictions are opposed to nature and truth, and are not *things*. They are only the delusions of weak, unintelligent minds that falsely apply things to persons, or ascribe powers, qualities, dispositions and aptitudes to things that nature never gave them. Such are the deluded notions that come to our minds from the Holy Spirit, or from any mere spirit, without the intervention of an adequate, natural or intermediate cause. To make a triangle four square, or to make a variety of mountains contiguously situated, without valleys, or to give existence to a thing and to not give existence to it at the same time, or to reveal anything to us that we cannot perceive, all are contradictions of nature and truth. These are not things that can be revealed, nor, as has already been argued, do they have any actual existence. They are contradictory to themselves and to the relations and effects that they are supposed to have with one another. That He cannot make both parts of a contradiction to be true takes nothing away from God's power and absolute perfection.

But let us reverse our position and assume that we *could* receive and understand revelation. In this case it would be natural, and therefore possible, for us to receive and understand revelation. If we have the capacity to receive and understand a revelation, then it will be possible to receive and understand it. But to suppose that God can make both parts of a contradiction to be true, to reveal and not reveal, would be as ridiculous as ascribing a falsehood to Him and calling it power.

None will dispute that God can do anything and everything that is consistent with His moral perfections, and which does not cause a contradiction to the nature of things or their essential relationships. It is great weakness and folly to suppose that, just because God is all-powerful, He can therefore do everything that we, in our ignorance of nature and moral fitness, may ascribe to Him. We cannot make such assumptions when we do not know whether or not the things we ask are morally right or consistent with the way things should be, i.e. the unalterable relationships and interconnections between all things. It is manifestly certain that God cannot, in the exercise of his providence or moral government, counteract the perfections of His nature, nor can He do any manner of injustice. Nor is it possible for God to cause a contradiction in the natural world, any more than He can in the moral realm. The one is impossible because of the moral perfections of God, and the other is impossible because of the immutable properties, qualities, relations and nature of things themselves, as in the cases of the mountains and valleys, etc. that we alluded to before, and in numerous other such cases.

If one admits that a revelation is from God, then one must also allow that it is infallible. Therefore, those to whom God first made a revelation must have been infallibly certain of their inspiration. Likewise, the rest of mankind, to whom a revelation is proposed as a Divine Law or rule of duty must have an infallible certainty that the revelation's first promulgators were truly inspired by the immediate intervention of the spirit of God. They must know with certainty that the revelation has been preserved throughout all the changes and ages to their day and age, and they must know that the existing copies contain its original inspiration, are perfectly composed or are perfect copies. We must have an infallible certainty of all these things, or we cannot be

infallibly certainty of revelation. We are liable to be imposed upon by impostors or by ignorant and insidious teachers, who may be interested in imposing their own systems on the world in place of infallible truth, as in the instance of Mohammed.

But if we examine our own makeup and the world in which we live, we shall find that inspiration, by its very nature, is impossible for us to understand; therefore, revelation cannot, as a consequence, in fact be true. What certainty can we have that the Divine Mind has acted on ours? How can we distinguish supposedly divine illuminations or ideas from our own and those that are natural to us? To be certain that direct divine inspiration has entered our minds we must be able to analyze, distinguish, and distinctly separate the supposedly divine reflections, illuminations or inspiration from our own natural thinking. Otherwise, we might mistake our own reflections and interpretations as inspiration from God as enthusiasts or fanatics do. We could thus trick ourselves and impose our imaginary notions on mankind as God's revelation.

It is presumed that none will pretend that the natural reflections of our minds are controlled by the direct action of the Divine spirit. If these reflections were thus controlled, they would be on equal footing with any supposedly inspired revelation. How then shall we be able to distinguish our natural perceptions, reflections or reasonings from any assumed to be directly inspired? Should God use His voice to make known to us a revelation in a language we understand, and if the propositions, doctrines, or subject matter of this revelation do not exceed our capacity to understand, we could comprehend such a revelation as we do in conversation with one another. But this would be an external and natural revelation. God would be making use of language, grammar, logic and sound, i.e. direct causes, in order to communicate or reveal His message. Such a revelation would be as different from a directly inspired revelation as this book is. The very definition of direct inspiration precludes all natural or immediate causes. We have already shown that God is eternally perfect in knowledge, and therefore knows all things, not partially or by degrees as we understand things. Nevertheless, all truth that we come to know is in accordance with Divine omniscience. We do not comprehend things by direct infusion or inspiration, but from reasoning. We cannot see or hear God think or reason any more than we can see a man think. Nor are our senses capable of a mental communion with Him. Nor, as we have before argued, is it naturally possible for the human mind to receive any instantaneous or immediate illuminations or ideas from the Divine spirit. But we must illuminate and improve our minds by a close study of nature, through which God chooses to reveal Himself to man. We may truly say that the knowledge of nature is the revelation of God. In this there can be no delusion. It is natural and could come from none other but God.

If we cannot tell God's revelation in nature apart from revelation that is assumed to be divinely inspired, we may form a revelation like Nebuchadnezzar's idol, "partly iron and partly clay", i.e. partly divine and partly human. The Apostle Paul tells us that sometimes he "spake, and not the Lord," and at other times speaks doubtfully about the matter, saying, "and I *think* also that I have the spirit of God." And if he was at a loss about his inspiration, we too should be distrustful of it. From the preceding speculations on supernatural inspiration it appears that there are insurmountable difficulties in attempting a mental discourse with the divine spirit. We have no experience with such discourse, and our very nature prevents it. We communicate vocally or by writing or by some sort of external symbols as a medium, and we are prone to errors and mistakes in these natural and external forms of communication. But when we are so vain as to

rely on dreams and visions for our information, or when we try to communicate with invisible beings or with the Holy Spirit, our deceptions, blunders and confusions are increased to the very level of fanaticism. As they blindly adhere to such beliefs, such various alleged influences of the spirit on various sects, even among Christians, are in complete conformance with all their traditions. This proves that the whole business is mere hysteria. If the spirit of truth and uniformity caused these phenomena, they would influence everyone the same. However, zealots persuade themselves and one another that they experience supernatural communion with the Holy Ghost. And this is the source from which they tell us they derive their notions of religion. Their frenzy is to them proof against any reason or argument we might use. They tell us our reasoning is carnal and depraved, but that their teachings come directly from God. Then they proceed to vent upon us all the curses and punishments that are written in the book of the law.

There have been number of direct and wonderful discoveries in different parts of the world during various ages said to have been made known to godly men of old by the special illumination or supernatural inspiration of God. In doctrine, precept and instruction, each and every one of these inspirations has been completely different from the other. Consequently, they are as false as the wide variety of influences the spirit has on many various sects.

Together with the premises and inferences already deduced, these facts are too evident to be denied. They testify conclusively against direct or supernatural revelation in general. Nor will such revelation stand up any better in theory than in practice. If a revelation was to be made known to us it would have to be accommodated to our external senses and to our reason so that we could perceive and understand it in the same way we do general things. We must perceive by means of our senses before we can reflect with our minds. Our sensory system is that essential medium between the divine and human mind through which God reveals to man the knowledge of nature. It is our only door of correspondence with God or with man.

A supposed revelation, adapted to our external senses, would enable our mental powers to reflect upon, examine into, and understand it. Nevertheless, one would have to assume that the subject matter of such revelation, or the doctrines, precepts or injunctions the revelation contained, would not be beyond our reason. It would have to be adapted to our reason as well as to our external senses.

As we have already proven, it would be absurd to suppose that, just because God is omnipotent, He could use sound, or grammatical and logical language, or writing to correspond with us or to reveal anything to us without the intervention of some adequate direct cause. That would be the same as assuming that there could be an effect without a suitable or a corresponding cause. Effects must have adequate causes or they cannot be produced. God is the self-existent and eternal cause of all things, but according to the fixed laws of nature, the eternal cause cannot operate on the eternal succession of causes and effects except through the mutual operation of those causes on each other. As we have frequently observed before, infinite wisdom comprehended the best of all possible systems, and infinite goodness and power adopted and perfected it. Once established as a law of nature, God cannot deviate from it. That would necessarily imply a manifest imperfection in God, either in His eternally establishing that law of nature, or allegedly altering it afterward. We will consider this in greater detail in the next chapter.

It would be a contradiction to the order of nature, and consequently to the perfection of God, to suppose that Almighty power could produce a voice, language, grammar or logic that could communicate a revelation to us without some sort of organic or mechanical device or other intermediate medium or adequately constructed external instrument. God created nature. Therefore, assuming God has ever given us any particular revelation, we must suppose that He used some regular and natural means that could be comprehended naturally, some mode of communication that could use the vocal power of language. God must have used characters, orthography, grammar and logic, all of these things, to communicate a supposed revelation to mankind, and this eliminates inspiration.

Furthermore, this heavenly dictating voice would have had to accommodate all languages, grammars and logical ways of speaking. For a revelation to have been divulged in this way, it would have been necessary from the start to dictate it to every receiver, compiler, translator, printer, commentator on and teacher of such a revelation in order to have informed all of mankind. And at any time the words could have been adulterated or interpreted differently than was revealed in the original. These examples, with the refinements of languages and translations, are a summary of the many ways we may have been deceived by giving credit to antiquated written revelation. It would have taken a series of miracles to distribute and perpetuate a revelation in the world free from mistakes and frauds of one kind or other. This leads me to the consideration of the doctrine of miracles.

CHAPTER VI

SECTION I - MIRACLES

Before proceeding to the arguments concerning miracles, we must define them so that we can concentrate on the matter at hand and not argue about matters upon which we are all agreed. Our arguments will be clearly negative and opposed to the theory of miracles.

We will, therefore, assume that miracles are opposed to and go against the laws of nature. They absolutely contradict the eternal order, disposition and tendency of nature. We conclude that this is an accurate definition of miracles and that advocates for miracles define them the same way. If miracles were not supposed to alter the natural order of things, they could have no actual existence. The laws of nature would produce these effects, and miracles would not exist. They would be altogether fictitious, since their very existence depends on altering the laws of nature. If nature is not altered, miracles cannot exist anymore than nothingness itself can exist. Therefore, if in the course of the succeeding arguments, we should discover that the laws of nature have not and cannot be perverted, altered or suspended, then miracles cannot exist, and all things will be natural. Having thus defined miracles and stated the issue, let us proceed to the arguments.

If the laws of nature have ever been miraculously suspended and altered, God must have been the immediate cause, since no finite beings could alter those laws or regulations. They were established by omnipotent power and infinite perfection, and nothing short of such power and perfection can change them. This then is the single point at issue, i.e. has God ever altered or deviated from His eternal laws of nature. Is such an act consistent with God's nature?

To suppose that God should subvert his laws, (which is the same as changing them) would be to suppose Him to be fickle. Such a supposition would necessarily imply either that God's eternal establishment of these laws was imperfect or that a proposed alteration of them was imperfect. To alter or change something that is absolutely perfect would necessarily make that thing cease to be perfect. Perfection cannot be altered for the better. Such a change could only be for the worse, and consequently God could not approve such an alteration. This concludes the matter in question in opposition to miracles, and we must deduce the following conclusively. Almighty God eternally impressed the universe with a certain system of laws. Since they were infinitely perfect and best, they could never be altered in the least. They are as unchangeable in their nature as their immutable Author. To form the foregoing argument into syllogisms:

God is perfect -- the laws of nature were established by God; therefore, the laws of nature are perfect.

But if we allow the possibility of miracles, the syllogism should be:

The laws of nature were in their eternal establishment perfect; -- the laws of nature have been altered; therefore, the alteration of the laws of nature is imperfect.

Or: the laws of nature have been altered, and the alternation has been for the better; therefore, the eternal establishment thereof was imperfect.

Thus it appears from a logical point of view, as well as through other methods of reasoning, that if we admit the possibility miracles, which are synonymous with the altering of nature, we also accept the concept of a imperfect God who either created nature imperfectly, or subsequent altered it in miraculous fashion. Either way, one must weigh the argument against miracles.

Furthermore, is it possible that, if the eternal order of nature is imperfect, then nothing is perfect? Any of God's supposedly miraculous works might be as imperfect as those natural laws. We could never have any security under His natural or moral government if they were changeable. After all, changeability is just another term for limitation. Change is inseparably linked to imperfection.

God, the great architect of nature, has so constructed its system that it never needs to be altered or fixed. We search in vain for the hidden mystery of perpetual motion in order to copy nature. Despite all our research, we must content ourselves with mechanisms that will run down and need repair. But the mechanism of the universe needs no correction. It continues its never-ceasing operations under the unerring guidance of the providence of God. Human architects make and disassemble things. They alter them as their invention and experience may best dictate. But the infinitely perfect mind of God can gain nothing through experience. God surveys the immense universality of things. With one comprehensive view He sees all their possible relations, both fitness and unfitness, natural or moral.

SECTION II –GOD'S OMNISCIENCE AND OMNIPOTENCE INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE CONCEPT OF MIRACLES

We argued in the second chapter that creation is as eternal and infinite as God. There could be no sequel to creation or to the exertion of the power of God in perfecting this boundless work or in blessing the universe with harmonious laws that are perfectly well-adapted in terms of design, means and end.

First, these arguments may be further illustrated, and God's existence more fully proved, from the following considerations: dependent beings and existences must depend on some independent being or cause. Dependent beings or existences could not exist independently. By retrospectively tracing the order of the succession of causes, we must not include an independent cause in the succession. Since several successive causes still depend on their preceding cause, and then this cause must depend on the one preceding it ad infinitum, we must, as rational beings, admit there must be a self-existent and independent cause of all things. A mere succession of dependent causes cannot constitute an independent cause; so we must admit a self-existent and self-sufficient cause of all things. A dependent cause cannot give existence to itself, nor can it be the efficient cause of all things.

Now that we have established the doctrine of a self-sufficient, self-existent and, consequently, all-powerful cause of all things, we can attribute an eternal existence to this cause of all causes and effects, and we call this cause God. And, as we can obviously see from the works of nature, God is possessed of almighty power, and we can therefore infer that He is eternal. We must

conclude that He existed eternally and before all other things; otherwise, we would have to conclusively reject His omnipotence. Since, as we have argued before, God is self-sufficient, self-existent, and almighty, His power must apply to his own existence. Therefore, if He did not eternally exist, it would mean He must not have had the almighty power of existence. And if this was true, He never could have existed at all. God must have either existed eternally or not have existed at all. Since the works of nature prove that He exists, and since neither the power, will, nor pleasure of any being other than Himself could have brought Him into existence, and considering that His existence in normal time would contradict His almighty power to have brought Himself into existence, His existence must truly have been eternal.

Although a self-existent or eternal being (terms that are synonymous) is beyond our comprehension, we do seem to comprehend that any being that is not self-existent, eternal, independent and infinite is consequently not a God. We can therefore conclude that, though we cannot comprehend the true God due to our own finite nature, we can reject the idea that an imperfect being can be God. A dependent being is finite and, therefore, imperfect. Consequently, a dependent being cannot be a God. A being that has existed at a known point in history is limited, because he did not exist outside his era. Such a being is, therefore, finite and, consequently, not a God. Therefore, only a being who is self-existent, infinitely perfect and eternal is the true God. And if God is eternally and infinitely perfect, there must have been an eternal and infinite sign, and if there was an eternal and infinite sign, it could be nothing short of an eternal and infinite creation and providence.

As for the existence of a God prior to the time described as His first day's work, Moses does not inform us. The first account of God he gives us is the theory of His laborious days of creation, a tale that I think would be better suited for the servile brickmakers of Israel, than for men of learning and science in these modern times.

SECTION III – ANCIENT MIRACLES: RARE AND WONDERFUL PHENOMENA NOT PROOF OF THEM, DIABOLICAL SPIRITS CANNOT PERFORM THEM, SUPERSTITIOUS TRADITIONS CANNOT CONFIRM THEM, ANCIENT MIRACLES CANNOT PROVE RECENT REVELATIONS

Even though they undoubtedly have their proper and mostly understood natural causes, comets, earthquakes, volcanoes, and northern lights, along with many other extraordinary phenomena or appearances, can intimidate weak minds who then consider them miraculous. A Jack-o-lantern is frightening to some people, but not as much as an imaginary specter. But of all the scarecrows that have made humans tremble, the devil has been the chief. His family is said to be very numerous, consisting of "legions" through whom he has kept our world in a terrible uproar. It would take a volume of enormous size to tell the tale of all the feats and diabolical tricks that this infernal family is supposed to have played upon our race. All the magicians, necromancers, wizards, witches, conjurers, gypsies, sibyls, hobgoblins, apparitions and the like are supposed to be under the diabolical government of the devil. Old Beelzebub rules them all. Men will face destructive cannon and mortars, engage each other in the clashing of arms, and meet the horrors of war undaunted, but the devil and his band of fiends and emissaries frighten them out of their wits. These tales of the devil have a powerful influence in plunging people into superstition and

keeping them there.

This supposed interaction between mankind and those infernal beings is thought by some to be miraculous or supernatural. Others laugh at all the stories of their existence and conclude that they are mere manipulation and deception, craftily imposed on the gullible who are always gaping after something marvelous, miraculous, supernatural or mysterious. Such people are awkward and unskillful in examining nature, the truth or the reality of things. This flaw can be blamed partly on a natural lack of intelligence, and some is due to laziness and inattention to nature and reason.

We argued in Chapter Six that any magical intercourse or correspondence of pure spirits with mankind is contradictory to nature and, consequently, impossible. And we also argued that nothing short of the omnipotent power of God, countermanding His eternal order of nature and impressing it with new and contrary law, can constitute a miracle. Miracles surpass the power of mere creatures, the diabolical ones included. We therefore infer that devils cannot work miracles. Many of mankind give credit to miracles through inattention to reason and ignorance of the nature of things. It would appear that some think they can gain prestige through this marvelously ignorant way of accounting for things. But thinking nature to be nothing but a supernatural whirligig or an inconstant and irregular piece of machinery would reduce all learning and science to the same level as the fanaticism and superstition of the weak and credulous. By this theory the wise and unwise would be on the same level of knowledge, because there would not be any regular standard in nature through which we could tell truth and reality apart. What some people have thought to be miraculous is mere sleight-of-hand. Some believe in astrological calculations of birthdates and lucky and unlucky days and seasons. Some even think moles on the surface of the skin can predict good or bad fortune.

"The Swedish Laplanders, the most ignorant mortals in Europe," are "charged with being conjurors, and are said to have done such feats, by the magic art. What they do can only be considered miracles. They will give the sailors the winds they want in any part of their voyage. They can inflict and cure diseases at any distance; and insure people of success in their undertakings; and yet they are still just the same sort of poor miserable wretches that used to be charged with witchcraft here (i.e. in England and in New England). They cannot command even the necessaries of life, and indeed, only very credulous and ignorant people give credit to such fables in this day and age, although it seems the whole world used to be bewitched into believing them." "On the 24th of March, 1735, an act passed in the Parliament of Great Britain to repeal the statute of James I entitled *An act against conjugating witchcraft, and dealing with evil and wicked spirits* and to repeal an act in Scotland entitled *Amentis (Mad) Witchcraft*." Only forty-six years have passed since the supreme legislature became aware of the natural impossibility of any magical intercourse between mankind and evil and wicked spirits. Consequently, they repealed their statute laws against witchcraft, since these laws were naturally void, unnecessary, and unworthy of their legislative restriction. Such a crime had no possible existence in nature and, therefore, could not be committed by mankind. Before the repeal of those laws, however, a number of people of that island had been sacrificed to these laws. And the families of those imaginary criminals were branded with infamy by such legally sanctioned executions. The blame falls to the legislature and the judges and the many learned attorneys who proved the guilt in such capital offenses, as well as the righteous sanction of those laws in exterminating such pests

of society from the earth. The clergy likewise gave their approval, condemning those mortal sinners for being too free with their devils.

Furthermore, the repeal of those laws, through the wisdom and authority of the British Parliament, violated that law of Moses that says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Not only that, but the doctrine that it is impossible to interact or deal with wicked spirits causes us to reject the supposed miraculous casting out of devils of which we have various chronicles in the New Testament.

But to return to the annals of my own country, we should visit the scene of magical superstition that is probably equal to any in history, i.e. the Salem witchcraft trials in New England. A great number of inhabitants of both sexes were tried and convicted of being wizards and witches and then accordingly executed. Some of the victims were so infatuated with the delusion that at their execution they confessed themselves guilty of the sorcery for which they were indicted. This fanaticism continued unchecked until even some of the upper-class families were accused. These families opposed the prosecutions so strongly that they finally put an end to any further executions of the inhabitants of Salem.

Those capital offenders suffered because of certain laws, which have since been derisively called the Blue Laws due to the number of superstitions with which they abounded. Most of those laws have been repealed; but those regarding sorcery have had enough favorite legislators that they are still alive and in force to this day.

I recall an account of miracles said to have been carried on by the Catholic Clergy in France, upon which his most Christian Majesty sent one of his officers to those clergy with the following prohibition: "by the command of the king, God is forbidden to work anymore miracles in this place; "upon which the marvelous work ceased.

Even without lengthy reason-based arguments proving the utter impossibility of the existence of miracles in God's creation, so much trickery, deception and pretense by supporters of miracles has been detected in the world, especially in places where learning and science have prevailed, that we should be very suspicious that miracles could be real.

We are told that miracles were first introduced into the world to prove the divine authority of revelation, and this was the mission of its first teachers. For this plan of proving the divinity of revelation to work it would be necessary that its teachers should always be vested with the power to work miracles. That way whenever their authority or the infallibility of the revelation they were teaching might be questioned, they could work a miracle; or have God do it; and that would end the dispute. This assumes that mankind could judge miracles, which is not certain. However, if we assume a number of things: that miracles are possible, that early mankind was capable of judging whether miracles are true, and also that miracles were necessary to support the divine mission of the first evangelists of revelation and the divinity they were teaching, then by this same reasoning, miracles, along with their divine authority or that of their teachers, ought to still exist for the benefit of succeeding generations of mankind. Why should we in this day and age be obligated to believe the infallibility of revelation or the heavenly mission of its teachers based on less evidence than those who lived in the generations before us? If miracles were supposed to provide rational and worthy evidence to gain man's belief and assent during one era, then the

same must be true in another. It appears from the sequence of arguments on this subject that miracles were originally needed to establish the divine authority of revelation. It is equally required that miracles be continued to the latest generation to whom the divine lawmaker may be assumed to continue such revelation as His law to mankind.

Nothing is more obvious than the fact that in those parts of the world where learning and science have prevailed, miracles have ceased, but in the barbarous and ignorant parts of the world, miracles are still in vogue. This leads one must assume that when writing, learning and science were still in their infancy, those who believed in miracles as proof that the first evangelists of revelation were on a divine mission were fooled by false events rather than miracles.

Furthermore, the author of Christianity warns us against false teachers, and describes the signs of true believers, saying, "And these signs shall follow them that believe, in my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them, they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." These are the specific words of the founder of Christianity. They are contained in the very mission that He gave to his eleven Apostles who were to spread his gospel in the world. So from the very beginning it appears that when the miraculous signs He spoke of failed, His Apostles were considered unbelievers. As a result, no faith or trust could any longer be accorded to them or to their successors. For these signs were intended to perpetuate their mission. These signs were to continue as the only evidence of the validity and authenticity of that mission. As long as we could follow these signs, mankind could not be deceived in adhering to the doctrines that the Apostles and their successors taught. But when these signs failed, their divine authority ended. Now if any of those successors will drink a dose of deadly poison that I prepare, and if it does not "hurt them," I will subscribe to their divine author and end my argument. I have no intention poisoning anyone, nor do I suppose that an adherent would dare take any dose I might prepare for them But if they refused, that would prove that they were unbelievers themselves, while they are extremely likely to chastise others for unbelief, which according to their beliefs is a damnable sin.

SECTION IV - PRAYER CANNOT BRING MIRACULOUS RESULTS

Prayer to God is no part of a rational religion, nor did reason ever dictate that we pray. If we were to pay proper attention to reason, it would teach us that we should not pray.

It is impossible through prayer to make our wants known to God or to communicate any information concerning ourselves or the universe to Him. Since God, in his omniscient mind, has a perfect knowledge of all things, He therefore needs no communication from us to be informed about our circumstances. Prayer cannot tell Him what would be wisest and eternally best to do for us in all possible conditions and modes of existence. These considerations, along with an infinity of other things, have been deliberated by the omniscient mind throughout eternity. God cannot take in additional information, whether by prayer or otherwise. This renders prayer worthless.

We should preserve our self-respect and humble ourselves as creatures of our rank and capacity and not presume to dictate anything, less or more, to the Governor of the universe. God rules through eternal and infinite reason, not by our restrictions. To pray to God, or to make

supplication to him, to request certain favors for ourselves or any or all of the species, is inconsistent with the relationship that exists between God and man. Anyone who has a just sense of the absolute perfection of God and of their own imperfection, anyone who naturally subjects himself to His providence, must therefore understand the impropriety of praying or supplicating to God and asking for this, that, or the other, or to protest what He provides because "known to God are all our wants." All things considered, we ourselves are inadequate judges of what would be best for us. God looks through the immensity of things and understands the harmony, moral beauty and decorum of the whole. He will by no means change his purposes or alter the nature of things because of any of our entreaties or threats. To pray, entreat, or make supplication to God is nothing less than dictating to eternal reason and encroaching on the realm and prerogative of the Almighty, a prerogative that extends to the final events and consequences of things. If this is not the meaning and import of prayer, it has none at all. It would be stupidity or outright mockery to pray to God believing that our prayer will not be granted, or that our prayer will affect anything at all, or that our requests are no more likely to be granted or what we ask for be granted by God than if we had not prayed for them at all. It would also be mockery "to be seen of men", to be observed praying in order to procure from others some temporary advantages. But on the other hand, for us to suppose that our prayers or praises might in any way alter the eternal constitution of things or change the providence of God, would be the same as conceitedly supposing that we hold a share in the divine government. Our prayers should do something or nothing. If they affect nothing, they are good for nothing. But it is inadmissible to think that our prayers have any effect on the nature of things or on the providence of God. If they did, we would be interfering with the providence of God to some degree by assuming we have a say in the matter. For if there are any things in His works that God does not govern by his order of nature, then they are not works of God, but of man. For if, in any instance, God is moved by the prayers, entreaties, or supplications of his creatures to change His course of action, or acts in conformity with our prayers rather than do otherwise, then it would necessarily follow that God does not govern by eternal and infinite reason, but rather is governed Himself by the prayer of man.

Those who are skilled at prayer must believe themselves to be greatly important in the scheme of things, or else they would not indulge themselves in the notion that nature's God would subvert his laws or bend His will in answer to their prayers. But one may object that they pray conditionally. God should answer their prayers if they agree to bend to His will. But such prayer is not only useless, but impertinent. The laws of nature would produce their natural effects as well without prayer as with it. The sum total of such conditional prayer could amount to no more than God disregarding them altogether and conducting the kingdom of his providence in accordance with the absolute perfections of His nature. Who could sensibly imagine that God would do otherwise?

Since the immense universe of things has been eternally adjusted, constituted and settled by the profound thought, perfect wisdom, impartial justice, immense goodness, and omnipotent power of God, it is the height of arrogance for us to attempt to alter it. If we behave in a manner worthy of a reasonable happiness, the laws of the established moral system will provide it to us. And as for physical evils, prudent moderation may make them tolerable or ward most of them off for a

time, although they will unavoidably separate body and soul and will bring our lives to an end whether we pray or not.

To pray for anything that we can acquire through our own natural powers, but neglect to obtain, is impertinence and laziness in the extreme. And to pray for something that God has decided to put out of our reach is only expressing our discontent to God and finding fault with His will. Such is the act of an inconsiderate child. For example, to pray for more wisdom, understanding, grace or faith, for a more robust constitution, a handsomer figure or greater size would be the same as making a demand against God because we are dissatisfied with our lot in life, that neither our souls nor bodies suit us, that He has not been generous enough, that we want more wisdom and a physique better fitted for show, agility and superiority. But we should remember that "we cannot add one Cubit to our stature" or alter our physical makeup. And our mental talents are finite. And for the encouragement of intelligent nature, a vast variety of the proportions and disproportions that our Heavenly Father saw fit to give us in His order and scale of nature are capable of both improvement and enlargement. Therefore, instead of "asking it of God," "whosoever lacketh wisdom," should improve what he has. That way he may enlarge what he has been originally given. This is the only way of gaining in wisdom and knowledge. Understanding this will regulate our faith. But all too often great faith and minimal knowledge reside in the same person. Such persons are beyond the reach of argument. Their faith is immovable, even though that faith cannot remove mountains. The only way to procure food, clothing or the necessaries or conveniences of life is by natural means and through our actual efforts. We do not get them by wishing or praying for them. And the only way to obtain virtue or morality is through practice and good habits, not through prayer to God. He has naturally furnished us with talents or abilities suitable for the exercise and enjoyment of religion, and it is our business to improve them in the right way, or we must suffer the consequences. We should conform ourselves to reason and to the path of moral righteousness and in doing so, we will unfailingly recommend ourselves to God, and our own consciences will be clear. This is all the religion that reason knows or can ever approve of.

Moses, the celebrated prophet and lawgiver, ingratiated himself into the esteem of the Israelites, through the strategy of prayer and pretended intimate knowledge of God. He told us that he was once admitted to a sight of God's BACK-PARTS! And he said that "no man can see" his "face and live". At other times we are told that he "talked with God, face to face, as a man talketh with his friend". He also told us that at times God grew angry with Israel, and how Moses prayed for them. At other times he ordered Aaron to offer sweet incense to God, which appeased His wrath and prevented Him from destroying Israel in his hot displeasure! These are the footsteps by which we may trace priestly control to its source and explore its progress in the world. "And the Lord said unto Moses, how long will this people provoke me? I will smite them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of thee a great nation, and mightier than they." But Moses advises God of the injury that such a rash procedure would do to His character among the nations and also reminds Him of His promise to Israel, saying, "Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations, which have heard the fame of thee will speak saying, because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land, which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness." It is very extraordinary and repugnant to reason that Moses should thus advise the omniscient God of the dishonorable consequences that would

follow a breach of promise that he tells us God was unadvisedly about to make with the tribes of Israel had not prevented it through his protests. Yet to an eye of faith it would exalt the man Moses "and make him very great." For if we believe his version of the matter he not only averted God's judgment against Israel and prevented them from being cut off as a nation, but by the same prayer procured for them a pardon for their sin. "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of that people." And in the next verse comes the answer, "and the Lord said I have pardoned according to thy word." It seems that God had the power, but Moses had sway over Him and not only saved Israel from the wrath and troublesome fury of a jealous God, but also procured them a pardon for their sin. "For the Lord thy God is a jealous God." Jealousy can have no existence in a mind that possesses perfect knowledge and consequently jealousy cannot, without the greatest impropriety, be ascribed to God. God knows all things and needed none of the admonitions, advice or intelligence of Moses or any of his dictatorial prayers. "And the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also;" suggesting that it was a common thing for Him to do such a thing. When teachers can make the people believe that God answers their prayers and that the people's eternal interest is dependent on these priests, they soon raise themselves to opulence, rulership and high sounding titles such as His Holiness, the Reverend Father in God, The Holy Poker, Bishop of Souls and a variety of other such designations, which are derogatory to the honor or choice of God. Joshua's story fits into this category. In this tale the Lord pays heed to Joshua at the battle of the Amorites. Joshua tells us that he ordered the sun to stand still, saying, "Sun stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou Moon in the valley of Ajalon, so the Sun stood still and the Moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." So the Sun stood still in the midst of the heavens and did not set for about a whole day. Then, putting himself above all others and directly contradicting the earlier passages of Moses describing the Lord hearkening only unto him. Moses had said, "And there was no day like that before it, or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man." It is most obvious that if Joshua's version is true, then Moses' tales of the Lord hearkening unto him are not. Both the stories of Moses and Joshua are represented to be fact, but it is impossible that both can be true. However, astronomy was in a primitive state in the age during which Joshua lived. People in those days thought the earth was at rest, and the sun revolved around it. With such beliefs it would not seem strange for Joshua to be ordering the sun to stand still. But since it has since been discovered it is the sun that remains in a fixed position, the truth eclipses Joshua's miraculous intervention. Furthermore, if we just consider that on that very day Israel vanquished the Amorites with a great slaughter "and chased them along the way that goeth to Bethoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah" we can see how the confusion of war, the clashing of arms, and exasperation, plus the elation they might have felt as a consequence of such a triumphant victory, the Israelites might not have been paying attention to the length of the day. So, building on the happiness of such an extraordinary day's work, Joshua took the advantage and told them that it was an uncommonly long day, that he had intervened in the natural order and caused the sun to stand still about a whole day so they would think they had two days' time to accomplish those great feats. Believing that such a miraculous event had taken place in the solar system because of Joshua's influence with God would have most effectively established his authority among the people. After all, if God had listened to Joshua's voice, men might very well do the same. This is why the majority of mankind in all ages and countries of the world have been so much infatuated by their ghostly teachers. They have always imagined them to have had a special influence with God Almighty.

CHAPTER VII

SECTION I - PROPHECIES TOO VAGUE AND UNINTELLIGIBLE TO PROVE REVELATION

Some think prophecy is miraculous, while others think it is supernatural. And there are yet others who are of the opinion that miracles are nothing more than mere clever interpretations of signs. Some nations have pretended to interact with good spirits through the art of divination. Others communicate with evil spirits through the art of magic. And most nations have imagined a dialog with the world of spirits through both foretelling and sorcery.

The Romans placed great trust in their prophetic oracles and soothsayers. The Babylonians relied on their magicians and astrologers. The Egyptians and Persians had faith in their magicians, while the Jews had their seers or prophets. And all nations and peoples crave a dialog with the world of spirits; which provides an opportunity for devious and conniving men to deceive them. But if the preceding arguments in chapter six concerning the natural impossibility of any spirits or invisible mental beings communicating with mankind are true, then the foretelling of future events can amount to nothing more than artful illusion. For prophecy as well as all other sorts of prognostication must be supernaturally inspired, or it could be no better at judging of future events than mere chance or guess-work, as the astronomers ingenuously confess in their calculations, like Judgment of the weather (as in a farmer's almanac), etc. With respect to astrology, provided there is any chance that the future can be learned from it, it would be an altogether natural discovery. Neither astronomy nor astrology claim anything to be miraculous or supernatural. Their calculations are meant to be predicated on the order and course of nature, which is something our senses understand. Neither inspiration nor the cooperation of spirits are intended to play any role in astronomy or astrology. As for prophecy, if it is to be considered as natural (and we will not at present dispute whether it is true or false), it is on the borderline between probability and conjecture. But the idea that the divine mind acts supernaturally on ours, through what is commonly called inspiration, has been sufficiently refuted in chapter six; so these arguments need not be repeated. Nor am I interested in settling the question of whether prophecy should be considered miraculous or supernatural, since both of these doctrines have been convincingly refuted. It is my opinion that if we were to trace the notion of the supernatural to its source we would find that it derives from the same origin as miracles. If the supernatural exists above or beyond nature, it must be miraculous.

The writings of the prophets are generally so loose, vague and indeterminate in their meaning or current translation, that their prophecies could fit events in one period of time as well as another; and they could equally apply to a variety of events that have and are still taking place in the world. Such prophesies can be interpreted in so many different ways that they cannot be understood or explained except arbitrarily, and therefore cannot be admitted as proof of revelation. Take for instance the line, "it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God." Who can understand what is being prophesized when they are expressed this way? Every day has been and will be the last in a long succession of days. And if we refer to the specific words of the prophecy, i.e "the last days," there will be an uncertain plurality "of last days." We must assume this period of time to be less a month or a year. Otherwise, the prophesy would have said so: and

it shall come to pass in the last months or years, instead of days. And if the prophesy had mentioned last years, it would be safe to suppose that it would be less than a century. But since the prophecy says "last days," we are at a loss and cannot assign a time frame for the fulfilling of the prophecy.

Furthermore, we cannot learn from such a prophecy in what month, year, or any other duration of time those last days belong, so we can never tell when such vague prophecies are to take place. These prophecies, therefore, are subject to the arbitrary prerogative of fanatics to declare that these events might take place in any age or period of time, whenever their deranged fancies may think most eligible. There are other prophecies even harder to understand. For example, "And one said unto the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, how long shall it be to the end of these wonders? and I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto Heaven, and swore by him that liveth forever, that it should be for an time, times and an half." The question in the prophecy is asked how long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And the answer is given with the solemnity of an oath, "it shall be for a time, times and a half." A "time" is an indefinite period of duration, and so are "times", and the third description of time is as indefinite as either "time" or "times". So "and an half" is half a "time". There is no certain term given in any of the three descriptions of the time these wonders alluded to will end. None of them, together or separately, can be calculated. There is no certain period marked out to begin or end a calculation. To compute an indefinite time in any such quantity of duration is impossible. And to compute an uncertain plurality of such indefinite times is equally perplexing and impractical. And lastly, to define half a time by any possible succession elements is a contradiction. Half a time includes no time at all, since the smallest possible criterion of duration is a time, otherwise by adding many of those parts together they would not prolong a period of time; so there is not and cannot be any such thing as half a time. If it is of any duration, it is a time, and not half a time. Had the prophet said half a year, half a day, or half a minute, he would have spoken intelligibly, but half a time has no existence at all. Consequently no such time could ever possibly arrive when there could be an end to the wonders alluded to. By this definition alone the prophecy is intelligible, and therefore, it will never come to pass.

The revelation of St. John the divine involves the subject of time, and if anything, it is even more inconsistent, i.e.: "And to the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place: Where she is nourished for a time, and times and half a time." "And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hands to heaven, and swore by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer." Had this tremendous oath been verified the calculation of "time and times and half a time" would no longer be under dispute. Nor would have anything else be in dispute for that matter, because time would have then reached its last and final period and would have been "no longer." The solar system must have ceased its motions, and so time itself must have stopped, and the race of man would have become extinct. But if the solar system and man endured, time must necessarily have existed also. Since both nature and mankind have survived the angel's pronouncement, we may safely conclude that this interference in the system of nature was a complete fiction.

While objecting to the accusation of their being drunk with new wine at the first Christian celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost), the apostle Peter explains the prophecy of the prophet Joel, who prophesied of the events which were to take place in the last days. His words are handed down to us as follows: "But this is that which is spoken by the Prophet Joel, and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

If the history of the outpouring of the spirit at the Pentecost was actually fact, it would have fallen far short of the prophetic prediction, i.e.: I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. The kindest interpretation of this prediction is that the prophet meant human flesh, i.e., all human flesh. But it was not a universal effusion of the spirit. It appears to have been restricted to a select number who were collected together at Jerusalem, and the spectators at the scene thought that those affected were delirious. One may assume, however, that St. Peter was a better judge of the prophecy than I am. But if the prophecy of the last days was to have taken place at the first Pentecost; and that was more than seventeen hundred years ago, they consequently could not have been the last days.

Still, the question arises, was every prophecy predicted to be fulfilled in the last days fulfilled at that time? Will any of the prophecies expressed be fulfilled by events that took place since that Pentecost or yet to take place in the future? Can any prophecy whatever be fulfilled more than once, and if so, how many times? Considering the vast variety of greatly similar events, how can we determine which one in particular is the right prediction among the numerous prophecies?

Furthermore, assuming some of the prophecies describe some particular events that actually have taken place since, one can argue that it is likely that such events would have occurred in whether predicted or not. For instance, when we consider the power of the empire of Babylon at that time compared to the feeble power of the Jews, it is no ways extraordinary that the prophet Jeremiah should be able to predict that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would conquer Jerusalem, "The word, which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof, saying, thus saith the Lord the God of Israel, go and speak unto Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him thus saith the Lord, behold, I will give this city of Jerusalem into the hand of the king of Babylon." No politicians at the time of the prediction could be surprised about the fate of Jerusalem. Nor would it be at all evident to any candid or discerning enquirer that God had any hand in fabricating the prophecies, even if some of them should seem to predict future events. To some people it might appear that some prophecies might have been proven to be true even if that was merely from accident or the natural course of events. It is very improbable, or rather incompatible with human nature, that the prophecy of Micah will ever come to pass when he predicts (speaking of mankind) that "they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Some of the prophecies are so apparently contradictory, that they refute themselves. For instance, the prophecy of Micaiah in the book of Chronicles is probably as absurd as anything you might ever read: "And when he was come unto the king, the king said unto him Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? and he said go ye up and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand, and the

king said unto him, how many times shall I adjure thee, that thou shalt tell me nothing, but that which is true in the name of the Lord? then he said I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd, and the Lord said, these have no master, let them return, therefore, every man to his house in peace: and the king said unto Jehoshaphat, did not I tell thee, that he would prophecy no good concerning me, but evil? "Again he said, therefore, hear the word of the Lord -- I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of Heaven standing on his right hand and on his left, and the Lord said who shall entice Ahab, King of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead, and one spake saying after this manner; and another saying after that manner; then there came out a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said I will entice him, and the Lord said unto him wherewith? And he said I will go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets, and the Lord said thou shalt entice him and thou shalt prevail; go out and do even so. Now therefore, behold the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets and the Lord hath spoken evil against thee." We can observe that the prophet at first predicted prosperity for Ahab, saying, "go ye up and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand," but after a little pleading by the king, he alters his prediction and predicts exactly the opposite. It is certain that the expedition against Ramoth Gilead had to turn out according to one or the other of his prophecies. Ahab certainly would win or lose. He would have to either prosper or not prosper. There was no possible alternate outcome; and it appears that the prophet was determined to be in the right by predicting it both ways. It further appears from this prophecy that there was a great consultation in Heaven to entice Ahab, King of Israel, to his destruction. Some certain lying spirit came and stood before the Lord and proposed going out to be a lying spirit in the mouth of the king's prophets. But what is the most incredible is that God would support this idea and give positive orders to falsify the truth to the other prophets. It appears that Micaiah in his first prophecy, i.e.: "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand," acted in concert with the lying spirit that stood before the Lord, but afterwards acted the treacherous part by predicting the truth. If we believe Micaiah's account, this was in direct opposition to the scheme of Heaven.

SECTION II - THE DISPUTES BETWEEN THE PROPHETS OVER THE TRUTH, THE INCONSISTENCIES BETWEEN THE PROPHETS AND WITH THE NATURE OF THINGS, AND THE OMISSIONS OF THE PROPHETS IN TEACHING THE DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY, THUS PRECLUDING THE DIVINITY OF THEIR PROPHECIES

Whoever examines the writings of the prophets will discover a spirit of strife and contention among them. They charge one another with fallacy and deception. Such disputes are plentiful throughout the writings of the prophets. We will transcribe a few of those passages: "Thus saith the Lord to the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit, and have found nothing, they have seen vanity and lying divination, saying the Lord saith, and the Lord hath not sent them, and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word." And in another place, "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken unto them, yet they prophecy." Again, "I have heard what the prophets said, that prophecy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed, yet they are the prophets of the deceit of their own hearts." And again, "Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter."

There was such strife among the prophets vying for the favor of the people. They used every trick to gain power and superiority. All this scheming was to be judged by the common people, or in some instances by the political views of the Jewish Sanhedrin. How could the contemporaries of the several prophets distinguish the assumed true prophets from the false? Much less, how can we, who live more than seventeen hundred years since the last of the prophets, be able to distinguish the true from the false? Without knowing this distinction we cannot properly give credit to any of them, even if there were some true prophets among them. We cannot even know whether their very institution was merely a branch of the governments of Israel and the Jews to more greatly and easily aid in subjugating their people by supporting the belief that they were ruled with special directions from heaven, when in fact these directions originated from the Sanhedrin. Many other nations have made use of much the same kind of policy.

In the 22nd chapter of Genesis, we have a story of a very extraordinary command from God to Abraham and his very unnatural attempt to obey it. "And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, and he said unto him, Abraham, and he said behold here I am, and he said take now thy son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee to the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of;" "And they came to the place which God had told him of, and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood; and Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son." Shocking attempt! Mankind generally considers murder to be the most capital crime that can be committed. It would therefore be incompatible with the divine nature for God to command Abraham to kill his son. A murder such as this is the most unnatural and cruel and with the most aggravating circumstances, not merely because of the violation of the concept of parental devotion, but because the child was to be offered to God as a religious sacrifice (if we can believe this was commanded). What could have been more wicked than to obey this command? And what can be more absurd than to suppose that such a command came from God? As a justification of the order to Abraham to kill his son it is argued that it was merely a test of his obedience, and that God never intended to have him actually do it. To prevent the act an angel from heaven called to Abraham and ordered him not to slay his son. But to suppose that God would try such an experiment or other to find whether Abraham would obey his commands is utterly incompatible with His omniscience. God understands all things without such public exhibitions. Even if the command had been fit and reasonable and also from God, Abraham's compliance or non-compliance could not have communicated any new idea to the Divine Mind. Every part of the conduct of mankind is a trial of their obedience and is known to God, including the particular conduct of Abraham. Besides, in the scriptures we read that "God cannot be with evil, neither tempteth he any man." How then can it be, "that God did tempt Abraham?" In scripture this sort of behavior is commonly ascribed to the devil. It is very common to hear Abraham praised for attempting to comply with God's supposed command sacrifice his son, but it appears to me that it would have been wiser and more virtuous for Abraham to have answered the command by saying that it could not possibly have come from God. He is the fountain of goodness and perfection, and unchangeable in His nature. He has endowed Abraham with reason and understanding. He therefore knew his duty to God, to his son, and to himself. He knew better than to kill his only son and offer him as a religious sacrifice to God. Otherwise God would never have implanted in his mind such a strong

affection towards his son, nor such a conscious sense of duty to provide for him, protect and succor him at all times, and to promote his happiness and well-being. God could not have intended that Abraham should lay violent hands on his son's life. And considering that the command itself was, morally speaking, unfit and altogether unworthy of God, Abraham should have presumed that it never originated from Him, but from some inhuman, cruel and destructive being who delights in enticement and pungent grief. For God could not have been the author of such a dishonorable command, nor could He be pleased with such an inhuman and sinful sacrifice.

In the last chapter of Deuteronomy Moses crowns his history with the particular account of his own death and burial. "So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there, in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord, and he buried him in the valley, in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor, but no man knew of his sepulchre unto this day; and Moses was an hundred and twenty-years old when he died, his eyes were not dim, nor his natural force abated, and the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days." This is the only historian I have ever read who has ever given the public a particular account of his own death, how old he was at that decisive period, where he died, who buried him, where he was buried, and the total number of days his friends and acquaintances mourned and wept for him. I must confess I do not expect to be able to advise the public of the length of my life, nor the circumstances of my death and burial, nor of the days of the weeping or laughing of my survivors.

Part of the laws of Moses were arbitrary impositions upon the tribes of Israel and have no foundation in reason or reality, particularly the law in which he teaches that the children are punished for the sins of the father: "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation." There is no reason given as to why the iniquity of the father might not as well have involved guilt and punishment for the fifth, sixth and seventh generations and so on to the latest generation instead of the first four generations. For if it was possible for the sins of the father to be justly ascribed to any of his posterity who were not his accomplices in the iniquity or were not in some way or other aiding him or an accessory, then the iniquity might as justly be ascribed to any one succeeding generation as another. One might as well ascribe the sin to of indifferent person's generation. For arbitrary charges of guilt are equally absurd in any imaginable case. So once we allow the possibility of assigning guilt to anyone other than the perpetrators, no matter who they are, we discard our natural and scientific notions of personal accountability. In plain English, it is punishing the innocent for the sin of the guilty. But neither virtue nor vice can be transferred from the fathers to the unoffending children, or their children's children; or from the guilty to the innocent (which is the same thing). Good and evil are mental and personal and cannot be transferred, changed or altered from one person to another. These are inherently connected with the persons who commit the acts. They are qualities or habits to the credit or discredit of the respective good or evil person. These traits are by nature inalienable, "The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." But since we argue this in chapter twelve of this treatise where we discuss the sin of Adam attributed to his posterity, as well as the concept of inherited righteousness, we will not further discuss the subject of imputation at this point. However, Moses' law, the unjust practice of punishing the children for the iniquity of the father, was continued by the Israelites, as in the case of Achan and

his children. "And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zorah, and the silver and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had, and brought them to the valley of Achor, and all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones, and they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day; so the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger." "Fierce anger" is incompatible with the divine perfection, and principles of reason would preclude cruel extermination of Achan's innocent family and livestock. This flagrant injustice of punishing the children for the iniquity of the father produced a proverb in Israel, i.e.: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." But the prophet Ezekiel in the 18th chapter of his prophecies refuted Moses' law about passing down the iniquities of the father to the children. He repealed them with the authority of "thus saith the Lord", in the same manner in which they were created. But the prophet Ezekiel not only repealed those statutes of Moses in the name of the Lord, but also gave the reason. Otherwise, he could not have repealed them; for Moses enacted them from as high an authority as Ezekiel could claim in nullifying them. If Ezekiel had he not produced reasons and argument for overturning the law, it would have been "thus saith the Lord," against "thus saith the Lord." But Ezekiel reasons conclusively, "The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, what meat ye that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge; as I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are mine, as the soul of the father so also the soul of the son is mine the soul that sinneth it shall die, the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son, the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him, therefore, I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to their ways saith the Lord God." One can observe that the prophet ingeniously says, "Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel," implicitly acknowledging that the law of Moses had been the source of that proverb. The only way possible to remove that proverb derived from the practice of the Israelites punishing the children for the iniquities of the fathers was by repealing the law of Moses. Ezekiel effectually did this, whereupon the administration of justice was no longer encumbered by the embarrassment under which it had labored for many centuries. From this account it appears that God-given laws are not infallible, but have their exceptions and may be repealed.

Under the law a breach of the Sabbath was a capital offense, "And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks on the Sabbath day, and the Lord said unto Moses, the man shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp; and all the congregation brought him without the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died, as the Lord commanded Moses." The very institution of the Sabbath was in itself arbitrary, otherwise it would not have been changed from the last to the first day of the week. Laws based on reason and the way things should be can never change. If something is morally fit, it always remains so. It cannot change. Nor could the same crime justly be punishable by death in Moses' time (as in the instance of the Israelite's gathering sticks), while a pecuniary fine in our time is considered appropriate for a breach of the Sabbath.

Furthermore, the nature of day and night, the succession of time, is such that it is impossible to be the identically same day for all the inhabitants of the globe at the same time. Day is

perpetually dawning, and night is falling somewhere on the globe without intermission. At the distance of fifteen degrees of longitude to the east of us, the day begins an hour sooner than it does for us here in Vermont. And we see the dawn an hour sooner than people do fifteen degrees to the west, and so it goes in succession around the globe. And the nights follow just as regularly, succeeding the days, each in their alternate rounds. When it is our mid-day, it is mid-night for the Periaeci, who live under the same parallel of latitude with us, but under a directly opposite meridian. Likewise, their midday is our midnight. Thus it appears that the same identical part of time, our days, are their nights. So while we are keeping Sunday, they are in their midnight dreams. Nor is it possible in nature for the same identical time, our first day of the week, to be the first day of the week on the opposite side of the globe. The apostle James speaks candidly on this subject, saying, "Some esteem one day above another, others esteem every day alike, let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind," and keep the laws of the land. It was unfortunate for the Israelite who was accused of gathering sticks on the Israeli Sabbath, to be convicted of it. Though the law of his people required him to die, he violated no law of nature. What if this very same sinner was to come to this world again and gather sticks on Saturday in this country? As a laborer he might be paid for it without being liable to a similar prosecution of that of Moses. And if he were to gather sticks on our Sunday, his wages would atone for his crime instead of his life. Modern legislators have lessened the punishment under the law for the crime for which he died.

The barbarous zeal of the prophet Samuel in dismembering Agag after he was made prisoner by Saul, king of Israel, could not have been the act of a good spirit, nor would such cruelty be permitted towards a prisoner in any civilized nation at this day. "And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." This unmanly deed seems to be described with a facade of religion, i.e.: that it was done before the Lord; but that cannot alter the nature of the act itself. Everything that man does, for good or evil, is done before the Lord, including Samuel hewing Agag to pieces. As we may see in the 15th chapter of the Book of Samuel, the orders Samuel gave unto Saul (which he claims was the will of the Lord) were intended to end the Amalekites' bloodline and destroy them utterly, and this would end God's displeasure with them. Such orders are unworthy of God: "Spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." The ostensible reason for this slaughter was the fact that back before the days of Samuel when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, nearly five hundred years earlier, the ancestors of the Amalekites had ambushed and fought against the Israelites during their exodus to the land they later inhabited. It appears, however, from the history of Moses and Joshua, that Israel was going to dispossess the Amalekites of their country, which is thought to be a sufficient cause for war in these days. It is true that the Israelites claim that the Lord had given the land to the children of Israel, yet it appears that they had to fight for the land, notwithstanding, and get it by the most difficult means as is the case with nations in these days, and ever has been throughout history.

No matter what the old quarrel between Israel and Amalck might have been, it cannot in any way be supposed in the days of Samuel that the descendents of those Amalekites could be guilty of any supposed transgressions of their ancestors. The bloodthirsty laws of Moses did not require punishing the children for the sins of the fathers farther down than to the fourth generation, but the Amalekites, against whom Samuel had invoked the wrath of God by the hand of Saul, were

many generations removed from the ancestors who were charged with the crime for which they were cut off as a nation. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that God ever directed either Moses or Joshua to exterminate the Canaanites. "And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men and the women, and the little ones of every city, we left none to remain." It is no more proper to ascribe these cruelties to God than those that were perpetrated by the Spaniards against the native Mexican and Peruvian Indians of America. Anyone who might dare to exercise his unbiased reason will quickly discern that the inhumanities exercised towards the Canaanites and Amorites, as well as against the Mexicans and Peruvians, were detestably wicked. They could not be sanctioned by God or by rational and good men. Undoubtedly, avarice and domination were the causes of those abounding cruelties. Religion had no more to do with these cruelties than the so called crusades into the holy lands.

The writings of the prophets abound with extraordinary, strange and unnatural events. The walls of Jericho are said to have fallen to the ground due to the blast of ram's horns, Balaam's ass spoke to his master, and the prophet Elijah is said to have been carried off bodily into heaven by a chariot in a whirlwind. Strange stories! But other scriptures tell us, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The story of the mockery the prophet Elisha by the little children of Bethel, his cursing them, and their destruction by the bears has all the appearance of a fable. That Elisha should be so exasperated at the children for calling him bald head and telling him to go up (and follow his predecessor Elijah into Heaven) was rather a sample of ill breeding. Most gentlemen would have laughed at the joke rather than cursing them or being instrumental in their destruction by merciless, wild and voracious beasts. Even though the children were sassy, a man of any degree of kindness would have made allowances for their immaturity "for childhood and youth are vanity." "And he went up from thence unto Bethel, and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city and mocked him, and said unto him, go up thou bald-head, go up thou bald-head, and he turned back and looked on them, and he cursed them in the name of the Lord, and there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two, children of them." It seems by the way the children addressed Elisha that he was an old bald-headed man, and that, they had heard, that his mate, Elijah, had gone up to Heaven a little before. Since it was an uncommon thing for men to kite away into the air and leave the world in that manner, it is likely that it excited a curiosity in the children to see Elisha go off himself the same way. This is why they said, "go up bald head." The writings of Solomon, King of Israel, must have been slipped into the Bible by some subterfuge or other, because there is no one passage in the book that is in the least inspiring. Solomon did not pass down the word of God in his compositions. On the contrary, he informs us that he acquired his knowledge through the pursuit of wisdom, "to seek and to search out concerning all things that are done under the sun. This sore travail," he says, "has God given to the sons of men to be exercised there with." And since Solomon never claimed divine inspiration, others cannot justly claim his writings to have been anything more than natural reasonings. Who can properly claim the divine authority of his writings when Solomon claimed no such thing, but the contrary? His song of songs appears to be rather of the amorous kind. It is supposed to have been written at the time he was making love to the daughter of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, who is said to have been a princess of exquisite beauty and exceeding coy. She so captivated his affections that it made him light-headed and moved him to sing about the "joints of her thighs" and her "belly."

The divine decrees of Moses and the prophets are rendered questionable insofar as they never taught the doctrine of immortality. Their rewards and punishments are altogether temporary, terminating at death. They did not speculate that we survive the grave. This can be inferred from the unbelief of the Sadducees of the resurrection of the dead or angels or spirits. They strenuously adhered to the laws of Moses, because they believed that their great prophet and law giver would have spoken to them of immortality had it been true. In this respect the Sadducees seem to argue forcefully on their belief in the divine authority of the laws of Moses. If the soul is immortal, it seems incredible that God would have specially chosen Moses as his prophet and teacher of the tribes of Israel without requiring they be instructed in the important doctrine of a future existence.

SECTION III - DREAMS OR VISIONS – UNCERTAIN AND FANCIFUL CHANNELS FOR CONVEYING REVELATION (WITH REMARKS ON THE COMMUNICATION OF THE HOLY GHOST TO THE DISCIPLES, THE PRAYERS AND LAYING ON OF THE APOSTLES HANDS, WITH OBSERVATIONS ON THE DIVINE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF THE FIRST PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL, AND AN ACCOUNT OF THE CHOSEN LADY AND HER NEW SECT OF SHAKERS)

It appears from the writings of the prophets and apostles that part of their revelations were communicated to them through dreams and visions. These exist only in the imagination; they are the images that appear in the mind during sleep. Figuratively speaking, they are chimeras, groundless fancies or conceits and are without reason. Our experience agrees with this definition and convinces us that we cannot trust them. They are fictitious images of the mind, not under the control of our reasoning; therefore, they should not be believed in this day and age except by credulous and superstitious people who still respect them. Thinking that a revelation from God to man, still regarded as a divine and perfect rule of duty or law, might be communicated through such a fictitious and fanciful channel is obviously deceptive or unintelligible, as we see in the vision of St. Paul. "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory, I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord; I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth such an one caught up to the third heavens. And I knew such a man, whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth how that he was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." That God knows the whole affair will not be disputed, but that we should understand it is impossible. The apostle's account of his vision is unintelligible. It appears more likely he was in a delirium or a stupor and did not know whether he was in or out of the body: He says he heard "unspeakable words," but this tells us nothing. And these words "were not lawful for a man to utter" But what they were or why they were unlawful, he does not inform us. In his own words his own story was unspeakable and unlawful. He did not tell us what his vision was, nor did he make any revelation to us. He is explicit about being caught up to the third heaven, but how he could understand that is incredible. At the same time he did not even know whether he was in the body or out of the body. And if he was in such a delirium that he did not know such a simple matter as that, how could he be a competent judge of whether he was at the first, second, third, or fourth heaven, or even whether he rose above the surface of the earth?

It is highly questionable to believe that the Holy Ghost told the apostles in their ministry how to settle doctrines in dispute. In Acts 15 we read, "Forasmuch as we have heard that certain persons, who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying ye must be circumcised and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment, for it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no other burden than these necessary things." And the same chapter informs us, after giving us a history of the controversy over circumcision, keeping the law of Moses and the result of the council, that a rift developed between Paul and Barnabas so sharp, "that they parted asunder the one from the other." Had the Holy Ghost made revelations to the first teachers of Christianity as individuals, there could have been no disputable doctrines or controversies about the religion they were preaching to the world or how to teach. There would have been no disputes to refer to a general council of the apostles and elders held at Jerusalem. If they had been directed by the Holy Ghost, there could have been no controversies among them to refer to the council. And since the Holy Ghost neglected them as individuals, why is it not as likely that the Holy Ghost would likewise neglect to dictate to the council held at Jerusalem or anywhere? It seems that the Holy Ghost did not direct them in their plan of religion. It was rather the general council of the apostles and elders who provided direction, the same way all other communities are governed. Having passed through the upper coasts, Paul came to Ephesus and found certain disciples. He said unto them, "have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? and they said unto him we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost; and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied."

The spirit of God comprises the divine essence and makes Him what He is. But we can in no way accept that God should be defined or his spirit be communicated by any acts or ceremonies of the apostles. Such efforts of the apostles, which supposedly communicated the Holy Spirit to their disciples, would have made God passive in the supposed act of the gift of the spirit. Such a gift must have come either directly from God or from the apostles, and if it was the direct act of the one, it could not have been the direct act of the other.

To suppose that the act of the gift of the spirit was simultaneously the pure act of God, and the pure act of the apostles is a complete contradiction; both cannot both be true. But it may be supposed that the gift of the spirit was partly the act of God and partly the act of the apostles. Assuming this to have been the case, it would follow that the act of the gift of the spirit was partly divine and partly human. Therefore, the beneficence and glory of the grant of the gift of the spirit unto the disciples would belong partly to God and partly to the apostles. And this grant would have been in an exact proportion to the respective contributions of God and the apostles towards the marvelous act of the gift of the spirit. But that God should act in partnership with man, or share his providence and glory with him, is too absurd to argue, especially with respect to the display or exertion of the divine spirit on the spirits of men.

Such delusions have taken place in every age of the world throughout recorded history. Even now, there is no nation on earth that is not to some degree infatuated with delusory notions of the direct influence of good or evil spirits on human minds. A recent instance of it appears in the Elect Lady (the "Chosen Lady" as she has seen fit to style herself) and her followers, called Shakers. This so-called holy woman began her religious scheme at Connestagua in the northwest part of the State of New York in about 1769, and she has added a new sect to the

inventory of religions. After instilling her tenets among the residents of Connestaguna and the adjacent area, she rambled into several parts of the country, spreading her religion and gaining a considerable number of converts who have scattered not only throughout the State of New York, but some of the New England States. She has so greatly influenced her female devotees regarding the deceitfulness of riches and the fading nature, vanity and tempting allurements of their ornaments (which, by the way, are not plenty among her followers), that she has procured from them a considerable number of strings of gold beads and jewels and amassed a small treasure. And like most sects, she preaches that the kingdom of heaven belongs to her and her followers alone. She maintains that her calling is directly from heaven and that she toils in pain for her chosen ones. She pretends to talk in seventy- two unknown languages in which she converses with those who have departed this life. She also says that hers is the first true church on earth since the days of the apostles. She asserts that both the living and the dead must be saved in, by, and through her, and that they must confess their sins unto her and procure her pardon or they cannot be saved. She says that every person since the time of the apostles until her church was set up who has died has been damned, and that these damned are continually pleading to her for salvation, which is the why she talks to them in those unknown tongues. She gathers her chosen ones from both earth and hell. She utterly refuses to give a reason for what she does or says: but asserts that it is the duty of mankind to believe in her and receive her instructions, because she is infallible.

For a time she prohibited her disciples from procreating, but soon after gave them ample license, restricting them arbitrarily to the circle of her sanctified church because she needed more souls to complete the number of her chosen. Among other things, she teaches those who are young and sprightly among her pupils to practice the most wild, freakish, wanton and romantic gestures, as if indecently stripping themselves. They twirl round and twist their features, shaking and twitching their bodies and limbs into a variety of odd and unusual ways and exhibiting many other extremes of external behavior. When they perform these acts they are said to be very alert even to the astonishment of spectators, and their twirling, freakish and romantic practices give them an uncommon agility. The old Lady has such power over them that they believe that those extravagant actions were caused directly by the power of God, which to them serves as proof of the divinity of her doctrines.

A more particular account of this new sect was recently published in a pamphlet by a Mr. Rathburn. He relates that he was for a time one of her deluded disciples, but after a while he abandoned the faith and has since made known to the world the particulars of their doctrine and conduct.

Probably there never was any people or country throughout history that has been more confident than this part of America that they are directly influenced by the divine spirit. Since knowledge of their activities has spread over a considerable distance, they have become notorious. I take the liberty of mentioning them because knowing these facts, along with of the history of such deceptions in all ages and nations, might induce some of my countrymen to critically examine the claim versus the reality of all ghostly intelligence.

CHAPTER VIII

SECTION I - THE NATURE OF FAITH AND WHAT IT CONSISTS OF

Faith in Jesus Christ and in his Gospel is represented throughout the New Testament to be an essential condition of the eternal salvation of mankind. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." And, "If thou shalt confess the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou mayst be saved." And again, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Faith is the final conclusion. It is the consequence of deduction by reasoning from certain assumed premises. It is the same as believing or judging any matter of fact or assenting to or dissenting from the truth of any doctrine, system or position in order to form a judgment or to come to a determination in one's own mind. To believe, or to have faith, is in reality the same thing. It is synonymously applied both in writing and speaking, for example, "Abraham believed in God. ...for he (speaking of Abraham) judged him faithful who had promised," and again, "his faith was counted unto him for righteousness." We find examples of belief, judgment and faith standing for the same thing not only in scripture. All intelligible writers and speakers apply these words synonymously. It would be good grammar and would make good sense for us to say that we have faith in a universal providence or that we judge that there is a universal providence. In communicating our notions of providence these three different words all exhibit the same idea to all persons of common understanding who speak English. In fact, every one's experience should convince them that they cannot agree or disagree with the truth of any matter of fact, doctrine or proposition whatsoever without using their judgment. Whether our understanding is right or wrong, in assenting to or dissenting from any position or in having faith or belief for or against any doctrine, system, or proposition, our minds are exercising judgment, nothing more, nothing less. In all cases our faith is as liable to be misplaced as our reason is to misjudge the truth. Our minds rely on faith as much in disbelieving any doctrine or system of religion as in believing it to be true. Thus it appears that the mind cannot exercise faith in opposition to its judgment, because faith is the result of our understanding committed to memory or writing, and faith can never be considered distinct from understanding. And since faith necessarily results from reasoning, convincing us through the evidence of truth (or the mistaken appearance of truth) without our conscious choice, it cannot be morally good or evil. For us to believe doctrines or systems of religion that seem to us reasonable cannot be judged as good or moral any more than our natural eyes may be supposed to use goodness or morality to perceive colors. For the faith of the mind and the sight of the eye are both necessary. One results from the reasoning powers of the mind, and the other comes from the perception of the eye. Imagining a rational mind without faith would be as absurd as to suppose a complete, functioning eye without sight or ability to perceive common objects. In short, without reason we could not have faith, and without the eye or eyes we could not see, but once admitting that we are rational, faith derives naturally from reason.

SECTION II - THE TRADITIONS OF OUR FOREFATHERS

One may object that the great majority of mankind believes according to the tradition of their forefathers without examining those beliefs critically. We may also conclude that arguing reason and fact concerning their faith has little or no influence on most of them. This is too often the case, and many of them are guilty of not cultivating or improving their powers of reasoning. They have also failed to be better judges of their respective traditions. Nor have they examined a more just and exalted faith than was handed down to them by tradition. These facts still do not invalidate the foregoing arguments concerning the nature of faith. We must admit that most of the human race accepts the traditions of their forefathers rather than applying reason properly to them. They accept that their respective traditions are right. No one could believe in these traditions if they knew that they were wrong. And we have a natural bias in favor of our forefathers, to whose memory we must pay due respect. They have taken care to hand down from generation to generation those notions of religion and manners that they thought would benefit the well-being and happiness of their descendents in this and the coming world. These things naturally endear tradition to us and prompt us to hold to and honor tradition. Additionally, and in the same vein, the priests of every denomination are "instant in season and out of season" to teach and instill the same tenets that induce mankind in general to give at least implied consent to their respective traditions. And if people fail to thoroughly investigate these traditions, they believe them to be right or even infallible. They do not examine these traditions with determined reasoning and facts; therefore, these examinations of their respective traditions are less than conclusive, so they cannot help but be deceived about the rationality of their faith.

After all, it may be that in many respects some of mankind may have been traditionally or accidentally right. Even if true, they cannot take any rational satisfaction from the fact nor even understand where the truth might lie in any tradition that turns out to be right. They are no better off than others whose traditions may be supposed to be wrong. Only discovery of the truth is gratifying to the minds of those who contemplate truth's superlative beauty.

It is universally accepted that tradition has had a powerful influence on the human mind, even by those who are governed by tradition in the articles or discipline of their faith. Even though such people are blind with respect to their own superstitions, they perceive and despise tradition in others. Protestants very readily discern and expose the weak side of Catholicism, and Catholics are just as ready and sharp at discovering the errors of heretics. Both Christians and Muslims have an equal gift for pointing out one another's inconsistencies, and both are admirably judicious at perceiving the superstition of the heathen nations. Nor are the Jews wholly silent in this matter: "O God the heathen are come into thine inheritance, thy holy temple have they defiled." This must have been an abomination in the eyes of a nation that had monopolized all religion for themselves! Monstrous vile heathen, that they should presume to approach the sanctum sanctorum! The Christians call the Muslims by the odious name of infidels, but in the opinion of the Muslims, they cannot call the Christians by a worse name than the Christians' own, so they therefore call them Christians.

What we have covered relative to tradition is sufficient to warn us about its errors, superstitions and the prejudices we fall prey to because of tradition. It should be abundantly clear that we should carefully examine our respective traditions and not be satisfied until we have regulated our faith by reason.

SECTION III – FOR BETTER OR WORSE, FAITH IS GOVERNED BY REASON, NOT MERELY BY CHOICE

It is written that "Faith is the gift of God." Be that as it may, is faith any more the gift of God than are reflection, memory or reason? If not for memory, we could not remember what we have decided. Without some sort of ability to reason, we could neither judge nor believe. As has been previously argued, God could not bestow the gift of faith separate from the gift of reason. For better or for worse, faith is the direct consequence of reasoning.

There remains a knotty text of scripture to surmount, i.e.: "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." This text is considered as a harsh criticism of unbelievers in Christianity; but when we examine it critically we will see that it does not weigh heavily against them at all. It is but a crafty trick to overawe some and make others wonder. We will assume that an unbeliever is destitute of faith, which is why he is called an unbeliever. The Christian believes the gospel to be true and of divine authority, the Deist believes that it is not true and not of divine authority. The Christian and the Deist are both believers and, according to the express words of the text, "shall be saved." For that matter, a Deist could point at a Christian and call him an infidel, because his faith is different, and the Christian could claim the same about the Deist. It is just as improper in calling one an infidel as the other. Both are believers; and it is impossible for us to believe in a manner contrary to our judgment or understanding, whether we are correctly informed or not. Why then may there not be in both denominations honest men who are seeking after the truth, and why do they not have an equal right to expect the favor and salvation of God?

CHAPTER IX

SECTION I – WHETHER GOD IS FINITE OR INFINITE, A TRINITY OF PERSONS CANNOT EXIST IN THE DIVINE ESSENCE (WITH REMARKS ON ST. ATHENASIUS' CREED)

Of all errors that one can find in religion, none have been so grievous as those with direct respect to the divine nature. Wrong notions of God or of his providence shake a religion to its very foundation in both theory and practice. This is evident from the superstition found among the majority of mankind; who, instead of worshipping the true God, have somehow been convinced to pay divine homage to mere animals or to handmade idols or other such pure products of fertile imaginations.

God is incomprehensible to man. We cannot understand all the perfection of which the divine essence consists. Nevertheless, we can (negatively) comprehend many things, in which (positively) the divine essence does not and cannot consist.

That the divine essence does not consist of three persons (or of any other number of persons) is as easily demonstrated as any mathematical proposition.

We will assume that the three persons in the supposed Trinity are either finite or infinite. There cannot be a third type of being. However, many degrees of finiteness there might be, finite is still finite. And an infinite being cannot become greater. Since all beings must be limited or unlimited, perfect or imperfect, they must therefore be either finite or infinite. We will therefore suppose that the three persons in the Trinity, considered personally and individually from each other, are merely finite. The question would then arise whether the supposed Trinity of finite beings, even though united in one essence, could become more than finite. Three imperfect and limited beings united together could not constitute a perfect or infinite being, any more than absolute perfection could consist of three imperfections. This would be equivalent to supposing that infinity could be made up limited things or that absolute, uncreated and infinite perfection could consist of three personal and imperfect natures. On the other hand, if we surmise that every of the three persons in the supposed Trinity is absolutely infinite, it would be a complete contradiction to one infinite and all-comprehending essence. If we admit that God the Father is infinite, it would necessarily preclude the supposed God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost from being part of the god-head. The essence of God is one infinite essence comprehending every power and degree of excellence and perfection that can possibly exist in the divine nature. If it is possible for three absolute infinities, which is the same as three Gods, to be contained in one and the same essence, why not include any other number of infinities? But as certain as infinity cannot be made larger, it is just as certain that a plurality of infinities cannot exist in the same essence. Real infinity is true and absolute infinity only. It cannot be compounded of infinities or of parts. It cannot be enlarged. The concept of a personal or limited God is as great and manifest a contradiction as the human mind can conceive. It is the equivalent of a limited omnipresence, a weak Almighty, or a finite God.

From the foregoing arguments on the Trinity, we infer that the divine essence cannot consist of a Trinity of persons, whether they are supposed to be either finite or infinite.

The (Athanasian) creed-mangers have exhibited the doctrine of the Trinity in an alarming point of light, i.e.: "Whosoever would be saved before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith, which faith, except every one doth keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." Next, let us examine the doctrine, "The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, and the Holy Ghost is eternal, and yet there are not three eternals but one eternal." In plain English the three persons in the Trinity are three eternals, individually considered, and yet they are not three eternals but one eternal.

To say that there are three eternals in the Trinity, and yet say that there are not three eternals therein, is a contradiction in terms. It is like saying that there are three persons in the Trinity and yet there are not three persons in the Trinity.

The first proposition in the creed affirms, that "the Father is eternal," the second affirms that "the Son is eternal," the third affirms that "the Holy Ghost is eternal," the fourth affirms that "there are not three eternals," and the fifth that "there is but one eternal."

The reader will observe that the three first propositions are denied by the fourth, which denies that there are three eternals, even though the three first propositions affirmed that there were three eternals by name, i.e. the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The fifth proposition is unconnected with either of the preceding propositions, and it is undoubtedly true, i.e. "but there is one eternal." Then we have, "The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God and yet there are not three Gods but one God." Here again we have three Gods by name, affirmed to have an existence by the three first propositions, but they are negated by the fourth, and the fifth affirms the truth again, i.e. that there is "but one God."

Admitting the three first propositions to be true, i.e. that there are three Gods, the three could not be one and the same God, anymore than Diana, Dagan and Moloch might be supposed to be the same. And if they are three Gods, their essences and providences would interfere and create universal confusion and disorder.

"The Father is Almighty, the Son is Almighty, and the Holy Ghost is Almighty, and yet there are not three Almighties but one Almighty." Here we have three Almighties and simultaneously just one Almighty. So it all boils down to this simple question, i.e. whether three units can be one or one unit three or not? I leave this for the curious to answer. This creed further tells us that the three persons in the Trinity are co-eternal together and co-equal, but in its sequel we are told that one was begotten of the other; and when we turn our attention to the history of that transaction, we find it to be not quite eighteen hundred years ago, an event that took place in the reign of Herod, the King of Judea. And unless we keep this faith "whole and undefiled," we are threatened that "without doubt we shall perish everlastingly."

SECTION II – SINCE ESSENCE DEFINES IDENTITY, IT CANNOT REPRESENT MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES IN THE DIVINE NATURE

One God can have but one essence, which must have been eternal and infinite, and for that

reason precludes all others from being part of his nature, glory and universal and absolute perfection.

When we speak of any being who by nature can be rightfully called an individual, we conceive of that individual as existing in but one essence. Therefore, that essence, as applied to God, defines the divine nature, and as applied to man, it denotes an individual. Although the human race is properly called the race of man, and although every male of the species is with equal propriety called man, (since we all have one common nature and likeness) the respective individuals are still not one and the same. The person of A is not the person of B, nor are they aware of each other's consciousness. Therefore, the joy or grief of A, is not and cannot be the joy or grief of B. We know this to be fact from our own experience. The reason for this personal distinction is founded in nature. Although we share one common nature and likeness, we do not share of one and the same essence. Essence is, therefore, by nature the primary cause of identity and cannot be divided.

From these facts we infer that the doctrine of the Trinity is without foundation and obviously leads to superstition and idolatry.

SECTION III - THE IMPERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST PRECLUDES HIS DIVINITY

That Jesus Christ was not God is evident from his own words. When speaking of judgment day, he says, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." He thus gives up all pretention to divinity and most explicitly thereby acknowledges that he does not know all things. He rather compares his understanding to that of man and angels, "of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son." Thus he ranks himself with finite beings, and with them acknowledges that he did not know the day and hour of judgment. At the same time he asserts that his father has superior knowledge, since He knew the day and hour of judgment.

That he was a mere person is further evident from his prayer to the father, saying, "father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." These expressions reflect his most humble submission to his father's will, authority and government. However becoming such a submissive demeanor might be in a human, it is utterly inconsistent and unworthy of a God or of the person of Jesus Christ had he actually been a divine person or made up of the essence of God.

CHAPTER X

SECTION I - OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE OF MAN IN MOSES' PARADISE, ON THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL, AND ON THE TREE OF LIFE: WITH SPECULATIONS ON THE DIVINE PROHIBITION TO MAN, NOT TO EAT OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE, INTERSPERSED WITH REMARKS ON THE MORTALITY OF INNOCENT MAN

The mortality of animal life and the dissolution of vegetable life have been considered in detail in chapter three, section four in the discussion about physical evils. We now proceed to apply those arguments to the case of our alleged first parents, who Moses claims became mortal as a consequence of eating the forbidden fruit.

In his description of the garden of Eden Moses acquaints us with two mythical kinds of fruit trees, which, among others, he tells us were planted by God in the place chosen as the residence for the newly-made couple. God calls one "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" and the other "the tree of life." And prior to his account of The Fall, Moses informs us that God expressly commanded the man and woman, saying, "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth; and God said, behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to you it shall be for meat." Again, "and the Lord commanded the man saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the Lord said, it is not good for man to be alone, I will make him an help meet for him; and the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept, and he took out of his one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof, and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made he a woman."

Thus it appears from Moses' account of the state of man's innocence that Adam was commanded by God to labor and to replenish the earth. God gave him dominion over the creatures, and at several times God himself licensed him to eat of every one of the fruit of the trees and plant except of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And because it was not good that Adam should be alone, and so that he might multiply and replenish the earth, it seems that God formed our amorous mother Eve, who I dare say well compensated father Adam for the loss of his rib.

This short description of man's state and condition in innocence parallels the state and circumstances of man's current nature. Innocent man was required to labor and subdue the earth upon which he was supposed to subsist. Man could eat of the fruit of the trees or the plants of the garden. This pre-supposes that his nature then needed refreshment the same as ours does now. Otherwise, it would have been inappropriate to have granted him a privilege incompatible with his nature, which would have been no privilege at all, but an outright mockery. We must assume that innocent human nature was liable to decay, needed nutrition by food, and had the quality of

digestion and perspiration; in other words, had the same sort of nature as we now have. Otherwise, he could eat but one belly-full, which without digestion would remain the same, an idea that is too ridiculous to have been the original intention of eating. And though there is nothing mentioned by Moses concerning his drinking, it is altogether probable, that man was intelligent enough to drink when he was thirsty. That man had an animal nature is obvious, not only because he had to subdue the earth upon which he was to subsist and from his eating and drinking or his need to nourish himself with food, but also from his propensity to propagate his kind; for which purpose a helpmate was made for him.

Nothing could be more convincing that Moses' innocent progenitors of mankind were like us than their need to propagate the species. And since they required nutrition, they must also have experienced digestion and perspiration and every property that we now ascribe to an animal nature. We therefore infer that they must have been mortal. What would have prevented them from having been crushed to death by a fall from a precipice or from suffering death by any other casualty to which human nature is currently susceptible? Does anyone suppose that the bodies of those legendary ancestors of the human race were invulnerable? Were they not flesh and blood? Surely they were; otherwise, they could not have been male and female; as it was written, "male and female created he them." And since animal life from the beginning has had the same sort nature, has been propagated and supported in the same manner, and has been liable to the same fate, it would undoubtedly have been the same in the days of Adam. The requirements of animal life in nature would have been the same then as they are at present.

If the law of gravity was to be suspended, our world would be immediately disjointed and out of order. Confusion would reign, and animal life would perish in the convulsions. So not only must the laws having a direct effect on animal nature have been identical in the age of man's innocence, but the laws governing our solar system must have been the same at the time of the supposed Fall. Consequently, man must have also been mortal. Therefore, we infer that God's curses against man that Moses tells us about in chapter three, "dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," could not have been punishment for eating the forbidden fruit, because man would have turned to dust whether he had eaten of the fruit or not. Death and dissolution were the inevitable and irreversible conditions of the law of nature, which completely precludes the curse as told by Moses from having any effect on mankind.

The story of the "tree of life," is unnatural. Since the world has not produced another of the sort, it was one of a kind. According to Moses, its fruit was so wonderful that if Adam and Eve had eaten it, they would have lived forever: "And now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever." To prevent this, they were supposedly driven out of the garden, to prevent the reversal of the sentence God had previously pronounced against them making them mortal. "So he drove out the man, and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turneth every way to keep the way of the tree of life." It seems that a bite of this fruit would have reinstated mankind and spoiled the practice of priesthood. Still, we may observe that there are no travelers or historians who have ever given any accounts of such a tree or the cherubims or the flaming sword. This puts its existence in dispute, and the possibility of its existence is doubtful and improbable; especially since that part of the world where it is said to have been planted, has long been populously inhabited.

One can still object that the tree may have rotted down and disintegrated over time. But such conjectures are contrary to the character of the tree. It would seem a tree that was so marvelous that its fruit would have preserved animal life eternally would have laughed at time and would have defied decay and dissolution. It would have eternally remained in its pristine state under the protection of the flaming sword as perpetual evidence of the divine law of Moses and the reality of man's Fall forever. But alas! It is nowhere to be found. It has perished from the face of the earth, and such a marvelous fruit no longer exists. Consequently no cure for mortality remains.

SECTION II - SHOWING THE NATURAL IMPOSSIBILITY OF ALL HUMANS TO HAVE DESCENDED FROM ADAM AND EVE OR FROM THE SAME ORIGINAL ANCESTORS

It is altogether improbable and quite contradictory to suppose that the various and diverse nations and tribes of the earth who walk on two legs and are called man to have possibly descended by natural means from the same set of parents no matter who they are supposed to be.

Adventurers who have sailed or travelled to the several parts of the globe tell us in their stories that they find most of the habitable regions populated by one sort or other of rational beings. Whether they are tribes or nations, there is evidently a wide range of intellectual capacity among them. Some are higher and others lower on the developmental scale. They are especially diverse with respect to their behaviors, although in most respects they appear to share a common nature with us, i.e. they are more like us than the brutes. They walk erect, speak with a human voice, and make use of language of one sort or other, though many of them are somewhat inarticulate in their manner of speaking. In many other particulars they are generally like us. They are nevertheless considered as distinct tribes or nations, they are of different sizes, and have complexions that vary from the two extremes of white and black and a variety of tawny mediums.

The advanced nations can trace their genealogies (though somewhat incorrectly) for a considerable time, but sooner or later they are certain to lose the trail. And inferior nations or those lacking in learning or science have no knowledge of their genealogies other than what they retain in their respective traditions, which is not much. These nations and tribes are also diverse from one another in their features and in the shape of their bodies and limbs. And some are distinguished from others by their rank smell and the difference in their hair, eyes and appearance, but to point out all the distinctions is beyond the scope of this work.

The Ethiopians, though of a shining black complexion, have regular and beautiful features, and long black hair (one of those female beauties captivated the affections of Moses). They are so different than the Negro blacks that it appears impossible that they would have descended directly from the same ancestors. Their uniform lineages are so diverse from one another that the child from a male and female of the two nations would be a mongrel with some features of each of both nations. The same differences also exist between us and the Negroes. Their black skin is but one of the particulars in which they are different from us. These many and very essential differences are abundantly convincing evidence that the white and Negro nations could not have

descended from one and the same lineal original. They must have had different original ancestors.

It is true that the several nations and tribes of the earth, generally called man (their differences from one another in bodily shape and mental powers notwithstanding) bear a nearer resemblance to one another than to the brutes. For this reason they are called by one common name, although it is obvious that they could never have descended directly from the same first parents, whether their names were Adam and Eve, or whatever.

But our genealogies are completely inadequate for explaining our respective origins or for giving any men, considered as individuals or nations, any degree of insight or knowledge of how they descended or who their original ancestors might be, let alone their names. We must therefore reason on this subject from current facts and causes, which are abundantly convincing that we are of different kinds and, consequently, are not of the same lineage.

The acquaintance we have had with the Negro nation in particular shows the absurdity of supposing them to be our kin. There are some original intrinsic and essential hereditary differences between us that cannot be ascribed to time, climate or mere coincidence.

We and the Negroes are in nature inherently and uniformly different from one another in our respective makeup and have been since time immemorial. The Negroes are of a different species of rational beings and, consequently, must have had their distinct ancestors. If this was not so there could be no such thing as a mongrel or a mulatto, the product of a copulation between a male and a female of the respective diverse species with the child having features of both natures.

Had all the rational nations and tribes of the world been linearly descended from the same ancestors, mongrelism could never have taken place among them, because they would have been all of the same kind. We must, therefore, infer that they had different original progenitors. The Dutch colony at the Cape of Good Hope has enacted laws to inflict the death penalty on any Dutch subjects convicted of copulating with the Hottentots. Since they are an inferior species, mixing the Hottentot nature would essentially degenerate and debase the Dutch.

SECTION III - THE ORIGIN OF THE DEVIL OR OF MORAL EVIL; THE DEVIL'S CONVERSATION WITH EVE; WITH REMARKS ON THE NOTION THAT APOSTASY IS THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY

Since the devil is supposed to have had such great and undue an influence in bringing about the Fall of Adam and continues to provide temptations to mankind, it may be worth our while to examine into his nature and habits, as well as how he exhibits his temptations.

In John's gospel, verses 1 and 3, we learn that the Christian God is the creator of the devil and, consequently, the original cause of evil in heaven. He planted among men the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and He knew at the time he planted it what awful consequences would follow.

We must suppose that the devil is subject to divine rule as much as any other creature. The fact that the devil could become inflexible, perpetually rebellious, wicked, incapable of rehabilitation

and consequently subjected to eternal punishment appears to me to be inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of God's government and His nature, intent and design. Still, it is incomprehensible that God would have permitted such a stubbornly wicked and incorrigible creature to tempt, ensnare or seduce mankind by plying his temptations to their weaknesses. Of one thing we are certain, that the devil does not visit our world in a bodily or organized shape, and there is no other way possible for him to make himself known to us. He could not have appeared to our ancestors, nor could he ever have communicated to them or to us any temptations or ideas whatsoever without affecting our external senses so that we could understand him or receive his temptations in a natural way. The reader is referred to the sixth chapter where we have presented arguments that show that supernatural intercourse with the world of spirits or invisible beings must be contradictory and impossible. Those arguments are equally valid whether applied to either good or evil spirits. They demonstrate the utter impossibility of mankind holding any manner of intercourse or intelligence with spirits.

But if we assume that the story of Moses is correct, it was in the power of the devil to assume a bodily shape, and that he did indeed transform himself into the figure, likeness and form of a snake, he still had no organ by which he could have spoken or uttered the words Moses attributed to him, "And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die, for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, that your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods knowing good and evil."

Who is speaking the truth in the above passages? It is the devil, because neither the man nor the woman died for many years after they are said to have eaten of the forbidden fruit. Death is the annihilation of life, and they did not die on the day they ate.

Since by nature a serpent is incapable of speech, the devil must have been in the same predicament. Assuming he transformed himself into the snake's figure or likeness he consequently lacked proper and adequate organs of speech, so he must necessarily have been incapable of any other language than that of rattling his tail. He therefore could never have spoken those alleged words to Eve or communicated any of his temptations unto her by language while in that form. However, even if we admit that the first parents of mankind were beguiled by the wiles of the devil to break the divine law, considering all the particular circumstances, it would have been the most trivial of transgressions that man can imagine.

What reasonable person can believe that Adam and Eve individually could have incurred the eternal displeasure of God by eating of such a natural fruit? Or that vindictive divine justice should extend to their unoffending unborn offspring? Who could believe that God would sentence their descendents to everlasting destruction, right down to the last generation? As obviously incredible as Moses' representation of the Fall of Man appears to be, it is the very foundation upon which Christianity is founded. The Fall is announced in the New Testament to be the very cause for Jesus Christ coming into this world, "that he might destroy the works of the devil," and redeem fallen man, the chosen, from the condemnation of the apostasy. This leads me to a discussion of the theory of imputation.

CHAPTER XI

SECTION I – DESPITE THE CLAIM, IMPUTATION CANNOT CHANGE, CONVEY OR TRANSFER THE PERSONAL DEMERIT OF SIN OR PERSONAL MERIT OF VIRTUE TO OTHERS WHO WERE NOT RESPONSIBLE

The Christian doctrine of imputation consists of two parts. The first is the imputation of the Fall of Adam and Eve to their descendents, commonly called original sin. The second is the imputation of the merits or righteousness of Christ, who in scripture is called the second Adam, to mankind, or to the chosen. This is a concise definition of the doctrine, undoubtedly considered accurate by everyone acquainted with Christianity, whether they adhere to this doctrine or not. I will therefore illustrate and explain the doctrine by relating a short, but very pertinent conversation I had with a Calvinist priest in my youth. First, note that I was educated in what is commonly called the Armenian principles. Among its tenets it rejects the doctrine of original sin. This was the point the clergyman and I discussed. I first opposed the doctrine of original sin with philosophical reasoning. I thought had successfully refuted the doctrine. The reverend gentleman heard me through patiently and candidly replied, "your metaphysical reasonings will not work, since you are a Christian and hope and expect to be saved by the imputed righteousness of Christ to you. You can be imputedly sinful as well as imputedly righteous. No, he said, if you hold to the doctrine of satisfaction and atonement by Christ, you presuppose the doctrine of original sin to be in fact true. Then he said that if mankind was not, by nature, in a ruined and condemned state, there would have been no need of a redeemer. Each individual would have been accountable to his creator to be judged based on his own moral conduct. He further observed that it was difficult to account for the doctrine of original sin or original righteousness based on philosophical principles, but since they were plain fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, we should agree that they are true and so consequently is the divine authority of revelation. Still, he said, if you will give me a philosophical explanation of original imputed righteousness, which you profess to believe and through which you expect salvation, then I will in return give you a philosophical explanation of the doctrine of original sin. For it is plain, he said, that your objections lie with equal weight against original imputed righteousness, as well as against original imputed sin." I then had the candor to acknowledge to the worthy ecclesiastic that I perceived that the argument from the Christian perspective had prevailed. At that time I dared not distrust the infallibility of revelation, much less dispute it. However, this conversation was uppermost in my mind for several months afterwards, and after many painful searches and researches to discover the truth about the doctrine of imputation, I ultimately resolved to accept what rational argument told me. After a full examination of both parts of the doctrine, I rejected both; because after a close examination I found that I had to accept it entirely or not at all. Otherwise I would have to accept the inconsistent position, just as the clergyman had argued.

Now that we have introduced and explained the doctrine, let us proceed to argue its merits. Imputation of sin or righteousness includes conveying or transferring the personal merits or demerits of sin or righteousness from those who have committed one act or the other to others who have not been involved. This is the Bible notion of imputation, because if sin or

righteousness, vice or virtue, can be imputed only to those involved, then original sin must have been imputed only to Adam and Eve and not to their posterity. And the righteousness of Christ must be exclusively imputed to himself, not to any others. So both the sin of the first Adam and the righteousness of the second (Jesus) would by this definition have been issues that pertained only to the demerits or merits of the two respective Adams themselves. We could have had no blame, reward or concern, anymore than we did in the building of the tower of Babel.

This then is the question that determines the consequences of the dispute for or against the doctrine of imputation, i.e. whether or not the personal merit or demerit of mankind, their virtue or vice, righteousness or wickedness, can be conveyed, imputed to, or transferred from one person to another. Objecting to this description would actually be the same as disputing the doctrine of imputation itself. Imputation must either transfer the personal merit or demerit of the sin or righteousness of mankind or not. If it does not, the whole notion of original sin or of righteousness being imputed from the first and second Adams to mankind is without foundation. Consequently, if there is any truth to the doctrine of imputation, it must necessarily transfer or change the guilt of original sin, the Fall of Adam and Eve, to their descendents. Otherwise, they could have no need of atonement or imputative righteousness to wash away their sin. And every individual would also have stood accountable to their creator and judged on the basis of their own moral conduct. This is undoubtedly the true state of the case for all rational and accountable beings. If transferring the individual merits or demerits of one person to another is not part of the doctrine of imputation, then it is empty. It is but a sound without a meaning, and despite all that been said about it, we must conclude that the old proverb is correct, i.e. every tub stands upon its own bottom. [*Ed. Each must stand or fall on its own merits.*]

SECTION II - MORAL JUSTICE PRECLUDES THE CONCEPT OF IMPUTATION

Imputation confuses virtue and vice and saps the very foundation of moral justice, both divine and human. By taking away the idea of personal merit and demerit from individuals, justice would be made totally blind, and truth would be nullified, or at least eliminated from the administration of government. If rational people can be morally good and evil, imputation would make it impossible for God or man to render them justice. We can be responsible only for our own personal merits and demerits, the result of our own moral conduct and accountability. This precludes the imputation of righteousness.

Truth reflects the reality of things as they truly are and necessarily conforms to all facts and realities. We find truth in, by and with everything that exists. That which does not and cannot exist is fictitious and devoid of truth, and so is the doctrine of imputation. It is true that some men are virtuous, and others are vicious. And it is further true that the former merit peace of conscience and praise, and the latter deserve a troubled conscience and blame. God has made the world this way, that moral goodness naturally and necessarily leads to moral happiness, and moral evil just as surely leads to the opposite. And since truth shows everything to be what it is, it reflects nature as God intended it, along with its tendencies, dispositions, aptitudes and laws. Since virtue leads to mental happiness, and vice to the reverse, they must be recognized as truth. These facts necessarily preclude imputation. We are morally happy or miserable according to our own actions.

Truth is manifest in the eternal rules of unalterable rightness and fitness, which reflect all virtue, goodness and true happiness. Sin and wickedness are deviations from the rules of eternal perfect order and reason. The truth is that sin is an unreasonable, unfit, unrighteous and unhappy deviation from morality and naturally leads to misery. This fact of nature, recognized as truth, must be the wisest and best of all possible things. In short, it is absolutely perfect. Such order and harmony could only result from and be supported by infinite wisdom, goodness and power. And all concepts of true justice or of natural and moral fitness must be learned from and predicated on nature. And nature depends on the immutable perfection of God. To suppose that imputation has ever taken place is the same as believing that eternal order, truth, justice, equity and fitness of things have been changed. Were this true the God of nature would have had to be a changeable being who might alter His justice or the laws of nature (which is the same thing). There could be no such thing as imputation without changing nature or its laws. All men must find ultimate happiness or misery according to their behavior, either good or evil, a fact which we have already stated is in agreement with the laws of nature. All rational and accountable persons must stand or fall upon the law of nature. Imputation alters nature and fact, and a perfect God cannot allow this.

In summary, we conclude that, since individuals are responsible for their own virtues or vices, the doctrine of imputation cannot be true. Furthermore, neither the first or second Adam could pass on to anyone else their personal responsibility for sin or virtue, i.e. the sin of the first Adam or the righteousness of the second Adam. Nor can those individuals to whom sin or virtue is allegedly imputed be responsible for the transfer. So neither of the Adams nor any of their descendents can be responsible for imputation. They must be altogether passive in the matter. Consequently, if imputation ever existed, it must have been the direct and sovereign act of God, not man. But to suppose that God can impute the virtue or vice of person A to person B is like saying God can impute or change truth into falsehood or falsehood into truth. It is like saying He can reverse the nature of morality itself, a concept that we must reject. Were we to suppose that men could exercise the power of imputation, it is altogether probable that they would have been very sparing in imputing merit and happiness. They might nevertheless have been very liberal in imputing demerit and misery from one person to another, a concept that is altogether too absurd to imagine.

SECTION III - REMARKS ON THE ATONEMENT AND SATISFACTION FOR ORIGINAL SIN

The doctrine of imputation is from every perspective incompatible with the moral perfection of God. Let us assume for a moment that the Bible representation is true and the race of Adam and his descendents were guilty of the apostasy, subject to the vindictive justice and punishment of God and accordingly doomed to either an eternal or temporary punishment. What possibility could there have been of reversing the divine decree? It would have to have been a just judgment or God could not have sanctioned the act. And if it was just, a reversal of it would be unjust. But it would be a greater injustice yet to lay the blame and vindictive punishment of a guilty race of condemned sinners upon innocent and inoffensive persons. In such a case the guilty would be exempt from their just punishment, and the innocent would unjustly suffer for it. The result would be two obvious injustices, the first in not doing justice to the guilty, and the second in

actually punishing the innocent. This would not be atonement for sin, it would add sin upon sin, injustice upon injustice. After all, if imputation was ever just, if Adam's descendents should have been punished for the imputed sin of their original ancestor, then the punishment is still just, irrespective of atonement. Eternal justice and reason can never be altered. Such justice precludes the possibility of sin ever being reconciled by a mediator.

No one can dispute the fact that physical defects may be passed down naturally through the generation. The facts are obvious. But that moral evil can be passed down in this manner is altogether absurd. We are not born criminals.

SECTION IV – REDEMPTION FOR INFLICTING THE WAGES OF SIN UPON THE INNOCENT WOULD BE UNJUST. IT COULD CONTAIN NO MERCY OR GOODNESS TO BEINGS IN GENERAL

The practice of imputing one person's capital offenses to another so that the innocent should suffer for the guilty has never yet been introduced in any court of justice in the world. Nor has this idea ever been practiced in any civilized country, and the obvious reason for this is that this practice perverts the concept of personal accountability, and this is true of all imputation.

The murderer ought to suffer for the sin of his crime, but if the court excludes the idea of personal responsibility, they might as well sentence one person to death for murder as another. Guilt is always the inherent characteristic of the guilty and of the guilty alone. Justice would be a complete travesty if it was not based on the concept of personal accountability of the same person who was guilty of the murder. Nor is it possible to reward merit apart from the person performing the act. These are facts that universally hold true in human government. The same reasons cannot fail to be true in the divine mind the same as in the human. The rules of justice are essentially the same whether applied to God or to man. These rules are uniform in eternal truth and reason.

But it is frequently argued that in the same way one person can satisfy a cash debt on behalf of another, redeem him from prison and set him free, Jesus Christ might therefore take responsibility for the sins of mankind, the chosen. By suffering their punishments He could atone for them and free men from their condemnation. But we must consider whether comparisons illuminate or cloud the argument, depending on whether or not they are applicable. We will therefore examine the comparison and see whether it properly applies to the atonement.

In the Christian scheme Christ the Son was God and equal with God the Father and with God the Holy Ghost. Therefore original sin must be considered to be an offense equally against each of the persons of the supposed Trinity. Since this sin was criminal in nature, it could not be satisfied by a monetary penalty as debts of a civil contract are. Only suffering punishment would be just for a criminal act, but as has already been proved, it is inconsistent with either divine or human government to inflict the punishment of the guilty upon the innocent. Although one man may discharge another's debt in cases where land, property or cash are involved, when has any capital offense ever discharged by such a monetary penalty?

Still, there remains a difficulty in Christianity concerning one of the persons in the supposed Trinity ratifying a debt due to the impartial justice of the Trinity as a whole. For God the Son to

suffer the condemnation of guilt on behalf of man would not only itself be unjust, but also incompatible with His divinity. And for the supposed Trinity of persons in the god-head, of whom God the Son must be one, to seek retribution towards mankind would be the same as supposing God to be judge, criminal and executioner, a conclusion that is unacceptable.

But if, for argument's sake, we assume that God did suffer for original sin, and we take into account all beings universally, both finite and infinite, we see that such a supposed redemption of mankind could not represent a general display of grace, mercy or goodness towards all beings, because we must assume that if the race of Adam (finite beings) had suffered for their sins, the same amount of evil still would have taken place against beings as a whole (both finite and infinite).

If we assume that there is a Trinity of persons in the divine essence, one could not suffer without the others suffering, for essence cannot be divided in suffering any more than in enjoyment. The essence of God includes the divine nature, and the same identical nature must necessarily partake of the same glory, honor, power, wisdom, goodness and absolute uncreated and unlimited perfection, which is equally exempted from weakness and suffering. Therefore, if it is certain that Christ suffered, then he was not God. But whether He was God or man or both, he could not have justly suffered for original sin. As we have argued before, such sin belonged to those who committed it.

If we assume Christ to have been both God and man, He must have existed in two distinct essences, i.e. the essence of God and the essence of man. And if He existed in two distinct and separate essences, there could be no union between the divine and human natures. But if there is any such thing as a distinct union between the divine and human natures, it must unite both in one essence, and that is impossible. The divine nature is infinite. It cannot be added to or enlarged. Consequently, it cannot allow a union with any other nature whatsoever. Even if such a union was possible, a superior nature uniting with an inferior one in the same essence would be degrading to the superior nature. It would put both natures on the same level by constituting an identity of nature. The consequences of this act would either deify man or divest God of his divinity and reduce him to the rank and condition of a mortal, because the united essence must be either divine or human.

CHAPTER XII

SECTION I - THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF TRANSLATING AN INFALLIBLE REVELATION FROM ITS ORIGINAL COPIES AND PRESERVING IT INTACT THROUGHOUT TIME. CHANGES IN HUMAN LEARNING IN OUR AGE

Admitting for argument's sake that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were originally of divine supernatural inspiration and that their first manuscript copies were the infallible works of God, it would be impossible to trace them perfectly from their respective ancient dead languages and different and diverse translations. They were written in obscure hieroglyphics. Translating them from the form in which they were first written to the present through all the changes and alterations of human learning, the prejudices, superstitions, enthusiasms and diversities of interests and manners, all the while maintaining an edition that reflects perfectly the supposedly infallible original manuscript, would be impossible. The various and progressive methods of learning, along with the insurmountable difficulties of translating any supposed antiquated written revelation, would not allow for such a thing to happen, as the following observations on language and grammar will fully convince you.

In those early ages of learning, hieroglyphics were used to express ideas. For instance, a coiled snake (a position common to that venomous reptile) was an emblem of eternity, and the picture of a lion was a representation of power. And so every beast, bird, reptile, insect and fish had in their respective pictures particular ideas attached to them. This varied with the arbitrary custom and common consent of the several separate nations among whom this way of communicating ideas was practiced. This is in some sense analogous to what is practiced at this day by different nations in connecting particular ideas to certain sounds or words written in characters, which according to certain rules of grammar constitute the several languages. But the hieroglyphic manner of writing by living emblems, and perhaps in some instances by other pictures, was very hard to understand. It was inadequate for communicating the great number and diversity of ideas necessary for the purpose of history, debate or general knowledge in any of the sciences or philosophy. This mystical way of communicating ideas underwent a variety of alterations and improvements, though not so much as that of spelling and grammar have done. In hieroglyphics there was no such thing as spelling or what is now called orthography. These have been continuously refined and altered ever since characters, syllables, words or grammar have been in use. They will undergo correction and improvement as long as man survives. For this reason the original form of all languages is absorbed and lost in the multiplicity of alterations and refinements that take place through the ages. It is beyond the power of all etymologists and creators of dictionaries now living to explain the ideas that were originally connected with those figures or words in hieroglyphics. The hieroglyphics may have represented the original of any language written in characters in those obsolete and antiquated ages, a time when learning and science were in their infancy. Ever since the beneficial art of printing achieved a considerable degree of perfection, the etymology of words in the scientific and learned languages has been considerably well understood. But even this understanding is imperfect, as the various opinions of scholars may testify. But ever since we entered the era of printing, ancient learning has been

mostly lost. And since the modern substitute is much better, it is no great loss at all. Some of the old English authors are now quite unintelligible, and others in their respective early publications more or less so. The last century and a half has done more towards the perfection of grammar and purification of languages than the world had ever seen before.

I do not understand Latin, Greek or Hebrew, in which languages the several original manuscripts of the Scriptures are said to have been written; but I am informed by scholars in these languages that they have gone through their respective alterations and refinement, just like other languages. This must have been the case, except they reached their greatest perfection in their first composition. Men could not know that as knowledge changed over time. Contemporary scholars in those languages know little or nothing about how they were spoken or written when the first manuscripts of the Scriptures were first composed. Consequently, they cannot tell us whether any of the present translations of the Scriptures agree perfectly with their respective original infallible manuscripts or not. And since the several English translations of the Bible materially differ from each other, it further convinces us of the confused and blundering conditions under which the Scriptures have been handed down to us.

The clergy often inform us from the pulpit that the translation of the Bible now in use in this country has errors. After reading some passage in the original Latin, Greek or Hebrew, they frequently tell us that, instead of the present translation, it should have been rendered thus and such in English. But they never tell us how it was read and understood in the antiquated and mystical figures or characters of those languages when the manuscripts of Scripture were first written or how it has been preserved and handed down intact through every refinement of those languages to present-day Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Probably this is too difficult a feat of research for their scholarship. It is probably as foreign to their knowledge as it is to those who listen to them preach.

One cannot suppose that all the changes that have taken place in language have been for the better. In many instances ignorance, accident or custom has changed language for the worse. But language has nevertheless been subject to correction, and generally speaking, it has changed for the better. But for better or worse, language has been so fluctuating and unstable that an infallible revelation could not have been preserved perfectly through all the changes and revolutions of learning for over 1700 years.

The diversity of the English language is represented with great accuracy by the celebrated lexicographer Mr, Samuel Johnson. He presents samples of different ages in his history of the English language in the preface to his dictionary to which the curious are referred to examine the various specimens.

SECTION II - THE VARIETY OF ANNOTATIONS AND EXPOSITIONS ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES, TOGETHER WITH THE DIVERSITY OF SECTS, CONVINCING US OF THEIR FALLIBILITY

Every commentary and annotation on the Bible implicitly declares its fallibility. For if the Scriptures remained genuine and entire, they would not need commentaries and expositions. They would shine with an infallible luster and purity without such commentary. What a vain

illusion it is for mortals to attempt to illustrate and explain to mankind what God may have undertaken by the direct inspiration of his spirit. Do they know how to explain it better than God would have? This is unthinkable. Where then do these numerous comments come from unless we presuppose that the present translations of the Bible have somehow become fallible and imperfect and must, therefore, be corrected and explained? If that is so, the Bible has lost the stamp of divine authority, assuming that it ever had such an authority in its original composition.

To interpret or give spiritual meaning to the Bible is the same as inspiring it all over again by means of the judgment, fancy or enthusiasm of men. Thus the common people cannot in fact be taught by the revelation of God if they are receiving a second-hand version of God's supposed revelation (whether it is a thousand or ten thousand times removed from its original inspiration they cannot know). Add to these diverse and clashing treatises of the Bible the fact that there are so many flagrant examples of fallibility and uncertainty that even bigots must be convinced that every one of these expositions is erroneous except their own!

It is due to these different comments on the Scriptures that Christians have been divided into sects. Every commentator who could influence a follower to embrace his comments has put himself at the head of a division of Christians. Luther, Calvin, and Arminius laid the foundation of the sects that bear their names, and the Socinians were named after Socinius, the founder of that schism. The same may be said of each of the sects. This is how different beliefs or commentaries on the original meaning of the Scriptures have divided the Christian world into the divisions and subdivisions of which it currently consists. Nor was there ever a division or subdivision among Jews, Christians or Muslims along religious lines except those brought about by comments on the Scriptures or alleged additional revelations from God that were inspired later. The law of Moses was the first alleged direct revelation from God in the Bible, and after that followed the several revelations of the prophets. Last of all in the Christian system were the revelations of Jesus Christ and His apostles who challenged the priesthood of Moses. Christ claimed to be the antithesis of the institution of sacrifices and ceremonies that symbolized the law of Moses. But this infringement of the privileges of the Levite priests offended not only them, but the Jews as a nation, to such a degree that they rejected Christianity and have not recognized its divine authority to this day, holding instead to the law of Moses and the prophets. However, Christianity has made great progress in the world, and it has been very much divided into sects for the reasons covered above.

"Mohammed, taking notice of the numerous sects and divisions among Christians in his journeys to Palestine, etc., thought it would not be difficult to introduce a new religion and make himself high priest and sovereign of the people." He finally executed this plan, going as far as modifying the Scriptures and presenting them (according to him) in their original purity. He named his disciples after himself. He gained great numbers of converts and became their sovereign in civil, military and spiritual matters. He instituted the order of mystical priesthood and gave the world a new Bible by the name of the Koran (Alcoran); which he claims was communicated to him chapter by chapter from God through His intermediary, the angel Gabriel. "His disciples at this day inhabit a great part of the richest countries in the world, and are supposed to be more numerous than the Christians." The Muslims are as much, if not more, divided into sects as Christians due to similar causes, i.e.: the different commentators on and expositions of the Koran. The Mufti, or priests, represent the doctrines and precepts of the Koran in a variety of

ways different from one another, each of them claiming to represent the purity of the original and infallible truths prescribed to the world by Mohammed, their great reformer of Christianity. Although the several Muslim sects differ in their interpretation of the Koran, they all support its truth and divine authority, just the Christian sects do concerning their Bible. So all the different opinions that have existed between Jews, Christians and Muslims can be resolved by one consideration, their common failure to correctly understand the original Scriptures. All believe they began with the truth of God's word (except the impostors), concluded that they had an infallible guide, and by one means or other have been led into as many opposing faiths as human invention could fabricate. Each sect exults in its happy ignorance, believing that it is favored with an infallible revelation as a guide.

This does not alter the present argument, whether the Scriptures were originally true. Whether we suppose they are true or false or some of both, they could never have been handed down entire and uncorrupted to the present day. They could not have survived intact through the various changes and continual refinements of learning and language. This claim is not mere speculation or argument. The existence of every Jewish, Christian and Muslim sect bears witness to this fact.

SECTION IV - COMPILING THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE SCRIPTURES INTO ONE VOLUME AND ITS SEVERAL TRANSLATIONS. THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPES AND THEIR CHARTERED RIGHTS TO FORGIVE SINS. THE IMPROPRIETY OF THE POPES BEING TRUSTED WITH A REVELATION FROM GOD.

The manuscripts of Scripture that comprise our present Bible were said to have been originally written on scrolls of bark, long before the invention of paper or printing. They were in a loose and confused condition, scattered about the world. How they were gathered nobody knows how or where. They were compiled into one volume at different times. Scholars generally agree that the four gospels were written many years after the death of Christ, particularly the gospel of St. John. And various other gospels were considered divine by some the sects that existed in the early days of Christianity. Unfortunately, these gospels were not given approval by church authorities in later eras.

The translation of the Scriptures by Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, came before Christ. Therefore his translation could not include the writings of the New Testament, and "whether by seventy-two interpreters, and in the manner as is commonly related, is justly questioned." But what I do not understand is where, at what time and by whom the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were first compiled into one volume. But whether it was a long or a short time after the death of Christ does not make a great difference since the scattered manuscripts were in a loose and confused condition for a long time. So the important question is when the compilers of those manuscripts collected them together to form them into one volume. How could they have differentiated the supposed divine writings or symbolical figures and the ideas originally connected with them from those which were of mere human origin (and profane in comparison to the others). Discovering this distinction would take a new revelation, an effort as great as composing the original manuscripts themselves. But no one claims that those who compiled or translated of the Bible received divine inspiration in completing their work, so human reason,

imagination or some hidden agenda must have been employed to distinguish between the apparent divine and human writings so that they could arrive at a perfect transcript of the original manuscripts. Now, assuming the compilers were really honest and principled men (of which we cannot be certain), they would have been obliged to winnow the divine out of the mix of supposed divine and human works. That would make them the sole judges of the divinity of what they were compiling and handing down to posterity as the infallible word of God. This is an enormous degree of latitude to confer on mortal and fallible men for this undertaking. It would require an equal amount of gullibility in others to accept the result as constituting divine authority.

Mr. Fanning, in his dictionary definition of the word Bible, adds the following history of its translations in an appendix: "The translation of this sacred volume was begun very early in this kingdom," [England,] "and some part of it was done by King Alfred. Adelmus translated the Psalms into Saxon in 709. Other parts were done by Edfrid or Ecbert in 730, the whole by Bede in 731, Trevisa published the whole in English in 1357. Tindals was brought higher in 1534, revised and altered in 1538, published with a preface of Crammers in 1549. In 1551, another translation was published, which was revised by several bishops, was printed with their alterations in 1560. In 1607, a new translation was published by authority, which is that in present use." From this account it appears that since the first translation of the Bible into English by Trevisa in 1357 it has been revised, altered, and passed through six different publications, the last of which is said to have been done by authority. I conclude that this means the authority of the king. His prerogative in giving us a divine revelation can be judged no more valid than that of other men, even though he may have the arbitrary power within his realm to prevent any further corrections or publications. We will not yet consider the changes it underwent prior to Trevisa's translation, during which time it was most exposed to corruptions of every sort. But bear in mind that not every one of those translations could be perfect, since they differed from one another due to their respective revisions and corrections. Nor is it possible that the Bible could be perfect in any of its various editions, any more than we can believe every person who played a role in transmitting the gospels down to us, because perfection does not apply to man. It is an exclusive prerogative of God.

To avoid the evils of man's imperfection, fallibility and imposture, the Roman Catholics have proclaimed the Pope to be infallible. This is their security against being misguided in their faith. And by attributing holiness to the Pope, they protect themselves from impostors, a deception that is incompatible with holiness. So in matters of faith, the Catholics need only to believe as their church believes. Their authority for absolving sins is extraordinary. However, their charter is from Christ (if we assume the Popes are His vicars and the successors of St. Peter). The present English translation of the Bible supports this claim. The commission is in these words: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." For St. Peter or his successors to have the power of binding and determining the state and condition of mankind in Heaven by forgiving their sins (or not) is too great a power to be entrusted to men. This power interferes with the providence and prerogative of God. If true it would mean that God could not judge the world since that would interfere with the chartered

prerogative of the Popes. This would preclude divine justice. Based on reason, we may safely conclude this notion to be untrue. All Christians were dupes of the Holy See of Rome for many ages. And during this time it is too evident to deny that the holy fathers inflicted a great deal of pious fraud on their devotees. All public worship was read to the people in unknown languages, just as it is done to this day in Roman Catholic countries. Nor has the Bible to this day been permitted to be published in those countries in any but the scholarly languages. This provides the Roman Catholic Church the opportunity to distort the Bible for their own lucrative ends. Nor should we suppose that they lack the inclination to do so. The power cited above granted to St Peter in particular to absolve people of sin was undoubtedly a contrivance of the Church.

In short, reason would lead us to conclude that if God had indeed revealed his mind and will to mankind as a matter of duty and practice to them, and if He intended this revelation to be handed down to all generations, he would have, in the course of His providence, arranged for his revelation to be deposited, translated and kept in the hands of men of more exceptional character than those holy frauds can lay claim to.

Witchcraft and priestcraft were introduced into this world together in its infancy. They were practiced together, hand in hand, until about half a century ago when witchcraft began to be discredited. Witchcraft is now almost destroyed both in Europe and America. This process has decreased the numbers of the priesthood in the neighborhood of fifty percent per year at least, and it makes it highly probable that improvement in the knowledge of nature and the sciences among succeeding generations will increase the reasoning power of mankind beyond the tricks and deceptions of priests. Achieving this could bring mankind back to the religion of nature and truth. It would ennoble their minds and provide a basis for cultivating harmony and mutual love among people. It would expand charity and goodwill to all intelligent beings throughout the universe. It would exalt the divine character and lay a permanent foundation for truth and reliance on providence. It would establish our hopes and chances of achieving immortality. It would be conducive to every desirable consequence in this world and the world to come. This will be the crowning glory of human happiness during our earthly trials. This can never happen while we are under the power and tyranny of priests, since it has always been and ever will be in their interest to invalidate the law of nature and reason in order to establish their incompatible systems.

CHAPTER XIII

SECTION I - MORALITY DERIVED FROM NATURAL FITNESS, NOT FROM TRADITION

The parts or passages in the Scriptures that teach morality have a tendency to be useful to mankind, the same as we suppose all other public investigations or teachings of morality may do. These lessons are neither better nor worse for having a place in the Bible. Morality does not come from books. Morality is derived from the way things should be. And though we may find moral lessons interspersed throughout the pages of the Koran, their purity and righteousness remain the same. Morality is founded in eternal rightness, and whatever writings, books or oral theories best illustrate or teach us moral science should be preferred. The knowledge of morality, as well as all other sciences, comes to us from reason and experience. And it is this process of progressively acquiring moral knowledge that may be properly called the revelation of God. He has revealed this knowledge to us through the creation of our rational natures. And since this truth is congenial with reason and truth, it cannot be susceptible to deception like other revelations. This is natural religion, and it could be derived from none other but God. I have endeavored in this treatise to prune from this natural religion those distortions introduced by deceit on the one hand and by ignorance on the other. I have attempted to examine it in its native simplicity, in its pure form. And throughout the contents of this volume I have addressed mankind's reason, not our passions, traditions or prejudices. For this reason it is in no way probable that that this volume will enjoy wide approval.

By one means or another, most of the human race is preoccupied with tendencies opposed to the religion of reason. In this part of America people are most generally taught that they are born into the world in a state of sin under God's wrath and curse. They are taught that the way to heaven and a blessed future is beyond their power to pursue, that the path is encumbered with mysteries that only the priests can solve, that we must "be born again". They tell us we must have a special kind of faith and be reborn. In short, human nature, which they call "the old man," must be destroyed, perverted, or changed by them and remodeled before it can be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. When a plan based on superstition gains credibility in the world it subjects mankind to being ruled by priests; which is an empire built on the imbecility of human nature. Any who manage to break the fetters of their upbringing, remove other such obstacles from their path, have the confidence to speak rationally in public, exalt reason to its proper supremacy and uphold truth and the ways of God's providence to men are sure to be branded as irreligious, infidels, profane, and the like. But we often observe that such a man may be morally honest, and as just as often the response is "What of that? Morality will carry no man to heaven." So the only satisfaction an honest man can have when the superstitious are bickering about hellfire is to call them priest-ridden in return.

Since we cannot conceive in this life of how the human soul endures or communicates after death claims our bodies, and since all communication between us and the departed is impractical, the priests have it in their power to occupy us with a great variety of imaginary fears of things in the world to come, things that we cannot dispute while we live. The priests prey upon our uncertainty, especially that of the common people. They have made their religion mysterious,

and they have made the afterlife incomprehensible to normal people. They use the authority of Scripture to invalidate reason as something carnal and depraved. They use this same authority to teach us that "the natural man knoweth not the things of the spirit, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned." A spiritualizing teacher knows the kingdom of heaven nearly as well as a man can know his own backyard. He knows the road to heaven and eternal blessedness. He assumes with the greatest assurance that he will lead his dear disciples to these happy regions and unfold to them the mysteries of the Scriptures and of the world to come. His followers get caught up in the enthusiasm and see through the same sort of spiritual eyes. With these eyes they can pierce religion through and through and understand the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, things which before had been "a dead letter" to them, particularly the revelations of St. John the divine and the reference to the horns found in that gospel. The most obscure and unintelligible passages of the Bible are within the grasp of a priest. They are as adept at deciphering a spiritual passage as a mathematician is with figures. Then they can sing songs out of the Canticles, saying, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." And since they are not fettered by the bounds of reason, they can enjoy any fanaticism they like best, such as being "snatched as brands out of the burning, to enjoy the special and eternal favor of God, not from any worthiness or merit in them, but merely from the sovereign will and pleasure of God, while millions of millions, as good by nature and practice as they, are left to welter eternally, under the scalding drops of divine vengeance." They fail to consider that if a perfect of God should choose, His salvation could not fail to be extended uniformly to all who are as deserving. Equal justice cannot fail to apply in all cases in which equal justice demands it. But these deluded people resolve God's rule altogether into sovereignty: "even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." And since they exclude reason and justice from their imaginary notions of religion, they also exclude these things from the providence or moral government of God. Nothing is more common in the part of the country where I was educated than to hear those infatuated people acknowledge to their creator, both publicly and privately, from the pulpit and elsewhere, "hadst thou, O Lord, laid judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, we had been in the grave with the dead and in hell with the damned, long before this time." Such expressions from man to his creator are profane and utterly incompatible with the divine character. All things completely considered, we cannot doubt that the providence of God to man is just, since it has God's approval.

This is how the superstitious have set up a spiritual view apart from and in opposition to reason. Amongst themselves their mere imaginations are accepted as infallible truth. They, therefore, despise the progressive and wearisome reasonings of philosophers (which we must admit is a painful way to arrive at the truth). But since that is the only way we can acquire truth, I have pursued the old natural path of rational reasoning and have come to the following conclusion. Since this spiritual manner of understanding is completely inadequate for managing any of life's concerns or for contributing anything worthwhile to the arts and sciences, it is equally unintelligible and useless in the matter of religion. Therefore, if the human race in general could be convinced to exercise common sense towards religious concerns, those spiritual fictions would cease and would be replaced by reason and truth.

SECTION II - THE IMPORTANCE OF EXERCISING REASON AND PRACTICING MORALITY TO SECURE MANKIND'S HAPPINESS

Life is very uncertain, and even the longest life is short. A few years bring us from infancy to manhood, and a few more lead us to our demise. Pain, sickness and death are the necessary consequences of being a living being. We struggle through life with physical ailments, which are certain to destroy our earthly bodies eventually. And we would do well if evils ended here, but, alas, moral evil has been relatively dominant during our existence, and though natural evil is unavoidable, moral evil still may be prevented or remedied by the exercise of virtue. Therefore, morality is more important to us than anything else we might achieve, because it is a habit of mind. It is something we can look back upon, something we should carry with us into our next stage of existence as an acquired extension of our rational nature and an element necessary for our mental happiness. Virtue and vice are the only things, other than our souls, that are capable of surviving death. Virtue is the sole rational cause that brings all intellectual happiness, and vice brings conscious guilt and misery. Therefore, our indispensable duty and ultimate interest is to love, cultivate and improve our virtues as the means of our greatest good, and to hate and abstain from vice as the source of our greatest evil. And to achieve these goals, we should divest ourselves of enough worldly distractions that we can identify a consistent understanding of our religious duty. We can then commit to pursuing this understanding as our constant goal in life. Religion is based on our knowledge of the existence, perfections, creation and providence of God and knowing that our souls are immortal. This foundation has been illustrated particularly in the four first chapters of this discourse. And since the Pagan, Jewish, Christian and Muslim countries of the world have been overwhelmed with diverse revelations, which their respective proponents claim have been directly inspired into their souls by the spirit of God or the direct agency of angels (e.g. the invisible Gabriel to Mohammed), and since those revelations have been received and credited as supernaturally revealed by God or angels by the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the several countries of the world where they have been imposed, and since all these religions conflict with one another in doctrine and discipline, we must be fully convinced that they are all false. Without need for lengthy argument, we can conclude with certainty that not one of them originally came from God. Since they all clash with one another, it is highly probable that none of them are authentic.

We must suppose that for a revelation to actually be part of the institution of God, it must also be perfectly consistent or uniform. It must be able to stand the test of truth. Therefore, we may be morally certain that if those pretended revelations that are claimed to be heaven's plan, but do not bear the test of truth, then they were originally deceptions or have since become distorted and false.

Reason, therefore, must be the standard by which we determine the respective claims of revelation. Otherwise, we may as well randomly subscribe to the divinity of one or another or of all or none of them. And so it is with this thesis. If reason dictates that we should reject all of those revelations, we should return to the religion of nature and reason.

It is undoubtedly our duty, and for our own best good, if we use and improve the faculties with which our creator endowed us. Any amount of prejudice or biased opinion that we allow to prevail over our minds excludes the same amount of reason from our theory or practice. Therefore, if we wish to acquire useful knowledge, we must first divest ourselves of those

burdens and sincerely try to seek the truth. We must draw our conclusions from reason and valid argument, which will never conform to our bias, interest or fancy. But we must conform to reason if we desire to judge rightly. Every time we draw a conclusion contrary to reason, we are drawing a wrong conclusion. Therefore, our wisdom must conform to nature and reality in both religious matters and in the other sciences. It would be preposterously absurd to deny the exercise of reason in religious concerns while be guided by reason in all of life's other endeavors. All of our knowledge comes from God in and by the order of nature. We cannot perceive, reflect or understand anything supernatural whatsoever. Our external senses are natural, and those objects we perceive are also natural. As argued in the fifth chapter, we and everything around us, including our knowledge of the universe, are natural, not supernatural.

An unjust composition always contains error and falsehood. Therefore, an unjust connection of ideas is not derived from nature, but from the imperfect composition of man. Failing to properly connect ideas is the same as misjudging. Such a failure is useless, a mere creature of the imagination. But nature and truth are real and uniform, and through reasoning the rational mind sees the uniformity and can thereby make a valid composition of ideas that will stand the test of truth. But the fantasies of the gullible and superstitious derive from weakness, and as long as they exist in the world, they subvert the religion of REASON, NATURE and TRUTH.

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