

**ANTIQUITY AND  
DURATION OF THE  
WORLD; PP. 1-75**

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THE WORLD.

BY G. H. TOULMIN, M. D.

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BOSTON:  
JOSIAH P. MENDUM.  
1854.



## INTRODUCTION.

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IN writing upon a subject extensive and important in its nature, so nearly interesting to every denomination of men, and upon which nothing satisfactory has hitherto been offered to the world, the Author is sensible that he has engaged himself in an arduous undertaking. At a period when a liberality of sentiment predominates; when men, emerging from obscurity, eagerly relinquish the errors and prejudices of their ancestors, something on the present subject seemed absolutely necessary to give still greater consistency to the reasonings and speculations of mankind.

To impress us with an adequate idea of the nature and extent of animal and vegetable life, the continual fluctuation of things, the antiquity and duration of the extended scenes of existence, is the object of the succeeding disquisition. Its intention will however be still more essentially answered, if while obviating the erroneous conclusions which too universally prevail, in respect to the antiquity of surrounding objects, it gives a new and clearer insight into the nature of existence.

We have sought for truth, not in the opinions of mankind, but in every step have been guided by plain sense and simple matter of fact. Nor can there exist a doubt, that, by thus giving a scope to cool and lib-

eral investigation, the interests of the human species have been essentially consulted. To what purpose can it be, that the errors of dark ages should cramp the reasonings of men who live in a time when everything is so much reversed? Truth never injures mankind. Ignorance, obscurity, and superstition alone, engender the evils that disturb society. In this inquiry we have then attempted to trace, not from reasonings purely metaphysical, but from the most undoubted facts, the remote existence of animal and vegetable life, and of the world itself. How far such intention has been answered, is left to the reader's determination.

Here it must however be confessed, that, independent of the considerations already enumerated, the Author has in view other objects, nearly connected with the design of this performance. The baneful and gloomy influence of Gothic barbarism and superstition upon the understandings and morals of mankind, have been perhaps too sparingly touched upon. The disagreeable effects of mistaken zeal and opinions, indeed, can scarcely be placed in too striking a point of view. In short, the manners of society have been, and are still, most materially injured by circumstances, which the outcry of folly would deem essential to the existence of society itself.

Happy then shall he esteem himself, if the few succeeding observations have but a tendency to shake the fixed prejudices of his fellow creatures; to assuage the remaining turbulence of ignorance and error, and thus to smooth the way to that refinement which essentially contributes to the peace, safety, and welfare of the human species.



## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

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THE author of the "Antiquity and Duration of the World," and of the "Eternity of the Universe," was among the first so to reason correctly of the properties of matter as to lay the foundation of the SCIENCE OF GEOLOGY. Reasoning from those facts which accident had disclosed, as to the composition of the face of the earth, he reared in his capacious mind the noble structure of the "Antiquity and Duration of the World," and finally asserted its ETERNITY! The beauty of that structure consists in the circumstance that the architect has nowhere resorted to the phantasmal aid of supernatural power; but, like a true son of SCIENCE, has made his foundation of the substantial realities of existing things. *Words* to him were *nothing*, unless they referred him to something to be seen, felt, and reasoned upon.

Since the time at which Mr. Toulmin wrote, the SCIENCE OF GEOLOGY has made great progress; but, boundless as matter itself, it will be the source of never ceasing discoveries, and ever exist in the character of an union of facts and theories. The Geologist of this day may go so far in assertion as to warrant all the conclusions drawn by our author; but to speak of the primary growth of planets in a positive tone is not yet to be warranted. Mr. Toulmin seems to rest upon their ETERNITY, that they always were nearly what they now are, and that changes on the surface form their *only change*.

An ingenious author of a work about a century old, under the title of "Telliamed," concluding that water is a common parent of fixed matter, accounts for the growth of planets upon that principle, and their final ignition and exhaustion as suns. "Telliamed" is a most useful book to be read after the works of Toulmin.

Discoveries on other grounds, such as the polarity of light and

heat, that heat or fire is a concentration of motion, that all liquids as well as solids may be heated to combustion by this concentration of motion, go to support the conclusion that a sun is a planet of immense size, with its atmosphere in a state of combustion, from its arid nature and rapid central motion.

The inquiries of *Toulnia* are confined to the visible changes on the surface of the earth; and, happily, he was not so blind as to attribute the whole to one fabled universal deluge. Hearing of discoveries of houses, trees, ships, and other works of nature and of art, at various and great depths in the earth; seeing different strata of different kinds of matter regularly placed one over the other to any depth that might be penetrated; hearing of islands rising and sinking in the ocean through volcanic means; seeing the beds of rivers changed, the sea retiring from some places and encroaching on others; seeing and hearing of such changes on the face of the earth, he attributes the whole to one regular and natural power, and proclaims its perpetuity. In matter and its motions he discovers the causes of all the changes he beholds, sees it to be of necessity what it is, and, wanting no exterior or designing aid to superintend its changes and operations, he proclaims its self-regulating power. If he finds exhausting fires in the bowels of the earth, he perceives a continual concretion on its surface, and proclaims that exhaustion in one part is but addition in another, making, in the aggregate, no perceptible difference in its size. Sinkings of surface fill up internal exhaustions, and internal exhaustions supply the chasms made by the sinking of surfaces. All is motion; all is change; but all is aggregately the same. Every distinct strata has been a surface, and every particle alike a portion of the centre and of the surface. Every part of the surface has been alternately the bed of the sea, a proof of which is exhibited in the marine strata found at various depths in that part of the earth which is now dry land; for these strata could not have been formed by any single, though universal, deluge.

It is common, even with Geologists, to attribute the phenomena and disorders of the surface of the earth to such a deluge as the Jewish book fables; but that one deluge will not account for the different strata to be seen, and for the ancient remains of na-

ture and art found at such various depths in the earth. The sciences of Geology and Astronomy must be united to account for such phenomena, the one considering the earth as a substance, its qualities, &c., the other its motions and the influences of other planets upon it.

The writings of Mr. Toulmin will always bear to be read, and alike delight and instruct. The subject will be interesting to all future generations of mankind, and for the purpose of preservation it is desirable that their circulation be extensive. They have been comparatively in a suppressed state for nearly forty years; for it is not to be supposed but that edition after edition of such works would have been sold if they had been printed.

RICHARD CARLILE.

*Dorchester Gaol, (Eng.) September 10, 1824.*