THE

TRIAL

OF THE

WITNESSES

OF THE

RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

N. B. *Not only Mr* Woolſton's *Objections in his* Sixth Diſcourſe *on our Saviour's Miracles, but thoſe alſo which he and others have publiſhed in other Books, are here conſidered.*

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M DCC LXIX.

THE TRIAL OF THE WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION of JESUS.

WE were, not long ſince, ſome gentlemen of the inns of court together, each to other ſo well known, that no man's preſence was a confinement to any other from ſpeaking his mind on any ſubject that happened to ariſe in converſation. The meeting was without deſign, and the diſcourſe, as in like caſes, various. Among other things we fell upon the ſubject of *Woolſton*'s trial and conviction, which had happened ſome few days before. That led to a debate, How the law ſtands in ſuch caſes? what puniſhment it inflicts? and in general, whether the law ought at all to interpoſe in controverſies of this kind? We were not agreed in theſe points. One, who maintained the favourable ſide to *Woolſton*, diſcovered a great liking and approbation of his diſcourſes againſt the miracles of Chriſt,

and ſeemed to think his arguments unanſwerable. To which another replied, I wonder that one of your abilities, and bred to the profeſſion of the law, which teaches us to conſider the nature of evidence, and its proper weight, can be of that opinion: I am ſure you would be unwilling to determine a property of five ſhillings upon ſuch evidence as you now think material enough to overthrow the miracles of Chriſt.

It may eaſily be imagined, that this opened a door to much diſpute, and determined the converſation for the remainder of the evening to this ſubject. The diſpute ran through almoſt all the particulars mentioned in Woolſton's pieces; but the thread of it was broken by ſeveral digreſſions, and the purſuit of things which were brought accidentally into the diſcourſe. At length one of the company ſaid pleaſantly, Gentlemen, you do not argue like lawyers; if I were judge in this cauſe, I would hold you better to the point. The company took the hint, and cried, they ſhould be glad to have the cauſe reheard, and him to be the judge. The gentlemen who had engaged with mettle and ſpirit in a diſpute which aroſe accidentally, ſeemed very unwilling to be drawn into a formal controverſy; and eſpecially the gentleman who argued againſt Woolſton thought the matter grew too ſerious for him, and excuſed himſelf from undertaking a controverſy in religion, of all others the moſt momentous. But he was told, that the argument ſhould be confined merely to

the nature of the evidence, and that might be conſidered without entering into any ſuch controverſy as he would avoid and, to bring the matter within bounds, and under one view, the evidence of Chriſt's reſurrection, and the exceptions taken to it, ſhould be the only ſubject of the conference. With much perſuaſion he ſuffered himſelf to be perſuaded, and promiſed to give the company and their new-made judge a meeting that day fortnight. The judge and the reſt of the company were for bringing on the cauſe a week ſooner; but the counſel for Woolſton took the matter up, and ſaid, Conſider, Sir, the gentleman is not to argue out of Littleton, Plowden, or Coke, authors to him well known; but he muſt have his authorities from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and a fortnight is time little enough of all conſcience to gain a familiarity with a new acquaintance: and, turning to the gentleman, he ſaid, I will call upon you before the fortnight is out, to ſee how reverend an appearance you make behind Hammond on the New Teſtament, a concordance on one hand, and a folio bible with references on the other. You ſhall be welcome, Sir, replied the gentleman; and perhaps you may find ſome company more to your own taſte. He is but a poor counſel who ſtudies on the one ſide of the queſtion only; and therefore I will have your friend Woolſton, T———l, and C———s, to entertain you when you do me the favour of the viſit. Upon this we

parted in good humour, and all pleaſed with the appointment made, except the two gentlemen who were to provide the entertainment.

The Second Day.

THE company met at the time appointed: but it happened in this, as in like caſes it often does, that ſome friends to ſome of the company, who were not of the party the firſt day, had got notice of the meeting; and the gentlemen who were to debate the queſtion, found they had a more numerous audience than they expected or deſired. He eſpecially who was to maintain the evidence of the reſurrection, began to excuſe the neceſſity he was under of diſappointing their expectation, alledging that he was not prepared; and he had perſiſted in excuſing himſelf, but that the ſtrangers who perceived what the caſe was, offered to withdraw; which the gentleman would by no means conſent to. They inſiſting to go, he ſaid, he would much rather ſubmit himſelf to their candour, unprepared as he was, than be guilty of ſo much rudeneſs, as to force them to leave the company. Upon which one of the company, ſmiling, ſaid, It happens luckily that our number is increaſed: when we were laſt together, we appointed a judge, but we quite forgot a jury; and now, I think, we are good men and true, ſufficient to make one. This thought was purſued in ſeveral alluſions to legal proceedings;

proceedings; which created ſome mirth, and had this good effect, that it diſperſed the ſolemn air, which the mutual compliments upon the difficulty before mentioned had introduced, and reſtored the eaſe and good humour natural to the converſation of gentlemen.

The judge perceiving the diſpoſition of the company, thought it a proper time to begin, and called out, Gentlemen of the jury, take your places; and immediately ſeated himſelf at the upper end of the table. The company ſat round him, and the judge called upon the counſel for Woolſton to begin.

Mr A, *Counſel for Woolſton, addreſſing himſelf to the judge, ſaid,*

May it pleaſe your Lordſhip, I conceive the gentleman on the other ſide ought to begin, and lay his evidence, which he intends to maintain, before the court; till that is done, it is to no purpoſe for me to object. I may perhaps object to ſomething which he will not admit to be any part of his evidence; and therefore I apprehend, the evidence ought in the firſt place to be diſtinctly ſtated.

Judge. Mr *B*, What ſay you to that?

Mr B *Counſel one the other ſide*:

My Lord, If the evidence I am to maintain, were to ſupport any new claim, if I were to gain any thing which I am not poſſeſſed of, the gentleman would be in the right: but the evidence is old, and is matter of record; and I have been long in poſſeſſion of all

all that I claim under it. If the gentleman has any thing to ſay to diſpoſſeſs me, let him produce it; otherwiſe I have no reaſon to bring my own title into queſtion. And this I take to be the known method of proceeding in ſuch caſes: no man is obliged to produce his title to his poſſeſſion; it is ſufficient if he maintains it when it is called in queſtion.

Mr *A.* Surely, my Lord, the gentleman miſtakes the caſe. I can never admit myſelf to be out of poſſeſſion of my underſtanding and reaſon; and ſince he would put me out of this poſſeſſion, and compel me to admit things incredible, in virtue of the evidence he maintains, he ought to ſet forth his claim, or leave the world to be directed by common ſenſe.

Judge. Sir, you ſay right, upon ſuppoſition that the truth of the Chriſtian religion were the point in judgment. In that caſe it would be neceſſary to produce the evidence for the Chriſtian religion. But the matter now before the court is, Whether the objections produced by Mr Woolſton, are of weight to overthrow the evidence of Chriſt's reſurrection? You ſee then the evidence of the reſurrection is ſuppoſed to be what it is on both ſides; and the thing immediately in judgment is, the value of the objections; and therefore they muſt be ſet forth. The court will be bound to take notice of the evidence which is admitted as a fact on both parts. Go on Mr *A.*

Mr

Mr *A.* My Lord, I ſubmit to the direction of the court. I cannot but obſerve, that the gentleman on the other ſide, unwilling as he ſeems to be to ſtate his evidence, did not forget to lay in his claim to preſcription; which is perhaps, in truth, though he has too much ſkill to own it, the very ſtrength of his cauſe. I do allow, that the gentleman maintains nothing, but what his father and grandfather, and his anceſtors, beyond time of man's memory, maintained before him: I allow too, that preſcription in many caſes makes a good title; but it muſt always be with this condition, that the thing is capable of being preſcribed for: and I inſiſt, that preſcription cannot run againſt reaſon and common ſenſe. Cuſtoms may be pleaded by preſcription; but if, upon ſhewing the cuſtom, any thing unreaſonable appears in it, the preſcription fails; for length of time works nothing towards the eſtabliſhing any thing that could never have a legal commencement. And if this objection will overthrow all preſcriptions for cuſtoms; the miſchief of which extends perhaps to one poor village only, and affects them in no greater a concern, than their right of common upon a ragged mountain: ſhall it not much more prevail, when the intereſt of mankind is concerned, and in no leſs a point than his happineſs in this life, and in all his hopes for futurity? Beſides, if preſcription muſt be allowed in this caſe, how will you deal with it in others? What will you

you ſay to the ancient Perſians, and their fire-altars? nay, what to the Turks, who have been long enough in poſſeſſion of their faith to plead———

Mr *B.* I beg pardon for interrupting the gentleman: but it is to ſave him trouble. He is going into his favourite common-place, and has brought us from Perſia to Turky already; and if he goes on, I know we muſt follow him round the globe. To ſave us from this long journey, I will wave all advantage from the antiquity of the reſurrection, and the general reception the belief of it has found in the world; and am content to conſider it as a fact which happened but laſt year, and was never heard of either by the gentleman's grandfather, or by mine.

Mr *A.* I ſhould not have taken quite ſo long a journey as the gentleman imagines; nor, indeed, need any man go far from home to find inſtances to the purpoſe I was upon. But, ſince this advantage is quitted, I am as willing to ſpare my pains, as the gentleman is deſirous that I ſhould. And yet I ſuſpect ſome art even in this conceſſion, fair and candid as it ſeems to be. For I am perſuaded, that one reaſon, perhaps the main reaſon, why men believe this hiſtory of Jeſus is, that they cannot conceive, that any one ſhould attempt, much leſs ſucceed in ſuch an attempt as this, upon the foundation of mere human cunning and policy; and it is worth the while to go round the globe, as the gentleman expreſſed himſelf,

himſelf, to ſee various inſtances of the like kind, in order to remove this prejudice. But I ſtand corrected, and will go directly to the point now in judgment.

Mr *B.* My lord, The gentleman, in juſtification of his firſt argument, has entered upon another of a very different kind. I think he is ſenſible of it, and, ſeeming to yield up one of his popular topics, is indeed artfully getting rid of another, which has made a very good figure in many late writings, but will not bear in any place where he who maintains it may be aſked queſtions. The mere antiquity of the reſurrection I gave up; for, if the evidence was not good at firſt, it cannot be good now. The gentleman is willing, he ſays, to ſpare us his hiſtory of ancient errors; and intimates, that upon this account he paſſes over many inſtances of fraud, that were like in circumſtances to the caſe before us. By no means, my Lord, let them be paſſed over. I would not have the main ſtrength of his cauſe betrayed in complaiſance to me. Nothing can be more material than to ſhew a fraud of this kind, that prevailed univerſally in the world. Chriſt Jeſus declared himſelf a prophet, and put the proof of his miſſion on this, that he ſhould die openly and publicly, and riſe again the third day. This ſurely was the hardeſt plot in the world to be managed; and if there be one inſtance of this kind, or in any degree like it, by all means let it be produced.

Mr

Mr *A.* My lord, There has hardly been an inſtance of a falſe religion in the world, but it has alſo afforded a like inſtance to this before us. Have they not all pretended to inſpiration? Upon what foot did Pythagoras, Numa, and others, ſet up? Did they not all converſe with the gods, and pretend to deliver oracles?

Mr *B.* This only ſhews, that revelation is by the common conſent of mankind the very beſt foundation of religion; and therefore every impoſtor pretends to it. But is a man's hiding himſelf in a cave for ſome years, and then coming out into the world, to be compared to a man's dying, and riſing to life again? So far from it, that you, and I, and every man may do the one, but no man can do the other.

Mr *A.* Sir, I ſuppoſe it will be allowed to be as great a thing to go to heaven, and converſe with angels, and with God, and to come down to the earth again, as it is to die, and riſe again? Now this very thing Mahomet pretended to do; and all his diſciples believe it. Can you deny this fact?

Mr *B.* Deny it, Sir? No. But tell us who went with Mahomet? who were his witneſſes? I expect, before we have done, to hear of the guards ſet over the ſepulchre of Chriſt, and the ſeal of the ſtone. What guard watched Mahomet in his going or returning? What ſeals and credentials had he? He himſelf pretends to none. His followers pretend to nothing but his own word. We are now to conſider the evi-

dence

dence of Chriſt's reſurrection; and you think to parallel it, by producing a caſe for which no one ever pretended there was any evidence. You have Mahomet's word; and no man ever told a lie, but you had *his* word for the truth of what he ſaid; and therefore you need not go round the globe to find ſuch inſtances as theſe. But this ſtory, it is ſaid, has gained great credit, and is received by many nations. Very well. And how was it received? was not every man converted to this faith with the ſword at his throat? In our caſe, every witneſs to the reſurrection, and every believer of it, was hourly expoſed to death. In the other caſe, whoever refuſed to believe, died; or, what was as bad, lived a wretched conquered ſlave. And will you pretend theſe caſes to be alike? One caſe indeed there was, within our own memory, which, in ſome circumſtances, came near to the caſe now before us. The French prophets put the credit of their miſſion upon the reſurrection of Dr Emmes, and gave public notice of it. If the gentleman pleaſes to make uſe of this inſtance, it is at his ſervice.

Mr *A.* The inſtance of Dr Emmes is ſo far to the purpoſe, that it ſhews to what lengths enthuſiaſm will carry men. And why might not the ſame thing happen at Jeruſalem, which happened but a few years ago in our own country? Matthew and John, and the reſt of them, managed that affair with more dexterity than the French pro-

phets; ſo that the reſurrection of Jeſus gained credit in the world, and the French prophets ſunk under their ridiculous pretenſions. That is all the difference.

Mr *B.* Is it ſo? And a very wide difference, I promiſe you. In one caſe every thing happened that was proper to convince the world of the truth of the reſurrection; in the other, the event manifeſted the cheat: and upon the view of theſe circumſtances, you think it ſufficient to ſay, with great coolneſs, that is all the difference. Why, what difference do you expect between truth and falſehood? what diſtinction——

Judge. Gentlemen, you forget that you are in a court, and are falling into dialogue. Courts do not allow of chit-chat. Look ye, the evidence of the reſurrection of Jeſus is before the court, recorded by Matthew, Mark, and others. You muſt take it as it is; you can neither make it better nor worſe. Theſe witneſſes are accuſed of giving falſe evidence. Come to the point; and let us hear what you have to offer to prove the accuſation.

Mr *B.* Is it your meaning, Sir, that the objections ſhould be ſtated and argued all together, and that the anſwer ſhould be to the whole at once? or would you have the objections argued ſingly, and anſwered ſeparately by themſelves?

Judge. I think this court may diſpenſe with the ſtrict forms of legal proceedings; and

and therefore I leave this to the choice of the jury.

After the jury had conſulted together, the Foreman roſe up.

The Foreman of the jury. We deſire to hear the objections argued and anſwered ſeparately. We ſhall be better able to form a judgment, by hearing the anſwer while the objection is freſh in our minds.

Judge. Gentlemen, you hear the opinion of the jury. Go on.

Mr *A.* I am now to diſcloſe to you a ſcene, of all others the moſt ſurpriſing. ‡ "The reſurrection has been long talked "of, and, to the amazement of every one "who can think freely, has been believed "through all ages of the church." This general and conſtant belief creates in moſt minds a preſumption that it was founded on good evidence. In other caſes, the evidence ſupports the credit of the hiſtory; but here the evidence itſelf is preſumed only upon the credit which the ſtory has gained. * I wiſh the books diſperſed againſt Jeſus by the ancient Jews had not been loſt, for they would have given us a clear inſight into this contrivance; but it is happy for us, that the very account given by the pretended witneſſes of this fact, is ſufficient to deſtroy the credit of it.

The reſurrection was not a thing contri-

‡ *Sixth Diſcourſe*, p. 17. * *Ibid* p. 4.

ved for its own ſake: No! it was undertaken to ſupport great views, and for the ſake of great conſequences that were to attend it. It will be neceſſary therefore to lay before you thoſe views, that you may the better judge of this part of the contrivance, when you have the whole ſcene before you.

The Jews were a weak ſuperſtitious people, and, as is common among ſuch people, gave great credit to ſome traditionary prophecies about their own country. They had, beſides, ſome old books among them, which they eſteemed to be writings of certain prophets who had formerly lived among them, and whoſe memory they had in great veneration. From ſuch old books and traditions they formed many extravagant expectations; and among the reſt one was, that ſome time or other a great victorious prince ſhould riſe among them, and ſubdue all their enemies, and make them lords of the world. * In Auguſtus's time they were in a low ſtate, reduced under the Roman yoke; and as they never wanted a deliverer more, ſo the eagerneſs of this hope, as it happens to weak minds, turned into a firm expectation that he would ſoon come. This proved a temptation to ſome bold and to ſome cunning men, to perſonate the prince ſo much expected. And † "nothing is more natural and common to "promote

* See *Scheme of literal prophecy*, p. 26. † Ibid. p. 27.

" promote rebellions, than to ground them " on new prophecies, or new interpreta- " tions of old ones; prophecies being ſuited " to the vulgar ſuperſtition, and operating " with the force of religion." Accordingly many ſuch impoſtors roſe, pretending to be the victorious prince expected; and they, and the people who followed them, periſhed in the folly of their attempt.

But Jeſus, knowing that victories and triumphs are not things to be counterfeited; that the people were not to be delivered from the Roman yoke by ſlight of hand; and having no hope of being able to cope with the emperor of Rome in good earneſt, took another and more ſucceſsful method to carry on his deſign. He took upon him to be the prince foretold in the ancient prophets: but then he inſiſted, that the true ſenſe of the prophecies had been miſtaken; that they related not to the kingdoms of this world, but to the kingdom of heaven; that the Meſſias was not to be a conquering prince, but a ſuffering one; that he was not to come with horſes of war, and chariots of war, but was to be meek and lowly, and riding on an aſs. By this means he got the common and neceſſary foundation for a new revelation, which is to be built and founded on a precedent revelation ‡.

To carry on this deſign, he made choice of twelve men of no fortunes or education,

‡ See *Diſcourſe of the grounds*, &c. ch. iv.

and of ſuch underſtandings, as gave no jealouſy that they would diſcover the plot. And, what is moſt wonderful, and ſhews their ability, whilſt the maſter was preaching the kingdom of heaven, theſe poor men, not weaned from the prejudices of their country, expected every day that he would declare himſelf a king, and were quarrelling who ſhould be his firſt miniſter. This expectation had a good effect on the ſervice; for it kept them conſtant to their maſter.

I muſt obſerve farther, that the Jews were under ſtrange apprehenſions of ſupernatural powers: and as their own religion was founded on the belief of certain miracles, ſaid to be wrought by their lawgiver Moſes, ſo were they ever running after wonders and miracles, and ready to take up with any ſtories of this kind. Now, as ſomething extraordinary was neceſſary to ſupport the pretenſions of Jeſus, he dextrouſly laid hold on this weakneſs of the people, and ſet up to be a wonder-worker. His diſciples were well qualified to receive this impreſſion: they ſaw, or thought they ſaw, many ſtrange things, and were able to ſpread the fame and report of them abroad.

This conduct had the deſired ſucceſs. The whole country was alarmed, and full of the news of a great prophet's being come among them. They were too full of their own imagination, to attend to the notion of a kingdom of heaven. Here was one mighty in deed and in word; and they concluded he was the very prince their nation expected.

pected. Accordingly they once attempted to ſet him up for a king; and at another time attended him in triumph to Jeruſalem. This natural conſequence opens the natural deſign of the attempt. If things had gone on ſucceſsfully to the end, it is probable the kingdom of heaven would have been changed into a kingdom of this world. The deſign indeed failed, by the impatience and over-haſtineſs of the multitude; which alarmed not only the chief of the Jews, but the Roman governor alſo.

The caſe being come to this point, and Jeſus ſeeing that he could not eſcape being put to death, he declared, that the ancient prophets had foretold, that the Meſſias ſhould die upon a croſs, and that he ſhould riſe again on the third day. Here was the foundation laid for the continuing this plot, which otherwiſe had died with its author: This was his legacy to his followers; which, having been well managed by them and their ſucceſſors, has at laſt produced a kingdom indeed; a kingdom of prieſts, who have governed the world for many ages, and have been ſtrong enough to ſet kings and emperors at defiance. But ſo it happens, the ancient prophets appealed to are ſtill extant; and there being no ſuch prophecies of the death and reſurrection of the Meſſias, they are a ſtanding evidence againſt this ſtory. As he expected, ſo it happened, that he died on a croſs; and the proſecuting of this contrivance was left to the management

of

of his diſciples and followers. Their part is next to be conſidered——

Mr *B.* My Lord, Since it is your opinion that the objections ſhould be conſidered ſingly, and the gentleman has carried his ſcheme down to the death of Chriſt, I think he is come to a proper reſt; and that it is agreeable to your intention that I ſhould be admitted to anſwer.

Judge. You ſay right, Sir. Let us hear what you anſwer to this charge

Mr *B.* My Lord, I was unwilling to diſturb the gentleman by breaking in upon his ſcheme; otherwiſe I ſhould have reminded him, that this court ſits to examine evidence, and not to be entertained with fine imaginations. You have had a ſcheme laid before you, but not one bit of evidence to ſupport any part of it; no, not ſo much as a pretence to any evidence. The gentleman, I remember, was very ſorry that the old books of the Jews were loſt, which would, as he ſuppoſes, have ſet forth all this matter; and I agree with him, that he has much reaſon to be ſorry, conſidering his great ſcarcity of proof. And ſince I have mentioned this, that I may not be to return to it again, I would aſk the gentleman now, how he knows there ever were ſuch books? And ſince, if ever there were any, they are loſt, how he knows what they contained? I doubt I ſhall have frequent occaſion to aſk ſuch queſtions. It would indeed be a ſufficient anſwer to the whole, to repeat the ſeveral ſuppoſitions that have been made, and

to

to call for the evidence upon which they ſtand. This would plainly diſcover every part of the ſtory to be mere fiction. But ſince the gentleman ſeems to have endeavoured to bring under one view the many inſinuations which have of late been ſpread abroad by different hands, and to work the whole into a conſiſtent ſcheme; I will, if your patience ſhall permit, examine this plot, and ſee to whom the honour of the contrivance belongs.

The gentleman begins with expreſſing his "amazement, that the reſurrection has "been believed in all ages of the church." If you aſk him, Why? he muſt anſwer, Becauſe the account of it is a forgery; for it is no amazement to him, ſurely, that a true account ſhould be generally well received. So that this remark proceeds indeed from confidence rather than amazement; and comes only to this, that he is ſure there was no reſurrection. And I am ſure this is no evidence that there was none. Whether he is miſtaken in his confidence, or I in mine, the court muſt judge.

The gentleman's obſervation, That the general belief of the reſurrection creates a preſumption that it ſtands upon good evidence, and therefore people look no farther, but follow their fathers, as their fathers did their grandfathers before them, is in great meaſure true; but it is a truth nothing to his purpoſe. He allows, that the reſurrection has been believed in all ages of the church; that is, from the very time of the reſurrection.

reſurrection. What then prevailed with thoſe who firſt received it? They certainly did not follow the example of their fathers. Here then is the point, How did this fact gain credit in the world at firſt? Credit it has gained without doubt. If the multitude at preſent go into this belief through prejudice, example, and for company ſake, they do in this caſe no more, nor otherwiſe, than they do in all caſes. And it cannot be denied, but that truth may be received through prejudice, (as it is called), *i. e.* without examining the proof, or merits of the cauſe, as well as falſehood. What general truth is there, the merits of which all the world, or the hundredth part has examined? It is ſmartly ſaid ſomewhere, "That the prieſt "only continues what the nurſe began." But the life of the remark conſiſts in the quaintneſs of the antitheſis between the *nurſe* and the *prieſt*; and owes its ſupport much more to ſound than to ſenſe. For is it poſſible that children ſhould not hear ſomething of the common and popular opinions of their country, whether thoſe opinions be true or falſe? Do they not learn the common maxims of reaſon this way? Perhaps every man firſt learned from his nurſe, that two and two make four; and whenever ſhe divides an apple among her children, ſhe inſtils into them this prejudice, That the whole is equal to its parts, and all the parts equal to the whole: and yet Sir Iſaac Newton, (ſhame on him!) what work has he made, what a building has he erect-

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ed upon the foundation of this nurſery-learning? As to religion, there never was a religion, there never will be one, whether true or falſe, publicly owned in any country, but children have heard, and ever will hear, more or leſs of it from thoſe who are placed about them. And if this is, and ever muſt be the caſe, whether the religion be true or falſe, it is highly abſurd to lay ſtreſs on this obſervation, when the queſtion is about the truth of any religion; for the obſervation is indifferent to both ſides of the queſtion.

We are now, I think, got through the common-place learning, which muſt for ever, it ſeems, attend upon queſtions of this nature, and are coming to the very merits of the cauſe.

And here the gentleman on the other ſide thought proper to begin with an account of the people of the Jews, the people in whoſe country the fact is laid, and who were originally, and in ſome reſpects, principally concerned in its conſequences.

They were, he ſays, a weak ſuperſtitious people, and lived under the influence of certain pretended prophecies and predictions; that upon this ground they had, ſome time before the appearance of Chriſt Jeſus, conceived great expectations of the coming of a victorious prince, who ſhould deliver them from the Roman yoke, and make them all kings and princes. He goes on then to obſerve how liable the people were, in this ſtate of things, to be impoſed on, and led into

into rebellion, by any one who was bold enough to take upon him to perſonate the prince expected. He obſerves further, that in fact many ſuch impoſtors did ariſe, and deceived multitudes to their ruin and deſtruction.

I have laid theſe things together, becauſe I do not intend to diſpute theſe matters with the gentleman. Whether the Jews were a weak and ſuperſtitious people, and influenced by falſe prophecies, or whether they had true prophecies among them, is not material to the preſent queſtion: it is enough for the gentleman's argument, if I allow the fact to be as he has ſtated it, that they did expect a victorious prince; that they were upon this account expoſed to be practiſed on by pretenders, and in fact were often ſo deluded.

This foundation being laid, it was natural to expect, and I believe your Lordſhip and every one preſent did expect, that the gentleman would go on to ſhew, that Jeſus laid hold of this opportunity, ſtruck in with the opinion of the people, and profeſſed himſelf to be the prince who was to work their deliverance. But ſo far, it ſeems, is this from being the caſe, that the charge upon Jeſus is, that he took the contrary part, and ſet up in oppoſition to all the popular notions and prejudices of his country; that he interpreted the prophecies to another ſenſe and meaning than his countrymen did; and by his expoſitions took away all hopes of their

their ever ſeeing the victorious deliverer ſo much wanted and expected.

I know not how to bring the gentleman's premiſes and his concluſion to any agreement; they ſeem to be at a great variance at preſent. If it be the likelieſt method for an impoſtor to ſucceed, to build on the popular opinions, prejudices, and prophecies of the people, then ſurely an impoſtor cannot poſſibly take a worſe method than to ſet up in oppoſition to all the prejudices and prophecies of the country. Where was the art and cunning then of taking this method? could any thing be expected from it but hatred, contempt, and perſecution? and did Chriſt in fact meet with any other treatment from the Jews? And yet when he found, as the gentleman allows he did, that he muſt periſh in this attempt, did he change his note? did he come about, and drop any intimations agreeable to the notions of the people? It is not pretended. This, which, in any other caſe which ever happened, would be taken to be a plain mark of great honeſty, or great ſtupidity, or of both, is, in the preſent caſe, art, policy, and contrivance.

But, it ſeems, Jeſus dared not ſet up to be the victorious prince expected, for victories are not to be counterfeited. I hope it was no crime in him that he did not aſſume this falſe character, and try to abuſe the credulity of the people: if he had done ſo, it certainly would have been a crime; and therefore in this point at leaſt he is innocent. I do not ſuppoſe the gentleman imagines

gines that the Jews were well founded in their expectation of a temporal prince: and therefore, when Chriſt oppoſed this conceit at the manifeſt hazard of his life, as he certainly had truth on his ſide, ſo the preſumption is, that it was for the ſake of truth that he expoſed himſelf.

No. He wanted, we are told, the common and neceſſary foundation for a new revelation, the authority of an old one to build on. Very well. I will not inquire how common, or how neceſſary this foundation is to a new revelation; for, be that caſe as it will, it is evident, that in the method Chriſt took, he had not, nor could have the ſuppoſed advantage of ſuch foundation. For why is this foundation neceſſary? A friend of the gentleman's ſhall tell you, "Becauſe * it muſt be difficult, if not "impoſſible, to introduce among men (who "in all civilized countries are bred up in "the belief of ſome revealed religion) a re-"vealed religion wholly new, or ſuch as "has no reference to a preceding one; for "that would be to combat all men on too "many reſpects, and not to proceed on a "ſufficient number of principles neceſſary "to be aſſented to by thoſe on whom the "firſt impreſſions of a new religion are "propoſed to be made." You ſee now the reaſon of the neceſſity of this foundation: it is, that the new teacher may have the advantage of old popular opinions, and fix himſelf

* *Diſcourſe of the grounds*, p. 24.

himſelf upon the prejudices of the people. Had Chriſt any ſuch advantages? or did he ſeek any ſuch? The people expected a victorious prince; he told them they were miſtaken: they held as ſacred the traditions of the elders; he told them thoſe traditions made the law of God of none effect: they valued themſelves for being the peculiar people of God; he told them, that people from all quarters of the world ſhould be the people of God, and ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom: they thought God could be worſhipped only at Jeruſalem; he told them God might and ſhould be worſhipped every where: they were ſuperſtitious in the obſervance of the ſabbath; he, according to their reckoning, broke it frequently: in a word, their waſhings of hands and pots, their ſuperſtitious diſtinctions of meats, their prayers in public, their villanies in ſecret, were all reproved, expoſed, and condemned by him; and the cry ran ſtrongly againſt him, that he came to deſtroy the law and the prophets. And now, Sir, what advantage had Chriſt of your common and neceſſary foundation? what *ſufficient number of principles* owned by the people did he build on? If he adhered to the old revelation in the true ſenſe, or (which is ſufficient to the preſent argument) in a ſenſe not received by the people, it was in truth the greateſt difficulty he had to ſtruggle with: and therefore what could tempt him, but purely a regard to truth, to take upon himſelf ſo many difficulties, which

might have been avoided, could he have been but ſilent as to the old revelation, and left the people to their imaginations?

To carry on this plot, we are told, that the next thing which Jeſus did, was, to make choice of proper perſons to be his diſciples. The gentleman has given us their character; but, as I ſuppoſe, he has more employment for them before he has done, I deſire to defer the conſideration of their abilities and conduct till I hear what work he has for them to do. I would only obſerve, that thus far this plot differs from all that ever I heard of. Impoſtors generally take advantage of the prejudices of the people, generally too they make choice of cunning dextrous fellows to manage under them; but in this caſe Jeſus oppoſed all the notions of the people, and made choice of ſimpletons, it ſeems, to conduct his contrivances.

But what deſign, what real end was carrying on all this while? Why, the gentleman tells us, that the very thing diſclaimed, the temporal kingdom, was the real thing aimed at under this diſguiſe. He told the people there was no foundation to expect a temporal deliverer, warned them againſt all who ſhould ſet up thoſe pretenſions; he declared there was no ground from the ancient prophecies to expect ſuch a prince: and yet, by theſe very means, he was working his way to an opportunity of declaring himſelf to be the very prince the people wanted. We are ſtill upon the marvellous; every ſtep opens new wonders. I blame not the gentleman;

gentleman; for what but this can be imagined to give any account of theſe meaſures imputed to Chriſt? Be this never ſo unlikely, yet this is the only thing can be ſaid. Had Chriſt been charged with enthuſiaſm, it would not have been neceſſary to aſſign a reaſon for his conduct: madneſs is unaccountable: *Ratione modoque tractari non vult.* But when deſign, cunning, and fraud, are made the charge, and carried to ſuch an height, as to ſuppoſe him to be a party to the contrivance of a ſham reſurrection for himſelf, it is neceſſary to ſay, to what end this cunning tended. It was, we are told, to a kingdom: and indeed the temptation was little enough, conſidering that the chief conductor of the plot was to be crucified for his pains. But were the means made uſe of at all probable to attain the end? Yes, ſays the gentleman, that cannot be diſputed; for they had really this effect, the people would have made him king. Very well: Why was he not king then? Why, it happened unluckily that he would not accept the offer, but withdrew himſelf from the multitude, and lay concealed till they were diſperſed. It will be ſaid, perhaps, that Jeſus was a better judge of affairs than the people, and ſaw that it was not yet time to accept the offer. Be it ſo; let us ſee then what follows.

The government was alarmed, and Jeſus was looked on as a perſon dangerous to the ſtate: and he had diſcernment enough to ſee

that his death was determined and inevitable. What does he do then? Why, to make the beſt of a bad caſe, and to ſave the benefit of his undertaking to thoſe who were to ſucceed him, he pretends to propheſy of his death, which he knew could not be avoided; and further, that he ſhould riſe again the third day.——Men do not uſe to play tricks *in articulo mortis*; but this plot had nothing common, nothing in the ordinary way. But what if it ſhould appear, that after the foretelling of his death (through deſpair of his fortunes it is ſaid) he had it in his power to ſet up for king once more, and once more refuſed the opportunity? Men in deſpair lay hold on the leaſt help, and never refuſe the greateſt. Now, the caſe was really ſo. After he had foretold his crucifixion, he came to Jeruſalem in the triumphant manner the gentleman mentioned; the people ſtrewed his way with boughs and flowers, and were all at his devotion; the Jewiſh governors lay ſtill, for fear of the people. Why was not this opportunity laid hold on to ſeize the kingdom, or at leaſt to ſecure himſelf from the ignominious death he expected? For whoſe ſake was he contented to die? for whoſe ſake did he contrive this plot of his reſurrection? Wife and children he had none; his neareſt relations gave little credit to him; his diſciples were not fit even to be truſted with the ſecret, nor capable to manage any advantage that could ariſe from it. However, the gentleman tells us, a kingdom has ariſen out of this

this plot; a kingdom of prieſts. But when did it ariſe? Some hundred years after the death of Chriſt, in oppoſition to his will, and almoſt to the ſubverſion of his religion. And yet we are told this kingdom was the thing he had in view. I am apt to think the gentleman is perſuaded, that the dominion he complains of is contrary to the ſpirit of the goſpel; I am ſure ſome of his friends have taken great pains to prove it ſo. How then can it be charged as the intention of the goſpel to introduce it? Whatever the caſe was, it cannot ſurely be ſuſpected that Chriſt died to make popes and cardinals. The alterations which have happened in the doctrines and practices of churches, ſince the Chriſtian religion was ſettled by thoſe who had an authentic commiſſion to ſettle it, are quite out of the queſtion, when the inquiry is about the truth of the Chriſtian religion. Chriſt and his apoſtles did not vouch for the truth of all that ſhould be taught in the church in future times; nay, they foretold and forewarned the world againſt ſuch corrupt teachers. It is therefore abſurd to challenge the religion of Chriſt, becauſe of the corruptions which have ſpread among Chriſtians. The goſpel has no more concern with them, and ought no more to be charged with them, than with the doctrines of the Alcoran.

There is but one obſervation more, I think, which the gentleman made under this head. Jeſus, he ſays, referred to the authority of ancient prophecies to prove that the

the Meſſias was to die and riſe again; the ancient books referred to are extant, and no ſuch prophecies, he ſays, are to be found. Now, whether the gentleman can find theſe prophecies or no, is not material to the preſent queſtion. It is allowed that Chriſt foretold his own death and reſurrection: if the reſurrection was managed by fraud, Chriſt was certainly in the fraud himſelf, by foretelling the fraud that was to happen: diſprove therefore the reſurrection, and we ſhall have no further occaſion for prophecy. On the other ſide, by foretelling the reſurrection, he certainly put the proof of his miſſion on the truth of the event. Whether it be the character of the Meſſias, in the ancient prophets, or no, that he ſhould die, and riſe again; without doubt Jeſus is not the Meſſias, if he did not riſe again: for, by his own prophecy, he made it part of the character of the Meſſias. If the event juſtified the prediction, it is ſuch an evidence as no man of ſenſe and reaſon can reject. One would naturally think, that the foretelling his reſurrection, and giving ſuch public notice to expect it, that his keeneſt enemies were fully appriſed of it, carried with it the greateſt mark of ſincere dealing. It ſtands thus far clear of the ſuſpicion of fraud. And had it proceeded from *enthuſiaſm*, and an heated imagination, the dead body at leaſt would have reſted in the grave, and without further evidence have confuted ſuch pretenſions: and ſince the dead body was not only carried openly to the grave, but there

there watched and guarded, and yet could never afterwards be found, never heard of more as a dead body, there muſt of neceſſity have been either a real miracle, or a great fraud in this caſe. *Enthuſiaſm* dies with the man, and has no operation on his dead body. There is therefore here no medium; you muſt either admit the miracle, or prove the fraud.

Judge. Mr *A*, You are at liberty either to reply to what has been ſaid under this head, or to go on with your cauſe.

Mr *A*. My Lord, The obſervations I laid before you were but introductory to the main evidences on which the merits of the cauſe muſt reſt. The gentleman concluded, that here muſt be a real miracle or a great fraud; a fraud, he means, to which Jeſus in his lifetime was a party. There is, he ſays, no medium. I beg his pardon. Why might it not be an enthuſiaſm in the maſter which occaſioned the prediction, and fraud in the ſervants who put it in execution?

Mr *B*. My Lord, This is new matter, and not a reply. The gentleman opened this tranſaction as a fraud from one end to the other. Now he ſuppoſes Chriſt to have been an honeſt poor *enthuſiaſt*, and the diſciples only to be cheats.

Judge. Sir, If you go to new matter, the counſel on the other ſide muſt be admitted to anſwer.

Mr *A*. My Lord, I have no ſuch intention. I was obſerving, that the account I gave of Jeſus was only to introduce the evidence

dence that is to be laid before the court. It cannot be expected, that I ſhould know all the ſecret deſigns of this contrivance, eſpecially conſidering that we have but ſhort accounts of this affair, and thoſe too conveyed to us through hands of friends, and parties to the plot. In ſuch a caſe it is enough if we can imagine what the views probably were; and in ſuch caſe too it muſt be very eaſy for a gentleman of parts to raiſe contrary imaginations, and to argue plauſibly from them. But the gentleman has rightly obſerved, that if the reſurrection be a fraud, there is an end of all pretenſions, good or bad, that were to be ſupported by it: therefore I ſhall go on to prove this fraud, which is one main part of the cauſe now to be determined.

I beg leave to remind you, that Jeſus in his lifetime foretold his death, and that he ſhould riſe again the third day. The firſt part of his prediction was accompliſhed: he died upon the croſs, and was buried. I will not trouble you with the particulars of his crucifixion, death, and burial; it is a well-known ſtory.

Mr *B.* My Lord, I deſire to know, whether the gentleman charges any fraud upon this part of the hiſtory. Perhaps he may be of opinion by and by, that there was a ſlight of hand in the crucifixion, and that Chriſt only counterfeited death.

Mr *A.* No, no; have no ſuch fears; he was not crucified by his diſciples, but by the Romans and the Jews; and they were in very

very good earneſt. I will prove beyond contradiction, that the dead body was fairly laid in the tomb, and the tomb ſealed up; and it will be well for you if you can get it as fairly out again.

Judge. Go on with your evidence.

Mr *A.* My Lord, The crucifixion being over, the dead body was conveyed to a ſepulchre; and, in the general opinion, there ſeemed to be an end of the whole deſign. But the governors of the Jews, watchful for the ſafety of the people, called to mind that Jeſus in his lifetime had ſaid, that he would riſe again on the third day. It may at firſt ſight ſeem ſtrange that they ſhould give any attention to ſuch a prophecy; a prophecy big with confidence and preſumption, and which to the common ſenſe of mankind carried its confutation along with it: and "there is no other nation in the "world which would not have ſlighted "ſuch a vain prognoſtication of a known "impoſtor." But they had warning to be watchful. It was not long before, that the people "had like to have been fatally de-"luded and impoſed on by him in the pre-"tended reſuſcitation of Lazarus." They had fully diſcovered the cheat in the caſe of Lazarus, and had narrowly eſcaped the dangerous conſequences of it. And though Jeſus was dead, yet he had many diſciples and followers alive, who were ready enough to combine in any fraud, to verify the prediction of their maſter. Should they ſucceed, the rulers foreſaw, the conſequences

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in this caſe would be more fatal than thoſe which before they had narrowly eſcaped. Upon this account they addreſſed themſelves to the Roman governor, told him how the caſe was, and deſired that he would grant them a guard to watch the ſepulchre; that the ſervice would not be long, for the prediction limited the reſurrection to the third day; and when that was over, the ſoldiers might be releaſed from the duty. Pilate granted the requeſt; and a guard was ſet to watch the ſepulchre.

This was not all. The chief prieſts took another method to prevent all frauds, and it was the beſt that could poſſibly be taken, which was, to ſeal up the door of the ſepulchre. To underſtand to what purpoſe this caution was uſed, you need only conſider what is intended by ſealing up doors, and boxes, or writings. Is it not for the ſatisfaction of all parties concerned, that they may be ſure things are in the ſtate they left them, when they come and find their ſeals not injured? This was the method uſed by Darius, when Daniel was caſt into the lion's den; he ſealed the door of the den. And for what purpoſe? Was it not to ſatisfy himſelf and his court, that no art had been uſed to preſerve Daniel? And when he came and ſaw Daniel ſafe, and his own ſeal untouched, he was ſatisfied. And indeed, if we conſider the thing rightly, a ſeal thus uſed imports a covenant. If you deliver writings to a perſon ſealed, and he accepts them ſo, your delivery and his ac-

ceptance

ceptance implies a covenant between you, that the writings ſhall be delivered, and the ſeal whole; and ſhould the ſeal be broken, it would be a manifeſt fraud, and breach of truſt. Nay, ſo ſtrongly is this covenant implied, that there needs no ſpecial agreement in the caſe; it is a compact which men are put under by the law of nations, and the common conſent of mankind. When you ſend a letter ſealed to the poſt houſe, you have not indeed a ſpecial agreement with all perſons through whoſe hands it paſſes, that it ſhall not be opened by any hand, but his only to whom it is directed; yet men know themſelves to be under this reſtraint, and that it is unlawful and diſhonourable to tranſgreſs it.

Since then the ſepulchre was ſealed; ſince the ſeal imported a covenant, conſider who were the parties to this covenant. They could be no other than the chief prieſts on one ſide, the apoſtles on the other. To prove this, no ſpecial agreement need be ſhewn. On one ſide, there was a concern to ſee the prediction fulfilled; on the other, to prevent fraud in fulfilling it. The ſum of their agreement was naturally this, that the ſeals ſhould be opened at the time appointed for the reſurrection, that all parties might ſee and be ſatisfied, whether the dead body was come to life or no.

What now would any reaſonable man expect from theſe circumſtances? Do not you expect to hear, that the chief prieſts and the apoſtles met at the time appointed, open-

ed the ſeals, and that the matter in diſpute was ſettled beyond all controverſy one way or other? But ſee how it happened. The ſeals were broken, the body ſtolen away in the night by the diſciples; none of the chief prieſts preſent, or ſummoned to ſee the ſeals opened. The guards, when examined, were forced to confeſs the truth, though joined with an acknowledgment of their guilt; which made them liable to be puniſhed by Pilate: they confeſſed that they were aſleep, and in the mean time, that the body was ſtolen away by the diſciples.

This evidence of the Roman ſoldiers, and the far ſtronger evidence ariſing from the clandeſtine manner of breaking up the ſeals, are ſufficient proofs of fraud.

But there is another circumſtance in the caſe, of equal weight. Though the ſeals did not prevent the cheat entirely, yet they effectually falſified the prediction. According to the prediction, Jeſus was to riſe on the third day, or after the third day. At this time the chief prieſts intended to be preſent, and probably would have been attended by a great multitude. This made it impoſſible to play any tricks at that time; and therefore the apoſtles were forced to haſten the plot: and accordingly the reſurrection happened a day before its time; for the body was buried on the Friday, and was gone early in the morning on Sunday.

Theſe are plain facts; facts drawn from the accounts given us by thoſe who are friends to the belief of the reſurrection.

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The gentleman will not call theſe imaginations, or complain that I have given him ſchemes inſtead of evidence.

Mr *B.* My Lord, I am now to conſider that part of the argument upon which the gentleman lays the greateſt ſtreſs He has given us his evidence; mere evidence, he ſays, unmixed, and clear of all ſchemes and imaginations. In one thing indeed he has been as good as his word; he has proved beyond contradiction, that Chriſt died, and was laid in the ſepulchre: for, without doubt, when the Jews ſealed the ſtone, they took care to ſee that the body was there; otherwiſe their precaution was uſeleſs. He has proved too, that the prediction of Chriſt concerning his own reſurrection, was a thing publicly known in all Jeruſalem; for he owns, that this gave occaſion for all the care that was taken to prevent fraud. If this open prediction implies a fraudulent deſign, the evidence is ſtrong with the gentleman: but if it ſhall appear to be, what it really was, the greateſt mark that could be given of ſincerity and plain dealing in the whole affair, the evidence will be ſtill as ſtrong, but the weight of it will fall on the wrong ſide for the gentleman's purpoſe.

In the next place, the gentleman ſeems to be at a great loſs to account for the credit which the chief prieſts gave to the prediction of the reſurrection, by the care they took to prevent it. He thinks the thing in itſelf was too extravagant and abſurd to deſerve any regard; and that no one would have

regarded ſuch a prediction in any other time or place. I agree with the gentleman entirely; but then I demand of him a reaſon why the chief prieſts were under any concern about this prediction. Was it becauſe they had plainly diſcovered him to be a cheat and an impoſtor? It is impoſſible. This reaſon would have convinced them of the folly and preſumption of the prediction. It muſt therefore neceſſarily be, that they had diſcovered ſomething in the life and actions of Chriſt which raiſed this jealouſy, and made them liſten to a prophecy in his caſe, which in any other caſe they would have deſpiſed. And what could this be, but the ſecret conviction they were under, by his many miracles, of his extraordinary powers? This care therefore of the chief prieſts over his dead, helpleſs body, is a laſting teſtimony of the mighty works which Jeſus did in his lifetime; for had the Jews been perſuaded that he performed no wonders in his life, I think they would not have been afraid of ſeeing any done by him after his death.

But the gentleman is of another mind. He ſays, they had diſcovered a plain cheat in the caſe of Lazarus, whom Chriſt had pretended to raiſe from the dead; and therefore they took all this care to guard againſt a like cheat.

I begin now to want evidence: I am forbid to call this imagination, what elſe to call it I know not. There is not the leaſt intimation given from hiſtory, that there was any

any cheat in the caſe of Lazarus, or that any one ſuſpected a cheat. Lazarus lived in the country after he was raiſed from the dead; and though his life was ſecretly and baſely ſought after, yet nobody had the courage to call him to a trial for his part of the cheat. It may be ſaid, perhaps, the rulers were terrified. Very well: but they were not terrified when they had Chriſt in their poſſeſſion, when they brought him to a trial; why did they not then object this cheat to Chriſt? It would have been much to their purpoſe. Inſtead of that, they accuſe him of a deſign to pull down the temple, to deſtroy their law, and of blaſphemy; but not one word of any fraud in the caſe of Lazarus, or any other caſe.

But not to enter into the merits of this cauſe, which has in it too many circumſtances for your preſent conſideration; let us take the caſe to be as the gentleman ſtates it, that the cheat in the caſe of Lazarus was detected; what conſequence is to be expected? In all other caſes, impoſtors once diſcovered, grow odious and contemptible, and quite incapable of doing further miſchief; ſo little are they regarded, that even when they tell the truth they are neglected. Was it ſo in this caſe? No, ſays the gentleman; the Jews were the more careful that Chriſt ſhould not cheat them in his own reſurrection. Surely this is a moſt ſingular caſe. When the people thought him a prophet, the chief prieſts ſought to kill him, and thought his death would put an end to

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his pretenſions: when they and the people had diſcovered him to be a cheat, then they thought him not ſafe, even when he was dead, but were afraid he ſhould prove a true prophet, and, according to his own prediction, riſe again. A needleſs, a prepoſterous fear!

In the next place, the gentleman tells us how proper the care was that the chief prieſts took. I agree perfectly with him. Human policy could not invent a more proper method to guard againſt and prevent all fraud. They delivered the ſepulchre, with the dead body in it, to a company of Roman ſoldiers, who had orders from their officer to watch the ſepulchre. Their care went further ſtill; they ſealed the door of the ſepulchre.

Upon this occaſion, the gentleman has explained the uſe of ſeals when applied to ſuch purpoſes. They imply, he ſays, a covenant, that the things ſealed up ſhall remain in the condition they are till the parties to the ſealing are agreed to open them. I ſee no reaſon to enter into the learning about ſeals: let it be as the gentleman has opened it; what then?

Why then, it ſeems, the apoſtles and chief prieſts were in a covenant that there ſhould be no reſurrection, at leaſt no opening of the door, till they met together at an appointed time to view and unſeal the door.

Your Lordſhip and the court will now conſider the probability of this ſuppoſition. When Chriſt was ſeized and carried to his

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trial, his diſciples fled, and hid themſelves for fear of the Jews, out of a juſt apprehenſion that they ſhould, if apprehended, be ſacrificed with their maſter. Peter indeed followed him; but his courage ſoon failed, and it is well known in what manner he denied him. After the death of Chriſt, his diſciples were ſo far from being ready to engage for his reſurrection, or to enter into terms and agreements for the manner in which it ſhould be done, that they themſelves did not believe it ever would be; they gave over all hopes and thoughts of it; and far from entering into engagements with the chief prieſts, their whole concern was, to keep themſelves concealed from them. This is a well-known caſe, and I will not trouble you with particular authorities to prove this truth. Can any man now in his right ſenſes think, that the diſciples under theſe circumſtances entered into this covenant with the Jews? I believe the gentleman does not think it, and for that reaſon ſays, that ſeals ſo uſed import a covenant without a ſpecial agreement. Be it ſo; and it muſt then be allowed, that the apoſtles were no more concerned in theſe ſeals, than every other man in the country, and no more anſwerable for them; for the covenant reached to every body as well as to them, ſince they were under no ſpecial contract.

But I beg pardon for ſpending your time unneceſſarily, when the ſimple plain account of this matter will beſt anſwer all theſe jealouſies and ſuſpicions. The Jews, it is plain,

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were exceedingly ſolicitous about this event: for this reaſon they obtained a guard from Pilate; and when they had, they were ſtill ſuſpicious leſt their guards ſhould deceive them, and enter into combination againſt them. To ſecure this point, they ſealed the door, and required of the guards to deliver up the ſepulchre to them ſealed as it was. This is the natural and true account of the matter. Do but conſider it in a parallel caſe. Suppoſe a prince ſhould ſet a guard at the door of his treaſury, and the officer who placed the guard ſhould ſeal the door, and ſay to the ſoldiers, You ſhall be anſwerable for the ſeal if I find it broken: would not all the world underſtand the ſeal to be fixed to guard againſt the ſoldiers, who might, though employed to keep off others, be ready enough to pilfer themſelves? This is in all ſuch caſes but a neceſſary care; you may place guards, and when you do, all is in their power: *Et quis cuſtodes cuſtodiat ipſos?*

But it ſeems, that, notwithſtanding all this care, the ſeals were broken, and the body gone. If you complain of this, Sir, demand ſatisfaction of your guards; they only are reſponſible for it: the diſciples had no more to do in it than you or I.

The guards, the gentleman ſays, have confeſſed the truth, and owned that they were aſleep, and that the diſciples in the mean time ſtole away the body. I wiſh the guards were in court, I would aſk them, how they came to be ſo punctual in relating what hap-

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As this ſtory has no evidence to ſupport it, ſo neither has it any probability. The gentleman has given you the character of the diſciples; that they were weak, ignorant men, full of the popular prejudices and ſuperſtitions of their country, which ſtuck cloſe to them notwithſtanding their long acquaintance with their maſter. The apoſtles are not much wronged in this account; and is it likely, that ſuch men ſhould engage in ſo deſperate a deſign, as to ſteal away the body, in oppoſition to the combined power of the Jews and Romans? What could tempt them to it? what good could the dead body do them? or if it could have done them any, what hope had they to ſucceed in their attempt? A dead body is not to be removed by ſlight of hand; it requires many hands to move it. Beſides, the great ſtone at the mouth of the ſepulchre was to be removed; which could not be done ſilently, or by men walking on tip-toes to prevent diſcove-

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ry: ſo that if the guards had really been aſleep, yet there was no encouragement to go on this enterprize; for it is hardly poſſible to ſuppoſe, but that rolling away the ſtone, moving the body, the hurry and confuſion in carrying it off, muſt awaken them.

But ſuppoſing the thing practicable, yet the attempt was ſuch as the diſciples, conſiſtently with their own notions, could not undertake. The gentleman ſays, they continued all their maſter's lifetime to expect to ſee him a temporal prince; and a friend of the gentleman's ‡ has obſerved, what is equally true, that they had the ſame expectation after his death. Conſider now their caſe. Their maſter was dead; and they are to contrive to ſteal away his body. For what? Did they expect to make a king of the dead body, if they could get it into their power? Or did they think, if they had it, they could raiſe it to life again? If they truſted ſo far to their maſter's prediction, as to expect his reſurrection, (which I think is evident they did not), could they yet think the reſurrection depended on their having the dead body? It is in all views abſurd. But the gentleman ſuppoſes, that they meant to carry on the deſign for themſelves, in their maſter's name, if they could but have perſuaded the people to believe him riſen from the dead. But he does not conſider that by this ſuppoſition he ſtrips the diſciples of every part of their character at once, and

‡ *Grounds*, p. 33.

and preſents to us a new ſet of men, in every reſpect different from the former. The former diſciples were plain, weak men; but theſe are bold, hardy, cunning, and contriving: the former were full of the ſuperſtition of their country, and expected a prince from the authority of their prophets; but theſe are deſpiſers of the prophets, and of the notions of their countrymen, and are deſigning to turn theſe fables to their own advantage; for it cannot be ſuppoſed that they believed the prophets, and at the ſame time thought to accompliſh or defeat them by ſo manifeſt a cheat, to which they themſelves at leaſt were conſcious.

But let us take leave of theſe ſuppoſitions, and ſee how the true evidence in this caſe ſtands. Guards were placed, and they did their duty. But what are guards and centinels againſt the power of God! An angel of the Lord opened the ſepulchre; the guards ſaw him, and became like dead men. This account they gave to the chief prieſts, who, ſtill perſiſting in their obſtinacy, bribed the guards to tell the contradictory ſtory, of their being aſleep, and the body ſtolen.

I cannot but obſerve to your Lordſhip, that all theſe circumſtances, ſo much queſtioned and ſuſpected, were neceſſary circumſtances, ſuppoſing the reſurrection to be true. The ſeal was broken, the body came out of the ſepulchre, the guards were placed in vain to prevent it. Be it ſo: I deſire to know, whether the gentleman

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thinks that the ſeal put God under covenant? or could preſcribe to him a method of performing this great work? or whether he thinks the guards were placed to maintain the ſeal, in oppoſition to the power of God? If he will maintain neither of theſe points, then the opening the ſeals, notwithſtanding the guard ſet upon them, will be an evidence, not of the fraud, but of the power of the reſurrection; and the guards will have nothing to anſwer for, but only this, that they were not ſtronger than God. The ſeal was a proper check upon the guards: the Jews had no other meaning in it; they could not be ſo ſtupid as to imagine that they could by this contrivance diſappoint the deſigns of providence. And it is ſurpriſing to hear theſe circumſtances made uſe of to prove the reſurrection to be a fraud, which yet could not but happen, ſuppoſing the reſurrection to be true.

But there is another circumſtance ſtill, which the gentleman reckons very material, and upon which I find great ſtreſs is laid. The reſurrection happened, we are told, a day ſooner than the prediction imported. The reaſon aſſigned for it is, that the execution of the plot at the time appointed was rendered impracticable, becauſe the chief prieſts, and probably great numbers of the people, were prepared to viſit the ſepulchre at that time; and therefore the diſciples were under a neceſſity of haſtening their plot.

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This obſervation is entirely inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition upon which the reaſoning ſtands. The gentleman has all along ſuppoſed the reſurrection to have been managed by fraud, and not by violence. And indeed violence, if there had been an opportunity of uſing it, would have been inſignificant: beating the guards, and removing the dead body by force, would have deſtroyed all pretences to a reſurrection. Now, ſurely the guards, ſuppoſing them not to be enough in number to withſtand all violence, were at leaſt ſufficient to prevent or to diſcover fraud. What occaſion then to haſten the plot for fear of numbers meeting at the tomb, ſince there were numbers always preſent ſufficient to diſcover any fraud, the only method that could be uſed in the caſe?

Suppoſe then that we could not give a ſatisfactory account of the way of reckoning the time from the crucifixion to the reſurrection; yet this we can ſay, that the reſurrection happened during the time that the guards had the ſepulchre in keeping; and it is impoſſible to imagine what opportunity this could give to fraud. Had the time been delayed, the guards removed, and then a reſurrection pretended, it might with ſome colour of reaſon have been ſaid, Why did he not come within his time? why did he chuſe to come after his time, when all witneſſes, who had patiently expected the appointed hour, were withdrawn? But now, what is to be objected? You think he came

too ſoon. But were not your guards at the door when he came? did they not ſee what happened? and what other ſatisfaction could you have had, ſuppoſing he had come a day later?

By ſaying of this, I do not mean to decline the gentleman's objection, which is founded upon a miſtake of a way of ſpeaking, common to the Jews and other people; who, when they name any number of days and years, include the firſt and the laſt of the days or years to make up the ſum. Chriſt, alluding to his own reſurrection, ſays, "In "three days I will raiſe it up." The angels report his prediction thus, "The Son of "man ſhall be crucified, and the third day "riſe again." Elſewhere it is ſaid, "After three days;" and again, That he was to be in the bowels of the earth "three "days and three nights." Theſe expreſſions are equivalent to each other; for we always reckon the night into the day, when we reckon by ſo many days. If you agree to do a thing ten days hence, you ſtipulate for forbearance for the nights as well as days; and therefore, in reckoning, two days, and two nights, are the ſame thing. That the expreſſion, "after three days," means incluſive days, is proved by Grotius on Matth. xxvii. 63. and by others. The prediction therefore was, that he would riſe on the third day. Now, he was crucified on Friday, and buried; he lay in the grave all Saturday, and roſe early on Sunday morning. But the gentleman thinks he ought

ought not to have riſen till Monday. Pray try what the uſe of common language requires to be underſtood in a like caſe. Suppoſe you were told, that your friend ſickened on Friday, was let blood on Saturday, and the third day he died; what day would you think he died on? If you have any doubt about it, put the queſtion to the firſt plain man you meet, and he will reſolve it. The Jews could have no doubt in this caſe; for ſo they practiſed in one of the higheſt points of their law. Every male child was to be circumciſed on the eighth day. How did they reckon the days? Why, the day of the birth was one, and the day of the circumciſion another; and though a child was born towards the very end of the firſt day, he was capable of circumciſion on any time of the eighth day. And therefore it is not new nor ſtrange, that the third day, in our caſe, ſhould be reckoned into the number, though Chriſt roſe at the very beginning of it. It is more ſtrange to reckon whole years in this manner; and yet this is the conſtant method obſerved in Ptolemy's canon, the moſt valuable piece of ancient chronology, next to the Bible, now extant. If a king lived over the firſt day of a year, and died the week after, that whole year is reckoned to his reign.

I have now gone through the ſeveral objections upon this head: what credit they may gain in this age, I know not; but it is plain they had no credit when they were firſt ſpread abroad; nay, it is evident, that the

very perſons who ſet abroad this ſtory of the body being ſtolen, did not believe it themſelves. And, not to inſiſt here upon the plain fact, which was, that the guards were hired to tell this lie by the chief prieſts, it will appear from the after-conduct of the chief prieſts themſelves, that they were conſcious that the ſtory was falſe. Not long after the reſurrection of Chriſt, the diſciples having received new power from above, appeared publicly in Jeruſalem, and in the very temple, and teſtified the reſurrection of Chriſt, even before thoſe who had murdered him. What now do the chief prieſts do? They ſeize upon the apoſtles, they threaten them, they beat them, they ſcourge them, and all to ſtop their mouths, inſiſting that they ſhould ſay no more of the matter. But why did they not, when they had the diſciples in their power, charge them directly with their notorious cheat in ſtealing the body, and expoſe them to the people as impoſtors? This had been much more to their purpoſe than all their menaces and ill uſage, and would more effectually have undeceived the people. But of this not one word is ſaid. They try to murder them, enter into combinations to aſſaſſinate them, prevail with Herod to put one of them to death; but not ſo much as a charge againſt them of any fraud in the reſurrection. Their orator Tertullus, who could not have miſſed ſo fine a topic of declamation, had there been but a ſuſpicion to ſupport it, is quite ſilent on this head, and is content to flouriſh on the

common-place

common-place of ſedition and hereſy, profaning the temple, and the like: very trifles to his cauſe, in compariſon to the other accuſation, had there been any ground to make uſe of it. And yet as it happens, we are ſure the very queſtion of the reſurrection came under debate; for Feſtus tells king Agrippa, that the Jews had certain queſtions againſt Paul, *of one Jeſus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.* After this, Agrippa hears Paul himſelf; and had he ſuſpected, much leſs had he been convinced that there was a cheat in the reſurrection, he would hardly have ſaid to Paul at the end of the conference, *Almoſt thou perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.*

But let us ſee what the council and ſenate of the children of Iſrael thought of this matter, in the moſt ſolemn and ſerious deliberation they ever had about it. † Not long after the reſurrection, the apoſtles were taken; the high prieſt thought the matter of that weight, that he ſummoned the council and ſenate of the children of Iſrael. The apoſtles are brought before them, and make their defence. Part of their defence is in theſe words: *The God of our fathers raiſed up Jeſus, whom ye ſlew and hanged on a tree.* The defence was indeed a heavy charge upon the ſenate; and, in the warmth of their anger, their firſt reſolution was to ſlay them all. But Gamaliel, one of the council, ſtood up, and told them, that the matter deſerved more

 conſideration.

† Acts v.

conſideration. He recounted to them the hiſtory of ſeveral impoſtorswho had periſhed, and concluded with reſpect to the caſe of the apoſtles then before them: *If this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, leſt haply ye be found to fight againſt God.* The council agreed to this advice, and after ſome ill treatment, the apoſtles were diſcharged. I aſk now, and let any man of common ſenſe anſwer, Could Gamaliel poſſibly have given this advice, and ſuppoſed that the hand of God might be with the apoſtles, if he had known that there was a cheat diſcovered in the reſurrection of Jeſus? Could the whole ſenate have followed this advice, had they believed the diſcovery of the cheat? Was there not among them one man wiſe enough to ſay, How can you ſuppoſe God to have any thing to do in this affair, when the reſurrection of Jeſus, upon which all depends, was a notorious cheat, and manifeſtly proved to be ſo? I ſhould but leſſen the weight of this authority by ſaying more, and therefore I will reſt here, and give way to the gentleman to go on with his accuſation.

Mr *A.* My Lord, before I proceed any further, I beg leave to ſay a few words in reply to what the gentleman has offered on this head.

The gentleman thinks, that the detection in the caſe of Lazarus ought to have made the Jews quite unconcerned in the caſe of Jeſus, and ſecure as to the event of his own reſurrection. He ſays very true, ſuppoſing

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their care had been for themſelves: but governors have another care upon their hands, the care of their people; and it is not enough for them to guard againſt being impoſed on themſelves, they muſt be watchful to guard the multitude againſt frauds and deceits. The chief prieſts were ſatisfied indeed of the fraud in the caſe of Lazarus, yet they ſaw the people deceived by it; and for this reaſon, and not for their own ſatisfaction, they uſed the caution in the caſe of the reſurrection of Jeſus, which I before laid before you. In ſo doing they are well juſtified; and the inconſiſtency charged on the other ſide, betwcen their opinion of Jeſus, and their fear of being impoſed on by his pretended reſurrection, is fully anſwered.

The next obſervation relates to the ſeal of the ſepulchre. The gentleman thinks the ſeal was uſed as a check upon the Roman ſoldiers. But what reaſon had the Jews to ſuſpect them? They were not diſciples of Jeſus; they were ſervants of the Roman governor, and employed in the ſervice of the Jews: and I leave it to the court to judge, whether the Jews ſet the ſeal to guard againſt their friends, or their enemies? But if the ſeals were really uſed againſt the guards, then the breaking of the ſeals is a proof that the guards were corrupted: and if ſo, it is eaſy to conceive how the body was removed.

As to the diſciples, the gentleman obſerves, that the part allotted them in the management of the reſurrection ſuppoſes an unaccountable

unaccountable change in their character. It will not be long before the gentleman will have occaſion for as great a change in their character: for theſe weak men you will find ſoon employed in converting the world, and ſent to appear before kings and princes in the name of their maſter; ſoon you will ſee them grow wiſe and powerful, and every way qualified for their extenſive and important buſineſs. The only difference between me and the gentleman on the other ſide will be found to be this, that I date this change a little earlier than he does: A ſmall matter, ſurely, to determine the right of this controverſy.

The laſt obſervation relates to king Agrippa's complaiſance to Paul, and Gamaliel's advice. I cannot anſwer for Agrippa's meaning: but certainly he meant but little; and if this matter is to be tried by his opinion, we know that he never did turn Chriſtian. As for Gamaliel, it is probable that he ſaw great numbers of the poople engaged zealouſly in favour of the apoſtles, and might think it prudent to paſs the matter over in ſilence, and not to come to extremities. This is a common caſe in all governments: the multitude and their leaders often eſcape puniſhment; not becauſe they do not deſerve it, but becauſe it is not, in ſome circumſtances, prudent to exact it.

I paſs over theſe things lightly, becauſe the next article contains the great, to us indeed, who live at this diſtance, the only great queſtion; for whatever reaſon the Jews had

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to believe the reſurrection, it is nothing to us, unleſs the ſtory has been conveyed to us upon ſuch evidence as is ſufficient to ſupport the weight laid on it.

My Lord, We are now to enter upon the laſt and main article of this caſe; the nature of the evidence upon which the credit of the reſurrection ſtands. Before I inquire into the qualifications of the particular witneſſes whoſe words we are deſired to take in this caſe, I would aſk, why this evidence, which manifeſtly relates to the moſt eſſential point of Chriſtianity, was not put beyond all exception? Many of the miracles of Chriſt are ſaid to be done in the ſtreets, nay even in the temple, under the obſervation of all the world; but the like is not ſo much as pretended as to this: nay, we have it upon the confeſſion of Peter, the ringleader of the apoſtles, that Chriſt appeared, ‡ *not to all the people, but unto witneſſes choſen before of God.* Why picking and culling of witneſſes in this caſe more than in any other? Does it not import ſome ſuſpicion, raiſe ſome jealouſy, that this caſe would not bear the public light?

I would aſk more particularly, Why did not Jeſus after his reſurrection appear openly to the chief prieſts and rulers of the Jews? Since his commiſſion related to them in an eſpecial manner, why were not his credentials laid before them? The reſurrection is acknowledged to be the chief proof of his miſſion,

‡ Acts x. 41.

miſſion, why then was it concealed from thoſe who were more than all others concerned in the event of his miſſion? Suppoſe an ambaſſador from ſome foreign prince ſhould come into England, make his public entry through the city, pay and receive viſits, and at laſt refuſe to ſhew any letters of credence, or to wait on the king, what would you think of him? Whatever you would think in that caſe, you muſt think in this; for there is no difference between them.

But we muſt take the evidence as it is. It was thought proper, in this caſe, to have ſelect choſen witneſſes; and we muſt now conſider who they were, and what reaſon we have to take their word.

The firſt witneſs was an angel, or angels. They appeared like men to ſome women who went early to the ſepulchre. If they appeared like men, upon what ground are we to take them for angels? The women ſaw men, and therefore they can witneſs only to the ſeeing of men. But I ſuppoſe it is the womens judgment, and not their evidence that we are to follow in this caſe. Here then we have a ſtory of one apparition to ſupport the credit of another apparition: and the firſt apparition hath not ſo much as the evidence of the women to ſupport it, but is grounded on their ſuperſtition, ignorance, and fear. Every country can afford an hundred inſtances of this kind; and there is this common to them all, that as learning and common ſenſe prevail in any country,

country, they die away, and are no more heard of.

The next witneſſes are the women themſelves. The wiſeſt men can hardly guard themſelves againſt the fears of ſuperſtition; poor ſilly women therefore in this caſe muſt needs be unexceptionable witneſſes, and fit to be admitted into the number of the choſen witneſſes to atteſt this fact. One part of the account given of them is very rational, that they were ſurpriſed and frightened beyond meaſure; and I leave it to your Lordſhip and the court to judge, how well qualified they were to give a juſt relation of what paſſed.

After this, Jeſus appears to two of his diſciples as they were upon a journey; he joins them, and introduces a diſcourſe about himſelf; and ſpent much time, till it began to grow dark, in expounding the prophecies relating to the death and reſurrection of the Meſſias. All this while the diſciples knew him not. But then going into an houſe to lodge together, at ſupper he broke bread, and gave it to them; immediately they knew him, immediately he vaniſhed. Here then are two witneſſes more. But what will you call them? eye-witneſſes? Why their eyes were open, and they had their ſenſes, when he reaſoned with them, and they knew him not. So far therefore they are witneſſes that it was not he. Tell us therefore upon what account you reject the evidence of their ſenſe before the breaking of the bread, and inſiſt on it afterwards? and why

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did Jeſus vaniſh as ſoon as known; which has more of the air of an apparition, than of the appearance of a real man reſtored to life?

Cleopas, who was one of theſe two diſciples, finds out the apoſtles, to make the report of what had paſſed to them. No ſooner was the ſtory told, but Jeſus appears among them. They were all frightened and confounded, and thought they ſaw a ſpectre. He rebukes them for infidelity, and their ſlowneſs in believing the propheſies of his reſurrection: and though he refuſed before to let the women touch him, (a circumſtance which I ought not to have omitted), yet now he invites the apoſtles to handle him, to examine his hands and feet, and ſearch the wounds of the croſs. But what body was it they examined? the ſame that came in when the doors were ſhut; the ſame that vaniſhed from the two diſciples; the ſame that the women might not touch: in a word, a body quite different from an human body, which we know cannot paſs through walls, or appear or diſappear at pleaſure. What then could their hands or eyes inform them of in this caſe? Beſides, is it credible that God ſhould raiſe a body imperfectly, with the very wounds in it of which it died? or, if the wounds were ſuch as deſtroyed the body before, how could a natural body ſubſiſt with them afterwards?

There are more appearances of Jeſus recorded; but ſo much of the ſame kind, ſo liable to the ſame difficulties and objections,

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that I will not trouble your Lordſhip and the court with a diſtinct enumeration of them. If the gentleman on the other ſide finds any advantage in any of them more than in theſe mentioned, I ſhall have an opportunity to conſider them in my reply.

It may ſeem ſurpriſing to you, perhaps, that a matter of this moment was truſted upon ſuch evidence as this: but it will be ſtill more ſurpriſing to conſider, that the ſeveral nations who received the goſpel, and ſubmitted to the faith of this article, had not even this evidence: for what people or nation had the evidence of the angels, the women, or even of all the apoſtles? So far from it, that every country had its ſingle apoſtle, and received the faith upon the credit of his ſingle evidence. We have followed our anceſtors without inquiry; and if you examine the thing to the bottom, our belief was originally built upon the word of one man.

I ſhall trouble you, Sir, but with one obſervation more; which is this: That although in common life we act in a thouſand inſtances upon the faith and credit of human teſtimony; yet the reaſon for ſo doing is not the ſame in the caſe before us. In common affairs, where nothing is aſſerted but what is probable, and poſſible, and according to the uſual courſe of nature, a reaſonable degree of evidence ought to determine every man: for the very probability, or poſſibility of the thing, is a ſupport to the evidence; and in ſuch caſes we have no

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doubt but a man's ſenſes qualify him to be a witneſs. But when the thing teſtified is contrary to the order of nature, and, at firſt ſight at leaſt, impoſſible, what evidence can be ſufficient to overturn the conſtant evidence of nature, which ſhe gives us in the uniform and regular method of her operations? If a man tells me he has been in France, I ought to give a reaſon for not believing him; but if he tells me he comes from the grave, what reaſon can he give why I ſhould believe him? In the caſe before us, ſince the body raiſed from the grave differed from common natural bodies, as we have before ſeen; how can I be aſſured, that the apoſtles ſenſes qualified them to judge at all of this body, whether it was the ſame, or not the ſame which was buried? They handled the body, which yet could paſs through doors and walls; they ſaw it, and ſometimes knew it, at other times knew it not. In a word, it ſeems to be a caſe exempt from human evidence. Men have limited ſenſes, and a limited reaſon: when they act within their limits, we may give credit to them; but when they talk of things removed beyond the reach of their ſenſes and reaſon, we muſt quit our own, if we believe theirs.

Mr *B.* My Lord, In anſwering the objections under this head, I ſhall find myſelf obliged to change the order in which the gentleman thought proper to place them. He began with complaining, that Chriſt did not appear publicly to the Jews after his reſurrection,

reſurrection, and eſpecially to the chief prieſts and rulers; and ſeemed to argue, as if ſuch evidence would have put the matter in queſtion out of all doubt: but he concluded with an obſervation, to prove that no evidence in this caſe can be ſufficient; that a reſurrection is a thing in nature impoſſible, at leaſt impoſſible to be proved to the ſatisfaction of a rational inquirer. If this be the caſe, why does he require more evidence, ſince none can be ſufficient? Or to what purpoſe is it to vindicate the particular evidence of the reſurrection of Chriſt, ſo long as this general prejudice, that a reſurrection is incapable of being proved, remains unremoved? I am under a neceſſity therefore to conſider this obſervation in the firſt place, that it may not lie as a dead weight upon all I have to offer in ſupport of the evidence of Chriſt's reſurrection.

The gentleman allows it to be reaſonable in many caſes to act upon the teſtimony and credit of others; but he thinks this ſhould be confined to ſuch caſes, where the thing teſtified is *probable*, *poſſible*, and *according to the uſual courſe of nature*. The gentleman does not, I ſuppoſe, pretend to know the extent of all natural poſſibilities, much leſs will he ſuppoſe them to be generally known; and therefore his meaning muſt be, that the teſtimony of witneſſes is to be received only in caſes which appear to us to be poſſible. In any other ſenſe we can have no diſpute; for mere impoſſibilities, which can never

exiſt, can never be proved. Taking the obſervation therefore in this ſenſe, the propoſition is this: That the teſtimony of others ought not to be admitted, but in ſuch matters as appear probable, or at leaſt poſſible to our conceptions. For inſtance: A man who lives in a warm climate, and never ſaw ice, ought upon no evidence to believe, that rivers freeze, and grow hard, in cold countries; for this is improbable, contrary to the uſual courſe of nature, and impoſſible according to his notion of things. And yet we all know, that this is a plain, manifeſt caſe, diſcernible by the ſenſes of men; of which therefore they are qualified to be good witneſſes. An hundred ſuch inſtances might be named; but it is needleſs: for ſurely nothing is more apparently abſurd, than to make one man's ability in diſcerning, and his veracity in reporting plain facts, depend upon the ſkill or ignorance of the hearer. And what has the gentleman ſaid upon this occaſion againſt the reſurrection, more than any man who never ſaw ice might ſay againſt an hundred honeſt witneſſes, who aſſert that water turns to ice in cold climates?

It is very true, that men do not ſo eaſily believe, upon teſtimony of others, things which to them ſeem improbable or impoſſible; but the reaſon is not becauſe the thing itſelf admits no evidence, but becauſe the hearer's preconceived opinion outweighs the credit of the reporter, and makes his veracity to be called in queſtion. For inſtance:

ſtance: It is natural for a ſtone to roll down hill, it is unnatural for it to roll up hill: but a ſtone moving up hill is as much the object of ſenſe, as a ſtone moving down hill; and all men in their ſenſes are as capable of ſeeing and judging, and reporting the fact in one caſe, as in the other. Should a man then tell you, that he ſaw a ſtone go up hill of its own accord, you might queſtion his veracity; but you could not ſay the thing admitted no evidence, becauſe it was contrary to the law and uſual courſe of nature; for the law of nature formed to yourſelf from your own experience and reaſoning, is quite independent of the matter of fact which the man teſtifies: and whenever you ſee facts yourſelf which contradict your notions of the law of nature, you admit the facts becauſe you believe yourſelf; when you do not admit like facts upon the evidence of others, it is becauſe you do not believe them, and not becauſe the facts in their own nature exclude all evidence.

Suppoſe a man ſhould tell you, that he was come from the dead, you would be apt to ſuſpect his evidence. But what would you ſuſpect? That he was not alive, when you heard him, ſaw him, felt him, and converſed with him? You could not ſuſpect this without giving up all your ſenſes, and acting in this caſe as you act in no other. Here then you would queſtion, whether the man had ever been dead? But would you ſay, that it is incapable of being made plain by human teſtimony, that this or that man

died a year ago? It cannot be ſaid. Evidence in this caſe is admitted in all courts perpetually.

Conſider it the other way. Suppoſe you ſaw a man publicly executed, his body afterwards wounded by the executioner, and carried and laid in the grave; that after this you ſhould be told, that the man was come to life again; what would you ſuſpect in this caſe? Not that the man had never been dead; for that you ſaw yourſelf: but you would ſuſpect whether he was now alive. But would you ſay this caſe excluded all human teſtimony, and that men could not poſſibly diſcern, whether one with whom they converſed familiarly was alive or no? Upon what ground could you ſay this? A man riſing from the grave is an object of ſenſe, and can give the ſame evidence of his being alive, as any other man in the world can give. So that a reſurrection conſidered only as a fact to be proved by evidence, is a plain caſe; it requires no greater ability in the witneſſes, than that they be able to diſtinguiſh between a man dead, and a man alive: A point in which I believe every man living thinks himſelf a judge.

I do allow that this caſe, and others of like nature, require more evidence to give them credit than ordinary caſes do. You may therefore require more evidence in theſe, than in other caſes; but it is abſurd to ſay, that ſuch caſes admit no evidence, when the things in queſtion are manifeſtly objects of ſenſe.

I allow further, that the gentleman has rightly ſtated the difficulty upon the foot of common prejudice; and that it ariſes from hence, that ſuch caſes appear to be contrary to the courſe of nature. But I deſire him to conſider what this courſe of nature is. Every man, from the loweſt countryman to the higheſt philoſopher, frames to himſelf, from his experience and obſervation, a notion of a courſe of nature; and is ready to ſay of every thing reported to him that contradicts his experience, that it is contrary to nature. But will the gentleman ſay, that every thing is impoſſible, or even improbable, that contradicts the notion which men frame to themſelves of the courſe of nature? I think he will not ſay it. And if he will, he muſt ſay that water can never freeze; for it is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the notion which men have of the courſe of nature, who live in the warm climates. And hence it appears, that when men talk of the courſe of nature, they really talk of their own prejudices and imaginations; and that ſenſe and reaſon are not ſo much concerned in the caſe, as the gentleman imagines. For I aſk, Is it from the evidence of ſenſe, or the evidence of reaſon, that people of warm climates think it contrary to nature, that water ſhould grow ſolid, and become ice? As for ſenſe, they ſee indeed that water with them is always liquid; but none of their ſenſes tell them that it can never grow ſolid. As for reaſon, it can never ſo inform them; for right reaſon can never contradict

dict the truth of things. Our ſenſes then inform us rightly what the uſual courſe of things is; but when we conclude, that things cannot be otherwiſe, we outrun the information of our ſenſes, and the concluſion ſtands upon prejudice, and not upon reaſon. And yet ſuch concluſions form what is generally called the courſe of nature. And when men upon proper evidence and informations admit things contrary to this preſuppoſed courſe of nature, they do not, as the gentleman expreſſes it, *quit their own ſenſe and reaſon*; but, in truth, they quit their own miſtakes and prejudices.

In the caſe before us, the caſe of the reſurrection, the great difficulty ariſes from the like prejudice. We all know by experience that all men die, and riſe no more; therefore we conclude, that for a dead man to riſe to life again, is contrary to the courſe of nature; and certainly it is contrary to the uniform and ſettled courſe of things, But if we argue from hence, that it is contrary and repugnant to the real laws of nature, and abſolutely impoſſible on that account, we argue without any foundation to ſupport us, either from our ſenſes or our reaſon. We cannot learn from our eyes, or feeling, or any other ſenſe, that it is impoſſible for a dead body to live again: if we learn it at all, it muſt be from our reaſon; and yet what one maxim of reaſon is contradicted by the ſuppoſition of a reſurrection? For my own part, when I conſider how I live; that all the animal motions neceſſary

ceſſary to my life are independent of my will; that my heart beats without my conſent, and without my direction; that digeſtion and nutrition are performed by methods to which I am not conſcious; that my blood moves in a perpetual round, which is contrary to all known laws of motion: I cannot but think, that the preſervation of my life, in every moment of it, is as great an act of power as is neceſſary to raiſe a dead man to life. And whoever ſo far reflects upon his own being, as to acknowledge that he owes it to a ſuperior power, muſt needs think, that the ſame power which gave life to ſenſeleſs matter at firſt, and ſet all the ſprings and movements a-going at the beginning, can reſtore life to a dead body. For ſurely it is not a greater thing to give life to a body once dead, than to a body that never was alive.

In the next place muſt be conſidered the difficulties which the gentleman has laid before you, with regard to the nature of Chriſt's body after the reſurrection. He has produced ſome paſſages which, he thinks, imply, that the body was not a real natural body, but a mere phantom, or apparition: and thence concludes, that there being no real object of ſenſe, there can be no evidence in the caſe.

Preſumptions are of no weight againſt poſitive evidence; and every account of the reſurrection aſſures us, that the body of Chriſt was ſeen, felt, and handled by many perſons; who were called upon by Chriſt

ſo

ſo to do, that they might be aſſured that he had fleſh and bones, and was not a mere ſpectre, as they, in their firſt ſurprize, imagined him to be. It is impoſſible that they who give this account, ſhould mean, by any thing they report, to imply that he had no real body; it is certain, then, that when the gentleman makes uſe of what they ſay to this purpoſe, he uſes their ſayings contrary to their meaning: for it is not pretended that they ſay, that Chriſt had not a real human body after the reſurrection; nor is it pretended they had any ſuch thought, except only upon the firſt ſurprize of ſeeing him, and before they had examined him with their eyes and hands. But ſomething they have ſaid, which the gentleman, according to his notions of philoſophy, thinks, implies that the body was not real. To clear this point, therefore, I muſt lay before you the paſſages referred to, and conſider how juſtly the gentleman reaſons from them.

The firſt paſſage relates to Mary Magdalen, who, the firſt time ſhe ſaw Chriſt, was going to embrace his feet, as the cuſtom of the country was: Chriſt ſays to her, † *Touch me not; for I am not yet aſcended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and tell them*, &c. Hence the gentleman concludes, that Chriſt's body was not ſuch an one as would bear the touch But how does he infer this? Is it from theſe words, *touch me not?*

† John xx. 17.

not? It cannot be: for thouſands ſay it every day, without giving the leaſt ſuſpicion that their bodies are not capable of being touched. The concluſion then muſt be built on thoſe other words, *for I am not yet aſcended to my Father.* But what have theſe words to do with the reality of his body? It might be real, or not real, for any thing that is here ſaid. There is a difficulty in theſe words, and it may be hard to give the true ſenſe of them: but there is no difficulty in ſeeing that they have no relation to the nature of Chriſt's body; for of his body nothing is ſaid. The natural ſenſe of the place, as I collect, by comparing the paſſage with Matth. xxviii. 9. is this. Mary Magdalen, upon ſeeing Jeſus, fell at his feet, and laid hold of them, and held them as if ſhe meant never to let them go: Chriſt ſaid to her, "Touch me not, or hang not about me "now; you will have other opportunities "of ſeeing me, for I go not yet to my Fa-"ther: loſe no time then, but go quickly "with my meſſage to my brethren." I am not concerned to ſupport this particular interpretation of the paſſage; it is ſufficient to my purpoſe, to ſhew that the words cannot poſſibly relate to the nature of Chriſt's body one way or other.

The next paſſage relates to Chriſt's joining two of his diſciples upon the road, and converſing with them without being known by them: It grew dark, they preſſed him to ſtay with them that night; he went in with them, broke bread, and bleſſed it, and gave

it

it them, and then they knew him; and immediately he diſappeared.

The circumſtance of diſappearing, ſhall be conſidered under the next head, with other objections of the like kind. At preſent I ſhall only examine the other parts of this ſtory, and inquire whether they afford any ground to conclude that the body of Chriſt was not a real one. Had this piece of hiſtory been related of any other perſon, I think no ſuch ſuſpicion could have ariſen. For what is there unnatural or uncommon in this account? Two men meet an acquaintance whom they thought dead: they converſe with him for ſome time, without ſuſpecting who he was: the very perſuaſion they were under that he was dead, contributed greatly to their not knowing him; beſides, he appeared in an habit and form different from what he uſed when he converſed with them; appeared to them on a journey, and walked with them ſide by ſide; in which ſituation no one of the company has a full view of another: afterwards, when they were at ſupper together, and lights brought in, they plainly diſcerned who he was. Upon this occaſion, the gentleman aſks, what ſort of witneſſes theſe are? eye-witneſſes? No; before ſupper they were eye witneſſes, ſays the gentleman, that the perſon whom they ſaw was not Chriſt: and then he demands a reaſon for our rejecting the evidence of their ſenſe when they did not know Chriſt, and inſiſting on it when they did.

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It is no uncommon thing for men to catch themſelves and others by ſuch notable acute queſtions, and to be led by the ſprightlineſs of their imagination out of the road of truth and common ſenſe. I beg leave to tell the gentleman a ſhort ſtory, and then to aſk him his own queſtion. A certain gentleman who had been ſome years abroad, happened in his return to England through Paris to to meet his own ſiſter there. She not expecting to ſee him there, nor he to ſee her, they converſed together with other company, at a public-houſe, for great part of a day, without knowing each other. At laſt the lady began to ſhew great ſigns of diſorder; her colour came and went, and the eyes of the company were drawn towards her; and then ſhe cried out, Oh my brother! and was hardly held from fainting. Suppoſe now this lady were to depoſe upon oath in a court of juſtice, that ſhe ſaw her brother at Paris; I would aſk the gentleman, Whether he would object to the evidence, and ſay, that ſhe was as good an eye-witneſs that her brother was not there, as that he was; and demand of the court, why they rejected the evidence of her ſenſes when ſhe did not know her brother, and were ready to believe it when ſhe did? When the queſtion is anſwered in this caſe, I deſire only to have the benefit of it in the caſe now before you. But if you ſhall be of opinion, that there was ſome extraordinary power uſed on this occaſion, and incline to think that the expreſſion, *Their eyes were holden*, imports as

much; then the caſe will fall under the next article. In which

We are to conſider Chriſt's vaniſhing out of ſight; his coming in and going out when the doors were ſhut; and ſuch like paſſages; which, as they fall under one conſideration, ſo I ſhall ſpeak to them together

But it is neceſſary firſt to ſee what the apoſtles affirm diſtinctly in their accounts of theſe facts; for I think more has been ſaid for them, than ever they ſaid, or intended to ſay for themſelves. In one place * it is ſaid, *He vaniſhed out of their ſight.* Which tranſlation is corrected in the margin of our Bibles thus: *He ceaſed to be ſeen of them.* And the original ‡ imports no more.

It is ſaid in another place, that the diſciples being together, *and the doors ſhut*, Jeſus came and ſtood in the midſt of them. How he came, is not ſaid: much leſs is it ſaid that he came thro' the door, or the keyhole; and for any thing that is ſaid to the contrary, he might come in at the door, though the diſciples ſaw not the door open, nôr him, till he was in the midſt of them. But the gentleman thinks theſe paſſages prove that the diſciples ſaw no real body, but an apparition. I am afraid that the gentleman, after all his contempt of apparitions, and the ſuperſtition on which they are founded, is fallen into the ſame ſnare himſelf, and is arguing upon no better principles than the common notions which the vulgar have of apparitions. Why elſe does he imagine

* Luke xxiv. 31. ‡ ἄφαντος ἐγένετο.

gine theſe paſſages to be inconſiſtent with the reality of Chriſt's body? Is there no way for a real body to diſappear? Try the experiment now: do but put out the candles, we ſhall all diſappear. If a man falls aſleep in the day-time, all things diſappear to him; his ſenſes are all locked up; and yet all things about him continue to be real, and his ſenſes continue perfect. As ſhutting out all rays of light would make all things diſapppear; ſo intercepting the rays of light from any particular body, would make that diſappear. Perhaps ſomething like this was the caſe; or perhaps ſomething elſe, of which we know nothing. But, be the caſe what it will, the gentleman's concluſion is founded on no principle of true philoſophy: for it does not follow that a body is not real, becauſe I loſe ſight of it ſuddenly. I ſhall be told, perhaps, that this way of accounting for the paſſages, is as wonderful, and as much out of the common courſe of things, as the other. Perhaps it is ſo; and what then? Surely the gentleman does not expect, that, in order to prove the reality of the greateſt miracle that ever was, I ſhould ſhew that there was nothing miraculous in it, but that every thing happened according to the ordinary courſe of things. My only concern is, to ſhew, that theſe paſſages do not infer, that the body of Chriſt after the reſurrection was no real body. I wonder the gentleman did not carry his argument a little further, and prove, that Chriſt, before his death had no real body; for we read, that when the multitude would

have thrown him down a precipice, he went through the midſt of them unſeen. Now, nothing happened after his reſurrection more unaccountable than this that happened before it; and if the argument be good at all, it will be good to prove, that there never was ſuch a man as Jeſus in the world. Perhaps the gentleman may think this a little too much to prove: and if he does, I hope, he will quit the argument in one caſe as well as in the other; for difference there is none.

Hitherto we have been called upon to prove the reality of Chriſt's body, and that it was the ſame after the reſurrection that it was before: but the next objection complains that the body was too much the ſame with that which was buried; for the gentleman thinks that it had the ſame mortal wounds open and uncured of which he died. His obſervation is grounded upon the words which Chriſt uſes to Thomas: "‡ Reach hither "thy finger, and behold my hands; and "reach hither thy hand, and thruſt it into "my ſide." Is it here affirmed, that Thomas did actually put his hand into his ſide, or ſo much as ſee his wounds freſh and bleeding? Nothing like it: but it is ſuppoſed from the words of Chriſt; for if he had no wounds, he would not have invited Thomas to prove them. Now, the meaning of Chriſt will beſt appear by an account of the occaſion he had to uſe this ſpeech. He had appeared to his diſciples, in the abſence of Thomas,

‡ John xx. 27.

Thomas, and ſhewn them his hands and feet, which ſtill had the marks of his crucifixion: the diſciples reported this to Thomas: he thought the thing impoſſible, and expreſſed his unbelief, as men are apt to do when they are poſitive, in a very extravagant manner: You talk, ſays he, of the prints of the nails in his hand and feet; for my part, I will never believe this thing, "except I ſhall ſee in his hands the print of "the nails, and put my finger into the print "of the nails, and thruſt my hand into his "ſide." Now, in the firſt place, here is nothing ſaid of open wounds; Thomas talks only of putting his finger into the print, that is, the ſcar of the nails, and of thruſting his hand into his ſide. And, in common ſpeech, to thruſt an hand into any one's ſide, does not ſignify to thruſt it thro' the ſide into the bowels. Upon this interpretation of the words, which is a plain and natural one, the gentleman's objection is quite gone. But ſuppoſe Thomas to mean what the gentleman means; in that caſe the words of Chriſt are manifeſtly a ſevere reproach to him for his infidelity: Here, ſays Chriſt, are my hands and my ſide; take the ſatisfaction you require; thruſt your fingers into my hands, your hand into my ſide; repeating to him his own words, and calling him to his own conditions; which, to a man beginning to ſee his extravagance, is of all rebukes the ſevereſt. Such forms of ſpeech are uſed on many occaſions, and are never underſtood to import that the thing pro-

poſed is proper, or always practicable. When the Grecian women reproached their ſons with cowardice, and called to them as, they were flying from the enemy, to come and hide themſelves once more, like children as they were, in their mothers wombs; he would have been ridiculous who had aſked the queſtion, Whether the women really thought that they would take their ſons into their wombs again?

I have now gone through the objections which were neceſſarily to be removed before I could ſtate the evidence in this caſe. I am ſenſible I have taken up too much of your time; but I have this to ſay in my excuſe, That objections built on popular notions and prejudices, are eaſily conveyed to the mind in few words; and ſo conveyed, make ſtrong impreſſions: but whoever anſwers the objections, muſt encounter all the notions to which they are allied, and to which they owe their ſtrength; and it is well if with many words he can find admittance.

I come now to conſider the evidence on which our belief of the reſurrection ſtands. And here I am ſtopped again. A general exception is taken to the evidence, that it is imperfect, unfair; and a queſtion is asked, Why did not Chriſt appear publicly to all the people, eſpecially to the magiſtrates? Why were ſome witneſſes culled and choſen out, and others excluded?

It may be ſufficient perhaps to ſay, that where there are witneſſes enow, no judge, no jury complains for want of more; and therefore,

therefore, if the witneſſes we have are ſufficient, it is no objection that we have not others, and more. If three credible men atteſt a will, which are as many as the law requires, would any body ask, Why all the town were not called to ſet their hands? But why were theſe witneſſes culled and choſen out? Why? For this reaſon, that they might be good ones. Does not every wiſe man chuſe proper witneſſes to his deed and to his will? and does not a good choice of witneſſes give ſtrength to every deed? How comes it to paſs, then, that the very thing which ſhuts out all ſuſpicion in other caſes, ſhould in this caſe only, be, of all others, the moſt ſuſpicious thing itſelf?

What reaſon there is to make any complaints on the behalf of the Jews, may be judged, in part, from what has already appeared. Chriſt ſuffered openly in their ſight; and they were ſo well appriſed of his prediction, that he ſhould riſe again, that they ſet a guard on his ſepulchre; and from their guards they learned the truth. Every ſoldier was to them a witneſs of the reſurrection of their own chuſing. After this, they had not one apoſtle, (which the gentleman obſerves was the caſe of other people), but all the apoſtles, and many other witneſſes with them, and in their power. The apoſtles teſtified the reſurrection to them; not only to the people, but to the elders of Iſrael aſſembled in ſenate: to ſupport their evidence, they were enabled to work, and did work miracles openly in the name of Chriſt.

Chriſt. Theſe people therefore have the leaſt reaſon to complain; and had of all others the fulleſt evidence; and, in ſome reſpects, ſuch as none but themſelves could have, for they only were keepers of the ſepulchre. I believe, if the gentleman was to chuſe an evidence to his own ſatisfaction in a like caſe, he would deſire no more, than to keep the ſepulchre, with a ſufficient number of guards.

But the argument goes further. It is ſaid, that Jeſus was ſent with a ſpecial commiſſion to the Jews; that he was their Meſſias; and as his reſurrection was his main credential, he ought to have appeared publicly to the rulers of the Jews after his reſurrection: that in doing otherwiſe, he acted like an ambaſſador pretending authority from his prince, but refuſing to ſhew his letters of credence.

I was afraid, when I ſuffered myſelf to be drawn into this argument, that I ſhould be led into matters fitter to be decided by men of another profeſſion, than by lawyers. But, ſince there is no help now, I will lay before you what appears to me to be the natural and plain account of this matter; leaving it to others, who are better qualified, to give a fuller anſwer to the objection.

It appears to me, by the accounts we have of Jeſus, that he had two diſtinct offices: one, as the Meſſias particularly promiſed to the Jews; another, as he was to be the great high prieſt of the world. With reſpect

ſpect to the firſt office, he is called * *the apoſtle* of the *Hebrews*; the † *miniſter of the circumciſion*; and ſays himſelf, ‡ *I am not ſent but unto the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael.* Accordingly, when he ſent out his apoſtles in his lifetime to preach, he expreſsly forbids them to go to the Gentiles or Samaritans; but go, ‖ ſays he, *to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael.* Chriſt continued in the diſcharge of this office during the time of his natural life, till he was finally rejected by the Jews. And it is obſervable, that the laſt time he ſpoke to the people, according to St Matthew's account, he ſolemnly took leave of them, and cloſed his commiſſion. He had been long among them publiſhing glad tidings; but when all his preaching, all his miracles, had proved to be in vain, the laſt thing he did was, to denounce the woes they had brought on themſelves. The 23d chapter of St Matthew recites theſe woes; and at the end of them Chriſt takes this paſſionate leave of Jeruſalem: "O Jeruſalem, "Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the prophets, "and ſtoneſt them which are ſent unto thee, "how often would I have gathered thy "children together, even as a hen gather-"eth her chickens under her wings, and ye "would not! Behold, your houſe is left "unto you deſolate. For I ſay unto you, "Ye ſhall not ſee me henceforth, till ye ſhall "ſay, Bleſſed is he that cometh in the name "of

* Heb. iii. 1. † Rom. xv. 8. ‡ Matth. xv. 24.
‖ Matth. x. 5, 6.

" of the Lord." It is remarkable, that this paſſage, as recorded by St Matthew and St Luke, twice over, is determined, by the circumſtances, to refer to the near approach of his own death, and the extreme hatred of the Jews to him: and therefore thoſe words, *Ye ſhall not ſee me henceforth*, are to be dated from the time of his death, and manifeſtly point out the end of his particular miſſion to them. From the making this declaration, as it ſtands in St Matthew, his diſcourſes are to his diſciples; and they chiefly relate to the miſerable and wretched condition of the Jews, which was now decreed, and ſoon to be accompliſhed. Let me now ask, Whether, in this ſtate of things, any farther credentials of Chriſt's commiſſion to the Jews could be demanded or expected? He was rejected, his commiſſion was determined, and with it the fate of the nation was determined alſo: What uſe then of more credentials? As to appearing to them after his reſurrection, he could not do it conſiſtently with his own prediction, *Ye ſhall ſee me no more, till ye ſhal. ſay, Bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* The Jews were not in this diſpoſition after the reſurrection, nor are they in it yet.

The reſurrection was the foundation of Chriſt's new commiſſion, which extended to all the world. Then it was he declared, that *all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth.* Then he gave a new commiſſion to his diſciples, not reſtrained to the houſe of Iſrael, but to go and *teach all nations.*

This

This prerogative the Jews had under this commiſſion, that the goſpel was every where firſt offered to them; but in no other terms than it was offered to the reſt of the world. Since then this commiſſion, of which the reſurrection was the foundation, extended to all the world alike; what ground is there to demand ſpecial and particular evidence to to the Jews? The emperor and the ſenate of Rome were a much more conſiderable part of the world, than the chief prieſts and the ſynagogue; why does not the gentleman object then, that Chriſt did not ſhew himſelf to Tiberius and his ſenate? And ſince all men have an equal right in this caſe, why may not the ſame demand be made for every country; nay, for every age? And then the gentleman may bring the queſtion nearer home; and ask, Why Chriſt did not appear in England in King George's reign? There is, to my apprehenſion, nothing more unreaſonable, than to neglect and deſpiſe plain and ſufficient evidence before us, and to ſit down to imagine what kind of evidence would have pleaſed us; and then to make the want of ſuch evidence an objection to the truth; which yet, if well conſidered, would be found to be well eſtabliſhed.

The obſervation I have made upon the reſurrection of Chriſt, naturally leads to another; which will help to account for the nature of the evidence we have in this great point. As the reſurrection was the opening a new commiſſion, in which all the world had an intereſt; ſo the concern naturally

rally was, to have a proper evidence to eſtabliſh this truth, and which ſhould be of equal weight to all. This did not depend upon the ſatisfaction given to private perſons, whether they were magiſtrates or not magiſtrates; but upon the conviction of thoſe, whoſe office it was to be, to bear teſtimony to this truth in the world. In this ſenſe the apoſtles were choſen to be witneſſes of the reſurrection, becauſe they were choſen to bear teſtimony to it in the world; and not becauſe they only were admitted to ſee Chriſt after his reſurrection: for the fact is otherwiſe. The goſpel indeed, concerned to ſhew the evidence on which the faith of the world was to reſt, is very particular in ſetting forth the ocular demonſtration which the apoſtles had of the reſurrection; and mentions others, who ſaw Chriſt after his reſurrection, only accidentally, and as the thread of the hiſtory led to it. But yet it is certain, there were many others, who had this ſatisfaction, as well as the apoſtles. St Luke tells us, that when Chriſt appeared to the eleven apoſtles, there were others with them *; who they were, or how many they were, he ſays not. But it appears in the Acts, when an apoſtle was to be choſen in the room of Judas; and the chief qualification required was, that he ſhould be one capable of being a witneſs of the reſurrection; that there were preſent an hundred and twenty ſo qualified †. And St Paul

* Luke xxiv 33.

† Acts i. Compare verſes 15, 21, 22. together.

Paul ſays, that Chriſt after his riſing was ſeen by 500 at once, many of whom were living when he appealed to their evidence. So that the gentleman is miſtaken, when he imagines that a few only were choſen to ſee Chriſt after he came from the grave. The truth of the caſe is, that, out of thoſe who ſaw him, ſome were choſen to bear teſtimony to the world; and for that reaſon had the fulleſt demonſtration of the truth, that they might be the better able to give ſatisfaction to others. And what was there in this conduct to complain of? what to raiſe any jealouſy or ſuſpicion?

As to the witneſſes themſelves, the firſt the gentleman takes notice of, are the angels and the women. The mention of angels led naturally to apparitions: and the women were called poor ſilly women; and there is an end of their evidence. But to ſpeak ſeriouſly: Will the gentleman pretend to prove, that there are no intelligent beings between God and man; or that they are not miniſters of God; or that they were improperly employed in this great and wonderful work, the reſurrection of Chriſt? Till ſome of theſe points are diſproved, we may be at reſt; for the angels were miniſters, and not witneſſes of the reſurrection. And it is not upon the credit of the poor ſilly women that we believe angels were concerned, but upon the report of thoſe who wrote the goſpels, who deliver it as a truth known to themſelves, and not merely as a report taken from the women.

But for the women what ſhall I ſay? Silly as they were, I hope at leaſt they had eyes and ears, and could tell what they heard and ſaw. In this caſe they tell no more. They report that the body was not in the ſepulchre; but ſo far from reporting the reſurrection, that they did not believe it, and were very anxious to find to what place the body was removed. Further they were not employed. For, I think, the gentleman in another part obſerves rightly, that they were not ſent to bear teſtimony to any people. But ſuppoſe them to be witneſſes; ſuppoſe them to be improper ones; yet the evidence of the men ſurely is not the worſe, becauſe ſome women happened to ſee the ſame thing which they ſaw. And if men only muſt be admitted, of them we have enow to eſtabliſh this truth.

I will not ſpend your time in enumerating theſe witneſſes, or in ſetting forth the demonſtration they had of the truth which they report. Theſe things are well known. If you queſtion their ſincerity, they lived miſerably, and died miſerably, for the ſake of this truth. And what greater evidence of ſincerity can man give or require? And what is ſtill more, they were not deceived in their expectation, by being ill treated; for he who employed them, told them beforehand, that the world would hate them, and treat them with contempt and cruelty.

But, leaving theſe weighty and well-known circumſtances to your own reflexion,

I beg leave to lay before you another evidence, paſſed over in ſilence by the gentleman on the other ſide. He took notice, that a reſurrection was ſo extraordinary a thing, that no human evidence could ſupport it. I am not ſure that he is not in the right. If twenty men were to come into England with ſuch a report from a diſtant country, perhaps they might not find twenty more here to believe their ſtory. And I rather think the gentleman may be in the right, becauſe in the preſent caſe I ſee clearly, that the credit of the reſurrection of Chriſt was not truſted to mere human evidence. To what evidence it was truſted, we find by his own declaration: "The Spi-"rit of truth, which proceedeth from the "Father, he ſhall teſtify of me. And ye "alſo (ſpeaking to his apoſtles) ſhall bear "witneſs, becauſe ye have been with me "from the beginning *." And therefore, though the apoſtles had converſed with him forty days after his reſurrection, and had received his commiſſion to go teach all nations; yet he expreſsly forbids them entering upon the work, till they ſhould receive powers from above †. And St Peter explains the evidence of the reſurrection in this manner: "We (the apoſtles) are his "witneſſes of theſe things; and ſo is alſo "the Holy Ghoſt, whom God hath given "to them who obey him ‡."

* John xv. 26, 27. † Acts i. 4. ‡ Acts v. 32.

Now, what were the powers received by the apoſtles? Were they not the powers of wiſdom and courage, by which they were enabled to appear before rulers and princes in the name of Chriſt? the power of miracles, even of raiſing the dead to life; by which they convinced the world, that God was with them in what they ſaid and did? With reſpect to this evidence, St John ſays, "If we receive the witneſs of men, the wit-"neſs of God is greater †." Add to this, that the apoſtles had a power to communicate theſe gifts to believers. Can you wonder that men believed the reality of thoſe powers of which they were partakers, and became conſcious to themſelves? With reſpect to theſe communicated powers, I ſuppoſe, St John ſpeaks, when he ſays, "He "that believeth on the Son of God, hath "the witneſs in himſelf §:" appealing, not to an inward teſtimony of the Spirit, in the ſenſe of ſome modern enthuſiaſts; but to the powers of the Spirit, which believers received, and which were ſeen in the effects that followed.

It was objected, That the apoſtles ſeparated themſelves to the work of the miniſtry, and one went into one country, another to another; and, conſequently, that the belief of the reſurrection was originally received every where upon the teſtimony of one witneſs. I will not examine this fact. Suppoſe it to be ſo. But did this one witneſs

go

† 1 John v. 9. § Ibid. verſe 10.

go alone, when he was attended with the powers of heaven? Was not every blind man reſtored to ſight, and every lame man to his feet, a new witneſs to the truth reported by the firſt? Beſides, when the people of different countries came to compare notes, and found that they had all received the ſame account of Chriſt, and of his doctrine: then ſurely the evidence of theſe diſtant witneſſes thus united, became ſtronger than if they had told their ſtory together: for twelve men ſeparately examined, form a much ſtronger proof for the truth of any fact, than twelve men agreeing together in one ſtory.

If the ſame thing were to happen in our own time: if one or two were to come into England, and report that a man was raiſed from the dead; and, in conſequence of it, teach nothing but that we ought to love God and our neighbours: if, to confirm their report, they ſhould, before our eyes, cure the blind, the deaf, the lame, and even raiſe the dead to life: if, endued with all theſe powers, they ſhould live in poverty and diſtreſs, and patiently ſubmit to all that ſcorn, contempt, and malice could contrive to diſtreſs them; and at laſt ſacrifice even their lives in juſtification of the truth of their report: if upon inquiry we ſhould find, that all the countries in Europe had received the ſame account, ſupported by the ſame miraculous powers, atteſted in like manner by the ſufferings, and confirmed by the blood of the witneſſes: I would fain know what any

reaſonable man would do in this caſe? Would he deſpiſe ſuch evidence? I think he would not. And whoever thinks otherwiſe, muſt ſay, that a reſurrection, though in its own nature poſſible, is yet ſuch a thing, in which we ought not to believe either God or man.

Judge. Have you done, Sir?

Mr *B.* Yes, my Lord.

Judge. Go on, Mr *A*, if you have any thing to ſay in reply.

Mr *A.* My Lord, I ſhall trouble you with very little. The objections and anſwers under this head, I ſhall leave to the judgment of the court, and beg leave only to make an obſervation or two upon the laſt part of the gentleman's argument.

And firſt, with reſpect to the ſufferings of the apoſtles and diſciples of Jeſus, and the argument drawn from thence for the truth of their doctrines and aſſertions, I beg leave to obſerve to you, that there is not a falſe religion or pretence in the world, but can produce the ſame authority, and ſhew many inſtances of men who have ſuffered even to death for the truth of their ſeveral profeſſions. If we conſult only modern ſtory, we ſhall find Papiſts ſuffering for popery, Proteſtants for their religion. And among Proteſtants, every ſect has had its martyrs; Puritans, Quakers, Fifth-monarchy men. In Henry VIII's time, England ſaw both Popiſh and Proteſtant martyrs; in Queen Mary's reign, the rage fell upon Proteſtants; in Queen Eliſabeth's, Papiſts and Puritans were called ſometimes, though rare-

ly,

ly, to this trial. In later times, ſometimes churchmen, ſometimes diſſenters, were perſecuted. What muſt we ſay, then? All theſe ſufferers had not truth with them; and yet, if there be any weight in this argument from ſuffering, they have all a right to plead it.

But I may be told, perhaps, that men by their ſufferings, though they do not prove their doctrines to be true, yet prove at leaſt their own ſincerity: as if it were a thing impoſſible for men to diſſemble at the point of death! Alas! how many inſtances are there of mens denying facts plainly proved, aſſerting facts plainly diſproved, even with the rope about their necks? Muſt all ſuch paſs for innocent ſufferers, ſincere men? If not, it muſt be allowed, that a man's word at the point of death is not always to be relied on.

Another obſervation I would make, is with reſpect to the evidence of the Spirit, on which ſo much ſtreſs is laid. It has been hitherto inſiſted on, that the reſurrection was a matter of fact, and ſuch a fact as was capable and proper to be ſupported by the evidence of ſenſe. How comes it about, that this evidence, this which is the proper evidence, is given up as inſufficient, and a new improper evidence introduced? Is it not ſurpriſing, that one great miracle ſhould want an hundred more to prove it? Every miracle is itſelf an appeal to ſenſe, and therefore admits no evidence but that of ſenſe: and there is no connexion between a miracle done this year and laſt year. It does not follow, therefore, becauſe Peter cured

cured a lame man, (allowing the fact), that therefore Chriſt roſe from the dead.

But allowing the gentleman all he demands, what is it to us? they who had the witneſs within them, did perhaps very well to conſult him, and to take his word; but how am I, or others, who have not this witneſs in us, the better for it? If the firſt ages of the church ſaw all the wonders related by the gentleman, and believed, it ſhews at leaſt, in his opinion, that this ſtrong evidence was neceſſary to create the belief he requires; why then does he require this belief of us, who have not this ſtrong evidence?

Judge. Very well. Gentlemen of the jury, you have heard the proofs and arguments on both ſides, and it is now your part to give a verdict.

* Here the gentlemen whiſpered together, and the Foreman ſtood up.

Foreman. My Lord, the cauſe has been long, and conſiſts of ſeveral articles; therefore the jury hope you will give them your directions.

Judge. No, no; you are very able to judge without my help.

Mr *A.* My Lord, Pray conſider, you appointed this meeting, and choſe your office. Mr *B.* and I have gone through our parts, and have ſome right to inſiſt on your doing your part.

Mr *B.* I muſt join, Sir, in that requeſt.

Judge. I have often heard, that all honour has a burden attending it; but I did not

not ſuſpect it in this office, which I conferred upon myſelf. But, ſince it muſt be ſo, I will recollect, and lay before you, as well as I can, the ſubſtance of the debate.

Gentlemen of the jury, The queſtion before you, is, Whether the witneſſes of the reſurrection of Chriſt are guilty of giving falſe evidence, or no?

Two ſorts of objections, or accuſations, are brought againſt them. One charges fraud and deceit on the tranſaction itſelf; the other charges the evidence as forged, and inſufficient to ſupport the credit of ſo extraordinary an event.

There are alſo three periods of time to be conſidered.

The firſt takes in the miniſtry of Chriſt, and ends at his death. During this period the fraud is ſuppoſed to be contrived.

The ſecond reaches from his death to his reſurrection. During this period the fraud is ſuppoſed to be executed.

The third begins from the reſurrection, and takes in the whole miniſtry of the apoſtles. And here the evidence they gave the world for this fact is the main conſideration.

As to the firſt period of time, and the fraud charged upon Jeſus, I muſt obſerve to you, that this charge had no evidence to ſupport it; all the facts reported of Jeſus ſtand in full contradiction to it. To ſuppoſe, as the council did, that this fraud might poſſibly appear, if we had any Jewiſh books written at the time, is not to bring

proof,

proof, but to wiſh for proof: for, as it was rightly obſerved on the other ſide, how does Mr *A.* know there were any ſuch books? And ſince they are loſt, how does he know what was in them? Were ſuch books extant, they might probably prove beyond diſpute the facts recorded in the goſpels.

You were told, that the Jews were a very ſuperſtitious people, much addicted to prophecy; and particularly, that they had a ſtrong expectation, about the time that Chriſt appeared, to have a victorious prince riſe among the . This is laid as the ground of ſuſpicion; a in fact, many impoſtors, you are told, ſet pon theſe notions of the people; and thence is inferred, that Chriſt built his ſcheme upon the ſtrength of theſe popular prejudices. But when this fact came to be examined on the other ſide, it appeared, that Chriſt was ſo far from falling in with theſe notions, and abuſing the credulity of the people, that it was his main point, to correct theſe prejudices, to oppoſe theſe ſuperſtitions; and by theſe very means he fell into diſgrace with his countrymen, and ſuffered as one who, in their opinion, deſtroyed the law and the prophets. With reſpect to temporal power; ſo far was he from aiming at it, that he refuſed it when offered; ſo far from giving any hopes of it to his diſciples, that he invited men upon quite different terms; "To take up the "croſs, and follow him." And it is obſervable, that, after he had foretold his death and reſurrection, he continued to admoniſh his

his diſciples of the evils they were to ſuffer; to tell them, that the world would hate them, and abuſe them; which ſurely to common ſenſe has no appearance that he was then contriving a cheat, or encouraging his diſciples to execute it.

But, as ill ſupported as this charge is, there was no avoiding it; it was neceſſity, and not choice, which drove the gentleman to it: for ſince Chriſt had foretold his reſurrection, if the whole was a cheat, he certainly was conſcious to it, and conſequently the plot was laid in his own time. And yet the ſuppoſing Chriſt conſcious to ſuch a fraud in theſe circumſtances, is contrary to all probability. It is very improbable, that he, or any man, ſhould without any temptation, contrive a cheat to take place after his death. And if this could be ſuppoſed, it is highly improbable that he ſhould give public notice of it, and thereby put all men on their guard; eſpecially conſidering there were only a few women, and twelve men, of low fortunes, and mean education, to conduct the plot, and the whole power of the Jews and Romans to oppoſe it.

Mr *A.* ſeemed ſenſible of theſe difficulties, and therefore would have varied the charge, and have made Chriſt an enthuſiaſt, and his diſciples only cheats. This was not properly moved, and therefore not debated: for which reaſon I ſhall paſs it over with this ſhort obſervation; that enthuſiaſm is as contrary to the whole character and conduct

of

of Chriſt, as even fraud is. Beſides, this imagination, if allowed, goes only to Chriſt's own part; and leaves the charge of fraud, in its full extent, upon the management from the time of his death; and therefore is of no uſe, unleſs the fraud afterwards be apparent. For if there really was a reſurrection, it will ſufficiently anſwer the charge of enthuſiaſm.

I paſs on then to the ſecond period, to conſider what happened between the death and reſurrection of Chriſt. And here it is agreed that Chriſt died, and was buried. So far then there was no fraud.

For the better underſtanding the charge here, we muſt recollect a mat rial circumſtance reported by one of the evangeliſts, which is this: After Chriſt was buried, the chief prieſts and Phariſees came to Pilate, the Roman governor, and informed him, that this deceiver (meaning Jeſus) had in his lifetime foretold, that he would riſe again after three days; that they ſuſpected his diſciples would ſteal away the body, and pretend a reſurrection; and then the "laſt "error would be worſe than the firſt." They therefore deſire a guard to watch the ſepulchre, to prevent all fraud. They had one granted; accordingly they placed a watch on the ſepulchre, and ſealed up the ſtone at the mouth of it.

What the event of this caſe was the ſame writer tells us. The guards ſaw the ſtone removed by angels, and for fear they became as dead men; when they came to the

city,

city, they reported to the chief prieſts what had happened: a counſel is called, and a reſolution taken to bribe the ſoldiers to ſay, that the body was ſtolen while they were aſleep; and the counſel undertook to excuſe the ſoldiers to Pilate, for their negligence in falling aſleep when they were on duty.

Thus the fact ſtands in the original record. Now, the counſel for Woolſton maintains, that the ſtory reported by the ſoldiers, after they had been bribed by the chief prieſts, contains the true account of this pretended reſurrection.

The Gentleman was ſenſible of a difficulty in his way, to account for the credit which the Jews gave to the prediction of Chriſt; for if, as he petends, they knew him to be an impoſtor, what reaſon had they to take any notice of his prediction? And therefore, that very caution in this caſe betrayed their concern, and ſhewed, that they were not ſatisfied that his pretenſions were groundleſs. To obviate this, he ſays, That they had diſcovered before, one great cheat in the caſe of Lazarus, and therefore were ſuſpicious of another in this caſe. He was anſwered, That the diſcovery of a cheat in the caſe before mentioned, ought rather to have ſet them at eaſe, and made them quite ſecure as to the event of the prediction. In reply he ſays, That the chief prieſts, however ſatisfied of the cheat themſelves, had found that it prevailed among the people; and, to ſecure the people from being further impoſed on, they uſed the caution they did.

This is the ſubſtance of the argument on both ſides.

I muſt obſerve to you, that this reaſoning from the caſe of Lazarus has no foundation in hiſtory. There is no pretence for ſaying, that the Jews in this whole affair had any particular regard to the raiſing of Lazarus. And if they had any ſuch juſt ſuſpicion, why was it not mentioned at the trial of Chriſt? There was then an opportunity of opening the whole fraud, and undeceiving the people. The Jews had a plain law for puniſhing a falſe prophet; and what could be a ſtronger conviction, than ſuch a cheat made manifeſt? Why then was this advantage loſt?

The gentleman builds this obſervation on theſe words, *So the laſt error ſhall be worſe than the firſt.* But is there here any thing ſaid about Lazarus? No. The words are a proverbial form of ſpeech, and probably were uſed without relation to any particular caſe. But if a particular meaning muſt be aſſigned, it is more probable, that the words being uſed to Pilate, contained a reaſon applicable to him. Now, Pilate had been drawn in to conſent to the crucifixion, for fear the Jews ſhould ſet up Jeſus to be their king in oppoſition to Cæſar; therefore, ſay the chief prieſts to him, If once the people believe him to be riſen from the dead, the laſt error will be worſe than the firſt; *i. e.* they will be more inclined and encouraged to rebel againſt the Romans than ever. This is a natural ſenſe of the words; as they are uſed to move the Roman gover-

nor

nor to allow them a guard. Whether Lazarus were dead or alive; whether Chriſt came to deſtroy the law and the prophets, or to eſtabliſh or confirm them, was of little moment to Pilate. It is plain, he was touched by none of theſe conſiderations; and refuſed to be concerned in the affair of Chriſt, till he was alarmed with the ſuggeſtions of danger to the Roman ſtate. This was the *firſt* fear that moved him; muſt not therefore the *ſecond* now ſuggeſted to him be of the ſame kind?

The next circumſtance to be conſidered, is that of the ſeal upon the ſtone of the ſepulchre. The counſel for Woolſton ſuppoſes an agreement between the Jews and diſciples about ſetting this ſeal. But for this agreement there is no evidence; nay, to ſuppoſe it, contradicts the whole ſeries of the hiſtory, as the gentleman on the other ſide obſerved. I will not enter into the particulars of this debate; for it is needleſs. The plain natural account given of this matter, ſhuts out all other ſuppoſitions. Mr *B.* obſerved to you, That the Jews having a guard, ſet the ſeal to prevent any combination among the guards to deceive them: which ſeems a plain and ſatisfactory account. The counſel for *W.* replies, Let the uſe of the ſeals be what they will, it is plain they were broken; and if they were uſed as a check upon the Roman ſoldiers, then probably they conſented to the fraud: and then it is eaſily underſtood how the body was removed.

I muſt obſerve to you here, that this ſuſpicion agrees neither with the account given by the evangeliſt, nor with the ſtory ſet about by the Jews; ſo that it is utterly unſupported by any evidence.

Nor has it any probability in it. For what could move Pilate and the Roman ſoldiers to propagate ſuch a cheat? He had crucifi d Chriſt, for no other reaſon, but for fear the people ſhould revolt from the Romans; perhaps too he conſented to place a guard upon the ſepulchre, to put an end to the people's hope in Jeſus: and is it likely at laſt that he was conſenting to a cheat, to make the people believe him riſen from the dead; the thing, of all others, which he was obliged, as his apprehenſions were, to prevent?

The next circumſtance inſiſted on as a proof of the fraud, is, that Jeſus roſe before the time he had appointed. Mr *A.* ſuppoſes that the diſciples haſtened the plot, for fear of falling in with multitudes, who waited only for the appointed time to be at the ſepulchre, and to ſee with their own eyes. He was anſwered, That the diſciples were not, could not be concerned, or be preſent at moving the body; that they were diſperſed, and lay concealed for fear of the Jews: that haſtening the plot, was of no uſe; for the reſurrection happened whilſt the guards were at the ſepulchre; who were probably enow to prevent violence; certainly enow to diſcover it, if any were uſed.

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This difficulty then reſts merely upon the reckoning of the time. Chriſt died on Friday, roſe early on Sunday. The queſtion is, Whether this was riſing the third day, according to the prediction? I will refer the authorities made uſe of in this caſe to your memory, and add only one obſervation, to ſhew that it was indeed the third day, according as the people of the country reckoned. When Chriſt talked with the two diſciples who knew him not, they gave him an account of his own crucifixion, and their diſappointment; and tell him, *To day is the third day ſince theſe things were done* ‡. Now this converſation was on the very day of the reſurrection. And the diſciples thought of nothing leſs than anſwering an objection againſt the reſurrection, which as yet they did not believe. They recount only a matter of fact, and reckon the time according to the uſage of their country, and call the day of the reſurrection *the third day* from the crucifixion; which is a plain evidence, in what manner the Jews reckoned in this and like caſes.

As the objections in this caſe are founded upon the ſtory reported by the Jews, and the Roman ſoldiers, Mr *B.* in his anſwer, endeavoured to ſhew, from ſome hiſtorical paſſages, that the Jews themſelves did not believe the ſtory.

His firſt argument was, That the Jews never queſtioned the diſciples for this cheat,

‡ Luke xxiv. 21.

and the ſhare they had in it, when they had them in their power. And yet who ſees not that it was very much to their purpoſe ſo to do? To this there is no reply.

The ſecond argument was from the treatment St Paul had from King Agrippa, and his ſaying to St Paul, "Almoſt thou "perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian:" A ſpeech which he reckons could not be made by a prince, to one concerned in carrying on a known cheat. To this the gentleman replies, That Agrippa never did become a Chriſtian: and that no great ſtreſs is to be laid upon his compliſance to his priſoner. But allowing that there was ſomething of humanity and civility in the expreſſion, yet ſuch civility could hardly be paid to a known impoſtor. There is a propriety even in civility. A prince may be civil to a rebel; but he will hardly compliment him for his loyalty: he may be civil to a poor ſectary; but if he knows him to be a cheat, he will ſcarcely compliment him with hopes that he will be of his party

The third argument was from the advice given by Gamaliel to the council of the Jews, to let the apoſtles alone, "for fear "they themſelves ſhould be found to fight "againſt God:" A ſuppoſition which the gentleman thinks abſolutely inconſiſtent with his or the council's being perſuaded, that the apoſtles were guilty of any fraud in managing the reſurrection of Chriſt.

The gentleman replies, That Gamaliel's advice reſpected only the numbers of people

ple deceived; and was a declaration of his opinion, that it was not prudent to come to extremities till the people were in a better temper. This deſerves conſideration.

Firſt, I obſerve, that Gamaliel's words are expreſs, "Leſt ye be found to fight a-"gainſt God;" which reaſon reſpects God, and not the people. And the ſuppoſition is, that the *hand of God* might poſſibly be in this work: A ſaying which could not have come from him, or have been received by the council, if they had believed the reſurrection to have been a cheat.

Secondly, It is remarkable, that the miracles wrought by the apoſtles after the death of Chriſt, thoſe eſpecially which occaſioned the calling of this council, had a much greater effect upon the Jews than even the miracles of Chriſt himſelf. They held out againſt all the wonders of Chriſt, and were perpetually plotting his death, not doubting but that would put an end to their trouble: but when, after his death, they ſaw the ſame powers continue with the apoſtles, they ſaw no end of the affair, but began to think in earneſt there might be more in it than they were willing to believe. And, upon the report made to them of the apoſtles works, they make ſerious reflection, *and doubted whereunto this would grow*. And though in their anger and vexation of heart they thought of deſperate remedies, and were for killing the apoſtles alſo; yet they hearkened willingly to Gamaliel's advice; which at another time might have been dangerous

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to the adviſer. So that it appears from the hiſtory, that the whole council had the ſame doubt that Gamaliel had, that poſſibly the hand of God might be in this thing. And could the Jews, if they had manifeſtly diſcovered the cheat of the reſurrection a little time before, have entertained ſuch a ſuſpicion?

The laſt period commences at the reſurrection, and takes in the evidence upon which the credit of this fact ſtands.

The counſel for Woolſton, among other difficulties, ſtarted one, which, if well grounded, excludes all evidence out of this caſe. The reſurrection being a thing out of the courſe of nature, he thinks the teſtimony of nature, held forth to us in her conſtant method of working, a ſtronger evidence againſt the poſſibility of a reſurrection, than any human evidence can be for the reality of one.

In anſwer to this, it is ſaid, on the other ſide,

Firſt, That a reſurrection is a thing to be judged of by mens ſenſes; and this cannot be doubted. We all know when a man is dead; and ſhould he come to life again, we might judge whether he was alive or no, by the very ſame means by which we judge thoſe about us to be living men.

Secondly, That the notion of a reſurrection contradicts no one principle of right reaſon, interferes with no law of nature: and that whoever admits that God gave man

man life at firſt, cannot poſſibly doubt of his power to reſtore it when loſt.

Thirdly, That appealing to the ſettled courſe of nature, is referring the matter in diſpute, not to rules or maxims of reaſon and true philoſophy, but to the prejudices and miſtakes of men; which are various and infinite, and differ ſometimes according to the climate men live in; becauſe men form a notion of nature from what they ſee: and therefore in cold countries, all men judge it to be according to the courſe of nature for water to freeze; in warm countries, they judge it to be unnatural. Conſequently, that it is not enough to prove any thing to be contrary to the laws of nature, to ſay that it is uſually, or conſtantly, to our obſervation, otherwiſe. And therefore, tho' men in the ordinary courſe die, and do not riſe again, (which is certainly a prejudice againſt the belief of a reſurrection); yet is it not an argument againſt the poſſibility of a reſurrection.

Another objection was againſt the reality of the body of Chriſt after it came from the grave. Theſe objections are founded upon ſuch paſſages as report his appearing or diſappearing to the eyes of his diſciples at pleaſure; his coming in among them when the doors were ſhut; his forbidding ſome to touch him, his inviting others to do it; his having the very wounds whereof he died, freſh and open in his body, and the like. Hence the council concluded, that it was no real body, which was ſometimes viſible,

viſible, ſometimes inviſible; ſometimes capable of being touched, ſometimes incapable.

On the other ſide it was anſwered, That many of theſe objections are founded on a miſtaken ſenſe of the paſſages referred to; particularly of the paſſage in which Chriſt is thought to forbid Mary Magdalen to touch him; of another, in which he calls to Thomas to examine his wounds; and probably of a third, relating to Chriſt's converſation with his diſciples on the road, without being known by them.

As to other paſſages which relate his appearing and diſappearing, and coming in when the doors were ſhut, it is ſaid, that no concluſion can be drawn from them againſt the reality of Chriſt's body: that theſe things might happen many ways, and yet the body be real; which is the only point to which the preſent objection extends: that there might be in this, and probably was, ſomething miraculous; but nothing more wonderful than what happened on another occaſion in his lifetime, where the gentleman who makes the objection allows him to have had a real body.

I mention theſe things but briefly, juſt to bring the courſe of the argument to your remembrance.

The next objection is taken from hence, That Chriſt did not appear publicly to the people, and particularly to the chief prieſts and rulers of the Jews. It is ſaid, that his commiſſion related to them in an eſpecial manner;

manner; and that it appears ſtrange, that the main proof of his miſſion, the reſurrection, ſhould not be laid before them; but that witneſſes ſhould be picked and culled to ſee this mighty wonder. This is the force of the objection.

To which it is anſwered, *Firſt*, That the particular commiſſion to the Jews expired at the death of Chriſt; and therefore the Jews had, on this account, no claim for any particular evidence. And it is inſiſted, that Chriſt, before his death, declared, the Jews ſhould not ſee him, till they were better diſpoſed to receive him.

Secondly, That as the whole world had a concern in the reſurrection of Chriſt, it was neceſſary to prepare a proper evidence for the whole world; which was not to be done by any particular ſatisfaction given to the people of the Jews, or their rulers.

Thirdly, That as to the choſen witneſſes, it is a miſtake to think that they were choſen as the only perſons to ſee Chriſt after the reſurrection; and that in truth many others did ſee him: but that the witneſſes were choſen as proper perſons to bear teſtimony to all people; an office to which many others who did ſee Chriſt, were not particularly commiſſioned: That making choice of proper and credible witneſſes, was ſo far from being a ground of juſt ſuſpicion, that it is in all caſes the moſt proper way to exclude ſuſpicion.

The next objection is pointed againſt the evidence of the angels, and the women. It

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is ſaid, That hiſtory reports, that the women ſaw young men at the ſepulchre; that they were advanced into angels, merely through the fear and ſuperſtition of the women: that, at the beſt, this is but a ſtory of an apparition; a thing in times of ignorance much talked of, but in the days of knowledge never heard of.

In anſwer to this, it is ſaid, That the angels are not properly reckoned among the witneſſes of the reſurrection; they were not in the number of the choſen witneſſes, or ſent to bear teſtimony in the world: that they were indeed miniſters of God appointed to attend the reſurrection: that God has ſuch miniſters, cannot be reaſonably doubted; nor can it be objected, that they were improperly employed, or below their dignity, in attending on the reſurrection of Chriſt: that we believe them to be angels, not on the report of the women, but upon the credit of the evangeliſt who affirms it: that what is ſaid of apparitions on this occaſion, may paſs for wit and ridicule, but yields no reaſon or argument.

The objection to the women was, I think, only that they were women; which was ſtrengthened by calling them *ſilly* women.

It was anſwered, That women have eyes and ears as well as men, and can tell what they ſee and hear. And it happened in this caſe, that the women were ſo far from being credulous, that they believed not the angels, and hardly believed their own report. However, that the women are none

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of the choſen witneſſes; and if they were, the evidence of the men cannot be ſet aſide, becauſe women ſaw what they ſaw.

This is the ſubſtance of the objections and anſwers.

The counſel for the apoſtles inſiſted further, That they gave the greateſt aſſurance to the world that poſſibly could be given, of their ſincere dealing, by ſuffering all kinds of hardſhip, and at laſt death itſelf, in confirmation of the truth of their evidence.

The counſel for Woolſton, in reply to this, told you, That all religions, whether true or falſe, have had their martyrs; that no opinion, however abſurd, can be named, but ſome have been content to die for it; and then concluded, That ſuffering is no evidence of the truth of the opinions for which men ſuffer.

To clear this matter to you, I muſt obſerve how this caſe ſtands. You have heard often, in the courſe of this argument, that the apoſtles were witneſſes choſen to bear teſtimony to the reſurrection; and, for that reaſon, had the fulleſt evidence themſelves of the truth of it; not merely by ſeeing Chriſt once or twice after his death, but by frequent converſations with him for forty days together, before his aſcenſion. That this was their proper buſineſs, appears plainly from hiſtory; where we find, that to ordain an apoſtle, was the ſame thing as *ordaining* one *to be a witneſs of the reſurrection* ‖.

‖ Acts i. 22.

If you look further, to the preaching of the apoſtles, you will find this was the great article inſiſted on †. And St Paul knew the weight of this article, and the neceſſity of teaching it, when he ſaid, *If Chriſt be not riſen, our faith is vain.* You ſee, then, that the thing which the apoſtles teſtified, and the thing for which they ſuffered, was the truth of the reſurrection; which is a mere matter of fact.

Conſider now how the objection ſtands. The counſel for Woolſton tells you, that it is common for men to die for falſe opinions; and he tells you nothing but the truth. But even in thoſe caſes their ſuffering is an evidence of their ſincerity; and it would be very hard to charge men who die for the doctrine they profeſs, with inſincerity in the profeſſion Miſtaken they may be; but every miſtaken man is not a cheat. Now, if you will allow the ſuffering of the apoſtles to prove their ſincerity, which you cannot well diſallow, and conſider that they died for the truth of a matter of fact which they had ſeen themſelves, you will perceive how ſtrong the evidence is in this caſe. In doctrines, and matters of opinion, men miſtake perpetually; and it is no reaſon for me to take up with another man's opinion, becauſe I am perſuaded he is ſincere in it. But when a man reports to me an uncommon fact, yet ſuch an one as in its own nature is a plain object of ſenſe; if I believe

† Acts ii. 22. *&c.* iii. 15. iv. 10. v. 30.

believe him not, it is not becauſe I ſuſpect his eyes, or his ſenſe of feeling, but merely becauſe I ſuſpect his ſincerity: for if I was to ſee the ſame thing myſelf, I ſhould believe myſelf; and therefore my ſuſpicion does not ariſe from the inability of human ſenſes to judge in the caſe, but from a doubt of the ſincerity of the reporter. In ſuch caſes, therefore, there wants nothing to be proved, but only the ſincerity of the reporter: and ſince voluntary ſuffering for the truth, is at leaſt a proof of ſincerity; the ſufferings of the apoſtles for the truth of the reſurrection, is a full and unexceptionable proof.

The counſel for Woolſton was ſenſible of this difference; and therefore he added, that there are many inſtances of mens ſuffering and dying in an obſtinate denial of the truth of facts plainly proved. This obſervation is alſo true. I remember a ſtory of a man who endured with great conſtancy all the tortures of the rack, denying the fact with which he was charged. When he was aſked afterwards, how he could hold out againſt all the tortures? he anſwered, I had painted a gallows upon the toe of my ſhoe, and when the rack ſtretched me, I looked on the gallows, and bore the pain, to ſave my life. This man denied a plain fact, under great torture; but you ſee a reaſon for it. In other caſes, when criminals perſiſt in denying their crimes, they often do it, and there is reaſon to ſuſpect they do it always, in hopes of a pardon or reprieve. But

what are theſe inſtances to the preſent purpoſe? All theſe men ſuffer againſt their will, and for their crimes; and their obſtinacy is built on the hope of eſcaping, by moving the compaſſion of the government. Can the gentleman give any inſtances of perſons who died willingly in atteſtation of a falſe fact? We have had in England ſome weak enough to die for the pope's ſupremacy; but do you think a man could be found to die in proof of the pope's being actually on the throne of England?

Now, the apoſtles died in aſſerting the truth of Chriſt's reſurrection. It was always in their power to quit their evidence, and ſave their lives. Even their bittereſt enemies, the Jews, required no more of them than to be ſilent *. Others have denied facts, or aſſerted facts, in hopes of ſaving their lives, when they were under ſentence of death: but theſe men atteſted a fact at the expence of their lives, which they might have ſaved by denying the truth. So that between criminals dying, and denying plain facts, and the apoſtles dying for their teſtimony, there is this material difference: criminals deny the truth, in hopes of ſaving their lives; the apoſtles willingly parted with their lives, rather than deny the truth.

We are come now to the laſt, and indeed the moſt weighty conſideration.

The counſel for the apoſtles having in the courſe of the argument, allowed, that more evidence

* Acts iv. 17. v. 28.

evidence is required to ſupport the credit of the reſurrection, it being a very extraordinary event, than is neceſſary in common caſes, in the latter part of his defence ſets forth the extraordinary evidence upon which this fact ſtands: This is, the evidence of the Spirit, the Spirit of wiſdom and power, which was given to the apoſtles, to enable them to confirm their teſtimony by ſigns and wonders, and mighty works. This part of the argument was well argued by the gentleman, and I need not repeat all he ſaid.

The counſel for Woolſton, in his reply, made two objections to this evidence.

The firſt was this: That the reſurrection having all along been pleaded to be a matter of fact, and an object of ſenſe, to recur to miracles for the proof of it, is to take it out of its proper evidence, the evidence of ſenſe; and to reſt it upon a proof which cannot be applied to it: for ſeeing one miracle, he ſays, is no evidence that another miracle was wrought before it; as healing a ſick man, is no evidence that a dead man was raiſed to life.

To clear this difficulty, you muſt conſider by what train of reaſoning miracles come to be proofs in any caſe. A miracle of itſelf proves nothing, unleſs this only, that there is a cauſe equal to the producing the effect we ſee. Suppoſe you ſhould ſee a man raiſe one from the dead, and he ſhould go away and ſay nothing to you, you would not find that any fact, or any propoſition,

was

was proved or diſproved by this miracle. But ſhould he declare to you, in the name of him by whoſe power the miracle was wrought, that image worſhip was unlawful, you would then be poſſeſſed of a proof againſt image-worſhip. But how? Not becauſe the miracle proves any thing as to the point itſelf, but becauſe the man's declaration is authoriſed by him who wrought the miracle in confirmation of his doctrine; and therefore miracles are directly a proof of the authority of perſons, and not of the truth of things.

To apply this to the preſent caſe: If the apoſtles had wrought miracles, and ſaid nothing of the reſurrection, the miracles would have proved nothing about the reſurrection one way or other. But when as eye-witneſſes they atteſted the truth of the reſurrection, and wrought miracles to confirm their authority, the miracles did not directly prove the reſurrection; but they confirmed and eſtabliſhed beyond all ſuſpicion the proper evidence, the evidence of eye-witneſſes. So that here is no change of the evidence from proper to improper; the fact ſtill reſts upon the evidence of ſenſe, confirmed and ſtrengthened by the authority of the Spirit. If a witneſs calls in his neighbours to atteſt his veracity, they prove nothing as to the fact in queſtion, but only confirm the evidence of the witneſs. The caſe here is the ſame; though between the authorities brought in confirmation of the evidence there is no compariſon.

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The ſecond objection was, That this evidence, however good it may be in its kind, is yet nothing to us. It was well, the gentleman ſays, for thoſe who had it; but what is that to us, who have it not?

To adjuſt this difficulty, I muſt obſerve to you, that the evidence now under conſideration, was not a private evidence of the Spirit, or any inward light, like to that which the Quakers in our time pretend to; but an evidence appearing in the manifeſt and viſible works of the Spirit: and this evidence was capable of being tranſmitted, and actually has been tranſmitted to us upon unqueſtionable authority. And to allow the evidence to have been good in the firſt ages, and not in this, ſeems to me to be a contradiction to the rules of reaſoning: for if we ſee enough to judge that the firſt ages had reaſon to believe, we muſt needs ſee at the ſame time, that it is reaſonable for us alſo to believe. As the preſent queſtion only relates to the nature of the evidence, it was not neceſſary to produce from hiſtory the inſtances to ſhew in how plentiful a manner this evidence was granted to the church. Whoever wants this ſatisfaction, may eaſily have it.

Gentlemen of the jury, I have laid before you the ſubſtance of what has been ſaid on both ſides. You are now to conſider of it, and to give your verdict.

The jury conſulted together, and the Foreman roſe up.

Foreman,

Foreman. My Lord, We are ready to give our verdict.

Judge. Are you all agreed?

Jury. Yes.

Judge. Who ſhall ſpeak for you?

Jury. Our Foreman.

Judge. What ſay you? Are the apoſtles guilty of giving falſe evidence in the caſe of the reſurrection of Jeſus, or not guilty?

Foreman. Not guilty.

Judge. Very well. And now, gentlemen, I reſign my commiſſion, and am your humble ſervant.

The company roſe up, and were beginning to pay their compliments to the judge and the counſel; but were interrupted by a gentleman, who went up to the judge, and offered him a fee. What is this? ſays the judge. A fee, Sir, ſaid the gentleman. A fee to a judge is a bribe, ſaid the judge. True, Sir, ſaid the gentleman; but you have reſigned your commiſſion, and will not be the firſt judge who has come from the bench to the bar without any diminution of honour. Now, Lazarus's caſe is to come on next, and this fee is to retain you on his ſide. There followed a confuſed noiſe of all ſpeaking together, to perſuade the judge to take the fee: but as the trial had laſted longer than I expected, and I had lapſed the time of an appointment for buſineſs, I was forced to ſlip away; and whether the judge was prevailed on to undertake the cauſe of Lazarus, or no, I cannot ſay.

S.