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James W. Woodward's

A DISSERTATION ON MIRACLES:

CONTAINING

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRINCIPLES ADVANCED BY DAVID HUME, ESQ.;

IN AN ESSAY ON MIRACLES.

BY GEORGE CAMPBELL, D.D.

Principal of the Mariſchal College, and one of the Miniſters, of ABERDEEN.

The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witneſs of me. JOHN X. 25.

The THIRD EDITION, with Additions and Corrections.

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M DCC XC.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN EARL OF BUTE,

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY's PRINCIPAL SECRETARIES OF STATE,

CHANCELLOR OF THE MARISCHAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN,

THE FOLLOWING DISSERTATION,

IN DEFENCE OF A RELIGION, OF WHICH HE IS AN EMINENT PATRON AND EXAMPLE,

IS,

WITH THE UTMOST RESPECT AND GRATITUDE,

INSCRIBED BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S

MOST DUTIFUL,

MOST DEVOTED, AND

MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

GEORGE CAMPBELL.

March 2. 1762.

ADVERTISEMENT.

'TIS not the only, nor even the chief, design of these sheets, to refute the reasoning and objections of Mr Hume, with regard to miracles: the chief design of them is, to set the principal argument for christianity in its proper light. On a subject that hath been so often treated, 'tis impossible to avoid saying many things which have been said before. It may, however, with reason be affirmed, that there still remains, on this subject, great scope for new observations. Besides, it ought to be remembered, that the evidence of any complex argument depends very much on the order into which the material circumstances are digested, and the manner in which they are displayed.

The Essay on Miracles *deserves to be considered, as one of the most dangerous attacks that have been made on our religion. The danger results not solely from the merit of* THE PIECE*; it results much more from that of* THE AUTHOR. The piece *itself, like every other work of Mr Hume, is ingenious;*

genious; but its merit is more of the oratorial kind than of the philoſophical. The merit of the author, *I acknowledge is great. The many uſeful volumes he hath publiſhed of* hiſtory, *as well as on* criticiſm, politics, *and* trade, *have juſtly procured him, with all perſons of taſte and diſcernment, the higheſt reputation as a writer. What pity is it, that this reputation ſhould have been ſullied by attempts to undermine the foundations both of* natural religion *and of* revealed!

For my own part, I think it a piece of juſtice in me, to acknowledge the obligations I owe the author, before I enter on the propoſed examination. I have not only been much entertained and inſtructed by his works; but, if I am poſſeſſed of any talent in abſtract reaſoning, I am not a little indebted to what he hath written on human nature, *for the improvement of that talent. If therefore, in this tract, I have refuted Mr Hume's* Eſſay, *the greater ſhare of the merit is perhaps to be aſcribed to Mr Hume himſelf. The compliment which the Ruſſian monarch, after the famous battle of Poltowa, paid the Swediſh generals, when he*

gave

gave them the honourable appellation of his masters in the art of war, *I may, with great sincerity, pay my acute and ingenious adversary.*

I shall add a few things concerning the occasion and form of the following dissertation.

Some of the principal topics here discussed, were more briefly treated in a sermon *preached before the* Synod *of* ABERDEEN, *and are now made public at their desire. To the end that an argument of so great importance might be more fully and freely canvased than it could have been, with propriety, in a sermon, it was judged necessary to new-model the discourse, and to give it that form in which it now appears.*

The edition *of Mr Hume's essays to which I always refer in this work, is that printed at* LONDON, *in duodecimo,* 1750, *intitled,* Philosophical essays concerning human understanding. *I have, since finishing this tract, seen a later* edition, *in which there are a few* variations. *None of them appeared to me so material, as to give ground for altering the* quotations *and* references *here used. There is indeed one* alteration, *which*

which candour required that I ſhould mention: I have accordingly mentioned it in a note.*

The arguments *of the eſſayiſt I have endeavoured to refute by* argument. *Mere* declamation *I know no way of refuting, but by* analyſing *it; nor do I conceive how* inconſiſtencies *can be anſwered otherwiſe than by* expoſing *them. In ſuch* analyſis *and* expoſition, *which, I own, I have attempted without ceremony or reſerve, an air of* ridicule *is unavoidable: but this* ridicule, *I am well aware, if founded in* miſrepreſentation, *will at laſt rebound upon* myſelf. *It is poſſible, that, in ſome things I have* miſtaken *the author's meaning; I am conſcious, that I have not, in any thing, deſignedly* miſrepreſented *it.*

* page 126,

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INTRODUCTION.

"CHRISTIANITY," it hath been ſaid, "is not founded in argument." If it were only meant by theſe words, that the religion of Jeſus could not, by the ſingle aid of reaſoning, produce its full effect upon the heart; every true Chriſtian would chearfully ſubſcribe to them. No arguments unaccompanied by the influences of the Holy Spirit; can convert the ſoul from ſin to God; though even to ſuch converſion, arguments are, by the agency of the Spirit, render'd ſubſervient. Again, if we were to underſtand by this aphoriſm, that the principles of our religion could never have been diſcovered, by the natural and unaſſiſted faculties of man; this poſition, I preſume, would be as little diſputed as the former. But if, on the contrary, under the cover of an ambiguous expreſſion, it is intended to inſinuate, that thoſe principles, from their very nature, can admit no rational evidence of their truth, (and this, by the way, is the only meaning which can avail our antagoniſts) the goſpel, as well as common ſenſe, loudly reclaims againſt it.

The Lord JESUS CHRIST, the author of our religion, often argued, both with his diſciples and with his adverſaries, as with reaſonable men, on the principles of reaſon, without this faculty, he well knew, they could not be ſuſceptible either of religion or of law. He argued from prophecy, and the conformity of the event to the prediction*. He

A argued

* Luke xxiv. 25. &c. John v. 39, & 46.

argued from the teſtimony of John the Baptiſt, who was generally acknowledged to be a prophet †. He argued from the miracles which he himſelf performed ‡, as uncontrovertible evidences, that GOD Almighty operated by him, and had ſent him. He expoſtulates with his enemies, that they did not uſe their reaſon on this ſubject. *Why*, ſays he, *even of yourſelves, judge ye not what is right* ‖? In like manner we are called upon by the apoſtles of our Lord, to act the part of *wiſe men* and *judge* impartially of *what* they *ſay***. Thoſe who do ſo, are highly commended, for the candour and prudence they diſcover, in an affair of ſo great conſequence ††. We are even commanded, to be *always ready to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh* us *a reaſon of our hope* ‡‡; *in meekneſs to inſtruct them that oppoſe themſelves* ‖‖; *and earneſtly* to *contend for the faith which was once delivered to the ſaints**. God has neither in natural nor reveal'd religion, *left himſelf without a witneſs*; but has in both given moral and external evidence, ſufficient to convince the impartial, to ſilence the gainſayer, and to render inexcuſable the atheiſt and the unbeliever. This evidence it is our duty to attend to, and candidly to examine. We muſt *prove all things*, as we are expreſsly enjoin'd in holy writ, if we would ever hope to *hold faſt that which is* good †.

THUS much I thought proper to premiſe, not to ſerve as an apology for the deſign of this tract, (the deſign

† John v. 32, & 33. ‡ John v. 36. x. 25, 37, 38. xiv. 10, 11. ‖ Luke xii. 57. ** 1 Cor. x. 15. †† Acts xvii. 11. ‡‡ 1 Peter iii. 15. ‖‖ 2 Tim. ii. 25. * Jude 3. † 1 Theſſ. v. 21.

deſign ſurely needs no apology, whatever the world may judge of the execution) but to expoſe the ſhallowneſs of that pretext, under which the advocates for infidelity in this age commonly take ſhelter. Whilſt therefore we enforce an argument, which, in ſupport of our religion, was ſo frequently inſiſted on by its divine founder, we will not dread the reproachful titles of *dangerous friends*, or *diſguiſed enemies* of revelation. Such are the titles, which the writer, whoſe ſentiments we propoſe in theſe papers to canvaſs, hath beſtow'd on his antagoniſts ‡; not, I believe, through malice againſt them, but as a ſort of excuſe for himſelf, or at leaſt a handle for introducing a very ſtrange and unmeaning compliment to the religion of his country, after a very bold attempt to undermine it. We will however do him the juſtice to own, that he hath put it out of our power to retort the charge. No intelligent perſon, who hath carefully peruſed the *Eſſay on Miracles*, will impute to the author either of thoſe ignominious characters.

My *primary* intention in undertaking an anſwer to the aforeſaid eſſay, hath invariably been, to contribute all in my power to the defence of a *religion*, which I eſteem the greateſt bleſſing conferred by Heaven on the ſons of men. It is at the ſame time a *ſecondary* motive of conſiderable weight, to vindicate *philoſophy*, at leaſt that moſt important branch of it which aſcertains the rules of reaſoning, from thoſe abſurd conſequences, which this author's theory naturally leads us to. The theme is arduous. The adverſary is both ſubtle and powerful. With ſuch an adverſary, I ſhould

‡ p. 204.

ſhould on very unequal terms enter the liſts, had I not the advantage of being on the ſide of truth. And an eminent advantage this doubtleſs is. It requires but moderate abilities to ſpeak in defence of a good cauſe. A good cauſe demands but a diſtinct expoſition and a fair hearing; and we may ſay with great propriety, it will ſpeak for itſelf. But to adorn error with the ſemblance of truth, and *make the worſe appear the better reaſon*, requires all the arts of ingenuity and invention; arts in which few or none have been more expert than Mr Hume. It is much to be regretted, that on ſome occaſions he hath ſo ill applied them.

A DIS-

A DISSERTATION ON MIRACLES.

PART I.

Miracles are capable of proof from teſtimony, and religious miracles are not leſs capable of this evidence than others.

SECTION I.

Mr Hume's favourite argument is founded on a falſe hypotheſis.

IT is not the aim of this author to evince, that miracles, if admitted to be true, would not be a ſufficient evidence of a divine miſſion. His deſign is ſolely to prove, that miracles which have not been the objects of our own ſenſes, at leaſt ſuch as are ſaid to have been performed in atteſtation of any religious ſyſtem, cannot reaſonably be admitted by us, or believ'd on the teſtimony of others. "A miracle," ſays he, "ſupported by any human teſtimony, is

" more properly a ſubject of deriſion than of argu-
" ment *." Again, in the concluſion of his eſſay,
" Upon the whole, it appears, that no teſtimony,
" for *any kind* of miracle, can ever poſſibly amount
" to a probability, much leſs to a proof †." Here he concludes againſt all miracles. " *Any kind* of miracle" are his expreſs words. He ſeems however immediately ſenſible, that in aſſerting this, he hath gone too far; and therefore, in the end of the ſame paragraph, retracts part of what he had advanced in the beginning. " We may eſtabliſh it as a maxim
" that no human teſtimony can have ſuch force, as
" to prove a miracle, and make it a juſt foundation
" for any ſyſtem of religion." In the note on this paſſage, he has theſe words. " I beg the limitation
" here made, may be remarked, when I ſay, that a
" miracle can never be prov'd, ſo as to be the foun-
" dation of a ſyſtem of religion. For I own that
" otherwiſe there may poſſibly be miracles, or
" violations of the uſual courſe of nature, of ſuch a
" kind, of to admit of proof from human teſtimo-
" ny."

So much for that cardinal point, which the eſſayiſt labours ſo ſtrenuouſly to evince; and which, if true, will not only be ſubverſive of revelation, as received by us, on the teſtimony of the apoſtles, and prophets, and martyrs; but will directly lead to this general concluſion: ' That it is impoſſible for God Almigh-
' ty to give a revelation, attended with ſuch evidence
' that it can be reaſonably believed in after-ages,
' or even in the ſame age, by any perſon who hath not

* Page 194. † p. 202.

'not been an eye-witneſs of the miracles, by which 'it is ſupported.'

Now, by what wonderful proceſs of reaſoning is this ſtrange concluſion made out? Several topics have been employ'd for the purpoſe by this ſubtle diſputant. Among theſe there is one principal argument which he is at great pains to ſet off to the beſt advantage. Here indeed he claims a particular concern, having diſcovered it himſelf. His title to the honour of the diſcovery, 'tis not my buſineſs to controvert; I confine myſelf entirely to the conſideration of its importance. To this end I ſhall now lay before the reader, the unanſwerable argument, as he flatters himſelf it will be found; taking the freedom for brevity's ſake, to compendize the reaſoning, and to omit whatever is ſaid merely for illuſtration. To do otherwiſe would lay me under the neceſſity of tranſcribing the greater part of the eſſay.

'Experience,' ſays he, 'is our only guide in rea-'ſoning concerning matters of fact *. Experience 'is in ſome things variable, in ſome things uniform. 'A variable experience gives riſe only to probability; 'an uniform experience amounts to a proof †. Proba-'bility always ſuppoſes an oppoſition of experiments 'and obſervations, where the one ſide is found to o-'verbalance the other, and to produce a degree of 'evidence proportion'd to the ſuperiority. In 'ſuch caſes we muſt balance the oppoſite experi-'ments, and deduct the leſſer number from the 'greater, in order to know the exact force of the ſupe-'rior evidence ‡. Our belief or aſſurance of any fact 'from

* P. 174. † p. 175, 176. ‡ ibid. ‖ ibid.

'from the report of eye-witneſſes, is derived from 'no other principle than experience; that is, our 'obſervation of the veracity of human teſtimony, and 'of the uſual conformity of facts to the reports of 'witneſſes *. Now, if the fact atteſted partakes of 'the marvellous, if it is ſuch as has ſeldom fallen 'under our obſervation, here is a conteſt of two op-'poſite experiences, of which the one deſtroys the 'other, as far as its force goes, and the ſuperior can 'only operate on the mind by the force which remains. 'The very ſame principle of experience, which gives 'us a certain degree of aſſurance in the teſtimony 'of witneſſes, gives us alſo, in this caſe, another de-'gree of aſſurance, againſt the fact which they en-'deavour to eſtabliſh; from which contradiction, 'there neceſſarily ariſes a counterpoiſe, and mutual 'deſtruction of belief and authority †. Further, if 'the fact affirmed by the witneſſes, inſtead of being 'only marvellous, is really miraculous; if beſides 'the teſtimony conſider'd apart and in itſelf, amounts 'to an entire proof; in that caſe there is proof a-'gainſt proof, of which the ſtrongeſt muſt prevail, 'but ſtill with a diminution of its force, in propor-'tion to that of its antagoniſt. A miracle is a viola-'tion of the laws of nature; and as a firm and 'unalterable experience has eſtabliſhed theſe laws, 'the proof againſt a miracle from the very nature 'of the fact, is as entire, as any argument from ex-'perience can poſſibly be imagined ‡. And if ſo, 'tis an undeniable conſequence, that it cannot be 'ſurmounted by any proof whatever from teſtimony. 'A miracle, therefore, however atteſted, can never 'be

* P. 176. † p. 179. ‡ p. 180.

'be render'd credible, even in the loweſt degree.' This, in my apprehenſion, is the ſum of the argument on which my ingenious opponent reſts the ſtrength of his cauſe.

In anſwer to this I propoſe firſt to prove, that the whole is built upon a falſe hypotheſis. That the evidence of teſtimony is derived ſolely from experience, which ſeems to be an axiom of this writer, is at leaſt not ſo inconteſtable a truth as he ſuppoſes it; that, on the contrary, teſtimony hath a natural and original influence on belief, antecedent to experience, will, I imagine, eaſily be evinced. For this purpoſe let it be remark'd, that the earlieſt aſſent, which is given to teſtimony by children, and which is previous to all experience, is in fact the moſt unlimited, that by a gradual experience of mankind, it is gradually contracted, and reduced to narrower bounds. To ſay, therefore, that our diffidence in teſtimony is the reſult of experience, is more philoſophical, becauſe more conſonant to truth, than to ſay that our faith in teſtimony has this foundation. Accordingly youth, which is unexperienced, is credulous; age, on the contrary, is diſtruſtful. Exactly the reverſe would be the caſe were this author's doctrine juſt.

Perhaps it will be ſaid, If experience is allowed to be the only meaſure of a logical or reaſonable faith in teſtimony, the queſtion, *Whether the influence of teſtimony on belief, be original or deriv'd?* if 'tis not merely verbal, is at leaſt of no importance in the preſent controverſy. But I maintain it is of the greateſt importance. The difference between us is by no means ſo inconſiderable, as to a careleſs view it may appear.

appear. According to his philoſophy, the preſumption is againſt the teſtimony or (which amounts to the ſame thing) there is not the ſmalleſt preſumption in its favour, till properly ſupported by experience. According to the explication given, there is the ſtrongeſt preſumption in favour of the teſtimony, till properly refuted by experience.

If it be objected by the author, that ſuch a faith in teſtimony as is prior to experience, muſt be unreaſonable and unphiloſophical, becauſe unaccountable; I ſhould reply, that there are, and muſt be, in human nature, ſome original grounds of belief, beyond which our reſearches cannot proceed, and of which therefore 'tis vain to attempt a rational account. I ſhould deſire the objector to give a reaſonable account of his faith in this principle, that *ſimilar cauſes always produce ſimilar effects*; or in this, that *the courſe of nature will be the ſame to-morrow, that it was yeſterday, and is to day*: principles, which he himſelf acknowledges, are neither intuitively evident, nor deduced from premiſes; and which nevertheleſs we are under a neceſſity of preſuppoſing, in all our reaſonings from experience*. I ſhould deſire him to give a reaſonable account of his faith in the cleareſt informations of his memory, which he will find it alike impoſſible either to doubt, or to explain. Indeed memory bears nearly the ſame relation to experience, that teſtimony does. Certain it is that the defects and miſrepreſentations of memory are often corrected by experience. Yet ſhould any perſon hence infer, that memory derives all its evidence from experience, he would fall into a manifeſt abſurdity. For, on

* Sceptical doubts. Part 2.

on the contrary, experience derives its origin ſolely from memory, and is nothing elſe but the general maxims or concluſions, we have form'd, from the compariſon of particular facts remember'd. If we had not previouſly given an implicit faith to memory, we had never been able to acquire experience. When therefore we ſay that memory, which gives birth to experience, may nevertheleſs in ſome inſtances be corrected by experience, no more is imply'd, but that the inferences form'd from the moſt lively and perſpicuous reports of memory, ſometimes ſerve to rectify the miſtakes which ariſe from ſuch reports of this faculty, as are moſt languid and confus'd. Thus memory, in theſe inſtances, may be ſaid to correct itſelf. The caſe is often much the ſame with experience and teſtimony, as will appear more clearly in the ſecond ſection, where I ſhall conſider the ambiguity of the word *experience*, as us'd by this author.

But how, ſays Mr Hume, is teſtimony then to be refuted? Principally in one or other of theſe two ways: *firſt*, and moſt directly, by contradictory teſtimony; that is, when an equal or greater number of witneſſes, equally or more credible, atteſt the contrary: *ſecondly*, by ſuch evidence either of the incapacity or baſeneſs of the witneſſes, as is ſufficient to diſcredit them. What, rejoins my antagoniſt, cannot then teſtimony be confuted by the extraordinary nature of the fact atteſted? Has this conſideration no weight at all? That this conſideration hath no weight at all, 'twas never my intention to maintain; that by itſelf it can very rarely, if ever, amount to a refutation againſt ample and unexceptionable

ble teſtimony, I hope to make extremely plain. Who hath ever denied, that the uncommonneſs of an event related, is a preſumption againſt its reality; and that chiefly on account of the tendency, which, experience teacheth us, and this author hath obſerved, ſome people have to ſacrifice truth to the love of wonder*? The queſtion only is, How far does this preſumption extend? In the extent which Mr Hume hath aſſign'd it, he hath greatly exceeded the limits of nature, and conſequently of all juſt reaſoning.

In his opinion, "When the fact atteſted is ſuch "as has ſeldom fallen under our obſervation, there "is a conteſt of two oppoſite experiences, of which "the one deſtroys the other, as far as its force goes, "and the ſuperior can only operate on the mind, by "the force which remains†." There is a metaphyſical, I had almoſt ſaid, a magical *balance* and *arithmetic*, for the weighing and ſubtracting of evidence, to which he frequently recurs, and with which he ſeems to fancy he can perform wonders. I wiſh he had been a little more explicit in teaching us how theſe rare inventions muſt be us'd. When a writer of genius and elocution expreſſes himſelf in general terms, he will find it an eaſy matter, to give a plauſible appearance to things the moſt unintelligible in nature. Such ſometimes is this author's way of writing. In the inſtance before us he is particularly happy in his choic of metaphors. They are ſuch as are naturally adapted to prepoſſeſs a reader in his favour. What candid perſon can think of ſuſpecting the impartiality of an inquirer, who is for *weighing* in the *ſcales* of reaſon, all the arguments on either ſide? Who

* p. 184. † p. 179.

Who can ſuſpect his exactneſs who determines every thing by a *numerical computation?* Hence it is, that to a ſuperficial view his reaſoning appears ſcarce inferior to demonſtration; but, when narrowly canvaſſed, 'tis impracticable to find an application, of which, in a conſiſtency with good ſenſe, it is capable.

In confirmation of the remark juſt now made, let us try how his manner of arguing on this point can be applied to a particular inſtance. For this purpoſe I make the following ſuppoſition. I have lived for ſome years near a ferry. It conſiſts with my knowledge that the paſſage-boat has a thouſand times croſſed the river, and as many times returned ſafe. An unknown man, whom I have juſt now met, tells me in a ſerious manner, that it is loſt; and affirms, that he himſelf ſtanding on the bank, was a ſpectator of the ſcene; that he ſaw the paſſengers carried down the ſtream, and the boat overwhelmed. No perſon, who is influenced in his judgment of things, not by philoſophical ſubtilties, but by common ſenſe, a much ſurer guide, will heſitate to declare, that in ſuch a teſtimony I have probable evidence of the fact aſſerted. But if leaving common ſenſe, I ſhall recur to metaphyſics, and ſubmit to be tutored in my way of judging by the eſſayiſt, he will remind me, "that there is here a conteſt of two oppoſite experiences, of which the one deſtroys the other, as "far as its force goes, and the ſuperior can only "operate on the mind by the force which remains." I am warned, that "the very ſame principle of "experience, which gives me a certain degree of "aſſurance in the teſtimony of the witneſs gives me "alſo, in this caſe, another degree of aſſurance, againſt

" the fact, which he endeavours to eſtabliſh, from " which contradiction there ariſes a counterpoiſe and " mutual deſtruction of belief and authority *."— Well, I would know the truth, if poſſible; and that I may conclude fairly and philoſophically, how muſt I balance theſe oppoſite experiences, as you are pleaſed to term them? Muſt I ſet the thouſand, or rather the two thouſand inſtances of the one ſide, againſt the ſingle inſtance of the other? In that caſe, 'tis eaſy to ſee, I have nineteen hundred and ninety-nine degrees of evidence that my information is falſe. Or, is it neceſſary, in order to make it credible, that the ſingle inſtance have two thouſand times as much evidence, as any of the oppoſite inſtances, ſuppoſing them equal among themſelves; or ſuppoſing them unequal, as much as all the two thouſand put together, that there may be at leaſt an equilibrium? This is impoſſible. I had for ſome of thoſe inſtances, the evidence of ſenſe, which hardly any teſtimony can equal, much leſs exceed. Once more, muſt the evidence I have of the veracity of the witneſs, be a full equivalent to the two thouſand inſtances, which oppoſe the fact atteſted? By the ſuppoſition, I have no poſitive evidence for or againſt his veracity, he being a perſon whom I never ſaw before. Yet if none of theſe be the balancing, which the eſſay-writer means, I deſpair of being able to diſcover his meaning.

Is then ſo weak a proof from teſtimony incapable of being refuted? I am far from thinking ſo; tho' even ſo weak a proof could not be overturned by ſuch a contrary experience. How then may it be overturned

* p. 179.

overturned? *Firſt*, by contradictory teſtimony. Going homewards I meet another perſon, whom I know as little as I did the former; finding that he comes from the ferry, I aſk him cencerning the truth of the report. He affirms that the whole is a fiction; that he ſaw the boat, and all in it, come ſafe to land. This would do more to turn the ſcale, than fifty thouſand ſuch contrary inſtances, as were ſuppoſed. Yet this would not remove ſuſpicion. Indeed, if we were to conſider the matter abſtractly, one would think, that all ſuſpicion would be removed, that the two oppoſite teſtimonies would deſtroy each other, and leave the mind entirely under the influence of its former experience, in the ſame ſtate as if neither teſtimony had been given. But this is by no means conſonant to fact. When once teſtimonies are introduced, former experience is generally of no account in the reckoning; it is but like the duſt of the balance, which hath not any ſenſible effect upon the ſcales. The mind hangs in ſuſpence between the two contrary declarations, and conſiders it as one to one, or equal improbability, that the report is true, or that it is falſe. Afterwards a third, and a fourth, and a fifth, confirm the declaration of the ſecond. I am then quite at eaſe. Is this the only effectual way of confuting falſe teſtimony? No. I ſuppoſe *again*, that inſtead of meeting with any perſon who can inform me concerning the fact, I get from ſome, who are acquainted with the witneſs information concerning his character. They tell me, he is notorious for lying; and that his lies are commonly forged, not with a view to intereſt, but merely to gratify a malicious pleaſure, which the takes in alarming

ing ſtrangers. This, tho' not ſo direct a refutation as the former, will be ſufficient to diſcredit his report. In the former, where there is teſtimony contradicting teſtimony, the author's metapher of a balance may be uſed with propriety. The things weighed are homogeneal: and when contradictory evidences are preſented to the mind, tending to prove poſitions which cannot be both true, the mind muſt decide on the comparative ſtrength of the oppoſite evidences, before it yield to either.

But is this the caſe in the ſuppoſition firſt made? By no means. The two thouſand inſtances formerly known, and the ſingle inſtance atteſted, as they relate to different facts, tho' of a contrary nature, are not contradictory. There is no inconſiſtency in believing both. There is no inconſiſtency in receiving the laſt on weaker evidence, (if it be ſufficient evidence) not only than all the former together, but even than any of them ſingly. Will it be ſaid, that tho' the former inſtances are not themſelves contradictory to to the fact recently atteſted, they lead to a concluſion that is contradictory? I anſwer, 'Tis true, that the experienced frequency of the conjunction of any two events, leads the mind to infer a ſimilar conjunction in time to come. But let it at the ſame time be remarked, that no man conſiders this inference, as having equal evidence with any one of thoſe paſt events, on which it is founded, and for the belief of which we have had ſufficient teſtimony. Before then the method recommended by this author can turn to any account, it will be neceſſary for him to compute and determine with preciſion, how many hundreds, how

how many thouſands, I might ſay how many myriads of inſtances, will confer ſuch evidence on the concluſion founded on them, as will prove an equipoize for the teſtimony of one ocular witneſs, a man of probity, in a caſe of which he is allowed to be a competent judge.

There is in *arithmetic* a rule called REDUCTION, by which numbers of different denominations are brought to the ſame denomination. If this ingenious author ſhall invent a rule in *logic*, analogous to this, for reducing different claſſes of evidence to the ſame claſs, he will bleſs the world with a moſt important diſcovery. Then indeed he will have the honour to eſtabliſh an everlaſting peace in the republic of letters; then we ſhall have the happineſs to ſee controverſy of every kind, theological, hiſtorical, philoſophical, receive its mortal wound: for though, in every queſtion, we could not even then determine with certainty, on which ſide the truth lay, we could always determine (and that is the utmoſt the nature of the thing admits) with as much accuracy as geometry and algebra can afford, on which ſide the probability lay, and in what degree. But till this metaphyſical *reduction* is diſcovered, 'twill be impoſſible where the evidences are of different orders, to aſcertain by *ſubtraction* the ſuperior evidence. We could not but eſteem him a novice in arithmetic, who being aſked, whether ſeven pounds or eleven pence make the greater ſum, and what is the difference? ſhould, by attending ſolely to the numbers, and overlooking the value, conclude that eleven pence were the greater, and that it exceeded the other by four.

Muſt we not be equal novices in reaſoning, if we follow the ſame abſurd method? Muſt we not fall into as great blunders? Of as little ſignificancy do we find the balance. Is the value of things heterogeneal to be determined merely by weight? Shall ſilver be weighed againſt lead, or copper againſt iron? If in exchange for a piece of gold, I were offered ſome counters of baſer metal, is it not obvious, that till I know the comparative value of the metals, in vain ſhall I attempt to find what is equivalent, by the aſſiſtance either of ſcales or arithmetic?

'Tis an excellent obſervation, and much to the purpoſe, which the late learned and pious biſhop of Durham, in his admirable performance on the analogy of religion to the courſe of nature, hath made on this ſubject. "There is a very ſtrong preſumption," ſays he, "againſt the moſt ordinary facts, before the "proof of them, which yet is overcome by almoſt a-"ny proof. There is a preſumption of millions to "one againſt the ſtory of Cæſar, or of any other man. "For ſuppoſe a number of common facts, ſo and ſo "circumſtanced, of which one had no kind of proof, "ſhould happen to come into one's thoughts every one "would, without any poſſible doubt, conclude them "to be falſe. The like may be ſaid of a ſingle com-"mon fact *." What then, I may ſubjoin, ſhall be ſaid of an uncommon fact? And that an uncommon fact may be proved by teſtimony, hath not *yet* been made a queſtion. But in order to illuſtrate the obſervation above cited, ſuppoſe, firſt, one at random mentions, that at ſuch an hour, of ſuch a day, in ſuch a part

* Part 2. chap. 2. § 3.

part of the heavens, a comet *will* appear; the conclusion from experience would not be as millions, but as infinite to one, that the proposition is false. Instead of this, suppose you have the testimony of but one ocular witness, a man of integrity, and skilled in astronomy, that at such an hour, of such a day, in such a part of the heavens, a comet *did* appear; you will not hesitate one moment to give him credit. Yet all the presumption that was against the truth of the first supposition, tho' almost as strong evidence as experience can afford, was also against the truth of the second, before it was thus attested.

It is necessary to urge further, in support of this doctrine, that as the water in the canal cannot be made to rise higher than the fountain whence it flows; so it is impossible, that the evidence of testimony, if it proceeded from experience, should ever exceed that of experience, which is its source? Yet that it greatly exceeds this evidence, appears not only from what hath been observed already, but still more, from what I shall have occasion to observe in the sequel. One may safely affirm, that no conceivable conclusion from experience, can possess stronger evidence, than that which ascertains us of the regular succession and duration of day and night. The reason is, the instances on which this experience is founded, are both without number and without exception. Yet even this conclusion, the author admits, as we shall see in the third section, may, in a particular instance, not only be surmounted, but even annihilated by testimony.

Lastly, let it be observed, that the immediate conclusion from experience is always *general*, and runs thus: 'This is the ordinary course of nature.'

'Such

'Such an event may reaſonably be expected, where 'all the circumſtances are entirely ſimilar.' But when we deſcend to particulars, the concluſion becomes weaker, being more indirect. For though all the *known* circumſtances be ſimilar, all the *actual* circumſtances may not be ſimilar: nor is it poſſible in any caſe to be aſſured (our knowledge of things being at beſt but ſuperficial,) that all the *actual* circumſtances are *known* to us. On the contrary, the direct concluſion from teſtimony is always *particular*, and runs thus; 'This is the fact in ſuch an individual 'inſtance.' The remark now made will ſerve both to throw light on ſome of the preceding obſervations and to indicate the proper ſphere of each ſpecies of evidence. *Experience* of the paſt is the only rule whereby we can judge concerning the *future*: And as when the ſon is below the horizon, we muſt do the beſt we can by light of the moon, or even of the ſtars; ſo in all caſes where we have no teſtimony, we are under a neceſſity of recurring to experience, and of balancing or numbering contrary obſervations *. But the evidence reſulting

* Where-ever ſuch balancing or numbering can take place, the oppoſite evidences muſt be entirely ſimilar. It will rarely aſſiſt us in judging of facts ſupported by teſtimony; for even where contradictory teſtimonies come to be conſidered, you will hardly find that the characters of the witneſſes on the oppoſite ſides are ſo preciſely equal, as that an arithmetical operation will evolve the credibility. In matters of pure experience it hath often place. Hence the computations that have been made of the value of annuities, inſurances, and ſeveral other commercial articles. In calculations concerning chances, the degree of probability may be determined with mathematical exactneſs. I ſhall here take the liberty, tho' the matter be not eſſential to the deſign of this tract, to correct an overſight in the eſſayiſt, who always ſuppoſes, that where contrary evidences muſt be balanced, the probability lies in

reſulting hence, even in the cleareſt caſes, is acknowledged to be ſo weak, compared with that which reſults from teſtimony, that the ſtrongeſt conviction built merely on the former, may be overturned by the ſlighteſt proof exhibited by the latter. Accordingly the future hath in all ages and nations, been denominated the province of conjecture and uncertainty.

FROM what hath been ſaid, the attentive reader will eaſily diſcover, that the author's argument againſt *miracles*, hath not the leaſt affinity to the argument uſed by Dr Tillotſon againſt *tranſubſtantiation*, with which Mr Hume hath introduced his ſubject. Let us hear the argument, as it is related in the Eſſay, from the writings of the Archbiſhop. " 'Tis acknowledged " on all hands, ſays that learned prelate, that the au- " thority either of the ſcripture or of tradition, is " founded merely on the teſtimony of the apoſtles, " who were eye-witneſſes to thoſe miracles of our " Saviour,

in the remainder or ſurplus, when the leſs number is ſubtracted from the greater. The probability doth not conſiſt in the ſurplus, but in the ratio, or geometrical proportion, which the numbers on the oppoſite ſides bear to each other. I explain myſelf thus. In favour of one ſuppoſed event, there are 100 ſimilar inſtances, againſt it 50. In another caſe under conſideration, the favourable inſtances are 60, and only 10 unfavourable. Though the difference, or arithmetical proportion, which is 50, be the ſame in both caſes, the probability is by no means equal, as the author's way of reaſoning implies. The probability of the firſt event is as 100 to 50, or 2 to 1. The probability of the ſecond is as 60 to 10, or 6 to 1. Conſequently on comparing the different examples, tho' both be probable, the ſecond is thrice as probable as the firſt.

" Saviour, by which he proved his divine miſſion. " Our evidence then for the truth of the Chriſtian " religion, is leſs than the evidence for the truth of " our ſenſes; becauſe even in the firſt authors of our " religion, it was no greater; and 'tis evident, it muſt " diminiſh in paſſing from them to their diſciples; " nor can any one be ſo certain of the truth of their " teſtimony, as of the immediate objects of his ſenſes. " But a weaker evidence can never deſtroy a ſtronger; " and therefore, were the doctrine of the real pre- " ſence ever ſo clearely revealed in ſcripture, 'twere " directly contrary to the rules of juſt reaſoning to " give our aſſent to it. It contradicts ſenſe, tho' both " the ſcripture and tradition, on which it is ſuppoſed " to be built, carry not ſuch evidence with them as " ſenſe, when they are conſidered merely as external " evidences, and are not brought home to every one's " breaſt, by the immediate operation of the Holy " Spirit.*" That the evidence of *teſtimony* is leſs than the evidence of *ſenſe*, is undeniable. *Senſe* is the ſource of that evidence, which is firſt transferred to the *memory* of the individual, as to a general reſervoir, and thence tranſmitted to others by the channel of *teſtimony*. That the original evidence can never gain any thing, but muſt loſe, by the tranſmiſſion, is beyond diſpute. What hath been rightly perceived, may be miſremembered; what is rightly remembered may, thro' incapacity, or thro' ill intention, be miſreported; and what is rightly reported may be miſunderſtood. In any of theſe four ways therefore, either

* p. 173, 174.

either by defect of memory, of elocution, or of veracity in the relater, or by misapprehension in the hearer, there is a chance, that the truth received by the information of the senses, may be misrepresented or mistaken; now every such chance occasions a real diminution of the evidence. That the sacramental elements are bread and wine, not flesh and blood, our sight and touch, and taste, and smell concur in testifying. If these senses are not to be credited, the apostles themselves could not have evidence of the mission of their master. For the greatest external evidence they had, or could have, of his mission, was that which their senses gave them, of the reality of his miracles. But whatever strength there is in this argument with regard to the apostles, the argument with regard to us, who, for those miracles, have only the evidence, not of our own senses, but of their testimony, is incomparably stronger. In their case, it is sense contradicting sense; in ours it is sense contradicting testimony. But what relation has this to the author's argument? None at all. Testimony, it is acknowledged, is a weaker evidence than sense. But it hath been already evinced, that its evidence for particular facts is infinitely stronger than that which the general conclusion from experience can afford us.--- Testimony holds directly of memory and sense. Whatever is duly attested must be remembered by the witness; whatever is duly remembered must once have been perceived. But nothing similar takes place with regard to experience, nor can testimony, with any appearance of meaning, be said to hold of it.

THUS

THUS I have ſhown, as I propoſed, that the author's reaſoning proceeds on a falſe hypotheſis. ———It ſuppoſeth teſtimony to derive its evidence ſolely from experience, which is falſe.————It ſuppoſeth by conſequence, that contrary obſervations have a weight in oppoſing teſtimony, which the firſt and moſt acknowledged principles of human reaſon, or, if you like the term better, common ſenſe, evidently ſhows that they have not.——It aſſigns a rule for diſcovering the ſuperiority of contrary evidences, which, in the latitude there given it, tends to miſlead the judgment, and which 'tis impoſſible, by any explication, to render of real uſe.

SECTION II.

Mr Hume charged with ſome fallacies in his way of managing the argument.

IN the eſſay there is frequent mention of the word *experience*, and much uſe made of it. 'Tis ſtrange that the author hath not favoured us with the definition of a term of ſo much moment to his argument. This defect I ſhall endeavour to ſupply; and the rather, as the word appears to be equivocal, and to be uſed by the eſſayiſt in two very different ſenſes. The firſt and moſt proper ſignification of the word, which, for diſtinction's ſake, I ſhall call *perſonal* experience, is that given in the preceding ſection. 'It is,' as was obſerved, 'founded in 'memory, and conſiſts ſolely of the general maxims

"or

'or concluſions, that each individual hath formed, 'from the compariſon of the particular facts he hath 'remembered.' In the other ſignification, in which the word is ſometimes taken, and which I ſhall diſtinguiſh by the term *derived*, it may be thus defined. 'It is founded in *teſtimony*, and conſiſts not 'only of all the experiences of others, which have 'thro' that channel been communicated to us, but 'of all the general maxims or concluſions we have 'formed, from the compariſon of particular facts at-'teſted.'

In propoſing his argument, the author would ſurely be underſtood to mean only *perſonal* experience; otherwiſe, his making teſtimony derive its light from an experience which derives its light from teſtimony, would be introducing what logicians term a *circle in cauſes*. It would exhibit the ſame things alternately, as cauſes and effects of each other. Yet nothing can be more limited, than the ſenſe which is conveyed under the term *experience*, in the firſt acceptation. The mereſt clown or peaſant derives incomparably more knowledge from teſtimony, and the communicated experience of others, than in the longeſt life he could have amaſſed out of the treaſure of his own memory. Nay, to ſuch a ſcanty portion the ſavage himſelf is not confined. If that therefore muſt be the rule, the only rule, by which every teſtimony is ultimately to be judged, our belief in matters of fact muſt have very narrow bounds. No teſtimony ought to have any weight with us, that doth not relate an event, ſimilar at leaſt to ſome one obſervation, which

we ourſelves have had acceſs to make. For example, that there are ſuch people on the earth as negroes, could not, on that hypotheſis, be rendered credible to one who had never ſeen a negro, not even by the moſt numerous and the moſt unexceptionable atteſtations. Againſt the admiſſion of ſuch teſtimony, however ſtrong, the whole force of the author's argument evidently operates. But that innumerable abſurdities would flow from this principle, I might eaſily evince, did I not think the taſk ſuperfluous.

The author himſelf is aware of the conſequences; and therefore, in whatever ſenſe he uſes the term *experience* in propoſing his argument; in proſecuting it, he with great dexterity ſhifts the ſenſe, and ere the reader is appriſed, inſinuates another. "'Tis a "miracle," ſays he, "that a dead man ſhould come "to life, becauſe that has never been obſerved in "any age or country. There muſt therefore be an "uniform experience againſt every miraculous event, "otherwiſe the event would not merit that appella-"tion *." Here the phraſe, *an uniform experience againſt an event*, in the latter clauſe, is implicitly defined in the former, not what has never been obſerved BY US, but (mark his words) *what has never been obſerved* IN ANY AGE OR COUNTRY.---Now, what has been obſerved, and what has not been obſerved, in all ages and countries, pray how can you, Sir, or I, or a man, come to the knowledge of? Only I ſuppoſe by teſtimony, oral or written. The perſonal experience of every individual is limited to but a part of one age, and commonly

* p 181.

monly to a narrow ſpot of one country. If there be any other way of being made acquainted with facts, 'tis to me, I own, an impenetrable ſecret; I have no apprehenſion of it. If there be not any, what ſhall we make of that cardinal point, on which his argument turns? 'Tis in plain language, 'Teſtimo-'ny is not intitled to the leaſt degree of faith, but 'as far as it is ſupported by ſuch an extenſive expe-'rience, as if we had not had a previous and inde-'pendent faith in teſtimony, we could never have 'acquired.'

How natural is the tranſition from one ſophiſm to another! You will ſoon be convinced of this, if you attend but a little to the ſtrain of the argument. "A miracle," ſays he, "is a violation of the laws "of nature; and as a firm and unalterable expe-"rience hath eſtabliſhed theſe laws, the proof againſt "a miracle is as entire, as any argument from ex-"perience can poſſibly be imagined *." Again, "As an uniform experience amounts to a proof, "there is here a direct and full proof, from the na-"ture of the fact, againſt the exiſtence of any mi-"racle †." I muſt once more aſk the author what is the preciſe meaning of the words *firm*, *unalterable*, *uniform?* An experience that admits no exception, is ſurely the only experience, which can with propriety be termed *uniform*, *firm*, *unalterable*. Now ſince, as was remarked above, the far greater part of this experience, which compriſeth every age and every country, muſt be derived to us from teſtimony; that the experience may be *firm*, *uniform*, *unalterable* there

* p. 180. † p. 181.

there must be no contrary testimony whatever. Yet by the author's own hypothesis, the miracles he would thus confute, are supported by testimony At the same time to give strength to his argument, he is under a necessity of supposing, that there is no exception from the testimonies against them. Thus he falls into that paralogism, which is called *begging the question*. What he gives with one hand, he takes with the other. He admits, in opening his design, what in his argument he implicitly denies.

But that this, if possible, may be still more manifest, let us attend a little to some expressions, which one would imagine he had inadvertently dropt. "So long," says he, "as the world endures, I pre-"sume, will the accounts of miracles and prodigies "be found in all profane history *." Why does he presume so? A man so much attached to experience, can hardly be suspected to have any other reason than, because such accounts have hitherto been found in all the histories, profane as well as sacred, of times past. But we need not recur to an inference to obtain this acknowledgment. It is often to be met with in the essay. In one place we learn, that the witnesses for miracles are an infinite number †; in another, that all religious records of whatever kind abound with them ‡. I leave it therefore to the author to explain, with what consistency he can assert, that the laws of nature are established by an uniform experience, (which experience is chiefly the result of testimony) and at the same time allow, that almost all human histories are full of the relations of miracles

* p. 174. † p. 190. ‡ p. 191.

miracles and prodigies, which are violations of thoſe laws. Here is, by his own confeſſion, teſtimony againſt teſtimony, and very ample on both ſides. How then can one ſide claim a firm, uniform, and unalterable ſupport from teſtimony?

It will be in vain to object, that the teſtimony in ſupport of the laws of nature, greatly exceeds the teſtimony for the violations of theſe laws; and that, if we are to be determined by the greater number of obſervations, we ſhall reject all miracles whatever. I aſk, Why are the teſtimonies much more numerous in the one caſe than in the other? The anſwer is obvious: Natural occurrences are much more frequent than ſuch as are preternatural. But are all the accounts we have of the peſtilence to be rejected as incredible, becauſe, in this country, we hear not ſo often of that diſeaſe, as of the fever? Or, becauſe the number of natural births is infinitely greater than that of monſters, ſhall the evidence of the former be regarded as a confutation of all that can be advanced in proof of the latter? Such an objector needs to be reminded of what was proved in the foregoing ſection; that the oppoſite teſtimonies relate to different facts, and are therefore not contradictory; that the concluſion founded on them, poſſeſſeth not the evidence of the facts on which it is founded, but only ſuch a preſumptive evidence, as may be ſurmounted by the ſlighteſt poſitive proof. A general concluſion from experience is in compariſon but preſumptive and indirect; ſufficient teſtimony for a particular fact is direct and poſitive evidence.

I SHALL remark one other fallacy in this author's reaſoning, before I conclude this ſection. "The In-" dian prince," ſays he, "who refuſed to believe the "firſt relations concerning the effects of froſt, rea-"ſoned juſtly; and it naturally required very ſtrong "teſtimony to engage his aſſent to facts, which "aroſe from a ſtate of nature, with which he was "unacquainted, and bore ſo little analogy to thoſe "events, of which he had had conſtant and uniform "experience. Tho' they were not contrary to his "experience, they were not conformable to it*." Here a diſtinction is artfully ſuggeſted, between what is *contrary* to experience, and what is *not conformable* to it. The one he allows may be proved by teſtimony, but not the other. A diſtinction, for which the author ſeems to have ſo great uſe, it will not be improper to examine.

If my reader happen to be but little acquainted with Mr Hume's writings, or even with the piece here examined, I muſt intreat him, ere he proceed any farther, to give the eſſay an attentive peruſal; and to take notice particularly, whether in one ſingle paſſage, he can find any other ſenſe given to the terms *contrary to experience*, but that which has *not* been *experienced*. Without this aid, I ſhould not be ſurpriſed, that I found it difficult to convince the judicious, that a man of ſo much acuteneſs, one ſo much a philoſopher as this author, ſhould, with ſuch formality, make a diſtinction, which not only the eſſay, but the whole tenour of his philoſophical writings, ſhows evidently to have no meaning. Is that

* p. 179.

that which is contrary to experience a ſynonymous phraſe for that which implies a contradiction? If this were the caſe, there would be no need to recur to experience for a refutation; it would refute itſelf. But 'tis equitable that the author himſelf be heard, who ought to be the beſt interpreter of his own words. "When the fact atteſted," ſays he, "is ſuch a one, as "has ſeldom fallen under our obſervation, here is a "conteſt of two oppoſite experiences*." In this paſſage, not the being *never* experienced, but even the being *ſeldom* experienced conſtitutes an *oppoſite* experience. I can conceive no way but one, that the author can evade the force of this quotation; and that is, by obtruding on us, ſome new diſtinction between an *oppoſite* and a *contrary* experience. In order to preclude ſuch an attempt, I ſhall once more recur to his own authority. "'Tis no miracle that a man in "ſeeming good health, ſhould die of a ſudden." Why? "Becauſe ſuch a kind of death, tho' more "unuſual than any other, hath yet been frequently "obſerved to happen. But 'tis a miracle that a "dead man ſhould come to life," Why? Not becauſe of any inconſiſtency in the thing. That a body ſhould be this hour inanimate, and the next animated, is no more inconſiſtent, than the reverſe that it ſhould be this hour animated, and the next inanimate; though the one be common, and not the other. But the author himſelf anſwers the queſtion: "Becauſe that has never been obſerved in any age or "country †." All the contrariety then that there is in miracles to experience, doth, by his own conceſſion,

* p. 179. † p. 181.

on, consist solely in this, that they have never been observed; that is, they are not conformable to experience, To his experience personal or derived, he must certainly mean; to what he has had access to learn of different ages and countries. To speak beyond the knowledge he hath attained, would be ridiculous. It would be first supposing a miracle, and then inferring a contrary experience, instead of concluding from experience, that the fact is miraculous.

Now, I insist, that as far as regards the author's argument, a fact perfectly unusual, or not conformable to our experience, such a fact as, for aught we have had access to learn, was never observed in any age or country, is as incapable of proof from testimony, as miracles are; that, if this writer would argue consistently, he could never, on his own principles, reject the one and admit the other. Both ought to be rejected or neither. I would not, by this be thought to signify, that there is no difference between a miracle and an extraordinary event: I know that the former implies the interposal of an invisible agent, which is not implied in the latter. All that I intend to assert is, that the author's argument equally affects them both. Why doth such interposal appear to him incredible? Not from any incongruity he discerns in the thing itself. He doth not pretend it. But 'tis not conformable to his experience. "A miracle," "says he," is a transgression of the law of nature *," But how are the laws of nature known to us? By experience. What is the criterion, whereby we must judge

* p. 182. in the note.

judge, whether the laws of nature are tranſgreſſed? Solely the conformity or diſconformity of events to our experience. This writer ſurely will not pretend, that we can have any knowledge *a priori*, either of the law, or of the violation.

Let us then examine by his own principles, whether the King of Siam, of whom the ſtory he alludes to, is related by Locke †, could have ſufficient evidence from teſtimony, of a fact ſo contrary to his experience as the freezing of water. He could juſt ſay as much of this event, as the author can ſay of a dead man's being reſtored to life. 'Such a thing was never obſerved, as far as I could learn, in any age or country.' If the things themſelves too are impartially conſidered and independently of the notions acquired by us in theſe northern climates, we ſhould account the firſt at leaſt as extraordinary as the ſecond. That ſo pliant a body as water ſhould become hard like pavement, ſo as to bear up an elephant on its ſurface, is as unlikely in itſelf, as that a body inanimate to-day ſhould be animated to-morrow. Nay, to the Indian monarch, I muſt think, that the firſt would appear more a miracle, more contrary to experience than the ſecond. If he had been acquainted with *ice* or frozen water, and afterwards ſeen it become fluid; but had never ſeen nor learned, that after it was melted, it became hard again, the relation muſt have appeared marvellous, as the proceſs from fluidity to hardneſs never had been experienced, tho' the reverſe often had. But I believe nobody will queſtion,

† Eſſay on human underſtanding, book 4. chap. 2. § 5.

ſtion, that on this ſuppoſition it would not have appeared quite ſo ſtrange, as it did. Yet this ſuppoſition makes the inſtance more parallel to the reſtoring of the dead to life. The proceſs from animate to inanimate we are all acquainted with; and what is ſuch a reſtoration, but the reverſing of this proceſs? So little reaſon had the author to inſinuate, that the one was only *not conformable*, the other *contrary* to experience. If there be a difference in this reſpect, the firſt to one alike unacquainted with both, muſt appear the more contrary of the two.

Does it alter the matter, that he calls the former "a fact which aroſe from a ſtate of nature, with "which the Indian was unacquainted?" Was not ſuch a ſtate quite unconformable, or (which in the author's language I have ſhown to be the ſame) contrary to his experience? Is then a ſtate of nature which is contrary to experience, more credible than a ſingle fact contrary to experience? I want the ſolution of one difficulty: The author, in order to ſatisfy me, preſents me with a thouſand others. Is this ſuitable to the method he propoſes in another place, of admitting always the leſs miracle and rejecting the greater *? Is it not, on the contrary, admitting without any difficulty the greater miracle, and thereby removing the difficulty, which he otherwiſe would have had in admitting the leſs? Does he forget, that to exhibit a ſtate of nature entirely different from what we experience at preſent, is one of thoſe enormous prodigies, which, in his account, render the Pentateuch unworthy of credit †? "No "Indian"

* p. 182. † p. 206.

Indian," says he in the note, " 'tis evident, could " have experience that water did not freeze in cold " climates. This is placing nature in a situation " quite unknown to him, and 'tis impossible for " him to tell *a priori*, what will result from it." This is precisely, as if, in reply to the author's objection from experience against the raising of a dead man (suppose Lazarus) to life, I should retort: ' Neither you, Sir, nor any who live in this century ' can have experience, that a dead man could not be ' restored to life at the command of one divinely ' commissioned to give a revelation to men. This ' is placing nature in a situation quite unknown to ' you, and 'tis impossible for you to tell *a priori* what ' will result from it. This therefore is not contrary ' to the course of nature, in cases where all the cir- ' cumstances are the same. As you never saw one ' vested with such a commission, you are as ' unexperienced, as ignorant of this point, as ' the inhabitants of Sumatra are of the frosts in ' Muscovy; you cannot therefore reasonably, any ' more than they, be positive as to the consequences.' Should he rejoin, as doubtless he would, ' This is ' not taking away the difficulty; but, like the ele- ' phant and the tortoise, in the account given by ' some barbarians of the manner in which the earth is ' supported, it only shifts the difficulty a step further ' back. My objection still recurs. That any man ' should be endowed with such power is contrary to ' experience, and therefore incredible:' Should he, I say, rejoin in this manner, I could only add, ' Pray ' Sir, revise your own words lately quoted, and con-

' sider

'sider impartially whether they be not as glaringly 'expoſed to the like reply.' For my part, I can only perceive one difference that is material between the two caſes. You frankly confeſs, that with regard to the freezing of water, beſides the abſolute want of experience, there would be from analogy a preſumption againſt it, which ought to weigh with a rational Indian. I think, on the contrary, in the caſe ſuppoſed by me of one commiſſioned by Heaven, there is at leaſt no preſumption againſt the exertion of ſuch a miraculous power. There is rather a preſumption in its favour.

Does the author then ſay, that no teſtimony could give the King of Siam ſufficient evidence of the effects of cold on water? No. By implication he ſays the contrary: "It required very ſtrong teſtimony." Will he ſay, that thoſe moſt aſtoniſhing effects of electricity lately diſcovered, ſo entirely unanalogous to every thing before experienced, will he ſay, that ſuch facts no reaſonable man could have ſufficient evidence from teſtimony to believe? No. We may preſume, he will not, from his deciſion in the former caſe; and if he ſhould, the common ſenſe of mankind would reclaim againſt his extravagance. Yet 'tis obvious to every conſiderate reader, that his argument concludes equally againſt thoſe truly marvellous, as againſt miraculous events; both being alike unconformable, or alike contrary to former experience *.

THUS

* I cannot forbear to obſerve, that many of the principal terms employed in the eſſay, are uſed in a manner extremely vague and unphiloſophical

THUS I think I have shown, that the author is chargeable with some fallacies, in his way of mana-

ging

unphilosophical. I have remarked the confusion I find in the application of the words, *experience*, *contrariety*, *conformity*: I might remark the same thing of the word, *miracle*. "A miracle," 'tis said, p. 182, in the note, "may be accurately defined, A TRANS-"GRESSION *of a law of nature, by a particular volition of the Deity,* "*or by the interposal of some invisible agent.*" The word *transgression* invariably denotes a criminal opposition to authority. The author's accuracy in representing God as a transgressor, I have not the perspicacity to discern. Does he intend, by throwing something monstrous into the definition, to infuse into the reader a prejudice against the thing defined? But supposing that thro' inadvertency, he had used the term *transgression*, instead of *suspension*, which would have been both intelligible and proper; one would at least expect, that the word *miracle* in the essay, always expresst the sense of the definition. But this it evidently does not. Thus in the instance of the miracle supposed (p. 203, in the note) he calls it, in the beginning of the paragraph, "A violation of "the usual course of nature;" but in the end, after telling us that such a miracle, on the evidence supposed, "our present phi-"losophers ought to receive for certain," he subjoins, (how consistently, let the reader judge) "and ought to search for the "causes, whence it might be derived." Thus it is insinuated, that tho' a fact apparently miraculous, and perfectly extraordinary, might be admitted by a philosopher, still the reality of the miracle must be denied. For if the interposal of the Deity be the proper solution of the phenomenon, why should we recur to natural causes? Hence a careless reader is insensibly led to think, that there is some special incredibility in such an interposal, distinct from its *uncommonness*. Yet the author's great argument is built on this single circumstance, and places such an interposition just on the same footing with every event that is equally uncommon. At one time, he uses the word *miracle* to denote a *bare improbability*, as will appear in the sixth section: at another, *absurd* and *miraculous* are, with him, synonymous terms; so are also the *miraculous nature* of an event, and its *absolute impossibility*. Is this the style and manner of a reasoner?

ging the argument; that he all along avails himself of an ambiguity in the word *experience*; ——that his reasoning includes a *petitio principii* in the bosom of it; ——and that, in supporting his argument, he must have recourse to distinctions, where, even himself being judge, there is no difference.

SECTION III.

Mr Hume himself gives up his favourite argument.

'MR Hume himself,' methinks I hear my reader repeating with astonishment, 'gives up his 'favourite argument! To prove this point is indeed 'a very bold attempt.' Yet that this attempt is not altogether so arduous, as at first hearing, he will possibly imagine, I hope, if favoured a while with his attention, fully to convince him. If to acknowledge, after all, that there may be miracles, which admit of proof from human testimony; if to acknowledge, that such miracles ought to be received, not as probable only, but as absolutely certain; or, in other words, that the proof from human testimony may be such as that all the contrary uniform experience, should not only be overbalanced, but, to use the author's expression, should be annihilated; if such acknowledgments as these, are subversive of his own principles; if by making them, he abandons his darling argument; this strange part the essayist evidently acts.

"I own," these are his words, "there may "possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course "of nature, of such a kind as to admit a proof from "human

" human teſtimony, tho' perhaps" (in this he is modeſt enough, he avers nothing; *perhaps*) " it " will be impoſſible to find any ſuch in all the records " of hiſtory." To this declaration he ſubjoins the following ſuppſition: " Suppoſe all authors, in all " languages, agree, that from the 1ſt of January " 1700, there was a total darkneſs over the whole " earth for eight days; ſuppoſe that the tradition of " this extraordinary event, is ſtill ſtrong and lively " among the people; that all travellers, who return " from foreign countries, bring us accounts of the " ſame tradition, without the leaſt variation or " contradiction: 'tis evident, that our preſent philo- " ſophers, inſtead of doubting of that fact, ought to " receive it for certain, and ought to ſearch for the cauſ- " es, whence it might be derived *."

Could one imagine, that the perſon who had made the above acknowledgment, a perſon too who is juſtly allowed by all who are acquainted with his writings, to poſſeſs uncommon penetration and philoſophical abilities, that this were the ſame individual, who had ſo ſhort while before affirmed, that " a miracle," or a violation of the uſual courſe of nature, " ſupported by any human teſtimony, is more " properly a ſubject of deriſion than of argument †;' who had inſiſted, that " it is not requiſite, in " order to reject the fact, to be able accurately to " diſprove the teſtimony, and to trace its falſehood; " that ſuch an evidence carries falſehood on the very " face of it ‡;" that " we need but oppoſe even to " a

* p. 203, in the note. † p. 194. ‡ ib.

" a cloud of witneſſes, the abſolute impoſſibility, or," which is all one, " miraculous nature of the events, " which they relate; that this in the eyes of all " reaſonable people, will alone be regarded as a " ſufficient refutation*;" and who finally to put an end to all altercation on the ſubject had pronounced this *oracle*. " No TESTIMONY FOR ANY " KIND OF MIRACLE CAN EVER " POSSIBLY AMOUNT TO A PROBABI- " LITY, MUCH LESS TO A PROOF†." Was there ever a more glaring contradiction!

YET for the event ſuppoſed by the eſſayiſt, the teſtimony, in his judgment, would amount to a *probability;* nay to more than a probability, to a *proof;* let not the reader be aſtoniſhed, or if he cannot fail to be aſtoniſhed, let him not be incredulous, when I add, to *more than a proof*, more than a full, entire and direct proof; for even this I hope to make evident from the author's principles and reaſoning. " And even ſuppoſing," ſays he, that is, granting for argument's ſake, " that the teſtimony for a miracle " amounted to a proof, 'twould be oppoſed by another " proof, derived from the very nature of the fact, " which it would endeavour to eſtabliſh‡." Here is then, by his own reaſoning, proof againſt proof, from which there could reſult no belief or opinion, unleſs the one is conceived to be in ſome degree ſuperior to the other. " Of which proofs," ſays he, " the ſtrongeſt muſt prevail, but ſtill with a diminuti-

" on

* p. 196, &c. † p. 202. ‡ ib.

" on of its force in proportion to that of its antago-
" nist.*" Before the author could believe such a miracle as he supposes, he must at least be satisfied that the proof of it from testimony is stronger than the proof against it from experience. That we may form an accurate judgment of the strength he here ascribes to testimony, let us consider what, by his own account, is the strength of the opposite proof from experience. " A miracle is a violation of the
" laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable expe-
" rience has established these laws, the proof against
" a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as
" *entire*, as any argument from experience can possi-
" bly be imagined †." Again, " As an uniform
" experience amounts to a proof, there is here a *direct*
" and *full* proof, from the nature of the fact, against
" the existence of any miracle ‡." The proof then which the essayist admits from testimony, is, by his own estimate, not only superior to a *direct* and *full* proof; but even superior to as *entire* a proof, as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Whence, I pray, doth testimony acquire such amazing evidence? ' Testimony,' says the author, ' hath no evidence, but what it derives from experi-
' ence. These differ from each other only as the
' species from the genus.' Put then for *testimony*, the word *experience*, which in this case is equivalent, and the conclusion will run thus: *Here is a proof from experience, which is superior to as entire a proof from experience as can possible be imagined.* This

* p. 180. † ibid. ‡ p. 181.

deduction from the author's words, the reader will percieve, is ſtrictly logical. What the meaning of it is, I leave Mr Hume to explain.

What hath been above deduced, how much ſoever it be accounted, is not all that is implied in the conceſſion made by the author. He further ſays, that the miraculous fact ſo atteſted, ought not only to be received, but to be received *for certain*. Is it not enough, Sir, that you have ſhown that your moſt full, moſt direct, moſt perfect argument may be overcome; will nothing ſatisfy you now but its deſtruction? One would imagine, that you had conjured up this demon, by whoſe irreſiſtible arm you propoſed to give a mortal blow to religion, and render ſcepticiſm triumphant, (that you had conjured him up, I ſay) for no other purpoſe, but to ſhow with what facility you could lay him. To be ſerious, does not this author remember, that he had oftener than once laid it down as a maxim, That when there is proof againſt proof, we muſt incline to the ſuperior, ſtill with a diminution of aſſurance, in proportion to the force of its antagoniſt*? But when a fact is received *for certain*, there can be no ſenſible diminution of aſſurance, ſuch diminution always implying ſome doubt and *uncertainty*. Conſequently the general proof from experience, tho' as entire as any argument from experience can poſſibly be imagined, is not only ſurmounted, but is really in compariſon as nothing, or, in Mr Hume's phraſe, undergoes annihilation, when balanced with the particular proof from teſtimony. Great indeed, it muſt be acknowledged, is the

* p. 178. 180.

the force of truth. This concluſion, on the principles I have been endeavouring to eſtabliſh, has nothing in it, but what is conceivable and juſt; but on the principles of the eſſay, which deduce all the force of teſtimony from experience, ſerves only to confound the underſtanding, and to involve the ſubject in midnight darkneſs.

'Tis therefore manifeſt, that either this author's principles condemn his own method of judging, with regard to miraculous facts; or that his method of judging ſubverts his principles, and is a tacit deſertion of them. Thus that impregnable fortreſs, the aſylum of infidelity, which he ſo lately gloried in having erected, is in a moment abandoned by him, as a place untenable.

SECTION IV.

There is no peculiar preſumption againſt ſuch miracles as are ſaid to have been wrought in ſupport of religion.

IS it then ſo, that the deciſive argument, the eſſayiſt flattered himſelf he had diſcovered *, which with the wiſe and learned, was to prove an everlaſting check to all kinds of ſuperſtitious deluſion, and would conſequently be uſeful, as long as the world endures; is it ſo, that this boaſted argument hath in fact little or no influence on the diſcoverer himſelf! But this author may well be excuſed. He cannot be always

* p. 174.

always the metaphyſician. He cannot ſoar inceſſantly in the clouds. Such conſtant elevation ſuits not the lot of humanity. He muſt ſometimes, whether he will or not, deſcend to a level with other people, and fall into the humble track of common ſenſe. One thing however he is reſolved on: If he cannot by metaphyſic ſpells ſilence the moſt arrogant bigotry and ſuperſtition; he will at any rate, though for this purpoſe he ſhould borrow aid from what he hath no liking to, trite and popular topics; he will at any rate free himſelf from their impertinent ſolicitations.

There are accordingly two principles in human nature, by which he accounts for all the relations, that have ever been in the world, concerning miracles. Theſe principles are, the *paſſion for the marvellous*, and the *religious affection* *; againſt either of which ſingly, the philoſopher, he ſays, ought ever to be on his guard; but incomparably more ſo, when both happen to be in ſtrict confederacy together. "For "if the ſpirit of religion join itſelf to the love of "wonder, there is an end of common ſenſe; and "human teſtimony, in theſe circumſtances, loſes all "pretenſions to authority.†" Notwithſtanding this ſtrong affirmation, there is reaſon to ſuſpect that the author is not in his heart, ſo great an enemy to the love of wonder, as he affects to appear. No man can make a greater conceſſion in favour of the wonderful, than he hath done in the paſſage quoted in the preceding ſection. No man was ever fonder of paradox, and, in theoretical ſubjects, of every notion that is remote from ſentiments univerſally received. This

* p. 164. 185. † ib.

This love of paradox, he owns himself, that both his enemies and his friends reproach him with *. There must surely be some foundation for so universal a censure. If therefore, in respect of the passion for the marvellous, he differ from other people, the difference ariseth from a particular delicacy in this gentleman, which makes him nauseate even to wonder with the crowd. He is of that singular turn that where every body is struck with astonishment, he can see nothing wondrous in the least; at the same time he discovers prodigies, where no soul but himself ever dreamt that there were any.

We may therefore rest assured of it, that the author might be conciliated to the *love of wonder*, provided the *spirit of religion* be kept at a distance, against which he hath unluckily contracted a mortal antipathy, against which he has resolved to wage eternal war. When he but touches this subject, he loseth at once his philosophic composure, and speaks with an acrimony unusual to him on other occasions. Some thing of this kind appears from the citations already made. But if these should not satisfy, I shall produce one or two more, which certainly will. There is a second supposition the author makes of a miraculous event, in a certain manner circumstanced and attested, which he declares, and I think with particular propriety, that he would "not have the least *inclination* "to believe †." At his want of inclination the reader will not be surprised, when he learns, that this supposed miracle is concerning a *resurrection*; an event which

* Dedication to the four dissertations. † p. 204. in the note.

which bears too ſtrong a reſemblance both to the doctrine and to the miracles of holy writ, not to alarm a modern Pyrrhoniſt. To the above declaration he ſubjoins, "But ſhould this miracle be aſcribed "to any new ſyſtem of religion, men in all ages have "been ſo much impoſed on by *ridiculous ſtories* of that "kind, that this very circumſtance would be a full "proof of a cheat, and ſufficient with all men of "ſenſe, not only to make them reject the fact, but "even *reject it without further examination.*" Again, a little after, "As the violations of truth are more "common in the teſtimony concerning religious mi-"racles, than in that concerning any other matter "of fact," (a point which the author is poſitive, tho' he neither produceth facts nor arguments to ſupport it) "this muſt diminiſh very much the au-"thority of the former teſtimony, and" (pray obſerve his words) "*make us form a* GENERAL RESOLUTION, "*never to lend any attention to it, with whatever* "*ſpecious pretext it may be covered.*"

Never did the paſſion of an inflamed orator, or the intemperate zeal of a religioniſt, carry him further againſt his adverſary, than this man of ſpeculation is carried by his prejudice againſt religion. Demagogues and bigots have often warned the people againſt liſtening to the arguments of an envied and therefore deteſted rival, leſt by his ſophiſtry they ſhould be ſeduced into the moſt fatal errors. The ſame part this author, a philoſopher, a ſceptic, a diſpaſſionate inquirer after truth, as ſurely he chuſeth to be accounted, now acts in favour of infidelity. He thinks it not ſafe to give religion even a hearing.

Nay

Nay ſo ſtrange a turn have matters taken of late with the managers of this controverſy, that it is now the FREETHINKER who preaches *implicit faith*; 'tis the INFIDEL, who warns us of the danger of conſulting *reaſon*. Beware, ſays he, I admoniſh you, of inquiring into the ſtrength of the plea, or of bringing it to the deceitful teſt of reaſon; for "thoſe "who will be ſo SILLY as to examine the affair by "that medium, and ſeek particular flaws in the "*teſtimony*, are almoſt ſure to be confounded *." That religion is concerned in the matter, is reckoned by theſe ſages ſufficient evidence of impoſture. The proofs ſhe offers in her own defence, we are told by theſe candid jndges, ought to be rejected, and *rejected without examination*. The old way of ſcrutiny and argument muſt now be laid aſide, having been at length diſcovered to be but a bungling, a tedious, and a dangerous way at beſt. What then ſhall we ſubſtitute in its place? The eſſayiſt hath a moſt admirable expedient. A ſhorter and ſurer method he recommends to us, the expeditious way of *reſolution*. 'Form,' ſays he, '*a* GENERAL RESOLUTION, *never* '*to lend any attention to teſtimonies or facts urgedby reli*-'*gion, with whatever ſpecious pretext they may be covered.*'

I had almoſt congratulated Mr Hume, and our enlightened age, on this happy invention, before I reflected, that tho' the application might be new, the expedient itſelf, of reſolving to be deaf to argument, was very ancient, having been often with great ſucceſs employed againſt atheiſts and heretics, and warmly recommended by Bellarmine and Scotus, and moſt others

* p. 197. in the note.

others of that bright fraternity the ſchoolmen: Perſons, I acknowledge, to whom one could not, perhaps in any other inſtance, find a reſemblance in my ingenious opponent.

I'm afraid that after ſuch a declaration, I muſt not preſume to conſider myſelf as arguing with the author, who hath, in ſo peremptory a manner, reſolved to attend to nothing that can be ſaid in oppoſition to his theory. 'What judgment he has,' to uſe his own expreſſion, 'he has renounced by principle, in 'theſe ſublime and myſterious ſubjects *,' If however it ſhould prove the fate of theſe papers, the forbidding title of them notwithſtanding, to be at any time honoured with the peruſal of ſome infidel, not indeed ſo rivetted in unbelief as the eſſayiſt, I would earneſtly intreat ſuch reader, in the ſolemn ſtyle of Mr Hume, "To lay his hand upon his heart, and " after ſerious conſideration declare *," If any of the patrons of religion had acted this part, and warned people not to try by *argument* the metaphyſical ſubtleties of the adverſaries, affirming, that 'they who 'were MAD enough to examine the affair by that 'medium, and ſeek particular flaws in the *reaſoning*, 'were almoſt ſure to be confounded; that the only 'prudent method was, to form a GENERAL RESO-'LUTION, never to lend any attention to what was 'advanced on the oppoſite ſide, *however ſpecious*;' whether this conduct would not have afforded great matter of triumph to thoſe gentlemen the deiſts; whether it would not have been conſtrued by them, and even juſtly, into a tacit conviction of the weakneſs of our cauſe, which we were afraid of expoſing in

* p. 185. † p. 206.

in the light, and bringing to a fair trial. But we ſcorn to take ſhelter in obſcurity, and meanly to decline the combat; confident as we are, that REASON is our *ally* and our *friend*, and glad to find that the enemy at length ſo violently ſuſpects her.

As to the firſt method, by which the author accounts for the fabulous relations of monſters and prodigies, 'tis freely acknowledged, that the Creator hath implanted in human nature, as a ſpur to the improvement of the underſtanding, a principle of *curioſity*, which makes the mind feel a particular pleaſure in every new acquiſition of knowledge. 'Tis acknowledged alſo, that as every principle in our nature is liable to abuſe, ſo this principle will often give the mind a bias to the marvellous, for the more marvellous any thing is, that is, the more unlike to all that hath formerly been known, the more new it is; and this bias, in many inſtances, may induce belief on inſufficient evidence.

But the preſumption that hence ariſeth againſt the marvellous is not ſtronger in the caſe of miracles (as will appear from an attentive peruſal of the ſecond ſection) than in the caſe of every fact that is perfectly extraordinary. Yet how eaſily this obſtacle may be overcome by teſtimony, might be illuſtrated, if neceſſary, in almoſt every branch of ſcience, in phyſiology, in geography, in hiſtory. On the contrary, what an immenſe impediment would this preſumption prove to the progreſs of philoſophy and letters, had it in reality one fiftieth-part of the ſtrength which the author ſeems to attribute to it. I ſhall not tire my reader or myſelf by recurring to the philoſophic

wonders in electricity, chymiſtry, magnetiſm, which, all the world ſees, may be fully proved to us by teſtimony, before we make the experiments ourſelves.

BUT there is, it ſeems, additional to this, a peculiar preſumption againſt religious miracles. "The "wiſe," as the author hath obſerved with reaſon, "lend a very academic faith to every report, which "favours the paſſion of the reporter, whether it "magnifies his country, his family, or himſelf, or "in any other way ſtrikes in with his natural incli- "nations and propenſities*." Now, as no object whatever operates more powerfully on the fancy than *religion* does, or works up the paſſions to a higher fervour; ſo, in matters relating to this ſubject, if in any ſubject, we have reaſon to ſuſpect that the underſtanding will prove a dupe to the paſſions. On this point therefore we ought to be peculiarly cautious, that we be not haſty of belief. In this ſentiment we all agree.

But there is one circumſtance, which he hath overlooked, and which is nevertheleſs of the greateſt conſequence in the debate. It is this, that the prejudice reſulting from the religious affection, may juſt as readily *obſtruct*, as *promote* our faith in a religious miracle. What things in nature are more contrary, than one religion is to another religion? They are juſt as contrary as light and darkneſs, truth and error. The affections, with which they are contemplated by the ſame perſon, are juſt as oppoſite, as deſire

* p. 200.

desire and aversion, love and hatred. The same religious zeal which gives the mind of a Christian, a *propensity* to the belief of a miracle in support of Christianity, will inspire him with an *aversion* from the belief of a miracle in support of Mahometism. The same principle, which will make him acquiesce in evidence *less* than sufficient in the one case, will make him require evidence *more* than sufficient in the other.

Before then the remark of the author can be of any use in directing our judgment, as to the evidence of miracles attested, we must consider whether the original tenets of the witnesses would naturally have biassed their minds in *favour* of the miracles, or in *opposition* to them. If the former was the case, the testimony is so much the *less* to be regarded; if the latter, so much the *more*. Will it satisfy on this head to acquaint us, that the prejudices of the witnesses must have favoured the miracles, since they were zealous promoters of the doctrine, in support of which those miracles are said to have been performed? To answer thus would be to misunderstand the point. The question is, Was this doctrine the faith of the witnesses, before they saw, or fancied they saw the miracles? If it was, I agree with him. Great, very great allowance must be made for the prejudices of education, for principles, early perhaps, carefully, and deeply rooted in their minds, and for the religious affection founded in these principles; which allowance must always derogate from the weight of their testimony. But if the faith of the witnesses stood originally in opposition to the doctrine

attested

atteſted by the miracles; if the only account that can be given of their converſion, is the conviction which the miracles produced in them; it muſt be a prepoſterous way of arguing, to derive their conviction from a religious zeal, which would at firſt obſtinately withſtand, and for ſome time hinder ſuch conviction. On the contrary, that the evidence ariſing from miracles performed in proof of a doctrine diſbelieved, and conſequently hated before, did in fact ſurmount that obſtacle, and conquer all the oppoſition ariſing thence, is a very ſtrong preſumption in favour of that evidence: juſt as ſtrong a preſumption in its favour, as it would have been againſt it, had all their former zeal, and principles, and prejudices, co-operated with the evidence, whatever it was, in gaining an entire aſſent.

Hence there is the greateſt diſparity in this reſpect, a diſparity which deſerves to be particularly attended to, betwixt the evidence of miracles performed in proof of a religion *to be* eſtabliſhed, and in *contradiction* to opinions generally received; and the evidence of miracles performed in ſupport of a religion *already* eſtabliſhed, and in *confirmation* of opinions generally received. Hence alſo the greateſt diſparity betwixt the miracles recorded by the evangeliſts, and thoſe related by Mariana, Bede, or any monkiſh hiſtorian.

THERE is then no peculiar preſumption againſt religious miracles merely as ſuch; if in certain circumſtances there is a preſumption againſt them; the preſumption ariſeth ſolely from the circumſtances, inſomuch that, in the oppoſite circumſtances, it is as ſtrongly in their favour.

SECT.

SECTION V.

There is a peculiar presumption in favour of such miracles as are said to have been wrought in support of religion.

IN this section I propose to consider the reverse of the question treated in the former. In the former I proved that there is no peculiar presumption against religious miracles; I now inquire whether there be any in their favour. The question is important, and intimately connected with the subject.

THE boldest infidel will not deny, that the immortality of the soul, a future and eternal state, and the connection of our happiness or misery in that state, with our present good or bad conduct, not to mention the doctrines concerning the divine unity and perfections, are tenets which carry no absurdity in them. They may be true for aught he knows. He disbelieves them, not because they are incredible in themselves, but because he hath not evidence of their truth. He pretends not to disprove them, nor does he think the task incumbent on him. He only pleads, that before he can yield them his assent, they must be proved.

Now, as whatever is possible, may be supposed, let us suppose that the dogmas above mentioned are all infallible truths; and let the unbeliever say, whether he can conceive an object worthier of the Divine interposal, than to reveal these truths to mankind? and

to enforce them in such a manner, as may give them a suitable influence on the heart and life. Of all the inhabitants of the earth, man is incomparably the noblest. Whatever therefore regards the interest of the human species, is a grander concern, than what regards either the inanimate or the brute creation. If man was made, as is doubtless not impossible, for an after state of immorality; whatever relates to that immortal state, or may conduce to prepare him for the fruition of it, must be immensely superior to that which concerns merely the transient enjoyments of the present life. How sublime then is the object which religion, and religion only, exhibits as the ground of supernatural interpositions! This object is no other than the interest of man, a reasonable and moral agent, the only being in this lower world which bears in his soul the image of his Maker; not the interest of an individual, but of the kind; not for a limited duration, but for eternity: an object at least in one respect adequate to the majesty of God.

Does this appear to the essayist too much like arguing *a priori*, of which I know he hath a detestation? It is just such an argument, as, presupposing the most rational principles of Deism, results from those maxims concerning intelligent causes, and their operations, which are founded in general experience, and which uniformly lead us to expect, that the end will be proportionate to the means. The *Pagans* of Rome had notions of their divinities infinitely inferior to the opinions concerning God, which in Christian countries are maintained even by those, who, for distinction's

sake

ſake, are called DEISTS. Yet ſuch of the former as had any juſtneſs of taſte, were offended with thoſe poets, who, exhibited the celeſtials on ſlight occaſions, and for trivial purpoſes, interfering in the affairs of men. Why? Becauſe ſuch an exhibition ſhocked all the principles of probability. It had not that veriſimilitude which is abſolutely neceſſary to render fiction agreeable. Accordingly it is a precept, with relation to the machinery of the drama, given by one who was both a critic and a poet, *That a god muſt never be introduced, unleſs to accompliſh ſome important deſign which could not be otherwiſe effectuated* *. The foundation of this rule, which is that of my argument, is therefore one of thoſe indiſputable principles, which are found every where, among the earlieſt reſults of experience.

THUS it appears, that from the dignity of the end, there ariſeth a peculiar preſumption in favour of ſuch miracles, as are ſaid to have been wrought in ſupport of religion.

SECTION VI.

Inquiry into the meaning and propriety of one of Mr Hume's favourite maxims.

THERE is a method truly curious, ſuggeſted by the author, for extricating the mind, ſhould the evidence from teſtimony be ſo great, that its falſehood

* Nec deus interſit, niſi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit. HORAT.

hood might, as he terms it, be accounted miraculous. In this puzzling caſe, when a man is ſo beſet with miracles, that he is under a neceſſity of admitting one, he muſt always take care it be the ſmalleſt; for it is an *axiom* in this writers DIALECTIC, That *the probability of the fact is in the inverſe ratio of the quantity of miracle there is in it.* "I weigh," ſays he, "the one "miracle againſt the other, and according to the ſupe- "riority which I diſcover, I pronounce my deciſion, "and always reject the greater miracle *."

Now, of this method, which will no doubt be thought by many to be very ingenious, and which appears to the eſſayiſt both very momentous and very perſpicuous, I own, I am not able to diſcover either the reaſonableneſs or the uſe.

Firſt, I cannot ſee the reaſonableneſs. 'A miracle,' to adopt his own definition, 'implies the tranſgreſ- 'ſion,' or rather the ſuſpenſion, 'of ſome law of na- 'ture; and that either by a particular volition of the 'Deity, or by the interpoſal of ſome inviſible agent †.' Now, as I ſhould think, from the principles laid down in the preceding ſection, that it would be for no trifling purpoſe, that the laws of nature would be ſuſpended, and either the Deity or an inviſible agent would interpoſe; 'tis on the ſame principles, natural to imagine, that the means, or miracle performed, ſhould bear a proportion in reſpect of dignity and greatneſs, to the end propoſed. Were I therefore under ſuch a neceſſity as is ſuppoſed by Mr Hume, of admitting

* p. 182. † Ib. in the note.

mitting the truth of a miracle, I acknowledge, that of two contradictory miracles, where all other circumſtances are equal, I ſhould think it reaſonable to believe the greater. I ſhall borrow an illuſtration from the author himſelf. " A miracle," he ſays, " may " either be *diſcoverable* by men or not. This alters " not its nature and eſſence. The raiſing of a houſe " or ſhip into the air is a viſible miracle; the raiſing " of a feather, when the wind wants *ever ſo little* of " a force requiſite for that purpoſe is as real a miracle, " tho' not ſo *ſenſible* with regard to us *." Surely if any miracle may be called *little*, the laſt mentioned is intitled to that denomination, not only becauſe it is an *undiſcoverable* and *inſenſible* miracle, but becauſe the quantum of miraculous force requiſite, is, by the hypotheſis, *ever ſo little*, or the leaſt conceivable. Yet if it were certain, that God, angel, or ſpirit, were, for one of thoſe purpoſes, to interpoſe in ſuſpending the laws of nature; I believe moſt men would join with me in thinking, that it would be rather for the raiſing of a *houſe* or *ſhip* than for the raiſing of a *feather*.

But though the maxim laid down by the author were juſt, I cannot diſcover in what inſtance, or by what application, it can be rendered of any utility. Why? Becauſe we have no rule, whereby we can judge of the greatneſs of miracles. I allow, that in ſuch a ſingular inſtance, as that above quoted from the eſſay, we may judge ſafely enough. But that can be of no practical uſe. In almoſt every caſe that will

* p. 182. in the note.

will occur, I may warrantably aver, that it will be impoſſible for the acuteſt intellect to decide, which of the two is the greater miracle. As to the author, I cannot find that he has favoured us with any light in ſo important and ſo critical a queſtion. Have we not then ſome reaſon to dread, that the taſk will not be leſs difficult to furniſh us with a *meaſure*, by which we can determine the magnitude of miracles; than to provide us with a *balance*, by which we can aſcertain the comparative weight of teſtimonies and experiences?

If leaving the ſpeculations of the eſſayiſt, we ſhall, in order to be aſſiſted on this ſubject, recur to his example and deciſions: let us conſider the miracle which was recited in the third ſection, and which he declares, would, on the evidence of ſuch teſtimony as he ſuppoſes, not only be probable, but certain. For my part, 'tis not in my power to conceive a greater miracle than that is. The whole univerſe is affected by it; the earth, the ſun, the moon, the ſtars. The moſt invariable laws of nature with which we are accquainted, even thoſe which regulate the motions of the heavenly bodies, and diſpenſe darkneſs and light to worlds, are violated. I appeal to the author himſelf, whether it could be called a greater, or even ſo great a miracle, that all the writers at that time, or even all mankind, had been ſeized with a new ſpecies of epidemical delirium, which had given riſe to this ſtrange illuſion. But in this the author is remarkably unfortunate, that the principles by which he in fact regulates his judgment and belief,

are

are often the reverſe of thoſe which he endeavours to eſtabliſh in his theory.

SHALL I hazard a conjecture? It is, that the word *miracle*, as thus uſed by the author, is uſed in a vague and improper ſenſe, as a ſynonymous term for *improbable*; and that believing the *leſs*, and rejecting the *greater miracle*, denote ſimply believing what is *leaſt*, and rejecting what is *moſt improbable*; or ſtill more explicitly believing what we think *moſt worthy of belief*, and rejecting what we think *leaſt worthy*. I am aware, on a ſecond peruſal of the author's words, that my talent in gueſſing may be juſtly queſtioned. He hath in effect told us himſelf what he means. "When any one," ſays he, "tells me, that he ſaw a "dead man reſtored to life, I immediately conſider "with myſelf, whether it be more *probable*, that this "perſon ſhould either deceive or be deceived, or that "the fact he relates, ſhould really have happened. "I weigh the one *miracle* againſt the other; and "according to the ſuperiority which I diſcover, I "pronounce my deciſion, and always reject the greater "miracle. If the falſehood of his teſtimony would "be more miraculous than the event which he relates; "then, and not till then, can he pretend to command "my belief or opinion *." At firſt indeed one is ready to exclaim, What a ſtrange *revolution* is here! The belief of miracles then, even by Mr Hume's account, is abſolutely inevitable. Miracles themſelves too, ſo far from being impoſſible, or even extraordinary, are the commoneſt things in nature; ſo

† 182.

ſo common, that when any miraculous fact is atteſted to us, we are equally under a neceſſity of believing a miracle, whether we believe the fact, or deny it. The whole difference between the eſſayiſt and us, is at length reduced to this ſingle point, Whether greater or ſmaller miracles are intitled to the preference. This myſtery however vaniſhes on a nearer inſpection. The ſtyle, we find, is figurative, and the author is all the while amuſing both his readers and himſelf with an unuſual application of a familiar term. What is called the weighing of *probabilities* in one ſentence, is the weighing of *miracles* in the next. If it were aſked, For what reaſon did not Mr Hume expreſs his ſentiment in ordinary and proper words? I could only anſwer, I know no reaſon but one, and that is, To give the appearance of novelty and depth to one of thoſe very harmleſs propoſitions, which by philoſophers are called *identical*, and which, to ſay the truth, need ſome diſguiſe, to make them paſs upon the world with tolerable decency.

What then ſhall be ſaid of the concluſion which he gives as the ſum and quinteſſence of the firſt part of the eſſay? The beſt thing for aught I know, that can be ſaid, is, that it contains a moſt certain truth, tho' at the ſame time the leaſt ſignificant, that ever perhaps was uſhered into the world with ſo much ſolemnity. In order, therefore, to make *plainer Engliſh* of his *plain conſequence*, let us only change the word *miraculous*, as applyed to the falſehood of human teſtimony, into *improbable*, which in this paſſage is entirely equivalent, and obſerve the effect produced by

by this elucidation. "The plain conſequence "is, and 'tis a GENERAL MAXIM, *worthy of our at-* "*tention*, That NO TESTIMONY IS SUFFICIENT "TO ESTABLISH A MIRACLE; UNLESS THE "TESTIMONY BE OF SUCH A KIND, THAT ITS "FALSEHOOD WOULD BE MORE IMPROBABLE, "THAN THE FACT WHICH IT ENDEAVOURS TO "ESTABLISH *." If the reader thinks himſelf inſtructed by this diſcovery, I ſhould be loth to envy him the pleaſure he may derive from it.

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† p. 182.

A

DISSERTATION

ON

MIRACLES.

PART II.

The miracles on which the belief of Chriſtianity is founded, are ſufficiently atteſted.

SECTION I.

There is no preſumption, ariſing from human nature, againſt the miracles ſaid to have been wrought in proof of Chriſtianity.

FROM what hath been evinced in the fourth and fifth ſections of the former part, with regard to religion in general, *two corollaries* are clearly deducible in favour of Chriſtianity. *One* is, That the preſumption ariſing from the dignity of the end, to ſay the leaſt of it, can in no religion be pleaded with greater advantage, than in the Chriſtian. *The other* is, That the preſumption ariſing from the religious affection, inſtead of weakening, corroborates the evidence of the goſpel. The faith of Jeſus was promulgated, and gained ground, not with the aſſiſtance, but in defiance, of all the religious zeal and prejudices of the times.

IN

IN order to invalidate the *second* corollary, it will poſſibly be urged, that proſelytes to a new religion, may be gained at firſt; either by addreſs and eloquence, or by the appearances of uncommon ſanctity, and rapturous fervours of devotion; that if once people have commenced proſelytes, the tranſition to enthuſiaſm is almoſt unavoidable; and that enthuſiaſm will fully account for the utmoſt pitch both of credulity and falſeneſs.

Admitting that a few converts might be made by the aforeſaid arts, it is ſubverſive of all the laws of probability, to imagine, that the ſtrongeſt prepoſſeſſions, fortified with that vehement abhorence which contradiction in religious principles rarely fails to excite, ſhould be ſo eaſily vanquiſhed in multitudes. Beſides, the very pretext of ſupporting the doctrine by miracles, if a falſe pretext, would of neceſſity do unſpeakable hurt to the cauſe. The pretence of miracles will quickly attract the attention of all to whom the new doctrine is publiſhed. The influence which addreſs and eloquence, appearances of ſanctity and fervours of devotion, would otherwiſe have had, however great, will be ſuperſeded by the conſideration of what is infinitely more ſtriking and deciſive. The miracles will therefore firſt be canvaſſed, and canvaſſed with a temper of mind the moſt unfavourable to conviction. 'Tis not ſolely on the teſtimony of the evangeliſts that Chriſtians believe the goſpel, tho' that teſtimony appears in all reſpects ſuch as merits the higheſt regard; but it is on the ſucceſs of the goſpel; it is on the teſtimony, as we may juſtly call it, of the numberleſs proſelytes that

that were made to a religon, oppoſing all the religious profeſſions then in the world, and appealing, for the ſatisfaction of every body, to the viſible and miraculous interpoſition of Heaven in its favour. The witneſſes conſidered in this light, and in this light they ought to be conſidered, will be found more than 'a ſufficient number:' and tho' perhaps there were few of them, what the author would denominate 'men of education and learning;' yet, which is more eſſential, they were generally men of good ſenſe, and knowledge enough to ſecure them againſt all deluſion, as to thoſe plain facts for which they gave their teſtimony; men who, (in the common acceptation of the words) neither did, nor could derive to themſelves either intereſt or honour by their atteſtations, but did thereby, on the contrary, evidently abandon all hopes of both.

It deſerves alſo to be remembered, that there is here no contradictory teſtimony, notwithſtanding that both the founder of our religion, and his adherents, were from the firſt ſurrounded by inveterate enemies, who never 'eſteemed the matter too inconſiderable to deſerve their attention or regard;' and who, as they could not want the means, gave evident proofs that they wanted not the inclination to detect the fraud, if there had been any fraud to be detected. They were jealous of their own reputation and authority, and foreſaw but too clearly, that the ſucceſs of Jeſus would give a fatal blow to both. As to the teſtimonies themſelves, we may permit the author to try them by his own rules*.

There

* p. 178.

There is here no oppoſition of teſtimony; there is no apparent ground of ſuſpicion from the character of the witneſſes; there is no intereſt which they could have in impoſing on the world; there is not a ſmall number of witneſſes, they are innumerable. Do the hiſtorians of our Lord deliver their teſtimony with doubt and heſitation? Do they fall into the oppoſite extreme of uſing too violent aſſeverations? So far from both, that the moſt amazing inſtances of divine power, and the moſt intereſting events, are related without any cenſure or reflection of the writers on perſons, parties, actions, or opinions; with ſuch an unparallelled and unaffected ſimplicity, as demonſtrates, that they were neither themſelves animated by paſſion like enthuſiaſts, nor had any deſign of working on the paſſions of their readers. The greateſt miracles are recorded, with as little appearance either of doubt or wonder in the writer, and with as little ſuſpicion of the reader's incredulity, as the moſt ordinary incidents: A manner as unlike that of impoſtors as of enthuſiaſts; a manner in which thoſe writers are altogether ſingular; and I will add a manner which can on no ſuppoſion be tolerably accounted for, but that of the truth, and not of the truth only, but of the notoriety, of the events which they related. They ſpoke like people, who had themſelves been long familiarized to ſuch acts of omnipotence and grace. They ſpoke like people, who knew that many of the moſt marvellous actions they related, had been ſo publicly performed, and in the preſence of multitudes alive at the time of their writing, as to be uncontrovertible, and as in fact not to have been con-

verted, even by their bittereſt foes. They could boldly appeal on this head to their enemies. *A man*, ſay they, ſpaking of their maſter*, *approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and ſigns, which God did by him in the midſt of you, as* YE YOURSELVES ALSO KNOW The objections of Chriſt's perſecutors againſt his doctrine, thoſe objections alſo which regard the nature of his miracles, are, together with his anſwers, faithfully recorded by the ſacred hiſtorians; 'tis ſtrange, if the occaſion had been given, that we have not the remoteſt hint of any objections againſt the reality of his miracles, and a confutation of thoſe objections.

BUT paſſing the manner in which the firſt proſelytes may be gained to a new religion, and ſuppoſing ſome actually gained, no matter how to the faith of Jeſus; can it be eaſily accounted for, that, even with the help of thoſe early converts, this religion ſhould have been propagated in the world, on the *falſe* pretence of miracles? Nothing more eaſily, ſays the author. Thoſe original propagators of the goſpel have been deceived themſelves; for "a "religioniſt may be an *enthuſiaſt*, and imagine he ſees "what has no reality †."

Were this admitted, it would not in the preſent caſe, remove the difficulty. He muſt not only himſelf imagine he ſees what has no reality, he muſt make every body preſent, thoſe who are no enthuſiaſts, nor even friends, nay he muſt make enemies alſo imagine they ſee the ſame thing which he imagines

* Acts ii. 22. † p. 185.

gines he sees; for the miracles of Jesus were ac-acknowledged by those who persecuted him.

That an *enthusiast* is very liable to be imposed on, in whatever favours the particular species of enthusiasm, with which he is affected, none, who knows any thing of the human heart, will deny. But still this frailty hath its limits. For my own part, I cannot find examples of any, even among enthusiasts, (unless to the conviction of every body they were distracted) who did not see and hear in the same manner as other people. Many of this tribe have mistaken the reveries of a heated imagination, for the communications of the Divine Spirit, who never, in one single instance, mistook the operations of their external senses. Without marking this difference, we should make no distinction between the *enthusiastic* character and the *frantic*, which are in themselves evidently distinct. How shall we then account from *enthusiasm*, for the testimony given by the apostles, concerning the resurrection of their master, and his ascension into heaven, not to mention innumerable other facts? In these it was impossible that any, who in the use of their reason were but one remove from *Bedlamites*, should have been deceived. Yet, in the present case, the unbeliever must even say more than this, and, accumulating absurdity upon absurdity, must affirm, that the apostles were deceived as to the resurrection and ascension of their master, notwithstanding that they themselves had concerted the plan of stealing his body, and concealing it.

But this is not the only resource of the infidel. If he is driven from this strong hold, he can take refuge in

in another. Admit the apoſtles were not deceived themſelves, they may nevertheleſs have been, thro' mere devotion and benevolence, incited to deceive the reſt of mankind. The religioniſt, rejoins the author, " may know his narration to be falſe, and yet per- " ſevere in it, with the beſt intentions in the world, " for the ſake of promoting ſo holy a cauſe *."

Our religion, to uſe its own nervous language, teacheth us †, that we ought not to lie, or *ſpeak wickedly*, not even *for God;* that we ought not to *accept his perſon* in judgment, or *talk*, or act *deceitfully for him*. But ſo very little, it muſt be owned, has this ſentiment been attended to, even in the Chriſtian world, that one would almoſt think, it contained a ſtrain of virtue too ſublime for the apprehenſion of the multitude. 'Tis therefore a fact not to be queſtioned, that little pious frauds, as they are abſurdly, not to ſay impiouſly, called, have been often practiſed by ignorant zealots in ſupport of a cauſe, which they firmly believed to be both true and holy. But in all ſuch caſes the truth and holineſs of the cauſe are wholly independent of thoſe artifices. A perſon may be perſuaded of the former, who is too clear-ſighted to be deceived by the latter: for even a full conviction of the truth of the cauſe is not, in the leaſt, inconſiſtent with either the conſciouſneſs, or the detection of the frauds uſed in ſupport of it. In the Romiſh church, for example, there are many zealous and orthodox believers, who are nevertheleſs incapable of being impoſed on by the lying wonders, which ſome of their clergy have exhibited. The circumſtances

* p. 185. † Job. xiii. 7, 8.

cumſtances of the apoſtles were widely different from the circumſtances, either of thoſe believers, or of their clergy. Some of the miraculous events which the apoſtles atteſted, were not only the *evidences*, but the diſtinguiſhing *doctrines* of the religion which they taught. There is therefore in their caſe an abſolute inconſiſtency betwix a conviction of the truth of the cauſe, and the conſciouſneſs of the frauds uſed in ſupport of it. Thoſe frauds themſelves, if I may ſo expreſs my ſelf, conſtituted the very eſſence of the cauſe. What were the tenets, by which they were diſtinguiſhed, in their religious ſyſtem, particularly from the Phariſees, who owned not only the unity and perfections of the Godhead, the exiſtence of angels and demons, but the general reſurrection, and future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments? Were not theſe their peculiar tenets, That 'Jeſus, whom the 'Jews and Romans joined in crucifying without the 'gates of Jeruſalem, had ſuffered that ignominious 'death, to make atonement for the ſins of men *? 'that, in teſtimony of this, and of the divine 'acceptance, God hath raiſed him from the dead? that 'he had exalted him to his own right hand, to be a 'prince and a ſaviour, to give repentance to the peo-'ple, and the remiſſion of their ſins †? that he is 'now our advocate with the father ‡? that he will 'deſcend from heaven at the laſt day, to judge the 'world in righteouſneſs §, and to receive his faithful 'diſciples into heaven, to be forever with himſelf ‖?' Theſe fundamental articles of their ſyſtem, they muſt

* Rom. v. 6. &c. † Acts ii. 32. &c. v. 30. &c. x. 40. &c. ‡ 1 John ii. 1. § Acts x. 42. xvii. 31. ‖ John xiv. 3.

muſt have known, deſerved no better appellation than a ſtring of lies, if we ſuppoſe them liars in the teſtimony they gave of the reſurrection and aſcenſion of their maſter. If, agreeably to the Jewiſh hypotheſis, they had, in a moſt wonderful and daring manner, ſtole by night the corpſe from the ſepulchre, that on the falſe report of his reſurrection, they might found the ſtupendous fabrick they had projected among themſelves, how was it poſſible they ſhould conceive the cauſe to be either true or holy? They muſt have known, that in thoſe cardinal points, on which all depends, they were falſe witneſſes concerning God, wilful corrupters of the religion of their country, and public, though indeed diſintereſted incendiaries, whitherſoever they went. They could not therefore enjoy even that poor ſolace, 'that the 'end will ſanctify the means:' a ſolace with which the monk or anchoret ſilences the remoſtrances of his conſcience, when in defence of a religion which he regards as certain, he, by ſome pitiful juggler-trick, impoſeth on the credulity of the rabble. On the contrary, the whole ſcheme of the apoſtles muſt have been, and not only muſt have been, but muſt have appeared to themſelves, a moſt audacious freedom with their Maker, a villainous impoſition on the world, and I will add, a moſt fooliſh and ridiculous project of heaping ruin and diſgrace upon themſelves, without the proſpect of any compenſation in the preſent life, or reverſion in the future.

ONCE more, can we account for ſo extraordinary a phenomenon, by attributing it to that moſt powerful

ful of all motives, as the author thinks it *, " an " ambition to attain so sublime a character, as that " of a missionary, a prophet, an ambassador from " heaven?"

Not to mention, that such a towering ambition was but ill adapted to the mean rank, poor education, and habitual circumstances, of such men as the Apostles mostly had been; a desire of that kind, whatever wonders it may effectuate when supported by enthusiasm, and faith, and zeal, must soon have been crushed by the outward, and to human appearance insurmountable difficulties and distresses they had to encounter; when quite unsupported from within by either faith, or hope, or the testimony of a good conscience; rather, I should have said, when they themselves were haunted from within by a consciousness of the blackest guilt, impiety, and baseness. Strange indeed it must be owned without a parrallel that in such a cause, and in such circumstances, not only one, but all, should have the resolution to persevere to the last, in spite of infamy and torture; and that no one among so many confederates; should be induced to betray the dreadful secret.

THUS it appears, that no *address* in the FOUNDER of our religion, that no *enthusiastic credulity*, no *pious frauds*, no *ambitious views* in the FIRST CONVERTS, will account for its propagation on the plea of miracles, if false; and that consequently there is no presumption arising from *human nature* against the miracles said to have been wrought in proof of Christianity.

SECT.

* p. 200.

SECTION. II.

There is no presumption arising from the history of mankind, against the miracles said to have been wrought in proof of Christianity.

IN the foregoing section, I reasoned only from the knowledge that experience affords us of *human nature*, and of the motives by which men are influenced in their conduct. I come now to the examination of facts, that I may know whether the *history of mankind* will invalidate or corroborate my reasonings.

THE essayist is confident, that all the evidence resulting hence is on his side. Nay so unquestionable a truth does this appear to him, that he never attempts to prove it: he always presupposeth it, as a point universally acknowledged. 'Men in all ages,' we learn from a passage already quoted, 'have been 'much imposed on, by ridiculous stories of miracles 'ascribed to new systems of religion *.' Again he asserts, that 'the violations of truth are more com-'mon in the testimony concerning miracles, than 'in that concerning any other religious matter 'of fact †.' These assertions, however, tho' used for the same purpose, the attentive reader will observe, are far from conveying the same sense, or being of equal weight in the argument. The difference hath been marked in the fourth section of the first part of this tract. The oracular predictions among the ancient Pagans, and the pretended wonders performed

* p. 204. in the note. † p. 205 in the note.

formed by capuchins and friars, by itinerant or ſtationary teachers among the Roman Catholics, the author will doubtleſs reckon among religious miracles; but he can with no propriety denominate them, miracles aſcribed to a new ſyſtem of religion †. Now, 'tis with thoſe of the claſs laſt mentioned, and with thoſe only, that I am concerned; for 'tis only to them that the miracles wrought in proof of chriſtianity bear any analogy.

I ſhall then examine impartially this bold aſſertion, That 'men in all ages have been much impoſed on,

† Should the author inſiſt, that ſuch miracles are nevertheleſs meant to eſtabliſh, if not a new ſyſtem, at leaſt ſome *new point* of religion; that thoſe which are wrought in Spain, for example, are not intended as proofs of the goſpel, but as proofs of the efficacy of a particular *crucifix* or *relic*; which is always a new point, or at leaſt not univerſally received: I muſt beg the reader will conſider, what is the meaning of this expreſſion, *a new point of religion*. It is not *a new ſyſtem*, 'tis not even *a new doctrine*. We know, that one article of faith in the church of Rome is, that the images and relics of ſaints ought to be worſhipped. We know alſo, that in proof of this article, 'tis one of their principal arguments, that miracles are wrought by means of ſuch relics and images. We know further, that that church never attempted to enumerate her relics and other trumpery, and thus to aſcertain the individual objects of the adoration of her votaries. The producing therefore a *new relic*, *image* or *crucifix*, as an object of worſhip, implies not the ſmalleſt *deviation* from the *faith eſtabliſhed*; at the ſame time the opinion, that *miracles* are performed by means of ſuch relic, image, or crucifix, proves, in the minds of the people, for the reaſon aſſigned, a very ſtrong *confirmation* of the *faith eſtabliſhed*. All ſuch miracles therefore muſt be conſidered, as wrought in ſupport of the received ſuperſtition, and accordingly are always favoured by the popular prejudices.

'by ridiculous ſtories of miracles aſcribed to new ſyſtems of religion.' For my part, I am fully ſatisfied, that there is not the ſhadow of truth in it: and I am utterly at a loſs to conceive what could induce an author ſo well verſed in the annals both of ancient and modern times as Mr Hume, in ſuch a poſitive manner to advance it. I believe it will require no elaborate diſquiſition to evince, that theſe two, JUDAISM and CHRISTANITY, are of all that have ſubſiſted, or now ſubſiſt in the world, the only religions, which claim to have been attended in their firſt publication with the evidence of *miracles*. It deſerves alſo to be remarked, that it is more in conformity to common language, and incidental diſtinctions which have ariſen, than to ſtrict propriety, that I call Judaiſm and Chriſtanity, two religions. 'Tis true, the Jewiſh creed, in the days of our Saviour, having been corrupted by rabbinical traditions, ſtood in many reſpects, and at this day ſtands in direct oppoſition to the Goſpel. But it is not in this acceptation that I uſe the word Judaiſm. Such a creed, I am ſenſible, we can no more denominate the doctrine of the *Old Teſtament*, than we can denominate the creed of Pope Pius the doctrine of the *New*. And truly the fate which both inſtitutions, that of *Moſes*, and that of *Chriſt*, have met with among men, hath been in many reſpects extremely ſimilar. But when, on the contrary, we conſider the religion of the Jews, not as the ſyſtem of faith and practice, which preſently obtains, or heretofore hath obtained among that people; but ſolely as the religion that is revealed in *the law and the prophets*, we muſt acknowledge, that in this inſtitution are contained the rudiments

ments of the gospel. The same great plan carried on by the Divine Providence, for the recovery and final happiness of mankind, is the subject of both dispensations. They are by consequence closely connected. In the former we are acquainted with the *occasion* and *rise*, in the latter more fully with the *progress* and *completion* of this benign scheme. 'Tis for this reason that the scriptures of the *Old Testament*, which alone contain the authentic religion of the SYNAGOGUE, have ever been acknowledged in the CHURCH, an essential part of the *gospel-revelation*. The apostles and evangelists in every part of their writings, presuppose the truth of the Mosaic economy, and often found both their doctrine and arguments upon it. 'Tis therefore, I affirm, only in proof of this one series of revelations, that the aid of miracles hath with success been pretended to.

CAN the PAGAN religion, can, I should rather say, any of the numberless religions (for they are totally distinct) known by the common name of *Pagan*, produce any claim of this kind that will merit our attention? If the author knows of any, I wish he had mentioned it; for in all antiquity, as far as my acquaintance with it reacheth, I can recollect no such claim. However, that I may not, on the one hand, appear to pass the matter too slightly; or, on the other, lose myself, as Mr Hume expresses it, in too wide a field; I shall briefly consider, whether the ancient religions of *Greece* or *Rome* (which of all the species of heathenish superstition are on many accounts the most remarkable) can present a claim of this nature. Will it be said, that that monstrous heap

heap of fables we find in ancient bards, relating to the genealogy, productions, amours, and atchievements, of the gods, are the miracles on which Greek and Roman Paganism claims to be founded?

If one should talk in this manner, I must remind him, *first*, that these are by no means exhibited as EVIDENCES, but as the THEOLOGY itself; the poets always using the same affirmative style concerning what passed in heaven, in hell, and in the ocean, where men could not be spectators, as concerning what passed upon the earth: *secondly*, that all those mythological tales are confessedly recorded many centuries after they are supposed to have happened; no voucher, no testimony, nothing that can deserve the name of evidence having been produced, or even alledged, in proof of them; *thirdly*, that the intention of the writers seems to be solely the amusement, not the conviction of their readers; that accordingly no writer scruples to model the mythology to his particular taste, or rather caprice; but considering this as a province subject to the laws of Parnassus, all agree in arrogating here the immemorial privilege of poets, to say and feign, unquestioned, what they please; and *fourthly*, that at least several of their narrations are allegorical, and as plainly intended to convey some physical or moral instruction, as any of the apologues of Æsop. But to have said even thus much in refutation of so absurd a plea, will perhaps to many readers appear superfluous.

LEAVING therefore the endless absurdities and incoherent fictions of idolaters, I shall inquire, in the next place, whether the MAHOMETAN worship (which

(which in its ſpeculative principles appears more rational) pretends to have been built on the evidence of miracles.

Mahomet, the founder of this profeſſion, openly and frequently, as all the world knows, diſclaimed ſuch evidence. He frankly owned that he had no commiſſion nor power to work miracles, being ſent of God to the people only as a preacher. Not indeed but that there are things mentioned in the revelation he pretended to give them, which, if true, would have been miraculous; ſuch are the nocturnal viſits of the angel Gabriel, (not unlike thoſe ſecret interviews, which Numa, the inſtitutor of the Roman rites, affirmed that he had with the goddeſs Egeria) his getting from time to time parcels of the uncreated book tranſmitted to him from heaven, and his moſt amazing night-journey. But theſe miracles could be no evidences of his miſſion. Why? Becauſe no perſon was witneſs to them. On the contrary, it was becauſe his adherents had previouſly and implicitly believed his apoſtleſhip, that they admitted things ſo incredible, on his bare declaration. There is indeed one miracle, and but one, which he urgeth againſt the infidels, as the main ſupport of his cauſe; a miracle, for which even we, in this diſtant region and period, have not only the evidence of teſtimony, but, if we pleaſe to uſe it, all the evidence which the contemporaries and countrymen of this military apoſtle ever enjoyed. The miracle I mean is the manifeſt divinity, or ſupernatural excellence, of the ſcriptures which he gave them; a miracle, concern-

ing which I ſhall only ſay, that as it falls not under the cogniſance of the ſenſes, but of a much more fallible tribunal, taſte in compoſition, and critical diſcernment, ſo a principle of leſs efficacy than enthuſiaſm, even the ſlighteſt partiality, may make a man, in this particular, imagine he perceives what hath no reality. Certain it is, that notwithſtanding the many defiances which the prophet gave his enemies ſometimes to produce ten chapters, ſometimes one, that could bear to be compared with an equal portion of the perſpicuous book *, they ſeem not in the leaſt to have been convinced, that there was any thing miraculous in the matter. Nay this ſublime performance, ſo highly venerated by every Muſſulman, they were not afraid to blaſpheme as contemptible, calling it, "A "confuſed heap of dreams," and the ſilly fables of "ancient times †."

Paſſing

* Alcoran. The chapter——of the cow,——of Jonas,—of Hud.

†——Of cattle,—of the ſpoils,——of the prophets. That the Alcoran bears a very ſtrong reſemblance to the Talmud is indeed evident; but I hardly think, we can have a more ſtriking inſtance of the prejudices of modern infidels, than in their comparing this motley compoſition to the writings of the Old and New Teſtament. Let the reader but take the trouble to peruſe the hiſtory of Joſeph by Mahomet, which is the ſubject of a very long chapter, and to compare it with the account of that patriarch given by Moſes, and if he doth not perceive at once the immenſe inferiority of the former, I ſhall never, for my part, undertake by argument to convince him of it. To me it appears even almoſt incredible, that the moſt beautiful and moſt affecting paſſages of holy writ, ſhould be ſo wretchedly diſfigured by a writer whoſe intention, we are certain was not to burleſque them. But that every reader may be qualified to form ſome notion of this miracle of a book, I have ſubjoined a ſpecimen of it, from the chapter of

Paſſing therefore this equivocal miracle, if I may call it ſo, which I imagine was of very little uſe in *making*

of *the ant*; where we are informed particularly of the cauſe of the viſit which the queen of Sheba (there called *Saba*) made to Solomon, and of the occaſion of her converſion from idolatry. I have not ſelected this paſſage on account of any ſpecial futility to be found in it, for the like abſurdities may be obſerved in every page of the performance; but I have ſelected it, becauſe it is ſhort, and becauſe it contains a diſtinct ſtory which bears ſome relation to a paſſage of ſcripture. I uſe Mr Sale's verſion, which is the lateſt and the moſt approved, omitting only, for the ſake of brevity, ſuch ſupplementary expreſſions, as have been without neceſſity inſerted by the tranſlator. " Solomon was David's heir; and he " ſaid, O men, we have been taught the ſpeech of birds, and " have had all things beſtowed on us; this is manifeſt excellence. " And his armies were gathered together to Solomon, conſiſting " of genii, and men, and birds; and they were led in diſtinct " bands, till they came to the valley of ants. An ant ſaid, O " ants, enter ye into your habitations, leſt Solomon and his ar- " my tread you under foot and perceive it not. He ſmiled, laugh- " ing at her words, and ſaid, O Lord, excite me, that I may " be thankful for thy favour, wherewith thou haſt favoured me, " and my parents; and that I may do that which is right and " well pleaſing to thee: and introduce me, thro' thy mercy a- " mong thy ſervants the righteous. And he viewed the birds, " and ſaid, What is the reaſon that I ſee not the lapwing? " Is ſhe abſent? Verily I will chaſtiſe her with a ſevere " chaſtiſement, or I will put her to death; unleſs ſhe bring " me a juſt excuſe. And ſhe tarried not long, and ſaid, I have " viewed that which thou haſt not viewed; and I come to thee " from Saba, with a certain piece of news. I found a woman " to reign over them, who is provided with every thing, and " hath a magnificent throne. I found her and her people to wor- " ſhip the ſun, beſides God: and Satan hath prepared their works " for them, and hath turned them aſide from the way, (where- " fore they are not directed) leſt they ſhould worſhip God, who " bringeth to light that which is hidden in heaven and earth, " and

making proſelytes, whatever uſe it might have had, in *confirming* and *tutoring* theſe already made; it may be

" and knoweth whatever they conceal, and whatever they diſco-
" ver. God! there is no God but he; the Lord of the magni-
" ficent throne. He ſaid, We ſhall ſee whether thou haſt ſpo-
" ken the truth or whether thou art a liar. Go with this my
" letter, and caſt it down to them; then turn aſide from them,
" and wait for their anſwer. The queen ſaid, O nobles, verily
" an honourable letter hath been delivered to me; it is from So-
" lomon, and this is the tenour thereof. *In the name of the moſt*
" *merciful God, riſe not up againſt me: but come, and ſurrender your-*
" *ſelves to me.* She ſaid, O nobles, adviſe me in my buſineſs: I
" will not reſolve on any thing, till ye be witneſs thereof. They
" anſwered, We are endued with ſtrength, and endued with
" great proweſs in war; but the command appertaineth to thee:
" ſee therefore what thou wilt command. She ſaid, Verily kings,
" when they enter a city, waſte the ſame, and abaſe the moſt
" powerful of the inhabitants thereof: and ſo will theſe do. But
" I will ſend gifts to them: and will wait for what thoſe who
" ſhall be ſent, ſhall bring back. And when the embaſſador
" came to Solomon, that prince ſaid, Will ye preſent me with
" riches? Verily that which God hath given me is better than
" what he hath given you: but ye glory in your gifts. Return
" to your people. We will ſurely come to them with forces
" which they ſhall not be able to withſtand; and we will drive
" them out humbled; and they ſhall be contemptible. And So-
" lomon ſaid, O nobles, which of you will bring me her throne,
" before they come and ſurrender themſelves to me? A terrible
" genius anſwered, I will bring it thee, before thou ariſe from
" thy place. And one with whom was the knowledge of the
" ſcripture ſaid, I will bring it to thee, in the twinkling of an
" eye. And when Solomon ſaw it placed before him, he ſaid,
" This is a favour of my Lord, that he may make trial of me,
" whether I will be grateful, or whether I will be ungrateful:
" and he who is grateful, is grateful to his own advantage; but
" if any ſhall be ungrateful, verily my Lord is ſelf-ſufficient and
" munificent. And he ſaid, Alter her throne that ſhe may not know.

be worth while to enquire, what were the reasons, that an engine of such amazing influence was never employed by one who assumed a character so eminent, as the *chief of God's apostles*, and the *seal of the prophets?* Was it the want of address to manage an imposition of this nature? None who knows the history of this extraordinary personage, will suspect that he wanted

" know it, to the end we may see whether she be directed, or " whether she be of those who are not directed. And when she " was come, it was said, Is thy throne like this? She answered, " As though it were the same. And we have had knowledge be- " stowed on us before this, and have been resigned. But that which " she worshipped besides God, had turned her aside, for she was " of an unbelieving people. It was said to her, Enter the pa- " lace. And when she saw it, she imagined it to be a great wa- " ter, and she discovered her legs. Solomon said, Verily this is " a palace, evenly floored with glass. She said, O Lord, verily " I have dealt unjustly with my own soul; and I resign myself " together with Solomon, to God, the Lord of all creatures." Thus poverty of sentiment, monstrosity of invention, which always betokens a distempered not a rich imagination, and in respect of diction the most turgid verbosity, so apt to be mistaken by persons of a viciated taste for true sublimity, are the genuine characteristics of the book. They appear almost in every line. The very titles and epithets assigned to god not exempt from them. The Lord of the daybreak, the Lord of the magnificent throne, the King of the day of judgment, &c. They are pompous and insignificant. If the language of the Alcoran, as the Mahometans pretend, is indeed the language of God, the thoughts are but too evidently the thoughts of men. The reverse of this is the character of the Bible. When God speaks to men, 'tis reasonable to think that he addresses them in their own language. In the Bible you will find nothing inflated, nothing affected in the style. The words are human, but the sentiments are divine. Accordingly there is perhaps no book in the world, as hath been often justly observed, which suffers less by a literal translation into any other language.

wanted either the genius to contrive, or the reſolution and dexterity to execute, any practicable expedient for promoting his grand deſign; which was no leſs than that extenſive deſpotiſm, both religious and political, he at length acquired. Was it that he had too much honeſty to concert and carry on ſo groſs an artifice? Thoſe who belive him to have been an impoſtor in pretending a divine miſſion, will hardly ſuſpect him of ſuch delicacy in the methods he would take to accompliſh his aim. But in fact there is no colour of reaſon for ſuch a ſuggeſtion. There was no prodigy, no miraculous interpoſition, which he heſitated to give out, however extravagant when he ſaw it would contribute to his ends. Prodigies of which they had no other evidence but his own allegation, he knew his adverſaries might *deny*, but could not *diſprove*. His ſcruples therefore, we may well conclude, proceeded not from *probity*, but from *prudence;* and were ſolely againſt ſuch miracles, as muſt be ſubjected to the ſcrutiny of other people's ſenſes. Was it that miracle-working had before that time become ſo ſtale a device, that inſtead of gaining him the admiration of his countrymen, it would have expoſed him to their laughter and contempt? The moſt curſory peruſal of the Alcoran, will, to every man of ſenſe, afford an unanſwerable confutation of this hypotheſis.* Laſtly, was it that he lived in an enlightened

* It is obſervable, that Mahomet was very much haraſſed by the demands and reaſonings of his oppoſers with regard to miracles. They were ſo far from deſpiſing this evidence, that they conſidered the power of working miracles as a never-failing badge of

lightened age, and amongſt a civilized and learned people, who were too quick-ſighted to be deceived by tricks, which among barbarians might have produced the moſt aſtoniſhing effects? Quite the reverſe. He lived in a barbarous age, and amongſt an illiterate people, with whom, if with any, he had reaſon to believe the groſſeſt deceit would have proved ſucceſsful.

What pity was it, that Mahomet had not a counſellor ſo deeply verſed in human nature as the eſſayiſt, who

of the prophetical office; and therefore often aſſured him, by the moſt ſolemn oaths and proteſtations, that they would ſubmit implicitly to his guidance in religion, if he would once gratify them in this particular. This artful man, who doth not ſeem to have been of the ſame opinion with the eſſayiſt, that it was eaſy for cunning and impudence to impoſe, in a matter of this kind, on the credulity of the multitude, even though an ignorant and barbarous multitude, abſolutely refuſed to ſubject his miſſion to ſo hazardous a trial. There is no ſubject he more frequently recurs to in his Alcoran, being greatly intereſted to remove the doubts, which were raiſed in the minds of many by his diſclaiming this power; a power which till then had ever been looked upon as the prerogative of the prophets. The following are ſome of the reaſons, with which he endeavours to ſatisfy the people on this head. 1ſt, The *ſovereignty* of God, who is not to be called to account for what he gives or with-holds. 2d, The *uſefulneſs* of miracles, becauſe every man is foreordained either to believe, or to remain in unbelief; and this decree no miracles could alter. 3d. The *experienced inefficacy* of miracles in former times. 4th, The *mercy* of God, who had denied them this evidence, becauſe the ſin of their incredulity, in caſe he had granted it, would have been ſo heinous, that he could not have reſpited or tolerated them any longer. 5th, The *abuſe* to which miracles would have been expoſed from the infidels, who would have either charged them with impoſture, or imputed them to magic. See the chapters—of cattle, —of thunder,—of All Hejir,—of the night-journey,—of the ſpider,—of the prophets.

who could have assured him, that there needed but effrontery and enterprise; that with these auxiliaries he had reason to hope the most impudent pretences would be crowned with success? The too timid prophet would doubtless have remonstrated against this spirited counsel, insisting, that it was one thing to satisfy *friends*, and another thing to silence or convert *enemies*; that it was one thing to impose on mens *intellects*, and another thing to deceive their *senses*: that tho' an attempt of the last kind should succeed with some, yet if the fraud were detected by any, and he might expect that his adversaries would exert themselves in order to detect it, the whole mystery of craft would be divulged, his friends would become suspicious, and the spectators of such pretended miracles would become daily more prying and critical; that the consequences would infallibly prove fatal to the whole design; and that therefore such a cheat was on no account whatever to be risked. To this methinks I hear the other replying with some earnestness, 'Make but the trial, and you will cer-
'tainly find, that what judgment, nay and what
'senses your auditors have, they will renounce by
'principle in those sublime and mysterious subjects;
'they will imagine they see and hear what has no
'reality, nay whatever you shall desire that they
'should see and hear. Their credulity (forgive a
'freedom which my zeal inspires) will increase your
'impudence, and your impudence will overpower
'their credulity. The smallest spark may here kin-
'dle into the greatest flame; because the materials are
'always prepared for it. The *avidum genus auricu-*

'*larum*

'*larum* ſwallow greedily, without examination, what-'ever ſoothes ſuperſtition and promotes wonder.' Whether the judicious reader will reckon that the prophet or his counſellor would have had the better in this debate, I ſhall not take upon me to decide. One perhaps (if I might be indulged in a conjecture) whoſe notions are founded in metaphyſical refinements, or whoſe reſolutions are influenced by oratorical declamation, will incline to the opinion of the latter. One whoſe ſentiments are the reſult of a practical knowledge of mankind, will probably ſubcribe to the judgment of the former, and will allow, that in this inſtance the CAPTAIN-GENERAL and PROPHET of *Iſlamiſm* acted the more prudent part.

Shall we then ſay, that it was a more *obſcure* theatre on which JESUS CHRIST appeared? Were his ſpectators *more ignorant*, or *leſs adverſe?* The contrary of both is manifeſt. It may indeed be affirmed with truth, that the religion of the wild Arabs was more repugnant to the doctrine of Mahomet, than the religious dogmas of the Jews were to thoſe of Jeſus. But we ſhall err egregiouſly, if we conclude thence, that to this repugnancy the repugnancy of diſpoſition in the profeſſors of theſe religions muſt be proportionate. 'Tis a fine obſervation of the moſt piercing and comprehenſive genius, which hath appeared in this age. That "tho' men have a very "ſtrong tendency to idolatry, they are nevertheleſs "but little attached to idolatrous religions; that tho' "they have no great tendency to ſpiritual ideas, they "are nevertheleſs ſtrongly attached to religions which

"enjoin the adoration of a ſpiritual being*." Hence an attachment in JEWS, CHRISTIANS, and MAHOMETANS to their reſpective religions, which was never diſplayed by POLYTHEISTS of any denomination. But its *ſpirituality* was not the only cauſe of adherence which the Jews had to their religion. Every phyſical, every moral motive concurred in that people to rivet their attachment, and make them oppoſe with violence, whatever bore the face of innovation. Their religion and polity were ſo blended as ſcarce to be diſtinguiſhable: this engaged their *patriotiſm*. They were ſelected of God preferably to other nations: this inflamed their *pride* †. They were all under one ſpiritual head, the high-prieſt, and had their ſolemn feſtivals celebrated in one temple: this ſtrengthened their *union*. The ceremonies of their public worſhip were magnificent: this flattered their *ſenſes*. Theſe ceremonies alſo were numerous, and occupied a great part of their time: this, to all the other grounds of attachment, ſuperadded the force of *habit*. On the contrary, the *ſimplicity* of the goſpel, as well as the ſpirit of *humility*, and *moderation*, and *charity*, and *univerſality*, (if I may be allowed that term) which it breathed, could not fail to alarm a people of ſuch a caſt, and awaken, as in fact it did, the moſt furious oppoſition. Accordingly, Chriſtianity had fifty times more ſucceſs amongſt idolaters, than it had among the Jews. I am therefore warranted to aſſert, that if the miracles of our Lord and his

* De l'eſprit des loix, liv. 25. chap. 2.

† How great influence this motive had, appears from Luke iv. 25. &c. and from Acts xxii. 21, 22.

his apoſtles had been an impoſture, there could not on the face of the earth, have been choſen for exhibiting them, a more unfavourable theatre than *Judea*. On the other hand, had it been any where practicable, by a diſplay of falſe wonders, to make converts to a new religion, no where could a project of this nature have been conducted with greater probability of ſucceſs than in *Arabia*. So much for the contraſt there is betwixt the *Chriſtian* MESSIAH and the ORPHAN CHARGE of *Abu Taleb*. So plain it is, that the *moſque* yields entirely the plea of miracles to the *ſynagogue* and the *church*.

BUT from HEATHENS and MAHOMETANS, let us turn our eyes to the CHRISTIAN world. The only object here, which merits our attention, as coming under the denomination of miracles aſcribed to a new ſyſtem, and as what may be thought to rival in credibility the miracles of the goſpel, are thoſe ſaid to have been performed in the *primitive church*, after the times of the apoſtles, and after the finiſhing of the ſacred canon. Theſe will probably be aſcribed to a new ſyſtem, ſince Chriſtianity, for ſome centuries, was not (as the phraſe is) *eſtabliſhed*, or (to ſpeak more properly) *corrupted* by human authority; and ſince even after ſuch eſtabliſhment, there remained long in the empire a conſiderable mixture of idolaters. We have the greater reaſon here to conſider this topic, as it hath of late been the ſubject of very warm diſpute, and as the cauſe of Chriſtianity itſelf (which I conceive is totally diſtinct) ſeems to have been ſtrangely confounded with it. From the manner in which the argument hath been conducted, who

who is there that would not conclude that both muſt ſtand or fall together? Nothing however can be more groundleſs, nothing more injurious to the religion of Jeſus, than ſuch a concluſion.

The learned writer who hath given riſe to this controverſy, not only acknowledges, that the falſity of the miracles mentioned by the fathers, is no evidence of the falſity of the miracles recorded in ſcripture, but that there is even a preſumption in favour of theſe, ariſing from thoſe forgeries, which he pretends to have detected *. The juſtneſs of the remark contained in this acknowledgment, will appear more clearly from the following obſervations.

Let it be obſerved, firſt, that ſuppoſing numbers of people are aſcertained of the truth of ſome miracles, whether their conviction ariſe from ſenſe or from teſtimony, it will ſurely be admitted as a conſequence, that in all ſuch perſons, the preſumption againſt miracles from uncommonneſs muſt be greatly diminiſhed, in ſeveral perhaps totally extinguiſhed.

Let it be obſerved, ſecondly, that if true miracles have been employed ſucceſsfully in ſupport of certain religious tenets, this ſucceſs will naturally ſuggeſt to thoſe, who are zealous of propagating favourite opinions in religion, to recur to the plea of miracles, as the moſt effectual expedient for accompliſhing their end. This they will be encouraged to do on a double account: *firſt*, they know, that people from recent experience, are made to expect ſuch a

* Dr Middleton's prefatory diſcourſe to his letter from Rome.

a confirmation; *secondly*, they know, that in conſequence of this experience, the incredibility, which is the principal obſtruction to ſuch an undertaking, is in a manner removed: and there is, on the contrary, as in ſuch circumſtances there certainly would be, a promptneſs in the generality to receive them.

Add to theſe, that if we conſult the hiſtory of mankind, or even our own experience, we ſhall be convinced, that hardly hath one wonderful event actually happened in any country, even where there have not been ſuch viſible temptations to forgery, which hath not given riſe to falſe rumours of other events ſimilar, but ſtill more wonderful. Hardly hath any perſon or people atchieved ſome exploits truly extraordinary, to whom common report hath not quickly attributed many others, as extraordinary at leaſt, if not impoſſible. As *fame* may, in this reſpect, be compared to a *multiplying glaſs*, reaſonable people almoſt always conclude in the ſame way concerning both; we know that there is not a real object correſponding to every appearance exhibited, at the ſame time we know that there muſt be ſome objects to give riſe to the appearances.

I ſhould therefore only beg of our adverſaries, that, for argument's ſake, they will ſuppoſe that the miracles related in the New Teſtament were really performed; and then, that they will candidly tell us, what, according to their notions of human nature, would, in all likelihood, have been the conſequences. They muſt be very partial to a darling hypotheſis, or little acquainted with the world, who will heſitate to own, that, on this ſuppoſition, 'tis not barely proba-

ble, but certain, that for a few endowed with the miraculous power, there would ſoon have ariſen numbers of pretenders; that from ſome miracles well atteſted, occaſion would have been taken to propagate innumerable falſe reports. If ſo, with what colour of juſtice can the detection of many ſpurious reports among the primitive Chriſtians be conſidered as a preſumption againſt thoſe miracles, the reality of which is the moſt plauſible; nay the only plauſible account that can be given of the origin of ſuch reports? The preſumption is too evidently on the oppoſite ſide to need illuſtration.

'Tis not my intention here to patronize either ſide of the queſtion which the Doctor's *Free inquiry* hath occaſioned. All that concerns my argument is, barely to evince, and this I imagine hath been evinced, that, granting the Doctor's plea to be well founded, there is no preſumption ariſing hence, which tends in the loweſt degree to diſcredit the miracles recorded in holy writ; nay, that there is a contrary preſumption. In further confirmation of this truth, let me aſk, Were there ever, in any region of the globe, any ſimilar pretenſions to miraculous powers, before that memorable *era*, the publication of the goſpel? Let me aſk again, Since thoſe pretenſions ceaſed, hath it ever been in the power of the moſt daring enthuſiaſt, to revive them any where in favour of a new ſyſtem? Authentic miracles will, for a time, give a currency to counterfeits; but as the former become leſs frequent, the latter become more ſuſpected, till at length they are treated with general contempt, and diſappear. The danger then is, leſt men

men, ever prone to extremes, become as extravagently incredulous, as formerly they were credulous. *Lazineſs*, the true ſource of both, always inclines us to admit or reject in the *groſs*, without entering on the irkſome taſk of conſidering things in *detail*. In the firſt inſtance, knowing ſome ſuch events to be true, they *admit all without examination;* in the ſecond, knowing ſome to be falſe, they *reject all without examination*. A procedure this, which, however excuſable in the unthinking herd, is altogether unworthy a philoſopher.

But it may be thought, that the claim to miracles in the early ages of the church, continued too long to be ſupported ſolely on the credit of thoſe performed by our Lord and his apoſtles. In order to account for this, it ought to be attended to, that in the courſe of ſome centuries, the ſituation of affairs, with regard to religion, was really inverted. Education, and even ſuperſtition, and bigotry, and popularity, which the miracles of Chriſt and his apoſtles had to encounter, came gradually to be on the ſide of thoſe wonders, ſaid to have been performed in after times. If they were potent *enemies*, and ſuch as we have reaſon to believe nothing but the force of truth could vanquiſh; they were alſo potent *allies*, and may well be ſuppoſed able to give a temporary triumph to falſehood, eſpecially when it had few or no enemies to combat. But in diſcourſing on the prodigies ſaid to have been performed in primitive times, I have been inſenſibly carried from the point, to which I propoſed in this ſection to confine myſelf. From inquiring into miracles aſcribed to new ſyſtems

ſtems, I have proceeded to thoſe pleaded in confirmation of ſyſtems previouſly eſtabliſhed and generally received.

LEAVING ſo remote a period, I propoſe, laſtly, to inquire, whether, ſince that time, any hereſiarch whatever, any founder of a new ſect, or publiſher of a new ſyſtem, hath pretended to miraculous powers. If the eſſayiſt had known of any ſuch pretender, he ſurely would have mentioned him. But as he hath not afforded us any light on this ſubject, I ſhall juſt recall to the remembrance of my reader, thoſe perſons who, either as innovators or reformers, have made ſome figure in the church. They were the perſons from whom, if from any, a plea of this kind might naturally have been expected; eſpecially at a time when Europe was either plunged in barbariſm, or but beginning to emerge out of it,

Was ever then this high prerogative, the power of working miracles, claimed or exerciſed by the founders of the ſects of the Waldenſes and Albigenſes? Did Wickliff in England pretend to it? Did Huſs or Jerom in Bohemia? To come nearer mocern times, Did Luther in Germany, Zuinglius in Switzerland, Calvin in France, or any other of the reformers, advance this plea? Do ſuch of them as are authors, mention in their writings any miracles they performed, or appeal to them as the evidences of their doctrine? Do contemporary hiſtorians alledge, that they challenged the faith of their auditors, in conſequence of ſuch ſupernatural powers? I admit, if they did, that their miracles might be aſcribed to a new ſyſtem. For tho' they pretended only

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to re-eſtabliſh the Chriſtian inſtitution, in its native purity, expunging thoſe pernicious interpolations, which a falſe philoſophy had foiſted into the doctrinal part, and Pagan ſuperſtition into the moral and the ritual; yet as the religion they inculcated, greatly differed from the faith and worſhip of the times, it might, in this reſpect, be denominated a new ſyſtem; and would be encountered by all the violence and prejudice, which novelties in religion never fail to excite. Not that the want of real miracles was a preſumption againſt the truth of their doctrine. The God of nature, who is the God of Chriſtians, does nothing in vain. No new revelation was pretended to; conſequently there was no occaſion for ſuch ſupernatural ſupport. They appealed to the revelation formerly beſtowed, and by all parties acknowledged, as to the proper rule in this controverſy: they appealed to the reaſon of mankind as the judge; and the reaſon of mankind was a competent judge of the conformity of their doctrine to this unerring rule.

But how, upon the author's principles, ſhall we account for this moderation in the reformers? Were they, in his judgment, calm inquirers into truth? Were they diſpaſſionate reaſoners in defence of it? Far otherwiſe. He tells us, "They may ſafely be "pronounced to have been univerſally inflamed with "the higheſt enthuſiaſm *." And doubtleſs we cannot expect from this hand a more amiable picture of their diſciples. May not we then, in our turn, ſafely pronounce, this writer himſelf being judge, that for a man to imagine he ſees what hath no reality, to impoſe in this manner not only on his own under-

* Hiſt. of Great Britain, James I. chap. 1.

underſtanding, but even on his external ſenſes, is a pitch of deluſion higher than the higheſt enthuſiaſm can produce, and is to be imputed only to downright frenzy * ?

Since

* Perhaps it will be pleaded that the working of miracles was conſidered by the leaders in the reformation as a Popiſh artifice, and as therefore worthy of being diſcarded with the other abuſes which Popery had introduced. That this was not the light in which miracles were viewed by Luther, who juſtly poſſeſſes the firſt place in the liſt of reformers, is evident from the manner in which he argues againſt Muncer, the apoſtle of the Anabaptiſts. This man, without ordination, had aſſumed the office of a Chriſtian paſtor. Againſt this conduct Luther remonſtrates, as being in his judgment, an uſurpation of the ſacred function. "Let him be aſked," ſays he, "Who made him teacher of religion? "If he anſwers, God; let him prove it by a viſible *miracle*: for "'tis by ſuch ſigns that God declares himſelf, when he gives an "extraordinary miſſion." When this argument was afterwards retorted on himſelf by the Romaniſts, who deſired to know how his own vocation, originally limited and dependent, had become not only unlimited, but quite independent of the hierarchy, from which he had received it; his reply was, That the *intrepidity*, with which he had been enabled to brave ſo many dangers, and the *ſucceſs* with which his enterprſe had been crowned, ought to be regarded as miraculous: And indeed moſt of his followers were of this opinion. But whether this opinion was erroneous, or whether the argument againſt Muncer was concluſive, 'tis not my buſineſs to enquire. Thus much is evident from the ſtory: *firſt*, That this reformer, far from rejecting miracles as a Romiſh trick, acknowledged, that in ſome religious queſtions, they are the only medium of proof; *ſecondly*, That notwithſtanding this, he never attempted, by a ſhow of miracles, to impoſe on the ſenſes of his hearers; (if they were deceived in thinking that his ſucceſs and magnanimity were miraculous, 'twas not their ſenſes, but their underſtanding that was deceived); *laſtly*, That the Anabaptiſts themſelves, tho' perhaps the moſt outrageous fanatics that ever exiſted, did not pretend to the power of working miracles.——*Sleidan lib. 5. Luth. De votis monaſt. &c. Epiſt. ad Frid. Sax. Ducem. ap. Chytræum.*

Since the world began, there hath not appeared a more general propenſion to the wildeſt fanaticiſm, a greater degree of credulity in every claim that was made to the illapſes of the Holy Spirit, or more thorough contempt of all eſtabliſhed modes of worſhip, than appeared in this iſland about the middle of the laſt century. 'Tis aſtoniſhing, that when the minds of men were intoxicated with enthuſiaſm; when every new pretender to divine illuminations was quickly ſurrounded by a crowd of followers, and his moſt incoherent effuſions greedily ſwallowed as the dictates of the Holy Ghoſt; that in ſuch a Babel of ſectaries, none are to be found, who advanced a claim to the power of working miracles; a claim which, in the author's opinion, tho' falſe, is eaſily ſupported, and wonderfully ſucceſsful, eſpecially among enthuſiaſts. Yet to Mr Hume himſelf, who hath written the hiſtory of that period, and who will not be accuſed of neglecting to mark the extravagancies effected by enthuſiaſm, I appeal whether this remark be juſt.

Will it be alledged as an exception that one or two frantic people among the Quakers, not the leaders of the party, did actually pretend to ſuch a power? Let it be remembered, that this conduct had no other conſequences, but to bring upon the pretenders ſuch a general contempt, as in that fanatical and gloomy age, the moſt unintelligible jargon or glaring nonſenſe would never have been able to produce.

Will it be urged by the eſſayiſt, that even in the beginning of the preſent century, this plea was revived in Britain by the French prophets, a ſet of poor viſionaries, who, by the barbarity with which they had been treated in their own country, had been wrought up

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to madneſs, before they took refuge in this? I muſt beg leave to remind him, that it is manifeſt, from the hiſtory of thoſe delirious and unhappy creatures, that by no part of their conduct did they ſo effectually open the eyes of mankind naturally credulous, diſcredit their own inſpirations, and ruin their cauſe, as by this, not leſs fooliſh than preſumptuous pretence. Accordingly they are perhaps the only ſect, which hath ſprung up ſo lately, made ſo great a buſtle for a while, and which is nevertheleſs at this day totally extinct. It deſerves alſo to be remarked concerning this people, that though they were mad enough to imagine that they could reſtore a dead man to life; nay tho' they proceeded ſo far, as to determine and announce beforehand the day and the hour of his reſurrection; yet none of them were ſo diſtracted, as to imagine, that they had ſeen him riſe; not one of them afterwards pretended, that their prediction had been fulfilled. Thus even a frenzy, which had quite diſordered their intellects, could not in this inſtance overpower their ſenſes.

UPON the whole, therefore, till ſome contrary example is produced, I may warrantably conclude,—that the religion of the BIBLE is the only religion extant, which claims to have been recommended by the evidence of *miracles*;—that though in different ages and countries, numberleſs enthuſiaſts have ariſen, extremely few have dared to advance this plea;—that wherever any have had the boldneſs to recur to it, it hath proved the bane, and not the ſupport, of their cauſe. Thus it hath been evinced, as was propoſed, that there is no preſumption ariſing from the *hiſtory*

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of the world, which can in the leaſt invalidate the argument from miracles, in defence of Chriſtianity.

SECTION III.

No miracles recorded by hiſtorians of other religions are ſubverſive of the evidence ariſing from the miracles wrought in proof of Chriſtianity, or can be conſidered as contrary teſtimony.

'WHY is a miracle regarded as evidence of a 'religious doctrine?' Or, 'What connection 'is there between an act of power admitted to be 'ſupernatural, and the truth of a propoſition pro-'nounced by the perſon who exerts that power?' Theſe are queſtions, which ſome of our infidels have exulted in as unanſwerable: and they are queſtions, which 'tis proper to examine a little; not ſo much for their own ſake, as becauſe a ſatisfactory anſwer to them may throw light on the ſubject of this ſection.

A man, I ſuppoſe, of an unblemiſhed character, advanceth doctrines in religion, unknown before, but not in themſelves apparently impious or abſurd. We interrogate him about the manner wherein he attained the knowledge of thoſe doctrines. He affirms, That by no proceſs of reaſoning, nor in any other natural way, did he diſcover them; but that they were revealed to him by the Spirit of God. It muſt be owned, there is a very ſtrong preſumption againſt the truth of what he ſays; and 'tis of conſequence to inquire, whence that preſumption ariſeth. It is not primarily from any doubt of the man's integrity. If the fact he

related, were of an ordinary nature, the reputation he has hitherto maintained would ſecure him from being ſuſpected of an intended deceit. It is not from any abſurdity or immoral tendency we perceive in the doctrine itſelf. It ariſeth principally, if not ſolely from theſe two circumſtances, the extreme uncommonneſs of ſuch a revelation, and the great facility with which people of ſtrong fancy, may in this particular impoſe upon themſelves. The man, I ſuppoſed, acquaints us further, that God, when he communicated to him the truths he publiſhes, communicated alſo the power of working miracles; ſuch as, of giving ſight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, of raiſing the dead, and making whole the maimed. 'Tis evident, that we have preciſely the ſame preſumption againſt his being endued with ſuch a power, as againſt his having obtained ſuch a revelation. Two things are aſſerted: there is one preſumption, and but one, againſt them; and it equally effects them both. Whatever proves either aſſertion, removes the only preſumption which hinders our belief of the other. The man, I ſuppoſe, laſtly, performs the miracles before us, which he ſaid he was commiſſioned to perform. We can no longer doubt of a ſupernatural communication. We have now all the evidence which the integrity of the perſon could give us, as to an ordinary event atteſted by him, that the doctrine he delivers as from God, is from God, and therefore true.

Nay, we have more evidence than for any common fact, vouched by a perſon of undoubted probity. As God is both almighty and all-wiſe, if he hath beſtowed on any ſo uncommon a privilege, 'tis highly probable, that it is beſtowed for promoting ſome end uncommonly

commonly important. And what more important end than to reveal to men that which may be conducive to their present and eternal happiness? It may be said, That, at most, it can only prove the interposal of some power superior to human: the being who interposeth is perhaps a bad being, and intends to deceive us. This it may be allowed, is *possible*; but the other is *probable*. For, *first*, From the light of nature, we have no positive evidence of the existence of such intermediate beings, good or bad. Their existence is therefore only possible. Of the existence and perfections of God, we have the highest moral assurance. *Secondly*, If there were such beings, that raising the dead, and giving sight to the blind, should come within the verge of their power, is also but possible; that they are within the sphere of omnipotence is certain. *Thirdly*, Whatever seems to imply a suspension of any of the established laws of nature, we may presume, with great appearance of reason, proceeds from the author of nature, either *immediately*, or, which amounts, to the same thing *mediately*: that is, by the intervention of some agent impowered by him. To all these there will also accrue presumptions, not only, as was hinted already, from the character of the preacher, but from the apparent tendency of the doctrine, and from the effect it produceth on those who receive it. And now the connection between the miracle and the doctrine is obvious. The miracle removes the improbability of a supernatural communication of which it is in fact an irrefragable evidence. This improbability, which was the only obstacle, being removed, the doctrine hath, at least, all the evidence

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of a common fact, attested by a man of known virtue and good sense.

In order to illustrate this further, I shall recur to the instance I have already had occasion to consider, of the Dutchman and the King of Siam. I shall suppose, that, besides the account given by the former of the freezing of water in Holland, he had informed the prince of the astonishing effects produced by gunpowder, with which the latter had been entirely unacquainted. Both accounts appear to him alike incredible, or, if you please, absolutely impossible. Some time afterwards, the Dutchman gets imported into the kingdom a sufficient quantity of gunpowder, with the necessary artillery. He informs the monarch of this acquisition; who having permitted him to make experiments on some of his cattle and buildings, perceives, with inexpressible amazement, that all the European had told him, of the celerity and violence with which this destructive powder operates, is strictly conformable to truth. I ask any considerate person, Would not this be enough to restore the stranger to the Indian's good opinion, which, I suppose, his former experienced honesty had entitled him to? Would it not remove the incredibility of the account he had given of the freezing of water in northern countries? Yet, if abstractly considered, what connection is there between the effects of gunpowder and the effects of cold? But the presumption arising from miracles, in favour of the doctrine published by the performer, as divinely inspired, must be incomparably stronger; since, from what hath been said, it appears to have several peculiar circumstances, which add

add weight to it. 'Tis evident, then, that miracles are a proper proof, and perhaps the only proper proof, of a revelation from Heaven. But 'tis alſo evident, that miracles may be wrought for other purpoſes, and may not be intended as proofs of any doctrine whatſoever.

THUS much being premiſed, I ſhall examine another very curious argument of the eſſayiſt: "There "is no teſtimony," ſays he, "for any prodigy, that "is not oppoſed by an infinite number of witneſ- "ſes; ſo that not only the miracle deſtroys the credit "of the teſtimony, but even the teſtimony deſtroys "itſelf *." In order to illuſtrate this ſtrange poſition, he obſerves, that, "in matters of religion, "whatever is different is contrary; and that it is "impoſſible the religions of ancient Rome, of Tur- "key, of Siam, and of China, ſhould all of them be "eſtabliſhed on any ſolid foundation. Every mira- "cle therefore pretended to have been wrought in any "of theſe religions, (and all of them abound in "miracles) as its direct ſcope is to eſtabliſh the "particular ſyſtem to which it is attributed, ſo it "has the ſame force, tho' more indirectly, to over- "throw every other ſyſtem. In deſtroying a rival "ſyſtem, it likewiſe deſtroys the credit of thoſe "miracles, on which that ſyſtem was eſtabliſhed; "ſo that all the prodigies of different religions are "to be regarded as contrary facts, and the evidences "of theſe prodigies, whether weak or ſtrong, as "oppoſite to each other." Never did an author

* p. 190, &c.

more artfully avail himſelf of indefinite expreſſions. With what admirable ſleight does he vary his phraſes, ſo as to make the inadvertent reader look upon them as ſynonymous, when in fact their ſignifications are totally diſtinct? Thus what, by a moſt extraordinary idiom, is called at firſt, 'miracles 'wrought in a religion,' we are next to regard, as 'miracles attributed to a particular ſyſtem,' and laſtly, as 'miracles, the direct ſcope of which is to 'eſtabliſh that ſyſtem.' Every body, I will venture to ſay, in beginning to read the ſentence, if he forms any notion of what the author means by a 'miracle wrought in a religion,' underſtands it barely as a 'miracle wrought among thoſe who profeſs 'a particular religion,' the words appearing to be uſed in the ſame latitude, as when we call the traditional tales current among the Jews, tho' they ſhould have no relation to religion, Jewiſh tales; and thoſe in like manner Mahometan or Pagan tales, which are current among Mahometans or Pagans. Such a miracle, the reader, ere he is aware, is brought to conſider as a miracle attributed to a particular ſyſtem; nay further, as a 'miracle, the direct 'ſcope of which is to eſtabliſh that ſyſtem.' Yet nothing can be conceived more different than the meaning of theſe expreſſions, which are here jumbled together as equivalent.

'Tis plain, that all the miracles of which there is any record, come under the firſt denomination. They are all ſuppoſed to have been wrought before men, or among men; and wherever there are men, there is religion of ſome kind or other. Perhaps

haps too all may, in a very *improper* ſenſe, be attributed to a religious ſyſtem. They all imply an interruption of the ordinary courſe of nature. Such an interruption, wherever it is obſerved, will be aſcribed to the agency of thoſe divinities that are adored by the obſervers, and ſo may be ſaid to be attributed by them to their own ſyſtem. But where are the miracles (thoſe of holy writ excepted) of which you can ſay with propriety, it is their direct ſcope to eſtabliſh a particular ſyſtem? Muſt we not then be ſtrangely blinded by the charms of a few ambiguous terms, if we are made to confound things ſo widely different? Yet this confuſion is the very baſis, on which the author founds his reaſoning, and rears this tremendous doctrine; That 'a mira-'cle of Mahomet, or any of his ſucceſſors,' and, by parity of reaſon, a miracle of Chriſt, or any of his apoſtles, 'is refuted (as if it had been mentioned, 'and had in expreſs terms, been contradicted) by 'the teſtimony of Titus Livius, Plutarch, Taci-'tus, and of all the authors, Chineſe, Grecian, 'and Roman Catholic, who have related any mira-'cles in their particular religions.' Here all the miracles, that have been related by men of different religions, are blended, as coming under the common denomination of miracles, the direct ſcope of which was to eſtabliſh thoſe particular religious ſyſtems; an inſinuation, in which there is not even the ſhadow of truth.

That the reader may be ſatisfied on this point, I muſt beg his attention to the following obſervations concerning the miracles of profane hiſtory. *Firſt*, Many facts are related as miraculous, where we may admit

admit the fact, without acknowledging the miracle. Inſtances of this kind we have in relations concerning comets, eclipſes, meteors, earthquakes, and ſuchlike. *Secondly*, The miracles may be admitted as genuine, and the manner in which hiſtorians account for them, rejected as abſurd. The one is a matter of teſtimony, the other of conjecture. In this a man is influenced by education, by prejudices, by received opinions. In every country, as was obſerved already, men will recur to the theology of the place, for the ſolution of every phenomenon ſuppoſed miraculous. But, that it was the ſcope of the miracle to ſupport the theology, is one thing; and that fanciful men thought they diſcovered in the theology the cauſes of the miracle, is another. The inhabitants of Lyſtra accounted, from the principles of their own religion, for the miracle performed in their city by Paul aud Barnabas *. Was it therefore the ſcope of that miracle to ſupport the Lycaonian religion? *Thirdly*, Many miracles are recorded, as produced directly by Heaven without the miniſtration of men: by what conſtruction are theſe diſcovered to be proofs of a particular ſyſtem? Yet theſe alſo, wherever they happen, will be accounted for by the natives of the country, from the principles of their own ſuperſtition. Had any of the Pagan citizens eſcaped the ruin in which Sodom was miraculouſly involved, they would doubtleſs have ſought for the cauſe of this deſtruction in the eſtabliſhed mode of polytheiſm, and would probably have imputed it to the vengeance of ſome of their deities, incurred by the neglect of ſome frivolous ceremony.

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* Acts xiv. 8. &c

Would it therefore have been the ſcope of the miracle to confirm this nonſenſe? *Fourthly*, Even miracles ſaid to have been performed by a man, are no evidences of the truth of that man's opinions; ſuch, I mean, as he pretends not to have received by revelation, but by the excerciſe of reaſon, by education, or by information from other men; no more than a man's being endowed with bodily ſtrenth greater than ordinary, would prove him to be ſuperior to others in his mental faculties. I conclude with declaring, that if inſtances ſhall be produced, of miracles wrought by men of probity, in proof of doctrines which they affirm to have been revealed to them from Heaven, and which are repugnant to the doctrine of the Bible, then I ſhall think it equitable to admit, that religious miracles contradict one another. Then will reaſonable people be reduced to the dilemma, either of diſproving the allegations on one ſide, or of acknowledging that miracles can be no evidence of revelation. No attempt however hath as yet been made by any writer to produce an inſtance of this kind.

'But will nothing leſs ſatisfy?' replies the author. 'Will not the predictions of augurs and oracles, and 'the intimations ſaid to have been given by the gods 'or ſaints in dreams and viſions, of things not otherwiſe knowable by thoſe to whom they were thus 'intimated; will not theſe, and ſuchlike prodigies, 'ſerve in ſome degree as evidence?' As evidence of what? Shall we ſay of any religious principles conveyed at the ſame time by revelation? No, 'tis not even pretended, that there were any ſuch principles

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ſo conveyed: but as evidence of principles which had been long before entertained, and which were originally imbibed from education, and from education only. That the evidence here, ſuppoſing the truth of the facts, is at beſt but very indirect, and by no means on the ſame footing with that of the miracles recorded in the goſpel, might be eaſily evinced, if there were occaſion. But there is in reality no occaſion, ſince there is no ſuch evidence of the facts as can juſtly intitle them to our notice. Let it be remembered, that, in the fourth ſection of the firſt part, it was ſhown, that there is the greateſt diſparity, in reſpect of evidence, betwixt miracles performed in proof of a religion *to be* eſtabliſhed, and in *contradiction* to opinions generally received; and miracles performed, on the contrary, in ſupport of a religion *already* eſtabliſhed, and in *confirmation* of opinions generally received; that, in the former caſe, there is the ſtrongeſt preſumption *for* the miracles, in the latter *againſt* them. Let it alſo be remembered, that in the preceding ſection it was ſhown, that the religion of the Bible is the only religion extant, which claims to have been uſhered into the world by miracles; that this prerogative neither the Pagan religion, the Mahometan, nor the Roman-Catholic, can, with any appearance of reaſon, arrogate; and that, by conſequence, there is one of the ſtrongeſt preſumptions poſſible *for* the miracles of the goſpel, which is not only wanting in the miracles of other religions, but which is contraſted by the ſtrongeſt preſumption poſſible *againſt* theſe miracles. And tho' this preſumption ſhould not, in all caſes, be

be accounted abſolutely inſuperable, we muſt at leaſt ſay, it gives an immenſe ſuperiority to the proofs of Chriſtianity. 'Twere an endleſs and a fruitleſs taſk to canvaſs particularly the evidence of all the pretended miracles either of Paganiſm or Popery, (for on this head Mahometiſm is much more modeſt) but as the author hath ſelected ſome, which he conſiders as the beſt atteſted, of both religions, theſe ſhall be examined ſeverally in the two ſubſequent ſections. From this examination a tolerable judgment may be formed concerning the pretenſions of theſe two ſpecies of ſuperſtition.

But from what hath been ſaid, it is evident, that the contrariety which the author pretends to have diſcovered in the miracles ſaid to have been wrought, as he expreſſeth it, in different religions, vaniſhes entirely on a cloſe inſpection. He is even ſenſible of this himſelf; and, as is cuſtomary with orators, the more inconcluſive his reaſons are, ſo much the more poſitive are his aſſertions. "This argument," ſays he, "may appear over ſubtile and refined;" indeed ſo ſubtile and refined, that it is inviſible altogether; "*but*—— is not *in reality* different from the "reaſoning of a judge, who ſuppoſes that the credit "of two witneſſes maintaining a crime againſt any one, "is deſtroyed by the teſtimony of two others, who "affirm him to have been two hundred leagues di-"ſtant, at the ſame inſtant when the crime is ſaid "to have been committed." After the particle *but*, with which this clauſe begins, the reader naturally expects ſuch an explication of the argument, as will convince him, that tho' *ſubtile* and *refined*, it hath

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ſolidity and *ſtrength*. Inſtead of this, he hath only the author's *word* warranting it to be good to all intents: "But *is not in reality* different," *&c.* The analogy between his *example* and his *argument* ſeems to be but very diſtant; I ſhall therefore, without any comment, leave it with the reader as I find it.

THUS it appears, that, for aught the author hath as yet proved, no miracles recorded by hiſtorians of other religions are ſubverſive of the evidence ariſing from the miracles wrought in proof of Chriſtianity, or can juſtly be conſidered as contrary teſtimony.

SECTION IV.

Examination of the PAGAN *miracles mentioned by Mr Hume.*

SHOULD one read attentively the *Eſſay on* Miracles, and conſider it ſolely as a philoſophical diſquiſition on an abſtract queſtion, like moſt of the other pieces in the ſame collection; he could not fail to wonder, what had induced the author ſo ſuddenly to change ſides in the debate, and, by doing ſo, to contradict himſelf in terms the moſt expreſs. Does he not, in the latter part of that performance, as warmly contend for the reality of ſome miracles, as he had pleaded in the former part, for the *impoſſibility* of all? 'Tis true, he generally concludes concerning thoſe, that they are 'groſs and palpable falſehoods.' But this ſerves only to render his conduct the more myſterious, as that concluſion is always preceded by an attempt to evince, that we have the greateſt reaſon to receive them as 'certain and infallible truths.' Nay, ſo entirely

tirely doth his *zeal* make him forget even his moſt poſitive aſſertions, (and what inconſiſtencies may not be dreaded from an exceſs of *zeal!*) that he ſhows minutely we have thoſe very evidences for the miracles he is pleaſed to patronize, which, he had ſtrenuouſly argued, were not to be found in ſupport of any miracles whatever.

"There is not to be found," he affirms*, "in all "hiſtory, a miracle atteſted by a ſufficient number "of men, of ſuch unqueſtioned good ſenſe, educa- "tion, and learning, as to ſecure us againſt all delu- "ſion in themſelves; of ſuch undoubted integrity, "as to place them beyond all ſuſpicion of any deſign "to deceive others; of ſuch credit and reputation in "the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to "loſe, in caſe of being detected in any falſehood; "and at the ſame time atteſting facts performed in "ſuch a public manner, and in ſo celebrated a part "of the world, as to render the detection unavoid- "able." We need only turn over a few pages of the *Eſſay*, and we ſhall find the author taking great pains to convince us, that all theſe circumſtances concurred in ſupport of certain miracles, which, notwithſtanding his *general reſolution*, he has thought fit to honour with a very particular attention.

He has not indeed told us *how many* witneſſes, in his way of reckoning, will conſtitute 'a ſufficient number;' but for ſome miracles which he relates, he gives us *clouds* of witneſſes, one cloud ſucceeding another: for the Moliniſts, who tried to diſcredit them, "ſoon found themſelves overwhelmed by a "cloud of *new* witneſſes, one hundred and twenty

* p. 183.

" in number *." As to the character of the witneſſes, " moſt of them were perſons of credit and " ſubſtance in Paris †;" again, thoſe miracles " were " atteſted by witneſſes of credit and diſtinction, be- " fore judges of unqueſtioned integrity‡; " and, " they were proved by witneſſes, before the official- " ty or biſhop's court of Paris, under the eyes of " Cardinal Noailles, whoſe character for integrity " and capacity was never conteſted even by his ene- " mies §;" again, " the ſecular clergy of France, " particularly the rectors or *curès* of Paris, give teſ- " timony to theſe impoſtures, than whom no clergy " are more celebrated for ſtrictneſs of life and man- ners ‖." Once more, one principal witneſs, " *Mon-* " *ſieur de* Montgeron, was counſellor or judge of " the parliament of Paris, a man of figure and cha- " racter *;" another "no leſs a man than the *Duc* " *de* Chatillon, a Duke and Peer of France, of the " higheſt rank and family *." 'Tis ſtrange, if *credit*, and *ſubſtance*, and *diſtinction*, and *capacity*, are not ſufficient ſecurities to us, that the witneſſes were not ' themſelves deluded ;' 'tis ſtrange, if *unconteſted integrity*, and *eminent ſtrictneſs* of life and manners, cannot remove ' all ſuſpicion of any deſign in them to deceive others ;' 'tis ſtrange, if one who was *counſellor* of the parliament of Paris, a man of figure and character, and if another was a *Duke* and Peer of France, of the higheſt rank and family, had not ' a great deal to

* p. 197. in the note.
† ib
‡ p. 197.
§ p. 196. in the note.
‖ p. 199. in the note.
¶ p. 295. in the note.
* p. 199. in the note.

'to lose, in case of being detected in any falsehood:' nay, and if all those witnesses of *credit* and *distinction*, "had not also a great deal to lose;" "since the Jesuits, a learned body, supported by the civil magistrate, were determined enemies to those opinions, "in whose favour the miracles were said to have "been wrought *;" and since "*Monsieur* Herault, "the lieutenant *de police*, of whose great reputation, "all who have been in France about that time, have "heard; and whose vigilance, penetration, activity, "and extensive intelligence, have been much talked "of; since this magistrate, who by the nature of his "office is almost absolute, was vested with full "powers on purpose to suppress these miracles, and "and frequently seized and examined the witnesses "and subjects of them; though he could never reach "any thing satisfactory against them †." As to the only remaining circumstance, 'their being performed 'in a public manner, and in a celebrated part of the 'world,' this concurred also. They were performed, we are told, "in a learned age, and on the most "eminent theatre that is now in the world ‡;" besides "twenty-two rectors or *curès* of Paris, with in-"finite earnestness, pressed the Archbishop, an ene-"my to the Jansenists, to examine those miracles, "which they assert to be known to the whole world, and indisputably certain §."

Thus the essayist hath laid us under the disagreeable necessity of inferring, that he is either very rash in his general

* p. 195. † p. 197. in the note. ‡ p. 175.
§ † p. 196. in the note.

general assertions, or useth very great amplification in his particular narrations. Perhaps in both inferences, we shall find, upon inquiry, that there is some truth. In his *History of Great Britain*, he gives us notice *, that he addressed himself "to a more distant "posterity, than will ever be reached by any local "temporary theology." Why did he not likewise, in writing the *Essays*, entertain this grand idea? It would have been of use to him. It would have prevented his falling into those inconsistencies, which his too great attention and antipathy to what he calls a *local temporary theology*, only could occasion; and which, when that theology, according to his hypothesis, shall be extinct, and when all our religious controversies shall be forgotten, must appear unaccountable and ridiculous. People will not then have the means of discovering, what is so obvious to us his contemporaries, that he only assumes the appearance of an advocate for some miracles, which are disbelieved by the generality of Protestants, his countrymen, in order, by the comparison, to vilify the miracles of sacred writ, which are acknowledged by them.

BUT to descend to particulars, I shall begin with considering those miracles, for which the author is indebted to the ancient Pagans. First, in order to convince us, how easy a matter it is for cunning and impudence to impose by false miracles on the credulity of barbarians, he introduces the story of Alexander of Pontus

* James I. chap. 2.

Pontus †. The juſtneſs of the account he gives of this impoſtor from Lucian, I ſhall not diſpute. But that it may appear, how little the Chriſtian religion is affected by this relation, notwithſtanding ſome inſinuations he hath intermixt with it, I ſhall make the following remarks.

It is of importance to know, what was the profeſſion of this once ſo famous, tho' now forgotten Paphlagonian. Was he a publiſher of ſtrange gods? No*. Was he the founder of a new ſyſtem in religion? No. What was he then? He was no other than a profeſſed fortune-teller. What were the arts by which he carried on this gainful trade? The eſſayiſt juſtly remarks, that 'it was a wiſe policy in 'him to lay the firſt ſcene of his impoſtures in a coun-'try, where the people were extremely ignorant and 'ſtupid, and ready to ſwallow the groſſeſt deluſion.' For, "had Alexander fixed his reſidence at Athens, "the philoſophers of that renowned mart of learn-"ing, had immediately ſpread thro' the whole Roman "empire their ſenſe of the matter; which, being

 "ſupported

† p 188. &c.

* The learned and judicious author of the *Obſervations on the converſion and apoſtleſhip of Saint Paul*, hath inadvertantly ſaid of Alexander, that he introduced a *new god* into Pontus. The truth is, he only exhibited a reproduction of *Eſculapius*, a well known deity in thoſe parts, to whom he gave indeed the *new name* GLYCON. In this there was nothing unſuitable to the genius of the mythology. Accordingly, we do not find, that either the prieſts, or the people, were in the leaſt alarmed for the religion of the country, or charged Alexander as an *innovator* in religious matters. On the contrary, the greateſt enemies he had to encounter, were not the religioniſts, but the latitudinarians.

" ſupported by ſo great authority, and diſplayed by " all the force of reaſon and eloquence, had entirely " opened the eyes of mankind." I ſhall beg leave to remark another inſtance of good policy in him. He attemped not to gain the veneration of the multitude by oppoſing, but by adopting their religious prejudices. His whole plan of deceit was founded in the eſtabliſhed ſuperſtition. The author himſelf will acknowledge, it would have been extreme folly in him to have acted otherwiſe: and all the world, I believe, will agree in thinking, that, in that caſe, he could not have had the ſmalleſt probability of ſucceſs. What were the miracles he wrought? I know of none, unleſs we will dignify with that name, ſome feats of legerdemain, performed moſtly by candle light; which, in many parts of Europe, we may daily ſee equalled, nay far exceeded, by thoſe of modern juglers. Add to theſe ſome oracles he pronounced, concerning which, if we may form a judgment from the account and ſpecimen given us by Lucian, we ſhould conclude, that, like other Heathen oracles, they were generally unintelligible, equivocal, or falſe. Before whom did he exhibit his wonders? Before none, if he could help it, that were not thorough believers in the popular ſyſtem. His nocturnal myſteries were always introduced with an AVAUNT to *Atheiſts*, *Chriſtians*, and *Epicurians*: and indeed it was dangerous for any ſuch to be preſent at them. Mr Hume ſays, that, " from his ignorant Paphlagonians, he was enabled to proceed to " the inliſting of votaries among the Grecian philo- " ſophers." On what authority he advances this, I have not been able to diſcover. He adds, " and

" men

" men of the moſt eminent rank and diſtinction in Rome." Lucian mentions one man of rank, Rutilianus, among the votaries of the prophet; an honeſt man he calls him, but at the ſame time the weakeſt, the moſt ſuperſtitious that ever lived. As to the military expedition, which one would imagine from Mr Hume's expreſſion, the Emperor had reſolved on, in conſequence of the encouragement which the deluſive prophecies of this impoſtor gave him, we find, on the contrary, it was undertaken, before thoſe prophecies were uttered. But further, Did Alexander riſk any thing in aſſuming the character of the *interpreter* of ESCULAPIUS? Did he loſe, or did he ſuffer any thing in defence of it? Quite the reverſe. He enriched himſelf by this moſt ingenious occupatoin. I ſhall ſay nothing of the picture which Lucian gives of his morals, of the many artifices which he uſed, or of the atrocious crimes which he perpetrated. It muſt be owned, that the principal ſcope for calumny and detraction is what concerns the private life and moral character. Lucian was an enemy, and, by his own account, had received the higheſt provocation. But I avoid every thing, on this topic, that can admit a queſtion.

Where, I would gladly know, lies the reſemblance between this impoſtor and the firſt publiſhers of the goſpel? Every one, on the moſt ſuperficial review, may diſcover, that, in all the material circumſtances, they are perfect contraſts. There appears not therefore to be great danger in the poignant remark with which the author concludes this relation: " Tho' *much to be wiſhed*, it does not always hap-" pen, that every *Alexander* meets with a *Lucian* rea-" dy

" dy to expose and detect his impostures." Lest the full import of this emphatical clause should not be apprehended, the author hath been still more explicit in the note: " It may here perhaps be ob- " jected, that I proceed rashly, and form my no- " tions of Alexander, merely from the account gi- " ven of him by Lucian, a professed enemy. *It* " *were indeed to be wished*, that some of the accounts " published by his followers and accomplices had re- " mained. The opposition and contrast betwixt the " character and conduct of the same man, as drawn " by a friend or an enemy, is as strong, even in " common life, much more in these religious mat- " ters, as that betwixt any two men in the world, " betwixt Alexander and St Paul for instance." Who can forbear to lament the uncommon distress of an author, obliged every moment to recur to unavailing wishes? Mr Hume, however, in this calamitous situation, solaceth himself, as well as he can, by supposing what he cannot assert. He supposeth what would have been the case, if his wishes could have been gratified; and artfully insinuates, in this manner to his readers; that if we had the character and conduct of the apostle, delineated by as able an enemy as Lucian, we should find the portrait as ugly as that of Alexander.

Let us then for once suppose, what the author so ardently wishes, that such an enemy had undertaken the history of Paul of Tarsus. I can easily conceive what a different representation we should, in that case, have had, of the mental endowments and moral disposition, as well as of the inducements and views of this Christian missionary. I can conceive

also

alſo, that both his actions and diſcourſes might have been ſtrangely disfigured. But if the biographer had maintained any regard, I ſay not, to truth, but to probability; there are ſome things, we may be abſolutely certain, he would never have advanced. He would not ſurely have ſaid of Paul, that he was by profeſſion a cunning man, or *conjurer*; one who, for a little money, either told people their fortunes, or taught them how to recover ſtolen goods. He would not, I ſuppoſe, have pretended, that wherever the apoſtle went, he flattered the ſuperſtition of the populace, in order to gain them, and founded all his pretenſions on the popular ſyſtem. He would not have alledged, that Paul *inriched* himſelf, or that he could ever have the proſpect of inriching himſelf, by his vocation; nay, or that he riſked nothing, or ſuffered nothing, by it. He could not have ſaid concerning him, that he *declined* the audience or ſcrutiny of men, whoſe opinions in religion differed from thoſe on which his miſſion was founded. He durſt not have imputed to him the *wiſe policy* of laying the ſcene of his impoſtures, only where ignorance, barbariſm, and ſtupidity prevailed: as it is unqueſtionable, that our apoſtle traverſed great part, not only of Aſia Minor, but of Macedonia, and Achaia; fixed his reſidence eighteen months at Corinth, a city not leſs celebrated for the polite arts, than for its populouſneſs and riches; preached publicly at Athens before the Stoics and the Epicureans, and even before the Areopagus, the moſt venerable judicature in Greece; not afraid of what the philoſophers of that renowned mart of learning, might ſpread through the

the whole Roman empire, concerning him and his doctrine; nay, and lastly preached at Rome itself, the mistress and metropolis of the world.

The reader will observe, that, in this comparison, I have shunned every thing that is of a private, and therefore of a dubious nature. The whole is founded on such actions and events as were notorious; which 'tis not in the power of contemporary historians to falsify; such with regard to Alexander, as a *votary* could not have dissembled; such with regard to Paul, as an *enemy* durst not have denied. We are truly indebted to the essayist, who intending to exhibit a *rival* to the apostle, hath produced a character which, we find on making the comparison, serves only for a foil. Truth never shines with greater lustre, than when confronted with falsehood. The evidence of our religion, how strong soever, appears not so irresistibly, considered by itself, as when by comparison we perceive, that none of those artifices and circumstances attended its propagation, which the whole course of experience shows to be necessary to render imposture successful.

THE next topic on which the ingenious author hath bestowed some flourishes, is the miracle "which Tacitus reports of Vespasian, who cured a "blind man in Alexandria, by means of his spittle, "and a lame man by the mere touch of his foot, in "obedience to a vision of the god Serapis, who had "enjoined them to have recourse to the emperor, for "these miraculous and extraordinary cures *." The story he introduces with informing us, that it is "one

* p. 292, &c.

"one of the beſt atteſted miracles in all profane "hiſtory." If ſo, it will the better ſerve for a ſample of what may be expected from that quarter. "Every circumſtance," he tells us, "ſeems to add "weight to the teſtimony, and might be diſplayed at "large, with all the force of argument and eloquence, "if any one were now concerned to enforce the "evidence of that exploded and idolatrous ſuper-"ſtition." For my part, were I concerned to enforce the evidence of that exploded and idolatrous ſuperſtition, I ſhould not with the ſtory were in better hands than in the author's. He is by no means deficient in eloquence; and if ſometimes there appear a deficiency in argument, that is not imputable to him, but to the ſubject, which cannot furniſh him with any better: and tho' I do not ſuſpect him to be in the leaſt concerned to re-eſtabliſh Paganiſm, yet 'tis well known, that hatred to his adverſary may as ſtrongly animate an advocate to exert himſelf, as affection to his client.

But to proceed to the ſtory: Firſt, the author pleads "the gravity, ſolidity, age, and probity of ſo great "an emperor, who, thro' the whole courſe of his "life, converſed in a familiar way with his friends "and courtiers, and never affected thoſe extraordina-"ry airs of divinity aſſumed by Alexander and De-"metrius." To this character, the juſtneſs of which I intend not to controvert, I ſhall beg leave to add, what is equally indubitable, and much to the purpoſe, that no emperor ſhowed a ſtronger inclination to corroborate his title by a ſanction of the gods, than the prince of whom he is ſpeaking. This, doubtleſs, he

he thought the more neceſſary in his caſe, as he was of an obſcure family, and nowiſe related to any of his predeceſſors. How fond he was of pleading *viſions*, and *preſages*, and *auguries*, in his favour, all the world knows *.

The author adds, " The hiſtorian, a contempo-
" rary writer, noted for candour and veracity, and
" withal the greateſt and moſt penetrating genius per-
" haps of all antiquity, and ſo free from any tenden-
" cy to ſuperſtition and credulity, that he even lies
" under the contrary imputation of atheiſm and pro-
" faneneſs." This would ſay a great deal, if the character of the hiſtorian were of any moment in the queſtion. Doth Tacitus pretend that he was himſelf a witneſs of the miracle? No. Doth he mention it as a thing which he believes? No. In either caſe I acknowledge, that the reputation of the *relater* for candour and penetration, muſt have added weight to the relation, whether conſidered as his *teſtimony*, or barely as his *opinion*. But is it fair to plead the veracity of the writer in proof of every popular rumour mentioned by him? His veracity is only concerned to ſatisfy us, that it was actually reported, as he relates; or that the attempt was made, and the miracle pretended; a point which, I preſume, nobody would have diſputed, altho' the authority had been leſs than that of Tacitus. Indeed the hiſtorian doth not ſay directly, whether he believes the miracle or not; but by his manner of telling it, he plainly inſinuates, that he thought it ridiculous. In introducing

* Auctoritas, et quaſi majeſtas quædam, ut ſcilicet inopinata et adhuc novo principi deerat, hæc quoque acceſſit. SUETON

cing it, he intimates the utility of such reports to the Emperor's cause. "By which," says he, "the favour of heaven, and the appointment of the gods, "might be urged in support of his title*." When he names the god *Serapis*, as warning the blind man to recur to Vespasian, he adds, in evident contempt and derision of his godship, "Who is adored above all "others by the *Egyptians*, a people addicted to superstition †." Again he speaks of the emperor, as induced to hope for success, by the persuasive tongues of flatterers ‡. A serious believer of the miracle would hardly have used such a style in relating it. But to what purpose did he then relate it? The answer is easy. Nothing could be more characteristic of the *Emperor*, or could better show the arts he had recourse to, and the hold which flattery had of him; nothing could be more characteristic of the *Alexandrians*, the people amongst whom the miracle is said to have been wrought.

"The persons," says the essayist, "from whose "testimony he related the miracle, of established character for judgement and veracity, *as we may well "suppose*; eye-witnesses of the fact, and confirming "their verdict, after the Flavian family were despoiled "of the empire, and could no longer give any re-"ward as the price of a lie." Persons of *established character for judgment and veracity!* Who told Mr Hume so? 'Twas not Tacitus. He only denomi-

L nates

* Queis cœlestis favor, et quædam in Vespasianum inclinatio numinum ostenderetur.

† Quem dedita superstitionibus gens ante alios colit.

‡ Vocibus adulantium in spem induci.

nates them in general *: "They who were preſent," and "a crowd of byſtanders." The author, conſcious that he advances this without even the ſhadow of authority, hath ſubjoined, in order to palliate the matter, *as we may well ſuppoſe*. An admirable expedient for ſupplying a weak plea, with thoſe convenient circumſtances that can give it ſtrength! When facts fail, which is not ſeldom the caſe, we need but apply to ſuppoſition, whoſe help is always near. But if this be allowed to take the place of argument, I ſee no reaſon why I may not avail myſelf of the privilege of ſuppoſing, as well as the author. The witneſſes then, I will ſuppoſe, were moſtly an ignorant rabble: but I wrong my cauſe; I have a better foundation than ſuppoſal, having Tacitus himſelf, and all antiquity on my ſide, when I add deeply immerſed in *ſuperſtition*, particularly attached to the worſhip of *Serapis*, and keenly engaged in ſupport of *Veſpaſian*, ALEXANDRIA having been the firſt city of note that publicly declared for him. Was it then matter of ſurpriſe, that a ſtory, which at once ſoothed the ſuperſtition of the populace, and favoured their political ſchemes, ſhould gain ground among them? Can we juſtly wonder, that the wiſer few, who were not deceived ſhould convive at, or even contribute to promote a deceit, which was highly uſeful to the cauſe wherein themſelves were imbarked, and at the ſame time highly grateful to the many? Laſtly, can we be ſurpriſed that any, who, for ſeven and twenty years, had, from motives of intereſt, and ambition, and popularity, propagated a falſehood, ſhould not afterwards be willing to expoſe themſelves as liars?

The

* Qui interfuere.——Quæ aſtabat multitudo.

The author finiſhes the ſtory thus: "To which if "we add the public nature of the facts related, it "will appear, that no evidence can well be ſuppoſed "ſtronger for ſo groſs and ſo palpable a falſehood." As to the nature of the facts, we are told by Tacitus, that when Veſpaſian conſulted the phyſicians, whether ſuch maladies were curable by human art, they declared *, that "in the one the power of ſight "was not extinct, but would return, were the ob-"ſtacles removed; that in the other, the joints had "ſuffered ſome diſlocation, which by a ſalutary preſ-"ſure might be redreſſed." From this account we are naturally led to conclude, that the diſorders were not ſo conſpicuous, but that either they might have been feigned, where they were not; or that cures might have been pretended, where none were performed. I think it is even a further preſumption of the truth of this concluſion, that Suetonius, the only other Roman hiſtorian who mentions the miracle, (I know not how he hath been overlooked by Mr Hume) differs from Tacitus, in the account he gives of the lameneſs. The one repreſents it as being in the hand, the other, as in the leg †.

There are other circumſtances regarding this ſtory on which I might make ſome remarks; but ſhall forbear,

* Huic non exeſam vim luminis, et redituram, ſi pellerentur obſtantia: illi elapſos in pravum artus, ſi ſalubris vis adhibeatur, poſſe integrari.

† Manum æger. TACITUS. Debili crure. SUETONIUS. Mr Hume, in the laſt edition of the *Eſſay* mentions Suetonius, but takes no notice of this difference between his account and that of Tacitus.

bear, as it is impoſſible to enter into a minute diſcuſſion of particulars, that appear but trivial, when conſidered ſeverally, without growing tireſome to the bulk of readers. I ſhall therefore only ſubjoin theſe ſimple queſtions. *Firſt*, What emperor or other potentate was flattered in his dignity and pretenſions by the miracles of our Lord? What eminent perſonage found himſelf intereſted to ſupport, by his authority and influence, the credit of theſe miracles? *Again*, What popular ſuperſtition or general and rooted prejudices were they calculated to confirm! Theſe two circumſtances, were there no other, make the greateſt odds imaginable betwixt the miracles of VESPASIAN and thoſe of JESUS CHRIST.

So much for the PAGAN miracles mentioned by the author.

SECTION V.

Examination of the POPISH *miracles mentioned by Mr Hume.*

THE author ſoon deſcends from ancient to modern times, and leaving *Paganiſm*, recurs to *Popery*, a much more fruitful ſource of lying wonders.

THE firſt of this kind he takes notice of *, is a Spaniſh miracle recorded in the memoirs of Cardinal *de Retz*. The ſtory, he ſays, is very memorable, and may well deſerve our conſideration. "When "that

* p. 193. &c.

" that intriguing politician fled into Spain, to avoid " the perſecution of his enemies, he paſſed thro' Sara- " goſſa the capital of Arragon ; where he was ſhown " in the cathedral church, a man, who had ſerved " twenty years as a door keeper of the church, and " was well known to every body in town, that " had ever paid their devotions at that cathedral.— " He had been for ſo long a time wanting a leg ; " but recovered that limb, by the rubbing of holy oil " upon the ſtump ; *and, when the cardinal examined* " *it, he found it to be a true natural leg, like the other.*" Would not any perſon imagine, from the laſt words of the ſentence, that the cardinal had ordered the man to put off his ſhoes and ſtockings, that, by touch as well as by ſight, he might be ſatisfied, there was no artifice uſed, but that both his legs conſiſted of genuine fleſh and bone ? Yet the truth is, his Eminency did not think it worth while to examine any one circumſtance of this wonderful narration, but contented himſelf with reporting it preciſely as it had been told him. His words literally tranſlated are, " In that church they ſhowed me a man, whoſe bu- " ſineſs it was to light the lamps, of which they " have a prodigious number, telling me, that he had " been ſeen ſeven years at the gate, with one leg on- " ly. I ſaw him there with two *†*." Not one word of trial or examination, or even ſo much as a ſingle queſtion aſked on the ſubject ; not a ſyllable of his

† L'on m'y montra un homme, qui ſervoit a allumer les lampes, qui y ſont en nombre prodigieux ; et l'on me dit, qu'on l'y avoit vu ſept ans a la porte de cette egliſe, avec une ſeule jambe. Je l'y vis avec deux. *Liv. 4. l'an 1654.*

finding the leg to be either true or falſe, natural or artificial, like the other or unlike. I have a better opinion both of the candour and of the good ſenſe of Mr Hume, than to imagine, he would have deſignedly miſrepreſented this ſtory, in order to render it fitter for his purpoſe. I believe the ſource of this error hath been ſolely the truſting to his memory in the relation which he gave, and not taking the trouble to conſult the paſſage in the memoirs. This conjecture appears the more probable, as he hath made ſome other alterations, which are nowiſe conducive to his deſign; ſuch as, that the man had been ſeen in the church *twenty* years wanting a leg, and that he was a *door-keeper*; whereas the memoir-writer ſays only *ſeven* years, and that he was one *who lighted the lamps* *.

"This miracle was vouched," ſays the author, "by "all the canons of the church; and the whole com- "pany in town were appealed to, for a confirmati- "on of the fact, whom the Cardinal found, by "their zealous devotion, to be thorough believers of the miracle." 'Tis true, that the company in town were appealed to, by thoſe eccleſiaſtics; but 'tis alſo true, that *De Retz*, by his own account, ſeems

† Since finiſhing this tract, I have ſeen an edition of Mr Hume's eſſays, &c. later than that here refered to. It is printed at London 1760. I muſt do the author the juſtice to obſerve, that, in this edition, he hath corrected the miſtake, as to the cardinal's examining the man's leg, of which he only "ſays, The cardinal aſſures us, that he ſaw him with two legs." He ſtill calls him a *door-keeper*, and ſays, that he had ſerved *twenty* years in this capacity.

seems not to have asked any man a question on the subject. He acknowledges indeed, that an anniversary festival, instituted in commemoration of the miracle, was celebrated by a vast concourse of people of all ranks.

"Here," continues the essayist, "the relater was "also contemporary to the supposed prodigy, of an "incredulous and libertine character, as well as of "great genius." But of what weight, in this affair, is either the genius or the incredulity of the relater, since, by Mr Hume's confession, he had no faith in the relation? Strange indeed is the use which the essayist makes of this circumstance!

"What *adds mightily*," says he, "to the force of "the evidence, and may double our surprise on this "occasion, is, that the cardinal himself, who re-"lates the story, seems not to give any credit to it." It doth not in the least surprise me, that the cardinal gives no credit to this relation; but I am beyond measure surprised, that Mr Hume should represent this circumstance as *adding mightily* to the force of the evidence. Is then a story which is reported by a man of genius, the more credible that he doth not believe it? Or, Is it the more incredible that he doth believe it? What would the author have said, if the cardinal had told us, that he gave credit to the relation? Might he not, in that case, have very pertinently pleaded the great genius, and penetration, and incredulity of the relater, as *adding mightily* to the force of the evidence? On that hypothesis, he surely might, for pretty obvious reasons. Uncommon penetration qualifies a man for detecting fraud;

it

and it requires evidence greater than ordinary to surmount incredulity. The belief therefore of such a person as the cardinal, who had not only the means of discovering an imposture, as he was contemporary and on the spot, but the ability to discover it, as he was a man of genius, and not over-credulous; his belief, I say, would evidently have been no small presumption of the truth of the miracle. How his disbelief can be in like manner a presumption of its truth, is to me incomprehensible. Ay but, rejoins the author, "as he seems not to give any credit "to it, he cannot be suspected of any concurrence in "the holy fraud." Very well. I am satisfied that a man's TESTIMONY is the *more* to be regarded, that he is above being suspected of concurring in *any fraud*, call it holy or unholy. But I want to know why, on the very same account, his OPINION is *the less* to be regarded? For my part, I find no difficulty in believing every article of the narration for which the cardinal gives his testimony: notwithstanding this, I may be of the same opinion with him; that the account given by the dean and canons, which is their testimony, not his, was all a fiction. But it is not with the cardinal's *testimony* we are here concerned: about that there is no dispute. It is with his *opinion*. Are then a man's sentiments about a matter of fact, I must insist on it, the less worthy of regard, either because he is a man of genius, and not at all credulous, or because he cannot be suspected of any concurrence in a holy fraud? Are they the more improbable on these accounts? The essayist, when he reflects, will be the last man in the world,

that

would assist in establishing a maxim so unfavorable, not only to candour, but even to genius and scepticism: and indeed there are few, if any, that would be greater sufferers by it than himself.

But leaving this, as one of the unfathomable depths of the essay, I proceed to the other circumstances. "The miracle," says the author, "of so "singular a nature, as could *scarce* admit of a counter-"feit." He did well at least to use the word *scarce*; for if every visitant was as little desirous of prying into the secret, as the cardinal, nothing could be more easily counterfeited: "And the witnesses very "numerous, and all of them, *in a manner*, specta-"tors of the fact, to which they gave their testimo-"ny." By the *very numerous witnesses*, I suppose he means the whole company in town, who were appealed to. They were all, *in a manner*, spectators of the fact. What precise abatement the author intended we should make, from the sense of the word *spectators*, on account of the qualifying phrase, *in a manner*, I shall not presume to determine; but shall observe, from the memoirs, that it was not so much as pretended by the canons, that any of the citizens had seen the miracle performed; 'twas only pretended, that they had seen the man formerly at the gate of the church, wanting a leg. Nor is it alledged, that any of them was at more pains in examining the matter, either before or after the recovery of the leg, than the cardinal was. They were therefore properly no spectators of the fact. The phrase, *in a manner*, ought, I imagine, to have been placed in the end of the sentence, which would have run

run thus : " to which they, *in a manner*, give " their teſtimony :" for no direct teſtimony was either aſked of them, or given by them ; their belief is inferred from their devotion.

I have been the more particular in my remarks on the circumſtances of this ſtory, not becauſe there was need of theſe remarks: for, tho' to the eſſayiſt the relation appeared very *memorable*, to me, and, I believe, to moſt people, it appears very *trifling* ; but that the reader might have this further ſpecimen of the author's talents in embelliſhing, To the above-mentioned, and all other ſuch idle tales, this ſhort and ſimple anſwer will, by every man of ſenſe, be thought ſufficient. *The country where the miracle is ſaid to have been wrought, is* SPAIN ; *the people who propagated the faith of it, were* THE CLERGY. What compariſon, in point of credibility, can be made between miracles, which, with no viſible ſupport but their own evidence, had at once to encounter, and did in fact overcome the abhorrence of the prieſt, and the tyranny of the magiſtrate, the inſolence of the learned, and the bigotry of the ſuperſtitious: what compariſon, I ſay, can be made between ſuch, and any prodigies ſaid to have been performed in a country, where all the powers of the nation, ſecular and eccleſiaſtical, the literature of the ſchools, ſuch as it is, and the prejudices of the people, conſpire in eſtabliſhing their credit ; a country ſunk in the moſt obdurate ſuperſtition that ever diſgraced human nature*, a country where the awe of the inquiſition is

* This perhaps will appear to ſome to be too ſevere a cenſure on a country called Chriſtian, and may be thought to reflect on Chriſtianity

is so great, that no person, whatever be his sentiments, dares mutter a syllable against any opinion that hath obtained the patronage of their spiritual guides? But that I may not be accused of prepossession, or suspected of exaggerating, I shall only give the sentiments of two eminent foreigners (who were not Protestants, and may therefore be supposed the more impartial) concerning that nation, and the influence which the holy tribunal has both on their character and manners. Voltarire*, speaking of the inquisition as established in Spain, says, "Their form of proceeding is an infallible way to destroy whomsoever the inquisitors please. The prisoners are not confronted with "the

*Christianity itself. I do not think it fairly capable of such a construction. That the corruption of the best things produces the worst, hath grown into a proverb; and, on the most impartial inquiry, I do not imagine it will be found, that any species of idolatry ever tended so directly to extirpate humanity, gratitude, natural affection, equity, mutual confidence, good faith, and every amiable and generous principle from the human breast, as that gross perversion of the Christian religion which is established in Spain. It might easily be shown, that the human sacrifices offered by Heathens, had not half the tendency to corrupt the heart, and consequently deserve not to be viewed with half the horror, as those celebrated among the Spaniards, with so much pomp, and barbarous festivity, at an *auto da fe*. It will not surely be affirmed, that our Saviour reflected on the Mosaic institution, or genuine Judaism, when he said, *Wo unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made*, YE MAKE *him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves*. Yet the words plainly imply, that even *Pagans*, by being converted to the *Judaism* that was then professed, were *made* children of hell, and consequently corrupted, instead of being reformed. See Matth. xxiii 15.

† Essai sur l'histoire generale, chap. 118.

" the informers; and there is no informer who is " not liſtened to. A public criminal, an infamous " perſon, a child, a proſtitute, are creditable accu- " ſers. Even the ſon may depoſe againſt his father; " the wife againſt her huſband. In fine, the priſo- " ner is compelled to inform againſt himſelf, to di- " vine, and to confeſs, the crime laid to his charge; " of which often he is ignorant. This procedure, " unheard of till the inſtitution of this court, makes " the whole kingdom tremble. Suſpicion reigns in " every breaſt. Friendſhip and openneſs are at an " end. The brother dreads his brother, the father " his ſon. Hence taciturnity is become the charac- " teriſtic of a nation endued with all the vivacity " natural to the inhabitants of a warm and fruitful " climate. To this tribunal we muſt likewiſe im- " pute that profound ignorance of ſound philoſophy, " in which Spain lies buried, whilſt Germany, " England, France, and even Italy, have diſcover- " ed ſo many truths, and enlarged the ſphere of our " knowledge. Never is human nature ſo debaſed, " as when ignorance is armed with power."—— " 'Tis neceſſary," ſays Monteſquieu *, in the humble remonſtrance to the inquiſitors of Spain and Portugal, " that we advertiſe you of one thing; 'tis, that if " any perſon, in future times, ſhall dare aſſert, that " in the age wherein we live, the Europeans were " civilized, YOU will be quoted to prove that they were " barbarians, and the idea people will form of you, " will be ſuch as will diſhonour your age, and bring " hatred on all your contemporaries."

I COME

* De l' eſprit des loix, liv. 25. chap. 13.

I COME now to consider the miracles said to have been performed in the church-yard of Saint Medard, at the tomb of *Abbé* Paris. On these the author hath expatiated with great parade, exulting, that he hath found in them, as he imagines, what, in respect of of number, and nature, and evidence, may outvie the miracles of holy writ. Yet should we admit them to be true, how they can be considered as proofs of any doctrine, or how they can affect the evidence of the miracles recorded in scripture, 'twill not perhaps be easy to discover. But setting that question aside, I propose to examine their evidence; and that, not by entering into a particular inquiry concerning each separate fact mentioned in Montgeron's collection, as such an inquiry would appear, to every judicious reader, both tedious and impertinent; but by making a few general observations, founded in unquestionable fact, and mostly supported even by the authority of Montgeron, that doughty champion of the Jansenist saint *.

First, Let it be remarked, that it was often objected by the enemies of the saint, and scarce contradicted, never confuted, by his friends, that the prostrations at his sepulcher *produced* more diseases, than they *cured*. The ingenious author lately quoted, in the account he gives of the affairs of the church in the ninth century, taking occasion incidentally to mention the miracles of the *Abbé*, speaks of this cir-

 cumstance

* The character of his book is very justly and very briefly expressed in *Le siecle de Louis* XIV. in these words: "Si ce livre "subsistait un jour, et que les autres fussent perdus, la posterite "croirait que notre siecle a ete un tems de barbarie," chap. 33.

cumſtance, as a thing univerſally known, and unundeniable*. "I ſhould not take notice," ſays he, "of an epidemical folly with which the people "of Dijon were ſeized in 844, occaſioned by one "Saint Benignus, who threw thoſe into convulſions "who prayed on his tomb; I ſhould not, I ſay, "mention this popular ſuperſtition, had it not been "furiouſly revived in our days, in parallel cir-"cumſtances. It ſeems, as if the ſame follies were "deſtined to make their appearance, from time to "time, on the theatre of the world: but good ſenſe "is alſo the ſame at all times; and nothing ſo ju-"dicious hath been ſaid, concerning the modern mi-"racles wrought on the tomb of I know not what "deacon at Paris, as what a biſhop of Lyons ſaid, "concerning thoſe of Dijon. *A ſtrange ſaint indeed, "that maims thoſe who pay their devoirs to him. I "ſhould think, miracles ought to be performed for the "curing, and not for the inflicting of maladies.*"

The *ſecond* obſervation is, That the inſtances of perſons cured are extremely *few*, compared with the multitudes of people in diſtreſs, who night and day attended the ſepulchre, imploring in vain the interceſſion of the ſaint. The crowds of ſick and infirm, who flocked to the tomb for relief, were, by all accounts, innumerable: whereas all the cures which the zealous and indefatigable Montgeron could procure vouchers of, amounted only to NINE*. The author

* Eſſai ſur l'hiſtoire generale, chap 21.

† It muſt be owned that the author of the *Recueil* after-mentioned, hath preſented us with a much greater number; but let it be remarked, that that author doth not confine himſelf to the cures

author therefore must be understood, as speaking with great latitude, when he says, "There surely never was "so great a number of miracles ascribed to one per-"son, as those which were lately said to have been "wrought in France, upon the tomb of *Abbé* Paris, "the famous Jansenist, with whose sanctity the "people were so long deluded *." If *thousands* of diseased persons had applied for medicine to some ignorant quack, in the assurance of his extraordinary abilities; would it be matter of surprise to a reasonable man, that, of so many, *eight* or *nine* should be found, whose distempers had taken a favourable turn, whilst they were using his specifics, and had thereby given countenance to the delusion? I think it would be matter of surprise that there were so few.

I shall observe, *thirdly*, That *imposture* was actually detected, and proved in several instances. That the reader may be satisfied of this, I must intreat him to have recourse to the Archishop of Sens' *Pastoral instructions*; a book which Mr Hume could not, with propriety, take any notice of, having positively asserted that "the enemies to those opinions, in whose fa-"vour the miracles were said to have been wrought, "were never able distinctly to refute or detect "them †." This prelate, on the contrary, hath not only given a distinct refutation of some of these pretended

cures performed openly at the tomb of the *deacon*; he gives us also those that were wrought in the private chambers of the sick, by virtue of his relics, by images of him, or by earth brought from under his monument. Nor is the collection restricted only to the cures effected by the saint; it includes also the judgments inflicted by him.

* p. 195. † ib.

tended miracles, but hath clearly detected the deceit and little artifices by which their credit was supported. I intend not to descend to particulars, and shall therefore only refer the reader to the book itself, and beg that he will peruse what relates to the cases of *Jacques Laurent Menedrieux*, *Jean Nivet*, *Sieur le Doulx*, *Laleu*, *Anne Coulon*, the widow *de Lorme*, as well as *Mademoiselle le Franc*, of whom the essayist hath made mention in a note. In this perusal, the reader will observe the shameful prevarications of some Jansenist witnesses, for whom Mr Hume would fain apologize, by telling us pleasantly, they were *tamperd with*.*. I shall only add on this head, that the detection of fraud in some instances, justly brings suspicion on all the other instances. A man whom I know to have lied to me, on several occasions, I shall suspect, on every occasion, where I have not access to discover, whether what he affirms be true or false. It is in the same way we judge of the spirit and conduct of parties, as of individuals.

I observe, *fourthly*, That all the cures recorded by Montgeron, as duly attested, were such as might have been effected by *natural* means. There are two kinds of miracles, to which Mr Hume hath alluded in a note, tho' he does not directly make the distinction. One is, when the event, considered by itself, is evidently *preternatural*. Of this kind are, raising the dead, walking on water, making whole the maimed; for by no natural causes can these effects be produced. The other kind is, when the event, considered by itself, is *natural*, that is, may be produced by natural causes, but is denominated miraculous, on

* p. 197. in the note,

on account of the manner. That a ſick perſon ſhould be reſtored to health, is not, when conſidered ſingly, preternatural; but that health ſhould be reſtored by the command of a man, undoubtedly is. Let us hear the author on this point: "Sometimes "an event may not, *in itſelf*, *ſeem* to be contrary to "the laws of nature, and yet, if it were real, it "might, by reaſon of ſome circumſtances, be denominated a miracle; becauſe, *in fact*, it is contrary to theſe laws. Thus, if a perſon claiming a "divine authority, ſhould command a ſick perſon "to be well, a healthful man to fall down dead, "the clouds to pour rain, the winds to blow, in "ſhort, ſhould order many natural events, which "immediately follow upon his command; theſe "might juſtly be eſteemed miracles, becauſe they are "really, in this caſe, contrary to the laws of nature. "For if any ſuſpicion remain, that the event and "command concurred by accident, there is no mi"racle, and no tranſgreſſion of the laws of nature. "If this ſuſpicion be removed, there is evidently a "miracle, and a tranſgreſſion of theſe laws; becauſe "nothing can be more contrary to nature, than that "the voice or command of a man, ſhould have ſuch "an influence*." From what hath been ſaid, it appears, that theſe two kinds of miracles muſt differ conſiderably in reſpect of evidence, ſince the latter naturally gives room for a ſuſpicion, which is abſolutely excluded from the former. In the former, when the fact or event is proved, the miracle is unqueſtionable. In the latter, the fact may be proved and yet the miracle may be juſtly queſtioned. It

* p. 181. in the note.

therefore merits our attention, that all the miracles recorded in Montgeron's collection, were of the ſecond kind. One of the moſt conſiderable of thoſe cures, was that of Don Alphonſo de Palacios, who had loſt one eye, and was diſtreſſed with an inflammation in the other. The inflamed eye was cured, but the loſt eye was not reſtored. Had there been a reproduction of the member which had periſhed, a ſufficient proof of the fact, would have been a ſufficient proof of the miracle. But as the caſe was otherwiſe, the fact vouched may be admitted, without admitting any miracle. The cures ſaid to have been performed on thoſe patients who were afflicted with paralytic or dropſical diſorders, or that performed on Louiſa Coirin, who had a tumour on her breaſt, will not appear to be intitled to a rank in the firſt claſs. As little can the cure of Peter Gautier claim that honour. One of his eyes had been pricked with an awl; in conſequence of which the aqueous humour dropped out, and he became blind of that eye. His ſight was reſtored, whilſt he paid his addreſſes to the *Abbé*. But that a puncture in the cornea of the eye will often heal of itſelf, and that the aqueous humour, after it hath been quite loſt, will be recruited, and conſequently, that the faculty of viſion will, in ſuch a caſe, be recovered, is what every oculiſt can aſſure us of. The loſs of the watery humour, is the conſtant effect of a very common operation in ſurgery, couching the cataract. Hence we may learn, how we ought to underſtand theſe words of the author "The curing of the ſick, giving hearing to the deaf, "and ſight to the blind, were every where talked of

"as

" as the usual effects of that holy sepulchre*." As therefore the alledged miracles were all of the second class, 'tis only from the attendant circumstances we can judge, whether the facts, tho' acknowledged, were miraculous or not.

In order to enlighten us on this point, I observe, *fifthly*, That *none* of the cures were *instantaneous*. We have not indeed the same hold of the deceased *Abbé*, as of a living prophet, who pretends to work miracles. Those who attend the latter, can know exactly, to whom he grants the benefit of his miraculous aid. They can judge also, whether the supplicant's recovery be coincident, with the prophet's volition or command. In the former case, we have not access to judge of either; and consequently, there is much greater scope for fancy and credulity to operate. No voice was ever said to have proceeded from the tomb of the blessed deacon, as his votaries styled him. They obtained no audible answer to their prayers. There are however some circumstances, by which a probable conjecture may be made concerning the efficiency of the saint in the cures ascribed to him. One is, if the cure instantaneously followed the first devotions at the tomb. Supernatural cures differ, in this particular, as much as in any other, from those which are effected by natural means, that they are not *gradually*, but *instantly*, perfected. Now of which kind were the cures of St Medard? From the accounts that are given, 'tis evident, that they were *gradual*. That some of them were *sudden*, is alledged; but that any of

* p. 195.

of them were *inſtantaneous*, or immediately followed the firſt application, is not even pretended. All the worſhippers at the tomb, perſiſted for *days*, ſeveral of them for *weeks*, and ſome for *months* ſucceſſively, daily imploring the interceſſion of the *Abbé*, before they received relief from their complaints; and the relief which was received, is, in moſt caſes, acknowledged to have been gradual.

I obſerve, *ſixthly*, That moſt of the devotees either had been uſing *medicines* before, and continued to uſe them, during their applications to the ſaint; or, that their diſtempers had *abated*, before they determined to ſolicit his help. That the Spaniſh youth had been uſing, all the while a medicine preſcribed by an eminent oculiſt, was proved by the depoſitions of witneſſes; that Gautier had begun to recover his ſight, before he had recourſe to the ſepulchre, was atteſted, not only by his uncle, but even by himſelf, when, as the Archbiſhop of Sens informs us, he ſigned a recantation of what he had formerly advanced. With regard to the reſt, it appears at leaſt probable, from the circumſtances of the proof, that they were uſing the preſcriptions of the phyſicians, whom they had conſulted before applying to the deacon, and who were afterwards required to give their teſtimony, concerning the nature and malignancy of the different diſeaſes.

The *ſeventh* obſervation is, That ſome of the cures atteſted were *incomplete*. This was manifeſtly the caſe of the Spaniard, who was relieved only from the moſt inconſiderable part of his complaint. Even the cure of *Mademoiſelle* Thibault, which was as great

great a subject of exultation to the partisans of the *Abbé* as any other, was not complete. Not only was she confined to her bed, for many days, after the decrease of her dropsy; but she still remained incapable of moving two of her fingers. Silva, physician to the Duke of Orleans, attested this; adding expressly, that he *could not look on her as being cured.*

The *eighth* and last observation I shall make on this subject is, That the relief granted some of them was but *temporary.* This was clearly proved to be the case of the Spanish gentleman. That soon after his return home, he relapsed into his former malady, the prelate I have often quoted, hath, by the certificates and letters which he procured from Madrid, put beyond controversy. Among these, there are letters from a Spanish grandee, Don Francis Xavier, and from the patient's uncle, besides a certificate signed by himself.

After the above observations, I believe, there will be no occasion for saying much on this subject. The author has, in a note, artfully enough pointed out his aim, that it might not be overlooked by the careless reader *. "There is another book," says he, "in three volumes, (called *Recueil des miracles de l' Abbe Paris,*) giving an account of many of these "miracles, and accompanied with prefatory dis-"courses, which are very well wrote †." He adds, "There

* p. 196.

† I am surprised that Mr Hume hath taken no notice of the profound erudition displayed in the *Recueil*, as I imagine its author is much more eminent for this, than for his talent in writing.

" There runs however, thro' the whole of these a
" a ridiculous comparison betwixt the miracles of our
Saviour

ting. Besides, his learning deserves our regard the more, that it is of a kind rarely to be met with in the present century. Where shall we find in these dregs of the ages, to adopt his own emphatical expression, such an extensive knowledge, as he hath exhibited, of all the monkish and legendary writings of the darkest and most barbarous, or, according to him, the most devout ages of the church? Or whence else, but from those productons, could he have selected such admirable materials for his work? The lives and writings of the saints are an inexhaustible treasure for a performance of this kind. 'Tis true, St Mathew, St Mark, St Luke, and St John, have said little to his purpose, and he makes as little use of them. But is not this want richly supplied in St Cudbert, St Edildride, St Willibrord, St Baudri, and five hundred others of equal note? One thing however I would gladly be informed of, being utterly at a loss to account for it. What intitled this author, who seems not to be deficient in a veneration truly catholic for ignorance, superstition, and barbarism, to speak contemptibly of Capgravius, Colganus, and Jacobus de Voragine author of *The golden legend*? To be plain with him, this is a freedom which doth not at all become him: for of *the few* readers in this age, who happen to be acquainted with the authorities quoted in the *Recueil*, most, if not all, will, I'm afraid, be of opinion, that the writers last mentioned are fully as credible, not less famous, and much more ingenious, than many of those to whom he is so greatly indebted for his most extraordinary narrative. Was it for him then to scandalize *these few*? 'Tis pity that a writer of such uncommon reading and application should act so inconsistently, and undermine his own cause. But passing his literature, which is unquestionable, I shall give the reader a specimen of his talent in disputation. To the objection that had been made, that the miracles of the deacon were gradual, he replies, " So was *the creation*, the first of miracles, which employed no less than six days." As all that was done in that time, is comprehended under *one name*, THE CREATION, he concludes very

" Saviour and thoſe of the *Abbé*; wherein 'tis aſſerted, " that the evidence for the latter is equal to that for the former †." At firſt reading, one is apt, with ſurpriſe

ry ſagely, that it ought to be denominated *one miracle*. A writer of this ſtamp would no doubt deſpiſe the anſwer which an ordinary reader might make him,—*firſt*, That every ſingle production was a perfect miracle,—*ſecondly*, That nothing could be more inſtantaneous than thoſe productions, *God ſaid, let there be light, and there was light, &c.*—and *laſtly*, That the world was not created by the miniſtration of man, nor in the preſence of men, nor in order to ſerve as evidence of any doctrine. I muſt be forgiven to remark, that in the whole of this author's reply, he hath unfortunately miſtaken the meaning of the objectors, who intend not to ſay, that God may not perform a miracle gradually, but that what is ſo performed, hath not the ſame evidence of its being miraculous, as what is done in an inſtant, and therefore cannot ſo well ſerve as evidence of any doctrine. Now that the miracles of Monſieur de Paris were intended as evidence of his doctrine, and conſequently of that of the appellants from the bull *Unigenitus*, he everywhere vehemently maintains. Another ſpecimen of this author's acuteneſs and ingenuity I ſhall give in a literal tranſlation from his own words. " But, it " will be ſaid, in the earlieſt times of the church, miraculous " cures were commonly perfected in an inſtant. True; and " 'tis this which confirms my doctrine. As it was ordinary then " to convert great ſinners all of a ſudden. But ſuch wonders in " both kinds are for the commencement of the church, or for the " renovation promiſed her. In theſe days, which the French " clergy have juſtly ſtyled *the dregs of the ages*, 'tis much that God " convert many ſinners, and cure many ſick, by ſlow degrees, " at the ſame time that he ſhows by ſome more ſhining exam- " ples that his arm is not ſhortened "

† I am ſorry to be again ſo ſoon laid under the neceſſity of obſerving, that the eſſayiſt, by confiding too much in his memory, often injures the writers whom he quotes. It is but doing juſtice to the author of the *Recueil*, to obſerve, that he hath, in no part of

ſurpriſe, to imagine, that the author is going to make ſome atonement for the tenets of the eſſay, by turning

of his performance, aſſerted that the evidence for the miracles of Monſieur de Paris is equal to that for the miracles of Jeſus Chriſt. Perhaps my reader will be ſurpriſed when I tell him, for I own I was exceedingly ſurpriſed when I diſcovered, that he hath not only in the plaineſt terms aſſerted, but ſtrenuouſly maintained, the contrary. And for this purpoſe he hath employed no leſs than twelve pages of his work. He introduces the ſubject (Diſcourſe 2. part 1.) with obſerving, that he and the reſt of his party had been traduced by their adverſaries, as equalling the miracles of the deacon to thoſe of our Saviour. The impiety of ſuch a compariſon he mentions with horror, and treats the charge as an abſolute calumny. Hence he takes occaſion to enumerate thoſe peculiar circumſtances in the miracles of our Lord, which gave them an eminent ſuperiority, not only over thoſe of his ſaint, but over thoſe of every other ſaint, or prophet whatſoever. To this enumeration he ſubjoins, Tous ceux qui recourent à Monſieur de Paris ne ſont pas gueris, nous dit-on; pluſieurs ne le ſont qu'en partie, ou d'une maniere lente, et moins eclatante; il n'a point reſſuſcite de morts. Que s'enſuit il de-la, ſinon que les miracles que Dieu a operes par lui ſont inferieurs a ceux que nôtre Seigneur a operes par lui même? Nous l'avouons, nous inculquons cette verite. "All thoſe, we are told, who re-"cur to Monſieur de Paris are not cured; ſeveral are cured but "in part, or in a ſlow and leſs ſtriking manner; he hath raiſed "no dead. What follows, unleſs that the miracles which God "wrought by him, are inferior to thoſe which our Lord "wrought by himſelf? We acknowledge, we inculcate this truth." Afterwards, ſpeaking of evidence, he owns alſo, that the miracles of the deacon are not equally certain with thoſe of Jeſus Chriſt. The latter, he ſays, are more certain in many reſpects. He ſpecifies the natural notoriety of ſome of the facts, the public and inſtantaneous manner in which moſt of them were effected, the number, the quality, the conſtancy of the witneſſes, and the forced acknowledgement of his moſt ſpiteful

turning advocate for the miracles of Jesus Christ; and by showing, that these are not affected by his doctrine. But on this point we are not long held in suspense. He subjoins, " As, if the testimony of " men could ever be put in the balance with that of

" God

ful enemies. He concludes this subject in these memorable terms. Au reste ce que je viens d'exposer sur la supériorité des merveilles operes par le Sauveur, je l'avois reconnu avec plaisir dans le premier discours. J'y ai dit en propres termes, qu'il y avoit *une difference infinie entre les miracles de Jesus Christ et ceux de Monsieur de Paris*. J'ai promis de ne jamais oublier cette difference, et j'ai tenu parole. J'ai remarque, dans le lieu ou il convenoit de le faire, que cette difference infine regardoit *l'evidence* des prodiges aussi bien que leur *grandeur;* et que les incredules pouvoient nous dire, que ceux que nous produisions n'ont point le meme eclat qu'ont eu ceux de notre Seigneur. " Finally what " I have just now evinced on the superiority of the wonders per- " formed by our Lord, I had acknowledged with pleasure in the " first discourse. I said there in express terms, that there was " *an infinite difference between the miracles of Jesus Christ and those of* " *Monsieur de Paris*. I promised never to forget this difference, " and I have kept my promise. I remarked in its proper place, " that this infinite difference regarded the *evidence* as well as the " *greatness* of the prodigies; and that the incredulous might ob- " ject, that those which we produce, have not the same lustre " with those of our Saviour." I have been the more particular on this point, not so much to vindicate the author of the *Recueil*, as to show the sense which the most bigoted partizans of the holy deacon had of the difference between the miracles ascribed to him, and those performed by our Lord. I cannot avoid remarking also another difference, I mean that which appears between the sentiments of this author as expressed by himself, and his sentiments as reported by the essayist. 'Tis indeed, Mr Hume, a judicious observation you have given us; that we ought to ' lend a very academic faith to every report which favours the ' passion of the reporter; in whatever way it strikes in with his ' natural inclinations and propensities.' p. 200.

" God himſelf, who conducted the pen of the inſpi-
" red writers." An ingenious piece of raillery without queſtion. Is it poſſible, in a politer manner, or in more obliging terms, to tell the Chriſtian world, *They are fools*; and that all who are ſilly enough to believe the miracles recorded in ſcripture, are not intitled to be argued with as *men?* How? They are ſo abſurd as to believe the ſcriptures to be the word of God, on the evidence of the miracles wrought by our Lord and his apoſtles; and that theſe miracles were wrought, they could not believe on any teſtimony, leſs than that of God, reporting them in the ſcriptures: and thus, by making inſpiration and miracles reciprocally foundations to each other, they, in effect, admit both without any foundation at all. After this handſome compliment to the friends of holy writ, he thinks himſelf at liberty to be very explicit on the comparative evidence of the miracles of the *Abbè*, and thoſe of Jeſus: " If theſe writers in-
" deed were to be conſidered merely as human teſti-
" mony, the French author is *very moderate* in his
" compariſon; ſince he might, *with ſome appearance*
" *of reaſon*, pretend, that the Janſeniſt miracles *much*
" *ſurpaſs* the other, in evidence and authority." Was ever ſo rough an aſſault, preceded by ſo ſmooth, but ſo inſidious a preamble? Is it then ſtill the fate of Jeſus to be betrayed with a kiſs? But notwithſtanding this author's declaration, no Chriſtian will have reaſon to dread the iſſue of the compariſon. Mr Hume hath not entered on particulars, neither ſhall I enter on them. I ſhould not incline to tire my reader with repetitions, which, in a minute inquiry, would

would be inevitable. I shall therefore only desire him, if he think it needful, to peruse a second time the eight foregoing observations. Let him try the miracles of our Lord by this touch stone; and I persuade myself, he will be satisfied, that there is *no appearance of reason* to pretend, that the Jansenist miracles *much surpass* the other, or even equal them, in evidence and authority.

The author triumphs not a little in the observation, that the reports of the prodigies performed by the deacon, were violently opposed by the civil magistrate, and by the Jesuits, the most learned society in the kingdom. He could see the importance of this circumstance in the the case of *Abbè* Paris, tho' not in the case of Jesus Christ. But that the difference of the cases as well as their resemblance, may better appear; it ought likewise to be observed, that Jansenism, tho' not the *ruling* faction, was at that time the *popular* faction; that this popularity was not the effect of the miracles of the *Abbè*, but antecedent to those miracles; that, on the contrary, the Jesuits were extremely *unpopular*; and that many, who had no more faith in the miracles of Saint Medard than Mr Hume hath, were well pleased to connive at a delusion, which at once plagued and mortified a body of men, that were become almost universally odious.

I shall only add, that nothing could more effectually expose the folly of those pretensions, than the expedient by which they were made to cease: In consequence of an order from the King, the sepulchre was inclosed with a wall, and the votaries were debarred

barred from approaching the tomb. The author says, in relation to this *, " No Janseniſt was ever em- " barraſſed to account for the ceſſation of the mira- " cles, when the churchyard was ſhut up by the " Kings edict." Certain it is, that " God is maſter " of his own graces and works." But it is equally certain, that neither reaſon nor the goſpel leads us to think, that any human expedient will prove ſucceſs- ful, which is calculated to fruſtrate the decrees of Heaven. Both, on the contrary, teach us, that men never more directly *promote* the deſigns of their Maker than when they intend directly to *oppoſe* them. It was not thus, that either Phariſees or Sadducees, Jews or Gentiles, ſucceded in their oppoſition to the mira- cles of Jeſus and his apoſtles. The opinion of Gamaliel† was undoubtedly judicious: *If this counſel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye* CANNOT *overthrow it; beware therefore, leſt ye be found fighting even againſt God.* To conclude; Did the Janseniſt cauſe derive any advantage from thoſe preten- ded miracles? None at all. It even ſuffered by them. It is juſtly remarked by Voltaire ‡, that " the " tomb of the deacon Paris, proved in effect, in the " minds of all people of ſenſe, the tomb of Janſe- " niſm:" How unlike in all reſpects the miracles recorded by the Evangeliſts!

THUS I have briefly inquired into the nature and evidence, firſt of the *Pagan*, and next of the *Popiſh* miracles, mentioned by Mr Hume; and have, I hope, ſufficiently evinced, that the miracles of the New Teſtament

* p. 198. in the note. † Acts v 38. 39.

‡ Siecle de Louis XIV. chap. 33.

Teſtament can ſuffer nothing by the compariſon; that, on the contrary, as, in painting, the ſhades ſerve to heighten the glow of the colours; and, in muſic, the diſcords to ſet off the ſweetneſs of the harmony; ſo the value of theſe genuine miracles is enhanced by the contraſt of thoſe paltry counterfeits.

SECTION VI.

Abſtracting from the evidence for particular facts, we have irrefragable evidence, that there have been miracles in former times; or ſuch events as, when compared with the preſent conſtitution of the world, would by Mr Hume be denominated miraculous.

I READILY concur with Mr Hume in maintaining, that when, merely by the force of REASON, we attempt to inveſtigate the *origin of worlds* *, we get beyond our ſphere, and muſt infallibly bewilder ourſelves in hypotheſis and conjecture. REASON indeed (which vainly boaſts her all-ſufficiency) hath ſometimes pretended to carry men to this amazing height. But there is ground to ſuſpect, that, in ſuch inſtances, the aſcent of reaſon, as the author elegantly expreſſeth it †, hath been aided by the wings of *imagination*. If we will not be indebted to REVELATION, for our knowledge of this article, we muſt, for aught I can percieve, be ſatisfied to live in ignorance. There is, however, one queſtion diſtinct from the former, tho' akin to it, which, even from the principles of reaſon, we may with great probabi-

* Eſſay 12. Of the academical or ſceptical philoſophy, part 3.
† Eſſay 11. Of a particular providence and future ſtate.

lity determine. The queſtion I mean is, Whether the world had an origin or not?

That there hath been an infinite, eternal, and independent ſeries of finite, ſucceſſive, and dependent beings, ſuch as men, and conſequently that the world had no beginning, appears, from the bare conſideration of the thing, extremely incredible, if not altogether abſurd. The abſtract argument uſed on this head, might appear too metaphyſical and refined: I ſhall not therefore introduce it; but ſhall recur to topics which are more familiar, and which, tho' they do not demonſtrate, that it is abſolutely impoſſible that *the world hath exiſted from eternity*, clearly evince that is highly improbable, or rather, certainly falſe. Theſe topics I ſhall only mention, as they are pretty obvious, and have been often urged with great energy by the learned, both ancient and modern. Such are, the late invention of letters, and of all the ſciences and arts by which human life is civilized; the known origin of moſt nations, ſtates and kingdoms; and the firſt peopling of many countries. 'Tis in our power at preſent to trace the hiſtory of every people, backwards to times of the greateſt barbarity and ignorance. Europe, tho' not the largeſt of the four parts into which the earth is divided, is, on many accounts, the moſt conſiderable. But what a different face doth Europe wear at preſent, from what it wore three thouſand years ago? How immenſe the odds in knowledge, in arts, in policy, in every thing? How eaſy is the intercourſe, and how extenſive the acquaintance, which men can now enjoy with all, even the remoteſt regions of the globe, compared with what

what was, or could have been enjoyed, in that time of darkneſs and ſimplicity? A man differs not more from a child, than the human race now differs from the human race then. Three thouſand years ago, appear indeed to mark a very diſtant epoch; and yet it is but as yeſterday, compared with eternity. This, when duly weighed, every thinking perſon will acknowledge to be as ſtrong moral evidence, as the ſubject can admit, (and that I imagine is very ſtrong) that the world had a beginning.

I ſhall make a ſuppoſition, which will perhaps appear whimſical, but which will tend to elucidate the argument I am enforcing. In antediluvian times, when the longevity of man was ſuch as to include ſome centuries, I ſhall ſuppoſe, that a few boys had been imported to a deſart iſland, and there left together, juſt old enough to make ſhift to ſuſtain themſelves, as thoſe in the golden age are fabled to have done, on acorns, and other ſpontaneous productions of the ſoil. I ſhall ſuppoſe, that they had lived there for ſome hundreds of years, had remembered nothing of their coming into the iſland, nor of any other perſon whatſoever; and that thus they had never had acceſs to know, or hear, of either birth or death. I ſhall ſuppoſe them to enter into a ſerious diſquiſition concerning their own duration, the queſtion having been ſtarted, Whether they had exiſted from eternity, or had once begun to be? They recur to memory, but memory can furniſh them nothing certain or deciſive. If it muſt be allowed that it contains no trace of beginning of exiſtence, it muſt alſo be allowed, that it reaches not beyond a few centuries at moſt.

They

They obſerve beſides, concerning this faculty, that the further back it goes, it becomes the more indiſtinct, terminating at laſt in confuſion and darkneſs. Some things however they diſtinctly recollect, and are aſſured of. They remember, they were once of much lower ſtature, and of ſmaller ſize; they had leſs bodily ſtrength; and all their mental faculties were weaker. They know, that, in the powers both of body and of mind, they have advanced, by imperceptible degrees, to the pitch they are now arrived at. Theſe conſiderations, eſpecially when fortified by ſome analogous obſervations they might have made on the growth of herbs and trees, would have ſhown the probability to be entirely on the ſide of thoſe who aſſerted, that their exiſtence had a beginning: And tho', on account of the narrow ſphere of their knowledge and experience, the argument could not have appeared to them in all its ſtrength, we, from our long acquaintance with nature, even abſtracting from our knowledge of man in particular, muſt be ſatisfied, that it would have been ſtrictly analogical and juſt. Exactly *ſimilar*, the very *ſame*, I ſhould rather ſay, is the argument I have been urging for the origination of the ſpecies. Make but a few alterations in phraſeology: for *memory*, ſubſtitute *hiſtory and tradition*; for *hundreds of* years, ſay *thouſands*; for *the powers of body and mind*, put *the arts and ſciences*; and, with theſe, and perhaps one or two more ſuch variations, you will find the argument as applicable in the one caſe, as in the other. Now, if it be granted, that the human ſpecies muſt have had a beginning, it will hardly be queſtioned, that every other animal ſpecies, or even that the univerſe, muſt have had a beginning.

BUT

BUT in order to prove the propoſition laid down in the title of this ſection, 'tis not neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that the world had a beginning. Admit it had not, and obſerve the conſequence. Thus much muſt be admitted alſo, that not barely for a *long continued*, but for an ETERNAL, ſucceſſion of generations, mankind were in a ſtate little ſuperior to the beaſts; that of a ſudden, there came a moſt aſtoniſhing change upon the ſpecies; that they exerted talents and capacities, of which there appeared not the ſmalleſt veſtige, during the eternity preceding; that they acquired ſuch knowledge as procured them a kind of empire, not only over the vegetable and animal worlds, but even, in ſome reſpect, over the elements, and all the unwieldy powers of matter; that, in conſequence of this, they were quickly raiſed, much more above the ſtate they had been formerly and eternally in, than ſuch their former and eternal ſtate was above that of the brute creation. If ſuch a revolution in nature, ſuch a thorough, general, and ſudden change as this, would not be denominated miraculous, 'tis not in my power to conceive what would. I could not eſteem it a greater miracle, hardly ſo great, that any ſpecies of beaſts, which have hitherto been doomed to tread the earth, ſhould now get wings, and float about in the air.

Nor will this plea be ſubverted by that trite objection, That mankind may have been as much enlightened, perhaps myriads of years ago, as they are at preſent; but that by ſome *univerſal* calamity, ſuch as deluge or conflagration, which, after the rotation of many centuries, the earth poſſibly becomes liable

to,

to, all traces of erudition and of ſcience, all traces both of the elegant and of the uſeful arts, may have been effaced, and the human race, ſpringing from a few who had eſcaped the common ruin, may have emerged anew, out of barbarity and ignorance. This hypotheſis doth but ſubſtitute one miracle in the place of another. Such general diſorder is entirely unconformable to our experience of the courſe of nature. Accordingly the deſtruction of the world by a deluge, the author hath numbered among thoſe prodigies, or miracles, which render the Pentateuch perfectly incredible.

IF, on the contrary, we admit, that the world had a beginning, (and will not every thinking perſon acknowledge, that this poſition is much more probable than the contrary?) the production of the world muſt be aſcribed either to *chance*, or to *intelligence*.

Shall we derive all things, ſpiritual and corporeal, from a principle ſo inſignificant as blind *chance*? Shall we ſay, with Epicurus, that the fortuitous courſe of rambling atoms hath reared this beautiful and ſtupendous fabric? In that caſe, perhaps, we ſhould give an account of the origin of things, which, moſt people will think, could not properly be ſtyled miraculous. But is it, becauſe the formation of a grand and regular ſyſtem in this way, is conformable to the experienced order of nature? Quite the reverſe. Nothing can be more repugnant to univerſal experience, than that the leaſt organic body, not to mention the glorious frame of nature, ſhould be produced

duced by such a casual jumble. It has therefore, in the highest degree possible, that particular quality of miracles, from which, according to the author's theory, their incredibility results, and may doubtless, in this loose acceptation of the word, be termed *miraculous*. But should we affirm, that, to account thus for the origin of the universe, is to account for it by miracle; we should be thought, I'm afraid, to speak both weakly and improperly. There is something here, if I may so express myself, which is far beyond the miraculous; something, for which I know not whether any language can afford a proper appellation, unless it be the general appellations of *absurdity* and *nonsense*.

Shall we then at last recur to the common doctrine, that the world was produced by an *intelligent cause*? On this supposition also, tho' incomparably the most rational, it is evident, that in the creation, formation, or first production of things, call it by what name you please, a power must have been exerted, which, in respect of the present course of nature, may be styled *miraculous*. I intend not to dispute about a word, nor to inquire, whether that term can, in strict propriety, be used of any exertions before the establishment of the laws of nature. I use the word in the same latitude, in which the author commonly useth it in his reasoning, for every event that is not conformable to that course of nature with which we are acquainted by experience.

WHETHER, therefore, the world *had*, or *had not*, *a beginning*; whether, on the *first* supposition, the production

production of things be ascribed to *chance*, or to *design*; whether, on the *second*, in order to solve the numberless objections that arise, we *do*, or *do not*, recur to universal *cataſtrophes*; there is no possibility of accounting for the phenomena that presently come under our notice, without having at last recourse to MIRACLES; that is, to events altogether unconformable, or, if you will, contrary to the present course of nature known to us by experience. I cannot conceive an hypothesis, which is not reducible to one or other of those above-mentioned. Whoever imagines, that another might be framed, which is not comprehended in any of those, and which hath not as yet been devised by any system-builder; let him make the experiment, and I will venture to prognosticate, that he will still find himself clogged with the same difficulty. The conclusion therefore above deduced, may be justly deemed, till the contrary is shown, to be not only the result of one, but alike of every hypothesis, of which the subject is susceptible.

THUS it hath been evinced, as was proposed, that abstracting from the evidence for particular facts, we have irrefragable evidence, that there have been, that there must have been, *miracles* in former times, or such events, as when, compared with the present constitution of the world, would by Mr Hume be denominated miraculous.

SECT.

SECTION VII.

Reviſal of Mr Hume's examination of the Pentateuch.

ALLOWING to the concluſion deduced in the foregoing ſection its proper weight, I ſhall alſo take into conſideration the *Pentateuch*, or five books of Moſes; or rather, I ſhall endeavour impartially to reviſe the examination which thoſe books have already undergone by the eſſayiſt *. It is, in this caſe, of the greateſt importance to know, whether the evidence on both ſides hath been fairly ſtated.

"HERE then we are firſt to conſider a book," which is acknowledged, on all hands, to be the moſt ancient record in the world, "preſented to us," we admit, "by a barbarous and ignorant people †," at the ſame time exhibiting a ſyſtem of *Theiſm*, or natural religion, which is both rational and ſublime; with which nothing that was ever compiled or produced, on this ſubject, in the moſt enlightened ages, by the moſt learned and poliſhed nations, who were unacquainted with that book, will bear to be compared.

Mr Hume himſelf muſt allow, that this remark

* p. 205.

† The author adds, "wrote in an age, when they were ſtill "more barbarous." Theſe words I have omited in the reviſal, becauſe they appear to me unintelligible. The age in which the Pentateuch was written, is indirectly compared to another age, he ſays not what: and all we can make of it is, that this people were more barbarous at that time, than at ſome other time, nobody knows when.

deserves attention, since his reasoning in another performance, which he calls, *The natural history of religion*, would lead us to expect the contrary. He there maintains, that *Polytheism* and *Idolatry* are, and must be, the religion of rude and barbarous, and consequently of ancient ages; that the true principles of *Theism*, or the belief of one almighty and wise Being, the creator, the preserver, and the ruler of heaven and earth, results from the greatest improvements of the understanding in philosophy and science. To suppose the contrary, says he, is supposing, that "while men were ignorant and barbarous, they "discovered truth; but fell into error, as soon as "they acquired learning and politeness *." This reasoning is just, where-ever religion is to be considered as the result of human reflections. What account then will the author give of this wonderful exception? That the reverse is here the case, it is impossible for him to dissemble. The people he himself calls ignorant and barbarous; yet they are not idolaters or polytheists. At the time when the book, which he examines, was composed, he seems to think, they even exceeded themselves in barbarity; yet the sentiments of these barbarians on the subject of religion, the sentiments which that very book presents to us, may well put to silence the wisdom of the politest nations on earth. Need I remind Mr Hume of his express declaration, that if a traveller were transported into any unknown region, and found the inhabitants "ignorant and barbarous, "he might before hand declare them idolaters, and "there

* Natural history of religion. I.

" there is *ſcarce* a POSSIBILITY of his being miſta-
" ken †?" I know no ſatisfactory account that can be given of this exception, on the principles of the eſſayiſt. Nevertheleſs, nothing is more eaſy, than to give a ſatisfactory account of it, on the Chriſtian principles. This account is that which is given by the book itſelf. It is, that the religious tenets of that nation were not the reſult of their reaſonings, but proceeded from divine revelation. The contraſt we diſcern betwixt the ISRAELITES, and the ancient GREEKS and ROMANS, is remarkable. The GREEKS and ROMANS, on all the ſubjects of human erudition, on all the liberal and the uſeful arts, reaſoned like *men*; on the ſubject of religion, they prated like *children*. The ISRAELITES, on the contrary, in all the ſciences and arts, were *children*; but, in their notions of religion, they were *men*; in the doctrines, for example, of the unity, the eternity, the omnipotence, the omniſcience, the omnipreſence, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs of God; in their opinions concerning providence, and creation, the preſervation and government of the world; opinions ſo exalted and comprehenſive, as, even by the author's acknowledgment, could never enter into the thoughts of barbarians.

But to proceed in the reviſal: We have here a book, ſays the eſſayiſt, " wrote in all probability long after the facts it relates." That this book was written long after *ſome* of the facts it relates, is not indeed denied: that it was written long after *all*, or even *moſt* of thoſe facts, I ſee no reaſon to believe. If Mr

† Natural hiſtory of religion. I.

Mr Hume meant to ſignify, by the expreſſion quoted, that this was in all probability the caſe, why did he not produce the grounds on which the probability is founded? Shall a bold aſſertion paſs for argument? or can it be expected, that any one ſhould conſider reaſons, which are only in general ſuppoſed, but not ſpecified?

He adds, "corroborated by no *concurring* teſtimony;" as little, ſay I, invalidated by any *contradicting* teſtimony; and both, for this plain reaſon, becauſe there is no human compoſition, that can be compared with this, in reſpect of antiquity. But tho' this book is not corroborated by the concurrent teſtimony of any coeval hiſtories, becauſe, if there ever were ſuch hiſtories, they are not now extant; it is not therefore deſtitute of all collateral evidence. The following examples of this kind of evidence deſerve ſome notice. The diviſion of time into weeks, which hath obtained in many countries, for inſtance among the Egyptians, Chineſe, Indians, and northern barbarians; nations whereof ſome had little or no intercourſe with others, and were not even known by name to the Hebrews *: the tradition which in ſeveral

* The judicious reader will obſerve, that there is a great difference between the concurrence of nations, in the diviſion of time into *weeks*, and their concurrence in the other periodical diviſions, into *years*, *months*, *days*. Theſe diviſions ariſe from ſuch natural cauſes, as are every where obvious; the annual and diurnal revolutions of the ſun, and the revolution of the moon. The diviſion into *weeks*, on the contrary, ſeems perfectly arbitrary: conſequently its prevailing in diſtant conutries, among nations which had no communication with one another, afford a ſtrong

ſeveral places prevailed concerning the primeval chaos from which the world aroſe, the production of all living creatures out of water and earth, by the efficiency of a ſupreme mind *, the formation of

a ſtrong preſumption, that it muſt have been derived from ſome tradition (as that of the creation) which hath been older than the diſperſion of mankind into different regions. 'Tis eaſy to conceive, that the practice, in rude and barbarous ages, might remain, thro' habit, when the tradition, on which it was founded, was entirely loſt; 'tis eaſy to conceive, that afterwards, people addicted to idolatry, or who, like the Egyptians, had become proficients in aſtronomy, ſhould aſſign to the different days of the week, the names of their deities, or of the planets.

* This in particular merits our attention the more, that it cannot, by any explication, be made to agree with the doctrine which obtained among the Pagans, commonly called *the Mythology*. Ovid is ſo ſenſible of this that, when he mentions a deity as the efficient cauſe of the creation, he leaves him, as it were, detached from thoſe of the popular ſyſtem, which it was his buſineſs as a poet to deliver, being at a loſs what name to give him, or what place in nature to aſſign him. Quiſquis fuit ille deorum. *Whichever of the gods it was.* He well knew that, in all the catalogue of their divinities, the god who made the world was not to be found, that theſe divinities themſelves were, on the contary, produced out of the chaos, as well as men and beaſts. Mr Hume in his *Natural hiſtory of religion*, IV. remarks this conduct in Ovid, and aſcribes it to his having lived in a learned age, and having been inſtructed by philoſophers in the principle of a divine formation of the world. For my part, I very much queſtion, whether any nation was ever yet indebted, for this principle, to the diſquiſitions of philoſophers. Had this opinion never been heard of, till the Auguſtan age, it might indeed have been ſuſpected, that it was the daughter of philoſophy and ſcience, but ſo far is this from being the caſe, that ſome veſtiges of it may be traced even in the earlieſt, and moſt ignorant times. Thales the Mileſian, who lived many centuries before Ovid, had, as Cicero, in his

man laſt of all, in the image of God, and his being veſted with dominion over the other animals, the primitive

firſt book *De natura deorum*, informs us, attributed the origin of all things to God. Anaxagoras had alſo denominated the forming principle, which ſevered the elements, created the world, and brought order out of confuſion, *intelligence* or *mind* It is therefore much more probable that theſe ancients owed this doctrine to a tradition handed down from the earlieſt ages, which even all the abſurdities of the theology they had embraced had not been able totally to eraſe, tho' theſe abſurdities could never be made to coaleſce with this doctrine. At the ſame time I acknowledge, that there is ſomething ſo noble and ſo rational in the principle, *That the world was produced by an intelligent cauſe*, that ſound philoſophy will ever be ready to adopt it, when once it is propoſed. But that this opinion is not the offspring of philoſophy, may be reaſonably deduced from this conſideration alſo, that they were not the moſt enlightened or philoſophic nations, amongſt whom it was maintained in greateſt purity. I ſpeak not of the Hebrews. Even the Parthians, Medes and Perſians, whom the Greeks conſidered as barbarians, were genuine theiſts, and notwithſtanding many ſuperſtitious practices which prevailed among them, they held the belief of one eternal God the creator and the lord of the univerſe. If this principle is to be derived from the utmoſt improvement of the mind in ratiocination and ſcience, which is Mr Hume's hypotheſis, the phenomenon juſt now obſerved is unaccountable. If, on the contrary, it is to be derived originally from revelation, preſerved by tradition, thro' ſucceſſive genrations, nothing can more eaſily be accounted for. Traditions are always longeſt retained, and moſt purely tranſmitted, in or near the place where they were firſt received, and amongſt a people who poſſeſs a ſtrong attachment to their ancient laws and cuſtoms. Migrations into diſtant countries, mixture of different nations, revolutions in government and maners, yea and ingenuity itſelf, all contribute to corrupt tradition, and do ſometimes wholly efface it. This I take to be the only admiſſible account, why ſo rational and ſo philoſophical a principle prevailed

primitive ſtate of innocence and happineſs: the ſubſequent degeneracy of mankind: their deſtruction by a flood: and the preſervation of one family in a veſſel. Nay, which is ſtill ſtronger, I might plead the veſtiges of ſome ſuch cataſtrophe as the deluge, which the ſhells and other marine bodies, that are daily dug out of the bowels of the earth, in places remote from the ſea, do clearly exhibit to us: I might urge the traces, which ſtill remain in ancient hiſtories, of the migration of people and of ſcience from Aſia (which hath not improperly been ſtyled *the cradle of the arts*) into many parts both of Africa and Europe: I might plead the coincidence of thoſe migrations, and of the origin of ſtates and kingdoms, with the time of the diſperſion of the poſterity of Noah.

But to return: The author ſubjoins, "reſem-"bling thoſe fabulous accounts, which every nation "gives of its origin." 'Tis unluckily the fate of holy writ with this author that both its reſemblance, and

vailed moſt in ages and countries in which reaſon and philoſophy ſeemed to be but in their infancy. The notion, that the Greeks borrowed their opinions on this ſubject from the books of Moſes, a notion for which ſome Jewiſh writers, ſome Chriſtian fathers, and even ſome moderns have warmly contended, appears void of all foundation. Theſe opinions in Greece, as hath been obſerved, were of a very early date; whereas that there exiſted ſuch a people as the Jews, ſeems ſcarce to have been known there till about the time of the Macedonian conqueſts. No ſooner were they known than they were hated, and their laws and cuſtoms univerſally deſpiſed. Nor is there the ſhadow of reaſon to think, that the Greeks knew any thing of the ſacred writings till a conſiderable time afterwards, when that verſion of them was made into their language which is called *The tranſlation of the Seventy*.

and its want of reſemblance, to the accounts of other authors, are alike preſumptions againſt it. He hath not indeed told us, wherein it reſembles fabulous accounts: and, for my part, tho' the charge were juſt I ſhould imagine, little or nothing to the diſadvantage of the Pentateuch, could be deduced from it. It is univerſally agreed among the learned, that even the moſt abſurd fables of idolaters, derive their origin from facts, which having been, in barbarous ages, tranſmitted only by oral tradition, have come at length to be groſsly corrupted and disfigured. 'Tis nevertheleſs probable, that ſuch fictions would ſtill retain ſome ſtricking features of thoſe truths, from which they ſprung. And if the books of Moſes reſemble, in any thing, the fabulous accounts of other nations, it would not perhaps be difficult to prove, that they reſemble only whatever is leaſt fabulous in theſe accounts. That this will be found to be the caſe, we may reaſonably preſume, even from what hath been obſerved already; and if ſo, the reſemblance, ſo far from being an argument againſt thoſe books, is evidently an argument in their favour. In order to remove any doubt that may remain on this head, it ought to be attended to, that, in a number of concurrent teſtimonies, (where there could have been no previous concert) there is a probability independent of that which reſults from our faith in the witneſſes: nay, ſhould the witneſſes be of ſuch a character as to merit no faith at all. This probability ariſeth from the *concurrence* itſelf. That ſuch a concurrence ſhould ſpring from *chance*, is as one to infinite, in other words, morally impoſſible: if therefore concert be excluded, there remains no other cauſe but the reality of the fact. 'Tis

'Tis true, that " upon reading this book, we find it " ful of prodigies and miracles: " but 'tis alſo true, that many of thoſe miracles are ſuch, as the ſubject it treats of, muſt unavoidably make us expect. For a proof of this poſition, I need but refer the reader to the principles eſtabliſhed in the preceding ſection. No book in the world do we find written in a more ſimple ſtyle; no where does there appear in it, the leaſt affectation of ornament; yet nowhere elſe is the Almighty repreſented, as either acting or ſpeaking in a manner ſo becoming the eternal ruler of the world. Compare the account of the CREATION which is given by *Moſes*, with the ravings of Sanchoniatho the *Phenician* philoſopher, which he had dignified with the title of COSMOGONY: or compare it with the childiſh extravagancies of the *Greek* and *Latin* poets, ſo juſtly likened by the author to a ſick *man's dreams* *; and then ſay, whether any perſon of candour and diſcernment will not be diſpoſed to exclaim in the word, of the prophet, *What is the* CHAFF *to the* WHEAT †! The account is what we ſhould call in reference to experience, *miraculous*. But was it poſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe? I believe the greateſt infidel will not deny, that it is at leaſt as plauſible an opinion that the world had a begining, as that it had not. If it had, can it be imagined by any man in his ſenſes, that that particular quality ſhould be an objection to the narrative, which he previouſly knows it muſt have? Muſt not the firſt production of things, the original formation of animals and vegetables, require exertions of power

* Natural hiſtory of religion. XV.
† Jer. xxiii. 28.

er, which, in preſervation and propagation, can never be exemplified?

It will perhaps be objected, That if the miracles continued no longer, and extended no further, than the neceſſity of creation required, this reaſoning would be juſt; but that in fact they both continued much longer, and extended much further. The anſwer is obvious: it is impoſſible for us to judge, how far the neceſſity of the caſe required. Immediately after the creation, things muſt have been in a ſtate very different from that which they are in at preſent. How long that ſtate might continue, we have not the means of diſcovering: but as, in human infancy, 'tis neceſſary that the feeble creature ſhould, for ſome time, be carried in the nurſe's arms, and afterwards, by the help of leading ſtrings, be kept from falling, before he acquire, ſtrength to walk; 'tis not unlikely, that in the infancy of the world, ſuch interpoſitions ſhould be more frequent and requiſite, till nature attainining a certain maturity, thoſe laws and that conſtitution ſhould be eſtabliſhed, which we now experience. It will greatly ſtrengthen this concluſion, to reflect, that in every ſpecies of natural productions, with which we are acquainted, we invariably obſerve a ſimilar feebleneſs in the individuals on their firſt appearance, and a ſimilar gradation towards a ſtate of greater perfection and ſtability. Beſides, if we acknowledge the neceſſity of the exertion of a power, which only in reference to our experience is called miraculous, the queſtion, as is well obſerved by the judicious prelate formerly quoted *, "whether this power ſtopped immediately, after it "had

* Analogy of religion, &c. part 2. chap. 2. ſect. 2.

" had made man, or went on and exerted itself farther, " is a question of the same kind, as whether an or- " dinary power exerted itself in such a particular de- " gree and manner, or not." It cannot therefore, if we think reasonably on this subject, greatly astonish us, that such a book should give " an account of a " state of the world, and of human nature, entirely " different from the present; of our fall from that state; " of the age of man extended to near a thousand years; " and of the destruction of the world by a de- " luge."

Finally, if, in such a book, mingled with the excellencies I have remarked, there should appear some difficulties, some things for which we are not able to account; for instance, " the arbitrary choice of " one people, as the favourites of Heaven; and their " deliverance from bondage by prodigies the most " astonishing imaginable;" is there any thing more extraordinary here, than, in a composition of this nature, we might have previously expected to find? We must be immoderately conceited of our own understandings, if we imagine otherwise. Those favourites of Heaven, it must be likewise owned, are the countrymen of the writer; but of such a writer, as of all historians or annalists, ancient or modern, shows the least disposition to flatter his countrymen. Where, I pray, do we find him, either celebrating their virtues, or palliating their vices; either extolling their genius, or magnifying their exploits? Add to all these, that, in every thing which is not expressly ascribed to the interposal of Heaven, the relation is in itself plausible, the incidents are natural, the characters

racters and manners such as are admirably adapted to those early ages of the world. In these particulars, there is no affectation of the marvellous; there are no "descriptions of sea and land monsters; no relations "of wonderful adventures, strange men, and un-"couth manners*."

WHEN all these things are seriously attended to, I persuade myself, that no unprejudiced person will think, that the Pentateuch bears falsehood on the face of it, and deserves to be rejected without examination. On the contrary, every unprejudiced person will find (I say not, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, then all the miracles it relates; this is a language which I do not understand, and which only serves to darken a plain question; but I say, he will find) very many and very strong indications of authenticity and truth; and will conclude, that all the evidences, both intrinsic and extrinsic, by which it is supported, ought to be impartially canvassed. Abundant evidences there are of both kinds; some hints of them have been given in this section; but to consider them fully, falls not within the limits of my present purpose.

CON-

* P. 185.

CONCLUSION.

WHAT is the ſum of all that hath been now diſcuſſed? It is briefly this: *That the author's favourite argument, of which he boaſts the diſcovery, is founded in error*, is managed with ſophiſtry†, and is at laſt abandoned by its inventor‡, as fit only for ſhow, not for uſe; that he is not more ſucceſsful in the collateral arguments he employs; particularly, that there is no peculiar preſumption againſt religious miracles §; that, on the contrary, there is a peculiar preſumption in their favour ‖; that the general maxim, whereby he would enable us to decide betwixt oppoſite miracles, when it is ſtript of the pompous diction, that ſerves it at once for decoration, and for diſguiſe, is diſcovered to be no other than an identical propoſition, which, as it conveys no knowledge, can be of no ſervice to the cauſe of truth ¶; that there is no preſumption, ariſing either from human nature†, or from the hiſtory of mankind‡, againſt the miracles ſaid to have been wrought in proof of Chriſtianity; that the evidence of theſe is not ſubverted by thoſe miracles, which hiſtorians of other religions have recorded §; that neither the Pagan ‖, nor the Popiſh ¶ miracles, on which he hath expatiated, will bear to be compared with thoſe of holy writ; that, abſtracting from the evidence for particular facts, we have irrefragable evidence, that there have been miracles in former times†; and, laſtly, that his examination of the Pentateuch is*

both

* Part 1. ſect. 1. † Sect. 2. ‡ Sect. 3. § Sect. 4.
‖ Sect. 5. ¶ Sect. 6. † Part 2. ſect. 1. ‡ Sect. 2.
§ Part 2. ſect. 3. ‖ Sect. 5. ¶ Sect. 6. † Sect. 7.

both partial and imperfect, and consequently stands in need of a revisal *.

"OUR most holy religion," says the author in the conclusion of his essay, "is founded on faith, "not on reason; and 'tis a sure method of exposing "it, to put it to such a trial, as it is by no means "fitted to endure." If, by *our most holy religion*, we are to understand the fundamental articles of the Christian system, these have their foundation in the nature and decrees of God; and, as they are antecedent to our faith or reasonings, they must be also independent of both. If they are true, our disbelief can never make them false; if they are false, the belief of all the world will never make them true. But as the only question between Mr Hume and the defenders of the gospel, is, Whether there is reason to believe those articles? he can only mean by *our most holy religion*, our belief of the Christian doctrine: and concerning this belief we are told, that it is founded on *faith*, not on reason; that is, our faith is founded on our faith; in other words, it hath no foundation, it is a mere chimera, the creature of a distempered brain. I say not on the contrary, that *our most holy religion* is founded on *reason*, because this expression, in my opinion, is both ambiguous and inaccurate; but I say that we have sufficient reason for the belief of our religion; or, to express myself in the words of an apostle, that the Christian, if it is not his own fault, may *be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh* him *a* REASON *of* his *hope*,

So

*Sect. 7.

So far therefore am I from being afraid of expoſing Chriſtianity by ſubmitting it to the teſt of reaſon; ſo far am I from judging this a trial, which it is by no means fitted to endure, that I think, on the contrary, the moſt violent attacks that have been made upon the faith of Jeſus, have been of ſervice to it. Yes: I do not heſitate to affirm, that our religion hath been indebted to the *attempts*, tho' not to the *intentions*, of its bittereſt enemies. They have tried its ſtrength indeed, and, by trying, they have diſplayed its ſtrength; and that in ſo clear a light, as we could never have hoped, without ſuch a trial, to have viewed it in. Let them therefore write, let them argue, and, when arguments fail, even let them cavil againſt religion as much as they pleaſe: I ſhould be heartily ſorry, that ever in this iſland, the aſylum of liberty, where the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is better underſtood (however defective the inhabitants are in the obſervance of its precepts) than in any other part of the Chriſtian world; I ſhould, I ſay, be ſorry, that in this iſland, ſo great a diſſervice were done to religion, as to check its adverſaries, in any other way, than by returning a candid anſwer to their objections. I muſt at the ſame time acknowledge, that I am both aſhamed and grieved, when I obſerve any friends of religion, betray ſo great a diffidence in the goodneſs of their cauſe (for to this diffidence it can only be imputed) as to ſhow an inclination for recurring to more forcible methods. The aſſaults of infidels, I may venture to propheſy, will never overturn our religion. They will prove not more hurtful to the Chriſtian ſyſtem, if 'tis allowed

lowed *to compare ſmall things with great*, than the boiſterous winds are ſaid to prove to the ſturdy oak. They ſhake it impetuouſly for a time, and loudly threaten its ſubverſion; whilſt, in effect, they only ſerve to make it ſtrike its roots the deeper, and ſtand the firmer ever after.

ONE word more with the eſſayiſt, and I have done. "Upon the whole," ſays he, "we may conclude, "that the *Chriſtian religion*, not only was at firſt attended with miracles, but even, at this day, cannot "be believed by any reaſonable perſon without one. "Mere reaſon is inſufficient to convince us of its veracity; and whoever is moved by faith to aſſent to "it;" that is, whoever by his belief is induced to believe it, "is conſcious of a continued miracle in his "own perſon, which ſubverts all the principles of "his underſtanding, and gives him a determination "to believe, what is moſt contrary to cuſtom and experience." An author is never ſo ſure of writing unanſwerably, as when he writes altogether unintelligibly. 'Tis impoſſible that you ſhould fight your enemy before you find him; and if he hath ſcreened himſelf in darkneſs, 'tis next to impoſſible that you ſhould find him. Indeed, if any meaning can be gathered from that ſtrange aſſemblage of words juſt now quoted, it ſeems to be one or other of theſe which follow: *either*, That there are not any in the world, who believe the goſpel; *or*, That there is no want of miracles in our own time. How either of theſe remarks, if juſt, can contribute to the author's purpoſe, it will not, I ſuſpect, be eaſy to diſcover. If the

the ſecond remark is true, if there is no want of miracles at preſent, ſurely experience cannot be pleaded againſt the belief of miracles ſaid to have been performed in time paſt. Again, if the firſt remark is true, if there are not any in the world who believe the goſpel, becauſe, as Mr Hume ſuppoſeth, a miracle cannot be believed without a new miracle, why all this ado to refute opinions which nobody entertains? Certainly, to uſe his own words, "The "knights-errant, who wandered about to clear the "world of dragons and giants, never entertained the "the leaſt doubt concerning the exiſtence of theſe "monſters *."

Might I preſume faintly to copy but the manner of ſo inimitable an original, as the author hath exhibited in his concluding words, I ſhould alſo conclude upon the whole, That miracles are capable of proof from teſtimony, and there is a full proof of this kind, for thoſe ſaid to have been wrought in ſupport of Chriſtianity; that whoever is moved, by Mr Hume's ingenious argument, to aſſert, that no teſtimony can give ſufficient evidence of miracles, admits for *reaſon*, tho' perhaps unconſcious, a mere *ſubtilty*, which ſubverts the evidence of teſtimony, of hiſtory, and even of experience itſelf, giving him a determination to deny, what the common ſenſe of mankind, founded in the primary principles of the underſtanding, would lead him to believe.

† See the firſt paragraph of Eſſay 12. Of the academical or ſceptical philoſophy.

THE END

PROPOSALS,

By THOMAS DOBSON,

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THE

FOUR GOSPELS;

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK.

WITH

PRELIMINARY DISSERTATIONS,

AND

NOTES, Critical and Explanatory.

BY

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