

A B R I E F
D I S C O U R S E
C O N C E R N I N G T H E
C R E D I B I L I T Y
O F
M I R A C L E S and R E V E L A T I O N.

W H E R E I N

The Credibility of the Gospel Miracles is
shewn, notwithstanding all *later* Mi-
racles may be rejected as fictitious.

To which is added,

A P O S T S C R I P T in Answer to the Lord Bishop
of *Lichfield's* C H A R G E to his Clergy.

B Y

ARTHUR ASHLEY SYKES, D. D.

The S E C O N D E D I T I O N.

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Thomas Hollis

P R E F A C E.

THE sincere desire I have always had to serve the cause of *Virtue*, and *Religion* both natural and revealed, and to place them upon their true Foundations, made me some years agoe publish an *Essay on the Truth of the Christian Religion*; and not long since, a Treatise wherein I endeavoured to shew, the *True Connexion between Natural and Revealed Religion*. The Subjects were of consequence; and as I had had an Opportunity of seeing Some things wrote against *Revelation* with very great Acuteness, I found it necessary to treat the Defence of it, in a manner somewhat different from what other Writers had done. What I now lay before you finishes my Design; which was as far as I could, to compleat a Vindication of the Christian Religion in a *consistent, rational* manner; and to shew that there is nothing absurd, or incredible, in it.

I do not by this pretend to condemn, or find fault with, any Others who have wrote

in defence of Christianity : But I have pursued such a thread of Reasoning as I think strong and conclusive; and leave the intelligent Reader to judge of the necessity, or expediency, of what I have said.

When I wrote *The Connexion*, &c. I was well aware of the Difficulties which I have here distinctly considered : and this was the reason that led me to establish the *credibility* of *Revelation* in the manner I then did. I have now examined the *Objections* themselves with that freedom and impartiality that is due to them; and I own that unless they can be satisfactorily removed, I shall not wonder at the Doubts and Suspicions that may lie upon the minds of very honest Men. Wherever I have met with any thing that I conceived to be an Objection to what I was saying, I have examined it as such, without naming the Person from whom I differ, because I would treat this Subject in a manner as little *Personal*, as I could. And if the real Objection against the Gospel be removed, I should hope it might be a means to bring Men, to like, and to *practise*, what they are convinced to be true.

The

P R E F A C E.

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The Affair of the *Popish Miracles* required, I thought, something more to be said to it, than I had met with. There is not a *Protestant* of common Understanding that is not fully persuaded of their being either Enlargements of little Incidents, or Tricks, or mere Inventions; or if any thing really extraordinary has happened, it has been perverted to the Abuse of the Ignorant well-meaning people, and by that means has been what what the Scriptures call it, *A Miracle of a Lye*. Unbelievers have greatly taken occasion hence to triumph over Christianity itself, and to impute the Miracles of Christ to the same causes, as Believers do the *Popish* ones. It was therefore necessary so to speak to this point, as to shew a difference in the cases: or to assign a Reason why a Man might reasonably believe the One, at the same time that He either rejects, or troubles not himself about, the other.

But the principal thing which led me to treat on this Subject at this time was, an Objection against the Credibility of the Gospel Miracles taken from the *distance* of *Time* between the Facts as they were done by Christ, and the *Publication* of them. I do not know that this Objection was ever

urged

urged in *Print*, with that force that it has been lately: and how much soever the *Treatise* where it occurs, or the *Author* of it, may be despised, I cannot help thinking it very acutely urged, and a point of the utmost consequence. When these Sort of Difficulties are fairly and freely canvassed, it never produces that ill effect that some fearful good men imagine: and till they are fairly and fully answered, the fact will be, that Unbelievers will encrease, and triumph in a false Security and Strength.

I had once resolved with Myself, not to have troubled my Lord Bishop of *Lichfield*, with any Vindication of Myself against his Charge. But as I have here treated on the Subjects of *Miracles* and *Prophecy*, I have added, by way of *Postscript*, so much of what I had wrote to his Lordship in my own defence as concerns *those* points, omitting here what I had sometime agoe drawn up in answer to his other Accusations.

E R R A T A.

- P. 26. l. 10. for *or*, read *as*.
 49. l. 18. for *conclude*, read *conclude*.
 94. l. ult. after *has* put,
 126. l. 6. read *to particular instances*.
 164. l. penult. for *entirely*, read *entirely*.
 191. l. 7. for *Rogues*, which perhaps. i. perhaps *Rogues*, which

A B R I E F

A B R I E F

DISCOURSE, &c.

THERE are, or have been, but Two Religions in the World, founded or pretended to be founded upon *Miracles* : The one, the *Jewish* ; the other the *Christian*. Many indeed have derived their respective Institutions from Heaven ; and the Religious Legislators of old supported their Authority to institute such sacred Rites, as they thought would be most acceptable to the Gods, or most useful to the People, by pretending some extraordinary Directions or Commands from above : And this extraordinary Inter-course with the Gods hath been called a *Miracle*. But whatever the pretense of immediate conversation with, or Revelation from, any superior Being has been, yet none have attempted, or laid claim to a power of *working Miracles* in order to establish their Laws, or to confirm their Commissions, except the Jewish and the Christian Law-givers.

givers. *Zoroaster* and *Zamolxis*, *Minos* and *Lycurgus*, *Triptolemus* and *Numa*, pretended to receive their Laws from *Vesta*, and *Jupiter*, and *Apollo*, and *Ceres*, and *Egeria*; Others likewise derived their Laws from some other God or Goddess; and at last *Mahomet* laid claim to Inspiration from the God of Heaven. But none of them confirmed their Claims by *working of Miracles*, or appealed to that kind of Evidence for the Truth of their Doctrines. The only * *Miracle* pretended was, the Conference itself, with the God or Goddess and not any *sensible work* done to confirm such Conference.

Setting therefore all these aside as foreign to my purpose, I shall consider the Claims of the *Jewish* and *Christian* Legislators, who have appealed to the *Miracles* they did, for the Truth of their Doctrines. And that I may more clearly proceed in what I design, I shall consider *First*, what a *Miracle*

* Deorum metum injiciendum ratus est: qui cum descendere ad animos sine aliquo commento *Miraculi* non posset, simulat sibi cum Dea *Egeria* congressus nocturnos esse: ejus se monitu, quæ acceptissima Diis essent, sacra instituire.
Liv. l. 1.

is. Secondly, Whether there be any difference as to *Credibility*, betwixt Those done by Christ, and those done by Others who have since pretended to work Miracles. Thirdly, Whether an equal Credit, or even a greater, is not to be given to some *Popish* Miracles, the Accounts of which were published soon after they were done, than is to be given to the Miracles mentioned by the Evangelists, the Accounts of which were not published till many years after the Death of Christ. Fourthly, What are the *Lying Wonders* mentioned in the New Testament, and how they may be distinguished from true Miracles. And Lastly, I shall consider what degree of Credit is to be given to the Gospel Records, since they contain Accounts of Miracles reported to the world so long after the facts.

From hence I shall proceed to another Set of Enquiries arising from the doctrine of Miracles considered as attesting any Revelation. *E. g.* First, Whether we can discover whether it be God, or an Inferior Agent, that works a Miracle. Secondly, Whether a Doctrine may not come from an Evil Agent seducing Men. Thirdly, What

Degree of Assent is due to any Doctrine which stands confirmed by Miracles. Fourthly, Whether a *Partial Revelation* will prove that it comes from God, or from an Inferior Being. And Lastly, Whether God be obliged, supposing that he grants a Revelation, to grant it to all mankind equally.

The surprizing Cheats carried on at times in the several parts of the World, very dextrously and very successfully, by which the Ignorant have been grossly abused, and even the more knowing have been in a great measure confounded, from which a handle has been taken to call in question the Truth of Christianity itself, will justify this Enquiry into the Nature and Credibility of Miracles.

It must be confessed that the Men of all Religions, not only *Jews* and *Christians*, but *Heathens* and *Mahometans*, have made use of pious Frauds: And when they have had an Intrigue to carry on, or an Interest to serve, or a Party to strengthen, or an Adversary to destroy, or any private Ends to promote, they have made no scruple to recur to the extraordinary methods of Miracles; and have pretended to those helps
the

the better to accomplish what they could not effect by ordinary means. Sometimes Enthusiasts have put off their extravagant Imaginations for real Inspirations, and have fought with Devils, and have come off more than conquerors: Some have cured the Sick and raised the Dead, as well after they have been dead themselves, as before. There is nothing so wild and frantic that has not been pretended ; and by this and such like means so great a darkness has been thrown on the Subject of Miracles, that it is become a matter of no small difficulty to shew that any regard is due to what is pretended to be supported by this sort of Evidence.

It would be no small Entertainment to the Curious, were any one to give us an exact impartial *History of Miracles* from the End of the First Century of Christ: He would enquire, How long a power of working them continued in the Church of Christ ; what regard is due to those that are mentioned by Writers *before* the Fourth Century, as well as to those recorded by *Athanasius*, and *Jerom*, *Ruffinus*, *Severus*, and Others who lived in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Centuries : What is the difference, if any, betwixt those

done by Heretics, and those done by the Orthodox; what they were that were done by Heretics; what were the Ends and Uses that Both Sides made of them, &c. The early Fathers and the Church Historians would supply him with plentiful materials: and if he were to descend to later Times, he would rather sink under the Burden, than want materials for his work. Mr. *Whiston* has fixed the years of Christ 383, or 384, for the ceasing of the *truly divine and miraculous* powers, and the setting up the *Dæmoniacal* ones. “The very last,” says he, “of our Saviour’s miraculous Gifts,” [That of casting out Devils] “was taken away from the Church, just at or after the Council of *Constantinople*”—and then “he gave it up to strong delusions that they should believe a Lie, the lying frauds and wonders of *Popery*, and to *Dæmoniacal* Cures and Conjurations.”—“In short, says he, while the Church of Christ was properly Christian and Pure, the power of *true and divine Miracles* continued: But as soon as ever it became *Athanasian, Antichristian*, and *Popish*, those powers all
“ceased

“ ceased immediately, and the *Devil* lent
 “ it his own *cheating* and fatal Powers in
 “ their stead.” *Records*, p. 945, 946. This
 should be examined with the greatest ac-
 curacy : For it will require some proof,
 that *all Miracles*, done since the year
 384, were done by the *Devil*. Some cri-
 terion must be found out by which we
 may distinguish betwixt such as were done
 a hundred years before that year, and those
 done after it. Or will not *some* of the Mi-
 racles done *before* That year, be as much
 entitled to the *Devil* as some that have
 been done *since* ? Or may not some that
 were done *before* That year, be imputed to a
 Faculty of enlarging, or to mistake, or to
 Craft of Men, or to Forgery, or to Enthu-
 siastick Vision, or to mere Imagination, as
 well as some that have been done since ?

It is certain that every Age, especially the
 dark and tyrannical ones, have too much
 pretended to, and made use of Miracles.
 The Church of *Rome* has been in a particu-
 lar manner lavish in its pretensions to this
 power. Its latest Advocates tell us, “ That
 “ God has been pleased in *every Age* to
 “ work evident Miracles in his Church by

“ the Ministry of his Saints, in raising the
 “ Dead to Life, in curing the Blind and
 “ the Lame, in casting out Devils, in heal-
 “ ing in a moment inveterate Diseases, and
 “ the like stupendous works of his Power,
 “ attested by the most authentic Monu-
 “ ments, and very frequently (as may be
 “ seen in the Acts of the Canonizations of
 “ the Saints) by the Depositions of innu-
 “ merable Eye-witnesses examined upon
 “ Oath, and by the public Notoriety of the
 “ Facts: Which kind of Miracles so au-
 “ thentically attested, will be to all Ages a
 “ *standing Evidence*, that the *Church* in
 “ whose Communion they have all been
 “ wrought, is, the *True Spouse of Christ*.”
 Vid. *Catholic Christian instructed*, Pref. p. 18
 —19.

It is not my business here to examine into
 the Truth of these Facts thus confidently
 asserted. I shall only observe, 1st. That the
 Miracles appealed to, were never wrought in
 confirmation of this Truth, that *the Church*,
 in whose Communion they are wrought, is
 the *True Spouse of Christ*. 2. It is certain
 in fact, or at least it is attested by Histo-
 rians, that *Miracles* have been wrought by
 Heretics;

Heretics, by Heathens, by Mahometans, by Jews, as well as by Roman Catholics. Now should they reason, as the Roman Catholics do, that *their* Churches are the true Churches of God because Miracles are done in them ;—this would be as conclusive as the reasoning of the Papists, that the Church of *Rome* is therefore the true Spouse of Christ, because Miracles are performed in That. Suppose, *e. g.* a *Pagan* had argued for the Truth of the *Pagan Religion* in the very same manner which this *Roman Catholic Instructor* does ; and had inferr'd from the Miracles recorded by *Livy, Valerius Maximus, Plutarch, Pliny*, in short, the best and most reputable Writers,—Suppose, I say, that he had inferred the Truth of *Paganism*, or that the *Heathen Religion* was approved by God, or that Those amongst whom all those Miracles had been wrought were the *true Church of God*, since the Miracles done amongst them are so *authentically attested* by such universally approved Writers,—would this Inference be allowed to be just ?

If

If we consult *Mahometan* Writers, They too tell us, that “ the Companions and “ Followers of *Mahomet* were Saints, and “ did greater Miracles than the Apostles, or “ any other of other Nations. For some “ of them carried Armies through the Seas : “ One of them drank Poison : Another “ raised the Dead : Another multiplied both “ Victuals and Drink.” For the Truth of all this *Abmed* the Son of *Abdalhalim* is quoted by *Maraccius* in his 2d Part of his *Prodromus ad Refut. Alcor.* If one would see an Account of the Miracles done by their *Dervices*, the same Author has collected a great many instances from *Ricoldus*, *Busbequius*, and Sir *Paul Ricaut* ; and has attempted a Confutation of them. But a *Mahometan* will be just as deaf to such a Confutation, as a *Papist* is to what a *Protestant* says of the *Popish* Miracles : And will conclude, or may do so, that *Mahometanism* is approved by God, or that the *Mahometan Church*, (or whatever he will call it) is the *true Church* of God, from the Miracles done in that, as justly as the Catholic concludes his Church to be the *true Spouse of Christ* from the Miracles done in That. 3. The Miracles

Miracles of the Church of *Rome* are usually produced in order to confirm or establish some absurd, impossible, foolish or false Notions. Now no Miracles how well soever attested can ever prove a Contradiction, Absurdity, or Falshood to be true; and therefore they prove nothing but the folly of those who admit such consequences. 4. Notwithstanding all the boast of *Roman Catholics*, there may be just ground to suspect the Truth of the Facts by them asserted, since they are almost always done in private or suspicious places, or remote Countries, and never before such as are Enemies to their Religion, or for the Conversion of Infidels, or of such as they call and esteem *Heretics*. The Miracles of our Lord were all *sensible Operations* done openly to convert the *Jews* to his Religion: Those of *Moses* were done openly in the Sight of *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians*, or in the Sight of Thousands of Spectators in the Wilderness. Whereas secret Miracles done where no one has opportunity of examining into them, are like secret Witnesses that may be brought to attest any thing when they are not to be confronted, or cross examined. But, lastly,

ly, supposing these Miracles to be really done, and those Acts of the Canonization of the Saints to be as well attested as is pretended, yet still the Consequence is to be made good, that the Church of *Rome* is the true *Spouse of Christ*. For how does it appear that these Miracles are not done to attest some other Doctrine? Besides, there is certainly much Superstition, and much Idolatry in that Church; and no Miracles how well soever attested can support that Superstructure. Supposing therefore the Miracles done by these Saints, How will it appear that I am to draw the consequence which this Author does from them?

But I shall have occasion to consider more particularly some of the best attested Miracles of the Church of *Rome* hereafter. Not that I intend to examine the Truth of their *Legendary* Stories, or to trace out their Frauds and Lying Wonders, but, admitting them to be *Facts* sufficiently proved, (which is more perhaps than ought to be allowed, and certainly more than I have occasion to allow) I shall consider them as Evidences to the Truth of any doctrine, if they are produced as such; or I shall shew what re-
gard

gard is to be paid to them, when no Doctrine is attested by them. But,

Before I enter into any thing of this nature, it will be necessary to state exactly,

First, What is meant by the Word, *Miracle*?

In Order to the Explication of this, I must observe

1st, That every thing that *surprizes*, or *astonishes*, or makes men *wonder*, (*mirari*) is not what is meant by the Term, *Miracle*. It is frequent indeed in common Speech, when we don't know what is the reason of any strange thing, or from whence it could proceed, or how it could be done, to call it a *Miracle*. And in this Sense *Omens*, *Prodigies*, *Dreams*, all odd Events which may have happened and which we cannot conceive how they should be, may come under this Denomination. But this is only popular Language, and not what is the Subject of the present Enquiry. For in this Sense not only all extraordinary things may be called *Miracles*, but That may be deemed a *Miracle* by some, which is no more than the Effect of the peculiar Properties of certain Bodies known to Some, which have not
fallen

fallen under the Notice of Others. For as Men are of very different Abilities, Apprehensions, Sagacity and Understanding, so there are peculiar circumstances in Life which give to Some, Opportunities of Knowledge which Others never can have. There is in Some a slight of Hand, a Dexterity, by which they are enabled to surprise the ignorant or less knowing part of mankind, and to make them imagine That to be the effect of Conjunction, or of the aid of some Being superior to Man, which in reality is no more than superior Art and Skill. Sometimes the accidental meeting, or the mixture of certain Bodies, produces effects which are *amazing*. But These, or any such like instances, come not under the term, *Miracle*, unless, as I said, in a loose and figurative Sense; how much soever we may *admire* and *wonder* at what we cannot comprehend, or what we are perfectly unacquainted with.

2dly, Whenever we consider the *constant regular* course of things either in Heaven or the Earth, how incomprehensible soever they may be, yet we do not give the name of *Miracles* to them. Thus, how it comes
to

to pass that the Moon, and Earth, go round a Center, and move in Circles, and do not fly off in their respective Tangents: And What it is that keeps them in their Orbits, is matter of as much *wonder* as any that can be conceived; yet we do not call this a *Miracle*. Nay, should either of them, or any other Planet go off in the Tangent of its Orb, (which is what all bodies which are moved in Circles would do, were they not retained by some Hand or other) — This would justly be deem'd and called a *Miracle*, as soon as it was perceived. So that the immediate Interposition of God, or of a Being superior to Man, if it be *constant* and what we are *acquainted with*, does not make a thing to be deem'd *miraculous*; nor do we apply that Term to things which proceed in an *usual* regular manner.

3dly, Nor do we apply this Term to what may be resolved into *Melancholly*, *Idiosyncrasy*, or *Enthusiasm*, how strange and surprizing soever the Effects of these are: Because we impute to Temperament, or perhaps to Distemper, the odd Symptoms and Circumstances of persons under the influence of these cases, and often find we
can

can by Medicines remove the Affections here mentioned. And

Lastly, There are uncommon Cases, *e. g.* Monstrous Births; what is called *Longing* in Women with Child; extraordinary Chances and Events, &c. which though not reducible by us to any general Rules or Laws, are not called *Miracles*, but *Anomalies*, or *Irregularities*.

These cases being set aside, A *Miracle* is, *a designed Effect, sensible, unusual in itself, beyond the Art or Power of Man to do.* Who is the Agent that influences, or enables, the Man to do or work a *Miracle*; Whether it be God himself, or some inferior Being acting mediately or immediately by the Order or Will of God, makes no difference as to this point; since the *Miracle* is the same let it be done by either God, or any other Being superior to Man. Let us suppose, what implies no absurdity or contradiction, that there are Invisible Beings, superior to Man: and let it be admitted that a Man should purpose, and should walk on Water, or in any Medium thinner and rarer than Water is, without sinking; or suppose *e. g.* that he should attempt to fly in the Air without
out

out Wings, or any thing which might supply the place of Wings, and should do it,—This would be a *Miracle*, whether it were performed by the Assistance of God himself, or any other invifible Being of any lower clafs.

I would not chufe to put into the definition of a *Miracle*, that it muft be an effect *above, or befides, or contrary to, the ordinary courfe of Nature*. For, if I do not mistake, a Miracle may be wrought, and yet it may not be *above, or befides, or contrary* to the ordinary courfe of Nature: nay it may be agreeable unto it. It is indeed *above, or befides, or contrary to the ordinary courfe of Nature* AMONG US, for a Man to fly through the Air unaffifted by any Engine; or to walk on the Water without finking at all: But it is not *above, or befides, or contrary to the ordinary courfe of Nature*; for an *Angel*, (I fuppofe fuch Beings here the better to explain my meaning) to fupport a Man upon the Water, or to carry him through the Air, more than it is *contrary to the ordinary courfe of Nature* for a Veffel to fupport him in the Water, or for any Beings, *ftong enough*, to carry him

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through

through the Air. And I apprehend, that when a Miracle is defined to be, *A sensible effect above or besides the ordinary course of Nature, or of those Laws by which the natural world is governed in the course of God's general Providence*,—I apprehend, I say, that this definition is not exact, because I can conceive a Miracle to be worked, (as in the cases above-mentioned,) which yet is *not above, or besides, or contrary* to, the ordinary course of Nature, but perfectly *agreeable* to those Laws by which the natural World is governed in the course of God's general Providence. It is indeed *besides* the *ordinary* course of Nature, or what is usually and commonly practised by or among Men: but it is too general a manner of Expression to say, that any thing is *above, besides, or contrary* to the *ordinary* course of Nature, which is consistent with the common course of Nature, *i.e.* with the ordinary powers which Agents have, or may be conceived to have.

Again, as I put into my definition, that it is an Operation *above the power of Man to do*, it is plain, that it must be the Effect or Operation of some *superior Being*; and
not

not the result of any powers of Bodies, however unusual or inexplicable such powers may be. Whatever is a *Fact*, or an *Effect*, however beyond the Art or Power of Man to do, must be owing to some *Cause*: and we must impute it to some Agent, who is able to produce it, since it is an absurdity to suppose an Effect without a Cause. In every *Miracle* then, there being an Effect, by supposition beyond the power of Man to produce, we cannot but impute it to some invifible Agent who has greater Powers than Man has. Now that there *is* One fuch Superior Being, the Lord of all, powerful, capable of doing what he pleases, and how he pleases, and where he pleases, is too clear to be denied: And that there *may be* innumerable, inferior, invifible Beings, subordinate to the One Great Governor of all, is certainly *possible*. There is no Abfurdity in fupposing fuch; and the Scale of Beings, vifible in this world, makes it *probable* that it is continued upwards; and the *thinking Substance* within us, fhews every man that in fact there is fuch a thing as an invifible Agent. It is not neceffary to proceed farther than this in the prefent En-

quiry : Since if either a possibility, or probability of Invisible Agents, or a certainty of the Existence of God, all sufficient, Almighty, is admitted;—That is all that can be requir'd to account for any Phœnomenon. But further,

When a Miracle is said to be *beyond the power of man*,—it may be thought impossible, or at least very difficult, to fix the bounds which the Knowledge or Industry of man may arrive at. Hence it has been suggested, because it seems not to imply an absolute contradiction in the supposition, that He may some time or other arrive at the Skill of *raising the dead* ; that he may acquire the Secret of making the Juices of the Human body flow again after they have ceased to flow ; and that he may be able to dissolve coagulated Blood, and make it move freely again after it has totally ceased to move. Supposing all this, but not admitting it to be true ; which surely is taking the largest Strides in Supposition,—All that will follow from hence is, that That which is now *a Miracle*, and not in the power of Man to do, will then become within the Human power ; and in course the raising of a dead man to
life

life will then cease to be *miraculous*, because the effect of the power of man. And this reasoning will hold universally. To restore a man to his Eyes or Feet, or to give him Health and Soundness by a *word*, by no Touch, nor by any Application whatever, is now properly a *Miracle*. But shou'd such a Secret ever be found out, as to cure any, or all sorts of sick or disordered folks, or to restore life to dead persons, without any application, or Touch, the term, *Miracle*, wou'd not then be applied to such cases more than it is now to the Rising of the Sun or Moon, or to any common Cures of Distempers. The common Agency exerted regularly to such a cure of Disorders, wou'd be upon this Supposition nothing *extraordinary* or *unusual*; and consequently no more *miraculous* than any thing else within the compass of Human Skill or Power.

I have indeed admitted these Suppositions, extravagant as they are, because they serve to convey the Ideas which we have, as well and as justly as any others can. And should it be said, that the Cure of Disorders done by Christ, or his Apostles, by a Word,

without any Touch, or Application, was owing to any peculiar Skill or Knowledge in them which now is lost,——This must be left to Every body's Judgment : with only this additional circumstance, that our Lord controuled the Winds and Waves, with a word, as well as the fluids and solids of the Human Body : He cured *absent* as well as *present* disorders : He multiplied bread, and fish, so as to feed Great Numbers with little food : and in short, acted as much in a proper *miraculous* manner as we can conceive. To imagine such Skill, such Knowledge to be *acquired*, so as to effect any thing, or every thing, with a *bare word*, is in reality to imagine the greatest effects to be producible without any sufficient cause ; or that nothing is able to produce every effect.

But let it be farther observ'd, that as far as we are able to judge, God governs the World by stated general Laws, and Causes are suffered to produce their Effects regularly. Hence it is, that from our own, and other peoples Experience, we can say with assurance what will be the Event of things a great many years hence : The Sun, *e. g.* will
rise

rife at fuch a Minute on a given day, fix or fix hundred years hence : and if it be warm, rainy weather, in the Summer Months, the Grafs and Fruits of the Earth will thrive. Whatever we fee to be agreeable to the ordinary courfe of things in *our fphere* is never deemed *miraculous* by us, however *incomprehenfible* it may be to us. It is a general Law that Iron fhall be attracted by a Load-ftone, and that Iron touched by a Load-ftone fhall attract other Iron, and this Attraction is made contrary to the Laws of Gravity. How this is done, we know not ; but yet we never reckon it to be *miraculous*. So likewise there is a certain agreement or difagreement betwixt certain bodies, that the application of one to the other fhall caufe Quiet or Motion, remove or increafe certain Effects. Now, however furprifing this may be to any Obferver, yet it is not deemed *miraculous*, becaufe it is fupposed to be the Result of the original make, or of the properties of certain bodies ; and this by the ordinary courfe of a General Law. The odd Effects produced by the Application of Bodies to one another are regular and certain, and con-

stant in the same circumstances ; and therefore tho' we do not know the Reason of the Effects, yet having discovered the Fact, we acquiesce in the unknown cause, and do not imagine the Interposition of Invisible Agents, in order to account for that we commonly see. It is plain that some sorts of Matter have strange properties which we *do* know ; and there are as strange ones still undiscovered, which by Juxtaposition, by mixtures, by the help of Fire, by invisible Effluvia, by motion, by one art or other, are daily discovered. These Effects, how wonderful soever, are never look'd upon as *miraculous* ; since Observation grounded on Experience and Information, makes us judge them to be owing to some general Laws of Matter and Motion, which we find to be certain, tho' we are strangers to them.

There was, not very many years ago in *England*, a Man very famous for the strange Cures by him perform'd ; and every fact comes to us so well attested by the Best, and Ablest, and most Judicious men then in this Kingdom, that their Truth cannot be doubted : I mean such Men as Bishop *Wilkins*, Dr. *Cudworth*, Dr. *Patrick*, Dr. *Whichcot*,

Whichcot, Dean *Rust*, Dr. *Evans*, Mr. *Boyle*, and a great many more, who have attested the Truth of Mr. *Greatrak's* Cures. Can any thing look more like *Miracle*, than that the “Ague, the Falling Sickness, the “King’s Evil, the Fever, Lameness of “many Years standing,” should “be re-
 “mov’d by the meer laying on of hands,
 “and stroking the part affected?” That he shou’d “make the Pains skip and fly from
 “place to place till they run out,” and left the Patient well? Here was a *sensible, de-
 signed Operation*, very *unusual*, and one wou’d think *beyond the power of man*: And accordingly Mr. *Stubbs* the Physician, call’d him, *The Miraculous Conformist*. But yet, I am inclined to believe that Mr. *Greatrak's* Stroking, which produced such extraordinary Effects, was not properly *miraculous*. There might be some thing peculiar to him and to his Constitution, that enabled him to do such wonderful Cures; and Others, *if they knew it*, may have a like Quality, and might do the same.

When, I say, This *may* or *might* be the case,—I ground my notion upon a well known fact, that Mr. *Greatrak*, who was
 able

able to cure *some*, in the manner aforesaid, yet was not able to cure *others* ; no, nor was he able to cure the person who applied to him, unless the sick man was able to tell him where the pain lay : Or if Mr. *Greatrak* had, by his Stroking, removed the disorder from the affected part, and had drove it into some other part ; (which frequently was the case) if the Person was so reduced, *e. g.* by his *Fits*, or to have lost the use of his Speech, or was unable to *tell* where his Disorder lay, He could do no manner of Service to him. This, I conceive, would not have been the case, had these Cures been effected by some Superior Invisible Beings ; who could have easily known into what part of the Body the Distemper, or Pain, was removed, without the Patients declaring where it was ; and by their means the person might have been cured, tho' Mr. *Greatrak* did not know whither the pain was gone.

I do not by this attempt, nor wou'd I be understood to philosophize, or to account for the case before-mention'd, or for any other strange things which may be met with in History, where the facts have been so well attested, that they cannot easily be denied.

nied. All that I mean is, 1. That where an Effect is possible to be accounted for by the Art or Power of men ; or by the means of matter and motion ; or by any natural powers known to us, it shou'd not be rank'd amongst *Miracles*, but shou'd be imputed to its proper cause, how extraordinary soever it may appear to such as are not well versed in these matters. And, 2. That men should always be sure of the *Fact* itself, before they pretend to enquire for either a *natural* or a *supernatural* cause ; Or else they may dispute for ever about an imaginary Subject, and take a great deal of pains to find out the cause of nothing. The famous Story of the *Golden Tooth* that was said to grow in a Boy's head at *Weildorß* in *Silesia*, so artfully contrived as to impose on that famous Physician *James Horstius*, and many others, and which was not for a long while discovered to be a Tooth plated over with Gold : And all the Legendary Stories of *Miracles* said to be done by *Saints*, or by the *Host*, of which you have a tolerable Collection in *The School of the Eucharist*, should make us careful first to be sure of *Facts* ;

Facts ; and then it is time enough to consider whether They are *Miraculous*, or not.

Thus much concerning what is meant by the word *Miracle*. Let us next consider it as it stands, or may stand, connected with *Doctrines*. Here I must lay it down,

1. That nothing that is derogatory to the Honour of God ; nothing that is contrary to, or inconsistent with Goodness, Justice, Mercy, Truth, or any of the Moral Attributes of the Deity, can ever be proved true. For these Properties or Attributes are so certain, that let a Revelation be pretended, or any Evidence whatsoever be produced, yet what is true cannot be prov'd to be false, any more than a demonstrated Proposition in Geometry can be confuted by a contrary demonstration. Indeed cou'd this be done, there wou'd be no such thing as Truth or Falshood ; nor cou'd there be foundation for Assent of Mind, nor any thing to be believed or disbelieved.

2. No Doctrine can be assented to, That is contrary to the nature and reason of things : God himself is governed by them ; and all intelligent Agents are under Obligation to pursue the same Rule of Action.

3. What

3. Whatever is, either thro' our want of capacity, or thro' the nature of the thing, unconceivable by us, cannot be the Subject of Revelation. For as to all intents and purposes, it is exactly the same thing not to be revealed at all, as to continue perfectly unintelligible, after a Revelation is made. And

4. It seems most reasonable to imagine, that if God, or any Superior Being were to inform mankind in an extraordinary manner of any Truths, they would be such as were useful to them, and worthy of Him who is pleased to give them such Information.

This being premised, I now take it for granted, 1. That a *Miracle* may be done, *i. e.* a Work above the Power of man : And since it is above *his* power, it must be done either by *God* himself, or by some other invisible Agent inferior to God. 2. I suppose that some Doctrines may be discovered, or revealed to men by Invisible Beings. And, 3. That there are certain Tests, by which a man may judge, Whether he ought to receive a Doctrine as revealed, or not. The

Second Point then to be considered is, Whether there be any material circumstance attending

attending the Miracles done by the Founder of the *Christian* Religion and his First Disciples, which may make them more to be regarded than those done by the *French Prophets*, or by the *Abbé Paris*, or any other who pretend to work Miracles, and which may determine an honest man to believe the one to have been done, at the same time that he is justifiable in disbelieving, or in not being at all solicitous about the other.

There is certainly a general prejudice, arising from the nature of the thing, which makes men less apt to give into a belief of all miracles whether done many hundred years ago, or done in their own times. They are things *unusual*; and what is very *unusual*, and not within the reach of our Conceptions, is for that very reason rejected as *improbable*. No one therefore should be surpris'd, if Miracles in general, or if those of *Moses* and *Christ* in particular, are attacked by such common Topicks as These:—Miracles are fit arguments only for the Weak; that Credulity is a never-failing, unfathomable Abyss, that readily swallows all Prodigies, and whatever has the Appearance of the *Wonderful*; that
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it is an old Observation *, that the more Prodigies are believed by a simple and superstitious people, the more and the greater will ever be invented, and published ; and that none but credulous and weak people ever regard them. You may indeed pretend, that *Honest* men, who are unwilling to deceive, or to be deceived, give their Assent to such Facts : But *Honest* men may easily be misled themselves, and when they are so, they may as easily mislead others. It is well known, that tho' some men are Honest, yet Others are *Artful*, and know how to impose on, and seduce those who are honest ; nay, the more disposed they are to follow Truth, the more easily are they apt to believe, and to trust the Reports of the Men of Cunning : They therefore may be allowed to be well meaning, upright men, and yet being over easily persuaded, they may undesignedly impose on others. Or say that they are unwilling to be credulous, and search as well as they are able for the Truth of any Facts ; yet it is

* Prodigia eo anno multa nuntiata sunt, quæ quo magis credebant simplices ac religiosi homines, eo etiam plura nuntiabantur. Liv. l. 24.

easy to conceive how they may impose upon themselves. Whatever is *wonderful*, is apt to strike Mens minds very powerfully ; and when This has made the first Impression, an Interest may insensibly warp them from their Integrity ; Or if they have no Interest themselves, Others to whom they stand related some how or other, or from whom they receive their Information, may have an Interest to serve by their Credulity. It may be a Question, how far *Fame*, or *Reputation* may work upon men who have no Fame or Reputation to lose : if they succeed, is it not a prodigious Advantage to men of low condition in life to be esteem'd the Agents, or immediate Instruments of God ; and perhaps to be submitted to in whatever they should declare to come from Heaven ?

Should any one say, That *Eye-witnesses* cannot be deceived : and if such are Honest, there can be no reason to doubt of their Reports : It will be replied, That

Eye-witnesses of things *improbable in themselves*, may justly be suspected. How many have been made to imagine that they see, what never existed ? How many Eye-witnesses

witnesses are there of *Popish* Miracles, who cannot be reasonably charged with Dishonesty ? They certainly believe those to be true Miracles, which others are convinced to be mere Illusion and Fraud. But

Besides this, There may be much more reason to doubt of Miracles, when they are only grounded upon a Relation of them, made *Thirty, Forty, Sixty* years after they were said to be performed. Who would now give Credit to any Miracle said to be done at the *Revolution*, and never publish'd to the World till this Year, when Few cou'd possibly examine into its Truth, and Fewer would trouble themselves about it ? There is not only reason to *suspect* the Truth of such Relations, but there is no Obligation to concern ourselves with such surprising or unaccountable Facts, even were they to happen in our own Times. And indeed extraordinary Facts are related in every Age ; and if the world were to give into a Belief of Miracles every where said to be done, there wou'd be no cause to complain of the *Want*, but on the contrary, of the *Excess* of *Faith*.

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Now,

Now, all this declamatory Objection vanishes into nothing, if it can be made to appear, that as a *Miracle* is possible, so nothing is here urged to shew that the Apostles were *in fact* misled by Interest, or swayed by any sinister views, or any ways imposed on. If it could be shewn that the Evangelists in particular were not men of Honesty and Abilities, from any circumstances in their Histories, which cannot be reconcil'd to their Veracity and Integrity, then indeed a conjectural Objection might be reasonably urged ; and it would not be sufficient to reply that *Matthæw*, or *John* were *Eye-witnesses* ; or that we have as good Evidence for the Genuineness of their books as we have for *Cicero*, or *Cæsar*, for *Livy*, or *Sallust*. But there are in the Evangelists, all the marks of Integrity, and Abilities, that can be expected or given : And consequently, a mere conjectural Objection is of no validity against them.

Should it be said, that the Genuineness of the Book is not enough to justify the Truth of any thing *improbable* in itself that is contained in it : Or, that the Author *may* be imposed on, or byass'd in relating Facts
which

which in themselves are *unlikely*,—Though this may be true *in general*, yet when it comes to be applied to particular persons, and to particular circumstances, it may be false and groundless. It is true, in general, that Man is a lying, wicked, false creature: Yet, if any one should thence argue, that therefore such a *particular* Person is a Liar, or very wicked, the conclusion might be very false and very unjust. And so it is in the present case: Miracles in general are *unlikely* or *improbable*. Wou'd any one from thence conclude, that there never was a Miracle done; or that never any body was a competent Eye-witness, or a faithful Relator of such a fact? If indeed one can except to a particular person's credit, or to his credulity, or can prove him an incompetent Witness, the Improbability of the fact will justify our disbelief; and the more of such circumstances concur, the greater will be the grounds of Suspicion. But before we reject the relation of a Miracle as absolutely incredible, the circumstances are to be considered; and what is true *in general*, must be true *in particular*, or we may disbelieve a certain Truth, and reject what has the

strongest Evidence that can be produced for any fact.

How then are we to act in the present case ? And how can we possibly arrive at any degree of Evidence, that the Miracles done by our Saviour were really and truly done ? Or will they not always stand upon the Foot of other Miracles which are treated as *incredible*, and rejected as such ?

I answer. No. There may be *Two* cases put, which will justly give Credit to the Miracles which are attended with them ; and will justify our Assent to them, tho' we refuse it to all others. The

First is, Suppose the persons who are said to have work'd *Miracles*, have by means of a *Prophetic* Spirit shewn, that they had some Intercourse with Invisible Beings : Imagine, that He or They have plainly and clearly *foretold* things Two, Three, Five hundred, or a Thousand years or more, before they came to pass : Suppose too, that the matters foretold are so express and clear, (in many cases at least,) that the words of the Prediction must be racked and tortured much, in order to pervert them to a wrong meaning : And lastly, Suppose that there is no dispute, nor can be any, that the Books
which

which contain these Prophecies are public, and were so long before the Events. I need not stay to observe, that this is the case indisputably of the Writings of the Old and New Testament. In this case, the *Prophet* has a Gift superior to other men, and must have his Knowledge from some *Superior Being*, who either can *govern* and direct the Actions of free, voluntary Agents, so as to bring about things just as they are foretold ; or else he must *know* how the person that does govern all things will act at the given time. If the Prophet is enabled to work a *Miracle*, and this *Miracle* is recorded by One that was an Eye-witness, or of Abilities and Integrity,—I say, there is good reason for any one, at any distance of time, to believe that such a Miracle was worked ; because one must know, that the Person who worked it, had some Intercourse with some Invisible Being, who could as well enable him to *work* it, as he could enable him to *predict* so distant, so remote a futurity.

Suppose now a Miracle work'd, e.g. by the *Abbé Paris*, and related as his Elogist, *Monf. Montgeron* has told it. I have a right to call in question, or to doubt of the fact ; as it must be owned that I have to doubt of

every thing that is *unlikely*, or *improbable* ; especially if I have grounds to suspect Interest, or Policy, or Enthusiasm, or Party, or what else you please, to be concerned in the affair ; and I have no *collateral Evidence* to induce me to believe that the *Tomb* of the *Deacon* could do such wonders, or that God would do them at his Intercession. Should any one, therefore, in this case, doubt of the Truth of an uncommon, extraordinary Fact, He could not be blamed ; especially should he see it controverted on the Spot, whether such Miracles are done, or not. But when he has a certainty of a man's having a correspondence with Superior, Invisible Beings, from *Prophecy* and *Event*, exactly corresponding ; and when this is not a thing that lies within the reach of human conjecture, but what must depend upon him who governs the world ; Or if, (as is the case of the Scriptures) there may be *many* such Instances, and *we ourselves* can see the Events exactly tallying to what so many years before was predicted, — One cannot but see the Miracle to be *probable*, probable in the *highest degree*, and to have a greater degree
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of Credibility than what can be derived from the mere Authority of the Writer. Wherever any *extraordinary Facts* are related, especially such as are *above the powers of Men* to do, let them be called by the name of *Prodigies*, or what the Writer pleases, Every man has a right to *doubt*, to *suspect*, to *call in question* the Fact, or the Information, or perhaps the Honesty or Abilities of the Relator : And should he go so far as to disbelieve what is so very unlikely, unless very strong Evidence could be produced to the contrary, he wou'd not go beyond the bounds of Reason. But it is not so where Proof of an Intercourse with God, or with some Superior Invisible Being, is evident ; because Prophecy and Event is like a *standing, perpetual Miracle*, done before *mine own Eyes*, which I cannot be convinced to be false, till I can be convinced that such or such propositions are not wrote down in such a book, or that they do not mean what their plain purport is.

You'll say, perhaps, that to appeal to *Prophecy* for the credibility of *Miracles* is appealing to a thing as hard to be conceived as *Miracles* themselves : That a *Miracle* is

a Fact of which the *Senses* are the proper Judges: And that if any person does *see* such a thing done, it is enough to have, and one ought to acquiesce in such Testimony.

It is true, that the Senses are the proper Judges of a Miracle ; and there can be no greater evidence given than that of mens own *sensible* Experience. Let men argue ever so subtilly, yet still no one can prove that a man did not see, what in fact he saw to be done. If a Miracle therefore was really done ; if a dead man, *e. g.* was raised to life, or a lame man restored to the use of his Limbs by a word, — This was an Evidence beyond all question, to all such as were proper *Eye-witnesses*. The Facts ought to be examined into in the most careful manner ; and if no Art, no Trick be used, but the thing done be such as is plainly above the power of man to do, no Evidence can be stronger than *Eye-sight* ; and such as have that Evidence cannot but believe. Those therefore that see a Miracle, need not, cannot have stronger Evidence of its Truth than *Eye-sight* will afford.

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But this sort of Evidence being only to be had by those who are Spectators of the thing done, what Satisfaction can others, who are not present at the working of the Miracle, have? May it not be reasonable for those who live at a great distance of either Time or Place to *doubt* of such extraordinary facts, and to *suspect* delusion or imposture? There is so much deceit in the world, so much juggle, so many private Ends and Views to serve, that it cannot but be right to suspend our Judgment, till proof of extraordinary facts can be produced. Our Saviour, Seventeen Hundred years ago, is said by the *Evangelists*, to have work'd a great many Miracles in proof of his Mission: Two of the Writers of his Life and Acts were his immediate Attendants, and *saw* the wondrous Works he did. If now we are satisfied with their Historical Evidence, or from what these *Eye-witnesses* have declared, there's an end of the Enquiry. But *Unbelievers* still doubt: they are not satisfied with this Testimony: they see many instances of Miracles, well vouched, and yet rejected by adverse Parties: they see constant accounts from *Popish* Countries of

Cures

Cures of all sorts, done by *Images*, by *Reliques*, and I know not what consecrated Gewgaws. How many Miracles is *Ignatius Loyola* said to have work'd? How many did *Francis Xavier*? And yet we all make no scruple to condemn and reject such Stories, as Fictions and Romances. Why then should assent be given to the Accounts of Miracles, related by the *Evangelists*, which were done so many hundred years ago? Now,

The case I say is different, and we ourselves may *see* the difference, if we consider the *Prophecies* which occur in the Sacred Writings. I do not mean such Prophecies as were of things very *near*, or what an adversary would impute to *Chance*, or *Conjecture*; but I refer to such predictions of remote Events as could not be owing to such causes. Of these we are competent Judges; we see and know their completion; and when we *see* the completion, we can see a power with the person that works the Miracle, sufficient to enable him to do it; and consequently have ground to believe the Miracle itself to be done.

Prophecy,

Prophecy, as I just now observed, is like a *Standing Miracle* of which *we ourselves* are certain Judges ; and the appeal here lies, not to the *Eyes* of those who lived many hundred years ago, but to *our own* Faculties. We ourselves are as sure of the completion, as the concurring Testimonies of all parties, Heathens as well as Christians, Enemies as well as Friends, nay, our own Eye-sight, can assure us. When the Histories of past Times are related, and the Historian knew not that he was serving any purpose but that of writing faithfully what passed in the world, He was giving a demonstration of the Truth of Christianity, and establishing an Evidence for its Truth that is indisputable. Here *conjectural* Objections are of no force, against so clear and positive an Evidence ; nor ought any man to give up what is true, unless all History be false, for the sake of mere *possibilities*.

When I say, *unless all History be false*, I do not mean what is reported to be the motive to, or the Springs of action in Princes or States, or little Incidents which admit of Controversy ; but I mean the *Events*, the well known *Facts*, the *Revolutions* in Empires,

pires, the *Practices* of Christians ; Things which all agree in. Such are the Prophe-
tic Description of a Polity to arise in the
Church remarkable for its *Idolatry* and *Per-
secution* ; the *Apostacy* which was to consist
in the Worship of *Dæmons*, in abstinence
from *Marriage*, and from certain *Meats*,
which God hath ordained to be received with
Thanksgiving ; The Continuance of the *Jews* ;
the *Popes* subduing just *Three Kingdoms* ; and
many other Facts of the like nature. These
are such standing Evidences of a Superior
power with those who are reported to work
Miracles, that one cannot disbelieve the ac-
counts which we have of their *Miracles*,
unless some *direct* and *positive* proof, and
not a merely *conjectural* one, cou'd be pro-
duced against them.

But do not the Scriptures themselves sup-
pose, that a man may work a *Miracle*, and
utter a *Prophecy* at the same time, and yet
be a *Lying Prophet* ? *If there arise among
you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams,
and giveth thee a Sign, or a Wonder, and
the Sign or Wonder come to pass, whereof
he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after
other Gods, which thou hast not known, and
let*

let us serve them, Thou shalt not hearken to the words of that Prophet—for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God, Deut. xiii. 1—3.

But this is of no weight in the present case. No Evidence can be greater than that of *Eye-sight* ; and therefore if any one should see such a false *Prophet* work a *Miracle*, He could not doubt of the Truth of the Miracle itself. But if the prophet join'd to this Miracle a false Doctrine, if he attempted to seduce the people to Idolatry, or to worship any Beings besides the God of Heaven ; this consequence wou'd by no means follow. The case is put of one that had had heretofore a Revelation from God ; and is therefore styled a *Prophet*. Suppose that such a one were to give a *Sign*, or a *Wonder* ; or, suppose that he were to add to That a *Prediction* of some future Event, and all this were in order to induce the people to do a wrong, unjust, unrighteous act, yet they were not to *hearken* to him ; because no Evidence, no Argument was sufficient to prove a falsehood to be true. The nature and reason of the thing is always to be consider'd, and must never be forsaken : And
should

should a Worker of a Miracle foretel any Event, and should such Event happen—All that will follow is, That such a man was really assisted by some Superior Being, who enabled him to do the Miracle, and to prophesy: *Both* these extraordinary Events were, or might be true; but the consequence drawn from them was false, *viz.* That the people therefore were *to go after other Gods.*

But this is not the point I am now upon. A Miracle is supposed to be done; and I want to know, Whether I may not arrive at certainty, that such Miracle was not owing to Trick, or Art, or Mistake in them that have related it to the World. Suppose then, that the Person who work'd the *Miracle*, did *foretel* very distant Events, of which I am a competent Judge, and which I see to have happened just as it was foretold that they should happen; in this case, I myself can see that such Prophet was inspired, or influenced by a Superior Being; and thence I can conclude, that the *Miracle* is *probable*; and then it is easy to assent to the Relators of such Miracle, if I have sufficient grounds not to suspect their Veracity or Abilities.

Secondly,

Secondly, Another case may be put, which may give great credit to Records of *Miracles* done *Ten, Twenty, Thirty, Sixty* years before the Record was published : And that is this. Suppose that a company of men should be enabled to work Miracles from, and by the Person, who is reported to have work'd Miracles so many years before : Suppose that they should every where, as occasion or opportunity offered, do the same, or greater Miracles than those contained in such records,—This would argue a great degree of Probability, or would amount to Evidence, that that person who could give such a power to others, did do the Miracles he is said to do himself.

Suppose, *e. g.* that a number of men should go about the several parts of the world, and work *Miracles*, and write Books, and in them declare, that they did not the Miracles they did by any power of their *own* ; but that whatever they did, it was by a power received from One, who many years ago work'd Miracles himself. The Records indeed of these first Miracles were not published till twenty, or thirty, or even *Sixty* years after the death of him that did them.

them. But then, here were a large company of men, who appealed for the Truth of what they did to *All*, to Enemies as well as Friends ; and *They* work'd Miracles visibly and openly, as oft as Circumstances arose which required them ; and they declared, that whatever powers they had, they had from him, who did so many Signs and Wonders so many years ago. Are not these *later* Miracles a good ground to believe that even the *former* are, or might be true ? And must not every one, who was an *Eye-witness* to these *later* Miracles, conclude, that those which were done so much before might have been real ?

Now, should it further appear, upon the strictest Examination, that these very men who liv'd so much later than our Saviour, and work'd Miracles by a power derived from *him*, had likewise the gift of *Prophecy*, and did foretel many distant things, and they came to pass exactly as they foretold, it will be a strong Evidence of these mens Inspiration, or Intercourse with some *Invisible Being* ; and in course, that the Miracles they relate were *true*, or more to be regarded

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ed than any others not attended with such Circumstances.

Suppose now the question to be, Upon what grounds do we believe the Miracles of the New Testament to be real, or really done by them who are said to have done them ; since all Miracles are *improbable* in themselves, as being unusual, and beyond the power or art of man ? The Answer is, They are agreed to be the works of Beings superior to man. Now *Jesus* shewed sufficiently, that He had some Intercourse with some Superior Beings, by the *Prophecies* that He gave of future, distant Things, and *We* ourselves are Judges of these Truths from *our* Knowledge of their Completion. The Apostles had the same Spirit of *Prophecy*. Hence one may conclude, that both He and his Disciples might *possibly* do what is reported of them : *possibly*, as to the *Fact*, however, unlikely in itself ; and *possibly*, as to the *men* who are said to have done such and such Facts. Then come in, in their full force, all the Arguments for the Truth of the Gospel Records, taken from the Integrity and Honesty of the Writers, from their being Eye-witnesses, from their having

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no Interest to serve, from their sacrificing every thing for the Truth of the Gospel; and, in short, every Topic which is usually urged in behalf of the Gospel. What is *unlikely*, or *improbable*, in any other Writer appears in the present circumstance to be very *probable*; and in course, what is *incredible* in general here commences *credible*.

To strengthen this credibility still farther, it must be observ'd that the Apostles of our Lord did not confine themselves to any one part of the world, but dispersed themselves to places very remote from *Jerusalem*: They went to *Samaria*, to *Ephesus*, to *Athens*, to *Philippi*, to *Corinth*, to *Rome*; in short, they traversed the world, and went to all the principal Places, preaching the Gospel, as long as they lived; and they worked *Miracles*, and they likewise *Prophesied*; and *We* are competent Judges of the Truths by them foretold, since we can see the *Events*. Miracles openly done in so many places, so remote, so distant, gave a fair opportunity for great numbers of men every where to examine, to see with their own eyes, and to believe. What they saw done at *Rome*, *e. g.* would make what was reported to be done
at

at *Jerusalem*, to be *credible* because of a like nature. And then as to *Us*, at this distance of Place and Time, no Arguments taken from the *Improbability* of *Facts* are of any Significancy, when we are sure of such a power influencing those men as is able to make them perform what is said to be done by them : And when that Objection is remov'd, which made the thing *incredible*, the rest must stand upon the foot of *Facts* recorded by Men of Integrity and Ability.

It may be here asked, Whether any other Religion, except the *Jewish* and the *Christian*, has the Advantage here mentioned ? And my Answer is, No. There are, I think, somewhat more than *Twenty* places in the *Alcoran*, which are exprefs, that *Mahomet* never worked any Miracle ; that he was not sent to work Miracles, but to preach and admonish ; that Faith did not depend on Miracles, but upon God, &c. Neither are there any *Prophecies*, from which we might infer, that He was assisted by the Angel *Gabriel*, as he pretended. If his Followers have invented *Miracles* for him, they are not to be admitted against the exprefs Declarations of Himself : They are like the *Legendary* Stories, told

by some Christian Writers, concerning our Saviour, or certain Saints, which nobody believes or regards. And as to *Popish* Miracles, They will be considered in their proper places.

I may now proceed to the *Third* Question, Whether the Miracles done at the Tomb of the *Abbé Paris* are not of equal, or of greater Credibility, than those related by the Evangelists, since the Accounts of the One were published to the World in *five* or *six* years time after they were done, and were presented to the King of *France* himself upon the Spot : Whereas the first Account of the other, I mean St. *Matthew's* Gospel, was not published, as Dr. *Mill* assures us, till almost *Thirty* years after the Facts ; and St. *John's* Gospel, not till *Sixty* years, or more, after the Death of Christ.

It is but common Justice to give a short account of the facts mentioned by Mons. *Montgeron*, at first himself a great *Unbeliever*, and afterwards a *Convert*, upon seeing the wonders done at the *Tomb* of the deceased. The Sight of the Facts done there, brought him even to a Belief of Christianity itself, and made him see reason to give credit

dit to what he once rejected ; nay, to write a Defence of Christianity, when He saw, and critically examined into several Facts of a like nature with those of Jesus Christ, done at the Tomb of the *Blessed Deacon Francis*. Being fully convinced and converted himself, a man of figure and consequence, a Counsellor of Parliament, he wrote the History of the Facts, and dedicated it to the King of *France* ; and what is more, he actually presented his Book to the King, “ induced
 “ by an ardent zeal for his Majesty, to dis-
 “ close to him many Truths which were
 “ kept from him, and which it was his Ma-
 “ jesty’s Interest to know. I know, Sire,
 “ that the Step I have taken will draw upon
 “ me the hatred of those who imploy all
 “ their efforts to hinder your Majesty and
 “ your principal Ministers from being ac-
 “ quainted with the facts, of which, this
 “ contains the proofs ; but I never made any
 “ doubt to expose myself to their Resent-
 “ ment, because it was a doing to your Ma-
 “ jesty, and to Religion, the greatest Ser-
 “ vices : ” This was done *July 29. 1737*.
 There are Letters of the Bishop of *Senez*,

and of the Bishop of *Montpelier*, highly approving the Step that Mr. *Montgeron* took upon this Occasion, bearing date the *August* following.

Thus much of the *Author* : Let us next consider the *facts* themselves. The *first* Miracle which he mentions is, the *restoring Sight* to a young *Spanish Gentleman*, Jul. 2. 1731. The *Second* was the cure of a woman whose belly was swelled to an enormous Size, her Legs as big as the body of a Child, her Feet all swelled as large as a Head, her left side entirely struck with a Palsy, terrible Ulcers and Sores at the bending of her left arm, and upon her thighs, &c. This poor creature, after having been in this distress for four years, or thereabout, was with great difficulty, brought and laid at the bottom of the *Abbé's Tomb*, on the 19th of *June*, 1731. upon the sheet in which she was to be buried, in case she died : She was cured that very day ; all her Limbs were restored ; she got up in the sight of numbers of Spectators ; she sat upon the Tomb, moved her arms, clasped her hands ; the Sores were all cured ; the paralytick side was restored ; she even put on her shoes,
and

and was perfectly cured. A *Third* Miracle was of one whose left side was so struck with a Palsy, that she was forced to go with Crutches, and every Step to throw her body back, in order to draw with a Sling her left foot forwards : She was cured suddenly and perfectly, on the 13th of *June*, 1731. *Another* had, for Three years, terrible Vomiting of blood, and for Five years a continued Fever; and was tormented with a pain in her side, which caused a continual Waking : Her left side was all paralytick, and her whole body Dropsical ; at length, she had several attacks of Apoplexies, and Lethargy. She was cured of her Bleeding and Fever at the *Abbé's* Tomb, *July* 16 : She recovered her Speech the 17th ; the pain of her Side ceased the 18th ; her Dropsy disappeared the 19th, the same year. *Another* was cured of a Cancer and Palsy, the 12th of *August*, the same year. *Another* had lost her speech for some days, and both her Legs for some years, and was reduced so low, that she fainted away in the chair, in which they carried her : As soon as she was put upon the Tomb of the *Abbé Paris*, Aug. 2. 1731. she recovered the free use of her

E 4 speech,

speech, and of all her paralytick parts, and had a perfect health. *Another* almost entirely deprived of his left eye from his Childhood, by Two Cataracts, which covered the pupil, and having his right eye pierced with *an awl*, which entered into the Chrystaline humor, and hurt the parts essential to *seeing*; he recovered one Eye, the 22d of *April*, 1733. and the other, the 14th of *May* following. I might mention the Maimed, and the Halt as well as the Blind and Paralytick there said to be cured, within the compass of these ten years; of which all the City of *Paris* rung, and to which numberless people bore their Testimonies.

Here are the Blind, the Lame, the Sick, cured suddenly, where application of Medicines had before been fruitless; and their cases are so circumstanced, and so described, that it seems impossible to say, how a monument, or a piece of the *Abbé's Shirt* should produce such surprising cures. The History of them is published in *Four* or *Five* years time after the Facts: The cures were critically examined into by *Monf. Montgeron*; He went to the Physicians, Apothecaries, Surgeons, who had had the unfortunate

Patients

Patients under their hands : He enquired into every circumstance, and he makes his Report like a man that was desirous of knowing, and desirous of propagating nothing but the Truth. Thus far *Monf. Montgeron* seems to act with Honesty ; and tho' some of his Facts are denied, (at least, as to the manner by him related,) and it may be suggested, that the *Jansenists* had an interest to serve in opposition to the *Jesuits* ; and at this distance of place, it is impossible to know whether the Cures were such as this Author has represented them, — Let us admit the Facts, which is as much as can be desired by *Monf. Montgeron*. But then

It will not follow, what the Title Page of the Book holds forth, that these *Miracles* were, *opéré a l'intercession de M. De Paris*, *Done at the Intercession of the Abbé Paris*. For admitting the Facts to be done at his Tomb, it neither follows, that *He* did them, nor that he *interceded* with God for the Persons that were cured. There appears no Evidence, no pretence of proof, no discovery made *from above* to any of these afflicted Persons, nor to any one else, either before, or after, or at the time of their Cure,
that

that *Abbé Paris* had obtained, or had asked, any such power from God, to do the cures which were done at *St. Medard*. This is all mere Invention, upon no other foundation than that the cure was done at the place where this good man, or sinner, was buried.

I do not deny, nor concern myself about a fact, which, upon the credit of Eye-witnesses, able, honest, and good, is here said to be done. But what I affirm is, that Mr. *Montgeron*, and *the Appellants* take for granted what ought to have been particularly and clearly proved, that the *Abbé Paris* cured these people, or that God, or some other Invisible Being did these things at *his Intercession* or *Request*. God, or any other Invisible Being *may* do these wondrous works : But supposing the Truth of the Facts, the point that ought to have been proved, and which is taken for granted by the admirers of the *Abbé*, is, that the good *Deacon Francis*, or *Abbé Paris*, *requested*, or *did* them. Whereas, nothing follows from these facts, even supposing them supernatural, but that some Invisible, Superior Being, we know not whether *Abbé Paris*, or any particular
Being

Being else interposed, and really did such or such Things, at such or such Times, in such a particular Place, and in such a Manner. Here is supposed an Instance indeed of great Power, superior to what Man has, which was exerted, and which did a real Service to these miserable Objects : But *who* did the fact, is not at all known.

It is allowed, that Assent is due to proper Testimony ; and if it appears that men are no ways imposed on, nor do design to impose on others, credit ought to be given to a Fact by them reported. The Extraordinariness of the Fact if faithfully related, is not a reason why a sufficient Evidence should not be admitted : And if an extraordinary fact be committed to writing, the person who writes, if he be a proper witness, ought to be believed. Men ought to object to whatever they think liable to Objection ; and if many years intervene betwixt an extraordinary fact and the Relation, there may be, in general, probable grounds to suspect Addition, or Subtraction, or Alteration of Circumstances, which every man, however honest, may be liable to make. And where an apparent Interest is to be carried on, or served, (as is the case of the *Appellants* in
France

France against the *Jesuits*) there may be just ground to suspect that *Monf. Montgeron* may outtree some points, and lessen others, notwithstanding his desire of being faithful. But supposing all the Exactness and Fidelity that can be expected or wished, all that can be said is, That such Facts were done : Nothing depends upon them, and if men believe or disbelieve them, no more depends upon it, than there does upon believing, or not believing that there is a Bird at *Amboyna*, with *five* great Claws upon each Foot, and which, instead of feathers, has only long hairs upon his Body, and the Pinions of his Wings.

Suppose now the Facts which are mentioned in the Gospel to be done ; and suppose the Facts which *Monf. Montgeron* relates to be equally true : What then ? If nothing farther be added, you may believe them Both, or might reject them Both, without any great Evil, or Mischief. But the Truth is, that a *Doctrine* is expressly taught in the one case, useful, which natural Reason could not discover, and which, when revealed, appears to be perfectly agreeable, or not contrary, to Reason. In the other, nothing but the *Miracle* appears ; and that stands upon the foot of every other unusual

Act

Act of Providence. In the one case a Rule of Action, or a Motive to Action is made known ; and this is declared to come from an Invisibile, Superior Being, which Invisibile Being has manifested himself by the Exertion of a power beyond, or above the power of Man : In the other case, no doctrine, no discovery of any truth is made ; and all that is to be remarked is, the Mere Power and Existence of some Agent superior to ourselves.

When the Miracles done at *Abbé Paris's* Tomb are appealed to, the Use that is made, and the Inference that is drawn, is, That the *Abbé* was an extraordinary *Good* man ; that He is now a *Saint* ; that thro' his prevailing Interest, He has obtained a power to assist the Miserable that resort to his Tomb, and that the *Saint* intercedes with God, in behalf of those that pray at the place where He was buried. But these are hasty Inferences, which, First, are not revealed to any person : and 2dly, Suppose they should be pretended to be revealed, they would not easily be admitted, by such as read the Scriptures, and understand what has already been discovered by our Lord. How does it appear,

appear, that *Abbé Paris* heal'd the *Paralytick* Women, or cured *Don Alphonso de Palacios* of his *Blindness*? Why, these cures were done at his *Grave*. True. But is that a proof that *Abbé Paris* did them, more than the man that trod upon that ground a thousand years ago; or than the *Gravedigger*, who since turned up the Mold to make the grave that the *Abbé* lies in? How can *Monf. Montgeron* prove, That the *Abbé* *intercedes* with God, or with any other Agent, to work these Cures? How is it proved, that the *Abbé* *bears* the prayers of those who call upon him? Or if he does, How is it certain, that it is *He* who helps the poor afflicted Mortal? Still the only answer is, This is done at one particular place, where the *Saint* was *buried*. But this is very far from proving, that the *Abbé* does it, unless it could be proved, that no other Being but the dead Saints work Miracles where their Sepulchres are made.

You'll say it must be owing to the *Saint*, since *the Saint* is invoked at his Tomb; and the cure is done. I will not answer that this is a confess'd *Invocation of Saints*, which our *English Catholics* deny to be the practise of
of

of the Church of *Rome*. They “ hold it
 “ to be pious and profitable to apply our-
 “ selves to them, in the way of desiring
 “ them to pray to God for us, but not so
 “ as to address ourselves to them,—as if
 “ they had any power to help us indepen-
 “ dently of God’s good Will and Pleasure.—
 “ When we beg their *Aid* and *Defence*, we
 “ mean, to beg the *Aid* and *Defence* of
 “ their Prayers. *Cathol. Christian instructed*,
 “ pag. 224.” We are not then allowed to
 say, that the Saint is *invok’d*, except it be to
 beg his *Prayers*. God then alone is *invok’d*,
 but we beg the *Aid* and *Defence* of the
 Saint’s Prayers at the *Deacon’s Tomb* ; and
 the Prayer is heard, and answered. What
 now has the *Saint* to do in the Affair ? Why,
 nothing but to make his Prayer to *God*, who
 is able to grant the Assistance that is desir’d :
 Whereas, it is not proved, that the *Saint* is
 able to *bear*, or able to relieve the poor, af-
 flicted Patient ? It will be said,

That the Prayer is offered to the *Saint*,
 that He wou’d *pray* to God ; and from the
Event it appears, that the *Saint* did comply
 with the Request, and did *intercede* with
 God,

God, and did obtain the favour of the miraculous cure. The Answer is,

The Event shews, (for I admit the Fact, as it is reported, without examining farther into it) the Event I say shews, that the cure is done : but the Event does not shew, that *Abbé Paris* heard the Petitioner, or that he *interceded* with God, or obtained the Help desired : No, nor does it shew, that the Petitioner was cured for the sake of the Intercession of the *Saint* : Nor can this be proved, unless it could be shewn, that God would never interpose, *unasked* of some *Saint* or other, to help any miserable creature. For if he *may* interpose, the cure will shew an Interposition ; but whether a Saint in Heaven, or a Mortal upon Earth, makes a Request, and is heard, cannot be proved. What if God shews mercy to an honest, upright, *mistaken*, miserable creature ? How can it be proved, that God did not grant the cure, for the sake of the *Uprightness* of the petitioner, and not for the *sake* of the *Intercession* of the *Abbé* ?

But does not the *Miracle* prove, that the *Saint* heard the prayer of the Devout, Sick Person, and *interceded* with God for him,
and

and came to his Relief upon the performance of *a nine Days Devotion?*

No. It is impossible it should prove a Fact, or be urged as a Testimony to a Fact, which it never was work'd to prove. God might immediately work the cure : Any other Invisible Being might work the cure ; and *Abbé Paris* be as insensible as the *Tomb* in which He was laid. So that, to *infer* from the Fact done at the *Abbé's Tomb*, that He *heard* the Petitioner, or that He *interceded* with God for the miserable Object, or that *He* helped him, and worked the Miraculous Cure, is much more than the Miracle will prove, or any good reason will justify.

I will add here, by the by, that when the Missionaries here in *England* tell us, that the Catholics never *Pray* to Saints, except it be *to desire them to pray to God for us*, They tell us a flat contradiction to their *Breviaries*, and to the *Catechism* published by the Decree of the Council of *Trent* ; which must be looked upon as Standards, by which one may know the certain dogmas of the Church of *Rome* : Not here to mention what has been said a thousand times by all

F their

their Writers to justify that Practice. But I return to my Subject, from this short digression, occasioned by what the *Catholic Christian instructed*, has lately published to the world. Therefore

2dly. If no doctrine be discovered by the person that works the Miracle, (which is the case I have been considering) I am no more concerned in the affair, than I am in all, or any unusual Work of Providence. *Livy* relates a great many strange Prodigies, which it may be as hard to confute, as it is to believe them : Take them therefore as they are, and call them *true*, or call them *false*, just as the Fancy or the Judgment of the Reader is;—They may be the ground-work of Superstition to some ; but then it will arise from a false reasoning upon the case. Supposing it to be true, that it rain'd upon a certain day *Blood*, or that the Heavens appeared all on fire ; if you believe the fact, you are not the better ; or if you disbelieve it, you are not the worse. But then, if any *doctrine* be revealed by the Agent that does the Miracle, this may be of consequence, and ought therefore to be considered : It comes from a Superior Being, and his Superiority

tiority is manifested by the *work* he does. Is the doctrine then agreeable to those principles of *Reason* which we have, or does it contradict them? Is it agreeable to that Revelation which is already admitted upon a full Examination? If it tends to promote our good, it becomes our duty to attend to it, and to encourage the Reception of so good and useful a Doctrine.

Compare now in this view the Miracles done by our Saviour, and those said to be done by the *Abbé*. Nothing of consequence arises from the belief of the one, more than does from the belief of the *Prodigies* recorded by *Livy*: Whereas, from the other, our Lives are affected, our manners are corrected, our ill Habits are reform'd, our Appetites and Passions are controuled and regulated, and the discovery made by that beneficent Being who enabled our Lord to do the Will and Works of him that sent him, is of that nature, that we are all concerned in what is to all our Advantages, who know the points that are revealed. And consequently, admitting the Facts, which I all along do purely to avoid a needless contro-

verſy, the caſe of our Saviour's, and that of *Abbé Paris's* works, are totally different.

In this way of reaſoning, here is no pretence for ſaying that we argue in a circle, or prove the Miracle by the doctrine, and then the doctrine by the Miracle. The Miracle is the ſame, be the doctrine what you will ; be it e'er ſo irrational or abſurd, be it all immoral or contradictory, yet I ſuppoſe the Miracle done by a Superior, Inviſible Agent. Should he indeed deliver a falſhood, or a doctrine that tends to Vice, He wou'd be a bad, immoral Being ; but ſtill his Miracle would be a true Miracle ; and it wou'd prove a Superior, Inviſible Agent, who thought fit to *declare* ſuch a Doctrine, tho' it wou'd not prove that I ought to *receive* it.

All Doctrine muſt either be known to be true, or falſe, or only poſſible to be true, but its connexion with truth, ſuch as we cannot in our preſent condition perceive. If we know it to be *True*, Miracles do not make it more ſo ; but only carry the Atteſtation of that Superior, Inviſible Agent to the Truth which is made known. If we know the doctrine to be *false*, no Miracles can prove it *True* : And ſhould Ten Thouſand Miracles
be

be wrought to prove what Reason can discover to be *false*, they ought to be of no moment or regard : They only bear witness at most to the *Truth* of what we know to be *false* ; and in course, we shou'd treat the Being that gives his Testimony to a *Falshood*, as such a Being is, a *Deceiver*, a *Deluder*, an *Impostor*, an *Evil Being*. If the Doctrine be *possible* to be true, but we are not competent Judges, whether it be so, or not ; all the Evidence the Miracle affords, is, That the Doctrine comes from one Superior to us, and who has shewn himself Superior to us, by his working the Miracle ; That we can have, from what appears, no reason to suspect him of ill designs ; That, considering his Station in the class of Beings, it is more probable, that he will not, than that he will deceive us ; and That if the Doctrine has a Connexion with our Good, we are in common prudence, oblig'd to take notice of it.

Suppose it should be revealed, that God had sent his Son into the world to redeem Mankind, and by him had promised that their past Sins should be remitted, or pass'd by, if they would return to their allegiance,

and become his Subjects, and obey his Laws, and live for the future as they ought, in Virtue and true goodness of Life ; and that if they did thus, they should have an eminent Reward in Heaven. There is in this Doctrine nothing that Reason can determine whether it be true or false ; there is no Absurdity, no Contradiction, no apparent mark by which a man can be assured, whether in itself it be true or false. Imagine now, that this doctrine is confirmed by Miracles: What is the Assent that ought to be given to it? Here is One from the Other World, that comes, and proves his Mission by extraordinary works ; the Doctrine he teaches tends to promote and encourage all that our own Minds tell us to be right and proper for us to do : the assurance given of an eminent Reward, is a great motive to do what is right : I am obliged as a *Rational* creature to do what is Right, even tho' I had not this Encouragement, or Motive ; but I am liable to Temptations, Infirmities, Passions, Appetites, Pleasures in a thousand Shapes, which may warp me from my Duty. If therefore, such a Motive be offered from such a Being, no possible reason can be given,
 why

why I should not obey the Advice given ; and there is plainly a strong one why I should believe the Motive to be right, because it tends to promote my Happiness through rational means. This is Reason sufficient, why I ought to mind a Miracle wrought for so good an End ; whereas a Miracle not attended with such an useful Lesson, is no more to be attended to, or regarded, than any other unusual Act of Providence.

At the *Abbé Paris's* Tomb a sick person is recovered : at *Old Rome*, *Water* was carried in a *Sieve* ; or in *Egypt*, *Vespasian* cured a Blind Man. Let all these Facts be true, or all false, or some true and some false, nothing that I know of arises from them, but that certain instances of great *Power* were exerted, or are supposed to have been exerted. And what am I concerned in this, more than in any other Providential Act ? If the Vouchers are good, and such as I believe, I shall credit the Fact ; if not, I shall reject it, or disregard it, as having no relation to me.

But still it may be asked—Whether the Miracles done by *Abbé Paris* are not more *credible* than those done by our Saviour, since the Narration of the One was published in *five* or *six* years time after they were done, the History of the Other was not published till *seven* or *eight and twenty* years at soonest after the Facts?

The Answer is, That notwithstanding this circumstance which may seem to favour the one more than the other, yet the Evangelical Miracles are *most credible*. I do not except to the Time which *Irenæus* fixes on ; which if I did, I might seem to evade the difficulty : but as His opinion is very probable, and it is the earliest ; and the reasons assigned by Others for the writing of St. *Matthew's* Gospel within a much shorter date are no more than mere guesses, I rather chuse *Irenæus's* Account ; and say, that the circumstances attending the *Christian* Miracles make them more credible, than the circumstances attending those of *Abbé Francis*, even supposing the Account of these later was published so much earlier. Those of Christ have Both the Circumstances which I have already mentioned :

Abbé

Abbé Paris's have neither of them : Those of our Saviour are attended with a *Doctrine* revealed ; *Abbé Paris's* are not. So that if we take in the Prophecies accompanying those of *Christ*, even *We* at this distance have sufficient reason to give credit to them ; whereas *We*, at this distance, have no Evidence for the other, but the Historian's word, who may for ought we know have misrepresented Facts. Common prudence will justify our taking notice of what we are so fully assured *concerns* us, in the *First* case : in the *Latter*, let them be true or false we are no ways *interested*, or concerned in them, more than we are in any other *unusual* act of Providence.

Let us now proceed to the *Fourth* Question, What are the *Lying Wonders* mentioned in the New Testament, and how may They be distinguished from *True Miracles* ?

To this it is sufficient to say, that all Miracles, or Prodigies, or by whatever name they are called, which lead men into a belief of Falshoods, or Absurdities, or Impieties, or Wrong practices, are properly, τέρατα ψεύδους, *Miracles of a Lye* :
and

and they which are designed to bear witness to *Truth*, are to be distinguished from such as bear witness to *Falshood*, just as the Ends which are proposed are distinguishable. There are certain points so fixed, that they may be made the sure Tests of whatever any person attempts to do: Not indeed of this;—whether the person does a Miracle, or whether he is influenced immediately by a Good or a wicked Spirit, or whether he be a mere Jugler: but whether the thing done be a Miracle of *Falshood*, or of *Truth*, or which of those Ends it has in view. If a Sign or a Miracle led men to a firm adherence to the One God and Father of all; or to any strict observation of his commands, it was then a *Miracle of Truth*, if it led to Idolatry in any shape or degree, it was then a *Miracle of Lying*. So if it leads to Christ, and a constant Obedience to the New Covenant, it is a Miracle of Truth; Truth is its End: But if it tends to lead men from Christ to any Antichrists, whatever they are, or wherever they may appear, it is a *Miracle of a Lye*, or has Falshood for its End: and whatever has *That* as its point in View, or
its

its Object, is imputed to *Satan* and to his Operation, as the source or fountain of all Evil ; even though the thing be performed by *Men*, and by their Jugling Tricks and Arts. *Lipsius's* Two famous Virgin *Mary's*, One at *Hall* about three miles from *Brussels*, the Other upon a Hill near *Sickheim* about five miles from *Louvain*, were once famous for the Cures of many more Dis-temperers than ever were cured at *St. Medard*. So was the Image of *our Lady of Peace* at the Village of *Fieulaine* in the Diocese of *Noyon* in *France*, called the Image of *Notre Dame de Paix* *. The History of the most remarkable Cures said to be done by this Image, was published in the year 1662, and dedicated to the Queen Mother : it was strongly recommended to the world by an Ordonnance of the *Bishop of Noyon*, who was *Count of Noyon and Peer of France* : And there are instances produced of several strange Cures done, upon the Maimed and Halt, and Falling Sicknefs ; and many other disorders.

* Histoire de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable, a l'occasion d'une Image de la Sainte Vierge, dite, N. Dame de Paix, nouvellement trouvée dans le Village de *Fieulaine*, Diocese de *Noyon*. A. S. Quentin 1662.

Suppose

Suppose now that the Virgin *Mary* at *Hall*, or *Fieulaine*, or any where else, did these Cures; and that they are not *Impostures* (as I find some of them said to be done at *Fieulaine* were in fact, and that the Cures were so far from being done, that what in the relation is called a *Supernatural Cure*, p. 50, was so far from being so, that the person died of the very illness very soon after *,) but supposing them I say to be real cures, yet if the doctrine from hence is, that the Virgin *Mary*, or her *Image* was to be *worshipped*, the Miracles are such as have a *Lye* for their End, and are therefore to be rejected. The Virgin, or a piece of Wood are said to cure a com-

* At the End of my Book, is wrote this Remark of Monsieur *Mettayer*, a *French* Minister that died at *London*. Mr. Du Castel Docteur en *Medicine* m'a dit, que aijant été nommé comme premier *Medicin* pour examiner le miracle prétendu fait en la personne de *Jeanne Boulet* dont il est fait mention en la page 47. de ce livre, il avoit fait un report, que bien loin qu'il y eut aucun miracle en le guérison de cette fille, quelle *n'étoit nullement guérie*, mais au contraire en pire estat qu'elle n'avoit esté. Ce qui se trouva si véritable, que ladic *Boulet* mourut fort peu de temps de la meme maladie. Ce que le dit Sr. Du Castel me dit qu'il temoignerait avant tout Juge, ayant honte de l'*imposture* & du *Mensonge*, que l'on avoit voulu se servir pour Etablir cette devotion Superstitieuse.

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pany of invalids : This is supposed to be a fact indisputable. But how does it appear, or what Evidence is produced, either that *She*, or Her *Image* produced these Effects ? The Person Sick of the Dropsy, Palsy, or any other Infirmary, is cured, or *a dead man* is raised to Life ; (so does *Lipsius* tell us, and so does *Ribadineira* say of *Ignatius Loyola* and his Followers.) I ask, Does the Invisibile Being who does these facts, or that makes use of any Man, or Image, as his Instrument, tell the devotees, that they are to pay *worship* to the *Virgin*, or to her *Image*, because they receive such Benefit from Her ? No. How then comes this Notion into any person's head ? Or why is the *Image* of our *Lady of Peace* more to be worshipped, than the *Walls* of the Church against which the Image is placed ? Or how will it be proved that the Cure is more owing to the One than to the Other ? Should a Command be produced to worship such an Image, or such a Saint, it would not be of credit enough to make a man be guilty of such absurdity without fault or blame, but it would be one of those Miracles of *Falshood* mentioned in the Scripture, and no
proof

proof of the Lawfulness of such practices.

I have argued hitherto upon Supposition, that such Miracles as those I have mentioned, were really done by some Invisible Superior Beings: and upon Supposition too that the Evidences for the Facts were strong enough to cause assent. But they may be, and as I said just now, most properly they are, mere cheats, and juggling Tricks, and in this respect *Lying Miracles*: Not effects superior to the powers of Man, but *Lies*, i. e. pretences of Cures where none are done; or Frauds, or Illusions, or Legerdemain; nay some of them such errant bungling Trick, that the only matter of wonder is that they are not seen through; which yet it is as unsafe to contradict upon the spot, as it is to be guilty of murder or high Treason against the State. But be these Miracles either way, real or pretended, there is no great difference. No Doctrine is pretended to be given, unless it be a false one; no Rule of Action is commanded, but what is contrary to reason: And if so, you are at liberty to believe them or not, just as you do any other extraordinary facts mentioned in
other

other writers. Suppose it related that a *Ship* was drawn against the stream by a *Virgin's Girdle*; that Water was carried in a *Sieve*; that a *Whetstone* was cut in two with a *Razor*; that a Beard strok'd with a hand was turn'd into *Brass*: I know nobody that requires the *Belief* of such things: or if you do believe them to be true, it would be monstrously absurd to pay any *religious* regard to the *Girdle*, or *Sieve*, or *Razor*, if they were extant.

Having thus considered the case of Miracles, and compared those of the Gospel with those reported by later Writers, I shall in particular enquire,

Lastly, What degree of Credit is to be given to the Gospel Records, since they contain Accounts of Miracles reported to the world so long after the Facts. It must be granted, that a Record containing an Account of Miracles, not published in less than *Twenty* or *Thirty* years after the fact, is in itself, and independent of other circumstances, much more liable to suspicion of falshood than one published in *Two* or *Three* years, or in a less time, would be. The nearer to the Time or Place where such extraordinary

traordinary cases happen the History of them is made public, the better Opportunities have men of examining into the Truth or Falshood of them; and the Suspicions that may be raised are always in proportion to the want of Opportunity to examine. St. *Matthew's* Gospel was wrote about 27 or 28 years after the death of Christ, *i. e.* A. C. lxi. And the Arguments which have been urged to prove that He wrote it sooner, will only prove that those who urge them *wish* he had wrote it sooner, not that he really did it. St. *John* did not write his Gospel, or at least publish it, before A. C. xcvi. *i. e.* above 60 years after the death of Christ. Now admitting them to be (what cannot be disproved) the genuine Authors of the Books which bear their Names, what credibility will the Account of the Miracles of our Saviour which they relate, have?

I would willingly give this Argument all the Strength it can have, taken from the *Times* and the *Places*, where and when the several Gospels were published. Nor is it of any use to conceal a Strength which an Adversary knows, and makes his boast in:
Nor

Nor can any cause suffer, that is to be tried by Truth, when an Objection is set in its full light. Thus then it has been argued;—*St. Matthew* published his Gospel in the place where our Saviour work'd his Miracles; in *Jerusalem* itself, says *Athanasius*, *Synop.* and *Hippolitus*; in *Palestine*, say some; in *Judea*, say others. But as to *St. John*, his Gospel was published not only too many years *after* the facts, but, at *Ephesus*, too far from the place where the scene was transacted. *Sixty years* after a fact, and *Six hundred Miles* from a place where an extraordinary work was done, is enough to make all Enquiry useless. These were the only *Eye-witnesses*; and then as to *St. Mark*, His book was wrote at *Rome*, (about *Two years* after *St. Matthew*,) *Two Thousand Miles*, or thereabouts, from *Judea*. And *St. Luke* wrote his still a year later; and at *Alexandria* in *Egypt*, far enough from the Land where our Saviour did his works. Admitting now, that each of the Evangelists was the real Author of the Book whose name it bears; yet, may not the Facts they relate, be liable to just Suspicion, considering these circumstances of their Respective Histories?

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I answer; Not at all, if the Miracles they relate are attended with the Circumstances which I have mention'd above. These Records contain Predictions of future Events; and declare what shall happen not within the compass of such time as may give ground to imagine, that what is said arose from conjecture, or human Foresight; but at such great distances likewise as excludes all objections of that sort. Where this appears, you have a confirmation of the Miraculous Interposition; and they that see the Event, see the same kind of power exerted as was necessary to produce the Fact about which the doubt was raised.

Again: If the same kind of Powers continue to be openly exerted, and Miracles themselves are done, quite down to the Times when the Records of those former ones are published, there then cou'd be no doubt of the powers related, to have been exerted. Our Saviour worked certain miraculous Cures; his disciples did the same, and continued openly to do them, for many years. What reason can there be to question, Whether our *Saviour* did them, when his Disciples, *in his name*, and *only in his name*, profess

profess to do, and actually do the same? If therefore Miraculous powers continue so long at least till the Records are published, and these Miraculous powers are exerted in the several parts of the World where these Records are public, the People who lived *then* had Opportunities sufficient of Examining into the Facts done every where amongst them ; and thence had ground to believe the like Facts said to be done by our common Master : And We at this distance both of time and place can see the Predictions of our Lord and of his Disciples completed ; And thence we conclude a certain Intercourse with some superior Invisible Agent ; and from thence the very high Probability, or rather Certainty of the Facts themselves.

It may be suggested, and it often has been, “ That Prophecies, whether fictitious
 “ or true have inspired those for whom they
 “ were made, with the design of under-
 “ taking those things which were promised
 “ them.” I am ready to allow this to be often the case, when a prediction is made of some degree of *Good* to the persons incited to action ; or if any Scheme of things is

carrying on, where an Interest may be served; or where a Party is to be spirited up; or a particular Zeal and Courage is to be inspired. But These are Artifices that by no means agree with the *Scripture Prophecies*. For These relate to affairs which were to be accomplished at very great distances of Times, and which have hitherto come out in such a manner as shew that no Artifice, no human contrivance conspired to produce the Event. *E. g.* That the *Little Horn* in *Daniel* should subdue just *Three Kingdoms*, and no more, nor less: That the Church of Christ should *apostatize*, just as *St. Paul* said it should, in a Worship of *Demons*, abstinence from *Marriage*, and *Meats* which God had *commanded to be received with thanksgiving*; That such a *Tyrannical, persecuting, and idolatrous, power* should arise in the Church, and act as is described both by *St. Paul* and *St. John*; That the things foretold by our Saviour in very many of his Parables (which, in general, are all real *prophetic* accounts of what was to happen in his Church) should come out exactly as he said, is very surprising: That *Christians* should fall into
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the very practices, not *injoined* but *forbid* and *condemned*, by the Apostles, and by their Lord; who at the same time are received and acknowledged as *inspired by God*, is more strange. Had the Disciples of Christ engaged in courses, such as they were *enjoined*, and to which our Lord, and the Apostles had promised success, it might have been suggested that the foretelling the Event occasioned the conduct of the disciples. But in the present case it is just the reverse: They constantly *condemn* and forbid the practices which they *foretold*: They call it *an Apostacy from the Faith*: They say the *coming* of that *wicked* power is *after the working* of Satan, *with all power and signs and lying wonders*: They call it *the Mystery of Iniquity*: and declare that *the Lord will consume it and destroy it*. And notwithstanding all this precaution, and all this severe *condemnation*, We see what has come to pass in the Christian World. *Thy Words, O God, are Truth.*

It will be objected here that I suppose Miracles, real Miracles, to be done; and I contend that even upon that supposition no more regard is to be paid to them than to

any uncommon act of Providence. Must it not likewise be allowed, that both a pretence as well as a Reality of *Prophecy* has been as usual as either real or pretended Miracles, or more so: and that such strange things have been foretold and so unlikely, that one cannot impute them to the Invention of the Artful, or the Imaginations of the Melancholic, or the Wildness of Enthusiasts. How many have received Orders, real or pretended, as from some superior Being, to write — *Thus saith the Lord* — as the Prophets of Old did; when yet the Event has shewn that the pious man has only wrote down his own Follies? But then at other times has not the Event proved the Inspiration? It was told to *Sylla* by *Posthumius* the *Pontifex*, that he would suffer any punishment, nay forfeit his life, — “*Nisi ea quæ Sylla in animo haberet, diis juvantibus implevisset* — *if Sylla did not succeed in what he had in his Thoughts.*” So in the times of the *Mithridatic War*, *Sylla* received an Assurance from Jupiter by *Lucius Titius*, that He should overcome *Mithridates*; and it came to pass. Afterwards, when he was returning
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to Rome he promised him again Power, by which he should recover from his Enemies the Commonwealth, though not without much Bloodshed. To name but one more instance, *Lucius Pontius's* Slave foretold that the *Capitol* would be set on fire : He went out of the Camp, and the next day returning He said the *Capitol* was then actually burning. This was done whilst *Sylla* was at *Tarentum*, i. e. about 350 Miles from *Rome*. How could all this be done, without some superior Being's either foretelling the Fate of the *Capitol*, or telling it so soon at that distance? Vid. *Austin. De Civit. Dei.* l. ii.

I do not think myself obliged to account for these and such like *Prophecies*, more than I am to account for any *Miracles* that are said to be done. I know not whether They are, or would be, much mistaken, who should impute all this to *Sylla's* contrivance: It may be imagined to be a Trick of His, artfully to have the Temple set on fire, at a given Time ; and from thence to argue to the Populace the Anger of *Jupiter* against the impious Party of *Marius*. An impious Politician sticks at nothing to secure his

point ; and knows how to turn to his own Advantage every accident.

But suppose, that all that was foretold to *Sylla*, was not owing to Art and State contrivance : Imagine that it was some superior Being, that out of Kindness for *Sylla*, (that matchless inhuman Tyrant) foretold these Events : Suppose it said— “ *Victoria*
 “ *tua est, Sylla ; atque ut id divino spiritu*
 “ *clamasse crederetur, nuntiavit etiam ali-*
 “ *quid, et prope futurum, et mox factum—*
 “ *The Victory is yours Sylla. And that he*
 “ *might be believed to have said this as from*
 “ *God, he told him something that both was*
soon to happen, and accordingly did happen.”
 So St. *Austin* states this matter, *De Civ. Dei.* lib. ii. c. 24. In this case, an Event is foretold : The Being that foretells it, is as much unknown, as he is invisible ; nor can you argue to the *Right* or *Justice* of an Action because it is foretold, more than if it never had been mentioned. The Foretelling is an Argument of Knowledge in him that reveals any fact, but it does not prove the Goodness of the Agent ; nor of the Action itself, since an Evil Action of a
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wicked man may be as easily foretold, as any Good Action can.

If these Events then were *foretold*, no consequence can be drawn either to the Approbation or the Disapprobation of the Facts foretold, excepting this, that there is some Superior Being who has thought fit to interpose, and to discover certain facts. But as such facts are no ways *interesting* to us, there can be no occasion to be solicitous about them, more than there is whenever any other unusual act of Providence appears.

However, This Sort of Prophecies which may be imputed to conjecture, or to contrivance, or to any other cause, are not similar to the Prophecies of Scripture. The One relates to *remote* things as well as present; the Other only to such incidents as were near, and within the reach of the conjectures or contrivances of any one admitted into the secret, or who would set up for a Diviner. The One relates to Practices *condemn'd*, and strongly *forbidden* to the persons who should do them: The Other relates to Incidents *encouraged*, and with a view to *encourage* what was foretold. The One, is join'd to Miracles in order to confirm

firm a *Doctrine* that is revealed from some Superior Being ; The Other is of no Use or Consequence farther than the present Occasion makes it worth any Notice.

It may seem proper next to enquire, Whether *Prophecies* may not come from some invisible Being, superior indeed to man, but inferior to God himself. It is easily conceivable, That such Beings may know futurities, and may discover them ; and as to the great Governor of all, He *may* not immediately interpose nor foretel what He designs to accomplish. Prophecy therefore like Miracles, may prove an invisible Agency ; or that there are Beings superior to us ; but it will not necessarily prove, that it is *God* himself who foretels Events, more than that he himself works Miracles. And, if an inferior Being foretels what is designed to be accomplished by the great God and Father of all, and the Event answers to the Prediction, it will be *to us* much the same as if God himself foretold his own designs. For since the Providence of God has brought about Events exactly corresponding to the Prediction, it follows that God designed, or that it was agreeable to the Mind

Mind of the Great Governor, that such Events should happen. And whether He himself, or some other Being predicted, what was in fact to happen, it must be *to us* in effect the same thing. All our Inferences will be the same, as to God's supream Dominion and Government: We should necessarily conclude, 1st, The Superiority of the Being declaring an Event; and 2dly, His great Knowledge; and 3dly, If a Miracle be done, his great Power; and 4thly, That if a Being, our Superior, who knows Events, and gives a proof of his Power and Superiority by a Miracle, should likewise make to us a discovery of any Truth, it would deserve our Attention; and 5thly, That should we neglect such Truths, and afterwards suffer for such careless conduct, such sufferings would justly be inflicted on us, nor could we have any right to complain, when previous notice was given us, plainly manifested by the Evidence of one of a superior Class of Beings, and not at all inconsistent with our own natural Powers. However, let us pass to the other Set of Questions, arising from the Doctrine of Miracles, as attesting to any Revelation in
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which this point will be more particularly discussed. There must be some Being or other, superior to Man, or else there could be no such thing as Miracle: Now the Jewish and the Christian Legislators appealing to the Miracles they did, as proofs of their Mission from God; it will be proper to enquire,

First, Whether we can discover whether it be God, or an Inferior Agent that works a Miracle?

Secondly, Whether a Doctrine may not come from an Evil Being seducing men?

Thirdly, What degree of Assent is due to any doctrine revealed, and which stands confirmed by Miracles?

Fourthly, Whether a *partial* Revelation will prove that it comes from *God* Himself, or from an *Inferior Being*? And

Fifthly, Whether God be obliged, supposing that he grants a Revelation, to grant it to *all mankind* equally?

It must be granted that every effect above the *powers* of *matter*, or the Art or Skill of Man, must be produced by some Being *superior* to them *both*. I speak of the *powers* of *matter*, as if *matter* were able to produce

duce effects of itself; whereas I mean no more than the general effects of Matter and Motion, however, or by what Application soever, they may be produced.

Again; If a man be enabled to perform a *Miracle*, and has at the same time a Revelation of any truth made to him; it is most probable that *Both* proceed from the same Agent, whoever it is. And

Lastly, If the Revelation be such as tends to promote what Reason dictates to be right, and what as a *reasonable* Creature I am obliged to perform; if *e.g.* it offers me motives to right Action, or discovers to me such doctrines which I can perceive to have a relation to, or which encourage my moral Behaviour, I cannot but conclude, that the *kind, benevolent, assisting* invisible Agent is a *Good* Being: at least he is so to *Me*; and if it be not GOD himself that thus excites and aids me, it is a Being that is well affected towards me; and shews a disposition to excite me to act as I ought towards God and Man.

The Question then is, Whether we can discover whether it be GOD himself, or some *other* invisible Agent, that works a
Miracle.

Miracle. The Effect supposes an invisible Being to produce it : but can it be inferred to be a *Divine* Operation, or done by God himself, seeing supernatural Effects may be produced by the Agency of *other invisible Beings* ?

It is and must be granted, that certain Acts are not within the power of *man* to do. He cannot walk upon bare Water without sinking ; much less can he walk in the air without any support : He cannot restore Sight to the blind, or Strength to the weak, or Limbs to the maimed, by a *word*, or at a *distance*, or without any Application of things to the parts or persons affected ; Nor can he instantaneously, by a command, make a dead man revive. And should any man exert such a power, and exercise it as he pleased, one cannot but conclude that he must be helped in all such Acts by some *Superior Agent*. Whether God himself does immediately interpose, or not, is a point on which I find good men divided : But thus much will follow, that as some *Superior Agency* is necessary to produce such Effects, so where we see *Superior* powers to what man has exerted, we can certainly
infer

infer a *more powerful* Being: And where we are speaking of such powerful Beings amongst Intelligent Agents, we may venture to affirm that to be the *Superior*, which exerts the *greatest* power ; and a Being exerting very great power, and giving us directions for our Good, ought to be followed, in his Advices, Instructions, or Directions; because all this is agreeable to Reason.

Reason cannot discover whether the direct dominion over us be That of God himself immediately, or whether he may not have committed Power and Judgment to some *Subordinate* Being. But then Reason will dictate this, that supposing the Dominion over us of some *subordinate* Agent, and that Agent should reveal to us any Doctrinal Points, and supposing that he should prove his Dominion by a Series of Miracles, we ought to submit to any direction which he may give us ; since we cannot conceive that a Person, so empowered and so appointed by God for the Good of his creatures, will abuse the Trust reposed in him, or that he will not execute his Office faithfully.

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It may be said that we find the contrary very often amongst *men*: They are vested with Authority, and yet they more frequently abuse the trust reposed in them, than execute it as they ought.

'Tis true: But as in the case of men, the more they grow in Wisdom and Knowledge, they are less apt to act a foolish or an absurd part; so we may believe in general, that the higher any one is advanced in the class of Intellectual Beings, the less will he be disposed to act a little, ungenerous, unfriendly part. Supposing therefore that God in his wisdom were to think it proper to commit to any one a Power and Dominion over us, and a Revelation were to be made by such a Being to Mankind; and this Revelation appears to be for their advantage if it be pursued; one could not but conclude that this was agreeable to the Great Governor of all; and that He would not permit his Creatures to be deceived in what was thus communicated to them under the pretense and sanction of his Will: Or if he did, He could not justly punish such Subjects for obeying such pretended commands,
if

if they had not proper means or power to discover the cheat.

Supposing now that a Revelation be given by some Superior Invisible Being, who should have, or pretend to have dominion over mankind, and he should work one or more Miracles in confirmation of what he said—One might justly and fairly impute that to *God* as the *remote* cause, though He were not the proper *immediate* efficient cause: and as He is the Universal Governor, one might from the tendency of such Revelation to our Happiness through Virtue, be certain that it was *God's* will. Men might indeed iniquitously and unjustly pervert such doctrines, and not make them subservient to the End designed: But this would not at all lessen the probability of their coming from *God*. For whatever is good, may be perverted by wicked or careless men: and it is no more to be concluded that such a thing came not from God, because it has or may occasion Evil, than it can be inferr'd that Reason or Liberty were not given us by God, because by abusing each they have been made the Occasions of much mischief.

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If therefore one were to admit, that one cannot determine absolutely, whether it be *God* or a *subordinate* Agent that does a Miracle, or makes known a *Truth* unto us; it is not of such great moment as some may imagine. For it is in our power to try the *Doctrine*, and judge of its tendency; and if it does not agree possibly or actually with reason it is to be discarded. As to any *Miracle*, which is not attended with a Revelation, it is nothing to us, who does it: It is of no more regard than any other unusual Providential Act, which is and must be attended with Gratitude and Thankfulness, or with Awe and Fear, or whatever Affection is suited to the case. The great Governor of all is always entitled to acknowledgment for his Mercies and Goodness, since under his direction and by his grant of Power, and by his not interposing to prevent our good, we receive extraordinary Favours: And if it be our Misfortune to suffer any present Evil, He has it in his power, and knows best, when and how to make us ample amends.

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Let us suppose that God were to reveal to mankind any Truth—be it either by himself, or by some other Agent, it is the Moment of the Doctrine, and not the Person that delivers the Doctrine, which is to be considered by those to whom it is sent. Is it worth while to dispute and distinguish betwixt the Commands of a King delivered in person, and those which are actually delivered from *him* by *his* Minister? Or is it of any great consequence, whether the Message be sent by one of a Great or Small Estate, by one of greater or lesser Quality? The Doctrine is the thing in which we are concerned: and provided we can know it to be true, and to come from God, it may be needless to enquire, whether it comes mediately or immediately from him.

However, since I am considering this matter, it is fit to observe,

That some have taken a short way to determine the Question, whether it be God himself, or Some Other Agent that works a miracle. They imagine that it requires *Omnipotence*, or an *Almighty Power*, to perform them; and consequently

real Miracles are incapable of being wrought by any but God. They argue thus—" Tho' it may be allowed that there are Beings in the Spiritual World that are capable of performing things *above the power* of men, and therefore *amazing* to mankind, yet it is justly denied that any created Beings, and consequently Agents of a limited power, are capable of performing—*proper* and *real* Miracles, either those of the *Matter*, or of the *Manner*, independently of God; Since great as their power is, it is not *infinite*, and therefore cannot perform those Operations, either as to the *Matter* or *Manner* of them. No *less power than what is infinite* being able to overcome the otherwise insuperable difficulties and natural Impossibilities that attend them."

To understand what is meant by Miracles of the *Matter*, and those of the *Manner*, it must be observed, that the Miracles of Christ have been divided into two Sorts: Those of the *Matter*, are Jesus's curing Diseases justly thought incurable, restoring the withered hand, giving sight to one born blind, raising the dead &c.

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“ With regard to the *Manner* of perform-
 “ ance are, His curing diseases by a mere
 “ word spoken by Jesus either absent or
 “ present, or by a touch of his hand, or e-
 “ ven of his Garment.—Both these Me-
 “ thods require an Almighty Power, Omni-
 “ potence, or a power equivalent to that of
 “ Creation.”

That Both these Methods require a power sufficient to produce the designed effect is certain: But that they should require an Almighty Power, or that *no Power less than infinite* is sufficient for those purposes, should not be taken for granted. If indeed it be presupposed that absolute *Omni-potence* is necessary to produce a real Miracle, then it may be urged, that “ no power less than infinite is able to overcome
 “ the otherwise insuperable difficulties
 “ which attend” the performing of such an Action. But this is the point to be *proved*, not to be taken for granted. When a Hand is withered, or an Eye is lost, or a Body is dead, we mean by such expressions, that the Parts are so affected as not to be able to do their Offices in such manner as once they had done.

Now that a Being may have Skill and Power to restore the preexistent parts, or to supply the place of what has been lost, or to strengthen what has been decayed, is easily conceivable, without his having a power to *create* new parts. He may have a power to work on preexistent materials, and he may be able to remove Obstructions, without being *Omnipotent*, since even We, weak and ignorant as We are, are able to do so many things towards restoring a decayed Constitution. If therefore we conceive a Being that had ten thousand times, or ten millions of times, our Abilities and Knowledge, He might be able to do what is really a Miracle to us, both as to the *matter* and the *manner* without being properly *Omnipotent*.

Suppose only that any Being had Power to enter into any Parts of our Bodies, or that He could penetrate the finest and most delicate fibres, it is easy to conceive then, that he could have strength to open any Valve, or to take away whatever caused Obstructions: He might easily arrange what was out of Order, and those parts which were decaying, or actually decayed, He might

might restore, without an absolute *Infinity of Power*.

Should it be objected, that “ if any Spiritual Agents, placed in different Ranks betwixt God and Mankind, were supposed to perform such miraculous Actions independently of God, they must likewise be supposed to have an *equal* power of *creating* and *restoring* with God himself, and therefore not to be *inferior, limited and created* Beings: which is contrary to the very Supposition of their nature, and is so absurd, as consequentially to introduce a *Plurality* of Beings of *infinite* Power, and therefore of *Rival Gods*.”

Should this I say be objected, we must be allowed to reason, *a pari*, in the case. A good Physician, from his Observation of effects produced in certain cases, is able to do a great deal towards the Restoration of a decayed Constitution; and partly by removing of certain Obstructions, partly by the Application of proper Sanative Medicines, he is able to cure certain disorders, which if let alone would certainly and infallibly carry off the unhappy Patient. An Angel endued with a million of

times the Knowledge and Skill of the very best Physician could certainly do a vast deal more good to any decaying Body than such Physician could do. Suppose therefore an *Angel* were to restore a withered Hand, or to cure a lost Eye, by proper Application of Something that he may know,—why must he be supposed to *have an equal power of restoring with God?* No, no more than a *Man* who is able in his Sphere to remove the cause of a Distemper, or to cure a Disorder in the Eye, which if not taken in hand and removed would certainly destroy the Sight. The man *restores*, and the Angel *restores*, each in their respective ways, and proportionably to their Skill and Power; not *independently of God*, but Both acting by their ordinary Powers received from God. They both can do what they propose: But it does not follow, that they are therefore *not inferior limited and created BEINGS*: Nor does it follow, that such a Restoration *introduces a Plurality of Beings of INFINITE Power, and therefore of RIVAL Gods.*

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That which embarrasses this Question of Miracles very much is, that Writers give such definitions of Miracles as make common Appearances to be miraculous, to which no Nation ever applies that term. “ A true Miracle,” says the Learned Author whose account I am here considering, “ is properly a *Supernatural* Operation, disagreeing with and repugnant to the usual course of things, and the known laws of Nature, either as to the Subject Matter, or the Manner of its Performance.” Suppose now that a Heavy Body were to be moved round in a Circle with a great Velocity, and were not to go off in the Tangent of its Curve, would not This be a proper Miracle? For it is a known Law of Nature, that all Bodies that move in Circles, endeavour to fly off from their Centers, and would move on in strait Lines were they not restrained by some certain force. If this be a *known Law*, or *the usual course of things*, is it not a *Miracle*, a real and true *Miracle*, for any Body to move in a manner *disagreeing with and repugnant to* this course? And yet, do not the Planets all move in this manner? And
 whoever

whoever applies the Term, *Miracle*, to this *common, ordinary* motion? The Motion of the Planets is certainly the effect of a *Supernatural Operation, disagreeing with the known Laws of nature, as to the MANNER of its Performance.* Yet whoever looked upon the daily rising of the Moon, or Sun, as *Miraculous*? In truth this definition of a Miracle is faulty: since it makes those things to be *Miraculous* which no one reckons to be so; and the making *Omnipotence, or infinite Power*, absolutely necessary to the performance of a Miracle, will make many things to be not miraculous, which really and truly are so, *E. g.*

Was not it properly a *Miracle*, when *Peter came down out of the Ship and walked on the water to go to Jesus, Matt. xiv. 29*? Was it not a Miracle, when Jesus *went unto his Disciples walking on the Sea. v. 25*? Was it not a Miracle, when *Elisba made the Iron to swim. 2 Kings vi. 6*? And do any of these Acts require *Omnipotence* to do them? Or why may not an inferior Being do them, by his own native powers?

But a Distinction is made betwixt *mere Signs and Wonders*, and *true Miracles.*
 “ Whatever

“ Whatever Performances *Evil Spirits* can
 “ naturally and independently of God ex-
 “ ert, they must be *mere Signs and Won-*
 “ *ders*, and not *true Miracles*: The work-
 “ ers of them may by lower instances of
 “ power, *surprize* weak and wicked men,
 “ and those that are otherwise incredulous,
 “ but they cannot perform such works by
 “ their *own natural Ability*, as are men-
 “ tioned to be done by Christ.”

Should it be asked, Why cannot an *Evil*
 Spirit exert his power to perform a true
Miracle, I know not what would be the
 Answer, unless it should be *supposed*, that
 no work of *theirs* could be *Miraculous*, or
 that no work which was performed by a
 Power less than Infinite could be justly cal-
 led a *Miracle*. If the latter Supposition be
 true, neither *Good* nor *Evil* Spirits can
 work a *Miracle*; because the Powers of
 neither of them are infinite: If the for-
 mer be the case, the question will always
 be, Why is not a Supernatural Act of *E-*
vil Spirits as properly a *Miracle*, as the
 Supernatural Act of Good Spirits? It is
 granted that *Evil Beings* can *naturally ex-*
ert a power to do such *Signs and Wonders*,
 as may *surprize weak and wicked and in-*
credulous

credulous Men: why can they not surprize good and just ones too? But they cannot exert them “ *independently of God.*” True: No more can any Spirits, Good or Bad. If the *Goodness* of the Agent is necessary to a *Miracle*, then the Agent is to be put into the definition of a *Miracle*, since the Effect of a Supernatural Operation must have a different name according to the *Agent* that does it. I must observe further, that it is not the Scripture Language to impute to *Evil Spirits*, *Signs* and *Wonders*; and to God only *true Miracles*; but all of these are attributed to one and the same Spirit, God himself has *Signs and Wonders* attributed to Him, *Hebrews* ii. 4. *God himself also bearing them witness with Signs and Wonders and with diverse Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will.* So when God is speaking to *Moses*, *Exod.* vii. 3. He says, *And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply MY Signs and MY Wonders in the Land of Egypt.* So *Deuteronomy* vi. 22. *The LORD shewed Signs and Wonders, great and sore upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh and all his Household.* see *Deut.* vii. 19. xxvi. 8, xxxiv. 11. Nor do

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I recollect any one place where the Operations of *Evil Spirits* are contradistinguished from the Acts of God Himself, or Good Spirits, so that the One is called a *Sign and Wonder*, the Other a *true Miracle*.

I know not whether it be worth while to examine more particularly into this groundless Distinction, that Evil Spirits can work “ mere Signs and Wonders and not “ true Miracles.” However I will transcribe a Note of the Learned Dr. *Whitby* on *Heb. ii. 4.* Speaking of the *Signs and Wonders and Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost* mentioned in that verse, He says, “ Here are four Things mentioned which “ will admit of a distinct consideration ; “ the first and second are, σημεῖα καὶ τέρα- “ τὰ, *Signs and Wonders*, which refer to “ Portentous Actions done in *the Heavens*, “ as when *the Sun stood still* : In *the Earth*, “ as when *it opened to swallow up Da- “ than and Abiram* ; In the *Air*, as when *it “ was turned into Darknefs* : In *the Waters*, “ as when they were turned into *Blood* : “ And these were often wrought by *Mo- “ ses* and Others under the *Old Testament*, “ and still are styled σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα. So “ *Exod.*

“ *Exod. vii. 3. πληθυνῶ τὰ σημεῖα μου καὶ*
 “ *τέρατα, I will multiply my Signs and*
 “ *Wonders in the Land of Egypt. And*
 “ *again, ver. 9. Deut. iv. 32. He took his*
 “ *people out of that Nation, ἐν σημείοις καὶ*
 “ *τέρασιν by Signs and Wonders: Shewing*
 “ *σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα μεγάλα, Signs and*
 “ *great Wonders upon Pharaoh and all his*
 “ *House. Chap. vi. 22. And vii. 19. and*
 “ *xi. 3. xxvi. 8. xxix. 3. And there arose*
 “ *not a Prophet like unto Moses, ἐν πᾶσι*
 “ *τοῖς σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν, in all the Signs*
 “ *and Wonders which God sent him to do*
 “ *in the land of Egypt, Deut. xxxiv. 11.*
 “ *See Nehem. ix. 10. Psalm cxxxiv. 9.*
 “ *Jer. xxxii. 42. Thus Nebuchadonosor de-*
 “ *clares, σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα, the Signs and*
 “ *Wonders which the most high God had*
 “ *shewed to Him, Dan. iv. 2. And Darius*
 “ *says of him, Chap. xxvi. 27. ποιεῖ ση-*
 “ *μεῖα καὶ τέρατα ἐν τῷ ὕραν καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς*
 “ *γῆς, He doth Signs and wonders in the*
 “ *Heavens and on the Earth.*

“ Moreover, *Σημεῖα* and *Δυναμεις* are
 “ used in the New Testament, with rela-
 “ tion to the Miracles wrought by the *A-*
 “ *postles* upon others, in casting out Devils,
 “ making

“ making the Blind to see, and the Lamē
 “ to walk, and healing all manner of Dis-
 “ eases; Now none of these things were
 “ done by *Moses*, and very rarely by any of
 “ the Prophets. And lastly, As for the
 “ Distributions of the Holy Ghost, con-
 “ sisting in the internal Gifts of Wisdom,
 “ Knowledge, Faith, the Gifts of Tongues,
 “ and the Interpretation of them; These
 “ were peculiar to the latter days, that is,
 “ the times of the *Messiah*.” So very
 groundless is the Notion that Evil Spirits
 can only work *Signs and Wonders* and not
true Miracles, that we find *Signs and Won-*
ders to be imputed to God Himself, and to
 those whom *He* sent; and not at all to *Evil*
Spirits.

It may be said, that “ the case of *Good*
 “ *Spirits* is very distinguishable from that
 “ of *Evil Spirits*, who cannot for several
 “ reasons be supposed to have an equal
 “ power communicated to them, that is,
 “ such a *divine* power as is necessary to per-
 “ form *Miracles*. And therefore if Evil
 “ Spirits seem in any case to perform what
 “ appears miraculous, it must be Fallacy,
 “ Juggle, and Delusion, since they are in-
 “ capable

“capable of it both in a natural and moral
“Sense.”

This puts me in mind of the known saying, *Duo cum faciunt idem non est idem*. Why may not an Evil Spirit exert his natural Powers as well as a Good one? Or why must a *wicked Doctrine* be necessarily tacked to any wonderful work that an Evil Spirit does? Or why must every surprizing Act of Evil Spirits be *Juggle, Fallacy, and De-lusion*? Suppose an Evil Spirit exerts his natural Powers, and does a *surprizing* Action before *weak and wicked Men*,—This is allowed to be practicable: And yet should they seem to perform what *appears Miraculous*—They are *incapable of this in any Sense*. How are the *surprizing* Actions to be distinguished from such as *appear Miraculous*?

Perhaps I have been guilty of a fault in taking so much notice of any particular persons false Reasonings on this Subject: but as they have given me an Opportunity of clearing up some matters which I could not so well have done in another manner, it may not be thought a mere digression from my point, which was, Whether we could discover

cover whether it were *God*, or any *other* Agent that works a Miracle. To proceed therefore in our Enquiry.

No one doubts but that the Great God and Father of all may work a Miracle: Some have doubted whether Any Being but He can do one. It may afford some light to consider what the Scriptures have any where said upon this Head; For Revelation alone can satisfactorily determine this point. And,

1st, It never appears throughout the *Old Testament*, that the Great God, *whom no man hath seen nor can see*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. *the invisible God*, Col. i. 15. John vi. 46. Col. i. 15. Heb. xi. 27. 1 Joh. iv. 12. ever did upon Earth any Miracle; but as He *made* all things by the Son, so He *does* all things by means of Him, or some Angel or other who executes his Commands. As to the Father himself, *no man hath seen him at any time*, John i. 18. The *Angel of the Lord* that appeared to *Moses* in the bush, and who *said*, *I am the God of thy Fathers*, Acts vii. 30—32, enabled *Moses* to do the Miracles He did in *Egypt*, and elsewhere.

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So

So says *Justin Martyr*, assuring us, * that *Moses received strong power from Christ that spake to him out of the bush.* And it was an inferior Angel still, who in the Name of God, says, *Rev. xi. 1—3. I will give power to my Two Witnesses, and they shall prophesy in Sackcloth.*

I do not enquire *who* it was, or what *Angel* it was, whether that Person who is called *the Angel of the Covenant*, or as we render it, *the Messenger of the Covenant*, *Mal. iii. 1. the Angel of his Presence*, *Isai. lxiii. 9.*—I do not enquire, I say, whether this Person was the Christ, who made the several Appearances under the Old Testament. Whoever it was, it was one that spoke *in the Name of God*; and in whom the *Name of God* was, *Exod. xxiii. 21.* The *Jews* assert that Angels are the Mediators betwixt God and all other Beings; and that *one cannot find an Instance where God did any Work but by the means of some An-*

* Δύναμιν ἰσχυρὰν ἔλαβε παρὰ τοῦ λαλήσαντος αὐτῷ ἐν ἰδίᾳ πατρὶς, χρηστῶ. *Just. Apol. 1.* And in his 2d Apology he biames the *Jews* for imagining that the Father of all things spake to *Moses*, it being the Son of God, who is called an Angel and a Messenger.

gel. Non enim invenies, says Maimonides, Deum ullum opus fecisse nisi per manus alicujus Angeli. More Nevoch. Pars. 2. c. 6.

The Jews received the Law by the Disposition of Angels, Acts vii. 53. Moses was sent to be a Ruler and Deliverer by the hands of the Angel which appeared to him in the bush, v. 35. St. Paul observes that the Law was ordained by Angels, Gal. iii. 19. And in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is called the word spoken by Angels, c. ii. 2.

It is not my present business to consider further whether it was Christ, or another Being inferior to him who thus appeared, and enabled *Moses* to work Miracles. It plainly was not the *Great God and Father of all*, whose voice no one hath heard at any time, Joh. v. 37. But

2. One cannot but observe, That our Saviour himself, whilst He was upon Earth in his incarnate State, seems constantly to have been under the Guidance and Influence of the *Holy Ghost* in all his wondrous Works: and whatever he did, it was by a Power communicated to him by that Person. This Observation is justified by the following Texts. *I will put my Spirit upon him, and*

he shall shew Judgment to the Gentiles, Matt. xii. 18. But if I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you, Ibid. v. 28. Hence is he said, to be full of the Holy Ghost, Luke iv. 1. and that God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him, John iii. 34. In the Acts it is said, that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, c. x. 38. From these and other passages of the New Testament I seem to gather, that all the Miracles which our Saviour did upon Earth, were done by him through the Operation of the Holy Ghost, enabling him in his incarnate State to do all such works as were necessary to demonstrate who He was, and what his Errand to us was.

3. The same Person which enabled our Saviour to work Miracles, did likewise enable the Apostles and the Disciples of our Lord to work Miracles. Hence it is that that they were to *be baptized with the Holy Ghost, Act. i. 5. and as soon as they were filled with the Holy Ghost they began to speak with other Tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, c. ii. 4. x. 45, 46. xix. 6. When the several Gifts of the Spirit are*
enume-

enumerated, 1 Cor. xii. (amongst which are *the Gifts of healing*, v. 9. *the working of Miracles, Prophecy, discerning of Spirits,* and *divers kinds of Tongues*, v. 10.) it is added, ALL THESE worketh that One and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will, v. 11. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, c. ii. 4. the Author speaks of *Signs and Wonders and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, by which God bore witness unto the Apostles.

Hence then may we be enabled to understand all those passages of the New Testament, wherein our Saviour attributes all the wondrous works which he did, to his *Father*, or to a Power received from *the Father*. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not : but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works*, John x. 37, 38. *The Father which is in me, he doth the works*, John xiv. 10. And though in some places, our Saviour speaks of his works as done by his *own power*, yet still he refer'd every thing that he said or did to the *Father*, as the *Author*, or great *Principle*, of whatever he did, and by whose Will and Authority he acted in every instance: From

Him all Power was derived; and through the Influences of the *Holy Spirit*, was communicated to the *Son*, and by that means to Mankind.

When an Angel made any Appearance, and worked any Miracle, it seems to be only when God sent Him on any message, or commanded any thing to be done. Whenever any one represented the Person of the Great God, He did or acted as such a Representative; and then the words or things are directly imputed to God himself, as if He were the immediate Agent. For this reason the Sacred Writers use concerning such Angels so acting, the terms not only of *Adonai*, *El*, *Elohim*, but likewise that of *Jehovah*; as appears by comparing places together. Thus *Exod. xiii. 21. Jehovah* is said to *go before the Camp of the Israelites, by day in a pillar of Cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire*: whereas in the very next Chapter, *xiv. 19.* it is said—*The Angel of the Lord which went before the camp of Israel removed, and went behind them.* And *Ch. xxxii. 34. Behold mine Angel shall go before thee.* And *ch. xxxiii. 17. The Lord said unto Moses—I will make*
all

all my Goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee. This can no otherwise be understood than as the Word of a Being Subordinate to the great *Jehovah*, who *represented* him, and acted by his Authority, and Mission.

Now an Angel may be conceived to have Power of *his own*, either sufficient to guard the *Israelites*, or to do whatever is imputed to him, without any new extraordinary conveyance of *power* to him. His *Commission* indeed, or his *Authority to act* is always referred to God, who sent him upon such a Message, or such a Business: But whether He was vested with more than his *natural Power* on such Occasion, does not appear. If we consider the Things done, we can conceive a power less than *infinite*, able to execute them: Why then may not an Angel do them by a Power immanent and inherent in himself? When *Pharaoh* pursued the Children of *Israel*, it did not require *Omnipotence*, or an *infinite* power, to *trouble the host of the Egyptians*, or to *take off their Chariot-wheels so as to make them drive heavily*. *Exod. xiv. 24, 25.* This an Angel might be able to do by his own Strength; and whilst such power was ex-

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erted,

erted, *invisibly* to us, it would be deemed a *Miracle*, though the power by which it was done was very short of *infinite*.

What the Powers of the Highest Class of Superior Beings may be, it is absurd for us to pretend to determine. But yet, Let the Miracles of our Saviour be ranged into their respective Orders, according to our Conceptions of the Difficulties which attend their performance, and there is none of them that seem to require an absolute *infinity* of power. The Highest kind is *Raising the dead*, and giving Sight to such as are *born blind*. The *Second* is, What *may be* done by Natural Causes, but yet were done without them: such as the Sudden cure of Diseases, Leprosy, Palsy, &c. The *Third* is, What likewise may be effected by natural Causes and were in fact done by them, whereas there appeared no connexion nor relation to them: Such were the cure of the Blind by *Spittle and Clay*, *John* ix. 6; The Cure of the Deaf and Dumb by putting his *fingers* into the *Ears* and *Spitting*, and therewith touching the Tongue, *Mark* vii. 33; The cure of diseases by the Motion of the Waters at *Bethesda*.

Bethesda. John v. 4. There is another Sort of Miracles recorded in the Scriptures, done by natural means, but yet so done that supposing them used, yet they would not produce their effect, had not they been used by some Superior Being for such an Effect at such a particular time, and on such a particular occasion. Thus the *Samaritans* were destroyed by *Lions*, at that particular time let loose as it were upon them, for a punishment for their deserting the Worship of the one God. Of the same kind seem to be the great *draught of Fishes* mentioned *Luke v. 6. John xxi. 6.* Now none of these, however the effects of Power Superior to Man, seem to require an *infinite* power, or what may be conceived beyond the Abilities of a Being inferior to the Great God to effect. And since *Revelation* has not given us an instance of any Miracle done by the Almighty himself, but always attributes them to some other Agent acting in his Name, and by Authority from him; it seems most reasonable to conclude, that all miraculous Operations are the effects of Beings able by their natural powers to produce

duce them, and not the immediate Operations of the Great God himself.

You'll say still, that it is God himself who immediately gives Power to the inferior Agent to work a Miracle: or in other words, that God alone works the Miracle whether he does it by the Agency of an Inferior Being, or not. For as he alone is the immediate Cause of all Effects of nature, by his establishing the general Laws by which he governs all things, so he alone can suspend those general Laws or produce effects contrary to them.

But this is saying nothing, unless the general Laws were known, which could not be suspended by any Being but God himself. Suppose it a general Law, that such a Man should dye, if such or such certain Obstructions should happen in his Body. These Obstructions may be conceived capable of being removed by a Being that can get at them; just as *we* know how to remove them in many cases which otherwise would prove mortal. Should an invisible Agent exert his Power on such Occasion, or should he enable any Man to do so, This would properly

perly be a *Miracle*: And since God has created Beings endowed with Agency of their own, many things may be accomplished by such Agents, which would be indeed absurd if we suppose nothing in the Universe, but what is the effect of some blind necessary cause.

Nor is this Opinion any ways detrimental to Religion, nor can it be turned to the disadvantage of Revelation. A superior Being comes from above and tells us, as from God, some Doctrine or Truth: It is idle to dispute whether this shall, or shall not, be called a *Divine* Revelation. If a man assisted by any Superior Being works a Miracle, and tells you at the same time, that the works which he does are not his own, but his that sent him, and that the Doctrine he delivers is from God, though it be by the mediation of some other Being, This may in the greatest Strictness be called a *Divine* Revelation, though even Man be the intermediate Agent. It does not cease to be the Command or Will of the King, notwithstanding it is delivered to a third or fourth Person by the means of proper Ministers who are the subordinate Agents. If the Question be, How shall I know, that

that the Message delivered is really from God, and that I am not imposed on by a Being that deceives me—This is the

Second Question here to be considered, *viz.* How does it appear that the Doctrine and the Miracle are not from some *Evil* Being *Seducing* men? There are *Evil* Beings Superior to Man; and They have, or had, great *Powers*; and we do not know that ever they lost or were deprived of them. They may therefore work Miracles; and they may pretend to inspire Men; and they may utter *Untruths*, and confirm their *Lies* by Signs and *Wonders*, as well and as much as any benevolent Beings can. Which way then can we ever know that a *Miracle*, or a *Revelation*, comes from a *Good* or *Evil* Agent?

It must be owned that Evil Beings have Powers superior to Man, and they *may utter* Falshoods, and confirm their *Lies* by Signs and Wonders; But yet we are not destitute of all means of knowing how we are to act. There will be indeed this general prejudice in favour of all Superior Beings, that the higher we conceive any of them to be in the class of rational Beings, we

we shall always imagine them to be less inclined to impose on the lower part of the Creation, because it is little consistent with Wisdom to do any Hurt or Mischief to Beings not capable of guarding against the Evil.

But let us suppose an Evil Being to make a Revelation, and to confirm it by a Sign, and suppose that I know not the Being to be Evil. The First thing is to consider, what this Revelation is, whether it be, what our Reason tells us is right, and what may tend to our *Good*. Now if the Agent does *deceive* me to *my Good*, I have no reason to complain. If I know not, whether the Revelation tends to either Good or Harm; my Assent or Dissent, will be as it is to a purely Speculative Proposition, of which I know not the Use. As to the *Moral Character* of the Revealer, whatever it be in general, (of which by supposition I know nothing,) it must be owned, that in the Revelation of what is *Good to Me*, He acts a *Good* part: Should he *seduce* me to my *Good*, in that too he would shew himself *kind* and *benevolent*: And that is all that I am concerned in, or from which I can frame
a Judgment.

a Judgment. Should the Revelation be *immoral*, or what tends to encourage or promote Vice in any Shape or Form,—I could not but conclude the Being that discovers such *Untruths*, to be an *Evil Being*.

To apply this to a particular instance may tend to make the case more plain. Suppose a Superior Being should discover this Truth or Doctrine—“ That God will
“ judge Mankind by some Man who is appointed Lord of all”—Is it a *Good* or an *Evil* Being that *reveals* this? 1. There is nothing contrary to *Reason* in this? 2. It is certain, from the *Miracles* done, that this Revelation is not the fiction, or fancy, or Imagination, or Révery, or whatever it may be called, of a Mad or Enthusiastic man, but what comes from above. 3dly, If I act upon this persuasion, and live such a life as is recommended by the Revealer, I am assured that I shall be happy. And 4thly, The Life I am commanded to live is that of exact *Morality*, or *Goodness*; or agreeable to my best and perfectest Faculties. 5thly, The Discoveries which are made, are such as tend to promote my good: They are Motives to Goodness, or Encouragements

agements to persevere in it, or are Declarations of God's Government of the World; or openings of the Scenes of his Providence; or in short what may raise a most fixt and certain Dependance upon *him*, who directs and governs all things. Hence it follows, 1st. That it cannot but be a *benevolent* Being, that makes a Discovery of what is *Good* to me; or let him be *in Himself* as *Evil* as you please, it is nothing to me, since the Revelation is perfectly *good*. And if I am *seduced* to my *Good*; the Being that seduces me shews a *benevolent* disposition towards me. Should a Wife and knowing *Man* tell me that if I act in such a particular manner, I shall certainly maintain and keep a constant course of health; and I see and know myself, that the Course I am put into can do me no harm, ought I not to pay that deference to his superior Judgment, as to follow his prescriptions? Suppose that a Superior Intelligence should inform me of a Proposition; and I am no competent Judge, by any natural power I have, whether it be true or false; Suppose too that I cannot be hurt, if I admit what he says for a truth;

a truth ; and it may do me much good if I do receive it ; — Ought I not then to pay that deference to the Revealer, even supposing that I know no more of this invisible Agent, than that I have the Revelation from him ? His Superiority in the Rank of Beings entitles him to some regard ; and if I find that he acts *benevolently* towards me, why should not I depend upon his Friendliness and Service, since he voluntarily offers them unto me, and gives me such Evidence of his good disposition toward me ?

The tendency then of the Doctrine must determine both my Behaviour and the Character of the Invisible Being, and induce me to assent to it, or to reject it. But then 2dly. Suppose that Being were to work a Miracle, and to reveal this Proposition to me, *Anau hanau Namboüatfi tanghō*. I can only assent to this, that these words or sounds were revealed ; but I can't say whether it be a Good or Evil Being that revealed it, because I cannot conceive any meaning to those words. But

3. Should

3. Should a Being reveal any Proposition that tends to encourage Idolatry, Superstition, Falshood, or any thing contrary to the Attributes of God, or any thing idle, useless, or absurd, one must conclude the Being to be, what his Revelation shews him to be, and consequently not to be obeyed.

4. Should the Revelation be that, such a one is to go to the *East-Indies*, or that *Moses* is to go to *Pharaoh* ; then the determination is to be according to the Evidence which a man has for such command. Suppose therefore a Superior Being were to work a Miracle, and to command such a behaviour, There is no possibility of knowing, *à priori*, whether such Mission be to deceive, or not, but a man ought to obey, as being in the hands of such Superior Agent. If indeed an Evil Being were to work a Miracle, and there was no doctrine, no command annexed, it would then be no more than an extraordinary phænomenon, which we should be concerned in just as we are in all other instances of a like nature. We could not but assent to the Fact, if we see it ourselves, or if we have sufficient Evidences of it.

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But suppose a Contest betwixt two Persons, each of which is enabled to work a Miracle, or a series of Miracles ; and they appeal to what they do, as Evidences of a Commission from Above, What in this case must be done ? Or which are we to believe ? Supposing, I say, such a case,

First, He that works the *greatest* Miracles will shew himself either to be, or to be influenced by a Being, *Superior* in *power* : and he that proves himself to be the *Superior* will justly claim our Submission. I shall presently consider the question how the *Magicians* of *Egypt* did the wonders they did : Whether by flight of Hand, or by the Assistance of an Evil Spirit : But here it is sufficient to say, that what *Moses* did argued a vastly *Superior* power ; and consequently that *He* ought to be obey'd rather than *others*, who did only *less* wonders, and confessed that they were *not enabled* to do what *Moses* did.

Secondly, In case of contest, He that continues to do the *most* Miracles, may justly claim our Assent. For the ceasing to go on, argues an Inability to work what another does and continues to do ; Or it implies

plies some *Restraint* ; or some want of will : In the former of these circumstances a want of power cannot but be concluded ; in the second case, an Inferiority or Submission to another ; and in the third, a want of equal benevolence.

It may be perhaps suggested, That all Miracles are *equal* ; that “ it is as easy to
 “ turn six hundred Gallons of Water into
 “ blood as six Quarts ; and to bring up a
 “ Million of Frogs, as four and twenty.
 “ Out of the way of nature, all things
 “ seem alike impossible, or alike possible.
 “ Bring me a Man, or Spirit, that can make
 “ a *Fly* by his power, and I will shew you
 “ one that can make an *Elephant*.”

On the contrary I cannot persuade myself, that in these instances it may be as easy to do the one as the other, “ to turn six hundred Gallons of Water into blood as six Quarts,” or to “ bring up a Million of Frogs, as Two dozen : No nor that when we are got out of the Sphere of *our* Action, all acts of power are *alike impossible*.” In the Analogy of things, it is easy to conceive many degrees of Beings as much Superior to Man, as there are in fact Beings below him. And as a Mite, or

any other Animalcule, would falsly infer that a Dog, or a Horse, or an Elephant could do every thing equally, that was out of the way of the natures of such Animalcules: So shall we be guilty of the same absurdity, if we conclude that every Being Superior to us can equally do the same things. Those Superior Agents may do equally *many* things: But yet even their powers may be limited to certain points which they can no more transcend, than We can the powers which *we* are vested with. It requires but a low degree of Power to make a Man walk upon the Water, or to carry him through the Air, (which yet to us is a Miracle) in comparison of what it does to make a *Fly* or an *Elephant*: and consequently it is not impossible, that a Being may be able to do the one, who yet cannot do the Other. It requires not only a difference of power, but a difference of *Skill* and *Knowledge* to do several Miracles. To turn water into Blood, or into Wine, is not the same as to restore an Eye to one that is blind, or Life to one that is dead: because in the *one* case a Change of the particles of Water into such as make Blood or Wine is sufficient; in the *other*, the
liquids

liquids and solids of the body must be restored; Every Part must be adapted to its use; Every Tube or Canal made capable of receiving its proper Juice or Liquor; every Fibre, Muscle, Tendon, Nerve, must have its proper Elasticity and Strength, and do its Office, as well as every liquid, that was become altered in its nature, must be restored to its due use.

Again; it may not be as easy to turn great quantities of Water at once into blood, as it is to turn small ones. It argues much greater *power* at least to do the One than the Other; as it shews greater Strength to carry Six thousand pound, than it does to carry Six. It requires more Power to carry a Mountain than to carry a Mouse through the Air: and consequently all things out of the Sphere of our Action, are not alike possible or impossible: nor are we left incapable of judging whom *we* ought to adhere to, in cases where a contest may arise, and both parties work Miracles.

Are we then always to assent to him in whom we can perceive the *greatest Power*? Or is it more just to believe him to be the *Superior Being*, who exerts the *most Power*, than it is to believe that *Man* to be

the *best* and *wisest* that is endued with *greatest* Strength? The Answer is,

That in many cases *mere power* will prove *Superiority*; and where a contest in mere acts of Power is all that appears, there we cannot but infer a Superiority in him that has the greatest Power. *Moses* was enabled to exert and display a greater power than the *Egyptians*; the *Magicians* themselves acknowledged, and every instance of his Miracles evinced it; and when the contest was in acts of *power*, He that shewed himself the *strongest* was to be preferred. And supposing *that* the point is, whose Conduct am I to submit myself to? In such a case *cæteris paribus*, no question can be made but it will be to his, whose *power* is the most prevailing. For *Power* is the only thing we see; and this is displayed by Invisible Beings through the means of Men: and the Agent who shews the greater *power*, commanding *Pharaoh* to let the people go, *Pharaoh* ought to have submitted to such command, rather than suffer what such a Being might inflict.

But

But as I have here mentioned *Moses* and the *Egyptians*, it will be proper to consider their case more particularly, because it usually is represented as an instance of an Opposition between Two Agents invisible, each working in his respective way, for and against a command. The difficulty is such as has led Men into very different Hypotheses, in order to solve it: for which reason I shall particularly examine what the Scriptures have said about it

The case then was this: *Moses* was sent by *God*, or by an Angel from God, (which is to all intents the same thing) to *Pharaoh* with a Commission to demand of him to let the Children of *Israel* depart out of *Egypt*, and likewise to acquaint the *Israelites* themselves, that he was to deliver them out of their Bondage. Both the King and the People were to be made certain of this Truth, that *Moses* was sent for these purposes to them. And how could this be known? Or what must be the evidence that he was sent by God on such an Errand? *Moses* was first to be convinced himself that God was, and would be, with Him: and then

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he

he was to be enabled to convince all those to whom he was sent, of his divine commission. For the first, he was enabled to *turn his Rod into a Serpent*: then, his *Hand was made Leprous* only by *putting it into his bosom*; and it was restored to its former Strength and Colour again, only by doing the same thing, *Exod. iv. 3—7*. Convinced thus Himself that God was with him; and being assured by the Being that appeared to him in the Bush; that he should work Miracles in the presence of *Pharaoh*, He went to him and delivered his Message; and Aaron *cast down his Rod before Pharaoh, and it become a Serpent*, Chap. vii. 10. *Pharaoh* unwilling to let the people go, suspected some *Trick*; and disbelieved the Miracle. He therefore *called the Wise men and the Sorcerers: and the Magicians of Egypt also did in like manner with their Enchantments*, v. 11.

It will be necessary before we proceed further, to find out the exact Idea belonging to each of these words, *Wise men*, *Sorcerers*, *Magicians* and *Enchantments*.

1. The first, *Wise men*, seems to be a general word, by which is meant, such as are *eminently Skilful in any Science or Art*.

But

But something of *Cunning* or *Craft* was intended to be expressed by the LXX when they interpreted it here, σοφισταὶ *deceivers*, such as *circumvent others by deceitful words*. In *Daniel* it is translated, σοφοί, the *Wise men*, no less than *fourteen* times. Whatever then it was that these men excelled in the Knowledge of, whether it was Art, or Science, they were here sent for in order to do what *Moses* had done, and to confront him.

2. The second word, which we translate, *Sorcerers*, is מְשַׁפִּיִּים *Mecephaphim*. This is something more appropriated, and signifies such as use *Slight of hand*, *Legerdemain*; Such as can impose on By-standers so as to make them imagine that they see, what they do not see; such as pretend to do strange, wonderful things. The LXX not only in this place, but I think wherever it occurs, render it by φαρμακός, or what implies strictly working mischief to others by *poison*; not that they meant any such thing as *poisoning* in this place, since that was not the business they were sent for here; but they understood by it, ill persons who by their Art could do something
that

that seemed prodigious, or strange. There always were a Sort of Men and Women in the world, who from their Skill and Knowledge in the virtues of certain things, and from their contrivances to conceal their Arts, have been deemed, and reported by the ignorant, able to do almost every thing. They are imagined wise enough to know other people's fortunes, to discover where any thing that is lost may be found; to enchant; to bewitch; to raise Storms, or to lay them; to turn themselves or others into any Shapes; to ride through the Air; to affect the Moon itself by their Charms; to stop the course of Rivers, and what not. By what Arts they *imposed* on their credulous consulters, it is needless to enquire; The things made use of on these occasions, were called *φάρμακα*, and such as used them to hurt others, were *φαρμακῶν*: and hence the LXX made use of this word to express what we translate *Sorcerers*. The artful contrivances which these men have to work upon the credulity of the Many, and to deceive them into an Opinion of their Abilities, made these *Egyptians* be called, *Mecephaphim*. Could therefore any Men be sent for, that by any Art or Management

nagement could turn their Rods into Serpents or seem to do so, as *Moses* had done his, these would certainly be the proper men to confront him, and to shew that *Moses's* Message was all false.

All our Dictionaries agree in this—that *cashaph*, signifies to use *Jugling tricks*, to cast a *mist before any one's Eyes*. *Buxtorf* says it is, *Præstigiis usus est*; and its participle, *Mecashaph*, One that uses such *tricks*, *præstigiis utens*, *Præstigiator*. *Pagninus* interprets it, (and he quotes *R. Abraham* for it), *Prestigium*. *Mecashaph*, *præstigiator*. *Dicit enim quod est levis (agilis) manibus suis, qui tenet oculos, qui scit horas quando aliquid est faciendum, et cognitionem habet Somniorum secundum dispositionem Stellarum. Est enim Præstigiator, qui circumstantibus ita oculorum aciem præstringit, i. e. (valde stringit, aut claudit, obtenebrat) ut non advertant dolum, ut res aliter videre faciat quam sint. Unde Præstigium, Incantatio, falsa ostentatio: ut faciunt ii qui nostra vernacula lingua dicuntur Baghatellarii; et illorum delusio, Baghatellæ. One that has Slight of hand, that can so cast a mist before the Spectators Eyes that they shan't perceive his trick; that can make a thing seem*

seem otherwise than it is: *One who knows the lucky hour when any thing is to be done, and has a Skill in Dreams from the Disposition of the Stars*: One that can so hold the Eyes of the By-standers, that they shan't perceive any Deception. Hence it may be used, He says, for *Fascination*, or he that uses *Fascination*.

One cannot but observe (what several have taken notice of,) that this Word is almost always in Scripture joined, or used with, others which signify *Fortune-telling*, or revealing *secret* things, *Divination*, *Interpreting Dreams*, and such like. By which one may conjecture in general what sort of men they were that here were sent for.

It is true, that in the *Mischna*, a distinction is made betwixt the person that plays mere *jugling Tricks*, and one that pretends to *Magick Arts*: The One, they say is punishable with death, the Other not. *Hamecaseph*, signifies, *One that really does the thing, and not one that deceives your Eyes*. *Is est qui rem patrat, non qui ludit oculos*, *Misch. de Syneedr. c. 7*. Here the word is confined to an ill sense, to such as designedly injure others by Tricks or Arts: And under this Term is comprehended
all

all such as pretend to *charms, incantations,* and all that wicked Trade of Imposing on the weak or ignorant, in opposition to those who either for diversion, or for their pleasure, or profit, profess to practice the art of *Legerdemain*. And in this sense the word is taken, *Exod. xxii. 18.* which we translate—*Thou shalt not suffer a Witch, Mecasthephah, to live.* The word here signifies One that craftily pretends to the Secret Art of *Divination, or Fortune-telling*. It is certain that it has no relation to *Poisonings* as *Josephus* would have it. It was usual for such as pretended to these Arts, to mutter certain words, and to use certain rites, which served to *cast a mist before the Eyes* of such as came to consult them, or to try their powers. What the *Old Egyptians* did in such cases, is, I think, unknown: but yet one cannot but observe, that when the *Egyptians* went after *Joseph's* Brethren, and charged them with having stolen the *Silver cup* which *their Master* used in Divination, *Gen. xliv. 5.*—This is an instance of the Art of *imposing and deceiving* by some idle pretense, the better to carry on the Fraud.

Here

Here were innocent men in the hands of one who used them roughly, and had contrived the trick to terrify them. The Egyptians first tell them what their Master used the *cup* for: and then *Joseph* himself says—*Wot ye not that such a Man as I can certainly divine?* v. 15.

The old Magicians did not, as far as appears, pretend to any intercourse with Evil Spirits: They did not attempt to accomplish their Ends by means of the Assistance of those impure Beings, which have in later days been called into their Aid. We have some remarkable instances in *Theocritus*, and *Virgil*, and *Homer*, of Women pretending to do great feats by means of noxious herbs, and certain mixtures, with certain forms of superstitious Words, and ridiculous ceremonies, and supplications; who yet never pretended to receive their powers from any commerce with Spirits, or Demons, but to learn their Arts from Nations or Persons famous for their Practices in these affairs. Thus when *Symætha* was to try her Art upon her Lover, she invokes the Moon and *Hecate*, but does
not

not pretend to have her Art from them;
she learnt her Philters

Ἀσσυρίῳ—παρὰ ξείνοιο, *Theoc. Id. 2.*

from an Assyrian Acquaintance. She prays indeed to *Hecate* to make her Charms as powerful as were those of *Circe*, *Medea*, or *Perimede*,

Φάρμακα ταῦθ' ἐγδοῖσα Χερείονα μήτέ τι Κίρκης
Μήτέ τι Μηδείας, μήτε ξανθᾶς Περιμήδας. *ibid.*

But does not pretend to derive her power to enchant from her, but imputes it to the virtues of those Herbs and other things She had learnt:

When indeed the Witches of old talked, as if they could stop Rivers, and make them run upwards, to their Fountains, or Trees come down from the Hills on which they grew, or make the Moon or Sun come down from Heaven, or could stop their course, we know it to be all mere Words, and therefore it is needless to enquire upon what grounds they pretended to do such Prodigies.

Virgil's

Virgil's Witch in the same manner had all her Skill and Art from *Mæris*.

*Has herbas, atque hæc Ponto mihi lecta venena
Ipse dedit Mæris: nascuntur plurima Ponto.
His ego sæpe lupum fieri, & se condere Sylvis
Mærim, sæpe animas imis exire Sepulchris
Atque satas alio vidi traducere Messes.*

Virgil Ecl.

The Sorcerers then, or *Mecasephim*, here sent for, were men that could use great flight of hand, and had the Art of deceiving the Spectators Eyes, and by their Skill or Knowledge in nature, could seem to do wonderful things; nor do they appear to have any dealings with Evil Spirits.

The *Third* Term to be explained is what we translate *Magicians*: *הַרְטָמִּים*. To judge of the meaning of this word, it must be observed that it is used by *Daniel*, c. ii. 10, 27. for a sort of People called in to find out or discover *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*. In *Genesis* c. xli. 8. they were sent for to interpret Pharaoh's dream, as they were to interpret *Nebuchadnezzar's*, *Dan.* iv. 4. In the 9th verse of this Chapter, *Daniel* is called *Master of the Magicians*,
by

by which is meant, *the Chief*, the Governor, the *Head* of them : as we find him appointed, c. ii. 48. *Chief of the Governors over all the Wisemen of Babylon*. It is not then a Term which signifies a familiar commerce with an *Evil Spirit*, nor is such a Notion necessary to make a Man be deemed *Hhartom*, or what is in *Daniel* rendered a *Magician* : since not only the Prophet *Daniel*, but *Hananiab*, *Misbael*, and *Azariah*, were deemed, *Hhartummim*, Magicians. By it was meant what the Queen said to *Belshazzar Dan. v. 11, 12*. *There is a man in thy Kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the holy Gods, and in the days of thy Father light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the Gods was found in him, whom—thy Father made Master of the Magicians, Hhartummin,—Forasmuch as an excellent Spirit, and Knowledge, and Understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences and dissolving of doubts were found in the same Daniel.*

The Text indeed has it, *in whom is the Spirit of the Holy Gods* : and From this place, *Daniel* is supposed to have had the As-

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. fistance

sistance of God to enable him to be a *Hbartom*, a Magician in a good Sense, as the other *Magicians*, in a bad sense, are supposed to have the Spirit of Evil Beings to assist them. But this is quite groundless. *Belshazzar's* Queen meant no more, than what is expressed in the following verse, *viz.* that he was endued with an extraordinary, very eminent Wisdom, even such as was *like the wisdom of the Gods*, great, extensive, and from which nothing was hid. She uses the words which *Nebuchadnezzar* had used, c. iv. 8. which the LXX have interpreted, τὸ πνεῦμα θεῶν ἁγίων, *the Spirit of the Holy God*; or *the holy Spirit of God*: intimating an Opinion that he was blessed with an eminent Wisdom, greater than any other Man had.

This will sufficiently shew us what is meant by the *Magicians* of *Egypt* who were called in to oppose Moses and Aaron.

Later Jews explain the word by *Hbacam Toledoth*; So the *Hebrew Concordance* printed at *Venice*, A. D. 1524. Either that He understands the Qualities of things, their Causes, Sources, Natures: Or one who from the *Birth-day* of a man can pronounce his

his Fortune and Success: So *Pagnin* from *Aben Ezra*. From hence it seems plain, that this Word means a very *wise* or *knowing* man that could discover Secrets, or interpret dreams, from knowing their causes, or how the Mind must be affected, by its having such or such Images before it at the time of Sleep. It has been long observed by the Interpreters of Dreams, “ that
 “ many more of them would come out
 “ true, if we went to bed perfectly sober:
 “ but the reason why they are so confu-
 “ sed and irregular is, * because we go
 “ to Rest loaded with Wine and Victu-
 “ als.” And *Apuleius* tells us, † that
 “ Good and able Physicians observe that
 “ they who go to bed full of Victuals and
 “ Drink are apt to dream troublesome and
 “ bad dreams.

These were the Men called in upon this occasion by *Pharaoh* to consult with, and to try whether the Miracle worked by *Mo-*

* Vera quidem multo plura evenirent si ad quietem integri-
 iremus; nunc onusti cibo & vino perturbata & confusa
 cernimus. *Cic. de Divinat.* l. 1.

† Næ merito inquam Medici fidi cibo & crapula distentos
 scæva et gravia somniare autumant. *Apul. Met.* l. 1.

ses was any Evidence of his coming from God. It may be questioned, Whether the *Hhartummin* here mentioned, be any more than a more general Word expressing and comprehending under it, both the *Wise men*, and the *Sorcerers*. But it signifies little ; These Men did as *Moses did*, *they cast down every Man his Rod, and they became Serpents* : Only it is said, that they did it with their *Enchantments*, which is

The *Fourth* word which wants a particular Explication. They did it בְּלִהְטִיחָם or בְּלִטְיָחָם. The radical word is either לָטַח, *Laat*, which signifies to *cover*, to *hide*, and thence it is put for *Secrets* such as the persons just now mentioned were supposed to *know*. Or if it be derived from לָטַח that signifies much the same: *Lat* or *belat*, is, *Secretly, quietly, privately*. That those who were wont to utter their charms, did it with a *low voice*, or *muttered* over what they had to say, is well known. *Simætha* in *Theocritus* says to the Moon,

—Τὴν γὰρ ποταῖσσομαι ἄσυχὰ δαῖμον.

Theoc. Id. 2.

And

And *Lucina*, in *Ovid's* 9th Book of the *Metamorphosis*, speaks her Charms in a silent Voice.

———*Tacita quoque carmina voce.*

Dixit, & inceptos tenuerunt carmina partus.

Ovid. Metam. L. 9.

and *Pamphile* in *Apuleius*, after she had anointed herself, *Multum cum Lucerna secreto collocuta*, muttered a great deal, having her candle in her hand. *Apul. Metam. l. 3.* and in his 1st book he calls it, *Magico susurramine*, by magic muttering. Or lastly if it be derived from *לָהַט*, *Lahat* this signifies to set on fire, to burn: and thence comes the Substantive to signify a bright, well polished, Shining Sword-blade, *quod tales incantationes fierent ferro aut acie gladii*; says *Pagnin*. *Mercer* adds, *Quasi sit quoddam Incantationis seu præstigiarum opus quod sit Lamina gladii adhibita*. *Pagnin* cites *Rabbi David*, for the account of this Sort of Incantation done by the blade of a Sword: and *Mercer* explains it by saying, *As if there was some Incantation or trick done by using a Sword in the operation*. *V. Pagnin. Thesaurus.*

Buxtorf tells us, that Incantations were called *Latim*, because *they were secret, and done in secret, or that the Eyes of the Spectators were as it were covered, and had such a Mist cast over them that they could not see the true Object.* Quod occultæ sint et occulte fiant; aut fascino oculi spectantium obvolvantur et operiantur, ut veram speciem non videant. And he quotes *Cod. Sanhedrin*, c. 7. fol. 67. for a distinction betwixt the two words made use of, that *Belabatehem* signifies the *work of Devils*; *Belatehem*, the *work of Juglers*. See his *Lexicon*. But This is a mere *Rabbinical* distinction, without the least foundation.

One cannot but observe, that it was one of the Tricks which those who used the Art of Legerdemain in days of Old, played, to seem to *eat a Sword*, or to *run it into their bodies*, in order to amuse, and to make their gains out of, the credulous By-standers. There is a remarkable instance of this in *Apuleius*, who tells us of one * “ whom he

* Et tamen Athenis proximè ante Pæcilen porticum isto gemino obtutu circulatorum aspexi equestrem spatham præ-acutam mucrone infesto devorasse: ac mox eundem, invitamento exigux stipis, venatoriam lanceam, qua parte minatur exitium, in ima viscera condidisse. *Apul. Metam.* l. 1.

“ saw

“ saw himself at Athens *swallow a Horse-*
 “ *man’s great sharp Sword, running the*
 “ *point in at his Mouth. Presently after-*
 “ *wards, for the sake of a little piece of*
 “ *money, he thrust a Huntman’s Spear into*
 “ *his belly.*” If now the *Egyptian Magi-*
cians did what they did *Belahatehem*, by the
Art of managing their Swords, it is evident
 how they might amuse the By-standers, and
 do the things they were employed to do,
 whilst they caught and held the Spectators
 Eyes by this, or some such, management of
 their *Swords*.

Iannes and *Iambres* then cast down their
 Rods as *Moses* had done, and they became
 Serpents. The question then is, by what
 Power they did this, and whence it was de-
 rived? There are no less than *Three* Soluti-
 ons of this Difficulty. The *First* is, That
 they were enabled to perform what they did,
 by a Power derived from *God*. The *Se-*
cond is, That they were assisted by *Evil*
Spirits. The *Last* is, That they were er-
 rant Juglers, and did what they did by
 mere flight of hand.

In behalf of the *First* Scheme, it is said, That God alone is able to do Miracles, real Miracles; for he alone can alter the Laws of his own making: that the Scriptures assert this power and prerogative to God alone: that could any power less than that of God alter what he had settled, “this
 “ would be to have Rivals, Cheques, nay,
 “ and Controllers of his Will and Empire:
 “ That no use could be made of Miracles,
 “ if any one but God could work them in-
 “ dependently of him, and at their plea-
 “ sure. They could not manifest a Di-
 “ vine power, if any less could work them,
 “ nor could they attest to any one’s being
 “ sent of God, if any other than God
 “ could exercise such Power, because they
 “ might proceed from one as well as the
 “ other.” When the Scriptures any where speak upon this subject it is—*Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous works, Psal. lxxii. 18. Who is so great a God as our God; Thou art the God that doth wonders, Psal. lxxvii. O give thanks to the Lord of Lords—to Him who alone doth great wonders, Psal. cxxxvi. 3, 4. And Moses himself says,*
Who

Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the Gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Exod. xv. 11. intimating that none but God could do what he pleased in heaven or earth. These Writers tell us, That the Devil himself can work no true Miracle by his own power; much less can any wicked man. Wicked men may indeed be so far seduced as to believe that the Devil has a power which he may communicate to them; and so these *Egyptian Sorcerers* might imagine, that they turned their Rods into Serpents by the help of some Being with whom they were confederate; whereas they were only the Agents of *God* in doing what they did. And consequently that God used them, and their help, only that in the conclusion these Sorcerers themselves might be brought to a Confession, that it was God himself that did the Miracles which *Moses* did.

This is said in favour of this Opinion: But the Answer is,—It is owned, that in whatever Sense it is said of God, that He *alone* doth wonders, all *others* must be excluded. There is none among the *Gods* of the Nations that could, or ever did any
won-

wondrous works: and therefore *God alone*, the great Governor of all, is said to do them. But yet this does not exclude other Agents from doing *wonders*, who never were designed to be excluded by these Propositions. For it does not require *infinite* power to alter such Laws of God, as may make a true and real Miracle to us; tho' it may require a power equal to his who made all things, to change *every Law* that was appointed by him. Supposing therefore the *Egyptian* Sorcerers to be confederate with Superior Powers, there does not appear to be any contradiction, or absurdity, in conceiving them *able* to do the Miracles pretended. All that place the Miracles of these Men in the powers received from *Evil Spirits*, plainly enough conceive a *Power* in them sufficient to enable the Sorcerers to do what they did: But to conceive that *God* should enable men to work against his own designs by an express particular delegation of extraordinary Power, is something very harsh, and too extravagant to be admitted without sufficient proof. What is the *Confession* of Evil Men, that That is to be so much regarded? Were not the Miracles
done

done by *Moses* of as much weight and credit without the *Confession* of such men, as with it? But enough has been said already to shew, that Other invisible Agents besides the Great God may work Miracles to us by their natural powers; all which is in point against this Notion. I proceed therefore to,

The *Second* Scheme, that these *Egyptian* Sorcerers performed their Miracles by the Aid of *Evil Spirits*. It is justly here supposed that there are *Evil Spirits*; and that they are able to assist such with whom they may be confederate, to do what is miraculous: and the *Pharisees* agreeably to this Notion accused our Saviour to have done his works by the aid of the *Prince of the Devils*, Matt. ix. 34. These Beings then, whose Abilities and Will no one can call in question, it is said, enabled the *Magicians* to turn their *Rods into Serpents*, as *real true Serpents*, as any Good Being could enable *Moses* to turn his.

But This Scheme labours under difficulties, which are not easily surmountable. It is granted that there are *Evil Spirits*: But *Moses* never pretends that the *Egyptians* did their Miracles by the help of any *such* confederates.

federates. He never names them ; nor relates the facts as done by any such Beings. It is a mere Hypothesis invented only to account for this and such like facts : and it has been attended with pretensions to “ Enchantments, Sorceries, Predictions, and all that strange and *idle Trade* of dealing with the world of *Spirits* and Powers invisible ;” as Bishop *Fleetwood* well expresses it, when he was refuting this Notion, in order to establish his own.

The modern *Magic* consists in a supposed communication with spiritual Agents, by which Men are enabled to do what they aim at, however incredible in itself. But antiently there does not appear to have been more pretended, than a knowledge of the powers of certain herbs, minerals, and such like things, by which they were enabled to do great feats ; or else an Art or Skill to *divine* or *foretel futurities* by the Observations they had made in nature, by observing causes and effects, or by taking notice in a long series of Observations what things usually happened after one another : and as these men usually lived retired, they had the reputation of conversing with the Gods.

But

But I question whether any instance occurs of mens being assisted, or being *thought* to be assisted by *Evil Spirits*; or that men could perform what is imputed to Art Magic, by such means, till towards the times of the latter *Platonists*. Then indeed we read of strange feats done, *cæca coactorum Numinum violentia*, as *Apuleius* expresses it; as if Magicians could *compel* Spiritual Beings to do what they desired or commanded them to do. But a *familiarity* with *Evil Spirits*, or an acting by and under their *assistance*, seems to be a Notion much later than the days of *Moses*. The Antients pretended indeed a sort of *Sympathy* betwixt things on Earth and things above; and that by that *Sympathy* they could influence the Sun or Moon, or other Beings that were above: but this I think is the utmost that was *pretended*; and this was done to carry on their *frauds* with the greater *appearance* of Probability. But, as I said, *Moses* never charges these *Egyptians* with any commerce with *Evil Beings*; nor is there any ground to suppose that they had such communion with them, unless we previously suppose that they worked *real Miracles*,

Wizards, or could do what they pleased by such Aid or Assistance. In truth, *Magic*, neither *Name*, nor *Thing*, seems to be so old as the days of *Moses* in *Egypt* : and when the Term was used first in *Persia* it signified something good ; *Magus* signified a *Priest*, or one that was *well acquainted with the Rites and Ceremonies of worshipping the Gods* : then by a common Error of the ignorant, those who searched more minutely into the causes of things, or the nature of Providence, had this name given them : and lastly, it came to signify one who was supposed by the Aid of *Spiritual Beings* to be able to do just what he pleased.

Iannes and *Iambres* did a certain Fact. *They cast down their Rods, and they became Serpents.* To account for this, Some *Evil Spirit* is brought upon the Stage ; and He must either turn the Rods into Serpents, real Serpents ; Or He must change the Medium, so that the Spectators might be deceived by looking through a false medium ; Or he must some how affect the Eyes or Brains of the Spectators, that they must imagine they saw, what they did not see. If the *Evil Spirit* acted in the first way,
He

He must instantaneously either change the Rods, or else take them away, and with the utmost celerity substitute real Serpents, (either new formed ones, or new brought into the place,) in the room of the Rods: This *latter* is nothing but mere *flight of hand*; which the Men themselves might have done without any Assistance from Spiritual Beings: if the *former* be pretended, there must indeed be the aid of a Spirit, but how is that known, since *Moses* never has said it. He owns his own Powers to be received from God, or from the Angel that appeared to him in the Bush: but when He recounts what the *Egyptians* did, He never once imputes to any Superior Being what they performed. If the Evil Spirit deceived the Spectators by changing the Medium, or affecting the Eyes, or Brains, of the Spectators, so as to make them imagine, or fancy, that they saw what they did not see, The *Egyptians* would have appeared to have done *more*, if not *greater*, Miracles than *Moses*. They must in effect work a Miracle upon every man that was present, by so disposing the Medium, or the Brains of every particular person,

person, that every particular person must be made to see what was not. If a thousand people therefore were present, a thousand real Miracles would be done: And if the Devil made them fancy that they saw a Serpent, where there was none, or blood or frogs where there was no blood nor frogs; or if the *Egyptians* turned *more Rods* into Serpents than *Moses* did (as it appears from the History that they did, since *every* one of the Magicians did so) then the Miracles done by them were *more* and *greater* than those done by *Moses*; and for that Reason, They ought to have been obeyed rather than *Moses*. But not a Word of Evil Spirits is ever here mentioned by the sacred Writers.

I had occasion just now from *Apuleius* to mention what the Jugler did at *Athen's* with a *Sword*, and *Huntsman's Spear*, to amuse the Spectators. He adds a circumstance as little credible as any, without the help of Spiritual Agents; and yet he never pretended to any such Assistance. Art and Slight of Hand will do, what those who are unacquainted with them cannot but impute

pute to *Spirits*. “ When he had made the
 “ Spear go through the Groin and come out at
 “ the back part of his neck, lo! a lovely ten-
 “ der boy arose up just after the Iron of the
 “ Spear, and danced, and twisted himself a-
 “ bout it, as if he had neither bones, or any
 “ thing that was stiff in him, to the great
 “ Admiration of the Spectators. You
 “ would have said, He had been the Ser-
 “ pent that wreaths himself about the
 “ knotty Staff that the God of Physic
 “ carries.” Had we not been told, that
 the Man that played these tricks, was
 nothing but a *Jugler*, his Dexterity
 would have been imputed to some Su-
 pernatural Assistance, and the dancing
 and twisting of the boy to Magic Art. Fa-
 ther *Montfaucon* has given us several Im-
 pressions of *Esculapius*, with Staffs entwined
 by Serpents, and one with a Spear twisted

* Ecce, pone lanceæ ferrum; qua bacillum inversi teli ad
 occipitium per inguen subit, puer in mollitiem decorus insur-
 git, inque flexibus tortuosis enervem & exossem saltationem
 explicat, cum omnium qui aderamus, admiratione. Diceret
 Dei Medici baculo quod ramulis semiamputatis nodosum ge-
 rit, Serpentem generosum lubricis amplexibus inherere. *Apul. Metam. l. 1.*

M

about

about in like manner, which may help us to conceive how this little boy twisted about the Spear that seemed run through the Body of the Man. *L. Antiquit. Expliquée. lib. ii. p. 286.*

But if we suppose an *Evil Spirit* concerned in the Wonders done by the Egyptian Magicians, it will be natural to ask, Why could they not have produced the *Lice*, or changed the Medium, or altered the Brain of the Spectators on that occasion, as well as when the *Frogs* were produced, which is a much larger Animal? It requires not so much power to produce a *Louse* as it does a *Frog*; since it has not so many parts, nor so many conduits for the blood and Animal juices to pass. Whence then is it that the *Louse* should presently be confessed to be the effect of the *Finger of God*, when the *Frogs* could be produced by Spirits? And further still :

How comes *Moses* never to detect these Magicians, or never to tell *Pharaoh* that what they did was done by *Evil Beings*? *Pharaoh* must have been acquainted with what these Men could do, or else He never would have called for them to confront *Moses*.

jes. Now *Moses* never hinted to *Pharaoh* that these men were assisted by the *Devil*, or his Agents; nor did he ever intimate such Assistance; or pretend that his *own* Miracles were done by God, but *theirs* by Wicked Spirits opposing the Great God.

It will be said, that God permitted them to go so far; but would not permit them to go any further: He had set his bounds to them as he has done to the Sea, and they could then do no more.

But still this is all a mere hypothesis; taking for granted what *Moses* has no where said, and in course as easily denied as it is affirmed. The Fact indeed is plain, that *Iannes* and *Iambres* did not, or could not pretend to do, the Fourth thing that *Moses* did: but who it was that hindered them is no more said, than who it was that enabled them to do what they did in the former instances.

Lastly, If Spirits were concerned, it is unconceivable, that they should directly oppose, and work Miracles in opposition to God. If they did not see it in the *first* instance, it is somewhat strange that they should be so ignorant in the *Second*, or in

the *Third* case: or how came they not to find it out before they made their *Fourth* Essay?

I do not question but that the Serpents of the Magicians were real Serpents: but the question is, whence they came; Whether these real Serpents were the immediate productions of Evil Spirits, or whether they were only brought into fight by flight of hand, in those who made them to appear. It is certain that no mention is made of *Evil Spirits* in the History; and were it not for the words *Sorcerer*, and *Magician*, which with us carry with them the Ideas of some Communication with Evil Spirits, who are thought to enable persons to do strange things, it would be hard to shew any foundation for such a notion. The Psalmist indeed says, *Psalms lxxviii. 49.* That God *cast upon them the fierceness of his Anger, Wrath, Indignation, and Trouble; and sent Evil Angels amongst them.* It is in the Original, *Angels, or Messengers of Evil.* Hence *Evil Spirits* are supposed to be the Instruments of God in working these Evils to the *Egyptians*. But this is entirely groundless. The sending *Moses* and *Aaron*, by whom these
Plagues

Plagues were threatned, and even done, is sufficient to account for the expressions of the Psalmist, without concerning ourselves with either *Good* or *Evil Spirits*, as here employed by God : Or if *Moses* and *Aaron* are not deemed the Messengers of Evils to *Pharaoh*, Surely the *Angel* that smote the *First-born* of *Egypt*, and that destroyed the *Egyptians* themselves, was properly the *Angel of Evils* to them : Not a *wicked, immoral, evil* Being, but a Being that brought the Evil of Punishment upon a hardned, wicked, obstinate generation, who opposed the will of God in the deliverance of his People.

This Scheme being then unlikely, and impossible to be proved,

The *Third* Scheme by which some have attempted to account for what the Magicians did, is, That no real Miracle was ever done by them ; but these Magicians did by mere *Slight of hand* whatever they did, and opposed *Moses's* real and true Miracles by nothing but Trick and Legerdemain : They think that there is no occasion to imagine them assisted by any *Evil Spirits*, in order to oppose the designs of God, or

to turn Rods into real Serpents; but they were mere Pretenders, who could *withstand Moses*, and take upon themselves to work wonders in the sight of *Pharaoh*, as much as *Moses* armed with a power from God could do. They were what all the words by which they are called signify, Men, who by dint of *Slight of hand* could *seem* to produce Serpents, and thus imposed on the sight of the Spectators. The *Egyptians* were always famous for dealing in Astrology, and Fortune-telling, and all those Arts which common people impute to Spirits, and men of Learning despise as mere imposture and cheat. Suppose these ancient Sorcerers to be much the same with the present ones, that know how by little Tricks to impose on the ignorant; it is possible that they might act before *Pharaoh* their Parts, so as to make him believe that *Moses* had no other commission than themselves had. It is well known, that *Serpents* may be made so tractable, as not to be any ways dangerous. Sir *Paul Ricault* tells us that some *Ægyptian Dervices* pretend, that there is a power communicated to them of enchanting Serpents and Vipers, which they handle

handle as boldly as we do the tameſt Animals. And I find in the *Digeſts*, L. 47. Tit. xi. § xi. That *Paulus* the Lawyer is of Opinion, * *that an Action will lie againſt thoſe fellows who go about with Serpents, and play tricks with them, if any Miſchief happens to any one through fear of them, he ſhall recover damages proportionable to the harm ſuſtained.* It was always the common Trick of theſe Juglers to impoſe upon By-ſtanders, by producing, or by irritating, or by playing with thoſe venomous creatures to the Great Surprise of Spectators, and the more ready picking their pockets of their Money. When Mr. *Greaves* was at *Cairo*, among the Obſervables he ſaw there, He tells us of a man “ who
 “ had many Ceraſtes [a particular Species
 “ of Serpents] which he could take in his
 “ hands, open their mouths, and they
 “ would not hurt him. The ſame Gentleman
 “ had many four-legged Serpents,
 “ blackiſh with long knotty Tails, ending

* In Circulatores, qui ſerpentes circumferunt & proponunt, ſi cui ob eorum metum damnum datum eſt, pro modo admiſſi actio dabitur. *Digeſt.* L. 47. Tit. xi. §. xi.

“ in a point obtuse. The Serpents when
 “ the weather is hot, would upon Music
 “ come out and run upon him: He had
 “ Vipers, whose mouths he would open
 “ with his hands, and shew little Bags un-
 “ der every Toorh.” Vol. II. p. 323—4:
 How easy would it be if any Man had such
 Instruments of his Craft, to impose on By-
 standers by Slight of hand?

Moses and Aaron *went in unto Pharaoh—*
and Aaron cast down his Rod before Pha-
raoh, and before his Servants, and it be-
came a Serpent. Then Pharaoh also called
the Wise men and the Sorcerers; and the Ma-
gicians of Egypt, they also did in like man-
ner with their Enchantments. For they cast
down every Man his Rod, and they became
Serpents. But Aaron's Rod swallowed up
their Rods. Exod. vii. 10, 11, 12. Pha-
raoh so far imagined that what Moses and
Aaron did was owing to slight of hand,
 that he called for Men famous for such Arts,
 to do as they did: and they *seemed to do*
 the very Same. Their Serpents were real
 Serpents, as much as *Aaron's* Serpent was;
 only the one was the effect of *Slight of*
hand, the Other a *Miraculous* Production:
 the

the One was done by a real power from God, the other was by their *Enchantments*, *i. e.* by dazzling the Eyes of the Spectators by a *Sword*, whilst they did their Feats, or by some *covered* contrivance which deceived the Eyes of those that stood by ; as is the meaning of the word which we translate *Enchantments*.

It may deserve to be considered, and indeed it is remarkable, that all that these Men pretended to do, was only to do something of the same kind that *Moses* did before, and what was easy to be gathered together, or had : but when it came to be something producible in *quantity*, or, that was not possible to be done by *Slight of hand*, then they confessed *the finger of God*.

You will ask, How it appears that the Wonders done by *Moses* were not wrought in the same way, and by the same Slight, that those of *Iannes* and *Iambres* were ?

The Answer is, Look into the Facts themselves, and compare them, and the *Finger of God* will be apparent. Frogs innumerable produced: All the Waters of the Nile turned into Blood : The Dust of the Land turned into Lice : The Land corrupted

rupted by reason of the Swarm of Flies : A murrain upon all the Cattle of the Land : Handfulls of the Ashes of the furnace, became dust in the Land, and caused a boil breaking forth into blains upon Man and Beast throughout all the Land of *Egypt* : The Hail : The Locusts : The Plague of Darkness for three days :—These are not things capable of being done by Art ; or by imposing on the Sight ; they affected a whole Country ; And they were brought on, and removed by a word, and the Evils were felt for many days. The Nature therefore of the Plagues shew that they were effects owing to a *Supernatural cause*, and could not arise from Human Art or Power.

The only material Objection to this Solution is, That what *Moses* did, and what the *Egyptians* did, is expressed in the very same words. Aaron *cast down his Rod*, and it *became a Serpent*. The Magicians *cast down their Rods*, and *they became Serpents*. The difference is, 1st. That the whole series of *Moses's* Actions shew an impossibility that they could be done any other way than Miraculously : So far as the Magicians acted, it *may* be nothing but Slight of hand. 2^{dly},
The

The Facts of *Moses* are expressly attributed to a power derived from God : The Facts of the Others are as expressly imputed to Legerdemain. They did it *Belabatehem* ; by imposing on the Eyes, or deceiving the Sight by their *covered Arts*. And 3dly, *Aaron's* Rod swallowed up their Rods : The Serpent produced by *Aaron*, devoured the Serpents produced by the Magicians ; which evidenced at least a Superiority on the Side of *Moses*.

It may still be asked, How comes *Moses* all along to speak of the Tricks of the Magicians in the same manner that he speaks of his own real Miracles ? How comes he not to say in direct terms, that what *Iannes* and *Iambres* did, was nothing but errant Fraud and flight of Hand ?

The Answer is plain : *Moses* tells the Facts that were done in Opposition to Him ; and at the same time he tells us what *sort of Men* were called in for that purpose, Men of *Legerdemain*, errant imposers on the Sight, mere Juglers. Nor need there any more particular Detection of their Frauds, than to say that whatever was done, was all done by *such* men.

Thus

Thus it is said in the same Chapter, *Exod. vii. 20, 22. He lifted up his rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants, and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood—And the Magicians of Egypt did SO with their Enchantments.* It must be observed, that the Magicians did not *turn all the Waters that were in the Nile into blood*, as *Moses* had done; but artfully changed some that was taken from places *dug about the River*, v. 24. and made that appear like blood. The particle *SO*, does not signify, that the Magicians did every thing in as ample or full a manner as *Moses* did; but only implies a *Similitude* of Action, something in *like* sort.

It seems to be just the same in the *Third* Experiment, about the *Frogs*. *Moses* produced that terrible Evil which affected *Egypt* then, as some other Countries have been since in a mere natural way, as our Commentators have observed. *Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the Frogs came up, and covered the Land of Egypt. And the Magicians did*
SO

SO *with their Enchantments*, Exod. viii. 6, 7. One would naturally expect that *Pharaoh* should have employed his *Wisemen*, and *Magicians*, to have ridded the Land of these Two Evils. But it was easier to seem to produce more Evil of the same *Kind*, than it was to remove it. The *Magicians* could by their Arts imitate the Realities of others, and *seem* to do what they could not *really* do : But it was *Moses* that was desired to *remove* the Evil which was real, and owing to the power which he had from God : And He that alone could, did remove the Evil.

Thus far there appears but little difficulty in supposing that the Magicians acted by mere *flight of hand*. But then it is natural to ask—Why could not these Artists by the same flight of hand produce the *Lice* as well as they did the *Frogs*, or as they could change the Water into Blood ? They had the materials ready made to their hands by *Moses*, for they *were upon Man and upon Beast*. But yet the Magicians, though they tried *by their Incantments to bring forth Lice*, could not do it, *ch. viii. 18*. In answer to this,

I would

I would observe, that in all the former Instances *Moses* had not only beforehand told what he designed to do, but after He had done it, He waited some time; and Then the Magicians did what they could in opposition to him. But in the case of producing the *Lice*, he did not think proper to give any previous notice of what he designed to do; and in course the *Magicians* were not at all apprized, nor could they be prepared for this Event. They might get ready *Serpents*, or *Frogs*, or whatever they thought proper to tinge the water with in order to imitate blood; but in the present case, they were to act *instantaneously*, without any Preparation; and therefore Here *their Folly was made manifest unto all men*, 2 Tim. iii. 9. Here was a plain reason why they could not use any *slight of hand*: And besides, they found upon themselves, and all that were present, what they were to have produced if they could: and since the very *dust was become Lice throughout all the land of Egypt*, they could not pretend to imitate what was actually already upon all.

If

If this Account then of the Miracles of *Moses* and the *Egyptians* be admitted, the case of a *Contest* betwixt Superior Beings, each exerting a Power for, and against, a Command, will be a mere Speculation, a point to which we know nothing similar ; and in course as useless and trifling in Divinity, as the merest metaphysical abstract Speculation in Philosophy can be.

But there is another instance, where Miracles seem to be worked in Opposition to those which were brought as Evidences of Truth, which deserve our utmost Attention. They are expressly imputed to *Satan* ; and consequently are the Works of an Evil Agent in contradiction to the Works of God. The Case I mean is, That of those Miracles which false Christs and false Prophets were to do. What were those *great signs and wonders* which they were to *show*, which should *deceive* (if it were possible) *the very elect* ? Matt. xxiv. 24. What must we say to *Him*, *whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders* ? 2 *Thess.* ii. 9. Here Miracles are opposed to Miracles ; those of Antichrist to those of Christ ; the one to confirm

confirm and establish a Truth, the other *with all the deceiveableness of Unrighteousness*, to induce a *strong delusion*, and to make men *believe a Lie*.

It must I think be admitted, 1st, That a *Miracle* attesting any Doctrine good in itself, or that is a means or motive to Goodness, is sufficient to determine our Assent: Miracles were the means made use of by *Moses* and *Christ*, to establish and confirm their respective Doctrines; nor could any other method be taken so likely to procure assent to any Truth, as such extraordinary works would do. But then to draw any Doctrines from any Miracle which are not established expressly by it, or in proof of which the Miracle is not done, is to impose upon ourselves, and to establish our own Righteousness instead of the Righteousness of God.

2. It cannot be denied, that any work above the power of man to do, if designed, sensible, and unusual, is properly a Miracle. Whether the *Signs and Wonders* of Antichrist be such, *i. e.* be real Miracles, is the point to be proved: And supposing that proved, yet if a false Doctrine, or an absurd

fur'd one, or any thing that is contrary to common sense, is pretended to be confirmed by them, they are marks of Imposture, and must not be regarded.

3. The Apostle, calling these Signs and Wonders, the *Miracles of a Lie*, he must have a view to the *Means* used to support the Truth ; bad *Means* to support a Good Cause, Fictions and Lies to confirm the Truth : Or he must have respect to the *End* for which they are pretended, which is to seduce men into an Opinion of the Truth of that which is false in itself : Or that they are *counterfeit*, the Tricks of artful or deceiving Men : Or that they are *fiſtitious* and *fabulous*, the *Inventions* of Lyars : Or lastly, that they are the effects of the natural powers of Bodies, but imposed upon the ignorant and credulous as supernatural Operations either of God, or of some other Beings of the Other World. In all these cases, how dexterously soever the Cheat may be carried on, yet it is no great difficulty to discover the Wickedness of either Evil Spirits, if they are the Authors of them, or of Evil Men, since they are acting against the Truth of Christ himself. And no Miracle, let it be true or false, real

or pretended, can ever prove that either Virtue and Goodness are to be discarded, or Nonsense, Contradiction, or Absurdity is to be believed.

Take then any Miracle of Antichrist, those that are most boasted of, and the greatest stress is laid on, and let us see what use may be made of it. Miracles are necessary to shew that a person has his commission from Heaven, if he pretends to derive it from thence. But when once a Revelation is made and believed, the necessity of the *continuance* of Miracles is at an End. We cannot therefore but conclude, that Miracles are *unnecessary* to support a Revelation already made and received; and consequently we have a general prejudice against the *Probability* of all such *Miracles*, as may be pretended now to be worked.

Again. Let a Miracle be supposed to be worked. No man has any right to say that it was done for any particular certain fixed purpose, unless such purpose be specified by the person that works the Miracle. For where no Doctrine is declared, every one has as much a right to annex his own Fancy, and to make the Miracle an Attestation

testation to That, as any One has. Should therefore *One* man say, That such a Miracle was done to shew that the Church of *Rome* is the *true Spouse of Christ* ; Another has an equal Right to say, That it was done to make men take notice, that That Church is guilty of the Apostacy foretold, and has *corrupted* the Doctrines of Christ.

The strange Uses and Interpretations that have been made of, or put upon, Miracles, by some zealous well-meaning men ; The Inventions, Arts, Impostures, Lies, and Frauds of others to work upon the people, and to make them believe what they thought fit to impose, or tell them, are the just wonder of every thinking man. The Appeal is made to Facts, and Witnesses are produced ; and their Veracity is urged with so much Assurance and Confidence, as if no possible doubt could be raised about the Affair.

When *Marracius* was confuting the *Alcoran*, He produced Five *permanent Miracles*, as he calls them, in proof of the *Truth of Christianity*, “ allowed, says he, by all “ the world.” His First is, “ That fa- “ mous House in which the Blessed Virgin

“ was born and bred at *Nazareth*, in which
 “ she conceived the eternal word, and dwelt
 “ with him so many years ; and which
 “ after his death was had in the highest
 “ Esteem by Christians. This House,
 “ taken off of its foundations, by the Help
 “ of Angels, was brought to *Dalmatia*,
 “ A. D. 1291, on the 6th day of *May* :
 “ and three years after, on the 10th of
 “ *December*, was brought to the *Picene* ter-
 “ ritory, a Province of *Italy*, where now
 “ it is frequented by all Christians, and
 “ known by the name of the Temple of
 “ *Loretto*.” For the Truth of this he pro-
 duces Evidence, which, he says, can’t be dis-
 puted or doubted of. “ For at the same time
 “ that the House was not at *Nazareth*, it
 “ appeared in *Dalmatia* : and it was not in
 “ *Dalmatia* from the time that it was brought
 “ into the Marquisate of *Ancona*. Now,
 “ many faithful witnesses being sent to
 “ *Nazareth*, who were to examine into the
 “ Truth of this Fact, they found the
 “ House removed, its foundations being left
 “ of the same measure, materials, struc-
 “ ture, that was seen in *Dalmatia*, and
 “ now at *Loretto* ; and all the Pilgrims who
 “ return

“ return from *Palæstin* confirm the Truth
 “ of this. Nay God himself confirms the
 “ Truth of it daily by remarkable Mira-
 “ cles and Wonders there done.”

This puts me in mind of the *Witch* in
Apuleius, who, to revenge herself of one
 who was the Ringleader of a Plot against
 her, * “ took him in the middle of the
 “ night, and his whole *House*, the *Walls*,
 “ the *Foundations*, the *Ground* on which it
 “ stood, shut up as it was, and carried it to
 “ another city a *hundred Miles off*, that was
 “ situated on the top of a craggy moun-
 “ tain, and in course that wanted water.
 “ And because the houses at this new place
 “ happened to stand so thick, that she
 “ could not find room to place the House
 “ which was brought thus far, she threw
 “ it down before the Gate of the City,
 “ and went away.”

* At vero cætus illius auctorem nocte intempesta, cum
 tota domo, id est, Parietibus, et ipso solo, et omni funda-
 mento, ut erat clausa, ad centessimum lapidem in aliam ci-
 vitatem summo vertice montis exasperati sitam, et ob id ab
 aquis sterilem, transtulit. Et quoniam densa inhabitantium
 ædificia locum novo hospiti non dabant, ante portam pro-
 jecta domo discessit. *Apul. Met. l. 1.*

Let us now suppose this Story to be true, and that this house was brought by Angels from *Nazareth* to *Loretto*. Every one that sees it, or hears of it, may reasonably wonder at it. But if *Maraccius* fancies that therefore a *Mahometan* must believe *Christianity* to be true, (for that is the use he makes of this Miracle,)—How will this follow? Was the House brought by Angels so many Leagues with a design to *prove this Truth*? Did the Angels say so? Not a word. It is the Inference of some idle Monks, who might better have inferred that it was done, that Christians should make it a Storehouse, to lay up Gold and Silver, and Jewels in it; and then they would have spoke a certain Truth.

His *Second standing* Miracle is, That famous Cross at *Malabar* in the *East-Indies* upon which *St. Thomas* was killed by a certain *Bramin*. “ Every year upon the same
 “ day, whilst divine Service is performing
 “ before it, at the beginning of the Gos-
 “ pel, it becomes blackish intermixed with
 “ brightness; after the Offertory, it grows
 “ lighter coloured; till at length the whole
 “ Cross appears white and shining. Whilst
 “ the

“ the Consecration is making, the Cross re-
 “ sumes its natural Colour, and is all covered
 “ over with a bloody sort of Sweat, with
 “ which the faithful tinge linnen cloaths,
 “ and God by them does wonders. But if
 “ it happens that that Cross at that time
 “ does not change its Colour, it is found by
 “ Experience, that some dreadful Calamity or
 “ other is portended to the Christian Peo-
 “ ple there.” For the certainty of this
 Fact, he appeals to *innumerable Eye-Wit-
 nesses* : and be the Credit with them ; for it
 is better and fafer to believe it, than to
 go and see it. I will suppose this Fiction
 to be as true as that of the Journey of the
 House of *Loretto* from *Nazareth* to *Ita-
 ly* : what follows ? That Christianity is true ?
 The Miracle is not pretended to be done in
 confirmation of it. How therefore could
Maraccius propose this as an instance to
 his purpose ? This annual Miracle may
 serve to impose on weak and ignorant
 people ; But whilst the Spiritual Being that
 works it, (I will suppose that to be the case,
 tho’ there are such evident Marks of Trick
 and Fraud) Whilst that Being that works it
 makes no declaration about it, no one is o-
 bliged

bliged to believe more, than that such a strange thing has happened, which may and must be believed, or disbelieved, according to the Evidence produced for the fact.

His *Third* Miracle is, “ That at *Bari* (a
 “ famous City of *Apulia* in *Italy*,) from
 “ the Bones of St. *Nicholas* Bishop of *My-*
 “ *ra*, there flows daily a most pure and
 “ limpid liquor, (they call it *The Manna*
 “ of St. *Nicholas*) which being kept in glass
 “ Vials never corrupts nor vermifies, unless
 “ amongst those who are vicious and great
 “ Sinners.”

His *Fourth* is, “ That from the Arms
 “ of St. *Nicholas* of *Tolentino*, (who has
 “ been dead above three hundred years,)
 “ the Veins swelling, there flows a copious
 “ blood. This is observed chiefly to hap-
 “ pen when any great Calamity hangs over
 “ Christians.”

His *Fifth* is, that “ at *Naples* is kept in
 “ two glass Vials, the concreted blood of
 “ St. *Januarius* (who was killed above a
 “ 1000 years ago by the Infidels) and this
 “ blood as soon as it is exposed before his
 “ head, presently melts, and bubbles as if it
 “ were

“ were just shed. But if it continues con-
 “ creted, Experience has shewn that it pre-
 “ sages some Evil to Christianity.”

These are the standing Miracles of *Chri-*
fianity, says *Maraccius*, and prove its
 Truth: on the contrary, I think they are
 standing *Lying Wonders* of Antichrist: they
 are calculated to deceive such as are weak
 enough, or willing enough, to be deceived
 into Errors, or such notions as have no foun-
 dation in the New or Old Testament. Let
 them be done by Evil Spirits, or by Evil
 Men, or if you will have it so, let them
 be done by even Good Spirits; Let them
 have all the Advantage of being called
Miracles, yet still they are nothing but Mi-
 racles; no Doctrine is revealed; no Rule
 of Action given; nothing is done that o-
 bliges me to mind them, more than there
 is to mind the Coruscations in the Air, or
 any Phænomenon in the natural world.
 Could indeed this Consequence be made
 good, that that Church in which Miracles
 are ever wrought, is the *true Church*
 of Christ, and that therefore whatever
 such a Church taught, or those who
 were in communion with it, was to be
 submitted

submitted to, then indeed the *Facts themselves* should be examined carefully, and all should be upon their guard, that they might not be imposed on by the *Frauds* of Men. But which way can this be proved? Or what Medium can be thought on, that can make out such a consequence?

It may be said perhaps, that God and Good Beings only will work Miracles in the Church of Christ; but all those *wonders* that were worked by *Pagans* of Old, or by *Heretics* in the Church of Christ, or all those that are said to be worked amongst the *Mahometans*, were mere *Tricks* and *De-lusions* of the Devil, or of Evil Spirits, and That God will not lend his Seal to Evil Beings.

But this is gratis said, or gratis applied; since unless the Catholic previously supposes himself to be of the *True Church*, (which will never be granted) Each party will claim the privilege of being the *True Church*, the favourites of Heaven; and till this can be adjusted, their Doctrine of Miracles will leave every body in the same Uncertainty it finds him. It is a great misfortune that people should be so far prepos-sessed,

fessed, as always to give into such Notions
 as favour their own prejudices; but when
 any thing of the same kind appears in con-
 tradiction to their Schemes, then all the Sub-
 tility of the most acute Logic appears in or-
 der to fend off a consequence, which plainly
 affects them. A Roman Catholic sits easily
 contented, and rests satisfied with the Tales he
 is told, whilst he fondly imagines that they
 make for, or prove, his Religion. When a *Ma-*
hometan is to be confuted, then *the* Maho-
 metan Miracles are the *feats of Magicians*
and Juglers, and generally are wont to be
done by the Devil: “ Hæc nimirum pro-
 “ pria sunt Præstigiatorum, et Magorum,
 “ et ut plurimum à Diabolo fieri soleant;
 “ nullamque habeant necessitatem vel utili-
 “ tatem;” *and* have no necessity why they
 should be done, nor Usefulness when they
 are done. *Marac. Prodr. pars II. p. 74.*
 He goes on to attack *Mahometanism* by
 this * irresistible Argument; “ That it is
 “ impos-

* Insurgo contra Moslemos hoc *ineluctabili Argumento.*
 Impossibile est, Deum concurrere veris Miraculis ad confir-
 mandam falsam Religionem: Ergo impossibile est Mahume-
 tem vera miracula fecisse. Nam cum Deus Christianam Re-
 ligionem,

“ impossible that God can work true Mi-
 “ racles to confirm a false Religion ; There-
 “ fore it is impossible that *Mahomet* could
 “ ever have worked True Miracles.”

It is true, that God will not confirm a false Religion by true Miracles ; But then it is as true, that the Miracles which the *Roman Catholics* produce, will be denied to be *Mira-*

ligionem, non solum Christi, sed etiam Apostolorum, & aliorum sanctorum Christianorum Miraculis, quæ Moslemi ipsi & Alcoranus vera fuisse fatentur, confirmaverit : necessariò fatendum est, Christianam Religionem bonam esse & veram. Ergo impossibile est, Deum per vera miracula, Mahumeticam sectam, quæ Christianæ fere ex diametro opponitur, approbasse. Hic non video, quid respondere possint Mahumetani, nisi Deum Christianam Religionem veris miraculis approbasse, quamdiù bona, & vera fuit, nempe usque ad adventum Mahumeti. Hæc vero responsio dupliciter rejicitur, Primo quia—Christiana Religio eadem semper fuit tam ante Mahumetum quam post Mahumetum : neque ulla ratione probari potest, illam unquam mutatam fuisse. Secundo, quia Deus eadem miracula operatus est, in Christiana Religione, & hodie quoque operatur post adventum Mahumeti, quæ ante illum consueverat operari. Nam ubique Terrarum vel per Sanctos Viros, vel per Sacras Reliquias, & Imagines vel aliis modis, plurimi mortui suscitati sunt, plurimi cæci illuminati, & alia Miracula ostensa, quæ sola Dei virtute fieri possunt, neque de harum veritate locus relinquitur dubitandi : cum non in una regione, neque in una Urbe, neque ab uno sancto, neque iisdem testibus, facta sunt : sed in dissitissimis regionibus, à Sanctis diversissimis, & coram testibus, quorum alii nunquam alios viderunt aut noverunt. Nullum est ergo Mahumetanorum Argumentum. *Maraccius Predro. pars II. p. 74.*

cles worked by God or any good Being. Or if they are allowed, the consequences which the *Roman Catholics* draw from them will be disowned by those whom they call *Heretics*: nor is it possible for them to make them good.

A Protestant will use every word that *Maraccius* here has used against the *Mahometans*, changing only the Object, and substituting *Roman Catholic* for *Mahometan*, and imputing every miracle said to be done by the *Papist*, to the same *Causes*, or *Authors* to which *Maraccius* imputes the *Mahometan* Miracles. Some he will absolutely * *deny*: Others are † *trifling, ridiculous, unworthy of credit*: Others are the effect of mere ‡ *effrontery and impudence*: Others are owing ||

* Consuetudo mentiendi—præcipuum est argumentum eos maximè in his miraculis recensendis mentitos fuisse. p. 54 Quam perfrecta & audaci fronte confinxere, &c. *ibid.*

† Pleraque eorum quæ referuntur cum per se levia sint ridicula & omni fide indigna.—Quid magis ridiculum—quid improbabilius—quid levius, &c. p. 53.

‡ Sed impudentissime mentitur hic Thraso:—Hanc esse fabulam ex eo convincitur.—Quemcunque testem adducat, ex hoc saltem convincitur, hoc esse commentum, quia nullus sibi persuadebit, &c. p. 76. 77.

|| Facilitas illa fingendi miracula, quam in qualibet fere religione vel secta olim fuisse, & adhuc esse non ignoramus, persuadet nobis, nec mirum, nec novum esse, si hæc omnia quæ Mahometo tribuuntur, vel omnino ficta sunt, vel ita aucta, ut ex non miraculis miracula facta fuerint. p. 59.

to

to a *faculty of Lying*, and *feigning* ; or else facts are *so enlarged*, that from things originally not miraculous, Miracles have been made : Others are owing to *Evil Spirits*, † and Others to the *tricks of Evil Men*. All these are the Subjects of a long Discourse in the *Second Part* of Maraccius's *preliminary* Discourse in confutation of the *Alcoran* : and every Topic is equally strong against the *Lying wonders* of the Church of *Rome*. Now what is strong in a *Catholic's* mouth against a *Mahometan*, must be equally strong in a *Protestant's* mouth against a *Catholic*, unless he can shew a difference in the cases. Or if we admit the Miracles to be done, and even to be all true Miracles, it will not follow, that the *Popish* Church is pure and uncorrupt in her *Doctrines*, or her *Practices*.

Before I leave this Subject, I must observe one thing more from this Writer. *Maraccius* tells us * “ That in a certain
“ Kingdom

† Multa quidem non miracula, sed Dæmonum ludibria ac præstigia referuntur etiam à nostris Auctoribus de illis qui vulgo Sanctiones et Dervisi nuncupantur. p.77.

* Contrigit aliquando, ut in quodam Christiani Orbis Regno Ossa quædam intra montis cavernas profundissimè sepul-

“ Kingdom of the Christian World, Some
 “ Bones were found very deeply buried in
 “ the Caverns of a Mountain, which were
 “ judged to be the *Reliques* of some great
 “ *Saints*, from the Inscriptions over them:
 “ but in truth they were common Bones, of
 “ some Unbelievers, or Rogues, which perhaps
 “ were laid there by some *Mahometans*,
 “ as it afterwards was discovered, who act-
 “ ed outwardly as if they had been Christi-
 “ ans. It is scarce to be credited, how *ma-*
 “ *ny Miracles* were reported among the com-
 “ mon People to have been done by these,
 “ which likewise were *confirmed by Sworn*
 “ *Witnesses*. And yet no one was done; nor
 “ indeed could there be any true Miracle.

ta reperirentur, quæ ex inscriptionibus appositis, magnorum
 Sanctorum reliquæ esse judicabantur, & tales statim ab om-
 nibus creditæ sunt. Sed revera erant ossa communia, &
 fortasse aliquorum hominum infidelium vel scelestorum quæ
 ibi ad fraudem struendam à quibusdam, ut postea comper-
 tum est, Mahumetanis, qui se ut Christianos exterius gere-
 bant, supposita fuerant. Vix credi potest, quot statim Mira-
 cula de iis in vulgus emanaverint, quæ etiam adjuratis tes-
 tibus confirmabantur. Et tamen nullum hic erat, nec esse
 poterat verum miraculum. Unde hoc? an quia nonnulli
 sponte malignèque mentiebantur? Non puto, sed ex inani fa-
 ma, fallaque persuasione, vel imaginatione, & errore Vulgi
 totum eveniebat. Hic tamen Error brevi deprehensus est,
 sententia Summi Christianorum antistitis damnatus ac sublatus.

“ Whence

“ Whence came this? Was it that some
 “ willingly, and with ill design, told lies?
 “ I don’t think it; but it all arose from
 “ *groundless fame, and false persuasion*, or
 “ *Imagination and Error* of the common
 “ people. This Error was soon found out
 “ and condemned by the Pope.”

He adds a Second Story, † That “ the
 “ Life of one who was deemed a *Saint*,
 “ and who was reported to have lived above
 “ four hundred years ago, was lately prin-
 “ ted. It was all compiled from very an-
 “ tient Manuscripts, (which were also
 “ shewn) produced out of the most famous
 “ libraries of *Italy*. So *many Miracles* were
 “ told of him, and so *great* ones, that he

† Nuper etiam in lucem prodiit typis impressa vita cujus-
 dam, qui sancti nomine censebatur, & ante quadringentos an-
 nos floruisse ferebatur. Tota collecta & compacta erat ex
 antiquissimis Manuscriptis (quæ etiam ostendebantur) ex ce-
 lebrioribus Italiæ Bibliothecis productis. Miracula vero adeo
 multa, adeoque magna de illo scribebantur, ut temporum
 suorum Thaumaturgus merito posset appellari. Ejus corpus
 fortuito, non sine Miraculi opinione, in vetusto monumento,
 cum inscriptione antiquis Characteribus incisa repertum est.
 Quis hic fraudem vel Mendacium suspicaretur? Et ta-
 men nihil nisi fraus erat, & impostura; quæ tamen statim
 deprehensa est, & publico Romanæ Ecclesiæ edicto pro-
 scripta.

“ might

‘ might justly be called the *Wonderworker*
 ‘ of his times. His body was accidental-
 “ ly found, not without an Opinion of a
 “ Miracle, in an antient Monument, with
 ‘ an Inscription cut in antient Characters.
 “ Who would here suspect any *Fraud*,
 “ or *Lye*? and yet it was *all Fraud* and
 “ *Imposture*, presently found out, and con-
 “ demned by an Edict of the Church of
 “ *Rome*.”

Maraccius himself was one of those
 that was appointed to examine into both
 these cases, and he owns that They * “ a-
 “ bundantly prove, that many and great
 “ *Miracles* may be *forged* concerning any
 “ one particular Man; and if the *Fiction*
 “ be not discovered, the *Miracles* will be
 “ deemed true by all, and openly spoke of
 “ as such.”

He goes on, ‡ Nor are those Arguments
 O by

* Hi duo casus, quibus Ego ipse discutiendis cum doctissimis Viris deputatus fui, satis superque probant, posse de uno aliquo homine multa, & magna miracula confingi: & nisi fictio deprehendatur vera ab omnibus haberi & prædicari.

‡ Neque argumenta illa, quibus Adversarii, Prophetæ sui Miraculorum veritatem probare conantur, ponderis alicujus sunt vel Momenti. Quòd enim aliquid maxime vulgatum

“ by which our Adversaries endeavour to
 “ prove the Truth of the Miracles of their
 “ Prophet, of any Weight or Moment.
 “ For it is no Argument of the Truth of
 “ any thing, that it is commonly spread a-
 “ broad and believed by *Many*, nay by *All*:
 “ as is plain from what Writers have
 “ said about the Heathen Gods. They will
 “ tell us, that some Miracles were done by
 “ *Makomet, before many witnesses.* But
 “ this is the point to be proved. For it is
 “ not enough, that it is received by *Tradi-*
 “ *tion*; nor that *Fame* has spread such a
 “ thing. Do *Tradition* and *Fame* always
 “ transmit truth only? Does Experience
 “ confirm this?

I need not transcribe more: nor will a
Protestant desire more, than what this *Po-*
pish Writer has laid down when he was to

rum fit, & à multis, vel etiam ab omnibus receptum, non est
 certum veritatis argumentum ut patet in iis, quæ de Diis Gen-
 tium Ethnicarum Scriptores vulgavere. At enim, Miracula
 quædam à Muhameto multis coram testibus facta sunt. Sed
 hoc est probandum. Neque enim satis est, quod ita per tra-
 ditionem multorum habeatur, neque quod fama ita vulga-
 verit. Anne traditio & fama, semper vera transmittunt?
 Experientia, hujus rei Magistra est? *Marac. Prodr. pars II.*
 p. 60.

confute

confute the *Alcoran*. Here were *many* Miracles, and great ones published and believed by the common people: Here were Witnesses on *Oath* to *confirm* the Truth of the Miracles; and yet there was nothing but *Fraud*, *Forgery* and *Lying*. When *many Witnesses* are said by the *Mahometans* to attest *Mahomet's* Miracles, their testimonies are rejected: *Tradition* is rejected; common *Fame* is despised. What Evidence now can be produced for *Popish Miracles*, that a *Protestant* ought to submit to, when he sees how easily the *Mahometan* Miracles are set aside, or refuted, by this *Catholic*?

Should it be said, that the Church of *Rome* condemned as Impostures the Miracles said to be done in the *Two cases* just before mentioned; that therefore the *Rest* ought to be admitted as *true*—How hard will it be, to get this consequence admitted; when we see so many ways (which *Maraccius* himself has taught us) of guarding against it? The Fact may be *denied*; the thing may be in itself *incredible*; It may be a *trifle enlarged* into a *Miracle*; it may be a *Forgery* undiscovered; it may be the *Trick* of wicked Men; it may be the

effect of downright *Perjury*; it may be a *ridiculous Act*; in short, it may be something that I cannot account for, but yet am not obliged to believe, or concern myself about. So that these *Lying wonders* do not stand upon a foot of credibility; nor can a *Papist* prove them to be *real Miracles*; or if he were able to prove them to have been *real Miracles*, no Use can be made of them to prove the Church of *Rome* to be the *true Spouse of Christ*. In short, the great thing wanting in all these cases is, to remove the *Improbability* of the thing itself before the Miracle can be believed; and till some Evidence is produced strong enough for that purpose, all the Objections which this Author has produced against the *Mahometan Miracles*, will stand in full force against the *Popish Miracles*.

Should a *Deist*, or any Infidel, attack a *Christian* in the same manner as a *Roman Catholic* does a *Mahometan*, or a *Protestant* does a *Papist*, and impute the Miracles of Christ to the same Authors, or causes, as the *Catholic* does those of *Mahomet*, or the *Protestant* does those of *Antichrist*—Either I deceive myself much, or I have shewn a
manifest

manifest difference of the Cases. The Miracles of Christ are so circumstanced, that their credibility does not depend upon the same ground or Evidence that the Miracles of the Church of *Rome* do; and consequently the one may be believed though the other are rejected as ridiculous, or feigned, or a downright impudent imposition upon the Senses of Mankind.

It may be suggested, That if inferior Agents can, or are permitted, to work Miracles, and to give a Revelation to Mankind, it will follow that the *Great God* himself can never make a *Revelation* to us distinguishable from that which such *Inferior Beings* give. The Being that acts is by supposition, Invisible : and though mighty works are done, and thence we can infer Superiority of power, yet we can never know what degrees of power are imparted by God to some Beings; nor whether He acts himself immediately or not, in giving a Revelation to us.

Admitting all this to be true, it makes nothing against the credibility of a Revelation supported by Miracles uncontrolled. I dare not presume to say, that God *cannot* immediately give to Man an indisputable

Test of *His* Works, or of *His* Will: But this I think, that notwithstanding we are not Judges of what is the result of the most perfect and absolute Power, yet if sufficient Evidence is given for a Doctrine's coming from God, which appears to be worthy of Him, and tends to our Happiness, and this be uncontrolled, we are obliged to follow it. Nor does it signify whether We can distinguish, Whether a doctrine worthy of God comes from God himself immediately, or not; Since it is the *Doctrine* that we are to follow: And if I am put into the right way that leads to my Journey's End, what signifies it Who the person is, that shews it me? It is my Duty to pursue the path, which I know to be the true one as soon as I see it; Nor am I obliged to trouble myself about the dignity or moral Character of the person that puts me into it, further than from given circumstances to judge whether He knows the Road which I am bound to pursue. I must

Thirdly consider, What degree of Assent is due to any doctrine revealed, which stands confirmed by Miracles. This, if I mistake not, lies within a very narrow compass.

pass. For, however *true* the Doctrine may be in itself, and however well attested, yet since it is conveyed to us only through the Channel of *Authority*, and we are not able to *prove* it by any comparing of Ideas; our assent to it cannot be the same as to a proposition which we *know*, or can *prove*, but it must be proportioned to the grounds of *Probability* that we are not imposed on. A Miracle done in confirmation of a Proposition, does not prove any doctrine to be so true that it “implies a contradiction, or an
 “Impossibility in nature to suppose the con-
 “trary :” But it implies the Interposition of some superior Being, who discovers or declares such or such a proposition to us as *true*. Could we be certain, that none but God alone can discover any Truth from above, we might be *certain* then, even to demonstration, that the proposition revealed was True; because we then should have the Testimony of one who could not in the nature of things be deceived, nor could deceive. And in this particular case, *Faith* would be as certain as *Reason*, and our Assurance of the Truth as strong as any

O 4 intu-

ntuitive Knowledge could afford. But as Other Beings may discover to Man certain Truths, our Assent must always be proportioned to our conception of the Ability and Integrity of the Being that makes a Revelation to us.

Let us suppose that some important Truth is discovered to us by one, who assures us what he is; the *Son of God, the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person*; one to whom *all power is committed*; the person by whom *all things were made*, and who is *Lord of all*—Suppose, I say, that such a person should declare that he *came to do the will of God*, and should prove his Mission by frequent Miracles, and should discover many important Truths—In this case, the Greatness of the Person appearing, uncontrolled, and giving us samples in all his works of the powers he pretended to have, *viz. to raise the Dead, to forgive Sins, to grant Happiness or Misery* to his Servants, must create a very strong Assent. Not indeed Assent as to Truths which “imply a contradiction, or an impossibility in nature to suppose
“ the

“ the contrary,” but to Truths as useful, and fit for a reasonable creature to follow ; to such as are *Probable in the highest degree* ; to such as one *cannot doubt or hesitate* about. *Probability* is a loose word, of very indeterminate meaning ; and contains all the various degrees of Credibility from what is barely possible, up to what is but a mathematical point short of Certainty : *i. e.* it contains infinite degrees, and therefore is capable of being much misrepresented by a malicious or abusive adversary. When therefore I here speak of *Probability*, I mean by it, that such great Inducements to admit the Truths discovered by such a person are to be taken from the Miracles he did, that they amount to, and must cause an Assent of the Mind, but a Point short of Demonstration.

A Miracle is supposed to be done, and an Information is given by some Superior Intelligent Being, that one or more certain facts will happen ; and a supposition of these facts will have an apparent tendency to make men follow more strictly their known Rule of Action. Let the points revealed be—That there will be a *general Resurrection* ;

Resurrection; and that *all must appear at the Judgment-Seat of Christ*. What is the degree of assent which is to be given to these Propositions? I cannot demonstrate the Truth of either of them, or reduce it to a contradiction to suppose that there shall, or shall not, be a *Resurrection*, or a *future Judgment* by Jesus Christ: It is a future fact, and only to be *believed*, on the Authority of the Revealer. If it be asked—May not the Revealer impose upon and deceive me?—I cannot *demonstrate*, that he may not: But the *Probability* that he does not, arises so near to certainty, that in respect of the conduct of Life it amounts to the same. The Revealer is a Being *Superior* to Man; (that is evident from the *Miracle* :) He is *uncontrolled* by God: He is a *Benevolent* Being, because he is so good as to discover useful Truths to me: He is more *knowing* than any mortal is. Now where Superior *Knowledge*, and Superior *Power*, uncontrolled, or no way hindered by the Governor of all, and actual *Benevolence* are shewn, what ground is there to doubt of the *Truth* revealed? One may hesitate, perhaps, where
 one

one sees nothing but *Power* and *Knowledge*, or nothing that can or will direct them to proper uses: but when *Goodness* is evident in the Being who is blessed with those other Properties too, it is impossible not to place the highest assurance in his word, though we cannot *demonstrate* its Truth.

It is granted then that a *Miracle* is properly an Evidence of *Power*: And not a direct Evidence of *Truth*. But then it is an Evidence of the Power of one, who is superior to Man; and if he discovers any useful Doctrine to us, the point is, How far we ought in prudence to assent to such a Revelation? Should a man in low circumstances of Life meet with one of his own Species that is his Superior, and has the Reputation of great Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, who should voluntarily direct, assist, and put him into the way of growing easy and happy,—What regard ought he to pay to such a benevolent kind Adviser? When a Miracle is shewn, an Evidence is produced of a Superior Being: whoever he is, His Station in the Class of Beings shews him *Superior* to us, and to know more than
we

we can; and he appears to be *kindly* disposed towards us, by his discovering an *Useful* piece of Knowledge to us: If he declares that he is sent from *God*, from the Great Governor of all things, on such a particular Message to his creatures, and the Message is agreeable to all our Ideas of things, Belief cannot be refused, because the commission is attested in a manner as extraordinary as the Message itself is. It must raise the Assent of the Mind, which we call *Faith*; and it will be weaker or stronger, in proportion to the Evidence we have of the mission. I proceed

Fourthly to enquire, Whether a *partial Revelation* will prove that it comes from God himself, or from some *Inferior* Being. We have not any certain criterion by which we can discover whether any Act be the result or effect of the *most absolute Power*, and consequently whether *God* himself *immediately* acts, or not. But may we not guess, in case a Revelation be made? Should a “ Revelation be given to one Nation, or
 “ one People only, when the rest of Man-
 “ kind stand alike in need of it,” may it
 not

not be “ urged, that such a *partial conduct*
 “ makes it *probable*, that it was not GOD,
 “ but some other invisible Agent, who
 “ wrought those Miracles in favour of that
 “ Revelation.” I answer,

That should such an inference be drawn,
 it would not be a just one ; because God
 might make use of an inferior Agent to ex-
 ecute his purposes, and yet those purposes be
 the same, as if He executed them himself.
 Did it indeed necessarily follow, that a *par-*
tial Revelation could not be given, consistent
 with the *Goodness and Power* of God, then
 indeed it would be true, that GOD is not, or
 could not be, the Author of a *partial* Re-
 velation ; and if such a one was given, it
 must proceed from some Inferior Being :
 But where is the Inconsistency with *Good-*
ness or *Power* not to grant to every Being
 the utmost they are capable of receiving ?
 Or what *necessity* is there, that if God acts at
 all, he must give all that possibly can be recei-
 ved ? In the ordinary course of God’s Provi-
 dence, the Goodness or the Power of God are
 not so displayed, as to make all Beings of the
 same Kind equal in all respects. All parts
 of

of the natural World are not so disposed as to make all the Earth equally fertile, or equally capable of producing the good things of Life. I do not speak of places, which by their disposition on the Globe are Uninhabitable, but of * such as are well peopled, and which by the Temperature of their Clime are fit and proper for Inhabitants. Why is there that difference betwixt the deserts of *Arabia*, and the fertile soil of *Egypt*? Why are so many places in all well-inhabited Countries to be cultivated with infinite Labour and Sweat, and Expence; whilst others, perhaps contiguous, almost spontaneously produce whatever is necessary for Life?

This is by no means an Argument against God's Providence, but it only serves to shew that one may as well argue against *Wisdom* and *Goodness* in *God* from such Topicks as

* Inter locorum naturas quantum intersit videmus: alios esse salubres, alios pestilentes: in aliis esse pituitosos & quasi redundantes, in aliis exsiccatos atque aridos: multaque sunt alia, quæ inter locum & locum plurimum differunt. Athenis tenue cœlum, ex quo acutiores etiam putantur Attici: crassum Thebis; itaque pingues Thebani & valentes. *Cic. de Fato.*

these,

these, or that Those Properties were not exerted in the making those barren Soils, and thence to infer that God did not make them, as to argue from the Inequality of Revelation, that *God himself* did not make it.

But go on to the Moral World, and see whether there is not a great distinction amongst Mankind. Have all *equal* Parts and Abilities, *equal* Understanding, and Capacities? Why then did not absolute *Goodness* and *Power* produce such Equality? Whether we can find out the reason of this, or not, is not of any consequence: but I argue from the well known *Fact*; and since Every one sees such a manifest Inequality, should he reason from these Properties of God, that all men *must* be equal, one may be confident that he argues wrong. The Conclusion does not follow from the Premises in other visible cases: Therefore some how or other we argue wrong in this.

Perhaps it will be said,—That the manifest Inequality amongst Men, and all other Animals, whenever compared with others of
the

the same Species, proves that they all were not made by God, but by some inferior Being, who had Power and Goodness enough to produce such Species of Creatures as he did, but he had not power to make all equally perfect: That this is the very reason of the *Partiality*, and difference betwixt Beings, which were all made by the same Invisible Agent, who if he had had all the Wisdom and Power of the God and Father of all, he would certainly have made all of the same Species equal.

But neither does this by any means follow: For unless we could tell *à priori*, that it is not best to have things as they are, or that it was not the Will of God that they should be as they are, we must not presume to affirm that the present Scheme is *not best*, or was not agreeable to the Will of God. So far as the human Mind has hitherto been able to search and discover the natures of things, we see nothing but Wisdom, and excellent Art, and all the Contrivance imaginable. The conclusion therefore is, not that Wisdom is not made use of in parts in which we are not able to trace it, but that
we

we are too short-sighted, and have not yet sufficiently discovered what in process of time may be as clear as the Sun at Noon-day. How can it be shewn that this *Inequality* is not the best? How can it be proved that it is not most agreeable to the great *Ends* of Providence? Are we sufficiently acquainted with the Secrets of the Almighty? Or are we competent Judges of the Extent of his Thoughts? How does it appear that the Great God might not see reason for such an *Inequality* in his creatures, even of those of the same Species? Sure I am, it is more becoming such weak imperfect creatures as we are, not to conclude from any thing's not being what we fancy it *ought* to be, that therefore it is not the work of God's hands, (especially where we see no Evil in its frame;) than to conclude *against* a visible fact, when we can discover *à priori* the Existence and Providence of God.

We are able by arguing from Effects to Causes to arrive at the Existence of the great First Cause of the Universe, who made and governs all things: And wherever we are able to trace out any point, we perceive

P Wisdom,

Wisdom, and Skill, and final Causes, which manifest such a Superintendency as cannot be owing to Chance, or Fate, or Fortune. It is but little that such short-sighted creatures as we are can discover ; but yet we are able, as I said, to discover a superintending Being, and some few of the General Laws by which moral Agents are governed. Whatever are the Orders of Spiritual Subsistences, or what Powers Good or Evil Beings may have, or how far they can exert their Powers in our Sphere, we have no data to work on, or at least not sufficient to make any great discoveries.

We know, that God is the Great Governor of all, to whom all things are subservient, and whose Power no Being whatever can resist. Be an Inferior Being Good or Evil, he can neither oppose the Power of God, nor refuse Submission to his Authority, nor contradict his Will, without being obnoxious to a displeasure sufficient to make him repent.

The Government of God is that of Order, and not of Confusion. And therefore Evil Beings as well as Good Beings, must
be

be under the general Laws of their State; and not be at Liberty to perplex and confound, terrify and affright, all such other Agents as are inferior to them, without being accountable for their behaviour. But then,

We cannot discover by any light of reason, how this great machine is governed; whether the Infinite, the Immense, the Almighty God, *immediately* directs and governs all things *Himself*, or whether He does this by other Agents to whom He has committed Authority and Power. Here Revelation must be our Guide, and did not That tell us, we might be sure that Every thing must be transacted according to *his Will*, and to his Honour and Glory. To infer therefore that a Revelation is not *divine*, because it comes from a subordinate Being: or that such Being had *not Power* to make us all equally perfect, because in fact we are not made so, is to argue absurdly, or without the least Probability of Truth.

It is I think absurd to pretend, that the various species of Beings were called into Existence *merely* for the sake of *Variety*.

I have no doubt that in the great Wisdom of him that governs all things, a much greater Good may be carried on thereby; but what that Good is, I presume not to determine. When I see great Wisdom, and great Goodness, exerted in every instance that I am able to comprehend, I cannot but imagine that the same Wisdom and Goodness may be discovered in all other Acts where the same Being is concerned. If therefore there be a difference in the same Species of Creatures; if one man is made with greater Parts, Sagacity, Beauty, exactness of Proportion, to fit him for business than another; I cannot but conceive that Some *End* is to be served by this in the Government of Providence, different from what would be served, if all things were made equal in all respects. And so it may be in the case of *Revelation* made known at different times to different people: Some Good Ends *may* be served, nay a greater Good *may* be carried on in this method than in any other: at least it corresponds exactly to the method of God's Providence in making a great difference at present in creatures of the same Species. If this be called a *Partiality*,

tiality, or a *Defect of Benevolence* in the one case, so it will be in the other : And Both must be condemned, or Both acquitted.

I do not in this manner of reasoning ask, Why all men had not *all* powers given them : Or why God did not make all men the *Best* and *Perfectest* Beings that He could ? But, Why are not all Men of equal Strength, Beauty, Proportion ; of equal Parts, Abilities, Capacities ; of equal Understanding and Memory ; or of equal Tempers and Dispositions to moral Good ? Is there not an appearance of *Partiality* in this, as much as there is in giving a Revelation to some and not to others ? The Fact I think is indisputable : and if we know not the reason of the conduct of Providence in this case, we ought to argue from Analogy, taking it for a sure Rule, that He that is perfect Wisdom and Goodness can never do a foolish or an unjust Action. We may not be able to comprehend his ways ; but to condemn him as guilty of a defect of *Benevolence*, because he does not grant what we have no *Right* to demand, and what, were he to deny us, he could not be said to

injure us, or to do us any *Injustice*, would be an Arrogance or Insolence not to be excused, much less to be justified.

But does not this Inequality make it *probable*, that all such Beings as labour under such great differences, are the Works of some *Inferior* Agent, and not of *God* himself : and by Analogy, that a *partial* Revelation proceeds in like manner from such *Inferior* Being, and not from Him who is all *Power and Goodness* ?

The Answer is, No. For one cannot infer such a thing to be *probable*, or *likely*, unless one could by some medium or other prove, that *God* himself *could* not, or *would* not, have created such an imperfect creature as Man is : or that his properties were such as to prevent his making a difference in Beings of the same Species : Or that his *Ends* cannot be obtained by giving to some *Ten Talents*, and to others but *One*. What we have not sufficient data to reason upon, must be very dark or obscure : and to infer a *Probability* from what is not sufficient to justify scarce a *Possibility*, is idle and absurd. But then,

I must

I must add, that supposing it probable that an *Inferior* Being, and not *God* himself, made all things, (which can be known only by a particular Revelation) He must make them agreeably to the *Will*, and *good Pleasure* of God, and in such manner as *God* himself *intended* and *designed*. And what will be the difference in the cases, Whether *God* himself makes things, or a subordinate Agent makes them *according to his Will*? They will be what they are, in case of either Supposition; and the Argument drawn from the *Wisdom*, *Goodness*, and *Power*, of God, will make no difference. For God must *know* and *intend* such sorts of Beings, whoever made them: and then as to all effects and purposes it will be the same, whether He does any thing immediately himself, or by the Agency of another.

The Notion we have of God as the Supreme Lord and Governor of all, implies, That supposing he has committed a Subordinate Government of the World to any Being, He must have Powers and Abilities equal to such an Office: He must so act as never to do any thing inconsistent with the Will of God. Supposing now that This

Subordinate Governor were to reveal any Truths to Mankind, and were himself to work, or to cause to be worked, any Miracle in confirmation of such Truth, we cannot presume any thing less, than that what he says is agreeable to the *Will of God*. Supposing that this Subordinate Being made men with different capacities, parts, &c. and suppose that he gave a *partial* Revelation, this must be agreeable to the *Will of God*, who designed such differences, and *approved* them, and *approved* such Revelation : and if we are to stand or fall by our conformity to that, the uses of it are the same as if *God himself* had immediately given it.

But supposing it to be either *God himself*, or some *subordinate Being*, that gives a Revelation, and that we are not able to determine which it is ;—the Point is, What degree of Credibility has *the Thing* itself ? The Revelation comes from some Being superior to man : it is well attested, and it carries with it an incontestable connexion with our Happiness. Is it of much Importance, as to our Conduct, who is the Adviser, if the Advice itself tends to make us
Happy ?

Happy? Is it worth the dispute, whether the King himself advises, or whether He sends his Agent to advise? Or can we hope to please the person who sends us his Commands, if instead of *obeying* them, we are quarrelling about the person who brings us the Message, and imagine such Zeal to be sufficient to justify our Conduct?

It may be said, That admitting an *Inequality* among Men, yet the Cases are not parallel. For “ if things *could* have been
 “ better constituted they would. The difference betwixt the Capacities and Circumstances of men results from the original Frame and Constitution of things,
 “ —and *could* not be provided against without the introduction of some other, equal or greater, Evil.” But it is not so in the case of a partial Revelation: For “ a more
 “ *general* Good *would* be carried on by an
 “ *universal* Revelation than is by a *partial*
 “ one. Whereas, to make the cases exactly parallel, it must be affirmed, that a
 “ Revelation made to *all* would be inductive of some equal or greater Evil,
 “ than what results from its being given partially to some.”

Now,

Now in this comparifon, It is 1st faid,
 “ If things *could have* been better conftitu-
 “ ted they *would*.” And again, “ the Dif-
 “ ference of Capacities—*could* not be pro-
 “ vided againft without the Introduction of
 “ fome Equal or greater Evil.” How does
 this appear, without fuppoſing a principle
 which will equally reſolve the Caſe of a
partial Revelation? ’Tis affirmed that “ the
 “ difference of Capacities in Men *could*
 “ not be provided againft without the In-
 “ troduction of ſome Equal or greater E-
 “ vil.” Now it plainly implies no Contra-
 diction, or Impoſſibility in the nature of
 the thing, to ſuppoſe all men of equal parts,
 Beauty, Strength, Goodneſs: Why then were
 they not made ſo? The known *Wiſdom*
 of the Agent, and the *viſible fact* to the
 contrary, makes us conclude that this
 imperfect State, this Inequality of crea-
 tures is *beſt*. For as to us and our con-
 ceptions, it will be hard to *ſay*, what Evil
 would ariſe to mankind, were all men equal-
 ly ſagacious, benevolent, and good. How-
 ever from the Wiſdom and Power of the
 great Creator of all, we determine *in one*
caſe that things are beſt as they are: and
 confi-

considering the Weakness and Imperfection of our Judgments, and the very little we can trace out of the ways of him who is infinite in Knowledge and Goodness, we infer, and that justly, that Things *could* not have been altered without the Introduction of some equal or greater Evil. Ought we not to argue in the same manner about *another* of the ways of Providence, which I likewise do not understand; and from the Wisdom and Goodness and Power of God compared with a Fact which I have full Evidence of its coming from above, ought I not to conclude that This Revelation could not have been made to *all* equally, without the Introduction of some other equal or greater Evil?

To say, that *we* can conceive no harm that would arise from an *Universal* Revelation, and can conceive an Evil from a *partial* one, is making ourselves Judges contrary to the Fact: and it will be replied, that we can conceive no Evil from all men's being of equal Strength, and equally good Constitutions, and do see Evil arising from the defects which men labour under in the present case.

If

If it be said, That the difference betwixt the Capacities and Circumstances of men qualifies them to attain different degrees of Happiness—it may be answered, That if their Capacities were all equal to the best and greatest, and their Circumstances so too, they might be equally qualified for the best and greatest Happiness. For if difference of Capacities and Circumstances differently qualifies for Happiness, equal Capacities must equally qualify for it: And then the Question will always be, Why did not the *Wise* and *Powerful* God order things so, that all might equally attain equal Happiness? The Answer to this will account for God's giving a Revelation to some and not to others, supposing the *End* of Revelation to be, that they which have it may attain *greater Happiness*, than those which have it not.

But *Greater Happiness*, it is said, is not the point: “ It may be expected that a divine
 “ Revelation would not be barely to qualify
 “ men for obtaining a *higher degree* of
 “ Happiness, than otherwise they are in
 “ danger of not obtaining, but also to ob-
 “ tain *Happiness itself* in opposition to its
 “ contrary,

“ contrary, and to prevent their Being
 “ *greatly and lastingly miserable*, which
 “ Misery they are in danger of bringing
 “ upon themselves.” From hence it is ar-
 gued, “ That if God out of a tender re-
 “ gard for the well being of his creatures
 “ kindly interposed for the relief of *Some*,
 “ that regard would equally dispose him to
 “ interpose for the relief of *All* in like
 “ circumstances.”

This is the *Fifth* Point I proposed, *viz.*
 Whether God be obliged, supposing that
 he grants a Revelation, to grant it equally
 to *all Mankind*?

In order to determine this, it should
 not be taken for granted that all who have
 not the benefit of a Revelation are to be
greatly and lastingly miserable. It is true,
 that Man is an accountable creature; but it
 cannot be true, that he is accountable for
 what he never had. He has a law written
 in his heart, by which, and for the breach
 of which, he may justly be tried: And his
 Maker who knows him, and all the cir-
 cumstances he is in, is the proper Judge of
 his Abilities and Powers; what were the
 forces of Temptations; what difficulties he
 had

had to struggle with ; what Opportunities he had ; what Light of Mind ; what Knowledge and Understanding ; and in short, what was the true State of his case ; and will not condemn any one arbitrarily and unjustly. They that have not the benefit of Revelation, are not on that account to be *miserable*, more than are all they who have it, to be *happy*. But Revelation is to be considered as *Light* and *Knowledge* ; and an Improvement in Morals in consequence of greater Knowledge, is like the Improvement of many Talents ; it must qualify for proportional rewards.

It will be said, That there was no Occasion for Revelation on *this* account, since God might have granted different, or a proportional degree of Happiness, without granting *any* Revelation. But this is supposing it unworthy of God, to cause such differences of circumstances, as might deserve and have extraordinary degrees of Happiness. God may grant indeed his Happiness as He thinks fit ; but if He is pleased to suit such and such degrees of it to such as have made a proportionable Advance in Virtue, He
may

may grant the means to such Advance, and thus create as it were these New Relations. Supposing therefore a certain proportional Growth in virtuous Habits to be the ground of Reward, God might dispense what is the effect of Favour as he pleases and *when* he pleases: and whilst he injures none, he may grant capacities for Happiness in the grant of Revelation, just as he grants different Abilities to Men which will be rewarded according to their Improvements. Can any one pretend to say, What perfection some Men have been brought to in consequence of their Faith in Christ, and their careful endeavour to obey his will? Or what particular degrees they may attain in the Scale of Happiness, which without Revelation they might not have attained?

It may be urged, “ That if a Revelati-
 “ on be useful, or necessary, or a kindness
 “ to one nation, it must be alike useful, or
 “ necessary, or a kindness, to all, at least to
 “ *all in like circumstances;*” “ Were it
 “ equally in any one’s power to assist seve-
 “ ral as One, it would be an instance of
 “ *Partiality*, and an Indication not of *true*
 “ *Goodness*

“ *Goodness*, but of some other Motive which
 “ excited to Action.” Now,

Admit that a Revelation is a *kindness* wherever it is granted, and is alike to all in like circumstances; when this rule comes to be applied to particular instances, we are as much at a loss as if we had no such rule. For we do not know that Revelation was not given to all that were in *like* circumstances: Nor is any Mortal Man a competent Judge who are, or who are not, as to this, in *like* circumstances. Nor is it right to suppose, or take for granted, that *all Mankind* are in *like* circumstances, and thence to argue against the conduct of God. The Argument should be (if any thing can be concluded from this way of Reasoning) stated thus—Like Kindness does *not* appear to be shewn to *all* mankind by Him who is alwise, powerful and good, Therefore they are *not* all in *like circumstances*. It is true,
 “ that a good and wise Being will always
 “ direct his Actions by the Rules of Wis-
 “ dom and Goodness, and will not dispense
 “ his Favours arbitrarily and partially.”
 But then if we pass a Judgment on the Actions of God without knowing his *Ends*,
 or

or without knowing the *Reasons of his Actions*, or of his designs, we cannot but be guilty of Presumption and Arrogance.

We see a plain *fact*, which runs through all that we know, whether it be the Natural, the Animal, or the Moral World: There are in them all, differences in creatures of the same Species. The Fact is indisputable, whatever is the cause. Say that these differences arose from the *Will* of God, or his *immediate Act*; or say that it arose from the Act of an Inferior invisible Agent, acting according to the Will of God, the Fact itself cannot be denied. The *Wisdom* and the *Goodness* of God is not pretended to be affected by this: but if we move a Step further, and talk of *Revelation* given to Some and not to others, then—This is *Partiality* and *Injustice*. I ask, Why is not *Partiality* and *Injustice* in the *ordinary* course of things, as much as it is in the *Extraordinary*? God has given to some Men Abilities to reason, and to trace out his Existence, Attributes, Properties, and the general Laws of his governing the Natural and Moral World: Others can no more understand, even now when they are found out, much less could they ever

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have

have found out these Laws, than they can fly. Is this *Partiality* or *Injustice*, or *want of Goodness*? No. Go a Step further, and suppose that God should discover his Mind, or lay down to some the Scenes of his Providential Government of Mankind, and not to Others—This is *Partiality*. Why? Is it more *partial* than to give Powers to *some*, which they can improve to the Benefit of their Moral conduct, and increase in Knowledge and Virtue, greatly in comparison of Others who have no such Abilities? Either *All* should be made *Equal* in all respects, or a difference and distinction may be made without the Imputation of *Partiality*, or *Want of Goodness*.

It will be said, “ That God does good
 “ for *Goodness sake*; and that therefore he
 “ will dispense his Favours alike to all who
 “ are alike the Objects of his Goodness.”
 But,

1. Does it follow from the known *Goodness* of God, that *all* the *possible* Good that God himself *can* do to any or all his creatures, *must* be done by him? Is He obliged to make all his creatures *Equal*, by giving them all the Benefits which he *can* confer

confer upon them? Or may he not consult his own *Ends*, and give various Talents, as he in his infinite Wisdom may think proper? Or,

2. Does it follow from the *Goodness* of God, that he must dispense his favours to all, who are alike Objects of his Goodness, *at one and the same time*? Or cannot Favour be shewn to One, until it is shewn to another? It is granted that *Injury* is not to be done to any one; and that whatever is any one's *Right*, or what he can demand as *his own*, or what it would be *Injustice* to deny, there God is obliged to act equally, and he would be properly *partial* were he to act otherwise. But to act *partially*, is not merely to grant favours to *Some* and not to *Others*; but it is to do so *without any reason* for such Action. He is not *partial* that shews Kindness to some *particular* persons; but He that does it without good reason, without any *Ends* that may justify his conduct. And,

3. 'Tis true that God does good for *Goodness sake*: but yet his *Goodness* is always determined by his *Wisdom*, and he does Every thing for Wise Ends. Now suppose that

God may *design*, that his creatures should go on towards Perfection; that they shall have Opportunities of acting some how and some where, if they have not thro' their own faults neglected the Opportunity offered to them: That they shall all have proper Opportunities in *their* time, if they reject not the council of God against themselves, of becoming the Objects of God's Goodness. This is not an absurd or an unlikely supposition; And We have several instances in Natural Philosophy which are analogous to this Moral reasoning, which shew us how things may approach continually nearer and nearer, and yet can never touch. How can it be known that this is not, or may not be the case of Man; or that he may not be advancing higher and higher towards the All perfect Being, and yet never be able to come up to absolute Perfection? what if those who have great Light and Knowledge communicated to them advance a Step in this Scale nearer and higher than others do? And what if others succeed them as Opportunities offer? And is it of much consequence, whether this Opportunity be offered to all at *once*; or whether the progress

progress may be kept up by successive Opportunities granted?

We do not know, nor can we pretend to know the great Designs or Ends of Providence: and therefore if any possible Scheme can be conceived consistent with *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, it may justly be offered, because we know that God is a Wise and Powerful and Good Being, and always acts according to the Rules of Right. It does not follow from God's doing Good for *Goodness sake*, that therefore He must make all his creatures *equal*; or dispense to all *equal* Favours: it does by no means follow, that if a Revelation be granted to some and not to others, that therefore God himself *does not* give it; nor that an inferior subordinate Agent *does* give it. For the Interposition of God himself, may be reconciled to such a Dispensation, as well as to that of some other Being whose Abilities are bounded: Nor can more be inferred from a particular Revelation than this, That it was not the *Will* of the great Governor of all things that it should be otherwise.

It may be objected, that if we are so ignorant of the Schemes of God as not to be able to form a Judgment about the Good or Evil of them, than the most barbarous and burdensome Institutions “ may be “ from God. For even these in their *re-* “ *mote and secret* consequences may be for “ the Good of mankind; and were a Mi- “ racle or number of Miracles to be worked “ in behalf of such an Institution, an Op- “ poser might be answered, that as extra- “ ordinary Evidence was given in behalf “ of such an Institution, it ought to be ad- “ mitted, *though we perceive no good arising “ from it.*”

But let it be observed,

1. That a *Revelation* is not bad in *itself*, nor is it to be charged with the Abuses that a free Agent may make of it, more than *Reason* is to be loaded with the Evils which a perverse Being of intelligence may make of that. Be a Revelation ever so good in itself, it may be perverted, and made use of to quite contrary ends to those for which it was designed: and the Donor of it is no more chargeable with these perverted conse-

consequences, than God is for giving any free Being good powers which he neglects or abuses.

2. I am persuaded that no instance can be produced of any revealed Institution, the good end of which is not to be seen. For a Revelation is not to be charged with consequences which ignorant, or foolish, or wicked, Men may object, but only with such as naturally arise from *it itself*, and not from the Corruptions and Glosses that artful Men may make or add to it. But,

3. Supposing an Institution which is now deemed to be burdensome; it is possible that what at other times, and other places, and other circumstances, may seem so, might not have been so at the given time, nor be in given circumstances irrational. If we at this distance can discover the *remains* of a beautiful Fabrick, over which much Rubbish has been cast, we should not call the *Fabrick* itself deformed and ill contrived, which in truth deserved and had that Appellation only from the Rubbish which concealed its Excellency. We are apt to give hard words, and contemp-

tuous language, to what we do not understand; whereas the consequence should be, that if whatever we *do* understand is just and reasonable, and *all* proceeds from a wise Being, what we *do not* understand is most probably Wise and Good, because it proceeds from such a Being.

4. It is not therefore enough for any one to take notice of some Evils, Corruptions, Abuses, openly avowed and maintained by such as lay claim to Revelation; or to argue from such Notions, or Perversions, that therefore such or such Revelation could not come from God, because he must and did foresee the perverse Use that would be made of it. But Revelation should be considered as it is in itself; all prevailing Opinions, all received Interpretations should be discarded; and men should come to it just as they do to any other Books: they should consider the natural, visible use of it amongst the Persons, and at the times, to whom, and in which, it was given: if any thing was peculiar to one age, that ought not to be supposed as necessary for all: and from hence the true Estimate of its Good or Evil is to be made, and not
from

from other Persons and other Times for which it was not designed.

5thly, When a Revelation is given to the World, great care should be taken not to comprehend under that word, what is not Revelation. For it is easily possible to be led into very great mistakes by a careless or inaccurate manner of Expression upon such Subjects. And then,

6thly, Supposing an extraordinary Evidence were given that a Revelation comes from above; and supposing too that “*we*” “perceive no good arising from it,” what should be the natural thought on such an Occasion? The Miracle demonstrates an immediate Interposition, and makes the Fact indisputable: the only difficulty is, that *I*, weak imperfect as I am, cannot perceive any good arising from this Revelation, though it has subsisted for Many Centuries. Is it not natural to ask—Whether I have any certain means, by which I can compare one Generation of men with another, so as to be able to determine which upon the whole is best or worst? We find a great Evil of some particular Species, in the present Generation; and we see and feel it,
and

and therefore judge the present to be worse than the past Generation of which we read, and have no more to reason upon, than what happens to be taken notice of by the Writers of those times. We see certain *E-vils*, ^{*the*} very rise in one Generation, which we know had not any Existence in another : But then, we do not see *the Good* done in that very wicked Generation, not taken notice of by those who are ready to paint what deserved dislike, in the very blackest colours. The Enormous Vices make a great figure in the Generation described by a warm Historian, who takes but little notice of much Good done by very many : and yet even what Some will represent as Enormous Vices, may be in themselves no Faults : Nay, Some of them may be Excellencies. Party-Representations are always Suspicious ; and Zeal will easily convert Virtues into Vices, and Vices into Virtues. Good men may easily imagine that very few are good, when yet there are *many thousands* who will *not bow a knee unto Baal*. Every Generation is fancied to be worse than the former ; and the humor has prevailed to talk in that manner, for some
thousands

thousands of years: But this only proves that present Objects appear bigger than remote ones: and that our present Passions work upon us, and govern us where they are touched; but in other points we are cool, and impartial, and indifferent.

I do not here argue from the *secret* and *remote consequences* which a Revelation may have upon Mankind; but affirm, that if in its natural consequences it brings an apparent Good, the thing itself ought to be admitted; that we make ourselves too often very incompetent Judges of the Good that may be done in and by a thing of this nature; that we are not to argue against what *may* so be perverted, as to produce Evil amongst careless and ignorant men: but we ought to reason from the nature and intent of the Revelation itself, and see whether it will not produce much Good if it be followed, or whether it tends to produce Evil, unless it be abused.

Thus have I considered the case of *Miracles*, and have shewn what *Credit* is due to the *Gospel-Miracles* in particular, and how they may be distinguished from all Others: Hence
will

will it be easy to determine what Assent is due to all Revelation, and to That of Christ in particular. God grant that what is designed for the promoting of his Glory may be effectual to that purpose, if what is said be *true* : if not, that he may raise up some abler hand, to do justice to a cause, which ought to be supported by nothing but Truth, and which has been confounded by so many wicked frauds, that it has puzzled many an honest man to distinguish between what he ought to believe, and what he ought to refuse his Assent to.

F I N I S.

A P O S T-

A

POSTSCRIPT.

In ANSWER to the

Lord Bish op of LICHFIELD's Charge
to his Clergy.

IT is, my Lord, with the greatest concern and uneasiness that I am obliged to trouble your Lordship with any complaint; but I think myself so much mistaken, and misrepresented, and am set in so bad a Light to the Clergy of your Diocese, by the Charge delivered by your Lordship to them, and since made public, that I am persuaded your Lordship will not be displeased, nor they neither, if in this public manner I attempt to clear myself of what your Lordship has publicly imputed to me.

I do not design to concern myself *at present* with any other part of your Charge than
what

What relates to the Subject I am immediately upon ; viz. the *Miracles* and the *Prophecies* of the Scriptures. And here as I stand charged by your Lordship with having “ lessened or depretiated the Authority of the “ *Facts* recorded in the Gospel,” and with having “ depretiated all the Prophecies but “ those of *Daniel*,” p. 33. and consequently with having proportionably diminished “ the “ credibility of the Christian Religion ;”— permit me, my Lord, to examine this imputation with all that deference that is due to your Lordship, and with that Justice that is due to myself and my own Character.

The *First* Point which here I shall consider is, your Lordship's Charge of “ lessening or depretiating the Authority of the “ *Facts* recorded in the Gospel,” p. 25. By the *Facts*, your Lordship means “ the *Miracles* that Jesus Christ performed, or the “ *Prophecies* that he accomplished.” *ibid.* And as to the *Miracles*, your Lordship has particularly in view, *Two* : “ Those that “ relate to the power exercised by *Jesus* “ over Satan and all his infernal Spirits, in “ the dispossession of them from the Bodies “ of miserable men over whom they most “ cruelly

“ cruelly tyrannized : ” p. 25. And that other,
 “ the *Eclipse* of the *Sun* which was quite
 “ contrary to the course of nature at the
 “ time of our Lord’s Crucifixion.” p. 34.

I will not complain, my Lord, of hard-
 usage, or of unjust Representations, to your
 Lordship ; but will only say in general, That
 supposing all that I have said about *Pble-*
gon’s Testimony, and all that I have said a-
 bout the *Demoniacks* of the Gospel, to be
 false ; yet I deny that ever I *depretiated* or *les-*
sened the *Miracles* of Christ. I have endea-
 voured to represent them as what I thought,
 and do still think, they were : and tho’ your
 Lordship may disapprove my Sentiments, and
 may be convinced that I am mistaken, yet the
Reasons produced by your Lordship, are not
 such as, I apprehend, will justify so heinous
 an Imputation, as *lessening* or *depretiating* the
Miracles of Christ.

To make good your Lordship’s charge
 you say, that by representing our Lord’s
 “ casting out Devils to be no more than
 “ *miraculous* Cures of the mere diseases of
 “ Madness and Epilepsies, I most certainly
 “ *substitute* Miracles of an inferior kind in
 “ the

“ the room of those that are much superior
 “ to them ;” p. 26. and thus it is that I *lessen* or *depretiate* them. Now

1st, Supposing it true, that I have “ substituted Miracles of an inferior kind,” yet it must be acknowledged that the Mission of our Lord, and the Evidence for that, is secured upon the principles that I contend for. For if Miracles be really done, there is no necessity that every one must be of the highest kind possible, in order to establish and confirm the Doctrine, or the Mission of the person that comes from God. And if nothing that weakens the Evidence for Christ’s Mission be maintained,—Surely the affair of the *Demoniacks* may be amongst those Cases where Men of Learning may abound in, and enjoy, their own Sense. But.

2^{dly}, I deny that I have substituted an *inferior* kind of Miracle in the room of one that is *superior*. Your Lordship acknowledges the Miracle, upon my representation of it, to consist in the “ making alterations
 “ in the Blood and other Humours, and
 “ even in the Nerves themselves,” so as *instantaneously* to cure the disordered habit, by a word, without touching the diseased person.

son. This is what you call a Miracle of the *inferior* kind. The *superior* kind of Miracle, is the commanding an Evil Spirit; or a Legion of them, to leave a man. Now I cannot but apprehend the *former* of these to be the *greatest* Miracle of the Two. For it seems no mighty matter for a Person of our Saviour's Greatness, *The Son of God*; the Person who *made all things, and by whom all things subsist*; the *brightness of God's Glory, and the express Image of his person*;—it seems, I say, no mighty matter for such a person to command an *inferior* Being to depart out of his presence, or to go out from such a place: Whereas to change instantaneously the fluids and solids of a disordered Habit without any Touch, or external Application, and thus to *cure* them, argues an Exertion of real *Power*. Superiority of *Station* or *Authority* is all that is necessary in the one case: in the other, there must be the Exercise of real invisible Power. But

3dly, Is every miraculous case recorded in the Sacred Writings always so to be understood as to make it the most miraculous

R

possible?

possible? Or, Is it a *fault* so to understand the Scriptures, as not to represent the Miracle as *great* as possible? Your Lordship is pleased to censure me for *depretiating, lessening, and sinking* the Miracles of Christ. To make out this Accusation you say,—

“ They that *sink* them into Cures, though
 “ confessedly miraculous,—do *most certainly*
 “ substitute Miracles of an *inferior* kind in
 “ the room of those that are much *superior*
 “ to them, since it is *evident* that the im-
 “ mediate restraint and absolute command
 “ of Evil Spirits considered as free Agents,
 “ and transported with rage and malice to
 “ mankind, is a Miracle of a *much higher*
 “ class than the Cure of bodily Diseases,
 “ by making alterations in the blood and
 “ other humours, and even in the Nerves
 “ themselves, that are matter, and depend
 “ upon Mechanism,” *p.* 26. Your Lordship here takes for granted what appears to me to want great and clear Proof. You say
 “ it is *evident*” that the immediate restraint and absolute command of Evil Spirits—is a Miracle of a *much higher class*—than the cure of bodily Diseases. This is so far
 from

from being *evident* to me, that the contrary seems most true. A Person of superior Power and Authority may command and will be obeyed: and the Authority of a Superior is easily proved by the ready Submission of the Inferior: nor is any thing else necessary than barely to speak his Will: But the case of a *Cure of bodily diseases* requires not Authority, but *Power and Skill*, to set all Parts to right, and to make the machine (excuse my use of this word,) go as it ought to do. A *Prince* may command and be obeyed by his Inferiors: and yet have no Power or Judgment to cure a distemper. What therefore your Lordship here says, is *evident* and *certain*, requires good proof; and especially since it is made the Subject of a grievous Accusation. But

4^{thly}, Let us admit that I really have
 “ substituted a Miracle of an inferior kind
 “ in the room of one that is of a much su-
 “ perior,” (which yet I deny that I ever
 have done,) your Lordship will still have it
 to prove, that I have *depreiated, lessened,*
 or *sunk* the Authority of the Facts re-
 corded in the Gospel, To *depreiate* or

lessen the *Authority* of any Fact, is to make it have less credit by speaking against, or by speaking slightly or contemptuously of it. This indeed would be a crime, which had I even carelessly or inadvertently been guilty of, I should have no occasion for reproach from others: mine own conscience would soon have condemned me, and I should have been among the first that would have asked the World's pardon. But to interpret or to understand a miraculous case so as not to suppose the *greatest power possible* exerted, in order to produce the Effect, is not to *depretiate* or *lessen* the *Authority* of the Fact; but to enquire into the meaning of the Fact, and thence to determine what the case is. Your Lordship will excuse me if I add

5^{thly}, My thanks to your Lordship for acquainting the World, that the Scheme which I have advanced, is not to be found in the Commentaries of *Socinus*, or the *Frates Poloni*. Had any of those Gentlemen happened to have maintained the same Sentiment that I have, I had certainly been ranked in what your Lordship may think very ill company.

company. These same *Fratres Poloni* were surely very wicked, very impious Fellows, that whenever any one is designed to be painted in odious Colours, or represented as fit to be hunted down, his Notions are presently taken from *Them* ! Happy for me that I am not caught in such company ! But why then are they brought in, or mentioned by your Lordship, since it seems your Lordship says that what I say is *not* to be found among them ? But I must go a little further, and say, supposing that any of those dreadful writers had said that the Demoniacs of the Gospel were nothing more than Epilepticks, or atrabilarian Madmen, would the Notion have been more or less true ? Why are these *Fratres Poloni* mentioned, when you allow that what I say is not to be found in them, unless it be in your Zeal for something to express your wishes to join me with them, and thus to raise an odium against a book which has not yet been confuted ?

6thly, I do not think it necessary, or proper, here to enter into the debate about *Demoniacs*. I will only say, that it is not a sufficient refutation of my Notion, which

your Lordship urges from “ the Number
 “ of those ejected Demons being some-
 “ times so minutely specified ; a circum-
 “ stance” says your Lordship “ inconsistent
 “ with THEIR *being mere diseases*,” p. 27.
 I do not remember, my Lord, that I ever
 said that *Demons were mere diseases*. I have
 maintained indeed that Persons labouring
 under certain Disorders have *themselves* im-
 puted such Disorders to *Demons* as the cau-
 ses of them: and so likewise have many
 others done besides the Disordered persons.
 But I do not remember that I have ever
 maintained *Demons* or *Devils* to be *Disea-
 ses*. There have been those, my Lord, who
 have “ sometimes so minutely specified the
 “ Number of those ejected Demons,” as to
 make themselves the Subjects of great ridi-
 cule. I have heard of a famous Presbyte-
 rian Preacher at *Edinburgh*, who, by en-
 tering into a minute calculation of what
 Number made a Legion, and how the De-
 vils must be divided to enter into two thou-
 sand Swine, told his people, that “ *there*
 “ *were not above Three Devils to each Hog.*”
 But then the remaining 666 Devils, the ve-

ry Number of the Beast, being left undisposed of, they, said he, entered into *Antichrist*, where they have been ever since. This was the good man's account of this Miracle : but Others, who have not so dextrously been able to dispose of these odd Numbers, have been forced to something very like *splitting of Devils*. Now which is it that " exposes the Gospels to downright ridicule and contempt," such as talk in this way, or such as use even *forced Interpretations*, even as forced as those odious men the *Fratres Poloni*, I leave your Lordship to judge.

The Other instance of my lessening or depreting of the *facts recorded in the Gospel* is, " That of the Eclipse of the Sun, which was quite contrary to the course of Nature, at the time of our Lord's Crucifixion."

Here again I say, that I do not remember that I have at any time, in any Book or Writing, so much as designed or attempted to *lessen* or *deprete* this, or any other, *Scriptural Fact*. And I must call upon your Lordship, if there be any regard to be

paid to Truth, if there be any Honour, if there be any Honesty, to name the Book, or Passage, where I have been guilty of such a Crime, that I may publickly retract such an Error. And here,

1st. Does the Scripture call that *darkness* at the time of our Saviour's Crucifixion, an *Eclipse of the Sun*? Or does it say that it was quite “ *contrary to the course of Nature*?” Supposing therefore that I have depretiated *this* Notion, yet I have not by that depretiated any *Fact recorded in the Gospel*? But,

2^{dly}. Your Lordship cannot imagine it sufficient to prove me guilty of any fault, to say, that because I have “ endeavoured “ to lessen the credit of *Phlegon's* Testimony,” that therefore I have endeavoured to lessen or depretiate “ a *Scriptural Fact*.” Is *Phlegon* also among the Apostles? Or did the Persons who wrote against me “ vindicate That *Scriptural Fact* ;” or was it *Phlegon's* Testimony to a Scriptural Fact? If *Phlegon's* Testimony to a Scriptural Fact be the same thing as a *Scriptural Fact*, (which your Lordship has not yet proved) then

then indeed I must sit down with Shame, and repent of what I have said upon that Subject. But though your Lordship may imagine, that “ the Authority of the “ miraculous fact recorded in the Gospel “ had been confirmed by the Testimony of “ *Phlegon*,” yet surely it is very consistent to examine the *Testimony*, and if it be found defective, to reject it; and yet to admit the *Scriptural Fact* as certain and indisputable.

You tell us, my Lord, That “ his Testi-
 “ mony had been accordingly appealed to by
 “ the best of the *Primitive* Apologists for
 “ the Christian Religion,” and refer to *Tertullian’s Apology*, c. 21. My Lord, I have looked into this Tract of *Tertullian*, and I do not find *Phlegon’s Testimony* so much as mentioned, much less is it *appealed* to. It would be thought in any other case a strange way of appealing to any Man’s Testimony, never to name, or refer to him, or his Writings, or what he has said. How does it appear that it was *Phlegon’s* more than any one’s else, to whom *Tertullian* appeals? Or is it giving any Strength to a cause to appeal to a *credulous*,

dulous, superstitious, weak Writer, who took up with any romantic strange Tale, that he met with; and gravely related any idle Story that had much of the *Marvelous* in it? But I am again depretiating *Phlegon*; and your Lordship may call this a lessening and depretiating a *Fact recorded in the Gospel*.

It is not very common to meet with Instances of this nature, and therefore I shall dwell on this a little longer. A heavy accusation is brought against me, before the Clergy of a Diocese, for *lessening and depretiating* certain *Facts recorded in the Gospel*. Amongst other instances this is given—That I have lessened and depretiated “the Authority of this Miraculous Fact,” *viz.* “the Eclipse of the Sun which was quite contrary to the course of nature, at the time of our Lord’s Crucifixion.” How is this made out? Why, it seems I have “endeavoured to lessen the Credit of *Phlegon’s* Testimony.” I acknowledge, that I have endeavoured to prove that *Phlegon’s* Testimony related to a Natural *Eclipse of the Sun*: and not to the *Darkness* at the
time

time of our Lord's Crucifixion. Several persons wrote against me, upon that occasion, and your Lordship says "vindicated that SCRIPTURAL FACT." What *Scriptural* Fact? The *Scriptural* Fact is, that there was a *darkness over all the land*, or if you please *over all the earth*, at the time of our Saviour's Death: This *Darkness* I never denied, nor did the learned Gentlemen who wrote against me attempt to *vindicate*: it was acknowledged on all sides. But the Question in debate was, Whether *Phlegon's* Testimony, usually produced and appealed to, related to the *Scriptural Fact*, or not. The *Scriptural Fact* is certain, and depends solely on the Authority of the Evangelists, whether *Phlegon's* Testimony related to it, or not: So that I may lessen or depretiate the one, without lessening or depretiating the other; unless your Lordship can prove that *Phlegon's* Testimony is the same with that of the Evangelists.

The *Third* thing your Lordship charges me with is—"The lessening of the Number of Prophecies about the *Messiah*,
" and

“ and consequently depretiating of them
 “ all but those of *Daniel*.” p. 33. “ It
 “ is,” says your Lordship, “ surpriz-
 “ ing to all sincere Christians, that the
 “ forementioned Author” (your Lordship is
 speaking of me) “ thought fit even in a
 “ professed Vindication of the Christian
 “ Religion, to *reduce* all the antient Pro-
 “ phecies of the *Messiah* that are of any
 “ importance to the Prophecies of *Daniel*
 “ *alone*, if not chiefly to *one* only of them.”
 You add, “ It is superfluous to offer *any*
 “ *proof* that such a lessening of the Num-
 “ ber of Prophecies about the *Messiah*, and
 “ consequently such a depretiating of them
 “ *all but those of Daniel*, carries along with
 “ it a proportionable diminution of the
 “ credibility of the Christian Religion,”
 “ p. 32, 33. I reply,

It is, My Lord, surprizing not only to all
 sincere Christians, but to all Men of com-
 mon Candor, that your Lordship should
 fall into so strange a Mistake, or should so
 inadvertently misrepresent the design of that
 Book, which you refer to. You first
 charge me with “ reducing all the antient
 “ Prophecies

“ Prophecies of the *Messiah* that are of a-
 “ ny importance to those of *Daniel* alone:”
 and then in a *Note* this Observation is made.
 —This was *litterally true*, when that “ Au-
 “ thor professedly *vindicated the Christian*
 “ *Religion*, viz. in 1725. But since he
 “ has thought fit in his late Treatise of the
 “ *Principles and Connexion of Natural and*
 “ *Revealed Religion*, to allow *some other*
 “ *Prophecies* besides those of *Daniel*, as
 “ fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and since there-
 “ by he has consequentially *retracted his*
 “ *former ill-grounded Reduction* of antient
 “ Prophecies—&c.

My Answer is, 1st. That I never did in
 Thought, or Word, or Deed, attempt or
 “ think fit to reduce all the antient Prophe-
 “ cies of the *Messiah* that are of any im-
 “ portance to the Prophecies of *Daniel*
 “ alone:” and consequently what your
 Lordship says “ was *litterally true* in 1725,”
 I call upon your Lordship to *prove* to have
 been true either in 1725 or at any time
 either before, or since. And 2^{dly}. I never
 have *retracted* in my late Book, either di-
 rectly, or *consequentially*, any such *former Re-*
duction of antient Prophecy.

To

To shew how much your Lordship has mistaken me and my designs—Is there not in the very Book your Lordship refers to, a whole Chapter, wherein an Enquiry is made why our Saviour and the Apostles did not appeal to certain Prophecies, which, since their days, Christians have commonly appealed to? Is there not in that Chapter the famous Prophecy of *Genesis* xlix. 10. And That of *Haggai* c. ii. 7, 8. accounted for? Are there not several Prophecies (not one of which are in *Daniel*) allowed to be Prophecies relating to the *Messiah*, mentioned betwixt p. 232—293? Nay did I not expressly declare in the *Preface* to my Book, “ that I did not design nor would I be understood to exclude *all*, or *any other* Prophecies?” Your Lordship may indeed forget, or might not take Notice of, the Declaration made in the *Preface*; but it is not so easy to account for your charging me with such a *depretiating of them all but those of Daniel*; or the *reducing* them all to *Daniel alone*.

Is the Ground of this Charge this, That I have insisted principally on the Prophecies

cies of *Daniel*? I own I did ; and I think a wiser person than either your Lordship, or myself, or any other Man, shewed me the way. Our Saviour I had observed, appealed to *Daniel*, or referred to him, or had him in view, above 200 times, and in comparison but very rarely appealed to other Prophecies. What He made the foundation of his preaching to the Jews, I humbly conceived to be the strongest foundation I could insist on to convince an *Unbeliever*. And if our Lord himself is not chargeable with *reducing* all the antient Prophecies to those of *Daniel alone*, or with *depretiating all but those of Daniel*, I hope I may be excused for following his *unblemished Example*.

But supposing, my Lord, that I had not so good a reason as this for taking the Method I at that time did : nay suppose that I had never so much as mentioned any other Prophecy but those of *Daniel*, will your Lordship thence infer that I *depre-
tiated* all the Rest? Because that Learned Prelate the Lord Bishop of *Durham* insisted on *Twelve* Prophecies, would you say that
he

he consequentially *depretiated* all but those *Twelve*? The Prophecies of *Daniel* which I insisted on, were enough for my purpose, and fully answered my Designs; and if I had no occasion for more to make good my Argument, I do not see that I was obliged to use more: or that I thereby *depre-
tiated* or slighted, what might be useful in another manner of treating the Argument against Infidelity.

The Conclusion of your Lordship's Note is almost as remarkable as the beginning of it. You tell us, that “ you cannot too for-
“ bear to observe on this occasion, that
“ this Author in his last Treatise is grown
“ *so very fond* of the Argument of Pro-
“ phecies which he had *reduced before to*
“ *very narrow limits*, as to *suspend* the Ar-
“ gument of *Miracles* chiefly, if not sole-
“ ly, on the Prophecies of the *Old Testa-
“ ment*, and therefore to make the latter
“ the primary and principal proof of the
“ Truth of the Christian Religion. But it
“ is to be hoped from the beforemention-
“ ed Instance of *reforming* his System, that
“ this new dependence of the Truth of
“ Miracles

“ Miracles upon the Truth of Prophecies
 “ will in due time be likewise *retracted*,
 “ and a just stress be *restored* to the Argu-
 “ ment of Miracles.” —

Give me leave my Lord to express my Astonishment at such a heap of Misrepresentations. I never did, nor never attempted to reduce the Argument of Prophecy *to very narrow limits*, nor to *any limits* at all : I never have *reformed my System*, nor have I seen occasion to do it ; I have never *taken any thing from* the Argument of Miracles, and therefore I can never *restore* any thing to it : I have never *suspended* the Argument of Miracles either *chiefly* or *solely* on the Prophecies of the *Old Testament* : I have never *retracted*, nor have I yet had reason for *retracting* any thing I have said about Prophecy : And whereas your Lordship tells me that I am *grown so fond* of the “ Argument of Prophe-
 “ cy—as to *suspend* the Argument of Mira-
 “ cles chiefly if not solely on the Prophecies of the *Old Testament*,” —If I have used the Argument from Prophecy to purposes to which it does not belong, as well as to what it does belong—If I have used it improperly and

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unseasonably—If I have applied it to cases which it does not concern, or affect, your Lordship might say I was *grown very fond* of it. But I take the liberty to assure your Lordship, that my Notions of Prophecy are the same now as they were in 1725, and I do not know that your Lordship has any grounds, or any Authority, for talking of my *retracting*, or *reforming*, my Systems.

In the present *Note*, your Lordship speaks of my making “ the Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, the primary and principal *proof* “ of the Truth of the Christian Religion :” and that I suspend the Argument of Miracles chiefly, “ if not solely on the Prophecies of the “ *Old Testament*.” Strange Propositions ! unknown to me, and I believe to every body else !: How have I expressed myself that your Lordship could possibly gather such Absurdities from my Books ? I wish your Lordship would take the trouble to cite my own words, that I might be able to change what could mislead your Lordship ? The Prophecies of the *Old Testament* which relate to the *Messiah* must agree to *Jesus of Nazareth*, or else he could not be *The Christ* foretold :

foretold: But how they are, or can be the *primary* or *principal proof* of the Truth of the Christian Religion, I know not. They are not *Proofs*, but the *sine qua non*; All circumstances in them must agree to the Person who claims to be the *Christ*, or else no Miracles, no Proofs, whatever can be of any force. So again; I am charged with “*suspending* the Argument of *Miracles* upon the Prophecies of the *Old Testament*.” What Argument of Miracles? Do you mean the Argument taken from the Miracles done by Christ, or the Apostles, to prove their Mission? Have I *suspended* this upon Prophecies of the *Old Testament*? What Relation has the One to the Other? Or have I never mentioned Prophecies of the *New Testament* as well as *Old Testament*.

So again; You say “that You cannot
“but take Notice that in my late *review*
“of the Argument of *Prophecies* as fulfilled in Jesus Christ, I have thought fit
“to deny the force of *all* Typical Prophecies.” And for this you refer to my *Principles and Connexion*, c. x. p. 218, &c. Every Reader may well be surprized to be told,

that I never did deny the force of all *Typical Prophecies*, either in this Book, or in any other. Even your Lordship in the very next words is pleased to limit and confine your own words; and you declare that you mean not *all Typical Prophecies*, but only “all those *prefigurative characters* which “in their *primary sense* related to other “things or persons, but were afterwards *fulfilled*, i. e. were more eminently accomplished in our blessed Saviour, or some “of his Transactions.” Whether I deny these or not I cannot say, till I see them particularly specified. But as your Lordship has produced an instance of what you mean in the following words; viz. “that “the *same figurative Expressions* are used by “Jesus Christ himself in the Prophecy of “the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, that are “used in the very same Prophecy of the “Destruction of the whole World,” and “those very lofty Expressions were first verified in the destruction of *Jerusalem*, “considered as *Typical* of the destruction “of the World, and therefore one day to “be more eminently accomplished,”—I own
I do

I do deny this *Typical Prophecy*, and am persuaded that our Saviour gave distinct Prophecies of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of the *End of the World*, and of his *coming again*: And if the same figurative Expressions be used, yet still what is said of *Jerusalem* extends to nothing but *Jerusalem*, and has no relation to the End of the World; no, nor is it *Typical* of the End of the World. But I will not enter into this, but leave it to your Lordship's second thoughts.

The Last Thing I am charged with by your Lordship is, “ *That in proportion as I*
 “ *have depretiated or lessened the Miracles*
 “ *and Prophecies of the Gospel, I have less-*
 “ *ened the Authority of the Moral Pre-*
 “ *cepts that Christ inculcated on all his Dis-*
 “ *ciples, p. 25.*

I am contented, my Lord, to admit this consequence, since I have sufficiently vindicated myself from ever having *depretiated* or *lessened* either the *Miracles*, or the *Prophecies* of the Gospel; and it is allowed that this accusation is only *in proportion* to what has been *made out* upon the former heads.

I am forry your Lordship has given me any occasion to make such complaints as I am forced to make; but I will trouble you no longer than to say, That I am,

My Lord,

Your's &c.

A. A. SYKES.

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