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Letter.

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March 15th 1855.

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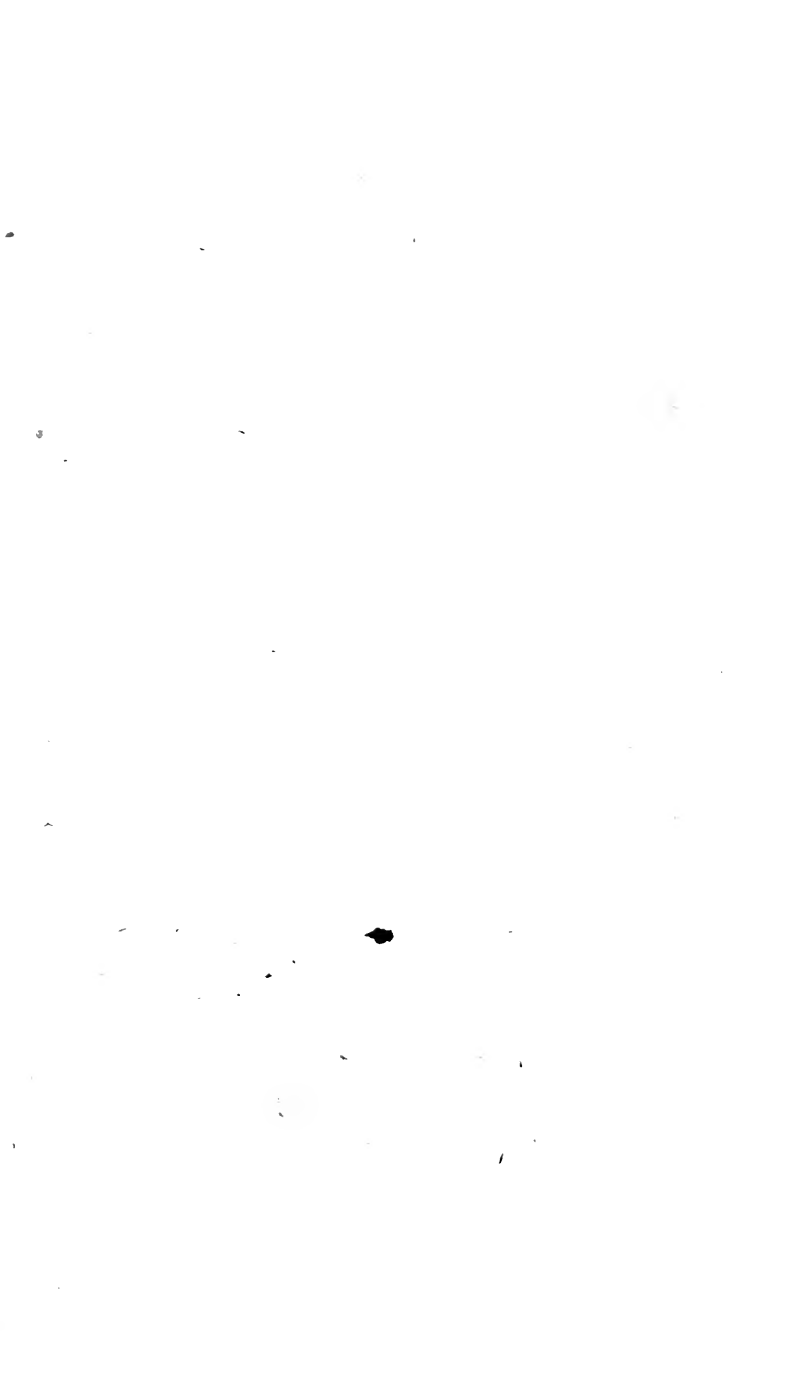
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Co. Matthews



A
FAIR STATE
OF THE
CONTROVERSY
BETWEEN
Mr. WOOLSTON
AND HIS
ADVERSARIES:

CONTAINING

The Substance of what he asserts in his
Six Discourses against the *Literal Sense*
of our BLESSED SAVIOUR'S
MIRACLES;

AND WHAT

| | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Bishop GIBSON, | Dr. ROGERS, |
| Bishop CHANDLER, | Mr. STEBBING, |
| Bishop SMALLBROKE, | Mr. CHANDLER, |
| Bishop SHERLOCK, | Mr. LARDNER, |
| Dr. PEARCE, | Mr. RAY, &c. |

Have Advanc'd against him.

By the Reverend Mr. THO. STACKHOUSE,
Author of the Compleat *Body of Divinity*.

L O N D O N :


Printed for EDWARD SYMON, over-against the
Royal Exchange in *Cornhill*. 1730.



T O T H E
Right Reverend Father in G O D,
E D M U N D
Lord B I S H O P of
L O N D O N :

A N D
One of the L O R D S of His
M A J E S T Y ' s most Honourable
P R I V Y C O U N C I L .

May it please Your Lordship,

 O accept of this my
poor Service in
the Cause of *Chri-*
stianity, as the only ac-
knowledgment, I am able

A 2 to

to make, for the many Favours and good Offices, which Your Lordship has been pleas'd to bestow upon me, but, at the same time, requir'd me to conceal, *that the Praise thereof might not be of Men, but of God.*

Strong are the Ties of Gratitude, where with I think my self bound, upon the Reception of any Kindness; but, if I were even free and disengag'd in this respect, common Justice would oblige me to *pay my Debts*, and point me out the Person, to whom of
Right

Right this Work belongs, which took its Original from my reading Your Lordship's truly *Pastoral Letter*, and has borrow'd from thence so many weighty Arguments, and learned Observations, in the course of its Composition. For, believe me, my Lord, whatever the Excellency of your other *vast* and laborious Works may be, in this small Tract, You *have shewn yourself* (what the great Apostle of the *Gentiles* requires of every one of your Sacred Order) *in all Things a Pattern of good Works, in Doctrine shewing uncorrupt-*

A 3 *ness,*

ness, gravity, sincerity, and sound Speech, which cannot be condemn'd ; that he, who is of a contrary part, may be ashamed.

Happy is the State and Condition of that Clergy, who live under the Care and Observation of One, whose generous and obliging Temper charms them into a Compliance with his good Counsel, and the Performance of their own Duty ; whose singular Knowledge in the Laws and *Canons* of the Church secures him from the Danger of any mistake in point of Government,

vernment, and whose Care and Vigilance, in keeping up the good Orders and Discipline thereof, give a due *Lustre* and Recommendation to its *Constitution*; whose Eye *runs to and fro*, in the large and extensive Sphere, wherein He presides, to superintend *all* in their several Stations, but, in a more peculiar manner, to distinguish *those*, who, by their Learning and Industry, have approv'd themselves as *able Ministers of the New Testament*, and strenuous Assertors of Divine Truths; and whose Zeal and Courage in the Cause of
God

God and Defence of the Gospel, not only animates others in their Conflict with Infidelity, but engages himself likewise to take the Field; and, having sustain'd the first Onset, and repell'd the main Attack, leaves them, in a manner, nothing to do, but to pursue a vanquish'd Enemy, broken and bereaved of his boasted Strength.

'Twas a sad Reproach,
 my Lord, to the Priesthood
 of old, that *all the Beasts of
 the Field came to devour, yea,
 all the Beasts of the Forests;
 because the Watchmen were
 blind, they were all ignorant,*
they

they were all dumb Dogs, that could not bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber, and looking to their own way, every one for his Gain, from his Quarter. But even *Envy* itself, (how forward soever to *speak evil of Dignities*) can fix no such Character upon our *Spiritual Pastors* and *Rulers*, when she beholds their *Labour* and *Affiduity* in the *Defence* of the great *Evidences* of *Christianity*: when she beholds one of them vindicating the proper *Application* of the *Prophecies*, in the *Old Testament*, with an uncommon *Compass* of *Jewish Learning*,

ing,

ing, and purfuing its Oppugners through all their Wiles and Subterfuges ; another, afferting the Truth and *literal* Senfe of the Miracles in the *New*, (expos'd to publick Scorn in a daring and petulant manner) from Topicks of Reason, as well as the Testimonies of all Antiquity ; and Your Lordship, (out of your tender Care and Concern for our Welfare) giving us both the *Caution*, and *Antidote* againft that Poison, which of late has been vended from the Prefs ; and interpoſing your own Pen, in order to *inform* the Ignorant, and *convince* the
the

the Erroneous, or (in a Stile more *Pastoral*) to retrieve the wandering, and bring again that which is driven away, to strengthen the Sick, and bind up that which is broken, to wait upon the Weak, and carry the Impotent upon your Shoulders.

Great is the Iniquity of the Age, and strong is the general propension to Infidelity; but, from the Influence of Your Lordship's Conduct, in the Eminent Station You possess, we promise ourselves to see the Number of those, who have made Shipwreck of their
Faith,

Faith, and of those, *who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness*, diminish'd; idle and profane Talkers, who *make a mock of Sin*, and think there can be Wit in Blaphemy, excluded from all civil Society; such busy *Factor*s for Infidelity, as, (in this great and populous Place) are continually running about *deceiving and being deceived*, discountenanc'd; a true Spirit of Piety, and the Love of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, reviv'd; Religion rescu'd from the Insults, that are now made upon it; and the prevailing *publick Vices*, which

which a very vile Author thinks to pass upon the World for *publick Benefits*, exploded, and reform'd :

*Te Duce, siqua latent Sceleris vestigia nostri,
Irrita perpetuâ solvent Formidine Terras.*

That the great God of Heaven and Earth, in whose *hand are the Hearts of Kings*, may give You such *Favour in the Sight* of his *Vicegerent* here below, as may enable You to accomplish those great and good Designs, which Your generous and upright Heart has conceiv'd, for the Advancement of true Religion, the sure Stabiliment of all *civil Power* and
Great-

Greatness; That his Divine Providence may bless You in your *private*, as well as your *publick* Capacity, and take under his watchful Care and Protection Your most excellent and beloved *Consort*, and all the Branches of Your numerous Family, those *Arrows in the Hand of the mighty Man*, wherewith Your Lordship's *Quiver* is happily full; and that, for the Comfort of the Friends, and the Confusion of the Enemies of the *Cross of Christ*, he may, in this Life, reward your *Labour of Love* with Health and Strength, and length of
Days,

Days; and, when You have fought a good Fight, and finish'd Your Course, and kept the Faith, give You that Crown of Righteousness, which he hath laid up for those, that love the appearing of his Son Jesus Christ, and shall be able, at that Day, to give up their Charge with Joy; is the daily and incessant Prayer of one, who, by all the Ties of Esteem, Duty, and Gratitude, professes himself,

My Lord,

*Your Lordship's
most humble,
most devoted, and
oblig'd Servant,*

Tho. Stackhouse.



T O T H E

R E A D E R.



*T*HE Controversy, which Mr. Woolston has occasion'd among us, has of late become so famous, by having three or four

R I G H T R E V E R E N D

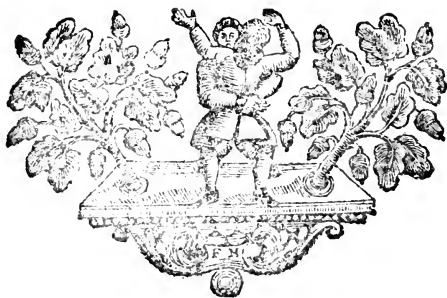
B I S H O P S, as well as some Eminent Divines of most Communions, engag'd in it, but, by the frequent Digressions and Altercations on both Sides, a Redundancy of Learning, and a Method of answering Paragraph by Paragraph, which most of his Adversaries have thought fit to pursue, is grown so very prolix and tedious; that I thought it not improper, by throwing aside what was Superfluous, and retaining only what was Material in the whole Debate, to give the Publick a more clear and easy View and

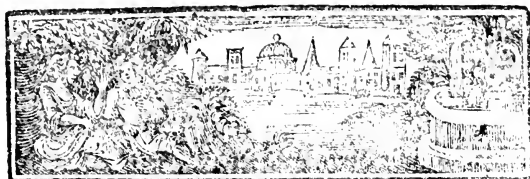
B Repre-

TO the READER.

*Representation of it. And, if in doing this, by reducing the Objections (which lay not a little loosely in him) into a more compact Order, I have done some Service to Mr. Woolston; and, by comprizing the Answers in continu'd Discourses, I have done no Injury to the Sense and strong Reasoning of his Adversaries; the Reader, I hope, will hereby be better enabled to judge for himself, and * to try the Spirits, whether they be of God, because many false Prophets are gone out into the World.*

* 1 John iv. 1.





A
True STATE
 OF THE
CONTROVERSY.



S E C T. I.

Of the Truth and Authority of the
 EVANGELISTS.



NE great, and very material difference, between Mr. *Woolston* and his *Adversaries*, is, concerning the Truth and Authority of the *Evangelical Writers*. The generality of *Christians* have always look'd upon them, as so many *honest* and *undesigned*

Mr. Wool-
ston's Ob-
jection.

Men, who have given us a *plain*, but *rational* Account of our Saviour's *Doctrine* and *Miracles*; and in doing this, were assisted by the Holy Ghost, *the Spirit of Truth*, and, consequently, could not run into Errors, much less be guilty of *wilful Lying*, and *barefac'd Impostures*: “ But the History of *Jesus*, “ as it is recorded by the *Evangelists*, “ and commonly believ'd by *Christians*, “ says Mr. *Woolston*, ^a is so improbable “ in itself, and, when thoroughly ex- “ amin'd into, full of such *Incredibilities* “ and *gross Absurdities*, as are quite “ dishonourable to the Name of *Christ*. “ The *Evangelists*, no doubt, ^b were, “ on all occasions, liberal enough of “ their Master's Praise, and apt to say “ more to his Honour, than was strictly “ true, but in the matter of his work- “ ing *Miracles*, ^c they seem to endea- “ vour to *outstretch* one another: *Mat- “ thew* indeed is a little sparing and “ modest in his *Romançe*; but *Luke*, “ perceiving the Insufficiency of his “ Tale, devises a Miracle of a bigger “ Size; and yet this being thought in- “ sufficient still, *St. John*, rather than “ his *Prophet's* Honour should fail for “ want

^a Disc. 1. pag. 19. ^b Disc. 3. p. 51. ^c Disc. 5. p. 7, 10, 11.

“ want of his Assistance, forges a *mon-*
 “ *strously huge one*, as if he were mind-
 “ ed ^d to palm upon his Readers an im-
 “ probable Tale of Senseless Circumstan-
 “ ces, and ^e to bambouze Mankind
 “ into a Belief of the grossest *Absurdi-*
 “ *ties*. For indeed ^f they do not endea-
 “ vour so much as to lye with a Grace,
 “ nor take they any pains to make their
 “ Stories hang together, which are ge-
 “ nerally ^g such *silly, nonsensical*, and
 “ *unphilosophical* Stuff, as would make
 “ one believe, either ^h they forgot them-
 “ selves, or blunder’d egregiously, or
 “ put a *Banter* upon us, to try how far
 “ their absurd Tales would pass upon
 “ the World with Credit. The Truth
 “ is, the Stories of *Christ’s Miracles*, and
 “ other Transactions of his Life, are ⁱ
 “ so *blindly*, and *lamely*, and *imperfectly*
 “ reported, that ^k *Infidels* (if they want-
 “ ed not Liberty) would certainly ex-
 “ pose them facetiously; as indeed ^l there
 “ is no need of much Wit to make them
 “ nauseous and ridiculous to the mean-
 “ est Understandings. The best that
 “ can be said of them, in their *literal*
 “ Acceptation, is, that ^m they are like
 “ *Gulliverian* Tales of Persons and
 B 3 Things,

^d Disc. 3. p. 38. ^e Ibid. 3. p. 49. ^f Ibid. ^g Ibid.
 p. 25. ^h Ibid. p. 46. ⁱ Ibid. 2. p. 5. ^k Ibid. p. 7.
^l Ibid. 2. p. 48. ^m Ibid. 5. p. 17.

State of the Controversy between

“ Things, which, out of the *Romance*,
 “ never had any Being; and this, add-
 “ ed to the *distance* of Time, wherein
 “ they are supposed to have been writ-
 “ ten, and the Condition of the Writers,
 “ who were all the *Friends* and *Follow-*
 “ *ers* of *Jesus*, is enough to make every
 “ prudent Reader inquisitive into their
 “ *Authority*, and very cautious in what
 “ *Sense* it is, he receives them.

The Ob-
 jection an-
 swered, as
 to *distance*
 of Time.

We acknowledge indeed, that, at
 this distance of Time, we are under
 some Disadvantages to prove the Truth
 of *Matters of Fact*, not only because we
 are forced many times to make use of
 the Testimony of our own Authors,
 which may look suspicious, but be-
 cause it is allowed, that, in all Ages,
 there has been abundance of *fictitious*
 Writers, which may endanger the *Credit*
 of the *true*: But when it is considered,
 that, notwithstanding these Impediments,
 there are several *Histories* in the World,
 which, merely upon their own *Testimo-*
ny, have obtained a good Repute, and
 the *Facts*, related therein, a general
 Credit and Belief; we cannot but think,
 that *sacred* Writers are entitled to the
 same *privilege*, and that, to deny *Moses*
 and the *Evangelists* the Favour, which

we

we are so ready to grant to *Thucydides*, *Cæsar*, or any other *profane* Historian, is very *partial* and unbecoming Treatment.

Multitudes of *Spurious* Books indeed Spurious Books. are every where extant in the World, but do we therefore, in other Cases, labour to persuade our selves that there are none *Genuine*?² Do we suspect whether we have any of the true Writings of *Cicero*, because an *Italian* counterfeited a Book *de Consolatione* in his Name? Or do we dispute whether *Cæsar's Commentaries* were his own, because it is uncertain who wrote the *Alexandrian War*, that is annexed to them? In these Instances we make no Scruple, and why then should the *sacred Writers* stand all the Brunt of the Objection? The *Evangelists*, we own, were the *Friends* and *Followers* of Jesus, but if this must affect their Credit as *Historians*, by parity of Reason, every thing we read in any *Roman* or *Greek* Author may come under the same Fate.

We have hitherto indeed believed them implicitly, and upon their own *Testimony*; but if the Question were put, how do we know, whether ever the *Roman Empire* prevailed, and extended it self to the Bounds of the then-known And the Bound -
less being
Christ's
friends. World,

B 4

World,

² Vid. A Letter to a Deist. Lon. 1677, p. 16, &c.

World, as is pretended? ° For was not this related by Persons of the same Country, and for that Reason bound to *aggrandize* its Fame? And may not a thousand Records be lost, which, if they were now extant, would give a quite different turn to the Story? *Carthage* might have the better in the Contest, *Hannibal* overthrow *Scipio*, and the *Persians* quite subdue the *Macedonians*, for any thing we know, since the the present Histories were written by Men of the *Roman* Interest, in one Case, and in the other, all our Accounts of *Alexander's* Expedition were *originally* from the *Greeks*: These Authors, it is certain, had the same biafs of *national Affection* upon their Minds, but none of them gave the thousand part of that Evidence for their Fidelity, that the Writers of the *Evangelical* History did; and yet what should we think of a Person, who should call in Question the best Histories of all Nations, merely because they were written by those of the same Country? What indeed, but that he was going to destroy all *historical Faith* at once, since Books of this kind must not be wrote by *Friends* and *Acquaintance*, for fear of *Partiality*, nor could

? A Letter to a Deist. p. 17.

could they be wrote by *Strangers* or *Enemies*, without giving a much greater Umbrage to suspect both the *Compass* of their *Knowledge*, and the *Strength* of their *Integrity*.

The Truth is, no tolerable Reason can be assigned, why *Credit* should not be given to *sacred*, as well as *profane* History, unless it should appear, that there is not the same *Evidence* of *Credibility*, or the same *Marks* of *historical Truth* inherent in the one, as may be supposed to be found in the other: Which is the Question we are now going to consider.

That, in the Reign of *Tiberius*, there lived such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, and suffered Death under *Pontius Pilate*, the Roman Governour in *Judæa*, is what *Christians* in all Countries profess, what *Jews* of all Ages have acknowledged, and what even *Heathen* Authors, such as *Suetonius*, *Tacitus*, and *Pliny jun.* have recorded. That this *Jesus* had, from the very first, a Succession of Men to publish his Doctrines, and to testify to the World the History of his Life and Actions; and that, in a short space of Time, a certain Number of approved *Historians* recorded them in Writing, to

The present State of the Gospels.

bc

be the *Pillar and Foundation of all Truth*, (as the *Ancients* call it) is what the earliest Writers in the *Christian Church* relate, and our present *Possession* of the Books themselves does imply. That the Books, which have descended to us, are the same which these Historians indited, and the Writers of the very next Age, and every Age since have asserted, both *Jews* and *Heathens*, in their Tracts against *Christianity* have allowed, and the numerous Passages cited from them, and in their Names, even to this Day, do evince. And, lastly, that the *Contents* of these Books, in their descent to us, have not suffered any considerable *Alteration*; but, (excepting some few Variations, occasioned by the Negligence of *Transcribers*;) from the Days of the *Apostles*, and *apostolick* Men, to the present Age, have always been the same; the long Continuance of the *Autographa* in the *Church*, the many *Copies* and *Transcripts* taken from them, and their early *Translations* into various Languages, have, under the Providence of God, been our Security.

Since then we have in our Hand *authentick* Records of our Saviour's Life and Actions, let us look a little into them,

¶ Bp. Gibson's pastoral Letter.

them, and see, whether their Authors have been defective in any of the *Marks* and *Characters* of *true Historians*.

That the *Evangelists* were Persons of too much *Truth* and *Honesty*, to relate any wilful *Lyes*, is evident from the whole Tenor of their Writings, where in the strictest Precepts about *speaking Truth*, and the severest Prohibitions of *Guile* and *Disimulation*, either in our Words or Actions, do every where meet us. Men of *Cunning* and *Artifice* have all their sawning and insinuating Ways, to captivate the Weak, and such as delight in Flattery; but, with what *Plainness* and *Simplicity* do they go about to persuade Men to become *Christians*, when they barely relate the Matters of Fact concerning the *Resurrection* of *Jesus*, saying, that they themselves were *Eye-witnesses* of it, and, upon the Credit of this their Testimony, expect that we should assent? Had they been minded to *aggrandize their Master*, they would have displayed indeed the wonderfulness of his *Birth*, the many *Miracles* he wrought, the *Descent* of the *holy Ghost* upon him, the Voice from Heaven declaring him to be the *Son of God*, the Glories of his *Resurrection*, and the Triumph of his *Ascension*; but by all

all means wou'd they have labour'd to conceal the Obscurity of his Birth and Parentage, the low Condition of his Life, and the shameful and ignominious Circumstances of his Death. Had they been minded to extol him above measure, as a great and mighty Worker of Miracles, they would have expatiated upon every one that came in their way, and not compriz'd some in the short compass of a Verse or two, and conceal'd others under a general *Enumeration*, as we find them frequently do. Had they design'd to set off themselves, their Labours, and Perils, and bold Adventures for the sake of the Gospel they might have describ'd in all their pleasing Horror; but (what is a singular Instance of their *Truth and Ingenuity*) their own mean Extraction and Employments, their Ignorance and Mistakes, their ambitious Contentions, cowardly Desertions, and base Denial of their Lord, in the Time of the greatest Exigence and Distress, they themselves have left upon Record, for all succeeding Ages to pursue and Censure: Or had they design'd any private Profit or Advantage to themselves, they took the most improper Method in the World, in publishing what, *to the Jews*, they knew, would be a *Stumbling-block*, and *to the*
Gen-

Gentiles, foolishness; and what they could not but foresee, would expose both them and their Companions to Scorn and Contempt, to Dangers and Hazards, to Poverty and Want, to Bonds and Imprisonment, and Death itself.

Now when Persons are both above the Views of Secular Interest, and forward to lay open their own Faults and Failings, merely for the Sake of Truth; 'tis a strong Presumption that they have no Inclination to write Falshoods, if so be they are but *competent Judges* of what they are about, and have sufficient *means of Information* in their Power. And herein the *Evangelists* could not be defective, because (even upon the Supposition of no Divine Assistance or *Inspiration*) they had Persons enough living, to give them full Instructions, as to the great Periods and Actions of our Saviour's Life. Of his *Conception* and *Birth*, and other Particulars, preceding his *Baptism*, they might have an Account from *Simeon* and *Anna*, and the Parents of *John*, as well as from *Joseph* and *Mary*: Of his *Baptism*, and what thereupon ensu'd, they might have Intelligence from *John* and his Disciples: Of his *Fasting* and *Temptation*, from the same *John*, who not

Their
Sufficiency
of In-
telligence.

un-

unlikely retir'd with him into the Wilderness, (where himself had been before) and continu'd with him until his return; and of the several Transactions in his *publick Ministry*, they themselves, as well as the other Apostles, were *Eye and Ear-witnesses*, and as competent Judges of what they heard and saw, as the greatest Philosophers living. By these and several other Helps, they might be supply'd with proper Materials for their respective Histories; and when they had thus compil'd them, (we speak still upon the Supposition of no *Inspiration*) their Fidelity appear'd, in their speedy committing them to writing. For, according to the best Account of *Antiquity*, St. *Matthew* wrote his Gospel about *eight*, St. *Mark* about *ten*, St. *Luke* within *fifteen*, and St. *John*, not much above *two and thirty* Years after our Saviour's Ascension; lest any thing deserving the Notice, or necessary to the Salvation of Posterity, might escape their Memories, by reason of too long a delay.

The Contents of their Gospels.

And indeed, if we look into the *Contents* of the *Histories*, as well as the *Characters* of the *Historians*, we shall soon perceive such a *Simplicity*, as well as *Majesty* in their *Narrations*, such *Purity* in their *Precepts*, and such *Sublimity* in their

their *Doctrines*, as plainly denote them to be a *Divine Revelation*.

Men of quick Parts and Ingenuity, 'tis true, may tell us *cunningly-devised Fables*, and amuse their Readers with *Tales* and *Romances*, that had never any Foundation in Nature; but, to frame such an excellent *System of Morality*, as is contain'd in the *Gospels*; to give such an extraordinary Account of the Satisfaction for Sin, and of the Nature and Office of a *Mediator*; to feign the Life and Actions of a *Messiah*, which should agree so exactly with the *Predictions* of the *Prophets*, and the *Types* and *Prefigurations* of the *Mosaic Law*; and to make the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of another Life so agreeable to humane Reason, and so worthy of Divine Majesty; this was a *Scheme*, which these poor *illiterate Men* were no more able to *invent*, than they were to *create* a World: And yet, notwithstanding the great variety and difficulty of this Province, 'tis wonderful to observe, how all the four *Evangelists*, who wrote at different Times, and in distant Places, agree, not only in the main *Topicks*, but sometimes in the most minute Circumstances, in so much that, whenever they seem to disagree (which chiefly arises from their

not

not confining themselves to the *same Words*, or the *same Order of Time*, and, with a little *critical* Observation, may easily be reconciled) whenever they disagree, I say, it looks as if the Spirit of God design'd on purpose that it should be so, not only that they might be *distinct* Witnesses of the same Things, but that all succeeding Ages of the Christian World might see with their Eyes, that they neither *transcribed* from one another, nor *combin'd* or *complotted* together, like crafty Knaves.

I might here produce the Testimony which God gave to the Truth of the Gospel, * *by Signs and Wonders, and by diverse Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost*: And what a mighty Proof the *Evangelists* themselves gave of their Fidelity in composing those Writings, which they, and *Thousands* more, were not afraid to seal with their Blood: But because an Agreement with other Authors is always reputed a good Token of *Historical* Probity, I shall rather take notice of some few Facts, whereby the professed Enemies of *Christianity*, both *Jews* and *Pagans*, have confirm'd the Authority of these *Sacred* Penmen.

§ The

* Heb. ii. 4.

The Testimony of other Authors.

‘The coming of a *King* out of the *East*, who should do great and mighty Actions, was a constant Report (founded on the *Sibylline Prophecies*) which prevail’d about the Time of our Saviour’s Birth, and *Tacitus*, (as a great *Politician* and *Statesman*,) will needs have it fulfill’d in *Vespasian* and *Titus*, because they were called out of *Judæa* to the Empire of *Rome*. The Appearance of a *wonderful Star*, at the Time of his *Nativity*, is mention’d by *Pliny* in his *Natural History*, under the Name of a *bright Comet*. The Murther of the Babes of *Bethlehem* is mention’d by *Dion* in his Life of *Octavius Cæsar*, and *Macrobius*, (who relates the Thing more at large) tells us, that *Herod*, upon the account of the same Jealousy, order’d his own Son to be slain. The Miracles that Jesus did, when he enter’d upon his *Ministry*; the Title he laid claim to, of being the *Messias*, or a divine Person sent from Heaven to Redeem Mankind; and the Doctrines which he preach’d, as they are recorded in the *Gospels*, are acknowledg’d and confess’d by *Celsus*, *Julian*, and *Porphiry*, as several of the Ancient Fathers

C

thers

‘*Edward’s* Truth and Authority of the H. Scripture. ° L. 2. & 25. * *Saturnal* L. 2. c. 4. † *Origins* cont. *Celsum*. *Cyvil* contr. *Julian*: & *August. civ. Dei* L. 22. c. 18.

thers assure us. The *Death* of our blessed Saviour, and the manner of his Suffering under *Pontius Pilate*, and in the Reign of *Tiberius*, is mention'd (as we said) both by *Tacitus* and *Lucian*. The *universal Eclipse*, which happen'd at the Time of his *Passion*, is mention'd² by *Dionysius*, before he was converted to the Faith. The terrible *Earthquake* which was at the same time, is related by *Dion*, *Pliny*, and *Suetonius*; and the *rending* of the *Veil of the Temple*, (mention'd by three *Evangelists*;) is testify'd by the *Jewish* Historian *Josephus*, who, among other Passages, has given us this memorable one concerning our Saviour Christ. “ At this time there was one
“ *Jesus*, a wise Man, if I may call him
“ a Man, for he did most wonderful
“ Works, and was a Teacher of those,
“ who received the Truth with Delight:
“ he brought many to his Persuasion,
“ both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*. This
“ was Christ: and tho' he was, by the
“ Instigation of some of our Nation, and
“ by *Pilate's* Sentence, hung on the
“ *Cross*, yet those, who loved him at
“ first, did not cease to do so; for he
“ came to Life again the third Day, and
“ ap-

² *Annal. L. 18. c. 44.*

“ appeared to them ; the Divine Pro-
 “ phets having foretold these, and in-
 “ finite other Wonders of him : And to
 “ this Day there remains a Sect of Men,
 “ who have from him the Name of
 “ *Christians.* ” A Passage, which (as
 “ a learned *French* Author has prov’d)
 is far from being an *Interpolation.*

Upon a Review of what has been
 said then, with Relation to the *Evange-*
lists, viz. That they were *honest* and *undesigning* Men, recording Things *plain-*
ly, and without any artful *Insinuations*,
 and so free and impartial in their Ac-
 counts, as neither to conceal their Ma-
 ster’s mean Condition, nor their own
 Faults and Failings ; that they had suf-
 ficient means of Information in what
 they were to Record, and no visible In-
 terest in the least, to sway them against
 their Knowledge ; that they ventured
 to publish their Gospels in a short Time
 after their Lord’s Ascension, though
 they knew, that Shame, and Persecuti-
 on, and Death itself (which they under-
 went with the utmost Bravery) would
 be the result of so doing : That their
 Gospels, when made publick, appear’d
 to be far above their Skill and Capacity
 to invent, singly consider’d, and, when
 compar’d together, sufficiently uniform

An Inse-
 rence from
 the whole.

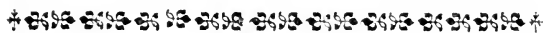
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and

‘ Mr. Martin.

and consistent ; and (what is no mean Consideration) that their greatest Enemies have, in their own Writings, either asserted or acknowledg'd the most material Parts of their Narrations : It must needs follow, that, according to the *genuine* Marks of a true Historian, we have greater Security, than any *humane* History can pretend to, of the Faithfulness of the *Evangelists*, and of the Certainty of every thing contained in their Writings : That Persons, situated in their Circumstances, even consider'd as *common* Historians, *would not* have deluded us with a false Representation of Things, but then, consider'd in the Capacity of *Inspir'd* Historians, (which Christians in all Ages have esteem'd them) they *could not* (without making God accessary to the Fraud) have banter'd our Credulity, and impos'd upon us false and roman-tick Fables ; and, consequently, that the many Faults and Absurdities, complain'd of by some, cannot be in the Writings themselves, but is too probably in the *Hearts* of the Complainers : for, *if our Gospel, i. e.* the Beauty and Excellency of our Gospel *be hid*, says the Apostle, *it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe*

lieve not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ (who is the Image of God) should shine unto them.



S E C T. II.

Of MIRACLES in general.

MIRACLES, I think, have always been accounted one of the great *Evidences* of the *Christian Religion*; Mr. Woolston's Objection.
 “ But the Miracles of Jesus, says ^a Mr. Woolston, are no proper Miracles of the ^b Messiah, nor so much as a good Proof
 “ of his *Divine Authority* to found a New Religion. Had the true Servants and Messengers of God indeed
 “ been the only Persons entrusted with this extraordinary Gift, much stress might have then been laid upon it;
 “ but since *Moses* has inform'd us, that it may be in the Power of a false Prophet ^c to give a Sign, or a Wonder, that
 “ may come to pass; since our Saviour has foretold us, that ^d there shall arise false Christs, and false Prophets, who
 “ shall shew great Signs and Wonders, enough

C 3

^a Disc. from p. 7. to p. 19. ^b Deut. xiii. 1.
^c Math. xxiv. 24.

“ nough (if it were possible) to deceive
 “ the very Elect; since his Apostle has
 “ assur’d us, that ^d the coming of Anti-
 “ christ is after the working of Satan,
 “ with all Power, and Signs, and lying
 “ Wonders; and, lastly, since History
 “ makes mention of several, such as A-
 “ pollonius Tyanneus, Vespasian, and the
 “ Irish Stroker Greatrack, who miracu-
 “ lously cur’d Diseases, as well as Jesus;
 “ either we must have the Art of distin-
 “ guishing true from false Prophets, or
 “ we can never account Miracles alone
 “ a sufficient Testimony for such, as
 “ pretend to a Commission from God.
 “ Our Saviour indeed appeals to his Mi-
 “ racles, and our Divines may imagine
 “ that the Words of the Prophet ^e (*then*
 “ *shall the Eyes of the blind be open’d, and*
 “ *the Ears of the Deaf unstopp’d, then*
 “ *shall the lame Man leap as the Hart,*
 “ *and the Tongue of the Dumb shall sing*)
 “ in the Cures that he wrought, receiv’d
 “ their full accomplishment: But that
 “ this Prophecy is to be understood, not
 “ in a literal, but in a figurative Sense,
 “ not to denote the outward Maladies of
 “ the Body, but the inward Distempers
 “ of the Soul, is apparent from that
 “ whole Context. Both the preceding
 “ and

^d 2 To ff. ii. 9. ^e Isa. xxxv. 5. &c.

“ and subsequent *Passages*, are certainly
“ Metaphorical, and therefore, to make
“ the whole consistent and uniform, the
“ intermediate Expressions ought, in the
“ same Manner to be interpreted, and
“ from hence we may conclude, that
“ when Jesus seems to appeal to *Isaiab*,
“ and to make the Cure of *corporeal* Dis-
“ eases an Indication of his being the
“ true *Messiah*, his purpose is to denote
“ the sundry Passions and Disorders of
“ the Mind, which are represented un-
“ der the Metaphors of *Blindness* and
“ *Lameness*, and *Deafness*, &c. The
“ Cure of these is a *godlike* Work, far
“ above the Imitation of Man, or *Anti-*
“ *Christ*, and infinitely more miraculous,
“ than healing any *bodily* Distempers.
“ Let others then admire and adore
“ *Jesus*, as much as they please, for
“ his wonderful Cures of bodily Dis-
“ eases, I am for the *spiritual Messiah*,
“ that remedies the Distempers of the
“ Soul, and performs all those *mystical*
“ Operations, whereof the Cure of *cor-*
“ *poral* Infirmities are but a *Type* and
“ *Figure*.

This is the full force of Mr. *Woolston's* Answer-
general Argument against the *Validity* of ^{ed.}
our Saviour's Miracles: And to give it

That true
Miracles
can be
done by
God only.

a fair Solution, it may not be amiss to enquire a little into the Nature and Use of *real* Miracles. Now ^h a true Miracle, is properly such an Operation, as exceeds the *ordinary* course of Things, and is repugnant to the known Laws of Nature, either as to its *subject Matter*, or *the Manner of its Performance*. For though we readily acknowledge that there are Beings in the *spiritual* World, which are able to perform Things far exceeding the power of Men, and therefore apt to beget Wonder and Amazement in us; yet, that any *created* Beings, and consequently Agents of a *limited* Power, are capable of working such Miracles as our Saviour did; are capable of controlling the course of Nature, of supplying Men's natural Defects, of giving Sight to the Blind, Speech to the Dumb, and Life to the Dead (which are Miracles relating to the *subject Matter*) or of doing any of those Things in an Instant, by a Touch, by a Word, at a Distance, and without any kind of outward Means (which are Miracles regarding the *Manner of their Performance*) is a Thing impossible; unless we can suppose that *limited, inferior, and created* Beings, have an equal Power

^h Bp. Smallbrooke's Vindic. p. 10.

Power of *creating, controlling, and restoring* with almighty God: which is *Contradiction* enough in all Conscience.

It was upon this Persuasion therefore, Or Persons sent by him.
viz. ⁱ That *true Miracles are the sole Operations of God*, that the World has all along agreed to acknowledge and accept of Miracles, as an *authentick and indisputable* Testimony, that the Persons entrusted with such Power, were certainly sent and commissioned by God. To this purpose we find *Pharaoh's Magicians* confessing, that the Miracles which *Moses* and *Aaron* exhibited, were ^k the *Finger of God*; and, in the Controversy between *Elijah* and the Priests of *Baal*, it was readily accepted, as a fair Proposal, that he, ^l *who answered by Fire from Heaven*, should be unanimously served, and worshipped as God. The less Reason, have we then to wonder, that we hear a learned *Ruler* of the *Jews* accosting our Lord in these Words, ^m *Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher sent from God, for no Man can do those Miracles, that thou dost, except God be with him*; or that a mean Man, who had been born Blind, should confront the whole Assembly of the

ⁱ *Stankofe's Epist. & Gosp. vol. 2. p. 63.* ^k *Exod. viii. 19.* ^l *1 Kings xviii. 24, &c.* ^m *John iii. 2.*

the *Pharisees* with this one Argument, ⁿ *since the World began, was it not heard, that any Man opened the Eyes of one, that was born Blind; if this Man were not of God, he could do nothing; or that our blessed Saviour himself should so frequently appeal to the Miracles he wrought, as proper Testimonies of his divine Mission, ° the Works, which my Father hath given me to finish, p the Works which I do in my Father's Name, the same bear Witness of me, that the Father hath sent me: q If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the Works, that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.*

Why our
Saviour
was to
work Mi-
racles.

And indeed, considering the Design of our Saviour's Mission, that he was a *Teacher sent from God* ^r to abolish a Form of Worship, which had incontestibly been established by the Power of Miracles in *Moses*, and to institute a new Religion, repugnant to the *Wisdom of the World*, in many *mysterious Doctrines*, and abhorrent to the vicious Inclinations of Men, in all its righteous Laws and Precepts; that he was appointed, in short,

ⁿ *John ix. 32, 33.* [°] *John v. 36* ^p *John x. 37.* ^q *John x. 37.* ^r *Stillingsfleet's Orig. Sacrae. p. 172.*

short, to destroy the Kingdom of the Devil, and, upon its Ruins, to erect a *Kingdom of Righteousness*; there was an absolute Necessity for him to be invested with a power of working Miracles: Otherwise, his Pretensions to this high Character had been ridiculous, and the *Jews*, with good Reason, might have demanded of him, *Master, ' we would see a Sign from thee, what Sign therefore dost thou do, that we may see and believe? What dost thou Work?* But this Demand is effectually silenced, by our Saviour's being able to make the Reply, *' If I had not done among them the Works, which none other Man did, they had not had Sin, but now they have both seen and hated, both me and my Father.*

And well may our Lord appeal to the *greatness* of his Miracles, as a proper Testimony of his being sent from God, when, in every Action of this Kind, he exercised a Power and Authority, not inferiour to that of God; ^{The Greatness of them.} *"* when, by the same Power, where-with he created all Things at first, he multiplied a few Loaves and two Fishes, into a sufficiency to feed five Thousand; when,

^c *John vi. 30.* ^e *John xv. 24.* ["] Bp. Chandler's Defence, p. 415.

when, at his Command, the Wind and the Sea grew still, and unclean Spirits departed from Men's Bodies, confessing him to be *the Son of God*; when acute Diseases and chonical Grievs, such as no length of Time, no Skill, no Remedies, no Expencc could assuage, were equally cured with a Touch, nay, with a Touch of his Garment, with a Word, nay, with a Word, that operated effectually upon the absent, and at a distance; when Persons at Death's Door, nay, actually dead, and dead for sometime, were commanded back to Life and Health, and himself, when slain by the *Jews*, and committed to the Grave, was, according to his own Prediction, raised from the Dead by the same divine Spirit, whereby he *quickneth* and *enliveneth* all Things.

A Proof
of his di-
vine Mis-
sion.

These, and many more Actions of the like nature, recorded in the *Gospels*, are plain Demonstrations of a *divine Power* residing in our blessed Saviour: And if they were affected by a divine Power, we have all the certainty imaginable of his being a *true Prophet* sent from God.

Of all the great Attributes of God, none shine brighter, and more amiably in our Eyes, than *Truth* and

and Goodness; the former cannot attest a Lye, nor the latter seduce Men into dangerous and destructive Mistakes: And yet, if God shou'd communicate any part of his Power to an *Impostor*, to enable him to work Miracles, in confirmation of his Pretences, what would become of these two Sacred Attributes? To suspect, I say, that Almighty God is capable of employing his infinite Power, and of disturbing the Course of Nature, with a design to mislead and delude Mankind, in what relates to their Eternal Concerns, is to destroy and subvert his very Nature, and leave ourselves no Notion at all of such a Being. Nay, for him to permit the same Evidences to be produc'd for Errors, as for Truth, is, in effect, to cancel his own *Credentials*, and make Miracles of no Significance at all: And therefore we may conclude, that, how artfully soever some *Impostors* may contrive their *Delusions*, yet, upon a strict Examination, there are always to be found some *Marks* and *Characters*, whereby to *distinguish* them from *real* Miracles.

Whether ever a *real* Miracle was wrought by any *false* and *Idolatrous* Prophet, in Confirmation of his Pretensions, is a Matter that may well admit of debate.

The meaning of the Passage concerning false Prophets. Dent. xiii.

bate. * It is certain, that, from the giving of the *Law*, we do not meet with any, that were ever wrought under such Circumstances; and therefore we may reasonably suppose, that the Caution, which *Moses* gives the *Jews*, † *not to hearken to any Prophet, who should give a Sign for following other Gods*, is not so much a *Prediction* of what should come to pass, as a form of vehement *Dehortation*; that it does not so much imply a possibility of their *working such Signs*, as it earnestly forbids the being led away by them, upon the fairest Pretensions; that it is, in short, a manner of Speech, not unlike that of *St. Paul* to the *Galatians*, ‡ *though we, or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel, than that, which we have preached, let him be accursed*: Where he does not suppose, that either the Apostles, or good Angels, would ever be induc'd to preach a Doctrine contrary to Christianity, but only puts the most *extraordinary Case*, and such a one, as would never happen, in order to shew, that, upon no account whatever, they were to recede from the Truth of the *Gospel*.

‡ Bp. Chandler's Defence, p. 421. † Deut. xiii.
 ‡ Gal. i. 8.

But be that as it will, this is apparent from the very Passage now under Consideration, that the holy Penman gives us a Sign, whereby we may discover the Prophet, here spoken of, to be no other than an *Impostor*, and that is, his tempting the People *to go after other Gods*: From whence we may gather, that, if Miracles have in themselves an Evil End and Tendency; if they be wrought to introduce the Worship of other Gods, besides him, whom Reason, as well as Scripture, assures us to be *the only true God*; if they be done to seduce Men to immoral Doctrines or Practices, or to contradict a Religion, already establish'd by Miracles, that are incontestibly true; they can, by no means, proceed from *the Finger of God*, but are the Effects, either of *humane* Fallacy and Delusion, or of a wicked and *Diabolical* Interposition.

When therefore our blessed Saviour ^{And of} foretels, that ^{that con-} *a false Christs, and false* ^{cerning} *Prophets should arise, and shew great Signs* ^{False Christs} *and Wonders*, he plainly intimates, at ^{Mat. 24.} the same time, that, by some means or ^{24.} other, these Wonders would be detected, and found to be *fallacious*, since they would not, with all their *speciousness*,
have

† *Matk. xxiv. 24.*

have efficacy enough *to deceive the Elect*:
^b For the Phrase, *if it be possible*, (tho' it
 shews the greatness of the *Artifices* em-
 ploy'd to *deceive*) very strongly implies
 an Impossibility, that good and confide-
 rate People should be *deceived* by them;
 and consequently evinces, that these
 false Miracles of Pretenders would be
 distinguishable from such, as were per-
 formed by God, or any Agents com-
 mission'd by him. How great soever
 then the Power of *Antichrist* may be
 suppos'd to be, yet the Apostle has ta-
 ken care to inform us; that all his Ope-
 rations would be but *lying Wonders*, and
 that those, who should be *deceived* by
 them, would be such, as did *not believe*
the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteous-
ness; and such, as *God would send a strong*
Delusion upon, that they should believe a
Lye, as a Punishment for their Infidelity,
 and abandon'd Wickedness. But since,
 in this account of *Antichrist*, he no where
 intimates, that good and faithful Chri-
 stians should be thus deluded by him,
 but rather implies the very contrary; we
 have sufficient reason to conclude, that
 there are certain Notes of Distinction ei-
 ther respecting 1st the Works them-
 selves, and their manner of being done;
 OR

^b Bp. *Smallbroke's* Vind. p. 8. ^c 2 *Thess.* ii. 10. &c.

or 2dly, the Persons themselves, and the Ends, for which they do them; whereby a Man of sober and sedate Reflection may discern the difference between *real* Miracles, and *lying Wonders*.

Ways to distinguish *true* from *false* Miracles.

First, In relation to the Works themselves, it is required, * that they be *possible*, since no Power whatever can effect that which is strictly *impossible*; that they be *probable*, since the divine Power will hardly concern itself in what favours of *Fable* and *Romance*; that they be not *below the Majesty of God*, as he is the Ruler and Governour of the World; nor *inconsistent* with his Character, as he is a good and gracious Being; that they be done *openly*, before a sufficient Number of competent Witnesses; *readily*, without any previous Forms or Ceremonies, which may make them look like *Incantation*; and *upon all proper and important Occasions*, to denote the permanency of that divine Power, by which they are done.

From the Works themselves.

Secondly, In relation to the *Person*, pretending to a *Divine Mission*, it is requisite, that he be a Man of *good Report* for his unblameable Conversation; in the *perfect Exercise* of his Reason and Senses;

From the Persons that do them.

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ses;

* *Chandler on Miracles.*

ses; and *constant and uniform* in the Message he delivers; and that the *Doctrine*, which he endeavours to establish by his Miracles, be consistent with the Principles of true *Reason* and *natural Religion*; consistent with right *Notions* and *Worship* of God; consistent with the *former Revelations*, he hath made of his Will; of a Tendency to destroy the Devil's Power in the World, to recover Men from their Ignorance, to reform them from their Vices, to lead them into the Practice of Virtue and true Godliness by proper Motives and Arguments; and, in short, to advance the general Welfare of *Societies*, as well as every Man's particular Happiness in this Life, and in his preparation for a Better. And now to observe a little, how all these *Characters* meet in the Blessed Jesus.

The Character of Jesus.

That *Jesus of Nazareth* was a Person of great Virtue and Goodness, in full Possession of his Reason and Senses, and constant and uniform in the Message he delivered to Mankind, not only the whole Tenor of his *Conduct*, as it is recorded by the *Evangelists*, but the Nature of his *Doctrine*, and Excellency of his *Precepts*, the manner of his *Discourses* to the People, and the Wisdom of his *Replies* to the insidious Questions of his

his Adversaries, are a plain Demonstration. That this Jesus ^e was a Man approved of God by Miracles, Wonders, and Signs, which God did by him in the midst of all the People, is manifest, not only from the Testimony of his Friends and Disciples, but ^f from the Concession of Heathen Historians, as well as the Traditions of the Jewish Talmud, wherein the Memory of them is preserv'd.

These Miracles indeed were above the Skill of Men or Angels to effect, but they were not therefore impossible, because subject to the Power of Almighty God. ^g For the same Agent who form'd the Eye, could restore the Blind to sight; he, who wrought the whole Frame of our Bodies, could as easily cure the Maimed, or heal the Diseas'd; and he, who causes the Rain to descend, and ^h to water the Earth, that it may minister Bread to the Eater, and Seed to the Sower, could be at no loss to change Water into Wine, or to multiply the Loaves and Fishes, for the Relief of the Hungry.

The Nature of his Miracles.

These Miracles again, being Acts of Mercy, as well as Power, were not con-

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sistent

* Acts ii. 2. ^f Vid. Bp. Chandler's Defence, where he proves this, as well as the Traditions of the Talmud, by several Instances, p. 429. ^g Isa. lv. 10.
^h Chandler on Miracles.

sistent with the Character of an *Impostor*, or the Agency of any wicked Spirit; but, that God should have Compassion on his Creatures, and exercise his tender Mercies over the Works of his own Hands; that he should give Bread to the Hungry, and Limbs to the Maimed, and Release to such, as were under the Captivity of Satan, is no improbable Thing at all. These were Actions suitable to his Majesty, and highly comports with his Wisdom and Goodness, since they naturally tended both to beget Reverence in the Minds of Men towards his *Messenger*, and to reconcile them to the Belief and Obedience of his Heavenly Will.

The manner and end of his doing them.

These Miracles our Saviour did *Openly*, & in the Temple, in the Synagogues, and on the *Festivals*, when the Concourse of People was greatest, and when the Doctors of the Law, who came on purpose to ensnare him, were sitting by, and beholding what was done. *These* he did *readily*, and with a Word's speaking: for ^h *peace be still*, quell'd the raging of the Winds and Waves; ⁱ *Young Man, arise*, reviv'd the Widow's Son; ^k *Ephatha, be open'd*, gave the

^s Bp. Chandler's Defence, p. 425. ^h Mark iv. 39.
ⁱ Luke vii. 14. ^k Mark vii. 34, 35.

the deaf Man Hearing; and ¹ *Lazarus*, come forth raised him from the Grave, who had been *four Days dead*. *These* he did frequently, and upon all proper occasions: For, after the Time that he enter'd upon his Ministry, scarce a Day pass'd without some fresh Instances of his Power and Goodness, infomuch that, if all his Actions of this kind had been particularly recorded, ^m *the World itself*, as the Apostle says, (but by way of *Hyperbole*) *would not contain the Books which should be written*; and (what crowns all) *these* he did with a design to establish a Religion, ⁿ whose business it is to give Men the most exalted Thoughts of God and his Providence, and the greatest Certainty of future Rewards and Punishments; to oblige them, by the strongest Motives, to observe and practice whatsoever Things are *true*, and *honest*, and *just*, and *pure*, and *lovely*, and of *good Report*; to persuade them to mortify every inordinate Affection, and to attain those excellent Dispositions of Mind, which will make them resemble God, and best prepare them for future Happiness. In a word, to establish the Practice of these two

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¹ *John xi. 43, 44.* ^m *John xxi. 25.* ⁿ *Chandler on Miracles.*

great Virtues, *the Love of God*, and the *Love of our Neighbour*, upon these two excellent Principles of *Faith in God*, as the Rewarder of those, that seek him, and *Faith in Jesus Christ*, as the Saviour and Judge of Mankind.

Compar'd
with the
pretend-
ed Mira-
cles of *A-*
pollonius.

Such is the *Nature* and *End* of Christ's Miracles, and in this *Manner* were they performed: But where now (if we may be allowed to ask) is the great Similitude between what *Apollonius* is said to have done, and them? ° The History of *Apollonius* (as it is recorded by *Philostratus*) has no other *Voucher*, than his Servant *Damis*, a weak and ignorant Person, (as the Historian himself confesses,) and consequently very capable of being imposed upon by the artful Juggles of his Master. But, besides the weakness of such Authority, the pretended Miracles of *Apollonius* are, for the most part, *ridiculous*, unworthy the Character of a Prophet, and (as the learned *Photius* speaks) *full of Follies and monstrous Tales*. In the highest Instance of his miraculous Power, *his raising a dead Woman to Life again*, † the Historian suspects (as he says the Company did) that there was some Confederacy and Collusion in

° Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 15. † Vid. Vit. *Apol.* L. 4. c. 16.

the Matter ; but, if even it were not so, the *Doctrines* he taught, and the Zeal he professed for the *Pagan Idolatry*, together with his excessive Pride, Ambition, and vain Affectation of divine Honours, are a plain Indication, that his Miracles were false, and his most surprizing Performances, either the Effects of *Magick*, or down-right Cheat and Imposture.

Tacitus indeed, tells of two Cures, of *Vespasian* one of a *Blind*, and the other of a *Lame* ^{Person}. ^{Person}, which *Vespasian* pretended to work at *Alexandria* : † But whoever reflects on the Situation of his Affairs at that Time, will perceive some Reason to suspect a Collusion. He was now in a dispute with himself what to do, whether to assume the *Roman Empire*, or restore the ancient Form of Government, a *Common-wealth* : The Restoration of the latter was what *Dion*, and *Euphrates*, two eminent Philosophers, advised ; but *Apollonius* (whom he likewise consulted upon this Occasion) with great vehemence, persuaded the contrary, and (being himself accustomed to such Artifices) might, not improbably, suggest to *Vespasian* the Necessity of some Miracle or other, in order to recommend

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him

† Bp. *Smallbrook's Vind.* p. 20.

him to the People, as a Person highly favoured by the Gods.

And indeed, if we consider, what an obscure Person, and of what mean Original *Vespasian* was, there seems to be the greater Reason, why *Apollonius*, and others of that Party, should think of some expedient or other, to raise him a Reputation in the World, answerable to the new Station of Life, they had advised him to accept : And whoever considers farther, ² what various Artifices were, about this Time used, to procure an Opinion of *Divinity* in the *Emperors*, will not much wonder that such Reports should be spread of them, or that certain Persons should be suborned to feign such Distempers, and then give themselves out to be cured by them. But allowing the Cures to be real, yet, since they were Things exceeding the Power of any created Being, they could not be affected by *Serapis*, the false God or *Dæmon*, who is said to prescribe them : They must be the Work of an *Omnipotent* Hand, and might perhaps be *providentially* intended, to give some *dignity* and *superior* Character to *Vespasian*, as a Person, who, in Conjunction with his Son *Titus*, was appointed by
God

² *Stillingsfleet's Orig. Sacrae. p. 171.*

God to be a signal Instrument of the divine Vengeance on the *Jewish* Nation.

But however this be, and whether these Cures were true or false; since, in Consequence of them, *Vespasian* never pretended to any *divine Commission*, nor to establish any new Worship or Doctrine; since, the only use he made of them was purely *political*, and to recommend himself, with greater Advantage, to the Favour of the People: The Case is very plain, that they can never come up to any Resemblance of our Saviour's *miraculous* Works, which were performed on purpose to establish his Authority, and to evince him a Prophet sent from God; to which Character the *Roman Emperor* (however some *Sycophant Jews* might endeavour to flatter him with it) never *of himself* made the least Pretension.

And, if what the *Roman Emperor* And did (even upon the best Supposition) Greatrack. falls infinitely short of what is recorded of our Saviour; the Competition is so very little between the *Stroker Great-rack*, and him, that nothing, but either gross Ignorance, or Malice, could have formed so unjust a Comparison. In his
own

own ^f Original Letter, which is still preserved in the *Bodleian Library*, *Great-rack* thinks more modestly of himself, he makes no mention of his healing all kinds of Diseases, much less of *restoring any decays of Nature*. The *Kings-evil*, and some few Distempers more, he pretended to Cure by a divine Impulse; but, failing sometimes herein (as ^t a just Examiner of his Pretensions tells us) he was obliged to fly to the Assistance of *Physick*, and *Chirurgery*, to use Plaisters and proper Medicines, and that, frequently too without Success. His usual Method was, to *chafe*, and *rub*, with some Violence, the part affected, and, in some Cases, to pinch the Ulcers very severely, by which means he might perhaps remove some few Indispositions from one part into another, or even quite out of the Body, by *insensible Perspiration*; ^u but what is all this, when compared with the numerous and lasting Effects of one powerful Word of our Lord, either present or absent; of his immediately healing the most inveterate and incurable Distempers, and restoring,

^f This Letter was sent to Dr. *Hall*, Bishop of *Chester*, An. 1665. ^t *David Lloyd*, in his Book entitled, *Wonders no Miracles*, An. 1666. ^u Bishop *Smallbroock's* Vind. p. 27.

restoring, not only the greatest decays of Nature, but even Life it self? Nothing at all: and therefore to sum up the Argument thus far pursued:

Since *true* Miracles can only be performed by the power of God, and, when performed by any Man, are always received as an *authentick* Proof of his *divine Mission*; since the Design of our Saviour's coming was to establish a new Religion, to abolish one form of Worship, and institute another, and to set up a Kingdom in Opposition to that of Satan; and (to bear him through in this Design) a necessity there was for his being invested with a Power of working Miracles; since this power of working Miracles in Christ was so vastly great, that it can be supposed to proceed from no other Cause, than a Communication from God, and yet, to imagine that God would communicate any part of his Power, to give Sanction and Countenance to an *Impostor*, is a Thing repugnant to his sacred Attributes; since God has not left us without means, either from the *Works* themselves, and the *Manner* of doing them, or from the *Persons* themselves, and the *End* for which they do them, to distinguish between the true Prophet and the Impostor,

The sum
of this part
of the Ar-
gument.

postor, the real Miracles of the one, and the *lying Wonders* of the other; and, lastly, since all the Signs and Characters of true Miracles concur in the Works of Jesus, but, on the contrary, violent Suspicions of Trick and Artifice, at least, an *Inferiority*, that will admit of no manner of Comparison, in such as are named in competition with him: It must needs follow, that the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour were not only a *good Proof of his Divine Authority*; but (what is to be farther prov'd) *such very Miracles in Kind*, as the *Messiah* (when-ever he came into the World) was pre-ordain'd to do.

The 35th
Chapter
of *Isaiab*
consider-
ed.

The 35th Chapter of *Isaiab's* Prophecy, ('tis generally agreed) relates to the *Messiah*, and that his coming, his Performances, and the Progress of his Kingdom are there describ'd in pretty lively Colours. The Prophet indeed has employ'd a variety of Stile in its Composition: he begins with the *Figurative*,
 ' *Let the Wilderness and the solitary Place be glad; let the Desert rejoyce, and blossom as a Rose, &c.* then he descends to the *Plain*, and literal, ' *say to them, that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not, behold your God will come with Vengeance,*
 even

even God with a Recompence, he will come, he will come, and Save you, for the Eyes of the blind shall be open'd, &c. and then he rises again in his usual Metaphors and Allusions, ² *In the Wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the Desert, and the parched Ground shall become a Pool, and the thirsty Land Springs of Water, &c.* But whoever considers the nature of *Prophetical Writings*, how various they are in their *Matter*, how bold in their *Figures*, and how very uncertain in their *Transitions*, cannot be under any Surprize, ³ that the Characters of the *Messiah* should be sometimes more express and *literal*, sometimes wrapt up in high *Oriental Figures*, and *Enigmatical Allusions*, and sometimes intermix'd with the Affairs of the several Ages, in which their Authors wrote; but should rather be induc'd to think, that a continued and uniform *Narrative*, without any Intermixture of this kind, would be a *Solæcism* in *Prophetical Compositions*, and expose them to the like Objections, that *Porphyry* once made against those of *Daniel*, for being too plain and too literal, *viz.* That they were an *Historical Account* rather of *Things past*, than any *Predictions* of *Things to come*.

Tho'

² Ver. 6, 7. ³ Bp. Smallbrooke's Vind. p. 35.

In which
Sense the
Jews took
it.

Tho' therefore the variety of Stile, and mixture of Matter, and other Causes of Obscurity, were much greater, than is pretended; yet, that these Considerations ought not to exclude the *literal* Sense of those Passages, which relate to the Works of the *Messiah*, is plain from the Opinion of the *ancient Jews*, who very frequently tell us, that ^b *when the Messiah cometh, he will open the Eyes of the blind*, and that ^c *all sorts of Leprosies shall be healed in his Days*; is plain from the Notions of the *Jews* in our Saviour's Time, who, upon seeing him do such Miracles, as *Isaiab* here foretold, ^d *glorified the God of Israel, and said, this is of a Truth the Prophet that should come into the World*; and (what is more) is plain from the use and application, that our Lord himself makes of them: For how much soever other Interpreters may disagree in the Acceptation of any Passage, relating to the *Messiah*, ^e all ambiguity ought certainly to cease, after it hath been determin'd to one Sense, by the Authority of a Person, working such Miracles, as could proceed from no less a *Principle*, than the Spirit of God. Let us then

^b *Targum on Isa. xiii, 1, 6, 7.* ^c *Vajikra Rab. on Lev. xiv. 2.* ^d *Muth. xv. 21.* ^e *Jo'n vi. 14.* ^f *Bp. Chandler's Def. p. 413.*

then consider a little what the Occasion of our Saviour's Application, was.

§ Upon the Report of our Lord's Miracles, which had now over-spread all *Judea*, *John the Baptist*, being then in Prison, sent two of his Disciples to know whether he was the *promis'd Christ*. *John*, who had so often given an ample Testimony of our Saviour, could not be ignorant of his Divine Mission; and therefore the Meaning of his sending, was, not to inform himself, but to give his Disciples an Opportunity of being satisfied from his own Mouth and Actions. *At that Hour* (as the Historian informs us) ^h *Jesus had cur'd many of their Infirmities, and Plagues, and to many, that were blind, had given Sight*, when the Disciples of *John* address themselves to him in Words, taken from the Prophet *Isaiah*, ⁱ *Art thou he that should come, or look we for another Saviour?* To which our Lord (pointing very probably to the Objects he had healed) replies in the very next Words of the Prophet, *Go your way, and tell John what Things you have seen and heard, how the blind see, the lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the*

Gospel

In what Sense our Lord applied it.

§ *Luk: vii. 16, &c.* ^h *Bp. Chandler's Defence,*
 p. 436. ⁱ *Isa. xxxv. 4.*

Gospel preached unto them, and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. Can any thing be more plain, than that our Saviour intended the Disciples should understand him in a *literal* Sense? Any thing more incongruous, than that he should refer them to certain *Spiritual* and *Allegorical* Cures for Conviction, and dismiss them at last with some such *Mystical* Harangue as this.

The Absurdity of a contrary Sense.

“ The *Baptist*, I find, has sent you
 “ to enquire of me, whether I am the
 “ true *Messiah*, and many Proofs of my
 “ Power you have seen in the *Objects*,
 “ that at present stand before you ; but
 “ let not these seeming Miracles deceive
 “ you. That *blind* Man, whose Sight
 “ I have restored, that *Lame*, that *Le-*
 “ *per*, that *dead* Person, to whom I have
 “ given Soundness, and Limbs, and
 “ Life itself, are not *really* and *actually*
 “ cur’d : whatever I do of this kind, is
 “ only by way of *Figure* and *Allegory*,
 “ to denote my much greater Perform-
 “ ances, ^k in curing Men’s Errors, and
 “ Ignorance, and want of intellectual
 “ Knowledge of God, and his Providence,
 “ by adhering to the Letter of the Scrip-
 “ tures ; in curing the Lameness and In-
 “ firmities of their Minds, the unclean-
 “ ness

^k Woolston’s Dif. 4. p. 19.

“ nefs of their Hearts and Affections,
 “ and in ¹ raising them, in fhort, from
 “ the Death of Sin, unto a Life of Right-
 “ teousness. Thefe are Performances
 “ that do truly denote the *Messiah*, but
 “ thefe I fhall not attempt to do, until
 “ my ^m Second and Spiritual Advent, un-
 “ til the Time of ⁿ the Evangelical Sab-
 “ bath: and therefore go and tell your
 “ Master, ’tis to *that* time I refer him
 “ for a proper and authentick Proof of
 “ my *Mission*.

After fuch a ftrange and unaccountable Speech as this, what Notions, I pray, must the Disciples of *John* have of our Saviour’s *Intellects*? And yet this, and no other is the Sense of his Reply, upon the Supposition, that his Miracles are to be understood not in a *literal*, but *mystical Sense* only; whereas, upon a contrary Supposition, the Reply will be rational, fatisfactory, and convincing:

‘ ° Ye come to enquire, whether I be
 ‘ the *Messiah*, or Saviour of the World,
 ‘ whom the Prophet *Isaiab* writes of;
 ‘ ye fee me do the fame Miracles, which
 ‘ *Isaiab* foretold the *Messiah* fhould do;
 ‘ and therefore, upon the Evidence and

E

‘ Con-

¹ Disc. 5. ^m Ibid. 1. p. 17. ⁿ Ibid. 2. p. 42. ° Bp. Chandler’s Defence, p. 437.

‘ Conviction of these, ye may return
 ‘ assured that *I am he*.

*External
 Miracles
 proper for
 the Messia-
 ah.*

The Question then is not, whether *bodily* or *spiritual* Cures are the more wonderful and *godlike* Operations, but, whether *real* and *external* Miracles, or such as are *spiritual* and *allegorical* only, were, at this time, proper for our Saviour to exhibit, in order to prove himself to be the promised *Messiah*. *Mystical* Miracles, and the Cure of Diseases that are purely *spiritual*, are perceivable only by an *omniscient* Eye; they are mere *Non-entities* to a common Spectator, and affect him no more, than if they were none at all; but a real Miracle pierces quite through the Soul, strikes all the Faculties at once, and by offering it self to our bodily Senses, becomes an Argument for the meanest Capacity to judge of. Without disputing then the Point of Preference between *internal* and *external* Operations, the plain Case is, that, since our Saviour's Business was to convince the People of his divine Mission, there could be no possibility of doing this, without exhibiting some Sign or other, that was *external* and *visible*: He might have talked of his *mystical* and *allegorical* Cures

Cures to Eternity, and yet not made one Profelyte; the Question, the unto-ward Question would have still returned upon him, Master, ⁹ *What Sign shewest thou, that we may see, and believe?*

“ These refined and airy Notions of
 “ *spiritual Diseases and mystical Cures,*
 “ we are not at all acquainted with;
 “ they are not the proper Evidences,
 “ whereby the Prophets of Old proved
 “ their divine Mission; *Our Fathers did*
 “ *eat Manna in the Wilderness,* and
 “ many were the Wonders, which *Mo-*
 “ *ses wrought in the Sight of all the People;*
 “ what we want therefore of thee, is *ocu-*
 “ *lar Demonstration,* and to be con-
 “ vinced immediately by some real and
 “ substantial Miracle, not by those di-
 “ stant and visionary Things, which
 “ will not happen until thy *second and*
 “ *spiritual Advent,* that thou art in reali-
 “ ty a *Messenger sent from God.*

And indeed, if we consider the Ef-
 fects of our Saviour's Miracles, and
 the many immediate *Convictions* they
 occasioned, we must needs be ashamed
 of this *allegorical* Notion. For can we
 suppose, ¹ that, when the People were
 amazed to see the stupendious Things

The Ab-
 surdities of
 the con-
 trary Sup-
 position.

⁹ *John* vi. 30. ¹ Bp. Gibson's pastoral Letter,
 p. 33.

he did, they were really amazed at nothing? That, when they asked one another, whether the *Messiah*, when he came, would do greater Works than these, they did not mean *real*, but only *imaginary* Works? That, when the Multitudes came to be healed, upon seeing the marvellous Cures he wrought on others, they had really seen nothing to encourage them to come? That, when the *Leper* came to thank him for his Mercies in healing him, he was not *really* healed, but came to return Thanks for nothing? Or that when the *Jews*, fearing the Success of his Miracles, called a Council, in order to prevent it, they were afraid of Shadows only, and properly consulted about nothing? † These and many more Conclusions, which follow upon the wild Notion of Miracles wholly *mystical* and *allegorical*, without any *literal* Meaning, are such gross and shocking Absurdities, that nothing, one would think, but † either great *Weakness* of *Understanding*, or great *Disorder* of *Mind*, strong *Affectation* of *Singularity*, or very strong *Prejudices* against the *Christian* Religion, could lead a Man into; and therefore to sum up the other Branch of this Argument.

Since

Since the 35th Chapter of *Isaiab's* Prophecy is supposed, by all Interpreters, to relate to the *Messiah*, and, notwithstanding some *figurative* Passages in it (a Thing very common in *prophetick* Writings) was, both by the *Tradition* of the *ancient Jews*, the *Sense* of the *Jews* in our Saviour's Time, and the *Use* which our Saviour himself makes of it, thought to denote, in a true and *literal* Sense, the Actions and Miracles of the *Messiah*: Since many of our Saviour's Miracles were of the same Kind and Character, with what the Prophet ascribes to the *Messiah*, and, being outward and visible Works, were the only proper Evidences of his divine Commission and Authority: Since the Notion of mystical and invisible Miracles (besides the strange and *chimerical* oddness of it) is attended with many Absurdities, and Contradictions to Scripture; makes our Saviour's Appeal to his Works impertinent, and his Answer to the Disciples of *John* ridiculous; justifies the *Jews* in their Demand of more Signs, and condemns the Judgment of such, as were converted upon no better Evidence; besides, that it destroys at once all Arguments in behalf of Christianity drawn

The sum
of this o-
ther part of
the Argu-
ment.

from Miracles, ^z since Miracles can be no Testimony at all, if they be not *true* and *real*: Since the Arguments, I say, on the one Side are so clear, and the Absurdities and Contradictions on the other so gross and palpable, it must necessarily follow, that our blessed Saviour, in ^a *healing all manner of Sicknesses, and all manner of Diseases among the People*, according to the Prophecies concerning the Messiah, *did*, in reality, ^b *the Miracles of the Messiah*, and consequently, *came with a Divine Authority to found and introduce a Religion into the World.*



S E C T. III.

*Of the ALLEGORICAL Fathers,
and their Authority.*

Mr. Wool-
ston's Ob-
jections.

“ **B**UT, in this Controversy concern-
“ ing the Sense of Jesus’s Miracles,
“ *says Mr. Woolston*, our safest way is
“ to have recourse to the Authority of
“ the *Fathers*; ^c those holy, venerable,
“ and learned Preachers of the Gospel,
“ in

^z Ep. *Gilson’s* Past. Letter, p. 25. ^a *Matth.* iv.
23. ^b *Woolston’s* Disc. 1. p. 7. ^c *Ibid.* 1. p. 5.

“ in the first Ages of the Church, who
 “ took our Religion from the Hands of
 “ the *Apostles*, and *Apostolick* Men; who
 “ died some of them, and suffer’d for
 “ the *Doctrine* they taught; who *pro-*
 “ *fessedly* and *confessedly* were endu’d
 “ with divine and *extraordinary* Gifts of
 “ the Spirit, and, consequently, can-
 “ not be supposed to be *Corrupters* of
 “ Christianity, or Teachers of *false No-*
 “ *tions* concerning the Miracles of Christ,
 “ or so much as *mistaken* about the *A-*
 “ *postolical* and *Evangelical* Sense and
 “ Nature of them. Now all these
 “ holy and learned Men (as it were
 “ with one Consent) agree, that ^d the
 “ Scriptures of the *new*, as well as the
 “ *old* Testament, are to be interpreted
 “ in an *allegorical* Sense; That, what
 “ ever Jesus did *in the Flesh*, was but
 “ *Typical* and *Symbolical*, of what he
 “ would do in the *Spirit*; and that the
 “ several *bodily* Diseases, which he heal-
 “ ed, were no other than *Figures* of the
 “ *Spiritual* Diseases of the Soul. And,
 “ accordingly, they observe, that the
 “ several Persons, said to be raised by
 “ Jesus, ^e were, in all Ages, an *Emblem*
 “ of such, as are *dead* in *Trespases* and
 “ Sin, and, by the Power of divine
 E 4 “ Grace,

^d Disc. 1. p. 8. ^e Ibid. 5. p. 65.

“ Grace, *quicken’d* to a Life of Right-
 “ teousness; that the several *Paralyticks*
 “ he cur’d, ^f were an *Image* of Persons,
 “ *dissolute* in their Morals, and *unsta-*
 “ *ble* in their Faith and Principles; and
 “ that the two Women, one with her
 “ *Issue of Blood*, and the other with her
 “ *Spirit of Infirmity*, ^g were *Paraboli-*
 “ *cal*, either of the Church’s *Impurity* and
 “ *Corruption*, in point of *Faith* and *Man-*
 “ *ners*, or of her adherence to the *Lite-*
 “ *ral Interpretations* of the Scriptures, so,
 “ as not to raise herself to the Contem-
 “ *plation* of their *Spiritual* and *Sublime*
 “ *Meaning*. Nay, they reject the *lite-*
 “ *ral*, and adopt the *mystical* *Meaning*,
 “ in several other Instances. The *Mar-*
 “ *riage in Cana in Galilee*, with them ^h
 “ is a *Type* of the *Conjunction* of Christ
 “ and his Church, where Christ is the
 “ *Bridegroom*, and *Moses* the *Governour*
 “ *of the Feast*: His *transfiguration on*
 “ *the Mount*, is ⁱ an *Image* and *Exhibi-*
 “ *tion* of our future and celestial *Glory*;
 “ and his *casting the Buyers and Sellers*
 “ *out of the Temple*, ^k a *Figure* and *Re-*
 “ *semblance* of his future *ejection* of
 “ such *Selfish Ecclesiasticks* out of the
 “ Church, as make *Gain* and *Merchan-*
 “ *dize*

^f Disc. 4. p. 64. ^g Ibid. 2. p. 15, & 32. ^h Ib.
 4. p. 49. ⁱ Ibid. 1. p. 46. ^k Ibid. p. 30.

“ *dize* of the Word of God. In short,
 “ if we will adhere to the Sense of the
 “ *Fathers*, we must be oblig’d to say,
 “ ¹ That the four Gospels are, in no
 “ part, a *literal* Story, but a System of
 “ *mystical* Philosophy, or Theology ;
 “ that the History of Jesus’s Life, as re-
 “ corded by the Evangelists, is an *Em-*
 “ *blematical* Representation of his *Spi-*
 “ *ritual* Life in the Soul of Man, and his
 “ *outward* Miracles, Figures of his more
 “ *mysterious* Operations.

It can never be denied indeed, but The Re-
 spect due
 to the Fa-
 thers, and
 why.
 that great Respect and Veneration is due
 to the Authority of the *Fathers*, and
 that those especially, who lived in the
 earliest Ages of *Christianity*, are highly
 beneficial to us in many Respects. ^m They
 are proper *Witnesses* of the Truth of the
 Miracles of Jesus, after the strictest En-
 quiries made about them, and of the Au-
 thority of those *Books*, which the Church
 receiv’d as *Sacred*, and wherein the Ac-
 count of those Facts was recorded. They
 are proper *Witnesses* of the Miracles
 wrought in the Church, and of the *Gifts*
of the Spirit, which (as they inform us)
 continu’d in the *Second* Century. They
 instruct us in several *Usages*, not so
 plainly

¹ Disc. p. 65. ^m Ep. Smallbrooke’s Vind. p. 123.

plainly express'd in Scripture ; the Observation of the *Lord's Day*, the three Orders of the *Clergy*, the Government of the Church by *Bishops*, &c. And they give us an Account of the Books, successively received into the *Canon* of Scripture, and by what means they have been preserv'd *uncorrupt*, and transmitted *pure* to future Ages. Nay, they are likewise of great use to us in relation to the Doctrines of the Church, for they acquaint us what the *System* of the *Catholic Faith* then was; and, in regard to the *Exposition* of Scripture, must be allow'd to have no small Advantage, in that they were nearer the Fountain itself: But the Fathers, we must know, came but *late* to the Exposition of the Scripture, for except the imperfect *Commentaries* of *Origen*, very little was wrote, at least, very little has descended to us, that was wrote before the *fourth* Century, when a *false taste*, and the Influence of some *great* Examples, drew many more into the *modish* (which was then the *allegorical*) way of Writing.

The Origin of Allegorical Interpretations.

ⁿ *Origen* was the first that distinguish'd himself this way, for which reason he is not unjustly stil'd *The Father of mystical Inter-*

Interpreters; nor is it improbable (what *Porphyry*, cited by ° *Eusebius*, tells us) “ That being conversant in the Writings of *Cheræmon* the *Stoick*, (who explain’d the *Egyptian Hieroglyphicks*) and of *Cornutus* (a *Stoick* too, who adapted the *Greek Mythology* to the Knowledge of Nature) he might learn from them the Art of Allegorizing the Scriptures, agreeably to the Customs of the *Greeks* in explaining their *Mysteries*. ” ’Tis certain, that the *Platonick* Philosophy was then in high esteem, and, having some Notions not altogether unlike Christian Doctrines, was become the *Popular Study*. *Origen*, by his Works, shews what Acquaintance he had with Books of this kind; and as their manner was to deal much in *Allegory*, ’tis very presumable, that his Familiarity with them might have some Influence on his *Mystical* Expositions of the Scripture: But this is not all.

“ P The *Jewish* Rabbins (as q *Maimonides* tells us) were mightily delighted with *Allegories*, and made frequent use of them; not that they were of Opinion, that the *Allegorical* Inter-

° *Euseb. Hist. Eccl. L. 6. c. 19.* P Bp. *Smallbrooke's Vind. p. 123.* q *Mer. Newb. p. 437.*

“ Interpretation was the true Sense of
 “ the Scripture, but because it had some-
 “ thing *Enigmatical* in it, that was very
 “ pleasant and Entertaining. ” † *Philo*
 the *Jew* was a great Artist of this kind,
 and the first indeed, according to the
 Opinion of *Photius* (the great Critick of
 the *Ancients*) who taught the Christians
 the way of Allegorizing the Scriptures.
Clement of *Alexandria* greatly cultivated
 this *mystick* Art in his Writings; and 'tis
 certain he deriv'd it from *Plato*, because
 he not only imitates, but transcribes
 him very largely, in several Places of
 his Works. Now it is very well known
 that *Clement* was *Origen's* Master, and
 therefore it is no wonder, that his Ex-
 ample and Institutions, falling in with a
 Temper naturally delighted with the
Platonick way, should give an *Allegorical*
 Turn to his Thoughts; nor is it at all
 strange, that such a Person, as *Origen*,
 who, by his *vast*, but *irregular*
 Wit, was peculiarly suited to the Na-
 ture of *mystical* Exposition, and, by his
 uncommon Learning, knew so well how
 to support the most *lively*, tho' frequen-
 tly *ill-grounded* Imaginations; in a *Path*
 so Pleasant and so Popular should have
 so many Followers.

It

† Bp. *Smallbrooks's* Vind. p. 94.

It is to be observ'd farther, that publick Expositions of Scripture were, at this time, the only Sermons in use; † and therefore the *Fathers*, willing, on these Occasions, to excite in the People a Spirit of Piety and Devotion, did not confine themselves to the bare Letter, but endeavour'd, upon the Letter, to raise *Spiritual* Meanings, and to allegorize upon them, by way of moral Application. They observ'd too, † that such Expositions gave an agreeable Entertainment to *popular* Auditories, and warmly affected their Imaginations; and thereupon were encourag'd to pursue them, not only in regard to the Miracles of our Saviour, but almost all the *Historical Facts*, either in the *old* or *new* Testament. Great Care however was taken to inform their Hearers, that these *mystical* Expositions did not vacate the *literal* Sense of the Scriptures; that the reality of *Facts* still stood firm; nay, that it was the proper Foundation, upon which they rais'd their *Allegories*, and without which, they must necessarily degenerate into Trifles, or rather vanish into nothing. And therefore † they never imagin'd, that their Expositions should be

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† Bp. Gibson's *Past. Lett.* p. 28. † Bp. *Smallbrooke's* *Vindic.* p. 115. † *Ibid.* p. 119.

so far abus'd, as to patronize a Separation of their *Allegories* from the Things, they allegoriz'd, and, much less, to favour the Substitution of their Allegories in the very Room of the *Facts*, which for good and wholesome Purposes they thus explain'd.

Even Origen acknowledges the *literal Sense* of Miracles.

Origen (as we said before) was one of the first, and most noted Writers in this way, and in some Places, he seems to give a manifest Preference of the *mystical* to the *literal* Interpretation (and well he might, in that it suited his Genius better) ^w but so far is he from not believing, and allowing the Miracles, and other Actions of our Saviour's Life, in a *literal* Sense, that, in many Parts of his Book against *Celsus*, (which consists not of *popular* Discourses, but of just and sober Reasonings) he directly argues from them in Defence of Christianity. Thus, in answer to *Celsus's* Boastings of the Precepts and Discipline of the *Greeks*, he urges, that *Christianity* has a more divine Demonstration, which the *Apostle* calls *the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*; and he explains *Power* to be the Miracles of Christ, which, says he, ^x we believ'd to have been wrought, as from

^w Bp. *Gilson's* Past. Letter, p. 29. ^x L. 1. p. 5. Edit. Spenc.

from many other Arguments, so particularly from this, that the Footsteps of the same Power do still appear. To this purpose ^y he takes Notice, that both *Moses* and *Jesus* did wonderful Works, and such as exceeded humane Power, and then expostulates with the *Jews*, for believing the Things which *Moses* wrought, though recorded singly by himself, and rejecting the Miracles of *Christ*, upon the Testimony of his Disciples. In like Manner, ^z speaking of *Moses* and *Christ*, he observes, that *Christ* was to overthrow the Customs, in which the People had been Educated, and to deal with a Nation, that had been taught to require Signs and Wonders, and therefore had at least as great need to shew them in order to gain Belief, as *Moses*, who had not those Difficulties to overcome: And lastly, ^a to prove that *Jesus* was the Son of God, he urges his healing the Lame, and the Blind, according to the *Prophecy* concerning him; he shews the reality of what the *Evangelists* relate, of his raising Persons from the dead, and why he raised no more, and then adds, that his Miracles were intended not only to be *Figures*

^y L. 1. p. 34. ^z L. 2. p. 91, 92. ^a L. 2. p. 87, 88.

gures and Symbols, but also the Means of converting Multitudes to the *Christian Faith*; whereby he plainly acknowledges the *literal*, as well as the *allegorical* meaning of them.

Nay, had I Leisure to gratify the Curious, I might shew out of his other Works, that are not written with the like Exactness (his *Commentaries* I mean, which are of undoubted Credit, and ^b ought *only* to be quoted in this Controversy) that, in talking of our Saviour's Miracles, he adheres to their *literal*, as well as *figurative* Meaning: " For, ^c
 " if all the sorts of Diseases, says he,
 " which our Saviour cured among the
 " People, bear any Relation and Ana-
 " logy to the various Diseases of the
 " Soul; it is very reasonable to appre-
 " hend, that, by the *Paralyticks* in the
 " Gospel, those Persons are intimated,
 " who have a *moral* sort of Palsy in their
 " Souls": and therefore he affirms,
 " that, ^d whatever Cures Jesus is said
 " to

^b Bishop *Smallbrooke* has observed, that Mr. *Woolsten* has neglected *Origen's Commentaries*, published in the original *Greek* by *Huetius*, which are certainly *genuine*, and made use only of his *Homilies* in the *Latin Translation*, that have been adulterated by *Ruffinus* and others: which looks a little odd and *disingenuous*, p. 52.

^c *Orig. Comment. in Math. c. 17.* ^d *Ibid in Matth. c. 15.*

“ to perform among the People, especially those, that are mentioned by the *Evangeliſts*, were then wrought, that those Persons might believe in him, who had not otherwise believed, unless they had seen his Signs and Wonders.

After all, it must be acknowledged, Put is blamed for being too allegorical. that *Origen*, and some others, indulged themselves farther in the *allegorical Way*, than was consistent with sober Reasoning, or authorized by any Example in Scripture. *St. Paul* indeed in his Epistles, has allegorized several Passages of the *Jewish Law* and History, ^f but it must be considered, that such an *Accommodation* was not only very agreeable to the *Jews* and other *Oriental Nations*, but receives likewise great Weight and Authority from the supposed Influence of the *divine Spirit*, which dictated it at first. If *St. Paul*, indeed, was inspired (as is justly believed by all *Christians*) with the Knowledge of what, in the *Old Testament*, was originally intended to be Significant and *Emblematical* of some things future, and accordingly expounded them; great regard is certainly due to what he delivered in this Manner to the Church: But, the like deference is not to be paid

F to

^e Bp. *Gibson's* Past. Lett. p. 31. ^f Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 107.

to the mystical Interpretations of others, who have not the same divine Inspiration, yet pretend to *allegorize* in Matters, that cannot require it. ^b *The Law of Moses*, indeed, (as the Apostle tells us) *had a Shadow of good Things to come*, and was entirely *typical* of the Gospel; but the Gospel is styled ^h *the Truth*, or Completion of Things under the Law, *whose Body, or Substance, is Christ*: And therefore we cannot but think it a derogation to the Perfection of the Gospel, and inconsistent with its being the Completion of the Law, that it should still be thought capable of being allegorized a new, and equally *so* with the Law.

This allegorizing is contrary to Scripture, and the practice of the Apostles.

It is a false and injurious Commendation then, to say, that *the Life of Jesus is, in no part, a literal Story, but a System of mystical Philosophy or Theology*. The Apostle, I am sure, gives us a different Character of it, when he tells the *Corinthians*, ⁱ that, *after the World by Wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the Foolishness of Preaching, to save them, that believe*; and therefore he declares to them his own Practice: ^k *And I, Brethren, when I came unto you, came not with Excellency of Speech, or of Wisdom, declaring*

^b ii. 1. ^h John i. 17. ⁱ I Cor. i. 21. ^k I Cor. i. 17, &c.

claring unto you the Wisdom of God; for I determined not to know any Thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified: And my Speech and my preaching was, not with enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, but in Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power; that your Faith should not be in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God. ^l For I delivered unto you, first of all, (that which I also received,) how that Christ died for our Sins, according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third Day, according to the Scriptures, and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after this he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto the present, but some are fallen asleep: after that, he was seen of James, then of all the Apostles, and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of Time. ^m Where is the Wise, where is the Scribe, where is the disputer of the World to unriddle all this to us? For, according to the present Scheme, this is all Figure and Allegory; a parabolical Narrative, and emblematical Representation of the spiritual Life in the Soul of Man: and what pity it was, that the great Apostle of the Gentiles

F 2

should

^l 1 Cor. xv. 3, &c. ^m Ib. i. v. 20.

And of
dange-
rous Con-
sequence.

should be so faulty in his Office, as not to let us into the Knowledge of all this. On the contrary, he, like an hardy Man, is not ashamed to justify himself; for, ⁿ *According to the Grace, which is given to me, says he, as a wise Builder, I have laid the Foundation, and another buildeth thereon; but let every Man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. Another Foundation can no Man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any Man build upon this Foundation, Gold, Silver, precious Stones, Wood, Hay, Stubble, i. e. Notions and Inventions of his own, how gross, or how refined soever they be, his Work shall be manifest, and, if himself be saved, it shall be but upon a narrow escape, it shall be, so as by Fire.* So that according to the Sense of St. Paul, this humour of *building* upon the Scripture, or of fixing foreign Meanings to the plain *historical* Facts of the Gospel, is neither so *innocent*, nor so *safe* a Thing, as some may imagine. It is, at the best, destroying the proper Signification of Things, and giving a Licence to every wild and extravagant Fancy, to make the Word of God speak just what it pleases: And if this unluckily should be found *to be preaching of another*

ther Gospel (as by this Way of Procedure, any thing may be so charged, as to lose every Feature it once had) what is the Sentence, that this Apostle pronounces against the Promoters of it? ° *If any Man or Angel, preach any other Gospel unto you, than what ye have received, let him be accursed.*

It is not then the Authority of great Names, that can justify us in what is unwarrantable in itself. If the Fathers have gone too far in their way of allegorizing, instead of being imitated, they ought to be blamed and censured by us, as freely, ^p as they were by some of their *Contemporaries*. But the Truth is, few, very few of the great Names of Antiquity have, as yet, appeared in this Controversy; not one, except *Origen*, of the first three hundred Years after Christ, but a long Roll of *Fathers* and Writers (*Spurious* and *Genuine* together) of the 4th, 5th, and following *Centuries*, far from ^q *having our Religion from the Hands of the Apostles, and apostolick Men, or from being endued with any divine and extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit.* And yet, as weak Authorities as they are, what uncommon Pains and

How the Fathers have been treated and misapplied by Mr. Woolston.

F 3 Artifice

° *Gal. i. 8, 9.* ^p *Vid. Hist. Origeniana,*
p. 170, &c. ^q *Bp. Gibson's Past. Lett. p. 28.*

Artifice has been us'd, by false Quotations, false Translations, and Interpolations of Words, by foisting in some Books, citing others as *Genuine* that are known to be *Spurious*, and, almost in every Passage, either perverting, or suppressing the true Sense and Meaning of the Author, to make them come in to the Scheme, but all to no purpose; the Fathers are obstinate, and will not comply: They avow the *literal* Sense of the Scriptures, and declare unanimously, that, without the Supposition of its Reality, their Allegories would be mere *Castles in the Air*, and have no Foundation at all.

The *Sum*
and Con-
clusion of
this Ar-
gument.

Since then this Custom of *Allegorizing* Scripture, owes, its Original to the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, (no great Friends to the *Christian Cause*) and was afterwards indulg'd to gratify, in some measure, a depraved Taste, and extravagant Imagination; since no Authority can be produc'd for it in Scripture, but many Passages, cut of *St. Paul's* Writings, to shew the danger and bold Presumption of it, as well as the necessary Duty of our adhering to the Plainness and Simplicity of the Gospel; since no Arguments, in its Vindication, can be drawn from the Writings of the ancient Fathers, foras-
much

much as the greatest Masters and admirers of it, have always acknowledg'd a *literal* Sense, and such as are produc'd to the contrary, upon a proper Examination, have been found to do the same; “ Remember, Reader, once for all, (as “ ^r *Tertullian* expresses it) that when we “ admit of any such Scriptural *Allegories*, “ the true *literal* Sense of the Scripture “ is not alter'd, tho' the Circumstances, “ or State of the Case, receive a new “ Turn, and have a *Rhetorical* Application given to them.



S E C T. IV.

Of CHRIST's driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple

“ BUT how can we help recurring to Mr. Wool-
 “ the *mystical* Sense, says Mr. ston's Ob-
 “ *Woolston*, ^r when the *literal* account of jection.
 “ many of Jesus's Miracles, implies such
 “ Improbabilities, Incredibilities, and
 “ gross Absurdities, as are very disho-
 “ nourable to the Name of Christ. The
 “ Miracle, for instance, of *his driving*
 F 4 “ the

^r L. 3. §. 5. & L. 5. §. 4. [*Woolston's Disc.* I. p. 19.

“ *the Buyers and Sellers out of the Tem-*
 “ *ple,* (as great an Exploit as some may
 “ think it) is certainly a very absurd
 “ and improbable Story : For † admit-
 “ ting there really was a *Market* kept
 “ in the Temple, (which our Divines,
 “ I believe, will find some Difficulty to
 “ prove) yet † what great Sin and Profana-
 “ tion could it be, to buy and sell
 “ such Things in it, as were brought on
 “ purpose to be offer’d to God in Sacri-
 “ fice? But then, † How any one, in
 “ the Form of a Man, and that a *despi-*
 “ *sed* Man too, should be able, with no-
 “ thing but a Whip in his Hand, to
 “ execute such an *heroick* Work, upon
 “ a great Multitude of People, who
 “ were none of them his Disciples, nor
 “ had any regard to him ; who had,
 “ some of them, been injur’d, and suf-
 “ fer’d Damage in their *Wares*, and
 “ consequently must be suppos’d in a
 “ Disposition to resist him, is a thing
 “ incredible. But put the Case it were
 “ not so ; for what End and Purpose he
 “ should now be so Zealous against the
 “ Profanation of the Temple, when he
 “ himself, in a short time after, by the
 “ Hands of the *Romans*, ordered it to
 “ be destroy’d and polluted, is some-
 “ thing

“ thing so very *inconsistent* ; that there is
“ no way of accounting for it, but by
“ ^x supposing it a *Prophetical* and *Para-*
“ *bolical Narrative* of somewhat to be
“ done hereafter, more *Mysteriously*, and
“ more *Wonderfully*, by him.

A vulgar Reader indeed may think The Courts of the Temple describ'd. it very strange, that a *Market* should be kept in a *Church*, or that *the Tables of Money-Changers, and the Seats of those that sold Doves,* should be permitted in the *Temple*: But we mistake the Matter much, if we suppose, that the *Temple of Jerusalem* was made like one of our Churches. ^y It did not consist of one single *Edefice* only, but had several *Courts* and *Buildings* belonging to it. The first and most outward *Court*, which went by the Name of *the Mount of the Temple*, was a *Square* of 500 *Cubits* every way, containing several *Buildings* for different uses, and surrounded with *Cloysters*, supported by *Marble Pillars*. Next to this was the *Court of the Gentiles*, rang'd round with *Cloysters*, and separated from the other *Courts* with *Stone Balustrades* three *Cubits* high, with *Pillars* at certain *Distances*, upon which were engraven, *Exhortations to Purity*
and

^z Disc. 1. p. 31. ^y Vid. *Lamy & Beaufovre's* *Intr.*

and Holiness, and a Prohibition to all the *Gentiles*, and to such, as were *unclean*, to advance beyond them: Then follow'd the *Court of the Women*; after that the *great Court*, which was divided into two Parts, the *Israelites Court*, and the *Court of the Priests*, contiguous to which stood the Temple itself. This was the Order of the Building, but the *whole* went under the general Name of the *Temple*.

The Place
wherethe
Market
was kept.

The *Jews* indeed did not place the same Sanctity in the *Court of the Gentiles*, as in other Parts of the Temple, and therefore it is less wonder that they permitted it to be employ'd to Purposes, that our Saviour condemn'd. ² They found it almost necessary, that such, as liv'd at a considerable Distance from *Jerusalem*, instead of bringing living Creatures, should only bring Money with them, in order to purchase Sacrifices and Oblations there; and for the Convenience of this (as ^a a great Master of *Jewish* Learning tells us) there was always a constant Market in the Temple, in the Place which was called the *Shops*; where every day was sold Wine, Salt, Oil, and other Requisites to Sacrifices,
as

² *Whitby* on *Matth.* xxi. 12. ³ *Lightfoot* on *Mat.* xxi. 12. Vol. 2. p. 224.

as Oxen and Sheep, in the spacious *Court of the Gentiles* : and that the same Practice was in use, in the Time of our Saviour's Ministry, we have the Testimony of the ancient *Jews* themselves. For, since in the *Babylonish Talmud* it is declared, ^b that *forty Years before the Temple was destroy'd, the great Council removed from the Place, where they us'd to assemble in the inner Court of the Temple, and sat among the Shops*; ^c counting back *forty Years* from the Destruction of the Temple, we shall find, that this removal of the *Sanhedrim* was about three or four Years before this Action of our Saviour's happen'd: and, consequently, that in his Time there was a Place, called the *Shops*, which, according to the Description that the *Jews* give of them, were an open spacious Place, where Goods were Sold, and Money Exchanged.

But how convenient soever this *Merchandise* might be for the Use of the Temple-Service, it was certainly a gross Profanation of the Place itself. For since the *Court of the Gentiles* was the only Place, wherein the *Profelytes of the Gate* (who came up to the Temple in great

Num-

This a gross Profanation of the Temple.

^b See L'Embercur on the *Codex Maddoth*. p. 48, 49. ^c Dr. Parr's *Miracles Vindicated*, part. 2. p. 10, &c.

Numbers, especially at the Time of the *Passover*) were permitted to worship *the God of Israel*, it can hardly be imagin'd, but that the Drovers of Cattle, which were brought in there to be Sold, would not only crowd and incommode the Place, (which is a great Indecency,) but that, in the midst of the bleatings of the Sheep, the lowings of the Oxen, and the hurry and bustle, necessarily occasion'd by the other sort of Merchandise, the *Profelytes* would be sure to meet with no small Disturbance in their Devotions. ^a Nor wants there some Reason to presume, that, the *Captains of the Temple*, and others, who had the Care and Direction of it, having let out part of the Court of the *Gentiles* for Profit and Advantage, and perhaps at excessive Rents; the *Sellers*, to make themselves amends for what they paid for their Shops and Stalls, insisted upon unjust and exorbitant Gains, for which we find them charg'd by our Saviour, as having made the *House of God*, not a Place of *Merchandise* only, but ^c *a Den of Thieves*.

Why pro-
per for our
Lord to
redress it.

Now if the Permission of such Abuses may be allow'd to be a Profanation of the Temple, whoever considers what great

^a Pearce's Miracles Vindicated, p. 13. ^c *Matth.* ii. 13.

great Reverence was constantly paid to it, and what Titles of Honour and Respect are given it by God himself; how, under the *old* Testament, it is stiled ^f his *Sanctuary*, his *Dwelling*, his *Courts*, and *Palace*, his *Holy Mountain*, and the *Place which he had chosen out of all the Earth, to set his Name there*; and how the Apostle, under the *new*, declares it to have been ^g *the Figure of the Heavens*, and of that Seat, *not made with Hands*, where the glorious Majesty of God more peculiarly resides: whoever considers this, I say, can, by no means, be induc'd to think, that a Reformation of such Abuses was any Instance of an intemperate Zeal in our Saviour, or that the Thing was less prudent, or less necessary to be done, because the Temple was shortly to be destroy'd, ^h since every Place, which is set apart for *Divine Worship*, ought to be kept *Sacred*, and fit for that Use, as long as it is subsisting. In such a Case, we are to consider what Things are *now*, not what they are to be *hereafter*; for what would have been a Profanation of the Temple, had it been always to last, was equally a Profanation

Notwithstanding its ensuing Destruction.

^f *Psal.* lxxxiv. 1, 10. *Isa.* lvi. 7. *2 Chron.* xx. 9. *Deut.* xvi. 16. ^g *Heb.* ix. ^h *Dr. Pearce, Part 2. p. 16.*

tion of it, tho' it was shortly to be destroy'd: The Action is the same under both Events, nor is it in the least alter'd by the Fate of the Place, where it happens to be done. ¹ As well therefore may we enquire, why Jesus conform'd to the *legal* Service of the Temple, which, tho' as yet establish'd, was soon to be abolish'd, *viz.* by the more perfect Sacrifice of himself; as why he vindicated the Honour of God, that was profan'd in his own *House*, tho' that House was, after some time, to be finally abandon'd and destroy'd.

Our Saviour, indeed, out of his Divine Knowledge, foretold the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and, that the Time should come, when ^k *the abomination of Desolation*, (*i. e.* the Roman Army, which having for their Ensign the Emperor's Image, and coming with intent to lay waste their Country, could not but be detestable to the *Jews*) *standing in the Holy Place*: But by this *standing in the Holy Place*, from a parallel Passage in || *St. Luke*, is suppos'd by ^{*} most Interpreters, to be meant no more, than the ¹ *Army's encompassing the Holy City*. If we refer it however to the Destruction of the

¹ Bp. *Smallwood's* Vind. p. 148. ^{*} *Mark* xiii. 14. || *Luke* xxi. 20. ^{*} Vid. *Hammond* and *Whitby* in locum. ¹ Dr. *Pearce*, p. 14.

the Temple, the Prediction of the Event does not *necessitate* its coming to pass; nor is our Saviour any more chargeable with the Consequence of it, than the Providence of God is with all the Slaughter, and Havock, and Devastation, which a Victorious Army makes in an Enemy's Country. The Destruction of the *Jewish* Nation was determin'd indeed in the Divine Counsel, but, according to the Account of their own † *Historian*, they themselves were the Authors of their own Calamity; and, in the particular Instance of the Burning of the Temple, not only themselves set fire to the Galleries thereof first, but even, when *Titus* had left them in quiet, and order'd his Guards to extinguish the Fire, they sallied out upon them, and hinder'd them; and so (as the *Historian* tells us) *wrought the final Destruction of the Holy Place with their own Hands.*

But be that as it will, since the *Temple* was, as yet, to stand full forty Years, ^{IV} was able to do it. and upwards, there could be no Incongruity in our Saviour's endeavouring to correct this Abuse of it; and, considering the present Situation of Things, no Impossibility in him to effect it. For we must remember, that he was just now
come

† *Jos. de Bell. Jud. L. S. c. 5. 9.*

come up from *Bethany* to *Jerusalem*, in a sort of Royal and Triumphant Procession; that he was attended on the Road, and into the City, with ^m a very great Multitude, nay, with Multitudes, that went before, and followed after; that these all went along with him into the Temple, and proclaimed (as they had done on the Road) *Hojanna the Son of David*; and that the Concourse, in short, was so great, that ⁿ all the City was moved, and even the chief Priests were afraid of him, and of the People too, because they took him for a Prophet, and were very attentive to hear him. Now it is no hard thing to imagine, that the People, seeing our Saviour proceed to the Temple in this triumphant Manner, might happily call to Mind the Prediction of the Prophet *Malachi*, ^o *The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom ye delight, and he shall purify the Sons of Levi, that they may offer to the Lord an Offering of Righteousness*; and that from the Remembrance of this Prophecy, they might be encouraged to abet his Reformation of the Temple: ^p nor is it to be doubted, but that a Con-

sciousness

^m *Matk.* xxi. 8, 9. ⁿ v. 46. *Mark* xi. 18. *Luke* xix. 48. ^o *Mal.* iii. 1, &c. ^p *Bp. Smallbrooks's Vind.* p. 146.

sciousness of Guilt in the Profaners themselves might, in some measure, contribute to their Submission and Acquiescence; even in the same manner, as his Enemies were *struck backwards* with the Sense of their own Guilt, as well as the Majesty of his Appearance, and *fell down to the Ground*, when they came to apprehend him in the Garden. ⁹ So that, in the whole, we are to consider our Saviour, in this Action, not in the Form of a *despised Man*, but of a triumphant *Monarch* rather, at the Head of an infinite number of People, all rejoicing in the Completion of an ancient *Prophecy*, all acknowledging him for their *Messiah* and *King*, and thereupon ready to support him in any *Reformation*, that he should think proper to attempt.

And now to collect what has been said in this Answer. Since, by the Temple here, is meant the outer Court of it, or *Court of the Gentiles*, where undoubtedly were Shops, and Stalls, and several sorts of Merchandise, which must needs be a great *Profanation* of a Place, set apart for *religious* Worship; since the Honour and Reverence, due to the *House of God*, was Motive sufficient for our Saviour to attempt a Reformation of

The sum of the whole answer.

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this

⁹ Dr. Pearce, p. 15.

this Abuse; and, in his present triumphant Condition, he had Followers and Abettors enough to support him in such an attempt; the supposed *long* or *short* Continuance of the Temple (to whose Destruction our Saviour was not accessory) makes no Alteration in the Case; nor is there any Occasion, I think, to form *Invectives* against this Miracle, or to charge it with any *Absurdities* or *Incredibilities*.



S E C T. V.

*Of his curing the DEMONIACKS,
and sending the Devils into the
Swine.*

Mr. Wool-
ston's Ob-
jection. “ BUT, suppose that the former Miracle
“ will bear the Test, says Mr. Wool-
“ ston, yet, what shall we say to the
“ Case of the *Demoniacks*, in the Coun-
“ try of the *Gadarens*, and that vast
“ number of *Devils*, which, to the De-
“ struction of other Men’s Property, he
“ permitted to enter into the *Herd of*
“ *Swine*? It looks a little oddly in-
“ deed, that these Madmen should have
“ their

‘ Woolston’s Dis. 1. p. 32 to 35.

“ their Habitation in the Tombs of a
 “ Burying-ground, and that the People
 “ of the Place should be so *inhumane*,
 “ as to take no manner of Care or Pity
 “ of them. If they were so exceeding-
 “ ly fierce and outrageous, *that no Fetters*
 “ *nor Chains could hold them*, nor any
 “ Passenger go that Way, without be-
 “ ing in danger of his Life, it certainly
 “ would have been more adviseable,
 “ and more lawful too, to have dis-
 “ patched them; but to send the Devils
 “ into the Herd of Swine, was a thing
 “ impossible, because the *Jews*, who
 “ inhabited the Place, were, by their
 “ Law, not only prohibited to eat
 “ Swine’s Flesh, but, after the Time
 “ that *Antiochus* polluted the Temple
 “ by the Sacrifice of an *Hog*, under the
 “ Pain of an *Anathema*, † forbidden to
 “ keep any in the Country. Nay, al-
 “ lowing this Herd to belong, not to
 “ the *Jews*, but the neighbouring *Gen-*
 “ *tiles*, to whom it was lawful to eat
 “ and keep Swine; yet, how will our
 “ Divines be able to assail the *Goodness*
 “ and *Justice* of Jesus, in permitting so
 “ large an Herd to be destroyed in this
 “ Manner, and their Owners, by this
 “ means, to become considerable Suffer-

G 2

“ ers?

† *Spener de Leg. Heb. p. 117.*

“ ers? This one Consideration, in my
 “ Opinion, is enough to set aside the
 “ whole Miracle : But then, if we con-
 “ sider, how common a thing (even ac-
 “ cording to the Testimony of Jesus
 “ himself) the Business of *Exorcism* was
 “ among the *Jews*, we cannot but con-
 “ clude, that his Talent of this kind
 “ (even had it been much greater than
 “ it really was) can never be deemed
 “ a sufficient Proof of his *divine Autho-*
 “ *rity*.

The Na-
 ture of
Jewish
Tombs.

The Addition of the Word *Burying-*
ground to the Text, is designed to mis-
 lead the Reader into a Conception of
 something resembling our *Church-yards*,
 in Cities and Towns; which, as they
 could afford but a bad Habitation for
 Madmen, would not fail of anoying the
 People perpetually, by having such
 fierce and disorderly Persons near them.
 To set us right, therefore, in this Par-
 ticular, it must be observed, that the
Tombs, which the *Evangelist* here men-
 tions, are said to be in *the Mountains*,
 and in *the Wilderness* : for the Custom
 of the *Jews* was, to have their *Tombs*,
 like so many little *Cells*, cut out in the
 sides of *Caverns*, and the hollow parts
 of

of *Rocks*, and *Mountains*, at some distance from the *Towns*, and usually in very loanly and defart Places. That many such *Tombs* remain in *Judea*, even to this Day, we are assured from the Testimony of *Maundrel*, and other modern Travellers; and, that particularly, on the Coast of the *Lake Genesareth*, which was the lower *Galilee*, and lay contiguous to *Gadara*, there were vast Caves and Dens under Ground, "*Josephus*, in his History, has not omitted to inform us. Nay, he tells us moreover, that these Caves and hollow Rocks, were oftentimes made use of for *Retreat* and *Shelter*; and mentions whole Bands of Thieves and Robbers, who sometimes, for whole Months, took up their abode there, and, from thence made their Excursions and Depredations.

Mountains indeed, in our *cold* Countries, afford no manner of Food or Sustainance, but, in those *warm* and *fruitful* Climates, the Case was otherwise. The *Baptist*, we find, liv'd in the Wilderness, on *Locusts* and *wild Honey*; and *Josephus*, in his own Life, tells us, that, when he was Young, he went into the Wilderness, to be instructed by one, who lived there upon what grew of itself, wild,

How the Demoni-aks might livethere.

G 3 and

and uncultivated : and therefore we have less Reason to wonder, that we find these *Demoniacks* in such melancholy Places, as were suited to their Complexions, and where they might find both *Shelter* from their Pursuers, and *Food* to sustain their Lives.

The *Gadarens*
Treatment
of them.

The *Gadarens* indeed seem not to be a People of much Humanity : The Request, which they make our Lord, ^u *to depart out of their Coasts*, after so signal a Mercy extended to two of their Country-men, gives us but a bad Notion of their Civility and Gratitude ; but still it must be acknowledg'd, that they had taken some Care of these wretched Creatures. They had *often* (as the Story tells us) bound them *with Fetters and Chains*, but the Fetters and Chains (whatever they were) were not of strength enough for Men in their outrageous Condition ; and therefore they got loose from their Keepers, and retreated to the Tombs and Mountains, where, when they were pursu'd, they probably hid themselves, and so eluded all the Diligence and Humanity of such, as endeavour'd to retake them. While they were alive however, there were still hopes of laying hold on them again,
and

^u *Matth.* viii. 34.

and perhaps of Recovering them to their Senses ; and this is a sufficient Reason why the *Gadarens* might not think fit to *dispatch them*.

In what relates then to the Case of the *Demoniacks*, and their Circumstances, A Description of Gadara. there seems to be no Incongruity in the sacred Story : and to clear, in like manner, our Saviour's Character from any Imputation, that may arise from the Destruction of the Swine, it may not be improper to observe, * that *Gadara* was a City on the other side *Jordan*, near the Lake *Gennesareth*, one of those Cities called *Decapolis*, and situate in that *Allotment*, which was made to the Tribe of *Manasseh*. *Pompey* indeed join'd it at first to the Province of *Syria*, but *Augustus* afterward gave it to *Herod*, tho', upon his Death, he annex'd it to *Syria* again ; by which means it was inhabited partly by *Jews*, and partly by *Syrians*, who were *Heathens*. Now it is a Thing very well known, that the *Heathens* us'd Swine, not only for Food, but for Sacrifices likewise ; and 'tis not improbable, that the *Jews* of that Country might be tempted to feed Swine, from the Profit they made, by selling them to their Heathen Neighbours. This

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was

* Dr. Pearce, P. 2. p. 26.

was against a *Prohibition* of their Law 'tis true, but Laws we know, are not always observ'd, and perhaps least of all at *Gadara*, which, being in the Extremity of the *Jewish* Territories, and under the *Jurisdiction* of *Heathens*, left the *Jews* without any restraint upon them, but that of *Conscience*, which is too frequently violated for the sake of Gain.

Why our Saviour might permit the Destruction of the Swine.

To bring the Matter then into a narrower Compass; the Swine, which were destroy'd in consequence of the Permission, which our Saviour gave the Evil Spirits to enter into them, belong'd either to the *Jews*, or to the *Gentiles* of *Gadara*: If they belong'd to the *Jews*, it cannot be denied, but that they were justly punish'd, for breaking their own Laws and Constitutions. In * *Josephus*, we find, an Edict of the Emperor *Augustus*, requiring the *Roman* Governours, in every Country where the *Jews* resided, to suffer them *to live according to such of their own National Laws, as were in force in Hyrcanus's time*; and from hence one may gather, that all Laws made in *Hyrcanus's* Time were look'd upon, by the *Jews*, as binding; otherwise, when they solicited the Emperor for this Edict in their Favour, they would

* *Antiq. Jud. L. 16, c. 6.*

would have scarcely fix'd upon this Period for their Standard. And if the Laws in *Hyrchanus's* Time were binding, then was the keeping of Swine a plain Violation of their Constitution, and justly punishable by our Saviour: because it was a receiv'd Maxim among the *Jews*, that any Person, invested with the Character of a *Prophet*, or acting by the Spirit of God, might, without the Assistance of a *Magistrate*, put the Laws in Execution against Offenders. What *Phineas* did to *Zimri*, and *Elijah* to the Priests of *Baal*, was by them look'd upon as Precedents in this Case; and therefore we, who acknowledge our Jesus to have been *more than a Prophet*, can never be at a Loss to account for his exercising an Authority among the *Jews*, which (according to their own Confession) was allowable, even in the lowest of that *Order*.

But if the Heathens of *Gadara* were the Owners of the Swine, 'tis very supposable, that they were guilty of some great Sin, which occasion'd the Loss of them; and the Conjecture is not amiss, that it was inflicted in order to cure them of their *Idolatrous* Worship of Dæmons, and to induce them to embrace the Gospel,

pel, by an Argument peculiarly adapted to them. For, when they saw our Saviour's Power over such a Multitude of Devils, exemplified in their possession of the Swine, (had they made a right Application of the Miracle) they cou'd not but perceive the Truth of the Gospel, and the Madness of their own worshipping such impure Spirits, as were both cast out of Men at Jesus's Command, and could not enter into the Swine without his Permission.

Nay, even in this Case too, supposing *Jesus* to have been a *Prophet*, and, in Consequence hereof, to have acted by *Commission* from God, he could not be guilty of any Injustice in this Action; * because, upon this Supposition, the Act will come to be consider'd, not as his Act, but as an Act of Providence. If Jesus had no Right to destroy the People's Swine, yet God, who is the supreme Proprietor of the whole Earth, most certainly had; and shall we then complain of him for such a Punishment as this, when every Day we see more surprizing Instances before our Eyes? When we see him laying whole Nations waste with Pestilence, with Famine, and

* Defence of Scripture, Hist. part 2. p. 26.

and with Earthquakes, shall we confess his Sovereign Authority in these Cases ; and yet, upon the Loss of *two Thousand Swine*, cry out, and say, *Why hast thou done thus ?* The *Heathens* themselves (upon the Supposition of a *Providence*) will acknowledge this to be unreasonable ; nor can our Saviour (as acting by a Divine Commission) ever be justly blam'd, because he once or twice did the same thing, which God does every Day.

The Truth is, whether the Proprietors were *Jews* or *Gentiles*,² the Words in the Text do not imply, that our Saviour was either *Principal*, or *Accessory* in the Destruction of the Swine. St. *Mark* indeed tells us that he *gave the Devils leave*, and St. *Luke*, that he *suffer'd them* to enter into the Swine, but by this is meant no more, than that he did not prevent them ; that he did not interpose his Divine Power in order to hinder them from entering : But if this made our Saviour a sharer in the Destruction of the Swine, by a parity of Reason, it will make God (because he permits it) answerable for all the Evil, that's done under the Sun ; which were
most

² Dr. *Pearce*, Part 2. p. 28.

most Impious to think, and most Blaphemous to say.

The Sum
of the
Answer.

Since therefore there were, at *Gadara*, *Swine* kept, by the Heathens no doubt, and not improbably by the *Jews* likewise; whether we suppose the *Jews* or *Heathens* Owners of this Herd, our Saviour's permitting the Devils to enter into them, made him not accessory to their Destruction; or if it be said that he did it with a *Punitive* Intent, it was to make the *Jews* suffer for the Breach of their Law, or the Heathens for their obstinate Idolatry, which his Character of a *Prophet*, and the Testimony of his being *the Son of the most High*, without all Controversy, Authorized him to do. And now to consider the Merits of the Miracle itself.

Few or
no Exorcisms
among the
Jews.

Whether the Practice of *Exorcising* Devils was really in use among the *Jews* before our Saviour's Time, is a Matter of some Debate among the Learned. Our Saviour indeed, in answer to the Objection of a *Diabolical* Confederacy in what he did, puts a Question to the *Jews*; *If I by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do your Children cast them out?*
 2 But by *the Children of the Jews*, some Interpreters will only understand those
 Sons

2 *Ep. Smallbrook's Vind. p. 191.*

Sons of theirs, who were become our Saviour's Disciples, and more particularly the *Seventy*, to whom he had given a Commission *to cast out Devils*, and from whom all such, as were diffident of the Matter, might receive full Conviction, if they pleas'd to enquire: tho' other Expositors think proper to refer the Words to the *Jews* at large, who, on some certain Occasions, (as they suppose) were enabled to dispossess Devils, by a solemn and Religious Invocation of the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*. However this be, that the Dispossession of Devils was no customary Thing among the *Jews*, before our Saviour's Ministry, is very evident from the great Surprize and Amazement they express'd, whenever they beheld such an Instance of his Power. For when, on any such Occasion ^b *the Multitudes marvelled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel*; ^c *the People were amaz'd, and said, is not this the Son of David?* The Spectators began to question among themselves, saying, *what Thing is this? What new Doctrine is this? For with Authority commandeth he even the unclean Spirits, and they obey him*; this is a plain Argument, that
the

^b *Math ix. 33.* ^c *Ibid xii. 13.*

the Authority, which our Saviour then exercis'd over the *Powers of Darknefs*, was a Thing unknown in *Judæa*, and a distinguishing Character of his being the *Messiah*, the *Son of David*.

If any,
they were
a *Confir-*
mation of
Christ.

But we will allow for once, that, in some rare Instances, the *Jews*, before Christ, were known to *exorcise* Devils ; yet it will not therefore follow, that our Saviour's dispossessions of them were *no Proofs of his Divine Authority* : So far from this, that the *Jewish* Exorcisms were rather a Confirmation of it. For, if such Dispossession were really made among the *Jews*, by the Invocation of the Name of the God of *Israel*, our blessed Saviour, who not only did this with greater Efficacy, and in many more Instances, than was ever known before ; but communicated to his Followers, likewise an Ability to do the same in his own Name, must thereby declare to the World, that his Power was derived from the same Original : or, (more properly speaking,) since his Name had the same efficacy with his Father's, that he and his *Father were one*. And herein lies the Strength of his Reasoning with the *Jews*,
^d *If I by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do your Children cast them out ?*

“ Your

^d *Matth. xii. 27, 28.*

“ Your Children, you say, exorcise De-
“ vils, by Virtue of the Name of the true
“ God, and thereupon you conclude,
“ that they are in no Confederacy with
“ Satan; you see me daily do the same,
“ nay, do it in a greater Degree than
“ they can; and yet ye will not have
“ the same good Opinion of me. *Let*
“ *them therefore be your Judges,* and if
“ they are conscious to themselves that,
“ in doing of this, they have no *Crimi-*
“ *nal* Correspondence, they certainly
“ will acquit me, and own that, if *I by*
“ *the Spirit of God not only cast out*
“ *Devils my self, but commission others*
“ to do the like in my Name, then
“ doubtless *the Kingdom of God is come*
“ *unto you.*” Whether therefore we
suppose that the *Jews did,* or *did not* ex-
orcise Devils, before the coming of our
Saviour Christ, his divine Authority, in
exerting that miraculous Power, is e-
qually the same, or rather receives a
greater Sanction and Confirmation from
what they did; and so to proceed to
his Transfiguration on the Mount.



S E C T. VI.

Of his TRANSFIGURATION on
the Mount.

Mr. Wool-
ston's Ob-
jection.

“ **B**UT, what do you mean by his
“ *Transfiguration*, says Mr. Wool-
“ *ston*, presently; the Word, in its Ori-
“ *ginal*, signifies nothing less, than the
“ *Change*, or *Transformation* of a Per-
“ son into the *Forms*, *Shapes*, and *Es-*
“ *sences* of other Things and Creatures,
“ of a different Species, Size, and Fi-
“ gure. But, not to insist too rigidly on
“ Words, we will suppose that the
“ *Change of his Raiment*, and the *Bright-*
“ *ness of his Countenance*, was all that
“ is intended by the *Transfiguration* ;
“ yet, still we may be allowed to ask,
“ for what End and Purpose did *Jesus*
“ exhibit this? As he was the *Wisdom*,
“ as well as the *Power of God*, all his
“ Actions, one would think, should
“ have been guided by Reason and
“ Discretion at least; but, where is the
“ Sense of his appearing, at this time,
“ in more Lustre than ordinarily? Where
“ the

† Disc. 1. p. 42, &c.

“ the Sense of his making a *Mountain*,
 “ rather than a *Valley*, the *Scene*; and
 “ his *Apostles*, rather than the *Multitude*,
 “ the *Witnesses*, of this his *Majesty*. His
 “ *Apostles*, we know, were attached to
 “ his Party, and, to *aggrandize* their
 “ Master’s Glory, might relate many
 “ wonderful Things of him; but, among
 “ the *Multitude* there were doubtless
 “ many *Unbelievers*, and for their Con-
 “ viction it would have been proper,
 “ that themselves should have had the
 “ Sight of this Miracle, rather than been
 “ obliged to take the Report of it only
 “ from such, as might justly be *suspect-*
 “ *ed of Partiality*, or (in the Fright and
 “ Consternation that seized them) might
 “ possibly *mistake* one thing for another.
 “ Nor is it less strange and unaccounta-
 “ ble, that the true *Moses* and *Elias* (not
 “ any Spectres or Apparitions in their
 “ Likeness) should be present with *Je-*
 “ *sus* on the Mount, and the Apostles
 “ over-hear them Discourse together,
 “ and yet make no Report of it; nor
 “ transmit one Word to Posterity of
 “ what these three greatest Prophets
 “ and Philosophers of the Universe might
 “ then *confabulate*, for our Instruction
 “ and Edification.

The End
of Christs
Transfi-
guration.

To know the true End and Design of our Saviour's *Transfiguration*,^a it may not be improper to look back a little into the *Context*; where we find, that, after *Peter's* confessing him to be^b *the Christ, the Son of the living God, from that time began he to shew unto his Disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many Things of the Elders, and chief Priests, and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third Day.* Nor was this all, for he foretold them, that they likewise were to suffer many grievous Persecutions for his *Name's Sake*, and therefore he recommended to them the unpleasent Doctrines of^c *Self-denial, and taking up the Cross, and following him*; but with this great (though distant) Encouragement, that^d *when the Son of Man should come in the Glory of his Father, with his Angels, he should then reward every one according to his Works.*

These Predictions, Doctrines, and Promises, were so contrary to the Expectations of his Disciples, who hoped, in him, to have a *temporal* Prince and Deliverer, a *Restorer* of the decay'd State of *Israel*, and Promoter of themselves to great Honours and Employments; that our

^a Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. c. 4. ^b *Math.* xvi. 21, &c.
[V. 24. ^c V. 27.

our Saviour thought proper, (not many Days after) in order to revive their Faith and Trust in him, and ^e to fortify their Minds against what was likely to ensue, to take as many with him, into the Mount, as made up a *legal* Evidence, and there to give them an *ocular* Conviction of what he had promised, in recompence of what they were to suffer, by assuming, for a while, the Lustre * and Appearance of a glorified Body; which so raised their drooping Hearts, that we find St. Peter immediately declaring, ^f *Lord, it is good for us to be here, and, if thou wilt, let us make here three Tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: For the Design of these Words is, not only*

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to

^e Young's Serm. vol. I. p. 360.

* This is the proper Meaning of the Word μεταμορφώθη, Which Mr. Woolston raises a very trifling Argument from: for μορφή, both in the *Old* and *New Testament*, does not signify the *Essence*, or constituent Properties of a Man, but only his *external Shape* or *Appearance*: As when it is said of Belshazzar [Dan. v. vi. 10.] and of Daniel [c. vii. v. 28] that ἡ μορφή ἠλλιώθη *their Forms were changed*; of Nebuchadnezzar, that ἡ μορφή μὲν ἐπέστρεψεν ἐπ' ἐμὲ *my Form returned to me* [Dan. iv. 36.] and of Christ, that he appeared to two of his Disciples, ἐν ἑτέρῃ μορφῇ *in another Form* [Mark xvi. 12.] for which Reason, the Word, which is derived from it, can extend no farther, than to a Change of the outward Form or Appearance only. *Whitby on Phil. 2. 6.*

^f Luke ix. 4.

to secure his Master, by staying in that Retreat, from the Sufferings and Death, which would be the Consequence of his going up to Jerusalem, (as St. Chrysofome and others understand it) but to express likewise the Pleasure and Satisfaction he took in this *Transfiguration*, and glorified Company; and how he resum'd fresh Spirits and Comfort, from a Miracle, which was *Emblematical* of the Glorious State, not of Christ only, but of all good Christians, after their Resurrection.

Why on
a Moun-
tain.

The only Instance we have in Scripture of any *Transfiguration* like unto this, is in the Case of *Moses*, & after he had been forty Days and forty Nights with God on Mount Sinai; for, upon his Descent, we are told, that the Skin of his Face so shone, that the Children of Israel were afraid to come nigh him, and therefore he put a Veil on his Face, while he talked with them. That our blessed Lord, in the act of his *Transfiguration*, might probably have respect to this preceding one of *Moses*, and, both in the Nature of the Change, and the Place where 'twas wrought, design some Conformity thereunto, is what we are at Liberty to suppose; and consequently can

§ Exod. xxxiv. 28, &c.

can account, why the *Scene* of this Transaction was in a *Mountain*, rather than a *Valley*: and why the three Apostles, *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, and not the whole *Multitude*, were allow'd to be Spectators of it, we have several Reasons to alledge.

For, besides that this was a vouchsafement, fit only to be communicated to such, as were of his more immediate Confidence, and stood in the highest Degree of his Esteem; to such, as, for their Zeal and Affection to him, were honour'd and distinguish'd * with a peculiar Title, and, after his Resurrection, appointed by Providence to be the great Pillars of his Church: And besides, that it would have look'd like Vanity and Ostentation in him, to have taken the Multitude into the Mount, and there made a publick Sight of his Miracles, which was the Thing he always carefully declin'd: Besides this, I say, there seems to be something in the *Transfiguration* itself, which might have been of dangerous Consequence for the Multitude to have been admitted to.

Why the three Apostles, and not the Multitude admitted to it.

St. *Peter*, who himself was one of those, who were with him on the *holy Mount*, gives us this account of it. ^h *We*

The Nature of it.

H 3

have

* Vid. *Matth.* vii. 17. ^h *2 Pet.* i. 16, &c.

have not follow'd cunningly devised Fables, says he, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were Eye-witnesses of his Majesty; for he received from God the Father Honour, and Glory, when there came such a Voice to him from the Excellent Glory, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Now by his Majesty, in this Place, most properly is to be understood that Lustre and Radiency, wherein he appeared, when his Face shone as the Sun, and his Garments (pierced through with the Beams, that were darted from his Body) became as white as Light: ⁱ For to shine as the Sun, is a Phrase expressing something ^k belonging to celestial Majesty; and white and splendid Garments, are proper for Kings, and ^l Royal Ministers of the Heavenly Court. And, in like manner, by the Excellent Glory, from whence the Voice proceeded, can be meant nothing, but the bright and shining Cloud, that then appear'd, which the Jews call the *Shechinah*, and is made up (as most imagine) of an Host of Angels, the constant Symbol of the Divine Presence; and how great and magnificent this Symbol is, we may,

ⁱ Vid. *Wily*, 2 *Pet* i. 5. ^k *Matth.* xiii. 43. ^l *Rev.* iii. 4.

may, in some measure, learn from the Vision of the Prophet *Daniel*: ^m *The Ancient of Days did sit, whose Garment was white as Snow, and the Hair of his Head like the pure Wool: his Throne was like the fiery Flame, and his Wheels as burning Fire: a fiery Stream did issue from before him; Thousands of Thousands ministred unto him, and ten Thousand times ten Thousands stood before him.*

Supposing then that this was the manner of our Saviour's *Transfiguration*; that not only, in his own Person, he was array'd with all this Glory and Lustre, but had likewise an Angelick Host surrounding him, two of the greatest Prophets of ancient Ages attending him, and a Voice from Heaven declaring him to be *the well-beloved Son of God*, while the Multitude stood by, and saw and heard all this; it would have been almost unavoidable, but that, upon such Conviction of his being the *Messiah*, ⁿ *they would have taken him by Force and made him a King.* But since (as our Saviour tells us) his *Kingdom was not of this World*, nor to come with the *Pomp and Observation*, which the *Jews* expected; and since one of his great Concerns was, that no disturbance of the Civil Govern-

H 4

ment

^m *Dan.* vii. 9, 10. ⁿ *John* vi. 15. ^o *Matth.* xvii. 9.

ment should be occasion'd by him, or laid to his Charge; he wisely made choice of three only, (but these the *principal* of his Apostles) to whom he exhibited a *Specimen* of his future Glory: And, as he came down from the Mount, he charged them *that they should tell the Vision to no Man, till after his Resurrection*; † because, *before* that most illustrious Instance of his Power, this *Glorification* of him (which was not very suitable to his mean outward Circumstances) would scarce have been credited by the *Jews*: but, after his Resurrection, and when he was actually to enter into that glorious State, of which this Transfiguration was *Emblematical*, the Testimonies of three competent Witnesses would be receiv'd with greater conviction; especially considering, (what makes their Testimony of more avail, than that of ten Thousand others) ‡ that they could prove the Truth of what they testified, and convince Mankind, that there was no Fraud or Imposture, * by any suppos'd Management of a Cloud in any assignable Situation of it, *by the Gifts of the Holy Ghost,*

Why
Christ
charg'd
his Apo-
stles to
conceal
it.

† Bp *Smallbrooke's* Vind. Ch. 4. ‡ *Missel. Sacra,* Vol. 2. p. 77. * Vid. *Woolston's* Disc. 1. p. 45.

Ghost, which they having receiv'd from him, after his Resurrection, both exercised themselves and imparted to Believers.

We cannot but imagine indeed, that so splendid and so awful an Appearance must needs have affected the Apostles with Wonder and Amazement; and ^a the *Evangelists* tells us, that they fell into an Ecstasy, ^b as being unable, at present, to sustain the Sight of that *Majesty* and *Glory*, which they themselves, in due time, were to put on: but, as we may observe, from our Saviour's injoining them Silence, that, in their Return from the Mount, their Conversation turn'd upon the Subject; we cannot but suppose, that their *Curiosity* would naturally lead them to ask many Questions concerning the Circumstances of this wonderful Transaction, which our Saviour, out of his great Goodness and Humanity, would not fail to resolve: so that whatever Defect might be occasioned by their Astonishment or Consternation at the Sight, might amply be supplied by their Master's kind *Information* of what had passed.

The Apostles not mistaken in it.

^a *Matt. xvii. 6, 7.* ^b *Young's Sermon. Vol. 2. p. 360.*

Their

That *Moses* and *Elias* were personally there.

Their Master (as we said) in his coming down from the Mountain, charged them that they should *tell no Man* what they had seen; and from the Word *ὄραμα*, which we render *Vision*, some have supposed, that *Moses* and *Elias* were not there in their proper Persons, but that the Apostles, in their Fancy and Imagination, had only a strong Idea, or Impression of them, or at most, that their *Spectres*, or some shadowy Resemblances of them only were there. Since the *Evangelist's*, however, speak of them in a personal Character and Capacity; since they represent them, as *talking with Christ, and speaking of his Decease, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem*; since, they tell us, that, when they were come out of the Ecstasy, into which this Vision had cast them, they saw *two Men standing with him, or two Men appearing in Glory*; it is much more probable to think, that *Moses* and *Elias* were really there, and that God had, some where or other, from the time of their Departure out of this World, preserved both their Bodies to this End. The Scriptures, indeed, are express as to *Elias*, that he was translated *into Heaven*, by

by the Ministry of Angels, resembling^r a Chariot of Fire, and Horses of Fire; and it is a pretty general Opinion, ^f both among Jewish and Christian Authors, taken (as is supposed) from some apocryphal Book, that Moses did not die, but was translated into Heaven, or some terrestrial Paradise, in the same Manner as were Enoch and Elias. There is a Passage in St. Jude, where^r Michael the Archangel is said to contend with the Devil, and dispute about the Body of Moses, which (if taken in a literal Sense) will greatly favour this Opinion: For, if we can but suppose, ^u that, the Contest between this good and evil Angel, concerning Moses's Body, related not to its Burial (as some will have it) but its Assumption into Heaven, or some other Place of Happiness, which the Devil might oppose, and urge the Obligation of his dying the common Death of all Men, for this Reason more especially, because he had once taken away the Life of an Egyptian: If we can but suppose, I say, that the Contest arose upon this Subject, then may we easily conceive, both how Moses might subsist in a separate State, from

^r 2 Kings ii. 11. ^f Vid. Dissert. de Calmet sur la Mort et la Sepulture de Moyse, vol. 3. ^r Jud. 7. 9. ^u Vid. Whitty in Locum,

from the Time of his *Assumption*, and how he, together with *Elias*, might be dispatched from thence, upon this Occasion, to set off the Lustre of our Lord's *Transfiguration*, by their appearing, at the same time, in their resplendent Robes of Glory.

And what
Subjects
they dis-
cuss'd
on.

And, indeed, if this was the purpose of their *Errand*, what Subject can we suppose so proper, and so well becoming the Conversation of three such illustrious Persons, as the *Redemption* of Mankind, by the Death and Passion of the *Son of God*. What these two ancient Prophets had, in their Times, imperfectly revealed; nay, what the *Angels* of Heaven desire at all times, to look into, viz. the Harmony of the divine Attributes, in this stupendous Work, ^w *the depth of the Riches, both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, and* * *the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge; My-steries, which have been hid from Ages, and from Generations, but are now made manifest to the Saints*: these were the sublime Subjects (for all these are implied in ^y *their speaking of Christ's De- cease*) of their Conversation at this Inter-view;

* *Rom. xi. 33.* † *Eph. iii. 18, 19.* † *Luke ix. 31.*

veiw; and, in Comparison of these, how jejune and worthless are all the wise Sayings of Philosophers, or Compositions of humane Wit? With good Reason, therefore might the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*, (who himself was no mean Proficient in what the World falsely calls *Knowledge*;) instead of *the* ² *Excellency of Speech and Wisdom*, determine to know nothing among his *Corinthians* but *Jesus Christ and him crucified*: for ^a *we preach Christ crucified*, says he, *unto the Jews a Stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks Foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God; for* ^b *of God he is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.*

And now, looking back upon what has been said, *viz.* that the proper Use and Design of our Saviour's *Transfiguration* was, to fortify his Apostles against what would shortly come upon both their Master, and themselves; that, as to the place, where the *Transfiguration* was wrought, some *Analogy* might be had to what befel *Moses* on *Mount Sinai*, but no Umbrage cou'd be given for any Suspicion of the least Fraud or Imposture,

The Sum
of the
whole
Answer.

posture; that the Testimony of *three* competent Witnesses were sufficient for the purpose, and some Disturbance might possibly have accrued to the State, if the whole Multitude had been admitted to the Sight of it; and lastly, that, at this *Transfiguration*, there is great Reason to presume, that *Moses* and *Elias* were both present in their proper Persons, and discoursed with Christ on the great Argument of Man's Redemption, by his Meritorious Death and Passion; we have answer'd, I think, the Challenge that was made us, and given proper and Satisfactory Solutions to the several Difficulties and hard Questions, concerning the Miracle of our Saviour's *Transfiguration*; and are therefore at Liberty now to proceed to *that of his healing the Woman of her Issue of Blood.*



S E C T. VII.

Of his HEALING the Woman of her Issue of Blood.

Mr. Wool-
ston's Ob-
jection. “ **B**UT had his Power of healing Diseases, ^a says Mr. *Woolston*, been ever design'd as an Argument of his
“ *Divine*

^a Vid. Disc. 2. p. 4. to p. 17.

“ *Divine Authority*, the Diseases, which
“ he cur’d, and the manner of his ope-
“ ration therein, would have been so
“ accurately describ’d by the *Evange-*
“ *lists*, (which we find they have not
“ done) as that we might have been
“ sure that the Work was *Supernatural*;
“ whereas, in the Case now before us,
“ they have left us ignorant, both as to
“ the *Nature*, and *Degree* of this Wo-
“ man’s Distemper. If however we
“ may be allow’d to conjecture by what
“ these imperfect Historians have told
“ us, *viz.* That the Woman subsisted
“ under her Malady for the space of
“ *twelve Years*, and was of *Strength*
“ sufficient to bear the *Press* of the Peo-
“ ple, when she applied to Jesus for
“ Cure; ’tis highly probable, that her
“ Distemper was but some slight Indis-
“ position, a little Bleeding at the Nose
“ now and then, (for the Word *ἀπορρο-*
“ *ήσασα* may signify *that*, as well as any
“ thing else) or some such small Eva-
“ cuation, as might have been a means,
“ (had she not been more *nice* than
“ *wise*) to *prolong*, rather than *shorten*
“ her Life. The Woman however, ha-
“ ving, upon some account or other, en-
“ tertain’d a good Conceit of *Jesus*, (as
“ Conceit in these Cases is all in all)
“ and

“ and *Jesus*, upon some hint or other,
 “ taking occasion to encourage that
 “ Conceit, her Cure is imputed to the
 “ *Touch of the hem of his Garment*, when
 “ it was *in reality* the pure effect of a
 “ strong *Imagination*.

The manner of the *Evangelists* relating *Christ's Cures*. It is the peculiar Excellency of the *Gospel-History*, that as it was intended for the Use and Instruction of all, so is it adapted, in the Plainness and Simplicity of its Composition, to every one's Capacity. The *Evangelists* pretend to do no more, than to give us an easie and familiar Account of our Saviour's Life and Transactions; and 'twould be putting them out of *Character*, when their Province is to write as *Historians*,^b to expect that they should describe, with the Accuracy of profess'd *Physicians* and *Chirurgeons*, the Nature and Symptoms of the several Diseases, which *Jesus* cur'd, and they, as the Writers of his *Memoirs*, were oblig'd to record. What seems to be requir'd of them, in this Case, is, that they should so far relate the Circumstances of each Disease, as to make them sufficient to convince all rational and unprejudic'd Persons, that the Power, whereby the Cures were effect-

ed,

^b Bp. *Smallbrocke's Vind.* p. 272.

ed, was certainly Supernatural. But, because this is one of the first *bodily* Cures, that falls under our Consideration, let us enquire a little, whether, in the general, there be any just Reason (as is suggested) to suspect their *Fidelity* in relating them.

The *Evangelists* indeed had no Skill in Diseases, nor is it at all necessary to the support of the Credit of their Relations that they should have had any: But Eyes and Understanding they certainly had, in virtue of which they were Judges, (as all other Men are,) of the common Appearances of Distempers, such as *Blindness*, *Lameness*, *Crookedness*, and the like. If therefore they falsified in their Account of these Matters, it must be out of a Confederacy with their Master, and such a *Confederacy*, as was levell'd against the whole *Jewish* Nation, and threaten'd nothing less, than the subversion of their Religion, and the utter Abolition of the Law of *Moses*, to which they were addicted even to *Superstition*. But now what Method do they take to carry on this Cheat? Why, in the very Country, where the whole Scheme of the Transaction was to lie, they extol Jesus as a Prophet, as one,

I who

Their Fidelity herein.

who prov'd his *Divine Mission* by such Miraculous Cures, as were never heard of before ; and in their Account of this, not only specify the Diseases, and the manner of their Cure, but the very Places (with other particular Circumstances) where the Persons liv'd, upon whom these Cures were wrought. At *Jerusalem* for instance, they tell us, that, on the Feast of the *Passover*, he cur'd a Man, who had been lame *eight and thirty Years*, by bidding him arise and walk ; that in *Galilee*, in one of their Synagogues, on the Sabbath Day, he restor'd a Man that had a wither'd Hand, by bidding *him stretch it forth* ; and that at *Capernaum*, he healed a *Centurion's* Servant, who was sick of the Palsy, only by speaking a Word. These, and many more Instances of the like nature, are reported of Jesus, in consequence of which, he, and his *Disciples*, gain'd Credit every Day among the People, who came over in great Numbers to their Party. But now, supposing any Man, at this time of day, should pretend a Commission from God, to set up a new Religion in opposition to *Christianity*, and, to countenance his Pretensions, should have his Followers give out, that, at *London*, he cur'd an *Alderman's* Son of Fits ; at St. Al-

Alban's, a Gentleman's Servant of a broken Leg; at *Dover*, restor'd a blind Man to his Sight, and so on; is it possible that ever such a Pretender as this should gain Credit? Would not every one think himself concern'd to make strict Enquiry, whether these Things were so, or not? Would not the People, in every Place, to whom Appeal was made, testify that no such Things were ever seen or heard among them? And, in consequence of this, would not the *Impostor*, instead of gaining *Profelites*, be expos'd, and grow contemptible in the Eyes of the People? But since the very reverse of this happen'd to our blessed Lord, and his Pretensions; it is an Argument, next to a Demonstration, that there was no Cheat in the Cures which he wrought, nor any Falsification in the *Evangelists* manner of relating them: And so we turn to the Cure, which, at present, lies before our View.

Now the *Evangelists* tell us, that, while our Saviour, attended with a great number of People, was going along with a certain *Ruler of the Synagogue*, in order to cure his Daughter, just then at the point of Death; this Woman, who

The State
of the
Woman's
Case.

I 2

had

had been diseas'd (as the generality of Physicians think it) with an Hysterical Flux, or Issue of Blood, and had suffered many Things of the Physicians, inſomuch that ſhe had ſpent all that ſhe had, and was nothing better'd, but rather grew worſe, being fully perſuaded, that, if ſhe could but come at Chriſt, the very Touch of his Garment would heal her; made a ſhift to get behind him in the Crowd, and immediately, upon Experiment, found within herſelf that ſhe was cured. But, the Cure being done ſecretly, and without the Privy of any of the Company, our Saviour turns about, and enquiring who had touch'd him, the poor Woman, fearing, and trembling, and knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the Truth, or (as ^d St. Luke has it) declared unto him, before all the People, for what Cauſe ſhe had touch'd him, and how ſhe was heal'd immediately.

Her Diſtemper
Chronical.

In this Light the *Evangelical* Hiſtory has placed the Woman's Diſtemper, and her Cure; and from hence it is no hard Matter to diſcern, that her Diſtemper was no flight or ſudden Indiſpoſition, but one of ſo obſtinate and inveterate a Nature, as not to be cur'd by the

the Art of Physick. For her *suffering many Things of many Physicians* shews, that she had undergone some harsh and uncommon Courses of it, and that too at so great an Expence, that whatever her Circumstances were (and they seem to be considerable by her consulting so many Physicians) she was reduc'd by them to Poverty.

Her Condition indeed is not represented so weak, but that she could get into the Crowd, and make forward to come at Christ; but the Crowd, we read of here, could not possibly be so great, as what we meet with in other places. In other places^e we find our Saviour frequently represented, as surrounded with large Multitudes of People, whose Attention was strongly engag'd in hearing his excellent Discourses, and in seeing his amazing Works. In this Case indeed there was no breaking through the Crowd, nor could any *new Comer* gain Admittance to him, especially^f when he was in an House. But here we find him walking along in an open place, accompanied with a Magistrate, whose Presence might restrain any Tumult, and neither Preaching to the People,

Why she might come at Christ.

^e Ray's Vind. part 2. p. 36. ^f Vid. Mark ii. 2, 4. & Luke viii. 19, 20.

ple, nor working any Miracle, until this Woman came, which made her Access much more easy. But be the Difficulty suppos'd never so great, yet who would not struggle upon such an Occasion as this, when *Skin for Skin, and all that a Man has, will he give for his Life*; when her Condition was become so desperate, that, without this last Experiment, she was lost and undone? For such was the Nature of her Distemper, (says ^s a very great Physician, having her very Case before him) that *it gains Strength in its Progress: It encreases and grows worse by Remedies, and, at last, all Benefit of them is despaired of, inso-much that Æsculapius himself, could not have cured a Patient in these Circumstances.*

That she
was not
cured by
Imagination
.

How vain and groundless a Notion is it then, to suppose, that a Disease of this Kind and Continuance, could ever be cured by the Strength of the Woman's *Imagination*? Whether ever Cures of Chronical Diseases were brought about by the help of a strong ^h *Fancy*, is much to be questioned; but admitting there were some Instances of this kind, yet there is one Circumstance, which plainly

^s *Ades. de morbis Evang. apud critic Sacra. Tom. 9. p. 3685.* ^h *Dr. Pearce's Vind. part 4. p. 24.*

plainly distinguishes them from the miraculous Cures of Christ, viz. ⁱ That they were never effected *at once*, and in a *moment*, but, when a Surprize of Joy, and a strong Persuasion that he should be cured, had so far work'd upon the *Patient*, as to give a new Turn and Motion to his Spirits and Juices of his Body, he has only begun, from that Time, to find an Amendment; and the Impression of the same Passions remaining strong upon him afterwards, he has recovered by degrees, and in length of Time, the Cure has been compleated, and *Nature* help'd to finish, what the *Imagination* had imperfectly begun. The Truth is, all the Work of *Fancy*, in this Case, is, to entertain a very good Opinion of a Physician, of his Skill, and Fidelity, and possibly of his Friendship, and thence to be pleas'd with great Hopes of the Success of his Prescriptions. But it is utterly incredible, that the very best Opinion, or most *Sanguine* Hopes could be powerful enough to remove a *Chronical* Distemper, so habitually rooted in Nature *for twelve Years* together, as to have in vain exhausted the whole Art of *Physick*, and baffled the Attempts of all *Physicians*. If ever the Power of

I 4

Fancy

ⁱ Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 282.

Fancy could have availed any thing towards the curing of an inveterate Distemper, this Woman, one would think, must have received great Benefit from some one or other of those many Physicians, she had consulted; since it is not reasonable to think, she would have *spent all her Living upon them*, nor gone through so many severe Courses, as were prescribed by them, had she not conceived a very good Opinion, at least, of some of them, and hoped, by their Advice, to recover her Health; and yet we find she *rather grew worse*, until she came to *Jesus*, in *full Assurance of Faith*, and, by the Emanation of a divine Power from him, received *the Consummation of her Hope*.

But by
Christ's
Power and
her Faith
in him.

What this *sanative* Virtue was, which resided in the Body of the holy *Jesus*; how it was exerted, and when exerted, how he perceived it, and was affected by it; are Points that we cannot resolve, because the Spirit of God has not thought proper to reveal them. This, however, every common Reader may observe, that there was a certain previous Qualification, in some Measure, required in those sick Persons, whom Christ vouchsafed to Cure, and without which he did

did not (^k not because he could not, but because he would not) usually extend his divine Power; and that Qualification was *Faith*, or believing him to be a true *Prophet*, and consequently the *Messiah*, that was to come into the World.

This Woman therefore, hearing of *Jesus*, as he was accidentally passing by, and encouraged by the former Miracles, he had wrought, which were undeniable Proofs of his Power and Compassion, adventured to make her humble Application to him. ¹ She, as well as the rest of the People, could not but stand amazed at the marvellous Works he did, and was constrained to acknowledge, that no Man could do the like, *except that God were with him*: and therefore, in Obedience to God, in whose Name he acted, and who so visibly owned and approved of his Pretensions, she gave a signal Testimony, (by this outward touching of his Garment) of her singular Regard and Veneration for so *divine* a Person. As her Extremity was great, so it gave her a fit Opportunity to express her high Opinion of his Power to help,

^k Compare *Matt.* xiii. 58. with *Mark* vi. 5, 6.

¹ *Ray's Vind.* Part 2. p. 40.

help, and gracious Inclination to commiserate, the distressed. Upon this Subject she declares herself with a Confidence and Satisfaction, free from the least Suspicion of a Disappointment, *If I may but touch his Garment, I shall be whole*: And the publick Applause, which our Saviour gave to this remarkable Instance of her Faith, seems to intimate, that he was particularly pleased with her Temper of Mind, as boading something more than a mere impatience to be cured of her Disease, and proceeding indeed from a full Sense and Persuasion of his *divine Character and Commission*; ^m *Daughter be of good Comfort, thy Faith has made thee whole, go in Peace*. And so we proceed to the other Woman, that was cured of *her Spirit of Infirmity*.

^m *Luke viii 48.*

S E C T.



S E C T. VIII.

Of his curing the Woman of her Spirit of Infirmity.

“ **B**UT this Cure, according to the
“ Letter, ⁿ says Mr. *Woolston*, was Mr. Wool-
“ no Miracle at all, and, in some ston's Ob-
“ Parts of the Story, incredible. The jection.
“ *Evangelist*, who himself was a *Physi-*
“ *cian*, and (if he had sufficient Know-
“ ledge of his Profession) would have
“ doubtless told us the worst of the Case,
“ says no more, than that the Woman
“ *had a Spirit of weakness*, i. e. was a
“ poor-spirited and vapourish Creature,
“ full of Fancies, (perhaps of the De-
“ vil's Temptations and Power over her)
“ and this, resting upon her for the
“ space of *eighteen Years*, might well
“ sink and bow down a Person of her
“ disconsolate and dejected Temper.
“ This is the whole of the Distemper:
“ And the Cure of it could be nothing
“ else, but Jesus's coming to her, and
“ giving her some comfortable Advice
“ and

ⁿ Vid. Disc. 2 from p. 17, to p. 44.

“ and Admonition ; whereupon she, ha-
 “ ving an high Opinion of his Wisdom
 “ and Goodness, might recover, and be
 “ afterwards of a more chearful Heart
 “ and erect Countenance. So that (ta-
 “ king the Devil out of the Story) I see
 “ nothing wonderful, either in the Dif-
 “ ease, or Cure : And that *the Devil*
 “ ought to be *taken out of the Story*, is
 “ plain for this Reason, because, in the
 “ Writings of the *Evangelists*, we have
 “ such frequent Accounts of *Satan*,
 “ *Beelzebub*, and other unclean Spirits,
 “ in comparison to what we have in
 “ preceding Histories, that, if these
 “ Things were *literally* to be understood,
 “ one would be tempted to think, that
 “ the Age, in which *Christ* came, was
 “ that wherein *Hell first broke loose, and*
 “ *infested Mankind*. And yet ’tis certain,
 “ that these Stories have no other Mean-
 “ ing, than what is *Cabalistical* ; nor
 “ does *Satan*, and all his Train of *De-*
 “ *vils*, signify any thing more, than the
 “ *wicked and outrageous Passions* of Man-
 “ kind.

The State
 of the Wo-
 man's
 Case

St. Luke as a Physician, and no doubt
 merely because he was one, (as ° a late
 learned Master of that Science has well
 ob-

° Dr. Friend's Hist of Physick, p. 222, &c.

observ'd) when there is occasion to speak of Distempers, or the Cure of them, makes use of Words more simple, more correct, as well as more Physical, than the other Evangelists; and 'twas his reading Greek Authors, while he studied Physick, that made his Language in this respect better. Let us then see in what manner he describes the Distemper now before us. He tells us, ^p That while our Saviour was teaching in one of the Synagogues, on the Sabbath Day, he chanc'd to espy a Woman, who, for eighteen Years, had been so infirm, that her Body was contracted, and bound together, and that to such a degree, that she could in no wise lift up herself, i. e. could not so much as raise her Head, and look upwards. For, that this is the true Meaning of the Passage, appears most evidently from the Phrases being bound, and then loos'd, which latter Word is literally interpreted by the equivalent Expression, of her ^q being made strait by Jesus.

Thus it appears, that the Woman's Condition was *Convuls'd*, and convuls'd ^{Infliged by the Devil.} by a tension of the Muscles, which bend the Body forwards; and the immediate Cause of this her Malady, the *Evangelist* acquaints us, was a *Spirit of Infirmity*.
By

^p Luke xiii. 10, &c. ^q Ver. 13.

By this *Spirit of Infirmity* we might indeed understand the *Disease itself*, agreeably to the *Jewish* way of speaking; but since afterwards, our Saviour himself plainly tells us, that this Evil was * *inflicted by Satan*, “ It is the better way (says † a learned Annotator) to take this matter in the same Sense, wherein † *St. Mark* uses the Expression, *πνεῦμα ἄλλυλον*, a *dumb Spirit*, as meaning thereby an *evil Spirit*, that obstructed the Power of Speaking. For it was an ancient Opinion of the *Jews*, that many Diseases were occasion'd in Mankind by evil Spirits, without any regard to *natural* Causes; as it appears in the Case of *Job*, and *Saul*, as well as several Instances in the *New Testament*”. † So that, upon very competent Authority, we may pronounce, that this Woman's Distemper was so far from being the mere Effect of *Vapours* and *Melancholly*, that it was a real and inveterate Disease, of a very long standing, and occasion'd by the Influence of an *Evil Spirit*.

The Existence of Devils before Christ.

That there are Spirits of this kind, the holy Scriptures have taken such care to
ac-

* *Luke* xiii. 16. † *Grotius in Luc.* 13. § 6. 9. v. 17. † *Bp. Smallbrooke's Vind.* p. 322.

acquaint us^u with their Origin and Fall, their Names and^w Numbers, their^x Government and^y Orders, their^z malicious Designs, and Employments, &c. that no one can doubt of their Existence, who believes these holy Oracles to be true; nor can any endeavour to dispossess his Mind of this Persuasion, without tempting God to *give him up to a strong Delusion, that he may believe a Lye.* That,^a both among the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, before our Saviour's Time, Men were possess'd with these evil Spirits, is manifest from the Testimony of *Josephus*, who tells us of a very powerful Form of *Exorcism*, which descended from *Solomon*, who learnt it from God; and from the Testimony of *Plutarch*, who acquaints us, that the *Magicians* of most Nations advised those, that were possess'd, *to repeat the Ephesian Letters.* That these Evil Spirits were distinct *Subsistences*, and neither the *Passions* nor *Diseases* of Mankind, is plain, from the Circumstances of their Ejection; from their expostulating hereupon with Christ, *What have we to do with thee? art thou come to destroy us? art thou come to torment*

^u *John* viii. 44 & *2 Pet.* 2. 4. ^w *Matth.* iv. 8.

^x *Matth.* xii. 26. ^y *Eph.* vi. 12. ^z *1 Pet.* v. 6.

† Vid. *Whitby's* Gen. Pref. before the Epist. p. 43.

ment us before the Time? And from his commanding them sometimes to be silent, and sometimes to come out of the Man, and enter into him no more, &c.

by *more* e
about his
Time. The Truth is, these apostate Spirits had gotten so far Possession of the World, that they began to rival God in his Worship; and therefore one End of his Son's Incarnation is said to be this, ^b *that he might destroy the Works of the Devil, and* ^c *overcome the strong one, and divide his Spoils.* And this, by the way, may suggest a Reason, why at, or about the Time of our Saviour's Advent, God might permit the Devil to exert himself in an unusual manner, in order to be the more signally triumph'd over by the Saviour of the World, and those, that were delegated by him to convert Mankind to his Religion.

That
they are
not with-
out Pow-
er even
now. 'Tis true indeed, that the Devil has not acted, in so open and undisguis'd a manner, since the Establishment of *Christianity*, which has mightily impair'd his Power; but tho' we do not know the Laws of the *invisible World*, and under what Regulation evil Spirits may be now restrain'd, or *how*, and for what Reasons, they may have varied the out-ward

^b *John* iii. 8. ^c *Luke* xi. 21, 22. ^d Bp. *Small- brooke's Vind.* p. 349.

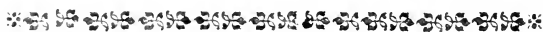
ward Appearances of their former Conduct in their Transactions with Mankind, yet there is too much Reason to apprehend, from the prodigious growth of all sorts of Vice and Impiety, that evil Spirits are, even now, more concern'd with the Spiritual Affairs of Men, than is generally imagin'd, tho' they may carry on their Commerce in a more artful and clandestine manner, than in former Times.

To return then to the Woman. If such was her unhappy Condition, that, for *eighteen Years*, she had been subject-^{The Woman's Cure Miraculous.} ed to the Bondage of one of these evil Spirits, and reduc'd, at last, to such a degree of *Crookedness*, that she could by no means lift up her Head; how can we suppose, that a little good Advice and comfortable Discourse should dispossess the Fiend, and make her *strait*, and stand upright in a Moment? In the sequel of the Story, ^e we read, that the Woman *glorified God* for her happy Recovery; that the Ruler of the Synagogue express'd his Malice and Indignation at it; that our Saviour wisely justified the Action he had done; and that all the People *rejoyc'd* and were *exceedingly glad* for what they had seen; ^f but,

K if

^e Luke xiii. 13, &c. ^f Roy's Vind. Part 2. p. 56.

if the Woman's Disease was only *Vapours*, and a little lowness of Spirit, her Gratitude was too *prodigal*, because her Distemper was but a *trifle*, and all the Favour, she had receiv'd from Jesus, was only that of *a few Words*; the Ruler was outrageous for nothing, for no Cure had been done in breach of the *Sabbath-day*; and the People's Joy was only Noise and Nonsense, because they *had seen no glorious Thing perform'd*. But enough has been said in Confutation of this idle Dream; and therefore proceed we next to our Lord's *Prophetical Conversation with the Samaritan Woman*.



S E C T. IX.

Of his Prophetical Conversation with the Samaritan Woman.

Mr. Wool-
ston's Ob-
jection. “ BUT instead of any thing *Prophe-*
“ *tical* in it, & says Mr. *Woolston*, it
“ is all mere *Fortune-telling*. So far in-
“ deed as one can gather from the Wo-
“ man's Discourse, the Expectation of
“ the *Samaritans* was, that the *Messiah*
“ should

‡ *Woolston's Dis. 2. from p. 49 to 55.*

“ should be neither a *Prince* nor a *Pro-*
 “ *phet*, but a *Conjurer* only; and for
 “ what appears in the Story, (instead of
 “ any Tokens of *Omniscience* in it) the
 “ whole thing might be a Cheat and Ar-
 “ tifice. By some private Intimations
 “ or other, (as the Practice of *Fortune-*
 “ *tellers* is) *Jehus* might get Intelligence
 “ of some Circumstances of this Wo-
 “ man’s Life; and, by the help of these,
 “ first raise her Admiration, and then
 “ possess her with the Notion of his
 “ being the promis’d *Messiah*, which we
 “ find him more ready to declare to her,
 “ than ever he was to *wiser* People.

^h The *Samaritans* originally were the The Ori-
Cutheans, and such other of the *Eastern* ginal of
 Nations, as *Esurhaddud*, upon the De- the Sama-
 portation of the *Israelites*, planted in ritans.
Samaria; but after the Temple upon
 Mount *Gerezim* was built by *Sanballat*,
 and *Samaria* became a common Refuge
 and *Asylum* to all refractory *Jews*, this
 mixture of Inhabitants, in a short time,
 produc’d a Change in Religion. For,
 whereas these *Samaritans* had, hitherto,
 worshipp’d the God of *Israel*, in con-
 junction with the Gods of the *East*, from
 whence they came, when once the
 K 2 *Jewish*

Jewish Worship came to be settled, and the Book of the Law of *Moses* to be read publickly, they conformed themselves wholly to the Worship of the true God, and, in the Performance of it, were as exact, as the *Jews* themselves: But herein they differ'd from the *Jews*, that they rejected all *Traditions*, and received no other Scriptures, but the five Books of *Moses*.

Their Expectation of the *Messiah*.

In these Books however, they had the express Promise of *Moses* himself, that ⁱ God would raise up to them a Prophet, to whom they were to hearken; and from the Prediction of *Jacob* might perceive, that, now ^k the Sceptre was departing from *Judah*, the Time of *Skilob's* coming was drawing near. From these Prophecies they might gather, that the *Messiah* was to come in the Character of a King and a Prophet both: and 'tis not to be doubted, but that the general Expectation of the *Jews* at this Juncture, their near Neighbourhood, and the Fame of many wonderful Works of *Jesus* done elsewhere, might awaken in the *Samaritans* some Attention.

Prophets ought not to be called Fortune-tellers.

It is no great Matter of Wit to give a *Burlesque* Name to the most serious Thing in Nature; and, because the Business

ⁱ *Deut.* xviii. 15.

^k *Gen.* xlix. 10.

finess of a Prophet extends to the Discovery of Things past, as well as the Prediction of what is to come, therefore to repute him a *Fortune-Teller*:¹ But, by the same kind of Treatment, may most of the great Prophets of old be *Nicknam'd*. *Daniel*, for Instance, must be a *Fortune-Teller*, because he not only foretold future Things, but likewise made Discoveries of past Secrets, and, particularly, that of the Dream of *Nebuchadnezzar*; nay, *Moses* himself must not escape without being called a *Conjurer*, who (besides his many Prophecies of future Events) revealed past Transactions, relating to the *Creation* it self, the first Fall of Man, the Deluge, the Dispersion of Mankind, together with the Reasons and Ends of these, and many other Matters, that happen'd before his own Time. And must these great Prophets be rank'd among so vile a set of People, as *Conjurers* and *Soothsayers*? Or rather must *Prophecy* it self, which, in its greatest Latitude, comprehends the Discovery both of past and future Things, and, in both Respects, is derived from the same Divine *Original*, be expos'd to Contempt under such a Character of Ridicule?

¹ Bp. *Smallbrooke's Vind.* p. 371.

Our Saviour
 our had
 no previous
 knowledge of
 this Woman.

The *Samaritan Woman*, 'tis certain, had a different Opinion; both of our Saviour, and his *Office*, when she found him breaking in upon her Secrets, and making a Discovery of Things, that were carefully concealed from the Eye of the World: for 'tis highly probable, that the infamous Courie of her Life had not, as yet, been detected, since, upon our Saviour's reminding her of it, she seems so very much astonish'd. ^a *Come see a Man, that told me all Things, that ever I did,* is an Expression so full of Wonder and Amazement, of Confusion of Mind, and Conviction of Conscience, as nothing, but an Eye, to which the most secret Recesses of the Heart lie naked and expos'd, could have extorted. For we are to remember, that this was the first Interview that Christ ever had with this Woman; that his Conference with her was purely *accidental*, in his Journey out of *Judæa* into *Galilee*; and that he was so far from having any previous Intelligence of her private Circumstances, that he was not so much as known to any of her Neighbours, and her Neighbours perhaps were as great Strangers, as any, to some Bottom-Secrets, that he had unfolded.

Cheats

Cheats and Impostors do seldom make it their Business to reform the World ; but our Saviour in his Conversation with this Woman, endeavours to instruct her in the most sublime Truths, ⁿ in the spiritual Nature of God ; the spiritual Worship, that is acceptable to him ; the Imperfection, and speedy Abolishment both of the *Jewish* and *Samaritan* Worship ; the Gift of the Spirit, as communicable by him, and the Consequence of imparting it, namely, everlasting Life. All these great and instructive Points (which but badly comport with the Character of an *Impostor*) were, in one occasional Discourse, taught this Woman ; besides her Instruction, in order to Reformation, from the Discovery of the Secrets of her shameful Life. So that, what with the Excellence of his Doctrine, and a Consciousness of his Omniscience, not only she, but ^o many *Samaritans in the City* likewise were induced to believe on him, and to acknowledge him to be indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World.

His Discourse with her inconsistent with an *Impostor*.

His declaring who he was upon all proper Occasions.

Our Saviour, 'tis true, was so far from making any unnecessary Declarations of himself, that, on some Occasions,

K 4

we

ⁿ Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 374. ^o *John* iv. 39, &c.

we find him labouring to conceal his Divine Character, and, both ^p upon St. Peter's confessing him to be *the Christ*, and ^q after his Transfiguration, wherein he was declared to be *the Son of God*, charging his Disciples to say nothing of this, until his Resurrection: and the Reason hereof is plain, because ^r their Testimony in these Points might not only look like a Matter concerted between him and them, but because indeed they were not qualified to be his Witnesses of these Things, until they *had received Power from on high*, by the coming down of the *Holy Ghost*. 'Tis to be observed however, that, when ever our Lord is himself fairly called upon, and especially by Persons invested with Authority, he never once conceals his Divine Nature and Commission. When the *Jews* ^s came round him in Solomon's Porch, and said unto him, *how long dost thou make us doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plain*, his answer is express, *I told you, and ye believed not, the Works that I do in my Father's Name, they bear Witness of me, for I and my Father are one*. When he stood before the *Judgment-Seat*, and the high Priest demanded of him;

^p Mark viii. 30. ^q Matt. vii. 9. ^r Whitby on Matt. ix. 30. ^s John x. 24, &c.

him; ^c I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God, his answer is, thou hast said, or as St. Mark expresses it, ^u I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the Right-hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven. Nay, there are some Instances, wherein, of his own accord, and without any demand of this kind, he freely discovers who he was: For, having cured the Man, that was born Blind, and afterwards meeting him accidentally, dost thou believe on the Son of God? says he; whereupon the Man asking, who is the Son of God, that I may believe on him? Our Saviour replies, thou hast both seen him, and it is he, that talketh with thee.

And therefore we need less wonder, that, when this Samaritan Woman had first of all confessed him to be a Prophet, and (as her Words seem to imply) was a little dubious, whether he was not the Messiah, our Saviour should prevent her Enquiry, and tell her voluntarily, that he was: especially considering, ^w that such a Declaration might be a Means to prepare her, and the rest of the Samaritans, whenever his Apostles should come

Why he discovered himself to this Woman.

^c Matt. xxvi. 63, 64. ^u Mark xiv. 62. ^w Whittly in Locum.

come and preach the Gospel unto them, to receive their Testimony. And so we proceed to *his Miracle upon the barren Fig-Tree.*



S E C T. X.

Of his cursing the FIG-TREE.

Mr Wool-
ston's Ob-
jection.

“ **B**UT of all the Miracles of Jesus, says Mr. *Woolston*, commend me to ^a *his cursing the Fig-Tree, for not bearing Fruit out of Season*; which, at the first naming it, appears to be such an *absurd, and ridiculous, if not malicious and ill-natur'd Act*, as can hardly be equalled in any Instance of the Life of a reputed wise Man. The *Evangelists* have represented the Matter in these Words. ^b *Jesus, being hungry, and seeing a Fig-Tree a far off, having Leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon; and when he came to it, he found nothing but Leaves, for the time of Figs was not yet. And he said unto it, let no Fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever,*

^a *Woolston's Dis.* 3. p. 4, &c. ^b *Matt.* xxi. 19, &c. *Mark* xi. 13.

“ ever, and presently the Fig-Tree with-
“ ther’d away. Now how inconsistent
“ is it with the Character of *Jesus*, a
“ worker of Miracles, and who had
“ Angels to *minister to him* when he
“ pleased, that he should be driven to
“ such an Extremity of Hunger, as to
“ make him Passionate, and out of Hu-
“ mour? How inconsistent with his
“ *Omniscience*, that when he saw this
“ Fig-Tree at a Distance, he should
“ not know, that it had no Fruit on it,
“ and so save himself the Trouble of
“ going to it? But, above all, how in-
“ consistent with common Prudence, to
“ expect Fruit at an unseasonable Time,
“ and then resent an unavoidable Disap-
“ pointment, at so violent and outragi-
“ ous a Rate? But, put the Case, that,
“ coming up to the Fig-Tree, he had
“ *haply* found Fruit thereon; yet, still
“ we may be allowed to ask, what le-
“ gal Right he had to it, and how could
“ he in Conscience, without asking Leave
“ of the *Proprietors*, have pulled and
“ eaten it? And much more then may
“ we ask, what Right and Authority
“ he had to Curse it; and where his
“ Wisdom, or Justice, or Honesty lay, in
“ destroying, by this Act of *Execration*,
“ another Man’s harmless and inoffen-
“ five

“ five Tree? There is some Reason,
“ however, to suppose, that this Act of
“ *Execration* did not do the Work a-
“ lone, but that, being minded to put
“ a Trick upon his Disciples and Fol-
“ lowers, he might take an Opportuni-
“ ty to slip from them, and give it such
“ a private and imperceptible cut, as
“ would make it wither away. But be
“ that as it will, the Miracle is certain-
“ ly repugnant to what our Divines
“ would have us believe of Jesus, and
“ the beneficent Nature of his Perform-
“ ances. Instead of cursing this Tree,
“ had he made a dead and withered one
“ immediately bud, and flourish, and
“ revive, this had been such an In-
“ stance of his Power, as must have
“ pass’d for an indisputable Miracle ;
“ such an instance, as (like his Mira-
“ cles of healing Diseases) carried Good-
“ ness along with it ; and from the one
“ with the other, we might have justly
“ inferr’d, that both were the Operations
“ of a good God : but this one Instance
“ of his cursing the Fig-Tree, in such
“ a rash extravagant manner, spoils the
“ Credit, and sullies the Glory of all his
“ other Works.

It cannot be denied indeed, but that ^{The State and Condition of Christi's Life.} our Lord Jesus Christ, who, tho' he was rich (as the Apostle expresses it) by Nature, as being Lord and Heir of all Things, yet for our sakes, became poor, that we through his Poverty might become rich, was frequently destitute of the Conveniencies of Life, and subject, at all times, to the innocent Infirmities of human Nature; yet we do not find that they gave any perturbation to his Mind. ^c Foxes have holes, and the Birds of the Air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not, of his own, where to lay his Head, is the Description he makes of his own Circumstances; ^d but what he wanted of this kind was occasionally supplied by several of his more wealthy Followers, who are recorded, as making Provision for him, out of their own Substance, and entertaining him from time to time at their Houses. And tho', upon any emergent Necessity, it was in his Power to supply himself in the same miraculous manner, as he oft provided for others, yet where human Means could be us'd, it was more consistent with his Wisdom, to reserve his Miracles for a more important Occasion. Tho' therefore (as ^e the Apostle

^b 1 Cor. viii. 9. ^c Matth. viii. 20. ^d Bp. Smallbrooke's Vind. p. 420. ^e Heb. ii. 9.

Apostle speaks) *God hath put in Subjection to him the Powers of the World to come*, and, on some extraordinary Conjunctions, (such as his long Temptation in the Wilderness, and bitter Agony in the Garden,) did, even in this Life, send down *these ministering Spirits to minister* unto him; yet that it was neither necessary in itself, or compatible with the Scheme of his *humiliation*, for them to do the same upon the common returns of Appetite, no one, I think, can imagine.

His going
up to the
Fig-Tree
no blot
upon his
Omnisci-
ence,

A Tree there was in the way, which might have supply'd his Wants upon the present occasion, had it not been barren; and, (besides *the acquiescence* of his *Divinity*, which may very well be admitted in the common *Actions* of his Life) it is but supposing, that this Tree stood in the *Road-side*, and that our Saviour, going that way, (whether he found Fruit on it, or no) intended all along to work a Miracle upon it, and, by its speedy withering away, *emblematically* to shew his Disciples the near approaching Ruin and Desolation of the *Jews*; and then all the supposed trouble of going up to it, and disappointment afterwards, which seem to cast an Imputati-

on

on upon his *Omniscience*, vanish into nothing.

There seems to be mere difficulty in-
 deed, in clearing our Saviour from the Or Wif-
dam. other Imputation, that of the breach of
common Prudence, in case he had Thoughts
 of finding Fruit upon the Fig-Tree, before
 the proper Season was come. But, to set
 this Matter in a true Light, we shall en-
 deavour to shew, *First*, † That, at the
 Time, when our Saviour went up to this
 Fig-Tree, it was a Season proper to expect
 to find Figs in *Judæa*; and, *Secondly*,
 That the Words of *St. Mark* may be so
 understood, as to comport very well with
 this Circumstance.

Whoever considers the *Series* of Hi-
 story, and the strict *connection* of the sub-
 sequent Actions and Discourses of Jesus,
 as they are recorded both by *St. Matthew*
 and *St. Mark*, will soon be convinc'd,
 that this Miracle on the Fig-Tree hap-
 pen'd about the *eleventh* Day of the
Jewish Month, *Nisan*, on *Tuesday*, very
 probably, before the *Passover*. For the
Passover, we know, was kept by the
Jews on the *fourteenth* Day of *Nisan*,
 which answers to the latter end of our
March: So that our business is to shew,
 that *at this Time of the Year* there were
 Figs

† *Dr. Pearce*, Part 3. p. 6.

Figs in *Judea*, ripe, and fit for eating.

From Sacred

8 When *Moses* sent away the *Spies* to search the Land of *Canaan*, it was, we are told, ^h in the Time of the first ripe Grapes, and, that ⁱ they returned from searching the Land after forty Days, and brought from thence ^k *Pomegranates*, and *Figs*, as well as *Clusters of Grapes*. Now the LXX Version says, That it was in the *Spring* when the *Spies* set forward; and *Philo*, in his *Life of Moses*, seems to be of the same Opinion: for he introduces him, as dismissing the *Spies*, and telling them, that the Season was then the fittest for discovering the goodness of the Country, because it was *Spring*, and, as charging them not to return, till *Summer* was come, that they might bring of the *Fruits of the Land* for a *Sample*. Supposing then, that it was about the middle of the *Spring* ^l (which began in *Judæa* about the middle of *January*) that the *Spies* set out, and that they were gone forty Days; it will follow, that they return'd some few days before the *Passover*: and if the *Figs*, which they brought, as well as the *Grapes*, were ripe, and full grown, then were there ripe *Figs* in

⁸ Dr. *Pearce*, part 3. p. 8. ^h *Numb.* xiii. 20.
ⁱ Ver. 25. ^k Ver. 23. ^l Vid. *Pearce*, part 3. p. 7.

in *Judea* at the very same time, that our Saviour is here said to look for them. But this is not all.

Solomon, in his Book of *Canticles*, gives us a lively Description of the Spring, and, among other Signs of its being come, makes mention of this, that ^m *the Fig-Tree putteth forth her green Figs, and the Vines, with the tender Grape, give a good smell; or (as it may more literally be render'd) The Fig-Tree hath begun to give a flavour to her young Figs, and the Vines a good smell to the tender Grape.* Now, if, in the middle of our *January*, the Figs were so forward, as then to give a flavour, it is reasonable to think, that, in so warm and fruitful a Climate, there might be ripe ones, about the latter end of *March*, which is the precise time when our Saviour sought for them upon this *Fig-Tree*.

Our Saviour indeed instances in the ⁿ *tenderness of the Branch of the Fig-Tree*, and in its *putting forth Leaves*, as the natural sign of the near approach of the *Summer*; but 'tis of the *ordinary* or *Garden Fig-Tree*, that he makes this Observation, which, (according to the *Talmudists*, cited by our Learned *Lightfoot*) brought not its Fruit to ma-
L turity,

^m Ch. ii. 15. ⁿ Mark xiii. 28.

turity, till about five Months after the *eleventh* day of *Nisan*, i. e. much about the latter end of our *August*.

The Truth is, ° there were in *Judæa* and *pro-*
fine Au- Fig-Trees of different kinds; and, be-
 thors. sides the *ordinary* sort, which our Savi-
 our here speaks of, the *Jewish* Writers
 make particular mention of one early
 kind, called *Banoth Shuach*, which
 never wanted Leaves, and very seldom
 Fruit. Nay, *Pliny* tells us of some
 sort of Fig-Trees in *Syria*, (under
 which Name he frequently comprehends
Judæa) ^p that had always Leaves, and
 when the Fruit of the preceding Year was
 gathered, the new Fruit began immediat-
 ly, and was growing all the Winter long.
 And therefore we need less wonder at
 what the Emperor *Julian* asserts, ^q That
 in *Damascus*, in *Syria*, there is a sort of
 Fig-Tree, whose Fruit, both old and
 young, grows together, and lasts beyond
 the Year; or at what a very eminent
 Traveller, and great Naturalist assures
 us, ^r “ That some sort of Figs grow in
 “ the *Archipelago* in Winter, Spring, and
 “ Summer, but that the *Garden Fig* is
 “ not ripe there, till the end of *August*,
 “ or

° Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 405. ^p Nat. Hist. L. 13. c. 8. ^q *Jul. Ep.* 24. ^r *Tournesori's* Voyages to the *Levant*.

“ or the beginning of *September*.” From all which, we may be allow’d to conclude, that there might be Figs in *Judæa* fit to eat, at the Time when our Saviour went to look for some on this Tree: and therefore,

Secondly, To accommodate the Words of St. Mark ($\epsilon \gamma \delta \eta \nu \kappa \alpha \iota \rho \acute{o} \varsigma \sigma \upsilon \kappa \acute{\iota} \omega \nu$) to this Circumstance, † some have thought fit to read them by way of Interrogation, for was it not the Time of Figs? Which small variation, and including part of the Sentence in a *Parentthesis*, will make the whole Verse run thus; *And, seeing a Fig-Tree afar off, having Leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon (and when he came to it he found nothing but Leaves) for was it not the Time of Figs?* The Interrogation, say they, has here the full force of an *Affirmation*, and, by the help of the *Parentthesis*, is a very good Reason for what went immediately before it, *viz.* our Saviour’s Expectance of finding Fruit on the Tree, for well might he do so, when it was the proper Season for Figs.

Others imagine, † that by the Words, *for the Time of Figs was not yet*, may not improperly be meant, that the * *Fig-time*,

L 2

or

† Dr. Pearce, p. 12. † Ibid. p. 13. * Vid. Kilder’s Demons, Part 2. p. 38, 39. where, by several parallel

or time, when Figs were wont to be gather'd, *was not yet come*; and so, keeping the Parenthesis, as before, in the middle of the Sentence, the Words will account for our Saviour's *going to the Fig-Tree, if haply he might find any thing thereon*. The only difficulty is to prove, that *the Time of Figs* may signify *the Time of gathering them*; but for this they produce several Authorities, and, among others, one in *St. Matthew*, who, in the Parable, tells us, that when the *Lord of the Vinyard sent his Servants to the Husband-men, that they might receive the Fruits of it*, it was *when the Time of the Fruit drew near*, i. e. when the Time of gathering it was at hand. For, if it is not supposable, that the Servants were sent more early, than there was occasion, the *Time of ripe Grapes* might then be come, tho' the Time of gathering them drew but near.

Taking *the Time of Figs* then for the Time of gathering them, we must observe farther, that, on the *second Day of unleavened Bread*, i. e. about five or six Days after our Saviour's thus coming to this Tree, the first Fruits of all that was then

parallel Instances he shews, both that this may be the Sense of the Word *καιρος*, and that a Parenthesis, in this place, is necessary.

then ripe were solemnly presented in the Temple, nor were the Owners of any Trees permitted to *gather in* their Fruit, but oblig'd to let it hang (how ripe soever it was) until that day was come; and, consequently, if no fruit Trees were as yet gather'd, our Saviour was far from acting a ridiculous part, in expecting to find something upon a Fig-Tree, that look'd so promising at a distance.

But the clearest Solution seems to be that, which arises from what has been observ'd concerning the different kinds of Fig-Trees, which grew in *Judæa*, and the different Times of their Fruit's coming to maturity. " For, if there were two sorts of Fig-Trees in *Judæa*, the one much earlier than the other, and thence two Seasons of ripe Figs, the one much later than the other, and (as 'tis natural to suppose) the *later* much more common and plentiful than the former; the later was properly called *the Time of Figs*, and the *Evangelist* might very truly say, that, at the Time of the Passover, *it was not yet come*, i. e. the *common and ordinary Season* for Figs was not come. " Some Trees, 'tis true, might

L 3

" which

" Dr. Pearce, p. 14.

“ which our Saviour saw at a Distance,
 “ by the shew of its Leaves, promised no
 “ less. In the early kind, he knew,
 “ Leaves came later than the Fruit, and
 “ therefore Leaves, at this time, he took
 “ for a good Sign of its being one of
 “ those; but a strong and vigorous Plant
 “ (though it was of the later sort) might
 “ sometimes put out its Leaves, before
 “ it had Fruit: and therefore he came,
 “ not with Assurance, but with some
 “ degree of Doubtfulness, *if haply he*
 “ *might find any Thing thereon*; and,
 “ when he came to it, he perceived,
 “ that, it being of the *later* sort, had
 “ nothing but Leaves, for the *common*
 “ and *ordinary* Season, for such Trees to
 “ bear Fruit, *was not yet come*.

His
 Words
 consistent
 with
 Christ's
 expect-
 ing Figs.

Thus, whether the Passage in *St. Mark*
 be understood by way of *Negation*, or
Interrogation; or whether the *Time*,
 mentioned therein, relates to the Time
 of *ripening*, or *gathering* the Figs, there
 can be no Folly or Absurdity in our Sa-
 viour's expecting Fruit on the Tree, he
 saw in the Way; since it is evident,
 from so many Testimonies, that in *Ju-*
daea there were certain Fig-Trees, which,
 at this very Season of the Year, bore
 ripe Fruit, though the particular Tree,
 which our Saviour went to at this
 Time.

Time, might not happen to be of that *Species*.

It is to be remembered however, that this Tree (of what kind soever it was) stood ^w *by the Way*, i. e. ^{*} was a Tree of common Right, which grew in a common Field, and was distinct from such, as were planted in *Gardens* and *Orchards*, and had their proper Owners; so that the Fruit, which our Saviour expected to have had from it, would have been no other, than that of an *uncultivated* Tree, in a mere *Hedge-Row*, usually as common, and as plentiful, as Apples growing by the Highway in *Herefordshire*. But, even if the Tree had stood in enclos'd Ground, and been never so much the *Property* of any one Man, yet had our Saviour a right, and a *legal* right too, both to pull and eat of the Fruit of it, even in Virtue of *the Law*, that he then liv'd under: for thus we read, [†] *When thou comest into thy Neighbours Vineyard, then thou mayest eat Grapes to thy fill, at thine own Pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy Vessel: And when thou comest into the standing Corn of thy Neighbours, then thou mayest pluck the Ears with thine Hand, but thou shalt*

Christ's
destroy-
ing the
Tree nei-
ther an
unjust

L 4 not

^w *Math.* xxi. 19. ^{*} Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 418.
[†] *Deut.* xxiii. 24, 25.

not move a Sickle into thy Neighbours standing Corn. This Law the *Jewish* Doctors extended (as indeed the Reason of the Law extends itself) not only to *Grapes* and *Corn*, but to *Olives*, *Figs*, *Dates*, and all other common eatable Fruits; and *Josephus* tells us, ^z that the Benefit of this Indulgence reached not only to *Jews*, but to all *Travellers* upon the Highway in *Judæa*, whether they were *Natives* or not. So that had our Saviour found *Figs* on the Tree; and eat never so plentifully of them, he could have done no Injury to any Proprietor, because he only made use of the Privilege, which the common Law of the Country gave him.

Nor passionate.

But, supposing this Tree to have no Proprietor, and as it was in itself a barren Tree, uselefs and contemptible even to a Proverb, I see no Reason, why it might not (without Offence to any Man) be *blasted* as well as *cut down*, since it was a manifest *Incumbrance* to the Ground, and capable of occasioning the farther Delusion of other Travellers, by the *Spaciousness* of its Leaves. Nor can I conceive, why our Saviour should be deem'd to be in a Passion, when he did this, any more than a Farmer may be thought

^z Antiq. Jud. L. 4. C. 8.

thought to be so, when he orders his Servants to cut down a barren and useless Tree. But then, if our Saviour had an higher View in doing this, and, ^a if the blasting of this Tree served so great an End, as to be a *Type* of the approaching Destruction of the *Jewish Nation*, on Supposition of their want of Repentance, and persisting in their wicked Design to destroy *Jesus* himself; (and that this was our Saviour's Intent in doing it, the two severe Parables which he spake to the *Jews* about that Time, and which, both *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark* adjoin to the Account of this Action, are a plain Indication;) if the Destruction of the Tree, I say, answered this Purpose, it was justly sacrific'd to the publick Good, as a warning to the *Jews*, to avoid the like Fate, by the Malediction of God, and his holy Prophet *Jesus*. ^b When, therefore the warning given, by this Action, to the whole Nation of the *Jews*, was so very Charitable and Kind, it is mere Perverseness to cavil at the Miracle, because it was a *destructive* one to the Tree.

The number of Christ's Miracles, which are of a *vindictive* Kind, are but three,

And truly
miraculous
Action.

^a Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 419. ^b Dr. *Pearce*, Part 3. p. 19.

three, his driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, his permitting the Devils to enter into the Herd of Swine, and, here, his destroying the Tree, that had nothing on it but Leaves; the rest of his Works (in great Variety) are all of a beneficial Nature: But why should these be thought clearer and more incontestible Miracles, than the other, when they are both equally supernatural Acts, and require an Almighty Agent to effect them? Instead of drying up a flourishing Tree then, we will suppose, that our Saviour had made a dry and dead one revive and flourish; yet ^c might not *Jews* and *Infidels*, with the same Colour pretend, that a Tree, which is supposed to revive and flourish, was never really dead, but retained a latent Principle of Life, which afterwards, on some incidental Occasion, exerted itself? Or might not a boundless *Scepticism* suggest, that a living Tree was *artificially* substituted in the room of the dead one? In short, if our Saviour's other Miracles of a *benign* Nature, such as curing, with a Word, the most desperate Diseases, healing the Impotent, and reviving the very dead themselves, could not then, and cannot now, overcome the unreasonable Prejudices

^c Bp. *Smallbrocke's* Vind. p. 427.

Prejudices of *Infidels*, the miraculous flourishing of a dead Tree would no more have been consider'd, as a *supernatural* Act, than the causing of a flourishing Tree to wither immediately, and die with one omnipotent Word: For when Men have once imbib'd strong *Prejudices*, and are obstinately bent against Conviction, whether the Work, designed for their Cure, be of a *merciful*, or *vindictive* Nature, it makes very little Alteration in the Case; since the miraculous *Blossoms* and *Fruit* of *Aaron's Rod* (to use a Comparison suitable to our present Subject) did no more prevent the *murmurings* and *disobedience* of the *Israelites*, than the miraculous *Hail* and *Fire*, which smote the Vines and Fig-Trees of the *Egyptians*, cured their King and People of their *hardness of Heart*.

And now, to take a Reveiw of what has been said on this Subject: since our blessed Saviour, who * *took not on him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham, was, in all Things, made like unto his Brethren*, and Subject to the innocent Infirmities of humane Nature, which he, nevertheless, thought not proper, by any *miraculous* means, to remedy, or to exert his *Divinity* upon every

A sum of
the whole
Answer.

* *Heb. ii. 16, 17.*

every little Occurrence of Life : Since, beyond Dispute it has been prov'd, that there were in *Judæa* Fig-Trees, of a very early kind, which had Fruit in full *Maturity* before the time of the *Passover*, or at the time, when our Saviour, in his Return to *Bethany*, went to find Fruit on *this*; nor are the Words of *St. Mark* incompatible with this Circumstance : Since this Tree, barren as it was, was nevertheless intended to be the Subject of a Miracle, and by its hasty withering away, at our Saviour's *Execration*, a Type and Figure of the speedy Destruction of the *Jewish* Nation : Since, had it born Fruit, its standing *in the Way* made it of common Right, or, had it been *enclosed*, a particular Law, provided for that purpose, submitted it to the Use of every Traveller, that was minded to gather of it : And, lastly, since a Miracle of this kind, served to such excellent Uses, was at this time *more* necessary, and in all respects *as* convincing, as if it had been of a *merciful* and ^d*beneficial* Nature ; there is certainly no Appearance either of Folly, or Ignorance, or Injustice, or Passion, or Ill-nature, in our Saviour's doing it, as is pretended : And that he could not possibly *impose* on his

his Disciples in this Instance, so, as to make them believe what never was done, is manifest from the Scripture-account of their Attendance on him, and being present at this whole Transaction; namely, at his Imprecation of the Fig-Tree, and its subsequent withering away.

Thus ^e St. Mark informs us, that when the *Eventide was come*, Jesus went out into *Bethany* with *the Twelve*, and that on the Morrow, when they were come from *Bethany*, he was hungry. Now it is plain, that when he cursed the Tree, ^f the Disciples heard it; that they came to *Jerusalem* with him; that with him they returned the next Evening to *Bethany*, and that, in the next Morning, as they passed by, namely, in their return to *Jerusalem*, they saw the Fig-Tree dry'd up from the Roots, whereupon, we are told, that *Peter*, and (as ^g St. Matthew adds) *the other Disciples*, that still attended Jesus, took Notice of that wonderful Event, and said unto him, *how soon is the Fig-Tree, which thou cursed'st, wither'd away?* So that, from this whole Deduction, it is evident, that the twelve Disciples did *personally* accompany

No Fallacy in this Miracle.

^e Mark xi. 11, 12. ^f Ver. 14, 15, 19, 20. compared together. ^g Math. xxi. 20.

ny Jesus, from the very beginning, to the end of this marvellous Transaction ; that they were *Eye-witnesses* of the whole Miracle, wherein there was no possibility from them to be impos'd on ; and consequently, no Reason for the *blasphemous Suggestion*, of * his taking a *secret Opportunity before-hand*, to lay his *Carpenter's Ax to the Root of this Tree*.



S E C T. XI.

Of his Healing the Impotent Man at the Pool of Bethesda.

Mr. Wool-
ston's Ob-
jection.

“ BUT, whatever may be said in
“ Vindication of Jesus's *curfing the*
“ *Fig-Tree*, ^a says Mr. Woolston, his
“ Cure of the *Impotent Man* at the Pool
“ of *Bethesda* is a Tale so blindly, so
“ imperfectly, and with such mon-
“ strously incredible Circumstances, re-
“ lated, as ought to be rejected with
“ Scorn and Indignation. For, except-
“ ing St. *John's Gospel*, where do we
“ find the least mention of this Pool of
“ *Be-*

* Vid. *Woolston's Disc.* 3. p. 15. [†] *Ibid.* p. 34, and 55.

“ *Bethesda* ? *Josephus* has professedly
“ written an *History* of the *Jewish* Na-
“ tion, and would doubtless have omit-
“ ted nothing, that tended to the Ho-
“ nour of his Country, or the Manifesta-
“ tion of the Providence of God over
“ it ; and yet we neither find him, nor
“ any other *Jewish* Author, giving any
“ account of this miraculous Pool ; tho’
“ it is very presumable, that, had the
“ Story been true, they would have
“ boasted, not a little, of this singular
“ Instance of God’s distinguishing Care
“ over his *peculiar* People. But, al-
“ lowing the silence of other Writers to
“ be no Argument against St. *John*, yet,
“ to give his Story a better air of Cre-
“ dibility, he should have told us a lit-
“ tle more minutely the true Occasion
“ of the Angel’s descent into this Pool,
“ how oft in the Week, the Month, or the
“ Year he condescended to do it ; why
“ one diseased Person *only* receiv’d the
“ Benefit of it at once ; and why no
“ better Care was taken, by the Provi-
“ dence of God, or the Civil Magistrates
“ of *Jerusalem*, in the disposal of that
“ Benefit, so as to give the Preference
“ to those, that deserv’d it best, and
“ not to those, that could best struggle
“ for it. But, if St. *John* is defective
“ in

“ in these material Circumstances, he is
 “ absurd and ridiculous in his relation
 “ of others. For, of all other impotent
 “ Folk, those whom he specifies, *viz.* the
 “ *halt*, the *blind*, and the *wither'd*, were
 “ the most improper Persons in the
 “ World to lie at this Pool, *expecting*
 “ *the troubling of the Water*. And there-
 “ fore, whatever may be said in com-
 “ mendation of this *impotent* Man's *Pa-*
 “ *tience*, his *Understanding* must be un-
 “ der some Suspicion, for attending so
 “ long, in Expectance of a Cure, which
 “ it was morally impossible for him to
 “ attain. Nor can we see what Care
 “ the *Evangelist* has taken of his Master's
 “ Honour, when he tells us, that he cur'd
 “ but one Man at this Pool; and yet, at
 “ the same time, assures us, that there
 “ was a *great Multitude* of miserable Ob-
 “ jects *lying in the Porches*. For if there
 “ were so many, why did not he cure
 “ them all? If he could not, there's an
 “ end of his Almighty Power; and if
 “ he would not, an Imputation falls up-
 “ on his Mercy and Compassion; and
 “ which way soever we consider it, his
 “ Conduct is not only blameable, but
 “ makes his Power of Healing disputa-
 “ ble, and gives us some Reason to que-
 “ stion, whether, in curing this one
 “ Man

“ Man only, he really wrought any
 “ Miracle at all. For, tho’ the Man’s Dis-
 “ ease was of a long continuance, no
 “ less than *eight and thirty Years*; yet
 “ many Instances may be given of In-
 “ firmities of human Nature, which, in
 “ time, (espécially in old Age,) are
 “ known to wear off: and, if this was
 “ the Case of the *Impotent* Man before
 “ us, where is the wonder, if Jesus, ob-
 “ serving such *Symptoms* in him, bad
 “ him take up his *Couch* and begone,
 “ for he would soon be *made whole*?
 “ Had he indeed healed the whole *Mul-
 titude of impotent Folk*, this Suspicion
 “ had been removed; but, since, of so
 “ many, he chose only to cure this *one*
 “ Man, it affords Matter of Speculation,
 “ whether he was the *most*, or the *least*
 “ diseased amongst them, and whether
 “ a *natural*, or *miraculous* Cause effect-
 “ ed his Cure.

Now, in answer to all this, it may not be improper to premise in general, ^b that, tho’ it should be suppos’d, that there are some difficulties in this Account of St. *John*, relating to the State and Circumstances of the Pool of *Bethesda*, which, at this distance of Time, considering the

The Cures of the Pool and of the *Impotent Man* two distinct things.

M

Si-

* Bp. *Sms Brooke's Vind.* p. 500.

Silence of other *ancient* Authors, and the usual Brevity of the *Evangelist*, as well as our Ignorance of many *Jewish* Customs; and peculiar ways of speaking, may not possibly be explain'd to a critical Satisfaction; yet will it not therefore follow, either that St. *John's* whole Account of this *Pool of Bethesda* is an incredible *Romance*, or that our Saviour's Cure of the *Impotent Man*, at that Place, was not a real Miracle.

^c 'Tis true indeed, *Place*, as well as *Time*, is a Circumstance unavoidably attending *Matters of Fact*; but, in the Account of *Matters of Fact*, the Circumstance of the particular *Place* may oftentimes be *indifferent*, and *insignificant*; *i. e.* when it adds no new Confirmation, or Illustration to the Transaction itself. Nay, a narrative of Transactions may be really *true*, when the Scene of them is mistaken, miscalled, or even quite forgotten. However, 'tis certain, that the Account of such a mere Circumstance is no farther *material*, nor does it properly affect the Story itself, but only as it serves to give some new Light or corroborating Evidence to it.

^c *Ray's Vind. of our Saviour's Miracles*, in Answer to Mr. *Woolston's* 5 last Discourses, p. 96.

* We must observe then, that, in this Narration of St. *John*, there are two distinct Miracles to be separately consider'd; that which was wrought by the *Pool*, after its Water was troubled, and that, which our Saviour wrought upon the *Impotent Man*. The Miracle upon the *Impotent Man* is what St. *John* primarily intended to relate; and his mention of the Pool of *Bethesda* is only introductory to it. To shew indeed how this Man became the Object of our Saviour's Notice and Compassion, he speaks of him, as among a Multitude of People, that were diseas'd; and to shew, for what Reason such a Multitude of diseas'd People were met together, he makes mention of the *Sanative Virtue* of the Pool: But the Pool was not his principal Subject: It is only mention'd for the sake of something that follows; nor is the Miracle, he was concern'd to establish, that of the Pool, but that of our Saviour's curing the Man, without any use of the Pool at all: and therefore whatever Difficulties attend our accounting for the Miracles of the Pool, the Cure of the Man stands good, nor is it all affected by them.

* Dr. *Pearce's* Vind. part. 4. p. 6.

Some Account of
this Pool.

But instead of evading, let us see what account may be given of this *Pool*.
^a At *Jerusalem*, not far from the Place called the *Sheep-Market*, (or rather ^b *the Sheep-Gate*) there was a *Bath*, (for so the Word *Κολυμβήθρα* signifies) built for the use of such of the common People, as lov'd to swim, and bathe themselves in the Water, which, in those warm Climates, was both a pleasant and healthful Exercise. Around this Bath were built five *Porches*, or rather *Portico's* (for so the Word *στοά* signifies) which were design'd, as Places for the People to walk in, under covert, in the heat of the Day, if they had no mind to bathe; and for the Conveniency of dressing and undressing in the shade, for those that had: for which Reason, both the *Bath* and *Portico's* were called by the Name of *Bethesda*, i. e. *the House of Mercy or Kindness*, because the erecting them was a great Act of Kindness to the Common People, whose Indispositions in hot Countries requir'd frequent Bathing; tho' others suppose that the Pool receiv'd that Name from the Miraculous Cures, which were perform'd there.

^a Dr. Pearce's Vind part 4. p. 7. ^b *Neb.* xxxi. & xii. 39.

At this Bath, about the Time of the *Feast*, (most probably the *Feast of the Passover*) a great multitude of impotent Folk, of blind, halt, and wither'd, lay in the *Portico's*, waiting for the moving of the *Waters*. For, (as *St. John* says) an *Angel* went down *κατὰ Κασίον*, at the *Season* (i. e. of the *Passover*) and troubled the *Water*, and whosoever then first, after the troubling of the *Water*, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. This is *St. John's* account of the Matter: and from hence it does not appear, that *Waters* of this *Pool* or *Bath*, had ever received this miraculously healing *Virtue*, before the *Time* of this *Feast*.

Now it is well known, that the *Feast* When its Sanative Virtue began, and how long it lasted. of the *Passover* lasted eight or nine *Days*, including the *Days* of *unleavened Bread*, and possibly this miraculous *Quality* of the *Bath* might have begun on the first day, or perhaps some few days before; but how it came to be discover'd at first, we have no *Intelligence* from *Scripture*; only we may suppose, that some *Jew*, of an *Infirm*, or otherwise diseased *Constitution*, bathing one day for his *Pleasure* and *Recreation*, might find himself surprizingly cur'd, upon a *preternatural Motion* of the *Water*, and

that other infirm People, hearing thereof, might likewise repair to the Pool in hopes of finding the same Benefit, and so by degrees the Place be crowded with Multitudes, expecting the *Troubling of the Water*.

Why, at the Time of this Feast only, the Waters of this Bath had a sanative Quality imparted to them, the *learned* and *ingenious* Author, from whom I have borrow'd this Account, has this *not improbable* Conjecture.—That our Saviour, having gone through all the Cities of *Galilee*, and most of the other Parts of the Country of *Judæa*, preaching and healing Diseases, came up to *Jerusalem* at this *Passover* (which was the *second*, since the Commencement of his publick Ministry) with an Intent to fix his Abode there; and that, to prepare the Way before him, God might give this Pool an healing Quality, thereby to shew the *Jews*, that the divine Power in *Jesus* was coming among them, and, what they saw miraculously done by its Waters, was but an *Earnest* and *Emblem* of what this great Messenger of the Covenant was going to do for them; but that they, instead of giving him a kind Reception, *took Council together how to take away his Life*, which made him
with-

withdraw himself from them, and thereupon the miraculous Virtue of the Water ceas'd.

However this be, 'tis certain that the preceding Account has this Advantage in it, that it clears the Story from several Difficulties, and especially from what may be suppos'd to arise from the Silence of *Jewish* Writers. For if this Miracle was but of a *Week* or *ten Days* Continuance, 'tis no Wonder it came to be forgotten so soon, when, (in so short a time) its Credibility was hardly well establish'd. Taking the Story however in a less advantageous View, and supposing (as the Crowd of Commentators do) that this miraculous Virtue of the Pool lasted for some Term of Years among the *Jews*; yet, even in this Case, I cannot perceive any thing, that may not be fairly accounted for.

It may seem a little strange indeed, *Josephus's* that the *Jewish* Historian, *Josephus*, ^{Silence} should give us no Account of this Pool, ^{hereof accounted} especially when the sanative Virtue of ^{for.} its Waters, occasioned by so extraordinary a Means, could not but redound to the Honour of his Country. But when it is considered, ^d that the like Omissions have been frequently made by
M 4 other

^d Ep. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 498.

other Historians, who have neglected to insert, in their Writings, several considerable Matters of Antiquity, merely because they were so familiar and well known to them : when it is considered, that *Josephus* is silent on several other Occasions, that bear some Relation to *Jesus* ; that he does not so much as intimate *the Slaughter of the Infants*, at *Bethlehem*, mentioned by ^e *St. Matthew* ; gives no clear Account of the *Roman Census* or *Taxation*, that is recorded by ^f *St. Luke* ; and none at all of the *Galileans*, whose *Blood* *Pilate* had mingled with their *Sacrifices*, as related by ^g the same *Evangelist* : When it is considered, that, the miraculous Virtue of the Pool of *Bethesda*, and the miraculous Cure of the Impotent Man by *Jesus*, had so visible a Connection, that he could not, in decency, give an Account of the one, without making some mention of the other, and therefore chose rather to decline the History of both : And lastly, when it is considered (what is told us by *Tertullian*) “ That this Pool of *Bethesda*, which
“ cured Diseases till the coming of Christ,
“ and some time after, ceas'd to be be-
“ neficial to the *Jews*, upon their fi-
“ nal Perseverance in Blasphemy and Infidelity

^e *Math.* ii. 16. ^f *Luke* ii. 1, 2. ^g *Luke* xiii. 1. :

“delity against Christ;” there is no wonder at all, that *Josephus*, who was so very defective in other Matters, should omit giving us an Account of a Pool, whose sanative Virtue was extinct and gone, when first he wrote his *Antiquities*, and which he could not well mention, without giving an implicit Honour to Christ.

* It may be observed farther, that, as *Josephus* wrote his History for the Information of the *Greeks* and learned *Romans*, who were *Heathens*; so he seems very tender of dwelling too much upon Miracles. Nay, he has omitted the mention of some, and endeavoured, by natural Causes, to Account for others, which he undoubtedly did both believe, and teach too, as he was a *Jewish* Priest. Thus, in the *Israelites* passing over the *Red-Sea*, he makes it a doubt, whether the *parting of the Waters* was occasioned by the *Command of God*, or by the *natural Course of Things*; and refers his Reader (as a parallel Event) to what befel *Alexander* and his Army, at the *Pamphylian Sea*.

But, after all, it is no improbable Con- He prob-
jecture of ^h some great *Criticks*, that *Jo-* bably
sephus did not entirely neglect to take No- mentions
- it under
- tice another
- *N.m.*

* Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 4. p. 19. ^h Vid. P.
Lamy de Tabernac. & Templo. L. 4. C. 5.

tice of this Pool, though he did it under a different Name; for he tells us of two Pools at *Jerusalem*, the one named *ερέθιον*, and the other *ἀμύγδαλον*, which *ἀμύγδαλον* (upon a small Variation of the Original) signifies *great* and *eminent*, and is therefore thought to be the same, with that of *Bethesda* in St. *John*, as having that *Sur-name* from its miraculous Cures. However this be, it is certain, that ⁱ St. *Jerome*, who himself had been at *Jerusalem*, makes mention of two Lakes, the one filled with the Rains; that came down in the Winter, and the other with Water surprizingly Red, as if it were Blood, which, *by evident Signs*, declares and testifies, says he, *the Work that was anciently done in it*: ^k Nor has a modern Traveller omitted to tell us, which he saw, yet remaining, what is reputed to be the Place of this ancient Pool, and to give us the particular Dimensions of its length, breadth, and depth.

Thus it is plain, that near to *Jerusalem*, there was such a Place as the *Pool of Bethesda*; but how its Waters came by

ⁱ St. *Hieron.* Op. Tom. 2. in Lib. de Situ. & nominibus Locorum Hebræorum, p. 422.

^k *Masindrei's Travels*, p. 107.

by their fanative Quality, Opinions, in some measure, have been divided. Our learned *Hammond* (who sometimes affects a Singularity of Interpretation) supposes, * that the Waters became *Medicinal*, by being impregnated with an healing warmth from the Blood and Entrails of the sacrificed Beasts, that were washed there; and that the *Angel*, in the ¹ Text, is not to be understood of any of those *celestial* Beings, that are usually distinguished by that Name, but is a more general Appellation for a *Messenger*, an *Officer*, or *Servant* of the *Priest*, sent by him, at a proper Season, to stir the Water of the Pool.

Whence its fanative Virtue, different Opinions.

The learned ^m *Bartholine* supposes, that these Waters were *naturally* Medicinal, and that their Commotion was occasioned by an extraordinary Fermentation of some *Mineral* in them; and therefore he makes the *Angel* no more, than a *divine Power*, which originally gave them this Efficacy, though it was exerted in a *natural* Way. ⁿ But besides, that the Word ἀγγελος seldom occurs in the *former*, and never in *this* Sense, in any historical Narrative in Scripture, there

* *Rav's Vind.* p. 99. ¹ Vid. Annot. on 5th Ch. of St. Jo'n. ^m De Paralyticis N. Test. ⁿ Bp. *Smallbrooke's Vind.* p. 507, &c.

there are these plain Objections against both Hypotheses, *viz.* that, be the Waters impregnated with what Ingredient we please, (had their Operation been *Mechanical*) they must necessarily have cur'd more than one Person, at every Commotion or Fermentation; and yet they never can be suppos'd of Efficacy enough to cure *all manner of Diseases*, in an Instant, and at one single Immersion, as the Waters of *Bethesda* are represented to do. And therefore, waving all such Suppositions, we may be allow'd to set the Authority of an ancient Father of the Church against these *modern Names*, and say, “ ° That the Angel, “ which descended at a certain Season, “ gave the Water its *medicinal* Virtue; “ for the Nature of the Water was not “ Sanative in itself, (if it had, Cures “ would have always happen'd) but “ the whole depended on the Virtue “ communicated to it by the *Angel*.

Most probably from the Action of an Angel.

That God has frequently employ'd the Ministry of Angels in Affairs of this kind; and that Angels, thus employ'd, by their natural Powers and Faculties, are qualified to execute his Will; that they are strong, quick, and penetrating, as the Wind, as Lightning, as a flame of

° Vid. *Theophylact.* in C. 5. *Johan. Evang.*

of Fire, and are therefore oft in Scripture express'd by these Metaphors; and that, by means imperceptible to us, they can dispose the Temperature of the Air, and order the Influence of all other Elements so, as to produce Effects; either hurtful or Sanative to human Bodies, is evident from a great variety of Instances, that might be produc'd, both out of the *old* and *new* Testament. But why God, at this Time more especially, vouchsafed the *Jews* such an *Angelick* Favour and Dispensation, as this at the Pool of *Bethesda*, is not so easie a matter to resolve.

The *Jews*, we know, had been God's peculiar People, and honoured with many signal Tokens of his divine Presence among them; ^p but now these were no more. All Prophecy, the *Urim* and *Thummim*, and the miraculous Fire from Heaven were entirely ceas'd; and therefore it may be suppos'd, that, in some measure to supply the want of these, in order to keep up a lively Sense of God's Providence among them, and to shew, that he had not absolutely deserted his People, this miraculous Descent of an Angel, at certain Seasons, or of some Power equivalent to it, was vouchsafed them. But there is not the like

Why God at this time only vouchsafed this Favour to the *Jews*.

^p Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 504.

like Reason for any such Miracle now, when God ¹ *hath spoken to us by his Son,* and by him given us a compleat and final Revelation of his Will.

Why it
cur'd but
one at
once.

If however the End of this *Angelical* Descent was to keep up the Sense of a divine Providence among the *Jews*, then was this End better answer'd, by the Cure of *one* Person only, at every commotion of the Water, than by the Cure of *Multitudes at once*: And the Reason is, because the Cure of one Person only, at one time, evinc'd that the Effect was *miraculous*; whereas, upon Supposition that many Persons had been cur'd at once, these Cures might have been imputed to the natural Virtue of the Water, either as it was impregnated with some sort of Mineral, or as the warm Entrails and Blood of the *Jewish* Sacrifices might give it a *Balsamick* and healing Quality. * Had Numbers been cur'd at once, I say, the Sceptick then might have ask'd, “ Where is the Wonder of this? Do
“ not many *Medicinal* Baths cure various
“ kinds of Diseases, and Multitudes of
“ such, as labour under each Disease,
“ provided their Case be curable? Had
“ one only indeed been cur'd, the first
“ that could get in, after the *troubling*
“ of

¹ *Heb. i. 2.* * *Dr. Pearce, Part 4. p. 14.*

“ of the Water, there would have been
 “ then a great and real Miracle? But
 “ now the Numbers make the Fact sus-
 “ picious: It seems to have been a na-
 “ tural Quality in the Waters, because
 “ it is so universal. To make it ap-
 “ pear a Miracle, its Effects should
 “ have been confin’d and limited to par-
 “ ticular Times, and Persons, or o-
 “ therwise so circumstantiated, as that
 “ the Power of God, and not of *blind*
 “ Nature, might have been apparent in
 “ it.” But all this Language is effectually
 silenced by the Method, which the
 wise Providence of God took in this
 Case.

What the stated Times of the Angel’s descent were, in order to confer a Cure
 on some particular Person; or what
 Care the *Magistrates* of *Jerusalem*
 took, in order to distribute the Cures,
 according to every one’s Merit or Exi-
 gence, the *Evangelist* has not thought
 fit to acquaint us; because these are Cir-
 cumstances no ways affecting our Savi-
 our’s Cure of the *Impotent* Man, which
 was his chief Concern to relate. He
 tells us however, that there was a Place
 of Reception for the *Sick* and *Impotent*
 folk, very convenient for their stepping
 down

At what
 Times it
 happen’d.

down into the Water, upon its commotion; And, 'tis generally conjectur'd, that this commotion happen'd once every Year, and, probably, about the Time of the *Passover*, when Jesus perform'd this Cure upon the *Impotent Man*.

No Folly in the impotent Man for waiting so long.

But even supposing the *Impotent Man* to know all this, *viz.* That the Angel descended but once a Year; that, upon such descent, one only Person was to be healed; and that he himself stood in no fair competition for that Benefit; yet, since his Case was desperate, and his Malady incurable by Physick, he had nothing indeed else to do, but to wait at the Pool, in hopes of some Success at last. His Prospect, at present, was not very promising; but who could tell, but that, in Time, he might prevail with some kind Friend or other to help and assist him into the Pool, at the proper minute of Commotion? And accordingly, ' some have observ'd, that, by his Answer to our Saviour's Question, [*Wilt thou be made whole?*] *Sir, I have no Man, when the Water is troubled, to put me into the Pool,* he means no more, than modestly to desire him (whom at that time he did not know) to supply his want of an Assistant

¹ Vid. *Theophylact. in Loc. & Erasmi Paraph. in Loc.*

sistant, by putting him into the Pool himself, at a proper Season.

And this, by the way, suggests a good Reason, why, out of the Multitude of infirm People, that lay at this Pool, our Saviour made choice of this Man only, namely, because he was peculiarly unqualify'd for a Cure by the Waters, on account, both of his own natural *Incapacity to step in first himself*, and of his *Poverty*, in having none to assist him in stepping into the Pool, upon its first commotion. † He was, in short, an Object most to be compassionated of any in the Place; and more especially so, as he had been now a very long time in this Condition, and yet still depended upon the good Providence of God for an Opportunity to be cur'd, at one time or other; for which reason our Saviour might very justly single out him, and leave the rest to the *standing* Miracie.

To cure whole Multitudes at once indeed, sounds more *popular*, and carries the Face of more extensive Goodness: But, besides that our Saviour might very probably, in this Case, conform to the Rule of Cure, establish'd *providentially* at *Bethesda*, which was to heal *but one* Person at one Time; his great De-

Why
Christ
cur'd but
one out of
so many.

N

sign,

sign, in every Action of this kind, we know, was to prove his Character and Commission from God, to which End, one single and uncontestible Miracle was as sufficient an Evidence, as a Thousand. The Truth is, as he was a *free* Agent, he had certainly a Liberty to bestow his Favours as he pleas'd, and to chuse such particular Objects of Cure, as he, at any time, should think fit, consistently with the great End and Design of all his miraculous Cures, which was to give a clear Attestation of his Divine Authority. And that the Cure, now before us, was such an Attestation, will best appear by considering a little the Nature of the Distemper itself.

The Nature of his Disease, and its incurableness.

The Word *ἀδύναμις*, which we render *Infirmity*, or *Weakness*, is indeed a general Name for almost all Distempers; but *here* it is so limited in its Signification, by the Circumstances mention'd in the Context, that it can properly denote no other Disease, than what we call a confirm'd *Palsy*. "For do the Symptoms of any other Distemper so exactly agree with the Description given of this *Infirmity*, both in point of so long continuance, and such extreme *Weakness* at the same time? Does not the Word *Weak-*

" Bp. *Smallwooke's* Viad. p. 553.

Weakness, in its most obvious Sense, exactly answer to such a Relaxation of the *nervous System*, or some part of it, as made the Man incapable of stepping quick enough from the Place, where he lay, into the adjacent Pool, upon its commotion? And (what is no mean Circumstance) does not our Saviour make use of ^w the same Form and Method of Cure to this very Man, that he applies to other *Paralyticks*, *rise, take up thy Bed, and walk*; a Form very proper to Persons thus distemper'd, both to express the Weakness of their past Condition, and the Compleatness of their present Cure?

These Symptoms, and concurring Circumstances, (as I take them) are a sufficient Proof, that the Distemper, here under debate, was the *Palsy*: And that a confirm'd *Palsy*, of *thirty and eight Years continuance*, is past the Power of Art, (much more the Power of Imagination) to remedy, and only curable by a Miracle, no Physician, I think, can doubt: And therefore, to look back upon what has been said.

The Miracle of the Pool of *Bethesda*, The *Sum*,
and Con-
clusion of
the whole
Answer. being a distinct thing from our Saviour's Cure of the *Impotent Man*, that he found there;

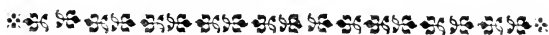
N 2

^w *Matt.* ix. 6. *Mark* ii. 2. *Luke* v. 24. *John* v. 2.

there; tho' we are not strictly accountable for every difficulty occurring in that Story, yet since, whether we suppose that the *Sanative* Virtue of its Waters was of a *short* or *long* continuance among the *Jews*, very good Reasons may be given for the Silence of *Josephus* concerning them; very good Reasons, why their Virtue, at this Time, rather than any other, proceeded from the Operation of an Angel, and not from any *natural* Cause; and (to ascertain the Miracle) why their Virtue was imparted to no more, than one Person at once: Since the Impotent Person, who lay there, was a very fit Object of our Saviour's Compassion, which, upon proper Considerations, confin'd itself, at this Time, to the Cure of one Person only, who, by the Symptoms that appear in the Story, was afflicted with an inveterate *Palsy*, incurable by all the Rules of Art; there is plainly, neither any Forgery in the *Evangelist's* Story of the Pool of *Bethesda*, nor any Fallacy in the wonderful Cure, which our Saviour wrought there: and therefore to conclude this Subject in the Words of * a *Physician* of no small Note, having this very Cure under his
 Confi-

* *Adv. de Morb. Evang. apud Critic. Sacr. Tom. 9. p. 3669.*

Consideration ; It was prodigious, says he, that this Paralytick should live so many Years : but, I believe, that God preserv'd him (as it were) in a dying Condition, that, in so difficult, impossible, and unheard-of Cure, and upon the Fame of such a mighty Miracle, it should be impossible for all the Infidels in the World, and even for those among them, that have the most obdurate Hearts, to doubt of the Divinity of Christ : And so we go on to his opening the Eyes of the Man that was born blind.



S E C T. XII.

Of his Curing the Man that was born Blind.

“ BUT, as there are several Maladies incident to the Eyes, ^a says Mr. Woolston's Objection.
 “ Mr. Woolston, some that are, and some that are not, curable by Art or Nature ; it will be no easy matter for us to distinguish, of what kind or degree this poor Man's Distemper was ; and consequently, whether there was any real Miracle in the Cure. Had
 N 3 “ Jesus

* Woolston's Dis. 4. from p. 4 to 17.

“ Jesus indeed, merely by speaking the
 “ Word, enabled the Man to see per-
 “ fectly, much then might have been
 “ urg’d in Vindication of the Miracle ;
 “ but his having recourse to such hu-
 “ man Means, as Washings and Oint-
 “ ments, not only destroys the Merit of
 “ the Cure, but exposes the whole Sto-
 “ ry to *Contempt* and *Ridicule*. For
 “ what a strange, whimsical, unac-
 “ countable *Eye-salve* was this, made up
 “ of Dirt and Spittle, and fitter indeed
 “ to put the Eyes out, than cure them ?
 “ unless we can suppose, that Jesus *un-*
 “ *der-hand* made use of a proper Medi-
 “ cine, or had privately in his Mouth,
 “ some Sanative and *Balsamick* Matter,
 “ which, dissolv’d in Spittle, might ef-
 “ fect the Cure.

No Fraud
 in the
 Cure.

Of all the miraculous Works, which
 our Saviour did, none, I think, is relat-
 ed so fully, and set off with so many
 Circumstances, to prevent the least sus-
 picion of Fraud, as this, of his *curing*
the Man, that was born blind. ^b The *E-*
vangelist has expended a whole Chapter
 upon it; and therein acquainted us with
 some previous Questions of the Disciples,
 which led to with the uncommon manner
 of

^b *John ix.*

of our Saviour's performing it ; the Surprise and Astonishment of the blind Man's Neighbours, when they saw such an Alteration wrought in him ; the Man's open and undisguized relation of the Matter, and repeated Attestation of the greatness and reality of the Cure ; the great disturbance and perplexity, which it gave the *Jews* ; their examining and *cross-examining* the Man, who still continu'd firm and uniform in his Account ; their tampering with his Parents, who avow'd the Truth of his being born blind ; and, at last, (when they saw that they could *prevail nothing*, but that the more they examin'd, the more Evidence they found,) their Rage and Malice, which carried them to such a degree, as to *excommunicate* the poor Man, and cast him out of the Synagogue. These, and some more Circumstances, are told in such a plain convincing manner, as shews the whole Story to be too well founded, for any Cavils, or mere fabulous Inventions to impair or weaken. For had there been any Deceit in the Case, 'tis very strange, that none of the Multitude should perceive any thing of it ; but much more so, that the Malice of the *Jews*, with all their Inquisitiveness, should not be able to detect it. Our Sa-

viour might have had some sanative Balsam in reserve, but what would all the Balsam in the World have availed towards the Cure of the Distemper, we are now considering? *Physicians* and *Chirurgeons*, that have studied the Texture of the Eye, and made the Cure of its Maladies their chief Employ, may give us indeed something, that will strengthen the *Optick Nerves* when weaken'd or relax'd; or, by some outward Operation may remove such Obstructions, as would otherwise impede the Sight: But *since the World began* (c as the poor Man here excellently argues) *was it not heard, that any Man opened the Eyes of one, that was born Blind.* And therefore it is Folly, as well as Malice, at this distance of Time, to oppose a *Matter of Fact*, attested with such Strength and Clearness, and, in the room thereof, to insinuate a Forgery, and suggest a suppositious Remedy, which, if even admitted, could not be competent to effect the Cure.

Or Folly
in the
Manner
of it.

Various indeed, were the Methods of our Saviour's working Cures; by a Touch, by a Word's speaking, by outward Applications, but always such an Application, as had no natural Efficacy in it. ^d Had he made use of any *Medicinal*

^b *John ix. 32.* ^d *Ray's Virg. part 2. p. 117.*

cial Remedies, there might then have been some room to doubt whether the Cure had been a miraculous Operation : But as he rejected all such Methods, as might have a Tendency to the Cure, this removes our Suspicion, and plainly demonstrates, that the Effect could be ascrib'd to no visible Means, but the invisible and irresistible Power of the Agent. The Miraculousness of it. And indeed, the very Uncommonness of the Application is so far from *diminishing*, that it rather *enhances* the Credit and Reputation of the Miracle ; at least, it must be allow'd, to be as great and triumphant a Display of a supernatural Power, to work a Cure by Means, that have no fitness to that End, as it is to do it, without the use of any Means at all : for the more improper the Methods are to answer the Design, the more amazing is the Power in making them subservient to it. In the former Case, the Man has only the Distemper to contend with, but here he has a double difficulty to conquer, and must not only controul the Power of the Disease, but change the repugnant Qualities of Bodies, and make them productive of quite contrary Effects. Though therefore the Method, which our Saviour made use of on this Occasion, was of no Significance,

cance, as to the Cure of the Man's *Blindness*, yet it was highly pertinent, in order to convince the Spectators, as well as the Patient himself, of his Almighty Power, which could produce such a wonderful and extraordinary Effect by no other Application, but what was indifferent, if not obstructive to the Cure.

Wherein
Christ
was cer-
tainly
left to
his *Liberty*.

The Truth is, ° a blind Man's coming suddenly to his Sight, (abstracted from the Agency of any Person, as fore-knowing or foreseeing the Event,) is either no Miracle at all, or if it be a Miracle, has not the Appearance or Evidence of one: But if such an Effect follows, in Consequence of any Act or Operation performed by any Person, as declarative of what will happen, this points out and demonstrates to us both the Miracle, and Person, that wrought it. Our Saviour, no doubt, could have cured this Man with *a Words speaking*; but, as the Use of this Ointment was declarative only of his Intention to Cure him, and, in this Case, every whit as significant, as if he had said in so many Words, *receive thy Sight*: I can see no Reason, why he might not, without any Imputation of *Folly* or *Whimsicalness*, be left to his own Discretion to chuse, which of the two
Actions

* Defence of Scrip. Hist. Part 2. p. 41.

Actions he was pleas'd to make use of, since both were equally expressive of his divine Power : And so we proceed to his *turning Water into Wine*, at a Marriage-Feast.



S E C T. XIII.

Of his turning WATER into WINE.

“ BUT, how can it be imagined, Mr. Wool-
“ **B** says^a Mr. *Woolston*, that so grave, ston's Ob-
“ so sober, so serious a Man, as Jesus is jection.
“ represented in Scripture, should ever
“ vouchsafe his Presence at a *Wedding*,
“ which, among the *Jews*, as well as
“ other Nations, was usually a Scene
“ of such Levities, Diversions, and Ex-
“ cesses, as were utterly inconsistent
“ with his Character. A Person of his
“ reserv'd Temper would have scarce
“ been invited at all, one would think ;
“ but if he had been invited, it is rea-
“ sonable to presume he would have
“ declined going. Instead of this, to sup-
“ pose that he was such an encourager
“ of Excess and Intemperance, as to turn
“ a large Quantity of Water into Wine,
“ to

^a *Woolston's Dif.* 4. p. 23. ad p. 43.

“ to the Tune of *seventeen* or *eighteen*
 “ *Firkins*, for the use of those, that *had*
 “ *drank* enough, if not too much be-
 “ fore, (as the Text seems to imply) is
 “ quite destroying his *moral* Character,
 “ and giving an untoward Umbrage of
 “ Suspicion, that himself was not right-
 “ ly sober, when he gave such a blunt,
 “ surly, and undutiful Answer to his
 “ Mother. The only way then to make
 “ all these Inconsistences meet, is to re-
 “ nounce the Miracle at once; and to
 “ give into the *Gloss*, which the *Gentiles*
 “ of old, by way of Objection put up-
 “ on it, viz. ^b *That the Company, ha-*
 “ *ving exhausted the Bridegroom’s Stock*
 “ *of Wine, and being in Expectation of*
 “ *more; rather than that the Bride-*
 “ *groom should be put to the Blush, Je-*
 “ *sus undertook, by a Trick of Art, to*
 “ *meliorate Water into what they called*
 “ *Wine; i. e. having some spirituous Li-*
 “ *quors at Hand, he mingled them with*
 “ *a Quantity of Water, and so, by the*
 “ *Help of the Governour of the Feast,*
 “ *(who vouched it to be incomparably good*
 “ *Wine,) palm’d a false Miracle upon the*
 “ *Guests.*

Our

^b Apud St. Chrysoft. in Locum Johan.

Our blessed Saviour, indeed, was a ^{Christ's} Person of a very grave and serious De-^{grave and}portment, infomuch, that, whatever In-^{Jober De-}portment. stances may be found of his Pity and Compassion to Mankind, of his grieving, and being troubled, and even weeping upon some Occasions; we can meet with none of his *laughing*, nor any Token of a Mirth or Joy extraordinary, in the whole History of his Life. But we must not from hence infer, that he was of a *sullen*, or *unsociable* Temper, or, in any degree, an Enemy to such Forms of Civility and good Manners, as were then in Use. If therefore we can but suppose at present (what hereafter will be evinc'd) that this Marriage of *Cana in Galilee* was between Persons of his own Kindred or Acquaintance, and that, by the very Rules of celebrating such Festivals among the *Jews*, all Excess or Intemperance were excluded; then will it follow, that it could be no Disparagement to our Saviour's Character to accept of the Invitation, and be present at such a meeting.

Among us indeed, especially among the *Vulgar* sort, there are sometimes, on these Occasions, Liberties taken, that are not so very Justifiable; but, among the *Jews*, there was always the greatest ^{The De-}Decency ^{ceney ob-}serv'd in ^{Jewish}Marriage ^{Feasts.}

Decency and Sobriety imaginable observ'd, in the Celebration of their Marriages. ^c To this purpose a *Governour of the Feast* (and, as some say, of the Sacerdotal Race) was always chosen, whose Office it was to have the Superintendency of the Dishes and the Wine, and to oblige the Guests to observe all the *Decorums*, that Religion requir'd: And, not only so, but other Persons, at this time, were likewise appointed to break *glass Vessels*, as a common signal, to give the Company notice, that they had already drank enough, and were not permitted to run to excess. Under this *Regulation*, 'tis scarce imaginable, that the Guests at a *Jewish* Marriage could be guilty of any Intemperance, and least of all at this in *Galilee*, where our Saviour's Presence and Observation, the gravity of his Behaviour, and the Seasonableness of his Discourse, may well be presum'd to heighten the *decorum*, and to keep all the Company under a proper Restraint.

The meaning of when Men have well drunk, *Joh. ii. 10.*

^d What therefore the Governour of the Feast says to the Bridegroom, in relation to the Water, that was turned into Wine, ^e *every Man, at the beginning,* *dotk*

^e *Lewis's Antiq. of the Heb. Rep. Vol. 3. p. 302.*
^d *Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 3. p. 26.* ^c *Joh. ii. 10.*

doth set forth good Wine, and WHEN MEN HAVE WELL DRANK, then that which is worse, is to be understood only as a general Representation of a Custom, usual at other Festivals, which was, to bring the best Wine at first, and towards the Conclusion, that which was worse; which Custom, (as the Governour tells him) was not observed here; for the difference between this Entertainment and others is, that thou hast kept the good Wine until now. So that the Phrase, when Men have well drank, is only a Circumstance thrown in to illustrate the Comparison, or describe the latter end of a Feast, and has no manner of Reference to the Condition of the Company then present. But, allowing the Words ὄτρυν μεθύσασσι to be a description of the Condition the Company was then in, yet will it by no means follow, that they had proceeded to any Intemperance, because the Words are equally capable of an innocent, as well as vicious Meaning. † Μεθύειν indeed, in its primitive Signification, means no more than drinking after the Sacrifice: and, as there is nothing in the Etymology, that determines this to be done to any Excess, or beyond the proper Bounds of Joy in a Festival;

fo

† Dr. Pearce, part 3. p. 27.

fo there are several Instances in Scripture wherein it was certainly done according to the Rules of Sobriety and Moderation. Thus (to mention one out of many) in the LXX Version of *Genesis*, where it is said, that *Joseph's Brethren* *drank and were merry with him*, the Words are ἐμεθύασαν μετ' αὐτοῦ; and yet the Circumstances of the Feast plainly shew that no Excess, or the least approach to it, is intended by the Expression. For they knew him not then to be any other than the *Governour of Ægypt*; nay, it is said ^s that they were afraid, as tho' he sought occasion against them, to fall upon them, and take them for Bondmen: And therefore we may well presume, that they were too much upon their guard, and solicitous about their own Safety, to give any way to Intemperance in his Presence. And if the Expression here, and in ^h several other Passages, may be taken in a *virtuous* Sense, (unless we can imagine that St. *John* design'd to expose his Master's Behaviour on this Occasion) we cannot but conclude, that he intend- ed we should understand him in the most favourable manner.

Christ might innocently go to the Marriage and why he was concern'd to go.

But let us for once suppose the worst; viz. That notwithstanding these wise Orders

^s Gen. xliiii. 34. ^h Whitby's Annot. in Loc.

Orders and Institutions, in the Celebration of *Matrimonial* Feasts among the *Jews*, some would be still apt to run Counter, and indulge their Appetites to Excess; ⁱ yet it will not therefore follow, that our Lord could be any Partner in the Guilt. In publick Assemblies of Men of promiscuous Tempers, we see daily, that, though the vicious Part may pollute and debauch themselves by Intemperance, Persons of a contrary Disposition do innocently partake of all regular and lawful Refreshments, without any Stain to their Virtue and Character. And though a *good* Man would not delight in such Societies, nor a *prudent* Man rashly and heedlessly frequent them; yet since our Saviour, who by the unspotted Purity of his Nature, was secured against every bad Impression, came *not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*, and for this Purpose, must be supposed to take all proper Occasions of meeting and conversing with them; since now he was about to open his *Commission*, and had here a fair Opportunity of working his first Miracle in the Presence, and for the Conviction of numerous Spectators; and, lastly, since the Invitation, in all Probability,

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ⁱ *Raz's Vindicat. of our Sav. Mir. Part 2. p. 13.*

bility, came from his own Kindred ; for Tradition tells us, that the Persons, whose Wedding was then celebrated, were *Alpheus* or *Cleopas*, and her, who, in Scripture, is called, *Mary, the Sister of our Lord's Mother*, (as it seems not unlikely, from his Mother's being so solicitous for the supply of Wine, and taking upon her to direct the Servants of the House, that they were either her *Relations*, or very intimate *Acquaintance*;) since our Saviour, I say, was in this Situation, it was highly expedient, both in discharge of his *prophetick* Office, and the Obligations of Friendship or Consanguinity, for him to vouchsafe his Presence at this Wedding, when he was invited.

That he encourag'd no Excess there.

Had he indeed, when he was there, given Encouragement to Intemperance among the Guests, (even though it had been by an Act of Generosity,) much then might have been said in Diminution of his Character : But, since the supply of Wine, wherewith he miraculously furnished them, will, upon Enquiry, appear, neither so large in its Quantity, nor so superfluous in its Use, as is pretended, all Suggestions of this horrid Nature, that our Saviour administer'd to their Excesses, and was himself *a little intoxicated*, should forever be silenced, and

and detested. ^k We indeed, in our Translation, say, that the *Water-Pots*, wherein the Wine was created, contained two or three *Firkins a-piece*; but the learned of all Communion have, of late, looked a little more nicely into the *μεσπητης*, or Measure here spoken of, and have brought it much lower, than a *Firkin*. The LXX Translators ^l use it for the *Bath* of the *Jews*, and the *Bath* of the *Jews* (according to *Calmet*) contains less than 30 *French Pints*, which are not so much, as six Gallons of our Measure; but *Lamy* sets it still lower, and makes it hold very little more than 20 *French Pints*, *i. e.* under four Gallons of our Measure. Nay, *Le Clerc*, and others mentioned by *Calmet*, say, that the *μεσπητης* held about twenty-five *French Pounds* of Water, which falls short of three Gallons of our Measure; and the learned Bishop *Cumberland* (supposing the *μεσπητης* of *Syria* to be here intended) computes it to have held less than one *English Gallon*, so that according to this reckoning, the whole six *Water-Pots* might not contain more than about *fourteen* or *fifteen* Gallons of *English* Measure.

But not to reduce the Measure so low, we will suppose, at present, that the

^{If more, it was no Reflection upon him.}

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Quantity

^k Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 3. p. 30. ^l 2 Chron. iv. 5.

Quantity of Wine made by our Saviour at this Feast, was as large as our Translation represents it ; yet, whoever considers the nature of *Jewish* Marriages, ^mhow they were celebrated, with Feasting and Rejoycings, not only on the Day of Solemnity (as it is with us) but for six or seven Days after ; and that, at these Feasts, not only all their Relations, Neighbours, and Acquaintance were invited, but that it was well taken likewise if any others (tho' not invited) would come to partake of the Entertainment, and bear a share in the Joy : Whoever considers this, I say, cannot but imagine, that a very large Quantity of Wine must needs be requisite, at such a Time, and that, if the resort of a greater Company, than was expected (as it is not improbable that many more, than were expected, would come, on purpose to see Christ and his Disciples) had occasioned a Deficiency herein, the Wine, which our Saviour miraculously produc'd, was to be a supply, not for that Day only, but for all the succeeding Days, until the Time of Feasting was expir'd.

but rather Com-
mendation
to him.

Nay, even supposing that our Lord, upon this Occasion, did not confine himself to a precise Quantity, proportionate
to

to the Company, or Period of the *Festival*; and (what is more) ⁿ that some of the Company might abuse his Liberality by their Intemperance (which is a Concession, that cannot be gathered from the *Text*) yet can't he therefore be charg'd with ministring to that Excess, by making such an ample Provision, any more, than we can charge the *Providence* of God with being instrumental to all the *Gluttony*, and *Drunkenness*, which is committed in the World, merely because it affords that Meat and Drink, which Men of inordinate Appetites abuse to Excess. The Truth is, as it is an high Commendation of Providence, that it crowns us with Plenty (whatever use we make of it) and bestows upon us all Things ^o *richly to enjoy*; so was it not unbecoming a Person, invested with a *divine* Commission, to give, on this Occasion, an eminent Instance of his *flowing* Liberality, and, by his generous Provision for the Family, to leave a grateful *Memorial* of his Benevolent Regard to two Persons, that were his Relations, and had just enter'd into the honourable State of Matrimo-

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ⁿ *Whitby* in *Jer. ii. 10.* ^o *Raj's Demon. Pa. t. 2.*
p. 134.

ny ; especially, when he did it at his Mother's Desire and Sollicitation.

Why he
did not
immediat-
ly work
this Mira-
cle.

It is to be observed, however, that in working this Miracle our Saviour (contrary to his usual Practice) stood upon the Reserve, and did not immediately gratify his Mother. In the following part of his Ministry, we find him frequently complying with the People's first Requests ; but his Circumstances *then* and *now* were different. ¶ When his Fame had been spread abroad through all the Regions round about, and every Tongue set forth his noble Acts, it better became him, as Occasions offer'd, readily to exert his Power : but, at present, he was not known to the World ; his Disciples were but few and fresh comers, and even his most intimate Acquaintance had not any due Apprehensions concerning him. Now he, who made the Glory of God, and the good of Souls, his principal Aim, was oblig'd to set out *warily*, and to stop, as much as might be, the Mouth of Prejudice and Cavil : And nothing could go farther towards fixing him a general Reputation, than *Modesty*. To put himself forward of his own Accord, or to yield to a Mother's first Motions, might look like an Eagerness to catch
at

at Admiration and Applause, to fall in with an intemperate Zeal for advancing his own Honour, and a shewing what he *could do*, rather than discerning what was *fit* for him to do. And therefore when his Mother came, and acquainted him, that her Friends were in danger of wanting Wine for the Company, he return'd her an Answer, in Terms so seemingly rough, that Interpreters have been at some trouble about their Meaning; *Woman, what have I to do with thee? my hour is not yet come.*

We mistake the Matter much however, if we think, that the Word $\gamma\omega\upsilon\eta$, which we render *Woman*, was any Title of disrespect or indifference; (as it seems to be in our Translation) ^{His Answer to his Mother explain'd.} for it is frequently us'd by the best Authors, when the highest Marks of Esteem are intended. The polite *Xenophon* himself puts it in the Mouth of one of the *Persian Chiefs*, when he was addressing himself to a Captive Lady, and comforting her under her unfortunate Circumstances. And certainly a Time there was, that our Lord call'd his Mother by this Appellation, when he was far from being *surlily* or *undutiful* to her, when he was hanging on the Cross, and recommending

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ing both his Mother to the Care of his beloved Apostle, and that Apostle to the Affection of his Mother, *'Woman, behold thy Son.* And, in like manner, *what have I to do with thee?* is a Phrase [†] sometimes us'd in Scripture, where nothing of Anger or Passion is conceiv'd, but only some dislike express'd, and a gentle Rebuke given; which seems to be the Case now before us.

The blessed Virgin comes and complains to her Son, that there was likely to be a deficiency of Wine. Her Complaint implies a Request of help from him in this Exigence; nor is it improbable, that hereupon she might desire to see him work a Miracle, and that a little Vanity might prompt her to this desire. [‡] But, in Cases, where an heavenly Father's Honour is to be the governing Principle, an earthly Mother's Authority is quite Superceded. Though therefore, he, who *made all Times*, could not be under Subjection to *any*, or restrain'd in his Power at one *Hour*, more than another; yet, to give a Gracefulness and Efficacy to all his Works, there was an Order to be observ'd, nor were Miracles to be wrought at all Adventures, for
grati-

[†] *John* xix. 26. [‡] *Vid.* 2 *Sam.* xvi. 10. [§] *Stan-*
hope's Epist. and Gospel, Vol. 2. p. 70.

gratifying the Curiosity of standers-by, or the Importunity of Friends or Relations, but had their proper Seasons, whereof his Divine Wisdom was the best judge, and not to be directed by any other.

This seems to be a probable Sense of the Words: and where then, I pray, is all that *Passion* and *Peevishness*, that *Ill-nature* and *Waspsishness*, so often, so loudly complain'd of (as if they were enough to *destroy the Credit of the whole Miracle*) in our Saviour's telling his Mother, (for his Answer imports no more) *that, in the business of manifesting his Glory by Miracles*, (wherein he approv'd himself to be the Son of God, wherein he had no relation to her, nor she any right to interfere) *she was to leave him to do what he thought proper*.

And now, to look back upon what has been said: Since the manner of celebrating *matrimonial* Festivals among the *Jews* was put under such Regulation, that the most grave and serious Persons might frequent them, without any Imputation on their Characters; since to this Marriage of *Cana in Galilee* our Saviour was more particularly oblig'd to go, as being either a Relation, or intimate Acquaintance to the Parties espoused, and therefore could not, without a breach

The Sense of what has been said.

breach of good Manners, as well as neglecting an Opportunity of doing much good, decline their Invitation ; since, in his miraculous production of Wine upon this occasion, the quantity was not so large, as our *Translation* represents it ; or, if so large, was not intended for one Day's Subsistence only, but to last out the remainder of the Festival, and all that time to supply the whole Company, which usually came in great Numbers ; and, lastly, since the Reply which our Saviour made his Mother, was, at the most, but a gentle Rebuke for her intruding into Matters, which did not properly concern her, but depended upon his infinite Wisdom only to determine : Since these Things are so, I say, then was there plainly, neither any *Levity* in our Saviour's going to this Marriage ; nor any *Encouragement* of Excess, in his supplying the Company with Wine ; nor any Signs of *Neglect* or *Disesteem*, and much less, of any worse Cause, in the Reply he gave to his Mother : And, that the Miracle itself (which comes next to be vindicated) was not perform'd by any artful Trick of his own, or collusion with others, the Circumstances attending it are sufficient to convince us.

For,

For, tho' the same Almighty Power, No Trick or collusion in this Miracle. which, every Year, turns Water into Wine by the impregnating Warmth of the Sun, concocting the Juices of the Earth, and the Sap of the Trees, that produce it, could have done *so* by *this* in a moment of Time, without any Helper; tho' he could, with the same Ease, have created Wine out of nothing, and fill'd the empty Vessels with a Word of his Mouth; yet was he pleas'd to use the Ministry of others, the Servants of the House, and such as could not be thought in any Confederacy with him. These pour'd the Water in with their own Hands; these therefore were so many unexceptionable Witnessees, that, what themselves knew to be *common* Water, was quickly after, by the same Hands, drawn out *generous* Wine.

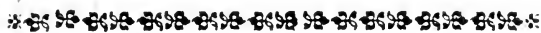
Without the Privity of these Servants, 'tis hard to suppose that he ever could be able (allowing he were so abandon'd) as to convey any *Spirituos Liqueur* into so many different Water-pots; hard to suppose, that he would refer this mix'd and adulterated Liqueur to the Taste and Approbation of the *Ruler of the Feast*, whose Judgment and Palate were known to be less vitiated, and, consequently, less liable to be impos'd on, than those of com-

mon Guest ; hard to suppose, that this Ruler of the Feast, a Man of Sobriety and gravity, and who (as the Text informs us) *knew not whence the Wine was*, should give it so large a Commendation, if he perceived to be no more, than a little Water *dash'd*; and still more hard it is to conceive, that this sham Miracle should have such an Effect upon the Disciples, who, (as it was the first) were doubtless inquisitive enough about the Particulars of it, as to engage their Faith and Adherence to him for ever after.

But a Demonstration of his divine Power.

These are some of the Difficulties, that attend the Supposition of an Imposture in this Case : but, on the contrary, the Testimony of the Servants, the Judgment of the Ruler, and the Conviction of the Disciples, plead very strongly for the Reality of this Miracle. And well indeed might his Disciples be convinc'd, when they saw the Creatures of this lower World so absolutely at their Master's disposal, as to make them start from their fix'd Laws of Being, and change their Natures and Qualities in an instant. He only, they knew, could repeal those *Laws*, who made them : He only could alter their *Forms*, who at first appointed them : And when this they saw

saw done, without invoking the Aid of any higher Power, they could not but esteem it an Evidence, that there was no higher Power to have recourse to, and, consequently that his Power and Authority was *Supreme*.



S E C T. XIV.

Of his Curing the Paralytick at Capernaum.

“ **T** H E Story of this Miracle, which Mr. Wool-
 “ even surpasses that of the *Pool* ston's Ob-
 “ of *Bethesda*, says ^a Mr. Woolston, is so jection.
 “ full of monstrous and palpable Absur-
 “ dities, that it requires no great Saga-
 “ city to detect them. For (not to ask
 “ for what possible Reason there should
 “ be such a mighty crowding about the
 “ House, where Jesus was) if the Mob
 “ was so great, that there was no coming
 “ at him, the *Paralytick* and his Bear-
 “ ers, one would think, should have
 “ waited a little, until the Multitude
 “ was dispers'd, rather than be at the
 “ Trouble of getting *Ropes* and *Pullies*,
 “ to hoist him up to the top of the
 “ „ House,

^a Woolston's Dis. 4. from p. 51 to 63.

“ House, and *Hammers* and *Hatchets*
 “ to uncover the Roof, and make an
 “ Hole large enough, for the Man, and
 “ the Bed to be let through. This shews
 “ a great Zeal and Eagerness indeed ;
 “ but, if the Cure was in such haste to
 “ be done, it would have look’d much
 “ better in Jesus, either to have healed
 “ the Patient at a Distance, or ordered
 “ the People to make way for him, than
 “ to have suffer’d such Waste and Ha-
 “ vock to be made in the House. In
 “ short, had there been such a Multi-
 “ tude about the Doors, as is pretended,
 “ it would have been next to impossible,
 “ for the poor Man and his Couch to be
 “ hoisted over their Heads, and rais’d
 “ to the Top of the House ; highly un-
 “ reasonable, that the Master of the
 “ House should suffer its Roof to be
 “ broken up without some Resentment ;
 “ but most of all so, that Jesus should
 “ not give forth the *healing* Word, or,
 “ by his divine Power, disperse the Peo-
 “ ple, that the *Paralytick* might have
 “ present Access to him.

Why such
 a *Crowd*
 about the
 Door.

Both ^b *St. Mark* and ^c *St. Luke* gives
 us an ample Account of what happen’d
 at *Capernaum*, and how the Inhabitants
 of

^b C. i. v. 21, &c. ^c C. iv. v. 31, &c.

of that Place were affected, the Time that our Saviour was there before. They tell us, that, when he taught them in the Synagogue on the *Sabbath* Day, all the People were *astonished at his Doctrine, for he taught as one that had Authority, and his Word was with Power.* They tell us, that, when, in their Sight, he cast out an *unclean Spirit*, crying out for fear, and declaring him to be *the holy one of God*, they were all *amaz'd, and spake among themselves, saying, what a Word is this? What new Doctrine is this? for with Power and Authority he commandeth the unclean Spirits, and they obey him.* They tell us, that, while he was in *Simon's House*, *all the City was gathered together at the Door*, and, that, upon their seeing him do so many wonderful Works, heal the Sick of divers Diseases, and cast out many Devils, his *Fame immediately spread abroad through all the Regions round about Galilee.* What Wonder then, if, when he returned to the same City again, not only the Inhabitants of the Place, but the People of every adjacent Country should run together in great Numbers, both to hear his heavenly Doctrine, and see his amazing Works. But least of all is it to be wonder'd, that any Person in

Why such
Impatience
to come
at Christ.

this *Paralytick's* Case, or any Friends of his, that were sollicitous for his Cure, should be so eager and impatient to gain Admittance to his Presence. They perceiv'd, that oftentimes it was no easy Matter for him to disengage himself from the importunate Attendance of the People: They remember'd, that, the last time he was among them, the Crowd continu'd about the Door till Night, and that, early next Morning, ^d *a great while before it was Day*, he left the City, and departed into a solitary Place: They saw that ^e the Day was declining, and ^f the Sun very nigh Sett, nor could they tell, but, that as soon as he had done preaching, and the Crowd a little dispers'd, he would retreat and retire, as he had done before; and therefore they thought it highly concern'd them, to make all the haste they could, and not run the Hazard of losing so precious an Opportunity. Away therefore they carry the Impotent Man, but when ^g they came to the Court-Yard (for so we may render τὰ πρὸς τὴν θύραν) they found the *Press* so great, such a Multitude of People got together, in order to hear him Preach; that, with all their Endeavours, they could

^d Mark i. 33. ^e V. 32. ^f Luke iv. 40. ^g Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 4. p. 26.

could not come nigh him : Whereupon, as ^h the *Evangelist* tells us, *they uncovered the Roof, where he was, and when they had broken it up, they let down the Bed (through the Tiling, says ⁱ St. Luke) wherein the Sick of the Palsy lay.* But, to have a right Notion of this Matter, we must observe, that the Manner of building among the *Jews*, was, in many respects, different to what has been obtained among us.

Their Houses were, for the most part, ^{The way} * very low, consisting but of two Floors ^{of Build-} or Stories, and the Roofs of them were, ^{ing Hou-} not sloping, but flat, surrounded with ^{ses among} a Battlement about Breast high, according ^{the Jews.} ^k to God's own Injunction. Here it was ^l that they used to walk in the cool of the Day ; here to sit, at any Hour of the Day, ^m under a Tent, or other cover to serve them for a Shade ; here ⁿ to talk and discourse together in private ; here ^o to pray, and meditate on religious Matters, ^p in little Closets built for that Purpose ; and (^q as our Saviour's Word's seem to imply) here some-

P times

^h *Mark* ii. 4. ⁱ *C.* v. 19. * Modern Travel-
 lers assure us, that the Houses in *Judæa* are, at
 this Day, low built, and flat roofed. See, *Sandy's*,
 p. 36. ^k *Deut.* xxi. 8. ^l *2 Sam.* xi. 12. ^m *2 Sam.*
 xvi. 22. ⁿ *1 Sam.* ix. 25. ^o *Acts* x. 9. ^p *Lesvi's*
Antiq. vol. 4. p. 75. ^q *Math.* x. 27.

times to Preach or Discourse publickly to the People.

Their
Stairs
without
Doors.

Now there were two Ways, which the *Jews* had, of going up to the Tops of their Houses; the one was by a Pair of Stairs within the House, leading up to a Trap-Door which lay even with the Roof, and, though fastened within for security against Thieves, might, on any Occasion, be lifted up: The other way was on the out-side of the House, where, by a fix'd Pair of Stairs, or Ladder, they could ascend to the Roof when they pleas'd, without ever going into the House itself; and to this our Saviour seems to allude, when he foretells to the *Jews* the Swiftnes of that Destruction which should overtake them, *Let him, that is on the House-top, not go down into the House, neither enter therein, to take any Thing out of the House:* For, unless we can suppose, that his Advice was, that Men should venture their Necks, by throwing themselves down from the Tops of their Houses, his Words must imply, both that they had such Stairs plac'd on the out-side of their Houses, and that it was an usual Thing for them, both to ascend and descend by them.

Since,

Since this then was a general Fashion of ^{How the} Jewish Houses, it is not improbable, that ^{Paralytick} this House at ^{might be} Capernaum was of the ^{let down.} same Figure and Make; and that, for the better Convenience of being heard, both within Doors and without, Jesus might then be preaching at one of the Windows of an upper Room, when this sick Man was brought in a Couch, or ^{sort of} *Elbow-Chair*, by four Persons, *who carried him*. The Crowd, however was so great, and the Company so attentive to our Saviour's Discourse, that no Care was taken to make way for him, and therefore his Bearers bethought themselves of another Expedient. They went round a private Way; and coming to the Stairs, which were fix'd on the out-side of the House, up these they carry him, and presently gain the Top: But finding the Trap-Door

P 2 (or

^f Dr. Pearce, part 4. p. 28. ^t St. Mark calls it *κράββατος*, and St. Luke *κλινίδιον*: So that these two Words are Synonymous. Now *Hesychius* explains the Word *κλινίδιον* by *ευτελές κλινίδιον μονοκοίτιον*, from whence it may be remark'd, that there were *κλινίδια* no larger than for one Person only, and of a much smaller Size, than the Word *Bed* conveys an Idea of to an *English* Reader. And this seems to be the Size of the Bed or Chair in this Place; for though four Persons help'd to carry the sick Man in it, yet it was no larger than what he alone could carry, as appears by the Story. *Pearce's Vind.* Part 4. p. 29.

(or *Way of the Roof* as the *Jewish Rabbins* call it) shut, and fasten'd against them, immediately they go to Work, and forcing it open (which *St. Mark* calls *uncovering* and ^w *breaking up the Roof*, because the Door, which lay even with the Roof, when let down and shut, was reputed a part of it) convey'd him down that way (which *St. Luke* calls *letting him down through^x the Tiling*, i. e. through the Roof, which (except where this Door was) was all pav'd with Tiles; and by this means found it no difficult Matter to place him in the midst before *Jesus*.

The Reasonable-
ness of
permit-
ting it.

This Account of the Matter, if it be true (and it seems indeed, at first Sight, to be far from an improbable one) removes most of the Objections at once. It takes away the necessity of having
Ropes,

^u Vid. *Lightsfoot* in *Locum*. ^w Ch. ii. v. 4.
The Word *ἐξορύξαιτες* in this Place does not so properly signify *Digging* or using Instruments to that purpose, as *pulling* and *forcing* the Door out of its Frame. In this Sense *St. Paul* uses the Word *Gal. iv. 15. τὰς ὀφθαλμοὺς σου ἐξορύξαιτες*, *pulling out your Eyes*, i. e. by *force* but not by *Digging*, in the proper and strict Meaning of the Word: For if the *Couch* or *Chair* was no larger than to hold one (as we said before) it might commodiously enough be *let* or *carried* down without widening the Passage, or making any Hole about it. *Pearce's Vind. Part 4. p. 30.* ^x *Κέρατοι* and *τέγος* (or, *στέγη*) are Synonymous Words in the *Greek* Authors, as *Steph. in Voce κέρατος* informs us. *Pearce's Vind. Part 4. p. 30.*

Ropes, Ladders, and Pullies, &c. sent for, upon this Occasion. It lessens considerably the suppos'd Damage done to the House, since the Roof-door is presum'd large enough to receive the *Chair* or *Couch*, wherein the Sick Man was, without any farther trouble. It recommends the Character of *the good Man of the House*, since he possibly might be so attentive to our Saviour's Preaching, as not to perceive what was doing, before he saw the Door forc'd open; or rather unwilling to disturb such heavenly Doctrine, upon so slight an occasion, as the breaking open a Door, by those, whose only motive was, to bring a sick Man to be cur'd by a Miracle; and it clears our Saviour's Conduct from any injurious Imputation; since, ^v as he was surrounded with a Circle of attentive Hearers, to whom he was dispensing the *Bread of Life*, and healing their Diseases, his leaving them, to go to the *Paralytick*, would perhaps have been more troublesome, and occasion'd more disturbance, than the letting him down in his *Couch*. Nor can it be thought consistent with Reason, to have dispersed the People upon this occasion, since, as the Pains, which the Sick Man and his Bearers

P 3

took

took to get at Jesus, shew'd the Strength of their Faith and Confidence in him; so the Reward, which he intended for it, was to be dispensed in as publick a manner, as possible, both for the Encouragement of the like Disposition in others, and for the manifestation of his own Power and Glory: And so we go on to (what occurs next,) his raising *three Persons from the dead.*



S E C T. XV.

Of his Raising Three Dead Persons.

Mr. Wool-
ston's Ob-
jection.

“ **T**HE very unnatural and *Prepo-*
 “ *sterous* Order of Time, says Mr.
 “ *Woolston*, in which these Miracles are
 “ Recorded by the *Evangelists*, is enough
 “ to bring them under the suspicion of
 “ Fable and Forgery. For these three
 “ Miracles, you must know, are not e-
 “ qually great, but differ in degrees.
 “ The greatest is that of *Lazarus*; next
 “ to it, is that of the Widow of *Nairn's*
 “ Son, and the least of all is that of
 “ *Jarus's* Daughter. What then can
 “ be the Reason, that *Matthew*, *Mark*,
 “ and

2 *Woolston's Disc. 5, from p. 4, to p. 55.*

“ and *Luke* (who all wrote their Gof-
“ pels before *John*) should forget to re-
“ cord this remarkable and most illustri-
“ ous Miracle of *Lazarus*? To aggran-
“ dize the Fame of their Master for a
“ worker of Miracles, was the Design
“ of all the *Evangelists*; and, if it was
“ not necessary that all of them should
“ set down every Miracle of this kind,
“ still it is absurd and unnatural to sup-
“ pose, that any of them (especially the
“ first Writers) should omit the greatest
“ of all, and only take notice of the
“ least. If *Matthew* indeed had record-
“ ed only the Story of *Lazarus*, *Luke*
“ had added that of the Widow’s Son,
“ and *John*, lastly, had remembered us
“ of the Ruler’s Daughter, which the o-
“ ther *Evangelists* (for brevity’s sake)
“ had omitted; all then had been well,
“ and no Objection lain against their
“ Authority. But, as the Case now
“ stands, it will always be objection e-
“ nough against this Miracle, that it
“ was never once mention’d by the *first*
“ *Historians*; nor indeed invented by the
“ *last*, until he was above an Hundred
“ Years old, and every Body dead, that
“ should have confuted him.

“ But, besides this suspicious Circum-
“ stance, since Jesus thought proper to

“ raise no more than three Persons, why
 “ he should prefer an insignificant Boy,
 “ and Girl, and the obscure *Lazarus*,
 “ to those of a more publick and de-
 “ serving Character, to the useful Ma-
 “ gistrate, or industrious Merchant,
 “ whose Life is a common Blessing, and
 “ Death a publick Loss; why no Hi-
 “ story should give us any Account
 “ what became of these three Persons,
 “ after their Resurrection, how long
 “ they liv’d, and of what Use and Ad-
 “ vantage their restor’d Lives was to
 “ Mankind; and why there is not the
 “ least hint of any Discourse they had
 “ with their Friends concerning their
 “ *Separate* Existence, where their Souls
 “ had been, in what Company, and in
 “ what Condition (tho’ a Narrative of
 “ this kind would have been of excel-
 “ lent Service to Religion) is a Thing
 “ unaccountable.

“ We have therefore abundant Reason
 “ to presume, that there was either some
 “ Mistake or some Collusion in these pre-
 “ tended Miracles: That the *Ruler’s*
 “ Daughter was only in a *Fit*, or rather a-
 “ *sleep*, as Jesus tells the Company, and as
 “ his Charge to her Parents, to conceal
 “ the Miracle, seems to imply; That
 “ the Widow’s Son was in a *Lethargick*
 “ State,

“ State, or rather, that his pretended
“ Death was a concerted thing between
“ him, his Mother, and *Jesus*, as his
“ meeting the Corpse upon the Road,
“ just at the nick of time, seems to de-
“ note; and that *Lazarus* was in the
“ like Contrivance, both from *Jesus*’s
“ weeping and groaning, and calling so
“ loud at the Sepulchre, which looks
“ like *acting a Part*; and from the o-
“ ther’s coming out thence with a *Nap-*
“ *kin bound about his Face*, which gives
“ no small suspicion of Fraud.

“ And indeed, had there not been
“ some apparent Signs of a Fraud and
“ Fallacy in this Case, it is not concei-
“ vable, why the *Chief Priests* and *Pha-*
“ *risees* should be so far incens’d against
“ *Jesus*, for working so signal a Miracle,
“ and against *Lazarus* too, for being
“ the Subject of it, as to conspire to-
“ gether to take away their Lives. Up-
“ on the Supposition that the Miracle
“ was true, no Instance in History can
“ parallel this Barbarity. But it seems
“ as if there were a detection of Fraud,
“ on the *one* Side, and a Consciousness of
“ Guilt, on the *other*, when we read
“ that the Chief Actor in it, ^b *walked no*
“ *more openly among the Jews*, (for fear
“ of

^b *John xi. 54.*

“ of Apprehension) *but went thence into*
 “ *a Country, near the Wilderness (a con-*
 “ *venient hiding Place) and there conti-*
 “ *nu'd with his Disciples.*

No one
 Miracle
greater
 than a-
 nother.

All Miracles, in the very Notion of them, are Supernatural Effects or Productions; and, however we may use the Terms *greater* or *less* with regard to common Operations, yet, when we come to apply them to Things, which transcend the reach of Nature, they are not so Justifiable. In Effects, that are produc'd by human Power, we are apt to say indeed, that some of them are *greater* than others; *i. e.* that they require more and greater Degrees of Power for the Production of them, and make a nearer approach to the utmost Boundaries of our Capacities: But this Distinction vanishes in our Consideration of the Supreme Being, since his Power is not to be measur'd, like ours, by degrees, nor limited to any certain Extent. The greatest Effect, we can imagine, is no measure of his Omnipotence, but is, equally with the smallest, within the Compass of his Power. And therefore, since all the Miracles which our Saviour did, were the undoubted Effects of a
 divine

divine Power, his raising any Person to Life again (if actually dead) tho' dead but for an Hour, is as great a Miracle, as if the Person had been dead twenty Years, since between *dead* and *dead* there can be no difference: and consequently, tho' we could not give a satisfactory Account why the *three first* Evangelists have made no mention of *Lazarus's* Resurrection; yet since *Lazarus's* Resurrection, is, in reality, no greater Miracle, than that of the *Ruler's* Daughter, or the *Widow's* Son, the matter seems to be indifferent, and entirely left to his Choice, which of these three Miracles each Historian should think proper to record.

The *Evangelists*, no doubt, recorded the Miracles of Jesus Christ for the same Reason, that he wrought them, namely, to shew that he was a *Prophet sent from God*; but so far are they from Vanity and Ostentation in what they wrote, so far from expatiating upon this copious Subject, that, after a recital of some Particulars, we find them frequently mentioning the rest in a summary way. Thus <sup>The E-
vangelists
om't ma-
ny.</sup> St. *Matthew*, having set down the miraculous Cures of a *Leper*, of the *Centurion's* Servant, and of *Peter's* Wife's
Mo-

‡ Defence of Scrip. History, p. 57. * Ch. viii.

Mother, relates no more, but only says in general ; that, ^f *when the Even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with Devils, and he cast out the Spirits with his Word, and healed all, that were sick* ; and, in like manner, St. Luke, having related a Cure or two, one done in the Synagogue, and the other in a private House, concludes what he had more to say upon the Subject in this Compendious manner ; ^g *Now when the Sun was setting, all they, which had any Sick with diverse Diseases, brought them unto him, and he laid his Hands on every one of them, and healed them.* ^h Nay, such is the Modesty of the *Evangelists*, in regard to our Saviour's Miracles, that we have some Reason to presume, they certainly knew of more Persons by him restor'd to Life again, than they have particularly named : For, when St. *Matthew* relates his Answer to *John's* Disciples, who were sent to enquire concerning him, ⁱ *the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, and the dead are raised*, 'tis plain, that, by mentioning the *dead* in the *plural* Number, he had the Knowledge of more than one, tho' he has given us a particular History of the

^f Ver. 16. ^g Ch. iv. v. 40. ^h *Lardner's Vind.* of 3 Miracles, p. 7. ⁱ *Math.* xi. 5.

the *Ruler* of the Synagogue's Daughter only.

And indeed, considering the vast *Extent* of their Subject, and intended *Brevity* of their Books, in order to make them more useful to People of all Ranks and Capacities, it was absolutely necessary for them to omit several Things, which must have occur'd to their Remembrance. The whole four Gospels, bound together, make not a large Volume, but each singly is a very small Book; and yet, besides the Miracles of our Saviour, attended, as they are, with the Circumstances of Place and Time, the Names of the Persons, and the Occasions of their being wrought; they have, in these short Pieces, inserted an Account of the wonderful Manner of our Saviour's Birth, the Dangers of his Infancy, the miraculous Appearances of divine Providence in his Favour, and his Removals, and Journeyings from one Place and Country to another. They have recorded the Substance of his Doctrine in plain Terms; have set down many Parables spoken by him, together with his Explanations; and given us a full Account of the Mission of his twelve Apostles, and the other seventy Disciples.

For what
Reasons
they do it.

* *Lardner's Vind. of 3 Miracles*, p. 16.

ples. The Cavils and Questions of the *Pharisees*, *Sadducees*, and the *Herodians*, together with his Answers and Solutions, the Observations and Reflections of the People, his publick Discourses before all, and his private Instructions to his Disciples, his Predictions of his own Sufferings, of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and many other Events; a long and particular Account of his Persecution, Condemnation, and Crucifixion, as also of his Resurrection, and Ascension, not to mention the History of the Birth, Preaching, Baptism, and Sufferings of *John the Baptist*, his Forerunner, are all compriz'd in one short Volume: and therefore, having such plenty of Matter before them, they were oblig'd to be silent, as to some Matters, after they had related others of the like Nature, in order to reserve Room for such important Events, as were essential Parts of their History; lest they should proceed to such a length and prolixity, as they had determin'd to avoid. And hence it is easy to suppose, in behalf of the *three* former *Evangelists*, that when they came to a certain *Period* in their History of the Ministry of *Jesus*, and observ'd they had given a sufficient Account of his Doctrine and Miracles, being to reserve
a Space

a Space for his last Sufferings, and Resurrection, they thought proper to pass over in Silence what ever happen'd between that Period, and the Time of his last Journey to *Jerusalem*.

Now, whoever looks into ¹ these *three* Why the *Evangelists* with any due attention, will *three first* find, that, from the Time when our Sa- omit that relating to Laza-
rus. viour returned *into the Coasts of Judæa beyond Jordan*, which (as ^m St. *John* tells us) was soon after *the Feast of the Dedication*, (and that was always observ'd in *Winter*) to the Time of his last going up to *Jerusalem*, a little before *Easter*, they make no mention at all of any Journeys, or Movings from thence; and yet from this Country (according to St. *John's* Account) it was, that Jesus afterwards came up to *Bethany*, and rais'd *Lazarus*, and then ⁿ *went into the Country near the Wilderness, into a City called Ephraim, and there continu'd with his Disciples*. And therefore, since these *Evangelists*, for the avoidance of Prolixity, thought not proper to take notice of what pass'd in this Interval of Time, they could not, with any Justness or Propriety, introduce into their Gospels an Account of the Resurrection of *Lazarus*.

But

¹ Compare *Matth.* Ch. xix. ver. 1, 2. with ver. 17. and *Mark* x. ver. 1. with ver. 32. ^m *John* x. 22. ⁿ *John* xi. 54.

But there is a farther Reason, which some learned Men have given us, for their Silence in this respect. They tell us, That (according to an ancient Tradition) *Lazarus liv'd thirty Years after his being rais'd from the dead*, and that, the latest of these *Evangelists*, writing but fifteen Years after our Lord's Ascension, they might think it a needless matter, to mention a Miracle concerning a Person, living so near *Jerusalem*, when the Fame of it was so great, and so many Witnesses living to attest it: nor can they suppose, but that, in point of Prudence, the *Evangelists* declin'd mentioning this Story, for fear of exasperating the *Jews*, and giving their Rage and Malice a fresh Provocation to cut off *Lazarus*. However this be, 'tis not improbable (what the generality of Commentators tell us) that *St. John*, observing the Method of the former *Evangelists*, and in what Particulars they had made an Omission, might, at the request of the *Asian Bishops*, undertake to supply their Defects.

*This is no
Objection
against
St. John.*

And indeed who ever will give himself the trouble to compare his History with that of the other *Evangelists*, will find this Notion in a great measure verified

rify'd. For, (not to mention any other Particulars of this sort) † the Miracles of our Saviour, (recorded by St. *John*) antecedent to his Resurrection, are in all but eight. 1. His turning *Water* into *Wine* at the Marriage in *Cana of Galilee*. 2. His telling the *Samaritan* Woman the Secrets of her Life. 3. His healing the Nobleman's Son at *Capernaum*. 4. His curing the lame Man at the Pool of *Bethesda*. 5. His feeding five Thousand Men with five Barly-Loaves and two Fishes. 6. His walking upon the Water, and calming a Storm at Sea. 7. His giving Sight to the blind Man by Anointing his Eyes with Clay: And, 8, lastly, His raising *Lazarus* from the Dead: all which Miracles are omitted by the former Evangelists, except the 5th, and the 6th, and these two St. *John* seems to have Recorded, chiefly to introduce a *moral* Discourse, which our Saviour took occasion to make to the People, and whereof the former *Evangelists* had taken no notice: And therefore the Silence of the former *Evangelists* is not a stronger Objection against the History of *Lazarus*, than it is against many other Facts, Recorded by St. *John*; or (to speak more properly) than it is

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against

† Defence of Script. Hist. p. 64.

againſt his whole Goſpel. His Goſpel indeed he wrote in an advanc'd Age, but, 'according to the Account of ſome, not many Years after the Death of *Lazarus*, at the moſt, when a whole Generation was alive, who muſt frequently have ſeen *Lazarus*, and been acquainted with the Story of his Reſurrection, had it been *true*; and able to ſhame and confute the *Historian*, had it been *false*.

The Truth is, 'all the *Evangelists* have omitted many Things, which the others, one or more of them, have recorded; even St. *John* himſelf 'confesses, that his own Goſpel, though it ſupplied the Defects of the former *Evangelists* in many Reſpects, left the History of *Jeſus* ſtill unfinish'd. It was ſubmitted indeed to their own Judgement and Diſcretion, out of the infinite Variety of Miracles, which Jeſus wrought, to chooſe, each of them, ſuch, as ſeem'd to them the moſt Material: And if, upon the whole, the good Providence of God has ſo order'd the Matter, that there is enough recorded to lay the Foundation of a *reaſonable* Faith, we ought to be contented, and not buſy ourſelves in enquiring minutely, why this Miracle was Recorded, or this Perſon made the Subject of it, rather than another? The

' Vid. *Whitby* in *John* c. xi. ' Defence of Scrip. Hiſt. p. 66. ' *John* xx. 30.

“ The Design of a Miracle is, not so much for the Profit of him, on whom it is perform’d, or of his Friends and Relations, who are interest’d in his Welfare, as it is to attest the divine Mission of him, who works it, and to give Authority to the Message and Doctrine, which he delivers ; and, to this purpose, the raising a DAY-LABOURER, is as conducive as raising a PRINCE, and opening the Eyes of a *blind Beggar* by the Way-side, as curing a *powerful Magistrate*, or a *wealthy Merchant*.

Why
Christ
rais’d
these Per-
sons more
especially.

“ *Farus* however, whose Daughter was rais’d, was, both by Character and Office, a Person of Eminence among the *Jews* ; and, considering the Perverseness and Obstinacy of many other Rulers of the Synagogue, this might be a Motive with Jesus to distinguish him by so divine a Favour. *Lazarus*, we know, was his peculiar Friend ; and, as his Affection, no doubt, was deservedly plac’d on him, the same Reasons, that engag’d his Love, might prevail with him to express it in so wonderful a Manner : And as to the Case of the Widow of *Nain’s* Son, this the Scripture has set off in such moving Colours, as deserve a more particular

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ticular

ticular Observation. * The parting with a beloved Child, is, at any Time an Affliction, which, in tender Mother's, stirs a very sensible Concern; but when Time and Acquaintance have endear'd their Conversation, when we have not only enjoy'd the Diversions of their Childhood, but the Promises of their Youth, and begin to conceive just Hopes of their Attainments and Prosperity, this adds a considerable Weight to the Blow. But that, which *here* drove it deeper, is, that this *young Man was the only Son of his Mother*; no Remnant left behind to mitigate, or to supply the Loss; no Remembrance of her Travail, but that most uncomfortable one, of Tears and Pangs undergone to *encrease the Number of the Dead*. And yet the most melancholy Aggravation is still behind, that *she was a Widow*; a State, of all others, the most *Friendless and Forlorn*, and, for this Reason, frequently mention'd in Scripture, as that, which God receives into his more immediate Protection. Such then, being the Condition of this mournful Woman, bereav'd of her Husband, bereav'd of her Son, in the Bloom and Vigour of Youth, when just at a Condition to re-
pair

* *Stanhope's Epist. & Gosp. vol. 3. † Luke vii. 12.*

pair a Mother's past Tenderness and Trouble, by becoming the stay and support of her Age and approaching Infirmities ; it is not at all to be wonder'd at, if this *Complication* of Misery mov'd Compassion in the merciful Jesus, to exert his divine Power, in order to turn her *Sorrow and Lamentation into Joy.*

What became of these several Persons, after they were rais'd from the Dead, we have indeed no Account transmitted to us ; but the Reason hereof is plain, ^{Why we have no Account of their subsequent Lives.} because the *Evangelists*, writing the History of Christ only, had Occasion to take Notice of them so far as Christ was concern'd with them, but were under no Obligation to enter into their particular Story. To prove the Miracles to be true, the *Evangelists* particularly relate the Circumstances of the Persons Death, and particularly also the Circumstances of their being rais'd to Life again ; and what more can be expected than this ? If we had the minutest Account of their Affairs afterwards, the Miracle would stand just as it does, neither impair'd nor confirm'd by the History : But then, to expect that the Gospel, which was intended to instruct the World in Religion, should be fill'd with Men's private

Q 3 Adven-

Adventures, or that the *Evangelists* should be oblig'd to write every Persons Life, on whom Christ wrought a Cure, is a Thing highly absurd and unreasonable: If however, we may be allow'd to Conjecture, ^a it seems not improbable, from the speedy Progress of the Gospel, that many of these Persons, by modest and humble Acknowledgments of the Benefits, they had receiv'd, by satisfying the *Inquisitive*, and convincing the Doubtful, might, according to their Stations, help forward the Work of the Apostles, and others engag'd in spreading the Doctrine of Christ.

Nor any
Intelli-
gence from
them of a
separate
State.

Whether the *three*, whom our Saviour was pleas'd to raise, after their return to Life again, gave any Tidings concerning the Circumstances of their separate Existence, is what we cannot so much as Conjecture, unless we had some Knowledge, ^b whether the Soul might not exist, and yet be under a *Suspension* of its Operations, at least without an Accession of any *new Ideas*, for as long a Time, as they were out of the Body; or, if *new Ideas* were communicated in their *separate State*, whether they retain'd them, after the *Re-union*, or were permitted to divulge them, or capable indeed

^a *Lardner's Vind.* p. 30. ^b *Ray's Vind.* p. 182.

indeed of expressing them by the *common* Forms of Speech, which are only adapted to *material* and *sensible* Things. ^c Our Saviour himself, who *was from above*, who was in the Bosom of the Father, and came to teach us all Things necessary to Religion, has not thought fit to give us any distinct and particular Account of the other World. ^d St. Paul, who had *abundance of Revelations*, who was caught *up into the third Heaven*, and *into Paradise*, has not attempted any such Thing; but declares only, that what he heard there, were *Things unspeakable, and what it was not lawful for a Man to utter*. The Gospel, in the Main, has made known unto us the Certainty of the Resurrection of the Just and Unjust, their final Judgment, and the different Awards of everlasting Punishment to the Wicked, and eternal Life to the Righteous. What they say of these Matters is great and awful, and sufficient to affect the Minds of all, that read and believe them; in so much, that those, who will not be convinc'd by these general Declarations, *would not be persuaded, though one rose from the Dead*, and told them never so many *Particulars* concerning the State of a separate Existence. Up-

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^c Lardner's Vind. p. 48. ^d 2 Cor. xii. 2, 7.

on the whole therefore, we may be allow'd to say, that a *Silence* of these Particulars, instead of disparaging, tends to the Honour of the *Evangelists*; who, when they wrote the History of the Preaching and Miracles of Jesus, have not recorded Dreams, and Visions, and abstruse Theories of a future State, for the *Amusement* of Mankind, but certain and important Truths taught by him for their *Edification*.

No Collu-
sion or Fal-
lacy in
these Mi-
racles.

Hitherto it appears that there is no *Incongruity* in the several *Stories*, as they are related by the *Evangelists*; and, that there can be no Suspicion of Fallacy in the *Miracles* themselves, is what we shall now endeavour to evince. ^a That the several Persons, whom our Saviour raised to Life, were actually dead, or at least were all of them treated as dead Persons by their Friends and Relations, is evident and incontestible. For, when our Lord came to *Jarus's* House, he found the *Minstrels* there, and, the People making great Lamentation; the *Widow's Son* was carrying to his Grave; and *Lazarus* had been actually buried several Days. But 'tis nonsense to believe, that those about the *Ruler's Daughter* would have call'd in the *musical Instruments*,

^a Defence of Scrip. Hist. p. 13.

struments, ^b as the manner of Funerals among the *Jews* was; or that the *Widow* would have suffer'd her only Son to be carried forth as a Corpse; or *Marttha* and *Mary* their Brother to be so long buried; had there not been, in these several Cases, all the Evidence of Death that Reason and Sense could give.

'Tis confess'd indeed, that *common* The Case of the Widow's Son. *Fame affords Instances of the mistaken Deaths of Persons, who have sometimes been unfortunately buried alive, and at other times happily restor'd to Life; and therefore, for Argument's sake, let us suppose for once, that this Widow's Son of Nain, might possibly be in a Lethargick State; yet since all about him concluded him to be dead, and accordingly were carrying him to his Funeral, how could Jesus (supposing him to be an Impostor) know, or so much as suspect, that he was only in a Lethargy, or if he suspected that, how could he tell farther, at what precise Time the Man would wake out of it? ^c What then are we to believe in this Case? Why, that Jesus needlessly offer'd himself to a publick Trial, without the least Prospect of Success. The company met him accidentally*

^b Vid. *Lewis's Antiq. of the Heb. Rep.* Vol. 3. p. 371. ; *Defence of Scrip. Hist.* p. 16.

dentally upon the Road, but no-body asked or challeng'd him to raise this Man to Life. It was entirely his own offer; and thereupon he either did, or did not, suppose him to be dead. If he suppos'd him to be dead (as he had abundant Reason) he must needs know (upon the foot we are now arguing) that it was not in his Power to raise him. If he did not suppose him dead, but hop'd that there might be some mistake in the Matter, the hazard of being disappointed, in presuming upon a Case, which scarce happens once in a *Century*, added to this farther hazard, that (even presuming this to be the Case) the Man might not possibly awake upon his *touching* the *Bier*, and calling upon him to arise, makes the Chance against him to out-run all reckoning.

Of *Farus's*
Daughter *rus's* Daughter. ^dHere a Person of Note requests of him to go and heal his Child, which was at the point of Death: before he could get to the House, a Messenger comes and acquaints the Father, that she was actually dead. Upon this change in the Case, Jesus is so far from excusing himself, (as he had a fair Opportunity) that he offers, of his own accord,
to

^d Defence of Script. Hist. p. 17.

to go forward, and tells the Father that he would raise her ; ^c *be not afraid*, says he, *only believe, and she shall be made whole.* Whatever the Case of the Child was in reality, 'tis certain, both by the Message of the Servant, and the Appearance of Things, when he came to the House, that Jesus had all the reason in the World to believe her dead. Here then is an Impostor making a bold and desperate *Push*, which must either ruin him at once, or establish his Reputation for ever. He undertakes to raise a Person to Life, who, he was assur'd, was dead. If she was dead in good earnest, he was undone ; his only Hopes rested upon a bare Possibility, that there might be some mistake in the Case : Upon these Hopes he goes, and when he comes to the House, *luckily* finds that there was a mistake, and more luckily still, that himself was the only one that perceiv'd it. What now does he do ? why, instead of improving this extraordinary accident to his own Advantage, he takes away (as much as in him lies) all possible Pretence for a Miracle, by declaring plainly, that the Person was not really dead, as they supposed, but *asleep*, and wanted only to be awaken'd. Here

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^c *Luke viii. 50.*

certainly is such a bundle of Absurdities, as no Man of common Sense can ever be suppos'd to incur. Had Jesus been an *Impostor*, or had the History, we are now examining, been a *Forgery*, instead of these modest Expressions, *give place, for the Maid is not dead, but sleepeth*, we had had some such vaunting Speech as this; "Ay! the young Woman is really dead, and your Lamentations are well grounded; but let me only look upon her, and say a few Words over her, and depend upon it, you will see her alive again, and as well as ever." Whereas our Saviour, in what he says, is so far from boasting of his divine Power, that he seems rather desirous to conceal it; and, for that Reason, makes use of a Word of a softer Signification, (as he does elsewhere^e in the Case of *Lazarus*) to denote that Death, which he came to remove, with the same facility, as another Person might be *awaken'd out of sleep*.

Why
Christ en-
joyn'd her
Parents
Silence.

And indeed 'twas owing, in a great measure, to the humility and modesty of Jesus, that, instead of ordering Men to proclaim his Works, we find him so frequently desiring them to conceal them. In the present Case however, he might have

^e *John xi. 4, &c.*

have some Regard to the Character of *Jarus*, as Ruler of the Synagogue, and, by this Advice of Silence, dispense with his speaking publickly of a Miracle, which might possibly draw the Malice of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* upon him, as well as upon himself. In the Case of his Railing *Lazarus*, we find, that [†] *because by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus, the Chief Priests consulted, not only how to destroy Jesus, but to put Lazarus likewise to Death*; and much of the same Design might have been expected (which our Saviour by this kind Caution endeavour'd to prevent) if it once came to their Knowledge, that so great a Man, as a Governour of the Synagogue, by the miraculous Recovery of his Daughter, had forsaken the Religion of his Ancestors, and was become a Convert to the Christian Faith. But to proceed.

When *Lazarus* fell sick, & the *Evan-* The Case of *Lazarus*.
gelist informs us, that Jesus was not with him, nor did he see any of the Family, until he had been buried some Days; that when *Martha* and *Mary* met him, their Behaviour was such, as might naturally be expected from Persons, under the most sensible Concern for the Loss
of

† *John* xii. 10, 11. ‡ *John* xi.

of so near a Friend; that when he saw their Sorrow and Concern, and the People, that came to comfort them, lamenting their Loss with Tears, himself was likewise mov'd with Compassion, and *wept*; that when he came to the Grave (*it was a Cave, and a Stone laid upon it*) and order'd the Stone to be taken away, *Martha* interpos'd, as knowing her Brother to have been too long dead, to be fit to be seen; but that, after a short Prayer to God, he called upon *Lazarus with a loud Voice*, whereupon *he, that was dead, came forth, bound hand and foot with Grave-Cloths, and his Face was bound about with a Napkin*. In this light have the *Evangelists* represented the whole Transaction, and wherein I pray is the least shadow of Fraud or Collusion?

Why
Christ
wept, and
called him
with a
loud Voice.

If our Saviour's compassionating the Circumstances of his Friends, and weeping upon so sad an Occasion, should be accounted an Action not comporting with his Character, it should be consider'd, ^k that "There is something in human Nature, resulting from our very Make and Constitution, while it retains its genuine Form, and is not alter'd by vicious Habits, or oppress'd
" by

^k Religion of Nat. *Delin.* Sect. 6. p. 139.

“ by stupidity, which renders us ob-
“ noxious to the Pains of others; causes
“ us to *Sympathize* with them, and al-
“ most comprehends us in their Case.
“ This Compassion appears eminently in
“ those, who, upon other Accounts, are
“ justly reckon'd among *the best of Men*.
“ They, who, of all Writers, undertake
“ to imitate Nature most, often intro-
“ duce even their *Heroes* weeping. The
“ Tears of Men are, in Truth, very dif-
“ ferent from the Cries and Ejaculations
“ of Children: They are silent Streams,
“ and flow from other Causes, common-
“ ly some *tender*, and perhaps *philo-*
“ *sophical* Reflections”: And in the
Case now before us, there might be
other Considerations, besides the Loss of
Lazarus, that might draw from our Sa-
viour these Tears of Compassion. He
might, at that Time be affected with the
Thought of the many Afflictions, to
which human Nature is liable, in this
imperfect State, and his Groans and in-
ward Grief might proceed from the want
of Faith, observable in the Sisters, and
Company attending, and a diffidence of
his Ability to raise the Dead, notwith-
standing they had seen so frequent Ma-
nifestations of a divine and omnipotent
Power residing in him.

If his *Crying to Lazarus with a loud Voice* is thought a Circumstance of some Suspicion, it should be remember'd, that, when a Miracle is wrought for the Proof of the Character, or divine Mission of any Person, it ought always to appear to be done by him, that it may not be reputed a *casual* Event. ¹ For this Reason it is, that we find the Prophets, and other extraordinary Messengers of God, at the same Time that they perform'd any Miracle, always making use of some external Action, though that Action was in itself of no real Virtue. Thus when the *Red-Sea* was to be open'd, to give a Passage to the Children of *Israel*, God said unto *Moses*, ^m *lift up thy Rod, and stretch thine Hand over the Sea, and divide it. The stretching the Hand*, it is plain, did not divide the Sea, but the divine Power, that accompanied that Action; and yet that Action was of great use to convince the People, that the dividing and returning of the Waters (which immediately follow'd thereupon) was not a casual natural Event, but a plain Indication of God's abetting the Pretensions of their Leader *Moses*. And, in like Manner, the Tone of our Saviour's Voice, whether *low*, or *loud*, avail-
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¹ *Lardner's Vind.* p. 65. ^m *Exod.* xiv. 16.

ed nothing to the dead Man's ⁿ Resurrection, but since the History assures us that a great Number of *Jews*, and, among these, Foes as well as Friends, were come to condole with the two Sisters upon this sorrowful Event, common Reason will inform us, that it was highly proper, that all, who were present, should be equally Witnessess of the whole Process; and, consequently, that an elevated Voice was more suitable to this Occasion, than when the like Miracle was done, either in a private Room, or before a smaller Number of People.

If the *Napkin*, which *Lazarus* came out of the Grave with, is thought to give any suspicious Umbrage, it may not be improper to observe, that the Text says, that ^o *Lazarus's Face was bound about with a Napkin*; but it does not say, that it was cover'd with it, so that the Spectators could not behold his Countenance.

^p The same *Evangelist*, speaking of our Lord's Resurrection, uses the same Expression, and tells us of the *σενδάριον, ὃ ἦν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ*, the *Napkin*, that was upon his Head, by which it should seem that the *Sudarium* was part of the *Burial-dress*, bound about the Head,

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^o *Ray's Vind.* Part 2. p. 189. ^o *John xi.* 44.

^p *Defence of Scrip. History*, p. 29.

The *Napkin* on his Forehead no suspicious Circumstance.

and covering only the upper part of the Face or Forehead, like a *Night-Cap*; and if so, this Circumstance can be no Proof that his Face was not open to the view of the Company. But allowing that his whole Face was covered with this *Napkin*, yet, since, among all civiliz'd Nations, the Custom is reputed decent, to cover the Face of the Corpse with something or other: as this was a Proof that *Lazarus* was suppos'd by his Friends to be Dead, when they buried him; so, instead of any Bodies going into the Tomb to occasion the least Suspicion of any clandestine Practices, the proper Demonstration was to see him come forth fairly alive, in the presence of the numerous Spectators, without any Change or Alteration of his Funeral Habit, but what was made before the People themselves, by our Saviour's saying, *loose him, and let him go*. That some or other in the Company was ready enough, upon this Occasion, to obey our Lord's Command, can hardly be doubted; and therefore it is very wonderful, that (had there been any Fraud or Collusion in this Resurrection) among so great a Multitude, no one should have Sagacity enough to find it out. But the Truth of the
Matter

Matter is, ^a they none of them suspected any such Thing; they none of them thought, that, when a Man had been four Days buried, there wanted any Proof of his being Dead; they none of them thought that Christ was only a pretended worker of Miracles, for, how unwilling soever they were to own him for their *Messias*, by long Experience they were convinc'd, that he was a Person *mighty in Word and Deed*.

Some few of the Company (as the History tells us) who were not convinc'd, even by this Miracle, went to the *Chief Priests* and *Pharisees*; but what was it that they told them? "That they had detected Jesus in an Imposture, and found out how the whole Business of this pretended Resurrection was transacted"? Quite otherwise, as appears from what themselves said, when, in Consequence of this Information, they were assembled in Council, ^r *What do we do, for this Man doth many Miracles; if we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our Place and Nation, and thereupon they resolve that both he and ^s Lazarus should be put to Death.*

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^a Defence of Scrip. Hist. p. 28. ^r *John xi.*
^s *Ch. xii. 10.*

Why the
Jews
were so
enrag'd a-
gainst
Jesus.

The Romans shall come, and take away our Place and Nation, was the publick and specious Reason given for the sanguinary Measures taken against our Saviour, but it was far from being the true one. The Jews, indeed, were very impatient of the Roman Yoke, and, upon all Occasions, prone enough to Rebellion: But, so far was our Saviour, either by Example or Precept, from giving any Disturbance to the Civil Government; so far from affecting any Secular Dominion among them, that we find him, very frequently, strictly charging the very People, that he cur'd, not to divulge the Miracles he had wrought, ^t on purpose to discourage the pernicious Conceit, which had then obtain'd among the Jews, that their *Messiah* was to be a temporal Prince. Here then was the true Cause, that rais'd their Malice and Indignation against him, *viz.* a Defeat given to their Expectations, in a Doctrine abhorrent to their corrupt Notions. ^u For it was a sad Disappointment and Mortification to them, after the fond Conceits, they had so long cherish'd, of a *temporal* Deliverer, in the Person of the expected *Messiah*, to be put off with one,

^t Vid. *Whitby* in *Matt.* [ix. 30. ^u *Roy's Vind.*
Part 2. p. 194.

one, who made so little Figure in the World himself, and who, instead of raising his Followers to any Eminence of earthly Honour and Dignities, made it his Business to beget in their Minds a just Contempt of the World, and all the fading and perishable Glories of it. And whoever considers the prodigious Force of worldly Interest upon the greatest part of Mankind, how much they are under the Influence and Impression of temporal Motives; what Regret and Impatience they discover, when they meet with any Thing, that controuls their ungovernable Lusts and Passions; will not wonder, that a Doctrine of so much Purity and Simplicity, as our Saviour came to establish, should meet with so much Opposition from such a corrupt Generation of Men, as the *Jewish* Rulers were. w Had he indeed taught no Doctrine at all, or no Doctrine contrary to the Opinions commonly receiv'd, his healing the Sick, and raising the Dead to Life, would questionless have every where gain'd him a great Esteem, and a general Consent, that the Power, by which he was enabled to do such Miracles, was *Divine*: But when the Case was so, that they could not acknowledge the Hand

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of

of God in these Things, without acknowledging, at the same Time, the Truth of a Doctrine, to which they had an irreconcilable Aversion; it is easy enough to conceive, how this might have the effect, which we find it had, of blinding their Eyes against Conviction, and of putting them upon contriving the Destruction, both of *Jesus* himself, and of every one else, who was instrumental in supporting his Authority among the People.

Why he
rerir'd
from their
Malice.

And if such was the Rage and Malignity of the *Jewish* Rulers against him, who can think it strange, that an innocent Person should endeavour to take care of his own Life and Safety, and prudently avoid (as much as was consistent with Justice and Honour) the bloody Designs of wicked and outrageous Men. * A time there was indeed (and *that* near approaching) appointed in the Decrees of God, when he was to be offer'd up on the Cross for the Sins of the World; but till that Time was fully accomplish'd, he was to be preserv'd, not by any *miraculous* Interposition, but by the ordinary Methods of Providence. Had he summon'd his *Legions* from Heaven, and overthrown his Enemies by a
visible

* Defence of Scrip. Hist. p. 40.

visible Exercise of his Sovereign Power, *⁠* how then (as he himself observes) *should the Scriptures have been fulfilled, that thus it should be?* Since for this Reason then, it was improper for him to employ his miraculous Power for his Protection; what had he to do, but to decline, for the present, the Storm, that was gathering, by retiring into a Place more private than *Jerusalem*. In this Retirement; however, his continuance was not long: for the next News we hear of him was at *Bethany*, in the House of *Lazarus*; where he was entertain'd at Supper publicly, in the Presence of a great Number of the Jews, who came, not only for *Jesus's* sake, but that they might see *Lazarus* also, whom he had raised from the Dead.

Bethany was a Village ^z about two Miles distant from *Jerusalem*, where, ^a within six Days, the Passover was to be celebrated. Here our Saviour (whose design was to be at the *Feast*) took up his Quarters, and, during this short interval, went every day to *Jerusalem*; where he appear'd in the most publick and frequented Places. The first time of his going thither, ^b he was met, upon

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No Fraud
in this Mi-
racle from
his After-
Actions.

^y *John* xii. 1, 10. [⁠] *Ver.* 12.

^z *Ibid.* xi. 18.

[⁠] *Ibid.*

the way, by great Throngs of People, who, with loud Acclamations, and other publick Marks of Honour, usher'd him into the City. After this we find him in the Temple, ^c driving out the *Buyers* and *Sellers*, disputing with the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, rebuking them sharply with his Parables, and exposing them openly in his Discourses to the People. Now had our Saviour been conscious of any Fraud in the Case of *Lazarus*, how can we think, that he would have come to *Bethany* again, and into the House of the very Man, who was the *principal Actor* in the Cheat; that he would have gone to *Jerusalem*, into the very Teeth of his Enemies; been receiv'd, by the *Populace*, with such Marks of Distinction, or allow'd to treat the great and leading Men of the City with such freedom of Speech? Above all, how can we think, that, in the Course of this Freedom, or in the Course of his *Tryal*, no one should be found to upbraid him with what had pass'd at *Bethany*, which (considering the great Weight of the Objection, supposing it to have been a *Fraud*, the short Time that had pass'd since the Thing was done, and that several were to be found, who must have been Eye-witnesses

nesses of it) would have avail'd more to Disgrace him with the People, than all the little Artifices, they us'd *to entangle him in his Talk*; and have justify'd his Condemnation better, than the false Accusations, which suborn'd Witnesses alledg'd, of his having a Design to pull down the Temple, and destroy the Law? These Things, I say, can no ways be accounted for, without admitting, in our Saviour, a *Consciousness* of his own *Innocency* of any just Imputation of Fraud, and, on the part of the People, a general Persuasion that he wrought his Miracles by the Power of God.

And now to look back upon what has been said in Vindication of these three Resurrection-Miracles. Since the Distinction of *greater* and *less* Miracles, is destitute of all real Foundation, and, consequently, the raising of one Person from the Dead, is as much a Miracle as raising another; since the *Evangelists*, in their Accounts of our Saviour's Miracles, are so far from relating every one, that they omit *several*, which the intended Brevity of their Gospels, and the multiplicity of Matter necessary to be compriz'd in them, oblig'd them to do; since, upon these Considerations,
and

The sum
of the
whole
Answer.

and perhaps in Point of *Prudence*, that they might not exasperate the *Jews* against *Lazarus*, the *three first Evangelists* have pass'd by that *Period* in our Saviour's Life, wherein *Lazarus* was rais'd from the Dead, and contented themselves with relating the History of others so rais'd; since the Gospel of St. *John* was professedly written to supply the Defects of these other *Evangelists*, and accordingly has done it in many remarkable Instances; since the three Persons, whose Resurrections are Recorded by these sacred Pen-men, were no improper Objects of our Saviour's Kindness to them, and the Scripture's Silence concerning their future Lives, and the Intelligence from the other World, may, in a great Measure, be accounted for; since there could be no mistake in their Deaths, nor any Circumstances in the whole Story, denoting a *Fallacy* in their Resurrection; since, in the Case of *Lazarus*, particularly, the whole Process was so order'd, as to take away all imaginable Occasion of Suspicion, and the bloody Resolves of the *Jewish* Council thereupon, and our Saviour's *Retreat* from *Jerusalem* for his Security, was no more, than what, an inveterate *Prejudice* in them, and a Principle of *Self-Preservation* in him, may
be

be well suppos'd to suggest; since all these Articles, I say, have been prov'd to be thus, the *Evangelists* are acquitted from the Imputation of *Forgery*, their Histories, from the Charge of *intrin-sick Absurdities and Incredibilities*, and our Saviour's Conduct, in working these Miracles, from the railing *Accusation of Fraud and Imposture*: and so we are come, at last, to *his own Resurrection*.



S E C T. XVI.

Of CHRIST'S *own* Resurrection.

“ BUT his own Resurrection, ^a says Mr. Wool-
“ **B** Mr. *Woolston*, as the *Evangelists* ston's Ob-
“ have related it, is the most notorious jection.
“ and monstrous Imposture, that was
“ ever put upon Mankind. ^b Pity it is
“ indeed, that we have not the Books,
“ which were anciently written against
“ *Jesus* and his Actions, for they,
“ doubtless, would have given us an
“ Insight into the whole Contrivance.
“ However, this Comfort we have, that
“ the very Account, which is given by
“ the

^a Vid. *Woolston's Disc.* 6, p. 4, to p. 36. ^b *Disc.*
p. 50.

“ the pretended Witnessses of this Fact,
 “ is enough to destroy the Credit of it.
 “ To this purpose we must remember,
 “ that, after Jesus was crucify'd, and
 “ his dead Body laid in the Sepulchre,
 “ the Governours of the *Jews*, calling
 “ to Mind, that he, in his Life-time,
 “ had promis'd to Rise again the third
 “ Day, and, considering withal, that
 “ he had many Disciples and Followers
 “ alive, who would be ready enough
 “ to combine in any Fraud to verify
 “ their Master's Prediction ; address'd
 “ themselves to *Pilate*, the *Roman* Go-
 “ vernour, and of him obtain'd a Guard
 “ to Watch the Place : nay, and to pre-
 “ vent any future Fraud, the chief
 “ Priests took a farther Method, and
 “ seal'd the Door of the Sepulchre, up-
 “ on Agreement with the Apostles, that
 “ the Seals should not be open'd, till
 “ the Time appointed for the Resurrecti-
 “ on, in order that all Parties might
 “ see, and be satisfy'd, whether the
 “ dead Body was come to Life or no.
 “ This was a fair Expedient, one would
 “ think, to determine the Dispute ; but,
 “ instead of this, we find the Seals bro-
 “ ken, without the Consent or Privity
 “ of

° The Tryal of the Witnessses, from p. 35. to
 p. 36. and from p. 53. to p. 59.

“ of the *Chief Priests*, and the Body
“ stolen away by his Disciples, a *whole*
“ *Day*, before he himself had spoke of
“ his Resurrection, and early in the
“ Morning, when the *Guards* were fast
“ asleep, as they themselves acknow-
“ ledg’d.

“ And indeed, had there not been
“ some such Management as this in the
“ Case, we can hardly conceive, why
“ *Jesus*, after his suppos’d Resurrection,
“ did not appear *personally* to the Chief
“ Priests and Rulers of the *Jews*. Him
“ they had crucify’d and put to Death,
“ as a Deceiver and false Prophet ; to
“ them did his Commission in a more es-
“ pecial Manner relate, and therefore,
“ for his own Justification, as well as
“ their Conviction, it was in a Manner
“ necessary, for him to manifest his Re-
“ surrection. For, since his Resurrecti-
“ on is acknowledg’d to be the chief
“ Proof of his Mission, the Evidence of
“ it should certainly have been so or-
“ der’d, as to put it beyond all possibili-
“ ty of Exception : But, instead of this,
“ we have none, but a set of his own
“ Creatures, who call themselves *Wit-
“ nesses chosen before of God*, to attest a
“ Matter of such Consequence. ’Tis
“ acknowledg’d indeed, that in Testi-
“ mony

“ many of these *Fictions*, they persist-
 “ ed with great Constancy and Resolu-
 “ tion; but, as it is no uncommon
 “ Thing to meet with *Enthusiasts*, who
 “ will suffer to the uttermost in Vindi-
 “ cation of Falshoods, and sometimes to
 “ meet with harden'd *Villains*, who will
 “ even adventure to die in an obstinate
 “ denial of the Truth; we may, from
 “ the whole, conclude, that these pre-
 “ tended Witnesses of *Jesus's* Resur-
 “ rection, were either *silly* enough to
 “ be impos'd on themselves, in what
 “ they attested, or, for some private
 “ Views or other, *wicked* enough to en-
 “ deavour to impose upon others.

The Loss
 of *Anti-
 christian
 Books* no
 great Dis-
 service
 to his
 Cause.

^d The Resurrection of our Saviour
 Christ is the great point, upon which
 the whole weight of *Christianity* rests;
 and therefore, as our Faith can never
 be too well grounded herein, whatever
 Objections, have, in any Age, been ad-
 vanc'd against it, are not unworthy our
 Consideration. 'Tis much to be wish'd
 therefore, that the ^e *Antichristian* Books,
 whose loss is so much lamented, were
 extant at this Day, if it were but to stop
 the Mouths of their Admirers, who would
 not,

^d Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 1. p. 1. ^e Defence of
 Scrip. Hist. p. 50.

not, I am confident, boast so much of them, if they had them, as they now do, that they want them. Whatever the strength of Wit or Malice can do, our modern *Patrons* of Infidelity have not left unattempted; and 'twou'd be a Disparagement to their fine Parts, and compass of Thinking, to imagine, that any of the *Ancients* cou'd assist them in their Enquiries. If we may be allow'd to take the Character of *Porphyry* (one of the most strenuous opposers of *Christianity*, whose Books *Theodosius* the Emperor order'd to be Burnt) from *Eusebius*, who had seen and read them, we cannot but suppose, that, if his manner was, *when he wanted Reasons, to set himself to railing, and tho' he wou'd sometimes speak Truth, when he cou'd not help it, yet he never scrupl'd to tell a Lye, when he thought he could palm it upon his Readers, without being discover'd*; his Books cou'd have been of any great service in our search after Truth. Nay, supposing that he, and some other *Fathers of Infidelity*, had made never so many discoveries against *Christianity*, and, with the like Assurance, that some of their *Sons* have done, had affirm'd that *Jesus* was a vile *Impostor*, and the History of his

his Miracles, (especially of his Resurrection,) as it is recorded by the *Evangelists*, was all a mere Fable, yet, after all, the Question will be, whom we are to believe? † That they, or any Authorities they cou'd bring to vouch for them, cou'd have better Opportunities of knowing the Truth, than the *Evangelists* had, is absolutely impossible; and that any of them have given any such Proofs of their Honesty and Sincerity, as the *Evangelists* did, a Man must be void of the Sense of Shame to maintain: And this (by the way) may supply us with a Reason, why the Fate of their Writings, and of the *Evangelists* was so very different.

Why it
happn'd.

That the *Heathens*, when under the power of Christians, were as able to preserve their Books from being destroy'd, as the *Christians*, when under the power of *Heathens*, were to preserve theirs, can be no manner of doubt, if mere Power were to be consider'd: but the great Difference lay here, that the Books of the *New Testament* were so confirm'd and establish'd by undoubted Evidence, and Christians were so fully convinc'd of their Divine Authority, that they willingly sacrificed their Lives, rather than deliver them up, and by this

† Defence of Scrip. Hist. p. 51, 52.

this means they were preserv'd and outliv'd the rage of *ten* Persecutions; whereas the Writings of *Celsus* and *Porphyry*, &c. were senseless lying *Invectives*, which however Men of corrupt Fancies might be pleas'd with, yet no one was found to have that value for them, as to run the least Hazard for their Preservation, and therefore they easily fell under the Punishment, which many thought due to the Spite and Malice, which gave them Birth.

Since then we are reduc'd to the sole Account of the *Evangelists* in this great Article of our Christian Faith, 'tis happy for us, that every Circumstance, relating to it, is so minutely told, as to leave no Umbrage for Suspicion. For, upon his being taken down from the Cross, and prepar'd for Interment, the Sacred Historians inform us, that he was laid *in a new Tomb*; that this Tomb was *hew'd out of a Rock*; that a great Stone was rolled to the Door of it, that Stone secur'd with a Seal, and the whole watch'd and defended with a strong guard of Soldiers. The Tomb is said to be a *new one, wherein never Man before was laid*, to prevent all Suspicion of its being any other Body, that did arise; and to be *hewn out of a Rock*, clos'd with

The Circumstances preceding Christ's Resurrection.

a Stone, and watch'd with a Guard, to silence the Pretence of the *Jews* that his Disciples stole the Body away: But, that the *Sealing the Door* was intended for any *Contract* or Agreement between the chief Priests and his Apostles is a mere Fiction, and full of Absurdities; because whoever considers the Situation of Affairs, at that time, must needs imagine, that there could be no manner of Intercourse between them.

No Engagement between the Chief Priests and his Apostles.

^h When Christ was first seiz'd, and carried to his Trial, his Disciples fled, and hid themselves for fear of the *Jews*, out of a just Apprehension, that they should, if apprehended, be sacrificed with their Master. St. *Peter* indeed followed him to the *Judgment-Hall*, but his Courage soon failed him, and 'tis well known in what a shameful manner he denied him. After the Death of Christ, his Disciples were so far from being ready to engage for his Resurrection, or to enter into any Terms or Agreements for the *manner*, in which it should be done, that they themselves did not believe it ever would come to pass; they gave off, in short, all Thoughts and Expectations of it, and instead of entering into any Covenant with the Chief Priests, made

ⁱ *The Trial of the Witnesses*, p. 40.

made it their whole Care and Concern, to keep themselves close and concealed from them.

So that, it was not upon any Stipulation with the Apostles, (who all this while never once came near them,) but to secure themselves against any Deception of the Guards, and lest they should enter into a Combination against them, that the *Jews* sealed the Door of the Sepulchre. Such was the Precaution taken by the *Jewish* Rulers: But what avails all this against the mighty Power of God? ⁱ An *Angel* descends, and rolls away the Stone; his *Countenance* and the *Earthquake*, that attended him, frighten the Keepers so, that they became like dead Men: But, when trembling for fear, they came into the City, and told what was done, observe, what a contradictory Story the Rulers trump up.

They pretended “ That, notwithstanding all they had done, the Devils stole away the Body; ^k that Things were carried on just in the same manner, as if no Precaution had been used, nor any Guards at all plac’d; that all their Contrivance and Foresight had been out-witted, by a Parcel of silly Fishermen, who had the Hardiness to break

The Reason of sealing the Sepulchre.

The Absurdity of their stealing away the Body.

S 2

“ the

ⁱ *Matth.* xxviii. ^k *Ry's Vind.* Part 2. p. 224.

“ the Seal, and were able, without Dis-
 “ covery, to roll away a vast Stone, and
 “ all to carry off the dead Body ; that,
 “ while this was doing, the whole Num-
 “ ber of the Guards were, to a Man,
 “ fast asleep, and (which is as strange as
 “ all the rest) that though they were *so*,
 “ they knew every thing that passed,
 “ without any Attempt, or Inclination
 “ to prevent it ; and were able to give
 “ as exact a Relation of what happen’d,
 “ while they were asleep, as if they had
 “ been broad awake”. *O ye wicked*
and corrupt Wretches, (as St. Austin,
 with just Indignation, expostulates the
 Case with the Soldiers,) *either ye were*
awake, or asleep ; if awake, it was your
Business to secure the Body from being
stolen away ; if asleep, then your own
words disprove you, since, in this Condition,
it was impossible for you to know, either
what was done, or who were the Persons
that did it. And indeed, well may the
 Guards be ask’d, how they came to be
 so punctual in relating what happen’d
 when they were asleep, and what induc’d
 them to believe, that the Body
 was stolen at all, what, that it was stolen
 by the Disciples, when according to their
 own Confession, they could see nothing
 that pass’d.

That

¹ That the Romans, whose Military Discipline was so extremely strict, should neglect their Post upon so extraordinary an Emergency, is hardly allowable; but, supposing they did, how can we imagine, that the Disciples should ever engage in so desperate a Design, as stealing away their Master's Body? For are not these the very Men, who, upon the first assault in the Garden, all forsook him? They durst not stand by him even then, when he declar'd it in his Power to call for twelve Legions of Angels for his Rescue; and have they now the Confidence to come in a Body, and bear away his Corpse? It is incongruous to believe, that they, who durst not so much as appear in Publick, but assembled privately, and shut up their Doors for fear of the Jews, should invade a strong Guard, and, all on a sudden grow so valiant, or rather fool hardy, as to attempt a detachment of armed Men (whose Order and Business it was to expect, and be provided for them) when he, in whom they trusted, was dead, and when the stoutest of them all (even while he was yet alive) trembled at the Voice of a silly Servant-Wench, and was forc'd to have recourse to Falshood and Perjury, to

From
their
want of
Courage.

S 3

deliver

¹ Stanhope's Epist. and Gosp. vol. 2. p. 599.

deliver himself from the Danger of her inquisitive Tongue.

The im-
practicable-
ness of
the thing,

But let us suppose further, that the Disciples had Courage enough for so desperate an Undertaking; yet what hopes could they have of succeeding in it? ^m A dead Body is not remov'd by *Slight of Hand*, it requires many Hands to do it; and the Stone, at the Mouth of the Sepulchre, was to be taken away, which could not be done *silently*, and by Men walking on tip-toes to prevent Discovery. So that if the Guards had really been asleep, yet there was no Encouragement to go upon the Enterprize; for 'tis hardly possible to suppose, but that rolling away the Stone, moving the Body, and the Hurry and Confusion of carrying it off, must have awaken'd them.

And the
Folly of it.

ⁿBut supposing the Thing practicable, yet the Attempt was such, as the Disciples, *consistently with their own Notions*, could not undertake. They had promis'd themselves, in their Master's Lifetime, to see him become a Temporal Prince, and to *sit on his Right and on his Left-hand*, had been the Matter of some of their Petitions: But now, that they had seen him Dead, and laid in the
Grave,

^m *The Tryal of the Witnesses*, p. 43. ⁿ *Stanhope's*
Epist. and Gosp. vol. 2. p. 600.

Grave, they gave up all for lost, and, what the sorrowful Disciple, in his Way to *Emmaus*, says, was the general Sentiment of them all, * *We trusted that it had been he, which should have deliver'd* Israel. And if such was their Despondency, for what End or Reason should they attempt to steal away his Body? Did they expect to make a King of the dead Body, if they could but get it into their Power? Or † did they think, that, if they had it, they could raise it to Life again? If they trusted so far to their Master's Prediction, as to expect his Resurrection (which I think is evident they did not) yet it is too gross to suppose, that they were so far bereav'd of common Sense, as to fancy that his Resurrection depended upon having the dead Body in their Possession. And yet some such extravagant Supposition, as this, must be admitted, before we can conceive, why they ran such a visible Hazard for that, which, when obtain'd, could avail them nothing.

But admitting that the Disciples were both bold enough, and foolish enough to Attempt the Thing; yet the Circumstances, wherein the Sepulchre was left, are a sufficient Proof, that the Removal of

From the Condition, in which the Sepulchre was found.

S 4

the

* *Luke xxiv. 21.* † *The Tryal of the Witnesses, p. 44.*

the Body was none of their Handy-work. Robberies, we know, are committed in haste, and every Moment is tedious to Men under Apprehensions of Discovery. If therefore the removing of the Body had been their Work, and they had watch'd their Opportunity for it, when the Centinels were asleep, yet certainly they would have taken it away, as it was, without staying to unbind and undress it. For do Thieves, after they have rifled an House, use to spend time in putting Things in order again? And is it not agreeable to all the Reason in the World, that these Persons would have been rather sollicitous to make their escape, than to strip the Corpse^o, to fold up the Cloaths, and to lay them apart, from one another, in their proper Places? The Custom of Interment among the *Jews*, we know, was to roll the dead Body^p (as we read our Saviour's was) up in Spices, which, though they preserv'd it in some measure from Corruption, yet, by their glewy Nature, could not but make the Cloaths, that were used with them, cling so close to the Skin, as not to be drawn off without a great deal of Time and Difficulty. When therefore these Coverings

^o *John* xx. 5, &c. ^p *Ch.* xix. 39, 40.

verings were found, regularly pull'd off, wrapped up, and laid by; this plainly shews, that the removing of Jesus's Body was a work of Leisure and Deliberation, and such, as, by no means, agrees with the Confusion and Haste of Things done by Stealth: nor can it enter into any sober Man's Thoughts, that they, who came privily, and in Danger of their Lives, should thus venture the awakening of the Guard, and trifle away their time, in such hazardous and unnecessary Niceties.

These, and many more Circumstances of the like Nature, are Conviction enough, that the Disciples were not concerned in stealing away their Master's Body. And, if we pursue their History a little farther, we shall find, that even the Persons, who first accused them with it, did, in their future Conduct, discover, that they themselves were conscious the Story was false.

¶ Not long after our Saviour's Resurrection, we read, that the Disciples, having received new Power from above, appeared publicly in Jerusalem, nay, in the very Temple, and testified the Resurrection of Christ, even before those, that had murder'd him. But what did the

And the subsequent Behaviour of the Chief Priests and Rulers.

Chief

Chief Priests do upon this Occasion? They seize upon the Apostles, they threaten them, they beat them, they scourge them, and all to stop their Mouths, insisting that they should say no more of the Matter. But why did they not, when they had them in their Power, charge them directly with their notorious Cheat, in stealing their Master's Body, and so expose them to the People, as Impostors? This had been to their Purpose more, and had more effectually undeceiv'd the People, than all their Menaces and Ill-usage; but not one Word of this is said. They try to Murder them, enter into Combinations to assassinate them, prevail with *Herod* to put one of them to Death, but not so much as a Charge against them of any Fraud in the Resurrection. Their Orator *Tertullus*, who could not have miss'd so fine a Topick of Declamation (had there been but a Suspicion to support it) is quite silent on this Head, and content to flourish on the common Place of Sedition and Heresy, profaning the Temple, and the like, mere Trifles to his Cause, in comparison to the other Accusation, had there been any ground to make use of it: And yet, as it happens,

we

we are sure the very Question of the Resurrection came under Debate. † For *Festus* tells *Agrippa*, that the *Jews* had certain Questions against *Paul* of one *Jesus*, which was dead, whom *Paul* affirm'd to be alive; after which, we are told that *Agrippa* heard *Paul* himself: but had he suspected, much less had he been convinc'd, that there had been a Cheat in the Resurrection, he would hardly have said to him, at the End of his Conference, † *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

Thus stands the Case of our Lord's Resurrection: and the Allegation against it in *Point of Time*, is a mere Trifle, arising from an Ignorance of the Jewish way of Computation. † Our Saviour indeed, alluding to his own Resurrection, says, *destroy this Temple, and in three Days will I rise it up*, meaning his own Body: The Angels represent his Prediction thus, *the Son of Man shall be crucify'd, and the third Day rise again*; elsewhere it is said, *after three Days*; and again, that he was to be *in the Bowels of the Earth three Days and three Nights*: But all these Expressions are Equivalent, since it is usual in all Nations to reckon the Night into the Day, whenever they reckon

How
Christ
rose on
the third
Day.

† *Acts* xxv. † *Acts* xxvi. 28. † The Tryal, &c.
p. 42.

reckon by so many Days. The *Jews* however, have a way of Computation, in some respects different from us: They, as well as we, put frequently a part of the Day for the whole; but then,^w whereas we reckon our Days (I mean our *natural* Days of twenty-four Hours) from twelve a Clock at Night, to twelve the next Night, they reckon from one Sun-set to the next Sun-set, and all the Time between them they call'd a *Day*; even as *Moses* did, when he says, * *the Evening and the Morning were the first Day*. Now allowing this manner of Computation, and reckoning, that the first Day began on *Thursday* at Sun-set, and ended upon *Friday* at Sun-set; since our Saviour died on *Friday* about three in the Afternoon, by putting a part for the whole, here we have one Day. *Saturday* is allowed on all Hands to be another Day: and since the third Day began on *Saturday* at Sun-set, and our Saviour rose on the Morning following; that part of the Day being likewise put for the whole, is fairly computed for the third Day: and thus we have the Prediction accomplished. But whatever Difficulty may be suppos'd in computing the time from the Crucifixion to the Resur-

^w Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 1. p. 12. * Gen. 1. 5.

Resurrection, since the Resurrection happened during the time, that the Guards had the Sepulchre in keeping, 'tis the same thing, whether our Saviour chose to arise in the Beginning, the Middle, or the Conclusion of the Day; only it is a little more presumeable, that, after he had continu'd in the Grave, long enough to convince the People of the Certainty of his Death, beyond all possibility of Recovery by natural Means, & he should take the first Occasion, consistent with his own Predictions, of returning from the Grave, in order to comfort and refresh the desponding Minds of his Disciples.

But though our Lord might have this tender Regard to his Disciples, yet the *unbelieving Jews*, (especially the Chief Priests, and Rulers) were, of all Men, the most unworthy of such a particular Vouchsafement. They had already despis'd the Evidence, that was given them; and not only so, but maliciously imputed the plainest Miracles, that ever were wrought,

Why he did not appear to the Jews, who deserv'd no such Favour from him.

Ne turbatos Discipulorum animos longa Mæstitudo cruciaret, denunciatam *Tridui* moram tam mirâ celeritate breviavit, ut, dum ad integrum secundum diem pars primi novissima, & pars tertij prima concurrat, & aliquantum temporis spacio decideret, & nihil dierum numero deperiret. Leo de Resur. Dom. Ser. 1. apud *Pearson* in Art. c. v.

wrought, to the Power and Operation of the Devil. Him, who was the Worker of them, they had vilified and blasphemed, rejected all his kind offers, and enter'd into Measures to take away his Life: And therefore in just Indignation, he denounces their Woes, and takes his solemn leave of them, ^z *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them, that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as an Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not! behold your House is left unto you desolate, for, I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord!*

Which would have been lost upon them.

But waving this Objection, and supposing for the present, that our Saviour had appear'd publickly to the *Jewish* Rulers; yet, since neither the *Darkness* at his Death, nor the *Earthquake* at his Resurrection; neither the Declaration of the *Centurion*, on the one, nor the Confession of the Soldiers, on the other Occasion, had wrought in them any Remorse; ^a we can hardly suppose, but that, had he so appear'd, they would have offer'd to lay violent Hands upon him,

^z *Matt.* xxiii. 27, &c. ^a *Soul's* Sermon. Vol. V.

him, as they had before design'd to kill *Lazarus*, and for the same Reason: In which Case, had our Saviour vanished out of their Hands (as doubtless he would) what would they have concluded from hence, but that they had seen a Ghost, a Spectre or Apparition; and what Conviction would *that* have wrought, but that their Senses had been impos'd upon by some magical Illusion; and what Effect would this have had upon their Minds, towards bringing them to a Belief that Christ was truly Risen, and much less that he was the true *Messiah*? None at all.

Many of the *Jews* (among whom we may suppose the Chief Priests and Elders, who hired the Soldiers to stifle the Belief of Christ's Resurrection, with a false Story of their own Invention) were given up to *Hardness of Heart*, and would not have believed, or, if they believed, would not have testified, that they had ever seen Christ after his Resurrection. ^b Now, they that are wicked enough to deny what they believe, will, at a pinch, deny also what they know to be true: and therefore, supposing that our Lord had shewn himself to all his Enemies, and to *all the People,*

And done
Injury to
the Christian
Cause.

^b *Clapet's Sermon, Vol. I.*

ple, and but some of them (especially of the great Men in Authority) had denied that ever they saw him after his Resurrection; this would have exceedingly weaken'd the Testimony of those, who vouch'd and confessed it: For he, who appeals to the Knowledge of another for the Truth of a Matter of Fact, is so far from gaining, that he loses Credit by the Appeal, if the other Person denies that he knows any thing of it. If therefore our Lord had appeared to his Persecutors (it being likely that his Disciples would appeal to their Knowledge) they, by protesting the contrary, would have made a terrible Advantage against the Christians upon that Appeal. Herein therefore is manifest the Wisdom of Christ, that, in making Choice of particular Witnesses, *viz.* such Persons only, as would be so far from dissembling their Knowledge, that they would always be ready to Seal their Testimony with their Blood, he hath settled the Christian Faith upon a better Foundation, than if he had appeared in the Temple, or in the midst of *Jerusalem*, to the whole People of the *Jews*.

For let us suppose, on the other hand, that our Saviour's appearing to the Chief Priests and Rulers, upon his Resurrection, should have had a contrary Effect; that, upon their Conviction, the whole *Jewish* Nation should be converted to the Christian Faith, and they, together with the Apostles, set out into Foreign Countries, Preaching the great Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection, and exhibiting Testimonials, under the Hands and Seals of the Grand *Sanhedrim*, that not only they themselves; but the whole Nation of the *Jews* was fully convinc'd of the Truth of it; yet we may very well question, whether this would have redounded to the general Advantage of Christianity. For might not such Persons, as now make Objections to the Testimony of the Apostles, have made much greater and stronger to the united Testimony of a Nation? and might not they have found out more room to suspect an Imposture, than they can now? It might then have been called, with a better Grace, a *stale Trick*, a *political Juggle*, a national Contrivance of the *Jews*, or any of those significant Names that are now so current among us. *Fraud* might have then been supposed to shelter it self under the Umbrage of *Magistry*;

The Excellency of the Apostles Testimony.

stracy; free Enquiries and Debates to be discouraged by the *Terror* and Awefulness of *Power*, and a general *Union* of Belief more justly reputed a general *Conspiracy*: but all this is happily evaded by the Method, Christ's infinite Wisdom took to propagate the Belief of his Resurrection.

In short, ^m it is not the Number of Witnesses, but the Character and Qualifications of the Persons, and the Evidence itself, in its full Force and Circumstances, which are chiefly to be regarded in Matters of this Nature. If but a few Men can (as the Apostles did) by undeniable Miracles make it sufficiently appear, that what they say is true, and that God himself confirms the Truth of it; they can appeal to every Man's own Senses, before whom they work Miracles, and make every one, that sees them, a Witness to the Truth of their Doctrines. In this Case God himself bears Witness to it; and what the *High Priest* said upon a very different Occasion, every stander-by finds himself constrain'd to declare in this; ⁿ *what need have we of any farther Witnesses? For we our selves have heard*
of

^m *Jenkin's* reasonableness of Christianity, vol. 2.

ⁿ *Matt.* xxvi. 65.

of their own Mouths (in the miraculous Gifts of Tongues) and seen with our own Eyes (in the many wonderful Works, which they have publicly wrought) a full and authentick Testimony of Christ's Resurrection.

The Resurrection of a Person from the Dead is indeed an Event so extraordinary, that it may well be expected, a more than common Evidence should be requir'd, to support its Credibility. Let us then see what the Credentials are, which the Witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection have to exhibit upon this Occasion.

That the Apostles of our Lord were Men of Truth and Probity, void of Ambition and Self-design, clear in their Account, and uniform in their Testimony, is what I had occasion to shew when their *Characters* and Qualifications fell under consideration * before; and tho' the Number of Persons, who are the Witnesses of a *Matter of Fact*, abstracted from all other Considerations, is not (as I just now hinted) of itself absolutely convincing and conclusive; yet it carries this Persuasion along with it, that though an Imposture may lie concealed

From their personal Character.

Their Numbers,

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for

* Vid. p. 11. ° *Discourse on the Resurrection of Christ*, p. 59.

for a while in a few Hands, it is next to impossible that it should lie undiscover'd in a great many. Now to what a Number of Witnesses our Saviour appear'd, after his Resurrection, the Apostle to the *Corinthians* has given us this Enumeration ; *¶ I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our Sins according to the Scriptures ; and that he was Buried, and that he Rose again the third Day according to the Scriptures ; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve, after that he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain at present. Besides this, he was seen of James, then of the Apostles, and last of all he was seen of me, as of one born out of time.* Here is a competent Number of Witnesses, and that they had sufficient Means and Opportunities to know and be inform'd of the Truth, is undeniable.

And Opportunities of knowing the Truth.

At his first return from the Grave indeed, our Saviour chose to discover himself to his Disciples by degrees. Hence we read of his *appearing* and *disappearing* so frequently ; of his *with-holding their Eyes*, that they should not know him ; of his coming Silently to them, *when the Doors*

Doors were shut, and then in a short time vanishing out of their sight again. But as these Expressions * (when rightly understood) can no ways affect the Reality of his Resurrection-Body; so do they serve to denote his Reservedness at first, which proceeded no doubt, from a kind Concern for his Disciples, least too sudden a recovery from the *despair*, they were in upon his Death, might make their Joy too excessive and tumultuous for them to bear: But when some few Interviews of this kind were passed, we find that they conversed with him with the greatest Freedom and Familiarity. They eat and drank with him, they saw him do many wondrous Works, and received Orders and Instructions from him about the Institution and Government of his Church: † They themselves declare, that, to convince them of the Truth of his Resurrection, he shewed them his *Hands and his Feet*, and, to one more incredulous than the rest, he indulged the Liberty of feeling the very *Prints*, which the *Nails* had made in them; that he upbraided them with unbelief, in not giving Credence to a Mat-

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ter

* Vid. *Whitby* on *John* xx. 19. *The Tryal of the Witnesses*, p. 66. &c. And *Dr. Pearce's* *Vin.* Part I. p. 16. † *Dutton* on the Resurrection.

ter so well attested ; shewed them the Reasons of his Resurrection, and expounded to them the Scriptures, concerning this very Article, with so peculiar an *Energy*, that they felt their Hearts set on Fire, even when they did not perceive that it was he. In short, they declare, that, at his Departure, he blessed them, and comforted them, and took his Leave of them, and that, after they had received all his Commands and Directions, they saw him *actually* taken up from them, and ascend into Heaven. Here was no room for any Dream or Deception : Men could never fancy that they saw a Person for forty Days together, that he eat and drank in their Presence, that he argued and expounded the Scriptures to them, convinced them of several Errors and Mistakes, gave them Promises, Rules, and Instructions, for their Comfort and the Government of a Church, and, after all, went up into Heaven in their Sight, whilst Angels stood by, and told them, that he, ^r *who was taken up into Heaven, should come in like manner again, as they had seen him go into Heaven* : This, I say, could be no Dream or Deception of their own ; and therefore, if their Testimony was

false,

^r Acts i. 11.

faſe, it muſt have proceeded from a malevolent Deſign to *abufe* Mankind with a downright Forgery.

But now, ſuppoſing them wicked enough to engage in ſuch an Undertaking; yet, where would they have had Abilities to put it in Execution?

From their Incapacity to execute an Impoſture.

They were not bred up in Courts, or engaged in ſuch a way of Living, where in the Arts and Intrigues of the World were either taught or practiſed; they were no Men of polite Converſation, that, by the Helps of Philoſophy, and Eloquence of Speech, were able to inſinuate a Fondneſs, and raiſe an Eſteem of themſelves in the reſt of Mankind; but their Diſcourſes were plain and homely, as well as their Education and Condition in the World ſuch, as could neither prompt their Ambition, nor qualify them for great Attempts. They were, in ſhort, poor illiterate *Fiſhermen*, and therefore not in much likelihood to entertain ſo great a thought, as putting an *Impoſture* upon the whole World. But, admitting they had Cunning and Courage enough to ſet about it, yet how could they poſſibly promiſe themſelves Succeſs, when the profeſſed Enemies of Chriſt's Reſurrection had ſo

The Improbability of its Succeſs.

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many urgent and weighty Reasons to induce them to use their utmost Efforts to prove it false; when they had as much Time and Opportunity, as they could desire, in order to discover the *Imposture*, and had Power in their Hands, to enable them to examine such Persons and Things, as might conduce to the Discovery. Nay put the Case, that they were so *Subtle*, as to contrive, and so *Fortunate* as to conceal the *Imposture*; yet still we are to consider them as Men, and consequently, of the same Passions and Desires with other Men; and being so, that they should relinquish all the darling Pleasures, Profits, and Accommodations of Life, and voluntarily expose themselves to Scorn, to Tortures, to Persecutions, and even Death it self, only to propagate a Story, which they themselves know to be a *Lye*, and that an absurd, insipid, incredible *Lye* (if a *Lye* at all) is a thing unnatural, and morally impossible.

The *Sufferings* it expos'd them to.

The Case of *Christi-an Martyrs*, and of *Criminals* or *Zealots* quite Different.

Instances perhaps there may be found, of Cheats, and Criminals, who have sometimes asserted their Innocence; and denied their Guilt, to the utmost
“ Ex-

† *Soutl's Ser.* vol. 5. “ *Dr. Pearce's Vind.* Part 1, p. 9.

“ Extremity ” ; w but between Criminals dying and denying plain Facts, and the Apostles dying for their Testimony, there is this material Difference, that *Criminals* deny the Truth, in hopes of saving their Lives, the Apostles willingly parted with their Lives, rather than deny the Truth. Instances again we allow, there are many of such, as have Suffered for Errors, as well as for Truths, as have given up their Lives, in a stubborn Defence of *Doctrines*, which others as heartily have abhorrd. But *Doctrines* and *Facts* are not the *same* : In *Doctrines* and matters of Opinion, Men mistake perpetually : * but the Apostles Testimony of Christ’s Resurrection, is a Testimony concerning a *Fact*, whereof they declar’d themselves *Eye-witnesses* ; and it is more, than all the Records of Time can do, to shew us one single Man, much less a large Number of sober and serious Men, all cheerfully undergoing the most violent Deaths, rather than recant what they knew to be a direct Falshood.

The Truth is, he who can believe, The absurdity of supposing the Apostles guilty of an Imposition. that, without any kind of human Means, or divine Assistance, the Apostles cou’d impose upon all Mankind, in an Affair of the highest Importance to them ; that

so notorious an Imposture should vanquish and triumph over Truth, in spite of all the Opposition, which Heaven, and Earth could make against it; that Persons, otherwise strictly *blameless* in their Lives, and rigidly Vertuous, should so zealously labour to maintain a *Lye*, as to expose themselves to the Fury of Men, and the Flames of Hell for the sake of it; that they should sacrifice their Lives and Souls to the Ghost of a Crucify'd and reputed Malefactor; and, lastly, that God, who is *Truth itself*, should send upon them his blessed Spirit, and, by enabling them to perform miraculous Works, give Sanction and Testimony to Error and Falshood: He, I say, who denies the Resurrection of Christ, and can believe such *Absurdities* as these, refuses his Assent to the best attested Fact in the World, and yields it to another, which, of all *Legends*, is the most unlikely and improbable.

∴ He must believe, that a Company of rude *Mechanicks*, without any Skill or Experience, without any Learning or Discipline, without any Arts of pleasing, or recommending themselves, were able to put a Deception upon all Mankind, and lay their Plot so very deep, that
 none

none of all the penetrating and inquisitive Heads in the World, for a Succession of so many Centuries, and after the deepest Researches and Examinations, should find it possible to discover the least Fault or Flaw in the whole Contrivance. He must believe, that the chief Managers of this Imposture, after having had Reason enough, in the *Treachery* of one, and the *Cowardice* of another of their Company, to suspect one another, did nevertheless, not only combine together themselves, but took into their Confederacy a large Party of Men, to the Number of five Hundred and upwards, and yet, for all this, the Confederacy was so kept, that neither Promises nor Threats, neither the Prevalence of Truth, nor Force of Conscience, nor Terrors of Death, ever prevail'd with one of them to turn *Informer*, and discover the Cheat. He must believe, that these Men, cunning and confederate as they were, had nevertheless divested themselves of all the Principles of Self-love and Tenderness, of Care and Regard to their own Preservation; that they despis'd all the Comforts and Enjoyments of Life; that they ventur'd upon Poverty and Misery, upon Shame
and

and Obloquy, upon Persecution and Torments, upon Death and Damnation itself, and all for nothing, for no End or Purpose, that can be imagin'd, or thought on, except to support an abominable Lye. He must believe, that these Cheats and Impostors, as vile and wicked, as silly and senseless, as they were, did, nevertheless, furnish Mankind with the most exact *System* of Morality, that ever was, and taught such *Rules* of living, as were never to be expected from all the Schools of *Philosophy*; that they, whose purpose it was to abuse the World, laid the surest Foundations of Peace and Happiness; they, who were notorious *Hypocrites*, took indefatigable Pains to make other Men *upright*; and that they, who themselves believ'd nothing of a God, did impart the most rational and becoming Notions of him, and by no other Principles, than those of *Atheism* and *Irreligion*, kindled in the Hearts of Men an earnest desire to serve and obey, to worship and adore him: But these are Absurdities too gross to be swallow'd; and yet every one, who disbelieves the *Veracity* of the Apostles, asserting our Lord's Resurrection, must, in consequence, believe all this.

And

And now to recapitulate what has ^{A Recapitulation of} been said on this great Argument. Since, ^{the who's} upon the Loss of the ancient Antichristian Books (which in all probability would not have avail'd us much) we are now reduc'd, in our Enquiries into the Reality of *Christ's* Resurrection, to the sole Account of the *Evangelists*: Since, according to the Relation of these *Evangelists*, the several Circumstances of the Sepulchre, where his Body was laid, and the great Care and Precaution, which the *Jewish* Rulers had taken about it, did effectually secure the Body from the Danger of being carried off, either by Fraud or Violence, had the Disciples been minded so to do: Since, from the whole Behaviour of these Disciples it appears, that they were too faint-hearted to attempt such an Enterprize; or, if attempting it, unlikely to succeed; or, if succeeding, in no probability to make any Advantage by it: Since, after the Resurrection, the *Sepulchre* was left in such condition, as clears the Disciples from the Imputation of any such Robbery, which their bitterest Enemies never once alledg'd against them, even when they had the fairest Call and Opportunity to introduce the Accusation: Since our blessed Lord, as soon as he ^{Answer} had

had fulfill'd the Time of his Interment, may well be suppos'd desirous of hastening his Return to his disconsolate Disciples, but was under no Concern to do the same to the *Chief Priests* and *Rulers*; in whom this exhibition of himself would have wrought no Conviction, and might probably have been an obstruction to the Progress of his Gospel: Since after his Resurrection, he appear'd so frequently to such a Number of his Disciples, and convers'd so familiarly with them, that they could not possibly be mistaken in the Truth and Reality of his Person: Since they, in their Testimony of *this*, could have no Bribe upon their Affections, nor any Temptation of Temporal Advantage to pervert them; but, on the contrary, a sure Prospect of the bitterest Persecutions, which they, notwithstanding, underwent with great Chearfulness, and seal'd, at length, the Truth of their Testimony with their Blood, which no Impostor was ever known to do: And, lastly, since in confirmation of the Truth of their Testimony, God was pleas'd to accompany them with Signs and mighty Wonders, the Power of working Miracles, and the Gifts of his blessed Spirit; 'tis plain, that, in the whole Transaction, the Witnesses

nesses of our Saviour's Resurrection can be liable to no suspicion. They could have no hand in stealing away their Master's Body : They could have no room to be deceiv'd themselves, in what they so frequently saw and felt ; nor could they have any Provocation to deceive others, in an Affair, where they were sure to get nothing, but Danger and Distress : Consequently, we have all the assurance, which any *matter of Fact*, at this distance of Time, is capable of, That the History of our Saviour's Life and Actions, his Doctrine and Miracles, and especially this great and momentous One, his *Resurrection from the Dead*, as related by the *Evangelists*, is *literally true* ; and that all the *Absurdities* and *Incredibilities*, which some pretend to espy in it, are nothing, can be nothing, but the pure Fruits of a Mind deeply tinctur'd with the *Gall of Bitterness and Infidelity*.





T H E
C O N C L U S I O N .

Which
takes no-
tice of
Mr. Wool-
ston's



Pride,

HUS we have done with what Mr. *Woolston* calls the *rational* and *argumentative* Part of his *Discourses*: And, to give the Reader a fuller Notion of the Man, and of *that Spirit, which works in the Children of Disobedience*, I had made an *Extract* of (what I have hitherto labour'd to conceal) the weak and wicked, the profane and blasphemous Passages of his Book. I had made some Remarks upon his *Pride* and *Arrogance*; when he assumes to himself the sole^a *Honour and Happiness* of being acquainted with the *Fathers, which are above the Reach*, as he tells us, of *other Men's Capacities*; and boasts not a little that his^b *Cause is impregnable, and his Arguments*

^a Vid. Disc. 1. p. 5, 6. ^b Ibid. 2. p. 2.

ments and Authorities, in defence of it, irrefragable: Upon his Ignorance and ridiculous Criticisms, when he turns a ^{Ignorance,} ^{Table,} ^c Table into a Pulpit, and makes buying and Preaching the same thing: Upon his Falshood and Insincerity, in ^d his frequent Citations of Spurious Fathers, and ^{ty,} Falsifications of those that are Genuine, notwithstanding ^c his Professions of the greatest Veneration for them: and upon his low and unmannerly Wit, when he puts off his ^f Bulls and Blunders for ^{Low wit,} (what they really are) dull and insipid; and thinks it decent enough to compare ^s one Reverend Prelate to a Spider, and another to ^h the Dog in the Fable, that let go the Substance to catch at the Shadow.

I had muster'd up some of his wild ^{with No-} ^{tions,} *Notions and unaccountable Raveries,* where he makes the Gospel (which every body else looks upon as a plain Narrative of Matters of Fact) ⁱ a System of mystical Philosophy and Theology; makes Christ ^k the most absolute Perfection of a Cabalist, a Mystick, a Parabolist, and an Ænigmatist; and the Evangelical Story ^l of Bishop Gibson's Jesus, the Carnal Je-

U sus,

^c Vid. Disc. 1. p. 30, 31. ^d Vid. Bp. Smallbrook's Preface, p. 12. ^e Disc. 1. p. 6. ^f Ibid. 1. p. 31. ^g Ibid. 5. p. 6. of the Dedicat. ^h Ibid. p. 62. ⁱ Ibid. 1. p. 60. ^k Ibid. 3. p. 65. ^l Ibid. 6. p. 53, &c.

deserve the *Church Revenues*; and of his Defiance and bold Defamations of those of the *superior*, whom he threatens ^{And Superior,} ^y to insult from the *Press*; ^z to tear with such familiar Language, as was never given to any of their Order, and of whose Sincerity and Conduct he gives us this Character, *viz.* That ^a they would renounce Christianity, but for the *Temporal Advantages* they enjoy from it, and are like ^b an high-mettl'd blind Horse, which, if not rid by the *Civil Government*, would be for oppressing and trampling upon all, that stood in their Way.

I had made a Collection of some of his many *Invectives* against the *Evangelists*, whom he represents, either as ^{his Invectives against the Evangelists.} blundering Egregiously, or putting the Banter upon us, to try how far their absurd Tales would pass upon the World; as ^d outstretching (as he calls it) one another in the praise of their Master, and relating such Things of him, ^e as, out of the Romance never had any Being; of some of his *Defamations* of the Gospels, which ^{The Gospel.} he reckons ^f not wrote with near so much Judgment as a *Quack's Bill*; containing Things ^g so blindly, lamely, and imper-

U 2

fectly

^y Dif. 3. p. 6.
p. 6. in the Ded.
p. 46.

^z Ibid. 1. p. 69.
^b Ibid. 6. p. 65.

^a Ibid. 2.
^c Ibid. 3.

^d Ibid. 5. p. 11.
^e Ibid. 5. p. 17.

^f Ibid. 2. p. 13.

^g Ibid. 2. p. 5.

fectly told, that, upon Examination, they dwindle into nothing; ^h the most absurd nonsensical and unphilosophical Stuff, and, in many Places, ⁱ the most arrant Quixotism, that can be devis'd or palm'd upon the Understandings of Mankind; and of some of his Degradations of Christianity

And Christianity it self;

it self, which he every where exposes as a mean and abject Dispensation, and in one Place expresses himself to the full. ^k “*The Application of the Word REASONABLE, says he, to the Christian Religion, is highly impertinent. Christianity, as it is now understood (he means in its plain and literal Sense) is the most unreasonable and absurd Story, that was ever told*”: Nay, according to the modern Systems of Theology, Mahometism is the more reasonable Religion than the Christian, and ^l the Alcoran not incumber'd with Contradictions and Inconsistencies, as are the Gospels.

His Blasphemies

I had taken, lastly, some Account of his *Blasphemies* against Christ, whom, either directly, or by way of Insinuation, he is not afraid, sometimes to call a ^m *Jugler*, a ⁿ *Punch-maker*, a *Fuddle-Cap*, one of the ^o *meereft Ideots and Block-heads, that ever open'd Mouth, who made himself*

Against Christ,

^h Dif. 3. p. 25. ⁱ Ibid. 1. p. 59. ^k Ibid. 3. p. 66. ^l Ibid. 6. p. 65. ^m Ibid. 5. p. 52. ⁿ Ibid. 4. p. 33. ^o Ibid. 3. p. 7.

himself a laughing-stock, ^p and deserv'd the House of Correction; sometimes a Chance Doctor, ^q whose Eye-salve, for Absurdity, Whim, and Incongruity, was never equal'd; or a ^r strolling Fortune-teller, ^t whose Genuine Disciples, our Gypsies may account themselves, as endu'd with the same Gifts, and exercising no worse Arts; and, at other times, a ^u pretended Author of Religion, whose Miracles are, ^v some of them absurd Tales, ^{Against his Miracles,} others foolish Facts, others unjust Actions, others ludicrous Pranks, and others magical Enchantments; ^w a Conjuror, a Sorcerer, in short, rather than the Messiah, and Prophet of the most high God; and ^x so grand a Deceiver, Impostor, and Malefactor, that no punishment was too great for him.

Can any thing be more gross, more daring Blasphemy than this? And yet, as if he thought it not enough *so*, we find him, after all, invoking the Sacred Name of Christ in this *satirical* manner; ^{And the insolent manner of his doing all this.} ^y *Bless'd Jesu! that such a Student, as I am, in the Revelations of St. John, should be charg'd with Blasphemy!* and either beginning or concluding most of his profane Discourses with some such *Ironical*

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^p Disc. 3. p. 7. ^q Ibid. 4. p. 15. ^r Ibid. 2. p. 51. ^t Ibid. 2. p. 52. ^u Ibid. 5. p. 23. ^v Ibid. 4. p. 29. ^w Ibid. 1. p. 15. ^x Ibid. 6. p. 5. ^y Ibid. 6. p. 3.

Professions as this ; ^z *The Service of Infidelity has no place in my Breast, but the honour of the holy Jesus ;* * *speaking Lyes in Hypocrisy* (as the Apostle words it) and *having his Conscience fear'd with a hot Iron.*

These *Materials*, I say, I had collected, in order to shew this Enemy of *Christianity*, this Blasphemer of the holy Name of *Jesus* (for now, I think, I may be allow'd to call him so) to open view, and in his *proper Colours*: but, as I was drawing the Work, I found it grow into such a gloomy *Night-piece*, as was indeed too horrid, and too hidious, for any Christian Eye to look upon, and therefore I expung'd it. God Almighty grant, that Mr. *Woolston* may review these his Discourses, with the same impartial Consideration, that I have done; and reflect with himself (before it be too late) that however the *Cause of Infidelity* may make him *popular*, 'tis the wrongest way in the World to make him *happy*; that if it provokes the Justice of the *civil Magistrate*, it will certainly raise the Indignation of God likewise, and draw upon him a Sentence, much more

^z Disc. 1. p. 5, 6, 69. Disc. 2. p. 3, &c. * 1 Tim. iv. 2.

more severe and intolerable, than what he now labours under. For, ^a *if he, that despised Moses's Law, died without Mercy, of how much sorer Punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy,* ^b *who hath crucified to himself the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open Shame? when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, and in a flaming fire, to take Vengeance on them, that know not God, and are so far from obeying his Gospel, that they make it the Subject of their impious Scorn and Ridicule; who shall be punish'd with everlasting Destruction, from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power, in that Day, when he shall come to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admir'd in all them that believe.*

^a Heb. x. 28, 29. ^b Ibid. vi. 6. ^c 2 Th. ii. 7. &c.

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