

April 3, 1856

1 We can lend you an air pump made in Boston which will I think answer your purpose.

2 The apparatus purchased for the Institution can generally be obtained without duty which very much diminishes the price.³

I will write again. The mail is about to close.

Yours truly
J. Henry

Joseph Jones

Jones Papers, Mss. 468, 534, 544, 1036, 1351, 1357, 1393, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Louisiana State University.

1. A draft is in the same location as this letter. Jones agreed to eliminate the introductory chapters, reported bids for the art work, and listed apparatus and supplies that he needed.

2. The executive committee report for 1856 shows just under \$8,000 being spent on the building, furniture, and fixtures, including just over \$6,000 on contracts. The amount spent on the building the following year was higher than

expected due to repairs following a severe hail-storm and the payment of one remaining contract. Rhees, *Journals*, pp. 507, 510-511.

3. Throughout the nineteenth century, United States tariff law exempted from duty philosophical apparatus imported for the use of educational or scientific organizations. *Henry Papers*, 6:360n.

194. TO SAMUEL FOSTER HAVEN

Smithsonian Inst
April 3rd 1856

My Dear Sir

Our printer¹ after considerable delay has again commenced operations and we shall be ready to put your paper through the press as rapidly as possible.

In reading however that part of it which relates to the question of the origin of man I am afraid we are likely to get into difficulty. I have submitted it to a person of liberal views and unprejudiced in regard to matter² and in comparing his opinion with my own I find we agree in our conclusion that unintentionally you have given undue preponderance to the hypothesis of the diversity of origin. The question as you know, is one which involves much feeling and the discussion of which cannot be confined to facts and opinions having their origin in this country. The views of Pritchard³ and all the other eminent ethnological authorities of Europe ought to be presented since the subject is one belonging to general science or at least it will be impossible to prevent it's assuming that aspect, again in discussions of this kind opinions must be weighed rather than counted; several of the writers which you have cited have but little or no authority in the scientific world.⁴

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While on the one hand I think the ethnological investigations should be conducted on grounds independent of revelation, on the other, great caution should be used in regard to hasty conclusions and the attempts to settle definitely a principles^A before sufficient data has ↑been↓ accumulated; particularly since party feelings of such warmth have been aroused and doctrines most sacred and revered are supposed to be endangered; and have really been assailed. I respect and hold in high estimation an honest discriminating and industrious searcher for truth, however his conclusions may clash with my own, but I have no regard for men who pride themselves on their infidelity and consider it a mark of superior intellect to reject all that their neighbours consider important truths, and who do not scruple to misrepresent the facts of science and the opinions of scientific men for their own purposes. I consider Gliddon's book as written in an improper spirit, or at least in very bad taste and regret, very much, that the name of my lamented friend Dr. Morton and that of Professor Agassiz should be mingled up with so much of puerility and sophistry as are to be found in this work.⁵

I am sorry that it has been thought necessary to dwell on this part of the general subject of your memoir and I am convinced that it cannot be presented in a proper manner without more expense of time and labour than the Institution or yourself at present can afford. There are many facts known to men of science which though published have not yet ↑been↓ referred to by the controversialists. But few physiologists and Geologists of any eminence have written expressly on the subject and they do not wish to be drawn into the controversy; or to be quoted as supporting, by their researches, either side of the question; particularly by such men as Gliddon. They are content to develop facts and to deduce, from them, principles, without reference to their bearing on points of theology. The great object of true science is the discovery of what really is and not controversy as to what should or may be. For example, the Smithsonian Institution has made the largest collection of skulls of American wolves ever before gathered, and from these it may be readily shown that, even, Dr Morton, has committed gross mistakes in regard to the multiplication of the species of this animal.⁶ The facts deduced from the examination of these skulls will be published as a contribution to science and not with reference to their bearing on the theological question of the origin of man. Professor Dana, Professor Guyot, and Dr. Gray of Cambridge and others among our most distinguished men of science do not agree with Professor Agassiz as to his interpretation of the facts he has presented and they regret that he has even ventured to allude in any way to the theological side of the subject.⁷

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After a due consideration of the whole matter I have come to the conclusion that it would be safer for the Institution and better for the cause of science to omit as far as possible the discussion of the whole question. I say better for the cause of science because as a general rule men who possess the faculty of discovering and establishing new truths are averse to controversy and will abandon a line of research which may tend to place them in an unpleasant position.⁸

The 8th volume of our contributions is now in the press and we are anxious to get it out before the first of June— We shall therefore require the remainder of your paper as soon as it can be prepared.

We send you by Adams Express a manuscript work on the subject of the unity of the race which please to return to us after you have perused it.⁹ I have also concluded to return to you the last part of your memoir with the hope that you may be able so to finish your interesting exposition of the antiquities of this country without interfering too much with its completeness and at the same time without danger to the controversy.

I trust you will not be offended with any part of this letter which has been written in a spirit of candor and with a desire to do that which will best subserve the cause of the promotion of true knowledge and the lasting reputation of the Institution and yourself.

I remain with much
esteem your friend
& serv't.
Joseph Henry

S. F. Haven Esq

AAS Correspondence, 1850–1859, American Antiquarian Society.

1. T. K. and P. G. Collins of Philadelphia.
2. Perhaps one of the two referees, Peter Force or Brantz Mayer. Mayer, however, may not have seen the memoir until June (Doc. 213).
3. James Cowles Prichard (1786–1848), author of *Researches into the Physical History of Man* (London, 1813), as well as the more popular *Natural History of Man* (London, 1843), and the leading exponent of the unity of origin theory. *DSB*.
4. Henry is probably alluding to George Robins Gliddon (*Henry Papers*, 8:175n–176n) and Josiah Nott, authors of *Types of Mankind* (Philadelphia, 1854). As a scientist and as a leader of the American scientific community, Henry was eager to discredit the scientific pretensions of Gliddon and Nott, who gleefully attacked the Biblical version of man's origin. They not only challenged the orthodox reli-

gious beliefs held by Henry and most of his scientific colleagues but exposed legitimate science and scientists to attacks by suggesting that science was irreconcilably opposed to religion. David J. Meltzer's introduction to Ephraim G. Squier and Edwin H. Davis, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*, ed. David J. Meltzer (Washington, 1998), pp. 55–56; William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815–59* (Chicago, 1960), pp. 163, 169, 193.

5. Samuel George Morton's studies of his large collection of human skulls led him to believe that natives of America were a distinct race and did not descend from Adam and Eve. His work provided the scientific basis for the theory of multiple origins, or polygenism, of which he was widely considered the father. *Types of Mankind* was not only dedicated to him, it was

based on his work and considered by Gliddon to be a memorial to it. The volume included excerpts from some unedited manuscripts by Morton.

Agassiz contributed a chapter on the geographical distribution of animals and men. He supported the theory of polygenism and contributed a letter on geographic distribution to Gliddon and Nott's *Indigenous Races of the Earth* (Philadelphia, 1857).

Stanton, pp. 162-163, 175-176, 193; Meltzer, pp. 10-15, 55-56; Curtis M. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian: Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America* (Washington, 1994), pp. 26-27; Edward Lurie, *Louis Agassiz: A Life in Science* (Chicago, 1960), pp. 257-259; DSB, s.v. "Morton, Samuel George."

6. Probably a reference to Morton's speculations at the conclusion of "On the Antiquity of Some Races of Dogs," *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, 1850-1851, 5:85-89. After studying depictions of dogs on ancient Egyptian monuments, Morton asserted that modern breeds had exact counterparts in antiquity. According to him, "it remains for those persons who insist that they have all been derived from an aboriginal pair, to give us something more in proof than analogical reasoning, or inferences drawn from arbitrary views of the laws of Nature" (p. 88).

7. Agassiz's embrace of polygenism shortly after his arrival in the United States in 1846 had attracted the attention of fellow scientists, notably John Torrey, who expressed concern about his position on the subject as early as 1847. Agassiz's stance on the diversity of the races isolated him from other scientists on this issue and foreshadowed the position he was soon to assume as the leading opponent among American scientists to Darwin's theory of evolution. Agassiz's position, as well as Dana and Gray's response to it, is detailed in Lurie, pp. 252-302; Stanton, p. 103; *Henry Papers*, 8:36.

8. As Curtis Hinsley has pointed out (p. 22), Henry was eager for the Smithsonian to steer clear of physical anthropology and its attendant racial debates as "politically explosive and morally repugnant." Following the Smithsonian's publication in 1848 of Squier and Davis's *Ancient Monuments*, E. G. Squier had publicly embraced polygenism. *Ancient Monuments* itself had been cited as evidence in support of the theory. As David J. Meltzer has concluded (p. 58), "the Smithsonian's first publication, which Henry had so carefully crafted as a model of neutral, inductive science, was suddenly ammunition in the arsenal of the racist polygenists."

Despite Henry's advice, however, Haven re-

tained an extensive discussion of Gliddon and Nott's *Types of Mankind*. He defended his incursion into the controversial question of the origins of man by stating that "the subject of American ethnology passes so insensibly into the general question of the original unity or diversity of mankind" (p. 81). He claimed that Gliddon and Nott constructed their theory from "purely scientific facts and archaeological discoveries" (p. 83), and that if one ignored the "theological speculations or controversial disquisitions," "their work is an exponent of a method of inquiry which might be expected to yield interesting results" (p. 83). But he also took note of the opposition to polygenism, mentioning in particular (pp. 89-92) critiques by Charleston naturalist John Bachman, especially in his *Doctrine of the Unity of the Human Race, Examined on the Principles of Science* (Charleston, 1850).

In wrapping up his review of various theories, Haven may have added a paragraph in response to the concerns Henry addressed in this letter. He wrote that he hoped he had not given undue weight to any particular view. He stated that the ideas in opposition to the unity of mankind could "neither be omitted with propriety nor be so disguised as to conceal their tendency" (p. 105). The question of the unity or diversity of the human race needed to be addressed on a worldwide basis and would rely for its solution on the careful work of Prichard and others. In his conclusion, Haven pointedly offered no speculations on man's origins: "We desire to stop where evidence ceases" (p. 158).

Hinsley, pp. 22, 25-28; Meltzer, pp. 54-58; Samuel F. Haven, *Archaeology of the United States. Or Sketches, Historical and Bibliographical, of the Progress of Information and Opinion Respecting Vestiges of Antiquity in the United States*, 1856, Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge, vol. 8 (Washington, 1856).

9. Perhaps the second installment of James D. Dana's "Science and the Bible," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1856, 13:81-130 (January), 631-656 (July); 1857, 14:388-412 (April), 461-524 (July); a presentation copy of the second installment is in the Henry Library. Dana wrote in response to *Six Days of Creation* (Schenectady, 1855) by Tayler Lewis, professor of Greek at Union College. He attacked Lewis's claim that scientists were motivated by infidelity and went on to name the Sillimans, Edward Hitchcock, Henry, O. M. Mitchel, Stephen Alexander, Denison Olmsted, Asa Gray, John Torrey, William C. Redfield, Benjamin Peirce, and A. D. Bache as American scientists who were indisputably pious (p. 643). Dana punctured the

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scientific claims of *Types of Mankind* and noted that Agassiz's contribution to it seemed out of place (p. 644). For an analysis of the controversy, see Morgan B. Sherwood, "Genesis, Evo-

lution, and Geology in America before Darwin: The Dana-Lewis Controversy, 1856-1857," in *Toward a History of Geology*, ed. Cecil J. Schneer (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969), pp. 305-316.

195. FROM THOMAS LAWSON

Surgeon General's Office
Ap^l 5, 1856.

Prof. Jo^s Henry.
Secy of the
Smithsonian Instⁿ
Sir:

Your communication of the 1st, acknowledging, in behalf of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, the receipt of a copy of the "Meteorological Register of the Army of the United States,"¹ which was sent to you on the 9th of January last, has been received.²

I regret, equally with yourself, that in expressing the thanks of the Regents for that present, you should have found it necessary to add, "that in the opinion of the Members of the Board with whom I (you) have conversed on the subject, as well as in my (your) own, the publication of the appendix to the Volume by Lorin Blodget, has done injustice to the Smithsonian Institution and to its meteorological correspondents".³ You then proceed to give in some detail the particulars of an arrangement between Assistant Surgeon Wotherspoon⁴ and yourself, respecting a plan of "co-operation" and in relation to certain services to be performed by Mr Blodget. I will not unnecessarily lengthen this communication by repeated quotations from your letter, but, presuming you have retained a copy, will proceed to reply to the several points which seem to call for remark. Your letter conveys the first intimation I ever received of a plan for "harmonious co-operation" between the Smithsonian Institution and this Office. Nothing could be further from my every thought and feeling on this subject. From your statement it appears, that by this co-operation, the Medical Bureau, after supporting an extensive system of observations for many years, was to have the labor and expense of preparing and publishing the reductions of those observations, that the Smithsonian Institution might use them for its own purposes; and in return, the publication from this Office was to be accompanied "with a brief essay as to the climate of the United States in which materials from the Institution might be used", and that essay to be submitted to you for approval "both