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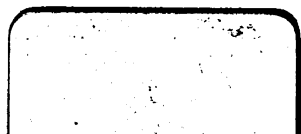
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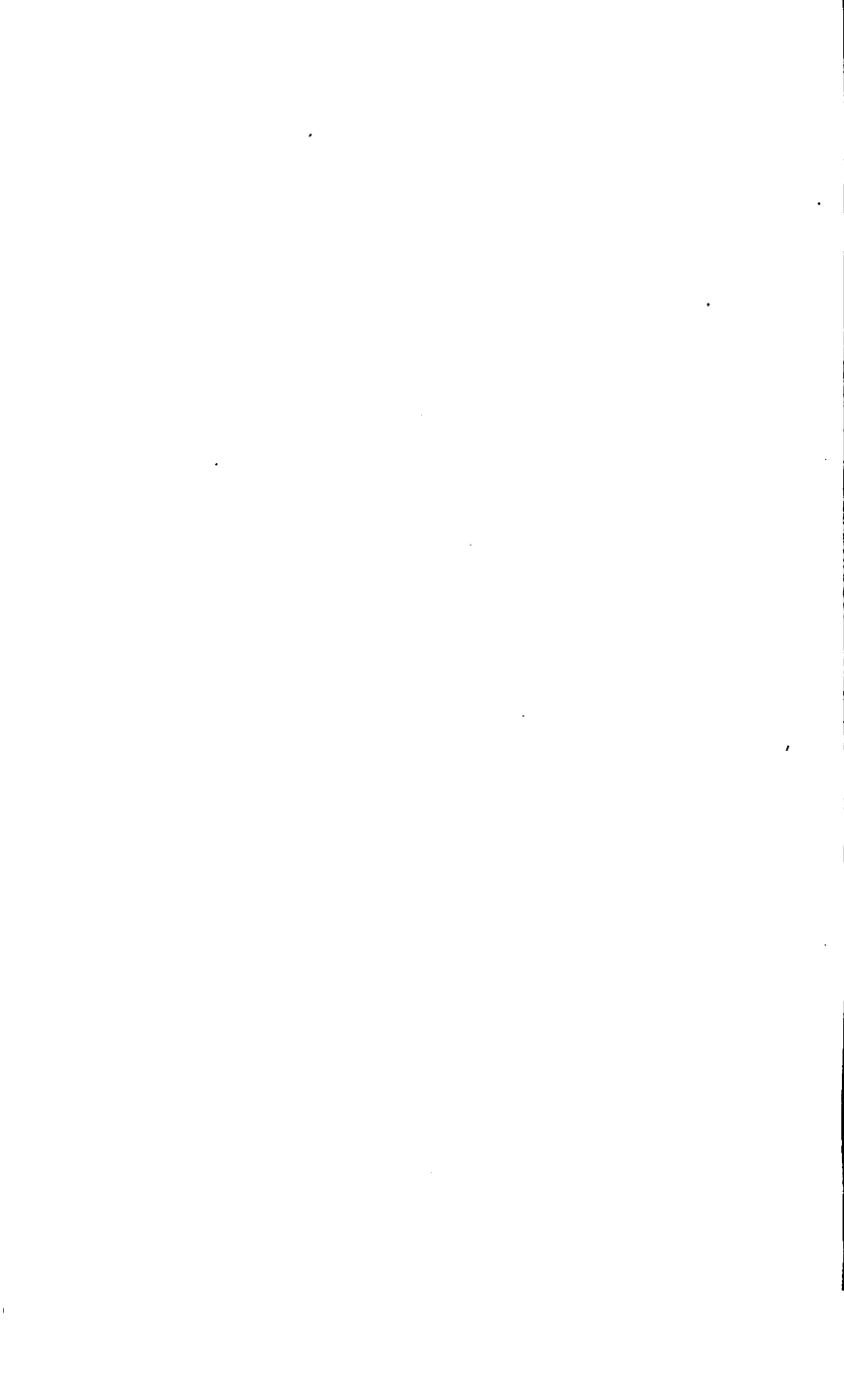
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ARGUMENT

FOR THE

TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

DRAWN FROM A

Collective View of Prophecy,

IN THREE PARTS.

- I. A brief State of the Argument.
- II. A Defence and further Illustration of the Argument.
- III. A brief State of the Question, whether Prophecies or Miracles afford a stronger Evidence for the Truth of Christianity.

Occasion'd by *Dr. Middleton's Examination of the Lord Bishop of London's Discourses.*

By the Rev. Mr. JOHN ROTHERAM,
Late of *Queen's College in Oxford*, and now
of *Codrington College in Barbados.*

The Second Edition.

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I. A brief State of the Argument for the Truth of Christianity drawn from a Collective View of Prophecy.

THE learned Bishop *Sherlock*, in his *Discourses on the Use and Intent of Prophecy*, has observed, that there is a general Dependency amongst all those Prophecies, that were delivered to the World, concerning the Messiah that was to come; that, in applying those Prophecies to our Saviour, we shall often fail of giving them their just Force, if we consider them only separately and independently; and that such a partial Consideration can by no Means give Us an adequate Idea of the grand Scheme of Providence in the Redemption of Mankind.

His Lordship has further observed, that these Prophecies were intended by Providence to serve Two great Purposes. First, *to support the Faith and Religion of the old World.* And Secondly, *to give Testimony to the Mission of Jesus.* He has shewn, with a View to the *first*, how the Revelation of the Messiah was gradually opened, and unfolded by little and little, according to the dif-

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ferent Exigences of the several Ages in which it was delivered, and the Measure of Support and Comfort that was necessary to be imparted to them: But He observes, that the *second* Purpose above-mentioned will be still farther assisted by taking in one entire View the whole Scheme of Prophecy, and that *they who consider the Prophecies under the old Testament, as so many Predictions only, independent on each other, can never form a right Judgment of the Argument for the Truth of Christianity drawn from this Topic.*

Now an entire View of the Prophecies may be taken in *two* different Lights: either *successively, as they lie in Order of Time*; or *collectively, as they All together make up one compleat Set of Predictions relating to the same Person.* These Views are manifestly distinct: The *first* of them is, I apprehend, chiefly to be attended to, when we speak of *supporting the Faith of the Old World*; as the *latter* of them is most subservient to the *Proof of Christianity.*

THAT the Prophecies of the Messiah recorded in the Old Testament are disposed in a regular and dependent Order, cannot be doubted by any one who seriously considers them: and that this Order was not fallen upon accidentally, and without Design, I think will admit of as little Dispute. The *Giving Testimony to Christ's Mission* could not be the Design of Providence in disposing them in this Order: For it will appear that a Set of Prophecies, if they only contained a full Description of the Messiah, would have given as
perfect

perfect an Evidence to the divine Mission of Jesus, in whatever Order they had been delivered, or delivered even without any Regard to Order, as they do when ranged in that Regularity in which they now appear.

No other Conditions could be requisite for this End than that the Prophecies should be, 1. *so clear as to be easily applicable to the Messiah*; 2. *so numerous and particular, as to comprehend a View of the most material Actions of his Life, and the Intention of his Coming*; and, *as to be necessarily restrained to him, and applicable to no one else*. Now these Conditions might be obtained, without any Regard to *the Order* in which the Prophecies were delivered: and therefore the giving a more perfect Testimony to the Mission of Jesus, could not be the Design of Providence in giving that regular Arrangement to these Prophecies in which they are disposed. But then these Conditions could not both be obtained without a Regard to the *second View* of Prophecies which we have pointed out. For though the Prophecies might have been so plain as to be easily applicable to the Messiah (as in Fact all the Prophecies applied to him are) yet unless they did all together make up *one compleat Set of Predictions relating to the same Person*, they could not have been so numerous and particular as to comprehend a View of the most material of our Saviour's Actions, and the Intention of his Coming, nor as to be restrained to him alone, and applicable to no one else.

THESE Distinctions then, I apprehend, give a clear and easy Account how far Prophecies, distinctly and independently considered, can go towards producing a perfect Testimony of the divine Mission of Jesus, and how far they must fail in doing this. We must easily see, that Prophecies, singly considered, might be so plain as to be applicable to our Saviour: but then under this View only they could go no farther. They might still be of such a Nature, (and in Fact many of them are of that Nature,) as to be applicable to many more besides the Person of our Saviour. Thus that Prediction, which says the Messiah should make his Grave with the Rich, is plainly applicable to our Lord, because it undoubtedly happened to him; but it happened to many more besides our Saviour, and therefore, if we consider it no otherwise than singly, the Evidence of this Prophecy is manifestly lost. It can no more, by its own single Force, prove Jesus of *Nazareth* to be the Messiah, than it can a Thousand others, to whom the same Thing happened in common with him. It only sets his Claim to that Title upon a Level with that of all those on whose Corpses, since the giving out of the Prophecy, the same distinguished Interment has been bestowed. But when we give it a Place amongst a Collection of Prophecies that were all given out concerning the same Messiah, then we see how, under this collected View, it is at once restrained, and assists in restraining others, to the Person of our Saviour; since it can then

then only be applicable to him in whom all the other Circumstances concurred, nor can the rest be applied, but where this is also due. 'Tis true there are some of the Prophecies by their Nature more restrained. There are perhaps some of them which no one could, in strict Justice, pretend to have fulfilled but our Saviour alone. These are however far the smallest Number. Nay there are scarce any of them, which a cavilling Age would have allowed him a peaceable and incontestd Right to: and, in by far the greatest Number, He would have had many Competitors. But if they fail here, much less can scattered, disjointed Predictions answer the other Part of the second Condition. For it is a Contradiction, that a Prophecy of a single Event should comprehend a View of the most material Actions of the Messiah, and the Intention of his Coming. We see how small a Part of that Evidence for the Truth of our Saviour's Mission, which Reason teaches us to expect from Prophecy, is obtainable from Prophecies singly and independently considered: and therefore how necessary it is, in Order to draw a conclusive Argument for the Truth of Christianity from this Topic, to take an entire View of the Prophecies of the Old Testament in the second Light, as they all together make up one compleat Set of Predictions relating to the same Person.

IF we should attend only to one single Operation of Nature, or to one single Act of God's Dealings with his Creatures, we might perhaps
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be tempted to deny a Providence. But if we take in at one comprehensive View the whole System of Nature, and run through the whole Scheme of God's Dispensations, then the Proofs of Power and Wisdom shine in so strongly upon Us, that We cannot help acknowledging the great and good Creator and Governour of the Universe. So here, when we attend only to one single Prophecy, so narrow and partial a View will at best leave the Mind clogged with great Uncertainties: but when We enlarge our View, and admit at once the whole System of Prophecies; then the Evidence for our Saviour's divine Mission breaks in with a Force so irresistible as carries all Doubts before it, and pours strong Conviction and full Assurance over all the Mind.

I do not deny, but that the first View of Prophecy may contribute something towards strengthening, or at least beautifying, the Argument drawn from thence for the Truth of Christianity. For 'tis certain that the System of Prophecies cannot be ranged in a more beautiful Order than that wherein they stand. And besides; having an Eye to the Occasions for which they were given, the Place they possess in the Series of Prophecies, and the Circumstances that attended their Delivery, cannot fail of giving Light to several particular Prophecies. There is some Reason to imagine, that our Saviour and his Disciples looked upon this as the most commodious Order, in which to draw out these Prophecies, to give their Evidence to the Truth of his Mission.

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Wherever they had Occasion to produce this Testimony, they generally began with *Moses*, and then descended in Order to the rest of the Prophets. We have a strong Presumption of our Saviour's especial Regard to this Method, joined with a direct Proof, that He thought the Prophecies of the Old Testament gave the best Evidence to his Mission when collected, in the pathetic Account of his Discourse with the Disciples in the Way to *Emmaus*. *a O Fools, and slow of Heart, said He, to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these Things, and to enter into his Glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the Things concerning himself.* From which We can gather Nothing less than this, that, in Order to convince his doubting Disciples of the Truth of his Mission from the Topic of Prophecy, He both summed up all the Prophecies contained in the Scriptures concerning himself, and also pursued that Order in which Providence had thought fit to dispose and connect them. He began from *Moses*, and expounded what related to his Mission throughout all the Scriptures.

THIS Observation will be strengthened if we consider that this was the first Time the Argument was, and could have been, made Use of in its full Extent. The Prophecies had not till then received their full and final Completion. The Scene of our Saviour's Sufferings was now clos-

a Luke 24. 25. &c.

ed, he had drank the bitter Cup, had paid down our Ransom, had shewn himself victorious over our grand Enemy, and in short had finished the great Work of his Mission; and now at last every Character given of the Messiah appeared legible in his Person. The Prophecies therefore could not have been earlier applied to him in a collected and dependent View. All that could be done in his Life-Time was to apply particular Prophecies, and to accommodate them to himself, as they one by one received their Completion in the Course of his Actions. But now He was able to gather them up, and to urge, as one powerful and irresistible Argument of the Truth of his Mission, the perfect and thorough Correspondence between his whole Life and Actions, and the entire Plan of them made up of the whole Set of Prophecies laid together and united. Our Saviour's Use of this Kind of Argument on the very first Occasion, after it was capable of being put in Force, seems clearly to point out to Us the most proper Use of Prophecy in applying it to the Proof of his Mission; and the Evangelist's apparent Care in describing so particularly this important Occurrence to Us, may justly be looked upon as a designed Recommendation of this our Saviour's Method of treating Prophecy as a Pattern most worthy our Imitation.

THE first View of Prophecy is chiefly concerned in leading Us to the first Use of it. For the greatest Strength of Testimony appears plainly to be deducible from the Second View of it.

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From that singly, all the necessary Conditions, requisite to make Prophecy a compleat Testimony, are to be obtained; and this seems to add more Grace than Strength to the Argument. Since then there is a manifest Order and Subordination observable in the Prophecies, and since We cannot suppose this Order to be the Effect of Chance, neither is the Use it can be of, in bringing about the second End of Prophecy, considerable enough to be thought the sole Purpose of it; it remains that it must have been planned in Subserviency to the first End of Prophecy, and with a View of supporting the Faith and Religion of the Old World. That they are fitted to serve this great End will easily appear.

MAN'S Innocence was the Condition on which he held his original Title to Happiness. Having lost his Innocence, he had therefore no longer any Means of obtaining Happiness. For if We say that he could, by any natural Abilities of his own, raise himself again to forfeited Happiness, what is this but destroying all essential Difference between Virtue and Vice? taking the Scales of Justice from the Hand of God, and making Man himself Arbiter of the Terms on which he will be saved? For, on this Supposition, when he had sinned, he had nothing more to do than to exert that Power with which he was endued, and be restored again to all the Priviledges of unstained Virtue. And what is such a Power, but a Power of setting up an Equality between Virtue and Vice? It is placing Man beyond all Possi-

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bility of forfeiting his Title to Happiness. For he could never forfeit his Title to that, which he had in himself a natural Power of obtaining.

THE first Sinner therefore could have no reasonable Expectations of Happiness, except it should please the Mercy of God to open for him a new Way to it. This God vouchsafed to do out of his great Compassion for the helpless State of fallen Man. He provided an Expiation for those Sins, which Man himself was unable to expiate, the Sacrifice of his beloved Son; and changed the Conditions of Happiness, on our Part, from perfect Innocence, which we were no longer capable of, to Repentance, and Faith in the Merits and Satisfaction of Christ. But still Man could not attain to the Knowledge of these Conditions, (since they depended not on his own, but on the divine Will,) and therefore could not lay hold of the Benefits of them, without some Revelation made to him of that divine Will. Hence it appears how excellently the first Prophecy was appointed for supporting the Faith and Religion of the first of Men; since without it they must have been utterly destitute of all Faith and Principles of Religion. For without it they could neither have known the Object of Faith, nor have had Hope in the Object of religious Worship. It conveys just so much Light as the Condition of Man at that Time required, a general Promise of a Deliverer. Who he was to be, at what Distance of Time he was to appear, or what were to be the Characters of his Person,

Person,

Person, it imported them little to know. These were Discoveries reserved for the Exigences of succeeding Ages. That there should arise one who should finally triumph over their grand Enemy, and thereby restore them to the Happiness they had lost all Title to by their Defection from Innocence, was enough to raise them from Despair to a Hope in God; it was a sufficient Foundation for Trust in his Mercies, and Faith in a promised Redeemer.

THIS Promise was granted to the Father of the whole Race of Men. They were all alike to share in the Benefits of it. It was therefore expressed in general Terms, because it was to be the Basis of a general Hope. But the Promise made to *Abraham* was more confined. It limited the Expectations of giving Birth to the promised Messiah to his Seed. And who does not see how conducive these Expectations were, towards carrying on the Interest of Providence, at that Time? God was then selecting a peculiar People for the better Preservation of Religion, and the Foundation of religious Hopes: And what could so effectually engage them heartily to concur in his Designs, as to diffuse through them all, from their very Fountain, the Opinion, that they were set apart by God, and sacred to the great Purpose of giving a Messiah to the World? Nothing could so strongly cement and unite them amongst themselves, or inspire them with so warm a Desire of preserving themselves a distinct People, unmixed with other

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Nations,

Nations, and of performing with Alacrity all those Ceremonies designed still further to secure their Distinction.

BUT lest this People, conceiving too high an Opinion of the Excellency of their Constitution, should be desirous of adhering to it, and of supporting it, even after the divine Protection was intended to be withdrawn from it, it was expedient they should know that God had prescribed a Period to its Duration, and only intended that its Obligation should be temporary. And what could so effectually serve this Purpose, as that the Declaration of this divine Appointment should come from the Mouth of the very Person, who was the Instrument of God in giving their Laws? That thus the great Veneration, they would conceive for One whom God had honoured with this high Commission, might be kept within due Bounds even by its own Force, and that the same Authority, which gave them Zeal to defend their Law, while it was intended to last, might also incline them to give it up without Reluctance, to that more excellent and perfect Law, which was to succeed it. Here then lay the Propriety of putting this Prophecy into the Mouth of *Moses*, *The Lord thy God will raise up unto Thee a Prophet from the midst of Thee, of thy Brethren, like unto me; unto him Ye shall hearken.* Deut. 18, 15.

WE see how justly the Degrees of Light were proportioned to the Exigences of the Times, in which they were delivered, and how well adapted

ed to excite in the Minds of Men, such Impressions, as might most conduce to forward the benevolent Designs of Providence. This Specimen sufficiently shews the Fitness of the Prophecies to the particular Periods, to which they are assigned, and how justly the Degrees of Revelation were measured out according to the Wants of those to whom they were vouchsafed. We might carry on this View of the Prophecies much farther, and shew of most of the succeeding ones, that they had a manifest Tendency to support, or revive the Faith of those to whom they were given.^a For they were generally bestowed, as these we have already considered plainly were, at Times when the People, under Difficulties or Distresses, stood most in Need of such Support; or when they wanted Encouragement for undertaking some arduous Attempts. But this is not necessary. For We cannot doubt but that Providence would carry the same gracious Design throughout the whole Revelation, that appears in the Beginning of it.

SHOULD we now suppose the Order of the Prophecies to be changed or disturbed, the Appearance they would then make, under this different Distribution of them, would further illustrate the great Wisdom of assigning them that Order they at present possess. Imagine then the Prophecies we have been considering to be in any Manner transposed, and you will see that it cannot be so contrived, but that great Inconve-

^a See Discourses &c. particularly Disc. 6. Page 148 &c.

niences would result from the Change. Suppose the Promise to *Abraham* removed back to *Adam*. It could not have added the least useful Light to that which the general Promise of a Redeemer conveyed. For what availed it *Adam*, to know the Name of One of the remote Ancestors of the Messiah? and to say that *Abraham* should be his Father, what was it saying more to *Adam*, than that one of his Seed should be his Father? But it would have been worse than barely superfluous here. For it would have laid the Deity, under a Necessity of giving a public Attestation, to the Person of this *Abraham*, either by a Set of Prophecies describing his Character, and the Time and Place of his Birth, or by working some great Miracles for this Purpose, or by some other public Demonstration, that He was the very *Abraham* from whom it was foretold, that the Messiah should spring. For without some such public Proof he might have been overlooked, or his Claim contested; instead of administering Evidence it would have supplied constant Matter of Exception and Dispute; For how could we have answered those who should have asserted that the *Abraham*, from whom the Messiah was to spring, was of another Family, another Country, or Nation? Should we on the contrary bring it nearer to the Time of our Saviour, it would, at least for the intervening Time, lose all its Influence for determining the Seed of *Abraham*, to keep up their Distinction from the Rest of Mankind; and *Abraham* himself would be

be deprived of some Part of the great Motive, that inspired him with Resolution, in maintaining the Honour of God's Name, amidst an idolatrous People, and in encountering all the Difficulties which Providence thought fit to lay upon him.

SHOULD we again, reversing the first Experiment, bring down the Promise made to *Adam* to some later Age, how unhappy would be the Consequence! Besides the great Difficulties of making the Revelation public in the World now become populous, It would leave the wretched Part of Mankind, who were destined to the dark Period which went before it, abandoned to Ignorance, or, what is still more deplorable, to all the Horrors of Despair, and the certain Apprehensions of the divine Displeasure. Thus to change or displace any of the Prophecies, like removing some of the great Bodies of the Universe, would lay in Ruins, or at least greatly disfigure, the whole System.

THE Prophecies were all inspired by the same Holy Spirit. When therefore so noble an End as the Support of Religion, which has always been the peculiar Care of Heaven, could be answered barely by giving a particular Arrangement to the Prophecies, to imagine that the Arrangement most suitable to that End was fallen upon by Chance, or to suppose that the Prophecies have been wildly scattered through different Ages, without any Regard to Order at all, is certainly sinking the Oeconomy of the divine Spirit,

Spirit, to a Pitch even lower than that to which human Prudence uses to attain. For even a prudent Mortal does not neglect to give his Affairs, the most commodious Disposition, nor will he jumble them together in Perplexity and Confusion, where he is sensible that Regularity would have conduced greatly to his Interest. The Prophecies being distributed, as they are, through all the Ages which preceded our Saviour's Coming, is of itself an Argument that Wisdom and Benevolence were concerned in appointing them their Stations, and that they were bestowed with a gracious Intention, as the Favours of Providence, on those who were thought worthy of them. Had they been all lavished upon any one Age, their Influence must have been lost to others. Had they all been given out with a profuse Hand to the first, their Force would have gradually decayed; long and unregarded Expectation would have wearied out Faith, and they would at last have vanished like Dreams, and been lost in the spreading Corruptions of Mankind. Or had they all been reserved to the later Ages, who could without Commiseration have looked back on the total Darknes, in which all Antiquity must have been involved! But when We see them disseminated with an even Hand through all Ages, who does not adore the universal Goodness, and admire the wise Oeconomy of Providence, thus dispensing his Mercies as the Necessities of his Creatures called for them, awakening at every fit Period the languishing Faith

Faith of the World, refreshing the thirsty Souls of his faithful Servants with a due Share of his Goodness, ever repeating the decayed Impressions of his Promises, and keeping alive and invigorating their Hopes, by renewed Assurances of his gracious Intentions! Upon the Whole, since it appears that the Order, in which the Prophecies are now disposed, is of all others the fittest for producing and sustaining the Faith of the Old World, and that all other possible Distribution of them, would necessarily destroy or greatly weaken this Tendency in them, we may fairly conclude, that the all-wise and bountiful Author of them, when he placed them in this beautiful Subordination, was not regardless of the great Benefits which, only under the Form he had given them, they were most capable of producing. Or in other Words; that a successive View of the Prophecies leads us to discover that they were designed by Providence, to support the Faith and Religion of the Old World.

WHEN now, in Pursuance of this great Design, God had, *by speaking*, as the Apostle expresses it, *in different Parts and in different Manners to the Fathers by the Prophets*, made a compleat Revelation of his Will concerning the Redemption of the World; when he had by frequent Additions displayed every Character of the Messiah, and thus filled up and finished the Great Out-Line that was delineated in the first general Prophecy of him: then commenced the Second Use of Prophecy, then was it fitted to

give a compleat Evidence to the Saviour that was to come. At that Period the Expectations of the faithful were raised to the greatest Height. They contemplated with awful Veneration the great Plan that was now wholly unfolded, and waited, with pious Fervour and devout Wishes, for the approaching Salvation. They stood wrapped up in silent Admiration, when they perceived the grand Crisis draw near in which the Promises of God, now shut up, were about to be made good ; and, filled with a deep and still Attention, expected when God would open in Reality that glorious Scene, the Description of which was now compleated. How their Hopes were answered by the Event, it best becomes the sacred Volumes to tell.

II. A Defence and further Illustration of the Argument.

SINCE the first Use of Prophecy laid down above, and all collective Views of the Prophecies for either of the Purposes to which they have been applied, have been lately opposed with great Severity, and condemned by an Author of great Note; to lay down such a View of them without any Regard to his Objections might be censured as Rashness, as a Want of proper Deference to an Author of his Eminence; nay as a Step unsafe for the Scheme itself; since it might be looked upon as leaving a Fortress undefended, except by its natural Strength, when a Battery directed by a great Master was playing against it. I shall therefore consider the Objections he has made to it.

HE tells Us *that our Saviour himself and his Apostles considered the Prophecies of the Old Testament, in a Light very different from that in which his Lordship would place them. That they always applied them singly and independently on each other to this or that Occasion, as so many different Arguments for the general Truth of the Gospel.*^a In sup-

^a Examination of the Lord Bishop of London's Discourses &c. by Conyers Middleton D. D. Pag. 8.

port of this Declaration he proceeds to shew, how Jesus himself constantly taught that his Person and Character were particularly foretold, and marked out by Moses and all the later Prophets as the Messiah, or that great Prophet who was to come: and that he came accordingly, as it had been foretold to them, not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them.^a This he illustrates from his general Exhortation to the Jews to search the Scriptures for the Proofs of his Character and Mission, for they are they which testify of Me, says our Saviour. From his asserting that a Belief in Moses ought to produce a Belief in him. Had ye believed Moses ye would have believed Me; for He wrote of Me. From his Reproof to his Disciples in the Way to Emmaus, Luke 24. 25 &c. From those particular Prophecies alledged by him as prefigurative of his Character and Mission.^b Which Instances of the Use of Prophecy, as it was applied by Jesus himself, sufficiently shew, he thinks, that the ancient Prophecies were considered by him singly and independently, as so many distinct Arguments for the Truth of his Mission. This Argument he endeavours further to strengthen by an Account of the Practice of the Apostles, who refer Us, he says, for the Evidences of our Faith to Moses and the Prophets. Saint Matthew was so diligent in collecting the prophetic Testimonies of Christ, and applying them severally on all Occasions as so many distinct Proofs of the Mission of Jesus, that there is scarce A SINGLE OCCURRENCE WHICH EVER

^a Page 9. ^b See Pag. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

HAPPENED TO CHRIST, *but what he declares to have been before told by some Propbet, and FULFILLED BY A CORRESPONDENT EVENT. And all the other Evangelists, he tells Us, pursue the same Method.*

AFTER having weighed all that is here drawn out from the Scriptures, to instruct Us in the Method the Apostles, and our Saviour himself made Use of, in applying the Prophecies of the Old Testament, I must confess I do not discover the least Appearance of any Thing in it inconsistent with his Lordship's Scheme. Nay it seems to Me to agree entirely with it, and to be in all Respects such an Account as the Bishop himself might be supposed to have gathered from the New Testament, had he been called upon to shew that his Notion of a System of Prophecy was reconcileable to the Sense of our Saviour and his Evangelists. For supposing them all to have been actually of Opinion, with the Bishop, that there was a Chain of Prophecies reaching from very distant Ages down to a few Centuries before his Coming, is there any Thing in all their Conduct or Discourse, as Doctor *Middleton* represents it, that betrays a Contradiction of Sentiments? Could not our Saviour, without departing from this Opinion, have exhorted the Jews to search the Scriptures for the Proofs of his Character and Mission? or rather, would he have used any other Exhortation, if he had intended to establish amongst them this very Opinion? Could he not preserve the same Consistency,

cy, and yet reproach the Jews with a Want of Belief in *Moses*, because they believed not in him? or his Disciples with Want of Faith for doubting his Resurrection, when he made it apparent to them from the Scriptures, that He ought to have suffered and to enter into his Glory? And must he, supposing a Chain of Prophecies to run through the Books of the Old Testament, have forgot himself when he asserted that he came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them? It may be said, that it is not so much the general Declarations of an Agreement between our Saviour's Character and the prophetic Account of it, that makes the Bishop's Deviation from the Opinion of our Saviour and his Apostles evident, as the Application of particular Prophecies to the Particulars of our Saviour's Life. And does this make it out? When any one asserts that the Prophecies relating to the Messiah lie in a beautiful and connected Order, do We understand him as denying that those Prophecies separately considered bear any Resemblance to the Particulars of his Life? nay on the contrary, does not the very Attempt to point out the Advantages of their lying in such an Order, presuppose the Agreement between the several Prophecies and the corresponding Circumstances in his Life? It would be absurd to argue upon any other Supposition: to pretend to rank those Expressions in a Chain of Prophecies, which it did not appear, had any Manner of Claim to the Title of Prophecies. If therefore his Lordship any-
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where denies that separate Prophecies bear any Resemblance to the Particulars of our Saviour's Life or Character; or in other Words, if he affirms, that by being distinctly considered they cease to be Prophecies, it is not in Consequence of his general Scheme that he does this; For that obliges him to no such Declaration: neither in Fact could he make any such without contradicting a main Part of his general Scheme. If you can bring him to deny that there are any distinct Characteristics of our Saviour in the prophetic Writings, I will venture to affirm, that he will ever, after be silent about the beautiful and commodious Arrangement, in which such Characteristics were delivered. It is absurd to talk of forming a Chain, without first being possessed of the Links of which it is to be composed. Nothing but an accurate Inspection into the particular Prophecies, could lead any one to discern that Uniformity of Design which runs through the Whole. In the Study of the Prophecies the same Method must be pursued, that has long been approved in treating all other Branches of Knowledge. That is, to begin by establishing the Particulars. It is from mature Observation in these alone, that We can ever hope to ascend to the more general Laws. But these once acquired, We can descend by the same Steps, and return with double Advantage to review the particular Cases, when we see the Dependence they have on their more general Causes. It is then only, when we are able to
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take the whole System into our View, that we can see the Advantage of the Order they are placed in, and at once discern and account for the Propriety of assigning this particular Part to that particular Place. Should We be shewn a Set of Pictures, and be taught, without any Regard to the Order they are placed in, the particular Story contained in each, We might, no doubt, be very well entertained while we turned from one to another just as Chance should lead Us. But should We then be told that they all represented the different Actions of the same Person, and were placed in an historical Order, this would open to Us a Set of fresh Beauties that We were not before attentive to; We should then see, that, as they stood, each following one received Light from those that went before, and that to consider them in any other Order would disturb and ruin the whole Design. Yet this new Light does not destroy the separate Representations. They are as strong as they were before, and more pleasing when their Relation to the rest is taken in, than when they were conceived to be single and independent Pieces. With Regard to the Prophecies of the Messiah, when We consider them separately, We easily discover in them strong and clear Images of our Saviour. Does He, who sees them in a connected State destroy these Images? Or if he should pretend that his View of them gives new Force and Beauty to each, which are not to be perceived by him who considers them barely in a broken disjointed State,

is such a Pretence to be construed, as a Design to blot out the Likeness that was before found to be in each particular Prophecy? The candid must think otherwise of such an Attempt. They will think the Design calculated to improve, not to weaken, these particular Resemblances.

THERE may and must be, in a Character so distinctly delineated in Prophecy as is that of our Saviour, several minuter Circumstances pointed at, which are not amongst the grand Characteristics, and inseparable Privileges of the Messiah, and which do not therefore belong to him alone. These considered distinctly and separately lose much of their Force. A Prophecy says that the Messiah was to be a Descendant of *Judah*. This happened to our Saviour, but it did not happen to him only. Therefore this Prophecy independently considered, is of too loose a Nature to be of any Assistance to Us in distinguishing the Messiah when he should come. 'Tis true it excludes many from that Title, but it also admits many to it; and if we should listen to its single Voice, we should have a whole Tribe of Messiahs. But consider this as foretold of the same Person, who was to be born of a Virgin, who was to do all Kinds of Miracles, who was to be put to Death, and to be raised from the dead, and in whom several other special Circumstances were to meet, it then becomes a forcible Evidence, and greatly contributes to fix the Character of the Messiah on the proper Person; it receives Strength from the Rest of the Prophe-

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cies,

cies, and adds Strength to them. There could scarce be one single Circumstance in our Saviour's Person or Actions fixed upon, which though foretold in the clearest and most express Terms, could have been strong enough to give him, in the Opinion of Men, an unexceptionable Right to the Title of the Messiah. Try this upon his Power of working Miracles: *That* many of the Prophets enjoyed in some Degree, and many of his Disciples gave astonishing Proofs of. He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief, underwent great Sufferings though innocent: Will this point him out to Us to be incontestably the Man? All History can witness that He is not the only innocent Sufferer. Nay try the Experiment upon those Marks which were most peculiarly his own, his Miraculous Conception, or his glorious Resurrection. If We could only have traced the Messiah, by any One of these single Points of him, in the prophetical Writings, what Objections would not have been raised against our Lord's Right to this glorious Title! How would the Infidel have triumphed over the Secrecy of his Conception! And what Accession of Strength would have followed those weak and malicious Exceptions to the Truth of his Resurrection! If then the most eminent Marks common to our Saviour with the Messiah of the Prophets, be too weak, when they stand alone, to establish him beyond Contradiction the same, and if they lose their Force by being separately applied, every other under-Circumstance

circumstance must proportionably lose more of its Force, as its natural Power to withstand the Violence offered it is less.

DESCRIPTIVE Definitions are always to be viewed intire. If you disunite the Parts of them and yet make use of every Circumstance thus independent, they will by no Means enable You to find out the Individual they were intended for, though they would readily do it when collected. If we had a Portrait given Us to find out by it the Person it was intended to represent, we should compare it intire with the Persons that offered themselves to our Notice; and when We found one whose Face and Proportions it exactly resembled, we should conclude him to be the Man we were in Search of. But if, instead of this Method, we should cut the Piece into as many Parts as there were Limbs or Features, and then look upon every small Section as a compleat Test of the Original, into what endless Mistakes should We be led! And yet in one Case the Resemblance between the several distinct Parts is the same as in the other, but We see the Advantage of laying them all together, For the Corresponding of this one Part is a Proof that all the rest are not misapplied.

How then did our Saviour and his Apostles proceed, in applying to his Person the Characters of it, that were exhibited in the prophetical Writings? It cannot be shewn that our Saviour has ever recommended the Use of any one particular Prophecy, exclusive of others, to the Attention

of those whom he was desirous of leading to a Faith in him. And till this be shewn, I see not how it can be laid down as his Sense of Prophecy, that any one particular Prophecy, much less that every particular Prophecy, is of itself a separate and distinct Proof of the general Truth of Christianity. He has indeed applied to himself particular Prophecies, and assured Us that they received their Completion in some Part of his Life or Sufferings. . But he has no where restrained the Proof of his Messiahship to any one of these, nor ascribed to them a separate Power of proving him to be *the Christ*. His Conduct was all along the very Reverse of this. He did not think that the fulfilling of any one Prophecy, or any Set of them, was sufficient to evince the Truth of his Mission. He thought that nothing less than a full Completion of all the Prophecies was sufficient for this great Purpose. He all along shewed a strong Desire of bringing about the Accomplishment of still more and more Prophecies; and when any human Endeavours were exerted that tended to prevent their further Accomplishment, He expressly opposed them. When his Disciples attempted to rescue him from the Betrayer and the Company that attended him, He ordered them to desist, assuring them that, if the Recovery of his Liberty had been agreeable to the Design he was carrying on, He wanted not the Means to effect it. * *But*

* Matt. 26, 54.

how then, he adds, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

AND as He fulfilled all the Scriptures, so he never recommended any separate Part of them, but the whole Volume, as a proper Foundation of their Faith, to others. When he endeavoured to bring others to a Belief in him, he did not refer them to this or that Prophecy as a full Evidence of his Truth, but bid them search the Scriptures without Limitation for the Proofs of his Character and Mission, *for they are they,* says He, *which testify of Me.* When He reproved the Incredulity of the Two Disciples in the Way to *Emmaus*, he did not think it sufficient, for the raising and invigorating their Faith, to recapitulate some of the most eminent Prophecies concerning himself, and to urge them as so many different, independent Arguments for their believing, but, as one great, full, and powerful Argument, *Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the Things concerning himself.*

THOSE whom He pitched upon to be his Witnesses to the World, were such as attended him through all the Scenes of his Ministry. They were not furnished with an imperfect Knowledge of it, nor admitted only to be conscious of one or two predicted Events, but were acquainted with his Preaching, his Miracles, his Persecution, his Death, Burial, Resurrection, and Ascension; For they were to give Evidence, not of a partial, but of a general Correspondency between

tween his Life and the prophetical Plan of it. *And Ye also shall bear Witness of Me, says He, because Ye have been with Me from the Beginning.* John 15. 27.

ACCORDINGLY the Evangelists are not contented with reciting only some of the most memorable Events in his Life, or with applying to it some of the most express and important Predictions, but they lay before Us the whole Scheme of his Life and Doctrine, and seem careful to inform Us of some of the minutest Incidents in them, and to apply some of the more indirect Prophecies, which were more likely to escape the Notice of common Enquirers. *St. Matthew especially has been so diligent in collecting the prophetic Testimonies of Christ, that there is scarce a single Occurrence which ever happened to him, but what he shews to have been foretold by some Prophet.* So insufficient a Foundation of a Christian Faith did he think the fulfilling of any single and separate Prediction; so industrious has he been to display to Us, in its full Force, the great Argument of the Whole Life of Jesus, corresponding to the Whole Picture of it, drawn in the prophetical Writings. The same Design is visible in the Writings of the other Evangelists. And will any one now object that they forgot this Design, when they shewed a Resemblance between particular Prophecies and the particular Acts of our Saviour? How else could the general Agreement be made out, without shewing these particular Likenesses? To attempt this
would

would be like attempting to shew the Resemblance between a Face and a Picture, and yet owning that the several Features were not at all alike. To reconcile this Scheme to the Conduct of the Evangelists, one would think a Reason for their not applying more particular Prophecies would be expected, rather than a Reason for their applying so many. For it might be said, that, if they wanted to shew Us this general Correspondency, they should have collected and applied the whole Body of the Prophecies. But neither was this requisite. For the prophetic Writings were still extant. When therefore they had drawn a compleat Account of the Transactions of Christ, they might safely leave it to Us, now possessed of both the corresponding Parts, to make the Comparison. We might read in the Prophets all that the Messiah was to do and suffer: We might read in the Evangelists all that our Lord did and suffered: and therefore were not unfurnished with every Thing, that could satisfy Us in the Reality of the Likeness, which run through the whole. It might nevertheless be judged expedient that They themselves should point out the Resemblance in some Particulars: either for the Benefit of those, who might want Leisure or Opportunity themselves, to examine the Prophets, that such might not be wholly unfurnished with this great Argument for the Truth of their Profession; or for the Sake of applying some of the more obscure Prophecies to their proper Events; or however it

was

was necessary that they should lay in a Claim in Behalf of their Master, to his being that very Messiah spoken of by the Prophets. For otherwise it might possibly have been overlooked by the inadvertent Readers, or disputed by the malicious, while they had this specious Plea to back their other Objections, "If they had been "conscious of the Completion of the Prophecies "in the Person of their Master, his Disciples "could not have been guilty of such Injustice to "his Cause as to neglect the Claim." This might have infused Doubts even into the diligent and well disposed Enquirer ; and therefore the Prophecies which stand recorded, and applied in the New Testament by the Hands of the Evangelists and Disciples of our Lord, at once awaken the inattentive, silence the bold Objector, and administer Confidence to the honest Heart. But supposing none of these Advantages had attended them, yet it is surely a very strange Objection, to say that the general Resemblance can be hurt, by a Resemblance in several Particulars being already made out, and to oppose the Argument drawn from this general Resemblance, by shewing that the Evangelists have long ago made great Advances towards proving the Reality of it. Especially when we can add that they have in Effect fully proved it. For, as far as they have gone, they have shewed the Resemblance to be perfect and undeniable, and having left us a full and true Portrait of our Lord, have appealed to the Scriptures for the Truth of the Resem-

Resemblance in those remaining Parts, which they did not think it necessary, that they themselves should draw into a Comparison. And in Truth, to do Dr. M. Justice, he seems not insensible of the Weakness of his Argument. For, after all the Pains he has taken to support it, he has fairly given it up. He says: *But whatever Ease it may give to his Lordship in this particular Dispute, to consider Prophecy in so extensive a View, yet, with Regard to the Service of Christianity, I cannot see the least Difference or Advantage in this Scheme, except in the greater Length of his prophetic Chain, than of that, which the Evangelists made Use of: For the Prophecies, as they are applied singly in the Gospels, are all of them subservient to one and the same Purpose of Providence, as well as in his Hypothesis, but the Evangelical Chain which begins with Moses, reaches only through several hundred Years; Whereas this Chain, which begins with Adam, reaches through several Thousand.*^a And is this Confession come at last, and accompanied with this Reason, that He now ceases to oppose his Lordship's Scheme, because he does not see that it carries in it any thing peculiarly serviceable to the Cause of Christianity? Why then, we may ask him, was all this Profusion of Labour to make it appear inconsistent with the Gospels? What, are the Prophecies, as applied in the Gospels themselves, all of them subservient to one and the same Purpose of Providence, as much as in his Lordship's Hypothesis,

^a Examination, Pag. 23.

and is the Gospel-Application of these Prophecies yet produced to shew this very Part of his Lordship's Hypothesis to be Chimerical, and contradictory to the Notion of the Evangelists? The Man, who could endeavour to sustain an Argument of this Kind, must surely attribute every thing to the Power of his Pen.

YET there is still one Part of the Scheme in Question, which He thinks might be of superior Service to Christianity, I mean the Length of the Bishop's prophetic Chain. For, *with Regard to the Service of Christianity, He cannot see the least Difference or Advantage in this Scheme, except in the greater Length of his prophetic Chain.* I will not say that He resolves for that Reason to maintain its Repugnance to the Gospel Scheme; However he does maintain it. And that Reason will justify our Endeavours, to shew that He has yet produced Nothing from the Scriptures, to make a Difference acknowledged. He says that the Evangelical Chain begins with *Moses*, and is therefore not so long as that for which his Lordship contends by upwards of 2000 Years. But laying aside this Metaphor at present, as unconcerned in the Point of Dispute we are now entering upon; what does he mean in plain Words when he says the Evangelical Chain reaches no higher than *Moses*? I suppose, that there are no Prophecies, cited or referred to in the New Testament, which were delivered before the Time of *Moses*. What then? does it follow, either that there were no Prophecies of the Messiah before
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the Time of *Moses*, or that the Evangelists did not know of any? not unless some Necessity can be shewn for their having cited, or referred to all the Prophecies that they were acquainted with. The Proof of this has not yet been made out, and I am perswaded will hardly be undertaken. Yet till it be made out, it must be allowed that the Evangelists might know and believe in Prophecies delivered before the Time of *Moses*, though they have not cited them, and, this being admitted, that the Supposition of a Scheme of Prophecies, taking their Rise much higher than the Time of *Moses*, is no way contrary to the Perswasion or Opinion of the Evangelists. I have before given a Reason why it was not incumbent on those who preached Christ, or were intrusted with the great Care of transmitting to Posterity the History of his Life, to apply all the Prophecies relating to the Messiah, that came within their Knowledge, to the several corresponding Passages therein. Namely, because we were still possessed of the prophetical Writings, and therefore were Ourselves capable of making the Application. I shall now further suggest a Reason, why it might seem particularly not necessary that they should expressly refer to the most ancient Prophecies of the Messiah. Now these Prophecies were only of more general Import, the Conditions of the Times not requiring that they should be more particular. They promised at large that a Messiah should come, a Deliverer from those great Evils under

which Humanity then laboured; but they did not deliver the Marks by which his Person was to be known, the Condition in which he was to appear, or the Manner in which he was to effect that Deliverance. No more was foretold to our First Parents, than that one should arise from the Seed of the Woman who should triumph over their grand Enemy, and greatly repair the Losses their Race sustained from their Transgression. To *Abraham* it was promised that the Deliverer should arise from his Seed. But this was all. Succeeding Prophecies were more particular. They pointed out all the several Characters of those different Offices the Messiah was to sustain; They determined the exact Time of his appearing in the World, the Place of his Birth, the Manner of his Life, the Nature of his Doctrine and Miracles, they painted the black Scene of his Sufferings and Death, the Circumstances of his Interment, the Glory of his Kingdom, and, in a Word, they exhibited a View of all the various Scenes he passed through in his Abode on Earth, describing many of the minutest Incidents that happened to him. The Nature then of the Prophecies delivered in the several Ages of the World being thus different, presents Us with an obvious Reason, why the Evangelists in their occasional Citation of Prophecies should make Use of the later, and why they might forbear making any References at all to the most ancient. When they had, by adapting them to the Particulars of his Life, shewn that

that the more circumstantial Prophecies belonged to him, it followed that the more general Prophecies could belong to no one else. When it had been shewn that he exactly resembled the most nice and finished Draughts of the Messiah, what Occasion to add that he also resembled the more faint Outlines or Sketches? They made it appear that every minute Circumstance, that was to meet in the Character of the Messiah, concurred in the Person of Jesus: could there therefore remain any Doubt whether he were intended under the more general Denomination of the promised Seed? Sure there could not. For it being shewn that the Explanation belonged to him, that of which it was an Explanation must of Course also belong to him. This may serve as a Reason why the Evangelists, did not expressly cite the most ancient of all Prophecies. It might have accounted for the Omission too, supposing it had been proved, that none of the ancient Prophecies were ever referred to in the Books of the New Testament. For though they had both believed and acknowledged the Force of such Prophecies, it appears from this View that it was superfluous, at least that it was not requisite, they should refer to them. But, I think, Dr. M. has by no Means proved, that there are no Prophecies referred to in the Gospel, which were delivered before the Time of Moses. He tells Us, *that it is affirmed by the Testimonies of all the Evangelists, how Jesus himself constantly taught, that his Person and Character were particularly foretold*

foretold and marked out by Moses and all the later Prophets, as the Messiah, or that great Prophet who was to come. In his Collections from the Evangelists for proving this, he has always marked these Expressions, *Moses and the Prophets*, or *the Law and the Prophets*, in different Characters. I suppose therefore, by his thus distinguishing them, he intends that these Expressions should convey an Argument, (for otherwise I find not the least Shadow of an Argument for this Purpose) and would insinuate that when the Writers of the New Testament refer to Prophecies as recorded in *Moses*, or the Law, and the Prophets, they can only be understood to mean such Prophecies as are not of an earlier Date than the Time of *Moses*. The Enquiry then must be into the Sense of these Expressions, as they were used by the Jews and Writers of the New Testament. By *Moses*, when they spoke of him as a Writer, they understood not the Person or personal Speeches, but the Writings of *Moses*. And not only that Part of his Writings whereof Himself and his own Acts are the Subject, but the whole Volume of his Writings. The Law, in their Usage signified the same Thing, as appears from the well-known Division of the Jewish Canon into the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa. Therefore *Moses and the Prophets*, or, *the Law and the Prophets*, were general Names for the whole Canon of Scripture. *The Five Books of the Law were divided into 54 Sections. This Division many of the*
Jews

Jews held to be one of the Constitutions of Moses from Mount Sinai. But others, with more Likelihood of Truth, attribute it to Ezra. It was made for the Use of their Synagogues, and the better instructing of the People there in the Law of God. For every Sabbath-Day, one of these Sections was read in their Synagogues. And this we are assured, in the Acts of the Apostles, was done amongst them of old Time. Chap. 15. 21. which may well be interpreted, from the Time of Ezra. They ended the last Section with the last Words of Deuteronomy on the Sabbath of the Feast of Tabernacles, and then began anew with the first Section from the Beginning of Genesis the next Sabbath after, and so went round in this Circle every Year. ----- Till the Time of the Persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes they read only the Law: But then, being forbid to read it any more, in the Room of the 54 Sections of the Law they substituted 54 Sections out of the Prophets, the Reading of which they ever after continued. So that when the Reading of the Law was again restored by the Maccabees, the Section which was read every Sabbath out of the Law served for their first Lesson, and the Section out of the Prophets for their second Lesson; and so it was practised in the Time of the Apostles. And therefore when Paul entered into the Synagogue of Antiochia in Pifidia, it is said that he stood up to preach after the Reading of the Law and the Prophets, Acts 13. 15. that is, after the Reading of the first Lesson out of the Law, and the second Lesson out of the Prophets.^a

^a Psid. Con. Part 1. Book 5. Page 478. 10 Ed.

We see then that all the Books of *Moses* were read in the Synagogue-Service, and that this Reading is called, by St. *James*, the preaching of *Moses*; (*For Moses of old Time hath in every City them that preach him, being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath-Day*, Acts 15. 21.) by St. *Luke*, the Reading of *the Law*. And therefore it is plain these Expressions cannot bear that confined Meaning which Dr. *M.* for the Sake of his Argument, would give them. Whence it follows that when our Saviour or his Disciples appeal for the Truth of his Mission to *Moses*, or the Law, it is not only an Appeal to the Prophecies which *Moses* in his own Person delivered, but to all those also that are contained in his Writings, though delivered originally by others, and in Times much elder than his own, and only recorded by him. And indeed this Notion of the Expression is agreeable to the Custom of Language prevailing amongst Us at this Day. We use the Name of an Author for the Works of that Author, and refer to him for any thing contained in his Works, without any Hazard of being misunderstood. If any one should say that there was a Prediction of the Greatness of the Roman Empire under *Augustus Cæsar*, delivered even before the Foundation of the City, and should refer his Hearers for it to *Virgil*, I am persuaded that He would be received with Contempt or Laughter as a low Quibbler on Words, or one ignorant of the most common Forms of Speech, who should reply, that “it was impos-
“ fible

“fible *Virgil* should be the Author of such a
 “Prophecy, for He lived not till the Days of
 “*Augustus.*” But if Dr. *M.* will not yet consent
 to give this Meaning to *Moses*, or, *the Law*, let
 him be reminded, for the further Ease of his
 Scruples, that our Saviour himself uses *Moses*,
 and the *Writings of Moses*, as synonymous Terms:
For had ye believed Moses, says He, *ye would have*
believed Me: For he wrote of Me. But if ye be-
lieve not his Writings, how will ye believe my
Words?^a—that He also appealed for the Evidence
 of his Mission to all the Writings of the old Tes-
 tament under the more general Name of Scrip-
 tures: *Search the Scriptures*, says he to the Jews,
for in them ye think that ye have eternal Life, and
they are they which testify of Me:^b—that in a full
 Account we have of his persuasive Discourse to
 draw his backward and dispirited Disciples to a
 Belief in him, he does not confine himself, in
 his Use of Prophecies, to any particular Part of
 the Scriptures, but ranges through the whole
 Compass of them, and gives the Argument com-
 plet and in its full Extent: *He expounded un-*
to them in all the Scriptures the Things concern-
ing himself:—that *Zacharias*, in his Prophe-
 cy on the Circumcision of his Son *John*, appeals
 to all the Prophets that *have been since the World*
began.^c As does *St. Peter* also in his Discourse
 after having wrought the Miracle of healing the
 lame Man: *But those Things which God before*
had shewed by the Mouth of all his Prophets, that

^a John 5. 46, 47. ^b John 5. 39. ^c Luke 1. 70.

Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. ^a And, which God hath spoken by the Mouth of all his holy Prophets, since the World began. ^b If therefore there were any Prophecies before the Time of *Moses*, it cannot be said that there is no Appeal to them in the Writings of the New Testament. And there are some Prophecies of that Antiquity whose Truth has not yet been disputed: *Viz.* The Promise of God to *Abraham*, which is thrice repeated: ^c And the Prophecy of *Jacob* determining the Period in which the Messiah was to appear ^d &c. Nay, to take away all Possibility of Suspicion that the Writers of the New Testament owned no Prophecies elder than the Times of *Moses*, this very Prophecy to *Abraham* is expressly cited and applied by them. Thus *Zacharias*, in the Prophecy above-mentioned, calls God's Promise to send the Messiah, the Mercy promised to our Fathers, and the Oath which he swore to our Father *Abraham*. And Saint *Peter*, in the Conclusion of that Discourse before referred to, quotes and explains the same Prophecy. *Ye are the Children of the Prophets*, says He, *and of the Covenant which God made with our Fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy Seed shall all the Kindreds of the Earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his Iniquities.* ^e

^a Acts 3. 18. ^b Verf. 21. ^c Gen. 12. 3. 18. 18. 22. 18.
^d Gen. 49. 10. ^e Acts 3. 25, 26.

IT appears then to be a very false Account of the Extent of those Prophecies which were referred to, or applied by our Saviour and his Apostles, that makes them reach no higher than the Times of *Moses*. And therefore Dr. M. has not shewn that there is so great a Difference, between the Length of the Evangelical Chain and that laid down by his Lordship, as he has asserted there is; nor, indeed, that there is any Difference at all. For his whole Stress being laid upon an imaginary Limitation, which has been shewn to have no Place in Scripture, that being removed, his whole Objection vanishes, and there is Nothing to hinder their being equally extended. Of Consequence, this being, by his own Confession, the only Difference between them which there was any Grounds from Scripture to insist upon, when this Difference is taken away, it must be allowed, that, notwithstanding any thing yet alledged to the contrary, the Notion of a Scheme of Prophecy beginning from the Time of *Adam*, and the Manner of arguing from one intire View of the whole Body of the Prophecies, may be esteemed agreeable to the Opinion and Practice of our Saviour and his Disciples, as they appear to Us in the Writings of the New Testament.

BUT We have not yet done with this formidable Objector. His last Appeal was to Scripture against Reason, He now appeals to Reason against Scripture. He is resolved it seems that the prophetic Chain shall be shorter at least by one

Link than the Bishop would have it. The Prophecy he attacks is that very remarkable one delivered to our First Parents at the Fall, to be the Foundation of a religious Hope to them and many of their Descendants. He is sensible that by overthrowing the Credit of this Prophecy, one great Design of Prophecy for which the Bishop is a strenuous Advocate, must fall to the Ground with it. For had Prophecy been intended to support the Faith and Religion of the old World, the Delivery of it at no other Time could have answered that End so well, as at that Period when such a Support first became necessary. As long as it was deferred, wretched Man, destitute of all Hope towards God, must, during that sad Interval, have been without any Religion at all. And therefore, this properest Occasion of delivering it for that Purpose being neglected, the Conclusion would be, that Providence, in affording this Light of Prophecy to Mankind, had no such View.

BIG with the Hopes of such a Conclusion, He resolves to strike at once at the Root of Prophecy, and to shew the History, out of which it grows, to be a mere Fable, a Dream or Invention of *Moses*, without Foundation or even Possibility in Fact. We shall give his Reasons for this bold Opinion a brief Consideration. He endeavours the Proof of it then by shewing what great Difficulties attend the Historical Sense. After We have done with these, We shall then consider that Opinion which he thinks most
consistent

consistent with Reason, and the Design of the Author:

THE Difficulties attending the Historical Sense which he produces may be reduced to these Two Heads, Inconsistences in the Characters of the Actors, and Incredibilities in the Facts. Of the first Kind there is only one, but that a very comprehensive, Instance. For it contains under it several particular Objections. It is this, That Man is represented in this Account as devoid of Reason. He proves it both from their Ignorance, and their Knowledge. From their Ignorance, of, what he calls, the primary End of their Creation, to propagate their Species. *For from this Historical Narration we find, says He, that during their State of Innocence they were utterly ignorant of this End.*^a Let it be observed upon what his natural Law has taught him to be the primary End of Man's Creation, that it makes him principally created neither for his own Happiness nor the Happiness of others, but merely as an Instrument of giving Existence to another Instrument, which was again designed to give Existence to a third, and that to a fourth, and so on *in Infinitum*, without a Possibility of ever coming at any thing that was made for itself. And when ever We should suppose a Period to be put to the human Race by God, He must be the Author of defeating his own Designs, by preventing his Works from answering that very End for which he created them: Since

^a Page 104.

it is plain that he takes from the last Set of Men all Opportunity of being the Instruments he intended them for. The same Charge of vain and fruitless Creation will by this Scheme be thrown upon God for taking out of the World so many in an Infant or unripe State; and the Imputation of opposing the Purpose of their Creator, on all those who have preserved themselves through Life in an unspotted Purity. The Neglect of this then in our First Parents, might not have been so heinous an Instance of their Inattention to the Voice of Reason, as he would have it thought, nor so unpardonable a Deviation from the Path of Nature. And therefore if it should be said that, for some Time after their Creation, their Thoughts were wholly employed on the best Means of securing their own Happiness, without once being turned on the Increase of their Species, it may perhaps be judged but a weak Argument of the utter Extinction, or rather Absence of all natural Law in their Minds. But how does he know that they were so utterly ignorant of this End? because *Moses* has not said that they endeavoured to obtain it? why might not such Endeavours be suspended? or why might not *Moses* forbear to intimate their Sense of this End as foreign to his Purpose? I am apt to think that they, who object this, are only sorry that *Moses* has not mentioned their Sense of it, because they are deprived of a fairer Opportunity of ridiculing him. As a further Instance of their Want of Reason he tells Us, *that they*

they did not know their own Nakedness till they were expelled out of Paradise. There is certainly a strange Opposition to the Sense of Mankind in this Author, that he is for having every thing figurative which others understand literally, and is resolved to stick close to the Letter there only where others agree to depart from it. However if the Expression, he founds this Objection upon, is to be understood literally, it proves not their Want of Reason, but of Sight. To speak freely then: is not the Objector somewhat unhappy in the Two Instances of Rationality he has pitched upon? Supposing *Moses* had foreseen the Objection, and, in Order to obviate it, had expressed himself as this Doctor would direct him. "And that you may be convinced " this Pair were endued with Reason in *Paradise*, " they gave Proofs both of a natural Desire to " propagate their Species, and of their Faculty " of seeing." Would this Proof have silenced the Objector? or would he not rather have been the first to cry out, "I could by the very same " Means prove every Individual in the Brute Creation a Reasonable Creature."

HIS Proofs of their Want of Reason from their Knowledge follow next. *The natural Law could not teach them*, he says, *that the Fruit of a Tree would inspire Knowledge; or that the Knowledge of Good and Ill could be criminal or hurtful.* I suppose his Argument is this; these were Instances of Knowledge above the Reach of Reason, and therefore they, who had this Knowledge,

ledge, wanted Reason. We shall not stand to dispute it with him, for neither of these are such Instances. They did not know that the Fruit of a Tree would inspire Knowledge. *Eve* indeed was so weak as to believe this on the Credit of the Tempter: but, if to be imposed on by the Devil working in Concert with our Lusts shews a Want of Reason, sure none of Us will have the Hardiness to claim it. And, unhappily for the Objector as to the next Instance, they were so far from knowing that the Knowledge of Good and Ill would be criminal or hurtful, that before the Experiment of Eating, they believed the direct contrary. Nothing was painted in the Imagination of *Eve* but Scenes of Happiness. For sure they would never have fallen, had they known that Crime and Hurt was all they should get by it. But this Piece of Knowledge was reserved for their Hours of Reflection and Penitence. And even then they would not impute their Crime or Punishment to any Enlargement of Knowledge, in the vain Expectation of which they were grievously disappointed, but to their Transgression of the divine Command. He adds, *nor was it the Light of Reason which directed them to hide themselves from the Sight of God among the Trees.* I agree with him. It was the Darkness of their Reason. Guilt had introduced Disorder and Confusion into their Minds, and they weakly strove, to hide themselves from the Sight of that God whom they were afraid to behold. Sin in many yet seeks the Shade. And if some of
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the bolder Sinners of our Age have got over this Weakness, and dare oppose God in open Day-Light, it proves not their superior Reason but their more hardened Impiety. He goes on to observe that *the same Law, which instructed Adam to give Names to the Beasts proper to their several Natures, would have taught him at the same Time, that they were all dumb, and that the Use of Speech was the peculiar Privilege of Man. And therefore if Eve had had any natural Reason, She must have been shocked and surprized when one of the lowest of those Beasts began to hold Discourse with her.* As for *Adam's* Part, after this Proof of his great Sagacity, in adapting the Names of the Creatures to their proper Natures, which he himself has produced, who will believe him when he says that *Moses* has represented him as devoid of Reason? And for *Eve*, how does he know that She was not astonished at the Discourse of the Serpent? In so short an Account as *Moses* gives of this Transaction, an obvious Reason may be given for his making no Mention of it. For he would choose to omit those Circumstances of all others, to the Knowledge of which his Readers must naturally be led by the rest that he described. This is the Manner of the most admired Writers. And sure, if we suppose that *Eve* knew the Serpent to be naturally dumb, the Historian must have written for Readers of a very dull Apprehension, if, after telling them that the Serpent spoke articulately and rationally to *Eve*, he had thought it necessary to

add, that *Eve* was surprized. But we do not know in Fact that *Eve* was well acquainted with the Nature of all the Beasts. At least the Account, he has produced for that Purpose, is far from shewing it. For that great Review of the Brute World was held before She was created. ^a And therefore if there be any inconsistent Opposition in these Two Passages it depends on this Foundation, *that a Knowledge of the Natures of all the Beasts was infused into Eve before She existed.* He tells us lastly on this Head, that *when the wonderful Works of the Creator had convinced our first Parents of his infinite Power and Wisdom and Goodness, the natural Law could not inform them, That there was another invisible Being in the World, of an opposite Nature, absolutely wicked, malicious, and endued likewise with great Power; which he was perpetually employing, to defeat all the Good and Happiness, which God had provided for his Creatures:* If the Account of *Moses* does lead us to believe that our First Parents were acquainted with these two great Points, there needs no more than this to overthrow all that he has advanced, or can advance on this Subject. For almost the whole of his Objections against the common Acceptation of this Account are intended to shew, that there is not the least Ground in the whole Story for our believing that they had any Notion of either of them. Can He say, *that in the whole of this Historical Narration* (as the Sharpness of his Wit prompts him often to

^a See Gen. 2. 19 &c.

call it) *we cannot discover the least Trace of any natural Law, nor of any Religion which Reason could teach?* and can He in the very next Page add, as what the Narration also leads him to, that *the wonderful Works of the Creator convinced our First Parents of his infinite Power and Wisdom and Goodness?* What can shew more fully our Strength of Reason, or what indeed was our Reason chiefly given us for but to lead to this very Truth? Can he again say, that there is Reason from the History to imagine, that *they had a Knowledge of another invisible Being opposite to the divine Nature, absolutely wicked and malicious?* and can he afterwards assert that *to suppose the Devil concerned in the Temptation, is not only void of all Support from the Text, but contradictory to the express Sense of it?* When he can Support these opposite Points, then I shall readily agree with him that the whole Story is a Fiction, and a gross Imposition on the Credulity of Mankind. If then he will grant that the History makes our First Parents possessed of that Degree of Knowledge he here objects to, he contradicts himself, and the Dispute is at an End. But if he be of Opinion that there is no Foundation in the Text historically understood for admitting this their Strength of Reason, or this their Belief of an evil Spirit, how impertinently are they then introduced to make the Text, thus understood, speak Inconsistences with itself?

I will add a general Reflection on this his Opinion, which I desire the Reader to carry along

in his Mind. His Assertion that the Text makes our First Parents devoid of all Reason and natural Law, and that all Things in the Paradisiacal State appear to have been ordered miraculously and supernaturally by the immediate Interposition of God, ^a will make it hard for him to account for its being a moral Fable. For by this Account, they could be no moral Agents, neither therefore could they sin: or if it be insisted upon, that notwithstanding this they still might sin, then, since they were intirely under the Direction of God and Revelation, their Sin will be chargeable on God alone. And how such an Example, of Persons either wholly incapable of sinning, or sinning only under divine Direction, could have any Tendency to promote Morality, I leave every one to judge.

WE shall pass on to the next Class of Difficulties attending the historical Sense, *viz.* Incredibilities in the Facts.

BUT it is Time to observe, that this Author has very unskilfully endeavoured to draw in, as a Part of the Question *whether the Story be Historical or Fabulous*; that which is quite another distinct Question, *what is to be understood by the Serpent in the Prophecy supposing the Story Historical*. If it can be proved that the Story is Historical, and that we are to believe the Transactions related by *Moses* really and truly to have happened in the Order in which he relates them, then is the Time to consider in what Light this will set

the Prophecy, and with what View it could be given. When we have once satisfied ourselves that there were really such Persons as *Adam* and *Eve* once happy in Paradise, and that an apparent and actual Serpent was instrumental in seducing them from their Innocence and thereby from their Happiness, then We may proceed to enquire whether *Moses* points out to Us any other concealed Agent behind the Serpent. For we must be agreed upon this that the whole is a Relation of real Facts, before we can ever hope to determine, whether from a View of the whole as a Relation of real Facts, the Serpent is to be esteemed the principal Tempter, or whether he was only actuated by an invisible Being who judged him fit for his Purpose. I shall therefore, omitting the latter of these Enquiries as besides my present Argument, confine myself wholly to the first. For it is said that there is here a Prophecy. And it is undeniably true that, if *Moses* describes Realities, there is a Prophecy. This for good Reasons has been long believed to be a Prophecy of the Messiah. Now when it is objected to this that *Moses* only relates a Fable, what Part of our Opinions are We thereby challenged to defend? Surely that alone which is opposite to the Position of our Adversary, that *Moses* relates the Truth. If We possessed a Town, and the Enemy had raised a Battery against it, where would we employ our Care? Surely we should defend those Parts of our Fortifications that the Enemy attacked. For
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though they aimed to dispossess Us of the Town, yet they attack our Works, knowing that if these can be beaten down, all within them is of Course their own, and we on the contrary defend them, knowing as well that while they are defended the Town is secure. Thus that there is a Prophecy here, and that this Prophecy relates to the Messiah, can only be maintained so long as we can defend the Reality of this History. And if that be given up, it then falls, not as a Part of this Proposition, that *the History is real*, but as a Consequence of it. For thus the whole Argument stands.

The Account which *Moses* gives of the Fall is a true Historical Account,

Therefore these Words, *it shall bruise thy Head, and Thou shalt bruise his Heel*, contain a real Prophecy.

Then follows.

This Prophecy cannot consistently be understood as conveying only the unserviceable Prospect of some fortuitous Encounters between the Race of Men and Serpents,

Therefore it conveyed the general Knowledge of a Redeemer, who was to repair the Loss human Nature sustained by the Fall, and to gain at last a compleat Victory over that very Enemy by whom our Parents had then been overcome.

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An Opponent may perhaps deny the Antecedent in each Proposition, I think he cannot deny the Consequence in either. But now it is plain that the Antecedent of the Second cannot be disputed upon, with any Reason, till we are agreed about the Antecedent of the First. For 'tis idle to wrangle about what Sense We shall give the Prophecy, when we are not yet agreed whether or no it be a Prophecy. But that it is a Prophecy is you see the Consequence of the first Proposition, and must therefore of Necessity stand or fall with it. Whence it is that That alone must be handled and decided e'er We proceed to the Second. If the first be overthrown, the second falls with it, for it is founded on a Consequence from the first. But if the first be found true We are then at Liberty to proceed. Our Way lies over it, if it fails Us we can go no further. But if it bears, nothing hinders Us then to advance and try the Solidity of the second.

I have been thus particular in explaining this Point, lest it might be thought that a material Part in the Defence of the Argument was omitted, by passing over without Notice the Objections which this Author has thrown out obliquely against the Sense his Lordship with most learned Men hath given this Prophecy. The present Question is, whether the Account of the Fall be an History or a Fable, Let us therefore attend to this alone. I know he disputes against all in a Breath, but this is not for the Advantage of Truth. For it tends only to embarrass
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and render the Matter more intricate: It entangles us as we go along, and We waste our Strength in struggling through the perplexed Path, without being able to make any proportionable Advances towards Truth.

LET us see now what Incredibilities are charged upon the Facts of this Narration. The Instances which are pronounced to be irreconcilable to the Notion of a true History are summed up in the following Manner. *The Plantation of a Paradise for the Habitation of Man; The Tree of Life, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, in the Midst of it; the Expulsion of him out of it after his Fall; The Cherubim and flaming Sword placed as a Guard to it; God coming down to walk in it in the Cool of the Day; Adam hiding himself among the Trees from the Sight of God; The Discourse of the Serpent; and the Curse pronounced upon him by God, and upon the Ground also itself; must all be considered as a mere Eastern Fable.*^a Since the Examiner has not thought fit to give us any other Reason for the Necessity of considering them in this Light, than barely saying that they must be thus considered, it might be sufficient to oppose Assertion to Assertion, and say that they must be considered as Facts. However, because Dr. M's Authority would be judged superior, we shall take a short Review of the Circumstances here thrown together, and endeavour to shew, in a more satisfactory Manner, that this Necessity is groundless. It cannot ap-

^a Page 136.

pear strange if in a Description of the World, while itself and its Inhabitants were so very different from what they are at this Day, we meet with some Scenes of which the present State of Things can furnish us with no Resemblances. And if, for this Reason, and for the Shortness of the Account given of it, we cannot arrive at a full Knowledge of the Nature of all Things in it, nor a clear Conception of the Manner in which some Actions were performed, it cannot be justly wondered at. But while we own some Obscurities in this History, it must at the same Time be confessed, that there is not a single Circumstance in it which is absolutely incredible, or which could not possibly have been. And if there be a Possibility of Things having appeared under that Form, and having happened in the Manner in which they are represented, all the rest depends upon the Historian. That Possibility alone is sufficient to rescue it from being condemned to the Class of Apologues or unnatural Fictions, and it is also sufficient to vindicate its Truth if it be attended with a sufficient Strength of Authority in the Relater, and if it seems more consistent with his Design to esteem it a true History. The Question of the natural Credibility or Incredibility of Things is decided, if it be acknowledged that they might exist: that such Things did exist must depend, no longer on their Nature, but solely on the Evidence offered in Proof of their Existence. If then it appears that every Circumstance in the

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History of the Creation and Fall might possibly be true, all Objection from the Nature of Things against their being true is answered, and the Remainder of the Enquiry must turn wholly on the Authority and Design of *Moses*. His Authority has not here been called in Question, and what has been advanced with Regard to his Design shall shortly be considered. At present the Nature of the Things demands our Attention. The Circumstance he has placed first, amongst those which he thinks determine this Account to be fabulous, is *the Plantation of a Paradise for the Habitation of Man*. We are not to transfer any unworthy Image to God's Manner of forming this Garden from the Word *Plantation* here made use of. It signifies no more than that such a Garden was formed by God, without defining the Manner in which it was done. It is applied here, because the common Manner of forming Gardens amongst Us is by Plantation. Surely then there can be no Difficulty or Incongruity in conceiving that a Place of superior Beauty and Delight was prepared for the first Reception of Man. It will not be said that God wanted Power to do this. The Vegetable Creation was obedient to his Word, and he could assemble the Parts of it in whatever Manner it should please him for the Service of his Will, and the Accommodation of, his yet Favourite Creature, Man. The Existence of a Tree of Life is as easily conceived as that of a Paradise. For the Production of it also depended on the Power of God.

God. And We cannot say that its Production was improper, if we will grant God the Liberty of bestowing his Favours in what Manner he shall think fit. In like Manner We cannot object to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, but by prescribing to the Creator what Test of Obedience he shall require from his Creatures. If we admit the Plantation of a Paradise for the Habitation of Man during his Innocency, We cannot find Fault with his Expulsion out of it when he had render'd himself unworthy longer to enjoy the Pleasures and Benefits of it. And having expelled him out of it, God might prevent his Return to it by whatever Guard he should think proper to appoint. What Quarrel can any one have with their hearing the Voice of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the Cool of the Day, except it be against the Expression? The Actions of God cannot be otherwise spoken of than in Terms taken from human Actions. And therefore if his sensible approaching be signified by the same Word which expresses the Motion of a Man, it is because human Language cannot supply a better Expression. We have before spoken of *Adam's* Attempt to hide himself amongst the Trees from the Sight of God, as the natural Effect of that Confusion of Mind which Sin and the Terror of Punishment had thrown him into. Had he been represented as effectually eluding the all-piercing Eye of his Judge, the Objection would have been strong; but the vain Attempt to do this is no more than the foolish

Cowardice of Guilt; which belongs to it, and which, even to short-sighted Man, often betrays instead of hiding it. A Serpent speaking, is what we would not give Credit to, no more than to any of the foregoing Circumstances, but upon the best Authority. However it cannot be thought incredible by those who hold the Existence of inferior Spirits good and bad, and who, believing the Scriptures, acknowledge that they have a limited Power not only over Beasts but even over Men. The Curse upon the Serpent and upon the Ground, though we could assign no Reason for them, yet would not furnish any Charge against the Justice of God, since they are both his Creatures to be disposed of according to his Will, except we could say, that, in punishing them, he changed their State against the Conditions of some Grant he had made them of continuing in it. But there can be no Room for Censure, when we consider the latter as a Part of the Punishment of Man, and the former as a Memorial of his Fall, and a lasting Mark of God's Hatred of Sin. In a Word, there is Nothing here that can appear incredible to any one, who believes that the World was created, and is governed, by a divine Providence, who admits the Agency of Spirits, and who does not hold Nature immediately to be reduced to *an empty Name*, by allowing that *it is not only variable, but has been often actually varied at the Pleasure of its Author.*^a

^a Page 172.

LET us now see what Opinion these angry Attacks, upon that which is commonly received, were intended to make Way for, and what Kind of Scheme was designed to be set up, when the Historical should be deposed. We are not at all concerned to take the least Notice of that Reasoning which has been erected on a chimerical Supposition substituting *Sanboniatho*, instead of *Moses*, for the Author of this History. The Enemies of the revealed Writings, when they find themselves unable to injure them as they stand impregnable in their native Strength, may find a Pleasure in supposing them weaker than they are, and may divert themselves with those imaginary Triumphs which such a Supposition gives them an Opportunity of acting over in Thought. But it is a Supposition, which they can never seriously hope they will be allowed decisively to argue upon. For it alone in a great Measure would determine the whole Question in their Favour. The Facts related in this Account appear to be all possible. The Belief of their Reality therefore depends not on their Nature (for Nature's Voice is that they may be real) but solely on the Authority and Intention of the Writer. If we see Cause to conclude that his Intention was to deliver this as a History of real Facts, and if his Authority be strong enough to persuade Us that He has faithfully executed his Intention, We must then admit the Account to be a true History. But if his Authority is lessened, its main Support is withdrawn, and the whole

whole Scheme falls to the Ground, we must conclude, either that he never designed his Account should be received for Truth, or, if he did, that he aimed to deceive Us. Dr. M. is sensible of this, and sets out with this fancied Advantage. *Let us now take a Review of this Story, says He, as if it had been told us by San-choniatho. And in this Way of considering it, the first Reflection which would occur is, that it was not possible for any Mortal, to give an historical Narration of the Events therein represented; or to describe the particular Manner, Order and Time, in which, or the Materials out of which, this World, and its principal Inhabitants, were formed. We should conclude at once, that the Whole, which the wisest of Men could write upon such a Subject, must be the mere Effect of Fancy and Invention.*^a We see how joyfully he hastens to his wished for Conclusion. But should we disturb his Dream, and bid him recollect that *Moses* was the Author of the History, this his first Reflection, with all the Train that follows it, would vanish with his Vision.

HE endeavours to prepossess Us in Favour of this Supposition by introducing it, as one that must be acceptable to *all Lovers of Truth*, and under a Notion of doing strict Justice to the Writings of *Moses*, by *allowing them the same candid Interpretation which is commonly indulged to other ancient Writers.*^b What would one now expect from these Professions of Candour? would

a Page 128. b Page 118.

not one hope to find some tender Regard for those Injuries with which Time equally affects all Writers? some favourable Allowances for those Obscurities, and uncommon Modes of Expression, which Antiquity, and the Change of Language and Customs, must necessarily introduce? sure one would hardly suspect that this Pretence was made Use of to cover a Design of giving *Moses* a Wound, where Length of Time has always shewn itself most merciful, in his Authority. Yet He entirely neglects the Diction, and that equitable Construction of Language, for which alone the Plea of Antiquity can be urged, and goes on, after this specious Preface, to traduce the Credit of *Moses*, and to bring *his History of the Fall and the particular Condemnation of the Serpent* down to the Level of *some Old Phœnician Story*.^a Surely this is a Kind of Justice entirely new. When *Moses* is to be treated with Candour and Impartiality, then he is divested of his divine Authority, and degraded to the Standard of ordinary Writers. A Judge, who, under a Pretence of doing strict Justice, should consider the Evidence of a Man of approved Integrity as if it had come from one of suspected Veracity, would only imitate him, who, pretending to lay aside all Prejudice and Partiality, should decide upon all Writings alike; and should consider the History of an Author to whom divine Assistances were vouchsafed, as if it had been the Production of a common unassisted Understanding.

^a Page 119.

WE will not therefore own Ourselves indebted to the Candour or Generosity of this Author, for granting *that this Account comes from Moses, and that Moses was commissioned by God to write it.*^a These are Points which have long been proved, and which must always be insisted upon. For if these be given up, We shall want that Authority in the Historian which is able to support the Weight that is to be laid upon it. Since then the Facts related in this Story are all in themselves naturally credible, and since the Authority of *Moses* is of the highest Kind and sufficient to induce a Belief of them when thus proved to be credible; in order to arrive at a clear Determination of the Question, whether this Account of the Fall is to be esteemed a Fiction or a true History, the only remaining Enquiry will be, Which of the two Schemes is most consistent with the Design of the Writer. To this, from which we were diverted by the Alarm given to the Credit of *Moses*, let us now return. That we may not misrepresent Dr. *M*'s Opinion I will give it in his own Words. He says, *We cannot properly call it a Parable; For tho' a Parable be a mere Fiction, it is defined to be of such a Sort, as must always be probable, or what might possibly be true! nor can it be an History, for though it be a plain Description of Facts, yet they are all apparently fictitious, and impossible to be performed in the Manner, in which they are described. What then are We to think of it? Why We may give it*

either the general Name of an *Allegory*, by which a different Sense is conveyed, than what is signified by Words: or we may call it rather an *Apologue* or *moral Fable*, the peculiar Character of which is, to relate Things and Events, impossible in their Nature: which is evidently the Case of the Narrative in Question.^a Again: The Matter of the Story, whether it be inspired or not, is absolutely inconsistent with the Character of an historical Narration, and must ever convince all, who consider it without Prejudice, that it is wholly fabulous or allegorical: and that Moses's Commission was accommodated on this Occasion, as it is allowed to have been on many others, to the prevailing Taste and Customs of the Nations around him; among whom the usual Method of instructing or inculcating Truths, especially those of a sublime and theological Kind, was by Fables and Allegories, which conveyed a summary Notion of the Doctrine proposed to be taught, by a Way the most striking and entertaining to the Generality of Mankind.

Thus the Plantation of a Paradise for the Habitation of Man; the Tree &c. --- must all be considered as a mere Eastern Fable, from which no other Lesson or Doctrine can be inferred, than what I have already^b intimated; that this World was

^a Page 124. ^b Viz. where he argues upon a Supposition of its coming from an uninspired Writer. He says also: *I will grant it to come from Moses, and that Moses was commissioned by God to write it: yet this makes no Difference in the Case, because the Matter of the Story, whether it be inspired or not, is absolutely inconsistent with the Character of an historical Narration.* Hence it appears that he adopts as his own Opinion, what he had said of it under that View. And therefore we may hereafter make some

created by God; and that Man was happy in it, as long as he continued innocent, but forfeited his Happiness and became wretched and miserable, as soon as he became a wilful and habitual Sinner: This, I say, is the whole, which we can rationally collect from the Mosaic Account of the Fall.^a We are all agreed therefore about this, that one great Design of the Author was, to inculcate certain very momentous moral Doctrines, such as, that the World was created by God, and is governed by his Providence, that Man was happy during his Innocency, and was made unhappy by Sin. These and many others this History, admitted to be true, will teach as fully, and much more forcibly than when considered as an Allegory. If we are persuaded of its Truth, we can no longer doubt of any of those important Doctrines, which are thus, by divine Commission, expressly and clearly delivered to Us. But a Thousand Doubts and Perplexities will crowd into our Minds as soon as we admit it to be allegorical. We shall never know where to fix, or what to assent to, on such slippery Ground: We shall be lost amidst a Variety of Interpretations, unable to determine whether we have yet penetrated to the Doctrines wrapped up under the Veil, or whether it may still conceal something far different from whatever we have yet conceived.

Observations upon it as it is professed to be his private Sentiments: though it did not appear deserving of Notice when considered as springing from, and being established upon, that absurd Supposition. ^a Pag. 135 &c.

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These are, as this Author observes, the fundamental Points of all Religion, and of necessary Belief for the Reformation of a depraved World.^a And therefore, to render them effectual, and to give them their proper Weight, they ought to have been delivered in the most clear and undissembled Manner, free from all Ambiguities and Equivocations, in all the commanding Force of simple and perswasive Truth, so as to leave the incredulous without Excuse, and the honest and well-disposed Mind without discouraging Suspicions and Distrusts. An allegorical Shade must certainly throw some Degree of Obscurity upon the Truths veiled under it. How near soever it may be made to approach to the Clearness of naked Truth, and how easy soever to the Apprehension, the naked Truth itself must still be more clear, and more easy; because its Clearness arises only from its nearer Approach to Truth. If any Part of the Disguise remains, the Features of Truth cannot be so readily, or so surely known, as when the whole is removed. This must be thought a considerable Objection to the Allegorical Scheme. For We cannot help wishing that Allegory had had no Place in the Delivery of those Truths which, of all others, ought to be made with the greatest Clearness. It will be hard to assign any Advantage attending it to counterbalance this Objection. To say that it was made Use of in Conformity to the Jewish Manner of Writing is but a weak Reason for its

^a Page 132.

Introduction here. It might indeed have carried some Appearance of Strength in it, if this Piece of History had been designed for the Use of the Jews alone. But it was designed for the Information of many People and Nations, where the Eastern Manner of speaking was neither known nor understood. The Doctrines it contains are the very fundamental Points of all Religion. Whose Obligation was to outlast the Genius of the Eastern People, to be extended to all those to whom Providence should please to open the Treasures of his Revelation. Our Saviour has not inculcated these Doctrines afresh to Us, and therefore he intended, no doubt, that we should draw them from the *Mosaic* Spring. Since then the Jews made but a small Part of those, for whose Benefit this Account was given, however clear these Doctrines might have appeared to them in an allegorical Dress, We can hardly suppose that their Taste alone would have been consulted, and infinitely the more numerous Part neglected, since the simple Truth could not have been less clear to them, and must have been much more clear to all others.

THE Jews had in the Body of their Law, and in the Course of their Transactions a great Mixture of Types. But then there is not one of their moral Doctrines, which were designed to be of eternal Use and Obligation, like the Doctrines here delivered, that is thus removed from the Light. They were intended for common Use, and therefore their Light is common to all.

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They are always expressed in plain and simple Terms, equally intelligible to all those, for whose Instruction they were equally intended.

IF, in inculcating Doctrines, the allegorical Scheme is much inferior to the literal in Point of Clearness, it falls still much more beneath it in Point of Authority to inforce those Doctrines. An Allegory may be contrived in an agreeable Manner to contain a Summary of Doctrines already known, but there can be very little Tendency in any Fable, especially if it be an Apologue, to create or inforce a Belief of Points unknown or disputed. When Things are related as they are, We cannot dispute their Truth, without calling in Question the Veracity of the Author. But we are taught to deny every Proposition of an Apologue. And indeed the Author of an Apologue does not affirm any thing directly. The Doctrines he inculcates are seen only by a faint Kind of reflected Light. But if those Doctrines are to be collected from Facts equally questionable, I see not how an Apologue can be made at all to affirm the Existence of Facts. For Example in the History before Us not only this Doctrine is to be taught, that *God is to be worshipped as the Author of our Being and all we enjoy*, but also the Fact from whence it is drawn, *that God is the Author of our Being*. Now if this Account is made an Apologue, all Authority in it for our believing that Man was created by God, is at once undermined. The Words indeed affirm the Fact. But the Words do not
contain

contain the true Mind of the Author. It is a Collection of Persons and Actions imaginary and impossible, and We are by no Means to believe any one Proposition as it there stands; nay on the contrary we are bound to deny them. It is true the ancient Sages, in laying the Foundations of Religion, and accounting for the Origin of Things, sometimes fell into the Apologue. But this was not the Effect of Choice, but Ignorance. They did not give their Accounts this Form because they thought it the most eligible, or the best fitted for teaching unknown Truths, but because they themselves wanted the Means of coming at the Truth. They therefore avoided the Appearance of it as industriously as possible, and did not deliver them in such Colours as must at first Sight betray them for Fictions and the Sport of the Imagination; but they endeavoured to lay down Systems apparently rational, and such as the Minds of Men must approve, and recommended them, not for the Entertainment of Mankind as mere Works of Ingenuity, but for their serious Perswasion and Belief, as the Dictates of Reason, or the venerable Truths of Tradition. They set them in what they esteemed the most perswasive Light, and supported them by all the Strength of Authority they could procure. They always endeavoured to make them most reconcileable either to the common Opinions, or to the Reason, of Mankind, and therefore never fixed upon them any suspicious Marks of Incredibility. None at least that
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they apprehended would appear such to the Persons for whom they wrote, and discover them to be manifest Fictions to those they designed to instruct. For what good Effects could they possibly produce amongst a People perswaded that they were false? Sure no Man would go seriously about to build a System of practical Doctrines on a Foundation, whose Weakness was not so much as dissembled or concealed. Let us imagine some ancient Sage, who had at Heart the Reformation of Mankind, when he was endeavouring to establish the Fundamentals of Religion, to have accompanied his Description of the Origin of Things with such a Declaration as this. “ And now I hope none of You are so weak as
 “ to believe that there is a Syllable of Truth in
 “ what I have delivered to You. You must be
 “ blind if you do not plainly see that it is a wild
 “ and groundless Invention of my own, which I
 “ neither believe myself nor desire You to believe.
 “ All I request of You is to act as if every Thing
 “ I have said was true.” Could he hope after this that the People would pay any great Regard to his Authority, or would effectually embrace the Belief of those Doctrines he intended to draw from this Account for the Influence of their Practice? Certainly this Instance of his Sincerity would ruin the whole Design. Now if *Moses* has fixed upon his Account of the Creation and Fall a Brand of Incredibility, if he has taken Care that it shall be attended with indisputable Marks of Fiction, and every where carry

ry along with it its own Confutation, he has done what amounts exactly to the same with such a Declaration. He does not speak himself; but his Writings speak for him, and call aloud to Us, "though I cannot assure You that God "created the World and Man, that Man was "happy in it while innocent, and became miserable by Sinning, yet be ye perswaded to act "as if all these Things were so." So great must be the Defect of Authority in an Apologue for enforcing Doctrines, where Credit is to be given at once to the Doctrines, and to the Facts from whence they are deduced.

THOUGH we are all agreed that certain Doctrines of moral Use were designed to be inculcated by this Account, yet we do not agree with Regard to all the particular Doctrines that are contained in it. Those who follow the literal Sense assert, from the History itself, that Man forfeited his Title to Happiness by a single Act of Sin, and that He lost the divine Favour by the very first Violation of God's Commands. But this Allegorist says, that Man became wretched and miserable not till he was become *a wilful and habitual Sinner.*^a If this was the Opinion designed to be inculcated by it, allowing it an Allegory, sure Nothing could be worse contrived for the Purpose. The Command given to Man, to abstain from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, was as follows. *Of every Tree of the Garden Thou mayest freely eat;*

^a Page 137.

But

But of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Thou shalt not eat of it: For in the Day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.^a Here We see Man is threatned to be punished with Death on the very first Breach of the Command, and accordingly We find in the Third Chapter that he was no sooner drawn into Disobedience, than God came down to execute the Punishment he had denounced. Man is not questioned by his Judge whether he had been guilty of a Series of Crimes, but whether he had broken this single Command. *Hast Thou eaten, says God, of the Tree, whereof I commanded Thee, that thou shouldst not eat?*^b And upon his Conviction of this single Crime, he is immediately condemned. Let him tell Us then by what Rules of Interpretation one single Act of Disobedience is to be taken, in an Allegory, for a Series; and how habitual Sin is figured in once Eating of a forbidden Fruit. This cannot be thought an unserviceable Remark, because if We admit that Man did not forfeit his Title to Happiness as soon as he became a Sinner, We must also allow, that He was of himself able, by future Obedience, to atone for past Crimes; and that he had, as this Author insinuates in the Person of some wise and ancient Reformer, after all his Sins and Depravity, still in his own Power *the Means of recovering the divine Favour, and of restoring himself to his original Happiness, by deserting that bestial Rule of sensual Pleasure, which had beguiled*

^a Gen. 2. 16, 17. ^b Chap. 3. 11.

him into a State of Sin and Misery.^a How repugnant such an Opinion is to the Foundation of most Christian Virtues, and the whole Scheme of our Redemption, I need not observe.

AGAIN. Those, who believe this History to be true, conclude from it, that there was a Tempter, distinct from the Man and Woman, concerned in the Fall. But this Allegorist says, that *the subtil Discourse of the Serpent, which beguiled Eve, could mean Nothing else but the tempting Suggestions of Lust and sensual Appetite, of which the Serpent was an Emblem; and that their Expulsion out of Paradise pointed out the natural Effects of Sin and Guilt, in depriving Man of his Happiness, and plunging him into Misery, Sorrow and Death. Which Account of the Matter, he says, is no other than what St. James himself gives of the natural Method, by which Men are usually beguiled to debase the Purity of their Nature: where he says, but every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed: then, when Lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin: and Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death.*^b James I. 14, 15. This Passage is a general Description, of the ordinary Manner and Effects of Temptations and their Conquests over Us; and it is not written with any particular Regard to the Sin of our First Parents. But if it had, nothing could have been more applicable to the Historical Account of their Fall, and therefore it cannot give the least Advantage to

^a Page 132. ^b Page 133.

the Allegory. For St. *James* does not exclude an outward Tempter from having a Share in our Seduction, neither does *Moses* exclude the Passions. On the contrary, the Apostle expressly describes the Behaviour of different Men under *outward* Temptations, and the different Consequences of it. In the 12th Verse He calls that Man *blessed that endureth Temptation: For when he is tried, he shall receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.* And then he goes on to expose the Impiety of those who, having failed under the Trial of Temptation, charge God, the Author of their Nature, with their Sin. *Let no Man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God^a &c.* telling them in the 14th and 15th Verses as above, that their Sin and Misery is chargeable on their own Folly alone, and their cowardly and base Submission to the Suggestions of their own Lust. The Historical View of the Fall is exactly agreeable to this. For it lies in this Order. First the outward Temptation is mentioned, this communicates the Fire to the Lusts of *Eve* within, She weakly yields to her inflamed Desires, sins, and incurs the Penalty of Death. The Allegory therefore, by taking away the outward Tempter, by no Means renders the Description of the first Sin more consistent with St. *James's* general Account of Temptation. But it certainly lays the Account itself under a very considerable Difficulty. In the sixth Verse of the third Chapter there is a

^a Vers. 13.

distinct Picture of the Workings of *Eve's* irregular Passions. *And when the Woman saw that the Tree was good for Food, and that it was pleasant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be desired to make one wise; She took of the Fruit thereof &c.* Here is plainly an Indulgence of her rebellious Appetite: she is pleased with the Beauty of the Fruit, her Mind drinks in the Infection, and rashly believes it possessed of every Excellence that is falsely imputed to it; she hastens to satiate her Senses, and obey her Desires. If then, as Dr. M. would have it, *the subtil Discourse of the Serpent also means Nothing else but the tempting Suggestions of Lust and sensual Appetite*, then here is a double Account of these *tempting Suggestions*; they are described both in plain Language, and in an Emblem. This is certainly, to say the best of it, a very great Deformity in his Apologue. The same Difficulty is again repeated in his Explanation of the Expulsion out of Paradise. For *that*, He says, *points out the natural Effects of Sin and Guilt, in depriving Man of his Happiness, and plunging him into Misery, Sorrow and Death.* Now it is certain that these same *natural Effects* are spoken of also in plain Language. God threatneth *Adam*, that in the Day he sinned he should surely die. After their Sin, we see Pain immediately taking Possession of their Minds, and the Conscience of Guilt filling them with Shame, Distraction, and Fear of Punishment. And then we behold God himself dooming them to Punishment, and distinctly foretelling their
 Misery,

Mifery, Sorrow, Labour, and Death. Here then will be also a double Description of the Effects of Sin, the plain and emblematical. And, what is still worfe, in this Circumftance the plain Description goes firft; for it is not till after the Sentence paffed upon the Sinners, that their Expulſion out of Paradife is related. So that when we have been instructed in all the fatal Effects of this Sin in the cleareft and fimpleft Manner, we are then prefented with the Emblem of them: as if the Author, imagining he had been too explicit, intended to lead us back from Light to Darknefs. Sure ſuch Profuſion of Language, and ſuch alternate Endeavours to ſhew and conceal the ſame Thing, does but ill agree with the Concifenefs and Elegancy of *Mofes*, or with the Nature of any one regular Deſign.

BUT let us now place this Account in another Point of View, and conſider it as deſigned to give Light into a very dark Part of Hiſtory. That it was written partly with ſuch a Purpoſe is, I think, plain, from its ſtanding as a very conſiderable and a very intereſting Part in that which is generally acknowledged to be an Hiſtory, the Pentateuch. I think it is undeniable that a true hiſtorical Account of the Creation and Fall would have answered every good Purpoſe that could be propoſed from the moſt ingenious Fiction, and would have been free from every Difficulty with which the latter muſt neceſſarily be attended. The Doctrines to be inculcated could not have been treated with equal Clearnefs

ness in an Allegory as in an History, nor could the Belief of the Facts, from whence the Doctrines were to be deduced, have been established upon an equally firm Authority. What then could determine the divine Wisdom, which inspired this Account, to prefer that Manner of doing it, by which our Information and Benefit was least consulted? Why did he wrap up those Doctrines in Obscurity which were to be of constant and common Use? And why did he hide from Us the Knowledge of his having created the World and its Inhabitants, of his just Dealings with the First of Mankind, his Blessing their Innocency and punishing their Disobedience; why did he refuse to give his Sanction to these Truths, and yet require from Us a firm and effectual Belief of them? Or, if it be said that He did not enlighten the Historian in this Part of his Work, why did He here desert him, and abandon him to his own Weakness, where alone his natural Abilities were most unserviceable to him, where there were no Means of Knowledge to guide his Researches, and where no Force of human Genius could penetrate? Was it to try the Power of his Invention, and did the divine Spirit vouchsafe its Assistance in finishing an History, and establishing a System of Doctrines, which had no better Foundation than in that? If the Genius of *Moses* had been left to work for itself here, it is most likely that He would have given Us those Opinions which he had early imbibed amongst the *Egyptians*, and would have drawn

drawn his Account of the Origin of Things from the same Fountain whence all his human Knowledge was derived. But certainly he was under the divine Direction here as well as in other Parts of his Works. And, if he was, since the Truth was fully known to the Holy Inspirer, and seems in all Respects more fit to have been taught, what possible Reason can be assigned for preferring Fiction, or what Cause can we have for imagining that Fiction was preferred? Things might have been as they are related: How then can We know that they were not so? The Manner, in which the World and all Things in it were created, can be known to infinite Wisdom alone; and since We have, under its Direction, a Creation described to Us, it is certainly the Height of foolish Presumption to say that Inspiration mocks Us, and does not give Us a true Account. The Account is given in plain descriptive Language, and gives us as clear a Conception of the Beginning and Progress of the Creation, and of the Fall of Man, as Words can give: and the History is continued on without the least Intimation of what goes before being a Fable, without any Breach in the Connection, or any Change in the Language but what the Subject required. Where then, We must ask those who maintain the Beginning of the *Mosaic* Books to be a Fiction, does the Fiction end, and Truth take Place? For they are wrought up together with such Care, and inserted into each other in so nice a Manner, that an ordinary Eye can-

cannot distinguish between them. The Histories of the remotest Ages, amongst the Greek and Roman Nations, are but very imperfectly known. In the Accounts they give of them, there is apparently a great Mixture of Fiction; but then they do not pretend to Certainty in them, and the most ingenuous of their Writers always speak of them with Diffidence. They have their Fabulous Ages, and distinguish them from their Ages of true History. But this is not the Case with *Moses*. He does not demand for himself the *Venia Antiquitati*, but speaks with as much Confidence, and as clear of all Reserve, in the Beginning, as in the End of his History. He asserts as positively that *Adam* was, by his Creator, placed in Paradise, and banished out of it, as that the Children of *Israel* came into *Egypt*, and, after a long Residence there, were led out of it under his Conduct. Whence then could this Confidence arise, but from a Consciousness that all he reported was Truth? And could this Consciousness be acquired, except he had derived his Knowledge of the Beginning of the World from the Fountain of all Truth? The Greek and Latin Historians, when they are to trace up their History into the obscurer Periods of it, tread with great Circumspection. If any one should depart from this Method, and, while He was writing a serious History of the Roman Affairs, should assert with as little Hesitation, that *Romulus* was the Son of *Mars*, as that *Augustus* was the Successour of *Julius Cæsar*, we should certain-

certainly have his Authority, as far as it would go, for believing equally both these Points. Now *Moses* speaks as distinctly and as confidently of *Adam*, as of any Person that lived the nearest to his own Times. Why then should we believe his Account of *Adam* to be a Fiction, and the rest to be true? He tells us the Time of his Living, and the Length of his Life, and ascribes some very important Actions to him. He then proceeds to give an Account of his Sons, of the Length of their Lives and the most memorable Events in them. And thus he carries on the Thread of his History regularly, and continues it down, without Interruption, to his own Times. The Account is intire, without the least Flaw or Breach. The Chain of Chronology is particularly preserved to us in the Lives of the Persons he writes of. The same Air of Seriousness and Truth runs through the whole, the Facts of one Age are not more doubtfully spoken of than of another, nor is there any more Obscurity thrown upon one Part of the History than upon another. Have we not then his Authority as strong for believing what He records of one Age as of another? Why shall the Story, from which the History takes its Rise, be treated as a Fiction, when that which springs from it is held to be real? And why do we longer believe, upon the Authority of *Moses*, what he tells us of the Posterity of *Adam*, when we resolve all that he relates of *Adam* himself into Imagination? Where the Account is pursued so regularly, and with

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such apparent Veracity and equal Pretensions to Knowledge and Certainty, through all Ages, If we once begin to believe, I see not how we can stop the Progress of our Belief till we are arrived at the very Beginning; for the same Authority, that we set out upon, will bear us, without failing, through every Period of the History. If we believe that *Jacob* was the Son of *Isaac*, and *Isaac* of *Abraham*, we must also believe on through the whole Race, from *Abraham* to *Noah*, to *Setb*, to *Adam*. If we give our Assent to what is told of the former, we cannot withhold it from what is related of the latter. Every succeeding Generation gives Credit to that which goes before it, nor can We, consistently, hold the most antient to be fabulous, and the latest to be true. For 'tis certainly as absurd to derive a Series of true History from a Fiction, as a Series of true Prophecies.

And indeed the Account of this very Author, however studiously he endeavours to avoid it, may be made to confess that there is some Degree of Truth in this Relation of *Moses*. *All the Lesson*, he says, *that can be inferred from the eastern Fable is this, that this World was created by God; and that Man was happy in it as long as he continued innocent, but forfeited his Happiness, and became wretched and miserable, as soon as he became a wilful (and habitual) Sinner.* Now all these very Facts, if we only leave out the Expression *habitual*, which I have before considered, and shewn not to be fairly inferred, are taught, in
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the most plain and express Manner, in the History of the Creation and Fall. *In the Beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth.*^a So God created Man in his own Image, in the Image of God created he him: Male and Female created he them.^b But of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thou shalt not eat of it: For in the Day that Thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.^c And when the Woman saw that the Tree was good for Food, and that it was pleasant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be desired to make one wise; She took of the Fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her Husband with her; and He did eat.^d Unto the Woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy Sorrow, and thy Conception; In Sorrow thou shalt bring forth Children: And thy Desire shall be to thy Husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the Voice of thy Wife, and hast eaten of the Tree of which I commanded Thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the Ground for thy Sake: In Sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the Days of thy Life. Thorns also and Thistles shall it bring forth to Thee: And Thou shalt eat the Herb of the Field. In the Sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread, till thou return unto the Ground: For out of it wast thou taken: For Dust thou art and unto Dust shalt thou return.^e Here it is said that God created the Earth, and made Man in his own Image: that He created Man, Male and Female: that He foretold

^a Gen. 1. 1. ^b Vers. 27. ^c Chap. 2. 17. ^d Chap. 3. 6.
^e Vers. 16, 17, 18, 19.

them that, whenever they should venture to transgress his Command, Loss of Happiness would be the Consequence: That the Woman, led aside by her Passions, sinned; She saw, desired, and eat: The Man also, hearkening to her Voice before that of his Creator, fell with her: And lastly, that, by Sinning, they incurred the divine Displeasure, and were by God condemned to Labour, Sorrow and Death. All these Things are related in the plainest and simplest Language: They stand forth in the clearest Light, not lying hid under any Emblems, nor darkened with so much as one figurative Expression. They are not in the least discoloured, dissembled, or disguised. Every Thing wears its own proper Form. It is God himself who is the Creator of all Things, and Avenger of his violated Laws: It is Man himself who is happy in Innocence, and made miserable by Disobedience. It is the Passions themselves that betray him into Sin: Sin itself which is the Cause of his Misery; and Death itself which is threatned, and, with other attendant Sufferings, inflicted. Every single Article therefore in the Lesson, which Dr. *M.* has *inferred* from this Account, The Creation of the World by God, Man's Happiness in it as long as he continued innocent, and his Misery as soon as he became a wilful Sinner, are set forth here in Terms so plain and free from Ambiguity, that no Comment, no Language can make them appear plainer. When, that Part of the Account, which relates these Things, being confessedly literal,

rerer, must be either literally true, or literally false. For Every Thing stands under its own Name and Character, is answerable for itself and Nothing else. There is no borrowed Form, Shadow, or Emblem, except Things may be called their own Shadows and Emblems.

Dr. M. finds great Fault with his Lordship for saying, in different Parts of his Discourses, that the Account itself is Historical, but cloathed in Parables and Similitudes, and in some Part metaphorical. Now all this does not shew any Inconsistency in that excellent Writer. He is all along clear for the Facts related by *Moses* being all literally true. In his late Appendix, he declares it as his Opinion, that a real Serpent was concerned in the Temptation. Yet he thinks that *this real Serpent might also stand as a proper Emblem of the Deceiver.*^a We see there how the Account may be historically true, and yet cloathed in Parables and Similitudes. And for the remaining Part, its being also metaphorical, in that there is no Difficulty. For whoever has read this excellent Appendix, may learn that Metaphors do not belong to the subject Matter of any Narration, but to the Expression or Language only. They may therefore indifferently be applied in any Writing, whether it be Truth or Fiction, and have accordingly been always used promiscuously by all Kinds of Writers. But now we hear this sharp Examiner declaring, that the Facts in this Account *are all apparently fictitious,*

^a Disc. pag. 57.

and impossible to be performed in the Manner in which they are described.^a Yet it appears, from what has been said, that he plainly admits the Truth of certain of the principal Facts contained in it, and confesses that some Part of it is truly historical. These Positions cannot possibly be reconciled to Truth or Reason. His own Wit may be turned upon him, barely by inverting the Sentence; for it will be true of him, that he holds this Account to be wholly fictitious, to be made up of Parables and Similitudes, and yet to be, in some Part, Historical.

SINCE then the Truth of these Capital Facts cannot possibly be controverted, and they appear undeniably to be related in plain and common Language, If any one will still maintain that the Author's Design was to inculcate the Belief of these Facts in an allegorical Manner, He must hold it to be a very strange and singular Kind of Composition. It must be wholly a double Account, in which the same Things are literally and emblematically set forth, sometimes clearly spoken of, sometimes but obliquely pointed at, now fully discovered, and again partly concealed, at one Time held up to our View in their own proper and naked Forms, and then at last presented to Us under a Disguise. But, what is still worse, the Substance of the Discourse must all be made true, and the allegorical Representation of that Substance thrown into the Circumstances. Thus the Sin, and consequent Misery

of *Adam*, are literally told, and literally admitted. If therefore they be also emblematically told, the Emblem can lie no where, but in some of those Circumstances, which are said to have accompanied his Fall. Thus the Circumstances must become the Emblems of the Facts which they attend, and be made to give a reflected Image of them. But to what Purpose? When we have been shewn a Thing fairly, in its genuine Form, the Author must have great Leisure if he stays to entertain us with it also in a Mask. For it can serve no Purpose but our Entertainment, since all the Uses, either for Knowledge or Practice, may more easily be drawn from the Reality than from any Image of it. All the material Facts designed to be inculcated being then confessedly true, and undeniably literal, no further good End to be answered, no parallel Authorities from any reputable Author whatsoever, can be brought to encourage or countenance Us in making the Circumstances, which only remain to be questioned, Allegorical. On the contrary it is repugnant to the Practice of all Writers, and to the Genius of all People and Languages, and utterly irreconcilable to all regular Thinking or Consistency of Design. The Circumstances cannot then be allegorical, but they must also be reputed either literally true, or literally false. If they be false, then must it be confessed that the Author has debased his Truth by this Mixture of Alloy, and they can deserve no better Name, than the Embellishments of a
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vain and sportive Fancy set at Work to disguise Truths of ever useful Importance.

THE Circumstances, when we mark their Connection with the fundamental Points, receive a communicated Force, which must necessarily draw them after these either into the Regions of Truth or Fiction. But we will venture to consider them also independently of these principal and allowed Facts, and, divesting them of this outward Impulse, to observe their own natural Tendency. And even thus we must still acknowledge their Propensity to the Side of Truth. They bear such strong Characters and Impressions of it as visibly demonstrates their inward Dignity and Alliance to it. The Author in them all along accounts for the Origin and Nature of many Things, as they still exist, and as they are afterwards described in the Sequel of his History. Now this he would certainly never have done, if he had not designed that this his Manner of accounting for them should be received for Truth. For if they be intended to be held as Fictions, they are such Fictions as never had place in any serious and reputable History, such as the Remainder of the Pentateuch, I hope, will still be allowed. *Moses* describes the Origin of the Sabbath in these Words. *And God blessed the Seventh Day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his Work, which God created and made.*^a We know very well that the Jews still keep this Sabbath, and for the Reason

^a Gen. 2. 3.

here assigned : And *Moses* himself in the Course of his History often mentions their religious Observance of it. Thus *Livy* describes the Original of the *Ludi Capitolini*, which he says were instituted in Memory of a very remarkable Preservation of the Capitol from the *Gauls*.^a Would not his contemporary *Romans*, to whom the Custom was well known, have had a very mean Opinion of their Historian, if he had laid the Foundation of these their Solemnities in a Fable? When again He ascribes the Building of the Temple to *Jupiter Feretrius* and the dedicating of the first *opima Spolia* therein to *Romulus*, on his conquering and killing with his own Hand *Acron* King of the *Cœninenfes*,^b and afterwards tells us that *Corn. Cossus*, in Imitation of *Romulus*, dedicated them on the like Occasion, and fixed them in the same Temple,^c would not that Commentator be thought to charge his Author with an Inconsistency, who should allow the latter Account to be true, but should say that the former was a Fiction of his own? Shall we then charge *Moses* with this or with still greater Inconsistencies? He not only barely mentions the future Observance of the Sabbath, but commands it: He is zealous for its being kept in the strictest Manner, and exerts himself in punishing those who profaned it. Can we imagine the People would have submitted to this institution, with that religious Reverence of it which many of them actually

^a Hist. L. 5. C. 50. *Ludi Capitolini fierent &c.* ^b Lib. 1. 10. ^c Lib. 4. 20.

had, if they had known, or but suspected, that the Grounds and Reasons, upon which they were commanded to observe it, were all an Invention of their Lawgiver? Or can we think so basely of *Moses* himself as to believe that he could, with such Rigour and Shew of Sanctity, have enforced the Observance of it upon Motives which he was conscious to himself deserved no Regard? But more may still be said for the Truth of this particular Circumstance. For God himself afterwards commands the Keeping of the Sabbath upon the very same Reasons on which *Moses* had before established it, as may be seen in the Fourth Commandment. He also wrought a Miracle expressly to encourage and promote the Observance of it; For he sent a double Portion of Manna on the sixth Day, that the People might be enabled to rest on the Seventh.^a We cannot account for this divine Concurrence in Support of this Institution, if we hold that the Foundation of it was a Fiction. For the Performance of religious Services from erroneous Motives is often as disagreeable to God as even the Neglect of them. It cannot be, that he should lay the Foundation of his Service, or support it when laid, upon such Motives.

THIS Mark of Truth, which is found besides in many more of the Circumstances, is likewise common to the fundamental Articles of this Narration. As may be seen in the following summary View of the most material of them. The

^a Exod. 16.

Existence of the Earth in its present State, with all the Classes of the vegetable and Brute Creation, are accounted for in the First Chapter. The Origin of Man is related in these Words: *And the Lord God formed Man of the Dust of the Ground, and breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life; and Man became a living Soul.*^a Of the Woman, in the same Chapter: *But for Adam there was not found an Help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep Sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: And he took one of his Ribs, and closed up the Flesh instead thereof. And the Rib, which the Lord God had taken from Man, made he a Woman, and brought her unto the Man.*^b Here is also laid the Foundation of the reciprocal Duty and Affection that ought to subsist between Man and Wife: as it is deduced in the following Verses. *And Adam said, This is now Bone of my Bone, and Flesh of my Flesh: She shall be called Woman, because She was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a Man leave his Father and Mother, and shall cleave unto his Wife: And they shall be one Flesh.*^c The Introduction of Sin into the World is described in the Beginning of the next Chapter. For our Parents are tempted to transgress a Command of God, and to eat of a Fruit which he had commanded them to abstain from.^d I have our Author's Word that *the abject State of the Serpentine Race*^e is accounted for, and *the Cause and Origin of their present odious Nature ex-*

^a Chap. 2. Vers. 7. ^b Vers. 20, 21, 22. ^c Vers. 23, 24.
^d Chap. 3. to Vers. 7. ^e Page 134.

plained in 14, 15 Verſ. *And the Lord God ſaid unto the Serpent, Becauſe thou haſt done this, thou art curſed above all Cattle, and above every Beaſt of the Field: upon thy Belly ſhalt thou go, and Duſt ſhalt thou eat all the Days of thy Life. And I will put Enmity between Thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed: It ſhall bruife thy Head, and thou ſhalt bruife his Heel. But to call it a fanciful Solution, as that Author does, in which View it can neither be of Uſe to Morality nor Hiſtory, is to make Moſes ſo injudicious and trifling a Writer, as muſt ſink his Genius and Deſign below thoſe of the worſt Fabuliſts or Compoſers of Metamorphoſes. In the next Verſe the ſingular Pains, that are laid upon Women in Child-Bearing, are accounted for, and the Foundation of that Submiſſion they owe their Huſbands is laid. *Unto the Woman He ſaid, I will greatly multiply thy Sorrow, and thy Conception; In Sorrow thou ſhalt bring forth Children: And thy Deſire ſhall be to thy Huſband, and he ſhall rule over thee.*^a The Unfruitfulneſs of the Ground, and the Neceſſity of Man's great Labour in the Cultivation of it are accounted for in the following Words. *And unto Adam he ſaid, Becauſe Thou haſt bearkened unto the Voice of thy Wife, and haſt eaten of the Tree, of which I commanded Thee, ſaying, Thou ſhalt not eat of it: Curſed is the Ground for thy Sake; In Sorrow ſhalt thou eat of it all the Days of thy Life. Thorns alſo and Thiſtles ſhall it bring forth to Thee: And Thou ſhalt**

^a Verſ. 16.

eat the Herb of the Field.^a Then follows an Account of the Frailty and Mortality of our Race. *In the Sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread, till thou return unto the Ground; For out of it wast thou taken: For Dust Thou art, and unto Dust shalt thou return.*^b I carry this View no farther because hitherto only has the Truth of the *Mosaic* Writings been at present called in Question.

THESE are the Things whose Natures and present Manner of Existence *Moses* has accounted for in this his Relation of the Creation and Fall. We are Witnesses that the Things do yet exist, and therefore they must have been brought into this State of Existence by some Means or other. Whether *Moses's* Manner of accounting for them is the true one or not, must depend intirely on his Veracity. Since he has accounted for them, and since his Description of their Origin has a strong and inseparable Connection with a Series of true History, I think We cannot behold such an Attempt in any other Light than as historical. His Writings are manifestly a Relation of some of the principal Revolutions both in the moral and natural World from the Beginning to his own Time. He writes the History of fallen Man, and he writes the History of Man's Fall. If we can prove, that he has ascribed any one of these Revolutions to wrong Causes, or that, in any one Period, he has copied only from his Imagination, what is this but overthrowing his Veracity? Fabulists may convey their Moral in

^a *Verf.* 17, 18. ^b *Verf.* 19.

feigned, but probable, Stories, making their Actors and Characters still consistent with the Nature of Things, which is the Case of Allegory: Or they may form a new Creation of their own, and then the Production will be an Apologue: But, when a professed Historian takes in Hand to account for the present Nature of Things, and to deliver the Causes of their existing in the Manner we now see them exist, to do this in a Way different from the Truth can proceed from Nothing but Ignorance, or a Desire to mislead; and the Author of such a Work, is not to be called an Allegorist, but a Deceiver.

IF, to these Arguments for a Belief that the Story of the Creation and Fall was intended for an Account of real Facts, we add the sacred Testimony of some Passages of later Scriptures concurring to induce the same Belief, I hope no more need be added.

WHEREVER it is refer'd to in the subsequent Writings, both of the Old and New Testament, it is constantly done as to a Relation literally true, and literally understood. As one powerful Instance of this Kind we may again return to the Fourth Commandment, and those other Passages which establish or enforce the Observation of the Sabbath. For they not only rest the Obligation to this religious Service upon the *Mosaical* Account of the Creation, and therefore necessarily suppose its Truth: but also further, in express Terms assert it. Thus the Fourth Commandment affirms that *in Six Days the Lord made Heaven*

Heaven and Earth, the Sea, and all that in them is, and rested the Seventh Day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath Day, and hallowed it.^a Again: *Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their Generations, for a perpetual Covenant. It is a Sign between Me and the Children of Israel for ever: For in Six Days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, and on the Seventh Day he rested, and was refreshed.*^b Here may not improperly be added, what the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* says, *For He spake in a certain Place of the Seventh Day on this wise, and God did rest the Seventh Day from all his Works.*^c If then the *Mosaic* Account of the Creation be fictitious, the Foundation on which this Duty is laid is imaginary, and the Obligation grounded thereon ceases. The Creation of the First Man and Woman, with the Order and Manner of their Creation and Transgression, are Points whose Validity is supported in the following Passages. *For a Man ought not to cover his Head, for as much as he is the Image and Glory of God; but the Woman is the Glory of the Man. For the Man is not of the Woman: but the Woman of the Man.*^d *The First Man is of the Earth, Earthy.*^e *For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the Woman being deceived was in the Transgression.*^f *But I fear lest by any Means as the Serpent beguiled Eve through his Subtilty, so your*

^a Exod. 20. 11. ^b Exod 31. 16, 17. ^c Hebr. 4. 4. ^d 1 Cor. 11. 7, 8. ^e 1 Cor. 15. 47. ^f 1 Tim. 2. 14.

Minds should be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ.^a

AGAIN. We may behold our Saviour himself establishing and securing the Practice of a moral Duty upon the Credit of this same Relation: And making it the Rule and Standard of that Affection which ought to subsist between Man and Wife. *The Pharisees also came unto him tempting him, and saying unto him, is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife for every Cause? And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the Beginning made them Male and Female? and said, for this Cause shall a Man leave Father and Mother, and shall cleave to his Wife: And they twain shall be one Flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain but one Flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not Man put asunder.*^b It cannot be thought tedious to run over the same Discourse in the Words of another Evangelist. *And the Pharisees came to him and asked him, is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, what did Moses command You? And they said, Moses suffered to write a Bill of Divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the Hardness of your Heart he wrote You this Precept. But From the Beginning of the Creation, God made them Male and Female. For this Cause shall a Man leave his Father and Mother, and cleave to his Wife; and they twain shall be one Flesh: so then they are*

a 2 Cor. 11. 3. b Matth. 19. 3 &c.

no more twain, but one Flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not Man put asunder.^a We see how readily and clearly our Saviour solves this controverted Point on the Authority of this Account of *Moses*. For since this was the first human Relation that ever subsisted, and since it was cemented in the closest Manner imaginable, and by the Hand of God himself, it ought to be preserved the last, and maintained in Preference to all other interfering Relations. From the Beginning of the Creation, God made them Male and Female. For this Cause, that it was the first Relation, shall a Man leave his Father and Mother, postponing those Relations which are of a later Commencement, and cleave unto his Wife, and they twain shall be one Flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not Man put asunder. Let no human Authority presume to rescind those Ties which God himself hath connected. But had Dr. *M.* been of Council for the *Pbarisees*, how soon would he have obviated our Saviour's Argument! "The Principles, says "He, you argue from are imaginary: They were "not joined together by God's creating Hand, but "by the Invention of *Moses*."

I shall produce yet one Class more of Script-Quotations in Support of the Authority of this History. *Nevertheless Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the Similitude of Adam's Transgression, who is the Figure of him that was to come. But not as the Of-*

^a Mark 10. 2 &c.

fence, so also is the Free Gift. For if through the Offence of one, many be dead; much more the Grace of God, and the Gift by Grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the Gift. For the Judgment was by one to Condemnation; but the Free Gift is of many Offences unto Justification. For if by one Man's Offence Death reigned by one, much more they which receive Abundance of Grace, and of the Gift of Righteousness, shall reign in Life by one Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the Offence of one, Judgment came upon all Men to Condemnation: Even so by the Righteousness of one, the Free Gift came upon all Men unto Justification of Life. For as by one Mans Disobedience many were made Sinners: So by the Obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.^a Again. But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the First-Fruits of them that slept. For since by Man came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.^b Here is a large Comparison made between the Loss and Hurt Mankind sustained by the Fall of Adam, and the Benefits they received by the voluntary Sacrifice of Christ. That both these are visionary I hope will not be asserted. Shall we then say that the Comparison is made between a Truth and a Fiction? That cannot be. Because it is said that *as in Adam all die, even so, in the same Manner, and no otherwise, shall all be made alive by Christ.* If therefore it be

^a Rom. 5. 14 &c. ^b 1 Cor. 15, 20, 21, 22.

only a Fable which makes *Adam* the Cause of our Death, in the same Manner must it be a Fable that Christ shall be the Author of our Life. Or if we have full Assurance of the Reality of our expected living in Christ, then we must also admit the Reality of our pretended dying in *Adam*. For we may reason *è Converso* that as in *Christ* all shall be made alive, even so in *Adam* did all die. The assign'd Cause of the Damage, and Reparation, of our Nature, are spoken of with the same Degree of Certainty: And therefore the Accounts we have of the Author and Production of our promised Happiness, and our experienced Misery, (both which the Apostle supposes Us to be acquainted with) must demand an equal Degree of Credit. For the Apostles Argument will not allow Us to hold the one for a Fiction, and the other for a Truth. As then we value the Foundation of the glorious Hopes of a Resurrection and an Immortality, let us not destroy the Foundation on which the supposed Depravation of our Nature is maintained. For We shall all be made alive in Christ no otherwise than as We all died in *Adam*.

UPON the Whole. There is Nothing incredible in the Facts or Matter of this Relation, and therefore it is no Apologue.

THE Authority of the Writer is unquestioned, and is great enough to establish a Belief of any credible Facts: The Design of the Author, which was the Instruction of the World in several moral and religious Duties, and in the Truth of se-

veral Facts from whence those Duties are derived, could not have been answered by a Fable: Through the whole of the Account are interspersed several evident Characteristics of true History: And lastly, for its being a true History there are the Suffrages of many sacred Interpreters, inspired by the same Holy Spirit which presided in its Composition: And Therefore it is no Fable.

WHENCE we arrive at the last Conclusion, for the sake of which chiefly the whole Argument was undertaken, that the Foundation of the First Prophecy is yet secure: And therefore, notwithstanding any Thing here objected, that it may still be esteemed a Part of that Chain of Prophecies extended through all Antiquity, in which the Revelation of the promised Redeemer was gradually unfolded.

I have all along avoided giving any Explanation of my own of the several Particulars of this History which have come under Consideration, both because several good and convenient Explanations of the whole have been already given, by many eminent Authors, and also because my present Design did not carry me any further, than barely to free it from the Objections that had been revived against it. My Attempt was not to procure any new Light, but to restore the old: and to recover that which, by the Interposition of an envious Cloud, had been intercepted.

III. A brief State of the Question, whether Prophecies or Miracles afford stronger Evidence for the Truth of Christianity.

WHY is this made a Question by the Enemies of Christianity? They who will not allow that it is supported by any Strength of Evidence at all, why do they go about to compare the Strength of two distinct Kinds of it's Evidence, and, denying that there are any Proofs for its Truth, why do they dispute by what Means its Truth may be most effectually proved? Or why, again, is it debated amongst the Friends of Christianity? If they are satisfied in the whole of its Evidence, and feel that its united Force is strong enough to overthrow all Opposition, and to work a full Conviction in every unprejudiced Mind, this is all that the Service of Christianity demands; and it can be but an unprofitable Curiosity at best that can engage them to spend their Leisure in enquiring into the separate and distinct Forces of its several Parts. If several Witnesses had given in their Evidence in some depending Cause, and the Jury were of Opinion that

that their concurring Testimony decided the Matter so clearly as to leave no Room for further Doubts; for them to suspend their Sentence till they had made a nice Disquisition into the distinct Weight of every single Deposition, would be thought, at least, a superfluous Exactness, and a Delay which the Service of the Cause did not demand.

It is probable therefore, that this Question owes its Rise to a Set of Men not properly taken in under either of these Classes. I mean those Enemies of the Christian Cause, who wear the Mask of Friends. Unable to gain their Ends by open Force, they craftily endeavour to divide it against itself, and thus to destroy it by its own Strength. They endeavour to shew that Prophecy is a stronger Proof of the Truth of Christianity than Miracles. One would at first apprehend no ill Design here. For what would be the Consequence? Miracles afford a very strong Proof: Prophecy yields yet a stronger: Therefore Christianity is impregnable. This would be the Inference of a common Genius. But these sublime Reasoners would give the Argument a contrary Tendency, making this surprizing Inference, therefore Christianity is overthrown: And having with great Industry proved the Strength of Prophecy superior to that of Miracles, would terminate their Reasoning here, that there is not the least Degree of Strength in either of them.

THEY, to whom the Laws of Argument are known, will easily discern the Weakness of
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this Sophism. Indeed they conceal their first Term; but force them to produce this, and the Fallacy appears. They begin by saying that Prophecy is stronger than Miracles. But it is plain that, before any Comparison can be begun between them, or any Judgment made of the Excess of the Force of one above that of the other, the Amount of their particular Forces should first be known. Or, if this Disquisition be too nice or laborious, it must at least be agreed upon that they have each of them some Quantity of Force, and that Force must be valued in the Gross; otherwise no Estimate can be made, though ever so inartificial, of their comparative Forces. The distinct Forces then of Prophecy and Miracles, or at least of one of them, is evidently the first Term, though they endeavour to hide it. Whence it is plain, that, by returning after the Comparison to weaken the Forces of either of them, they are chargeable with an Absurdity even worse than that of *Begging the Question*: their Reasoning manifestly terminates in an Attempt to unsettle that which was first of all settled; to establish an Estimate of the Two Forces contrary to that which was first agreed upon; and therefore to destroy those very Principles from which the Argument proceeded.

IT must surely be plain to common Sense, that a Comparison between Two Things does not affect or alter the real Nature of the Things themselves. The Result of it can only be a Knowledge of the Proportion they bear to each other,
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of their relative Value, not of that which ought to be known before, their real Worth considered singly and independently on each other. For the Things compared remain the same in every Respect after, as they were before, the Comparison. However they go on, to the great Surprize of all the Beholders, to convince them that this Bulwark of Prophecy, which they had laboured to raise to such seeming Strength and Fairness, is all a Deception of the Senses, and therefore by causing this to vanish, which was to Appearance the strongest, they imagine all the other pretended Strength of Evidence must sink and disappear with it. Thus they would raise one Part of the Edifice above its natural Height, and then, by letting it fall upon the rest, crush the whole Structure under it. Such treacherous Designs lurk underneath such specious Appearances! Like the faithless *Delilah*, with a seemingly affectionate Anxiety, they enquire where the great Strength of Christianity lieth, that they may at once lop it off, and deliver it over, thus despoiled and enfeebled, to the Derision and Insults of its Enemies. But they are deceived. A Conquest over Christianity is not to be acquired by any such Artifices as these. Its Strength is not, like that of the *Hebrew* Champion, lodged in any Excrescencies, or held by Virtue of any secret Customs or Observances: but is natural to it, runs through its Constitution, and is diffused in just Proportions over all its Parts.

IT has been pretended that our Saviour himself has entered into this Dispute, and has decided it in the Manner they desire, who wish to make the worst Use of it against his Religion. Though I really think that this Question howsoever decided, if fairly considered, threatens no great Hurt, or promises no great Advantage, to Christianity; yet, because designing Men may give it such a Turn as to mislead the unwary, and make that an Instrument of the greatest Hurt which is in itself perfectly harmless; to prevent this Abuse of the Nature of Things, and to deprive the Enemies of Christianity of their last faint Hopes of Success in their fraudulent Attempts against it, is a Prospect which makes this Question seem more worthy a serious Consideration, and the Endeavour to set it in a clear Light appear fruitful of better Effects, than barely the Gratification of an indolent Curiosity. We shall begin then by considering the Assertion of Dr. Middleton, *that all which his Lordship has been affirming so freely concerning the superior Evidence of Miracles to that of Prophecy, seems to have been originally confuted, and the whole Question determined against him by Christ himself; Who in one of his Parables declares, that those, who would not hearken to Moses and the Prophets, would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. Luke 16. 31. clearly intimating, that the Word of Prophecy, as delivered in the Old Testament, carried with it a firmer Proof of the Truth of his Gospel to the Jews, than even the greatest of all Miracles.*^a It is

^a P. 57.

proper to begin with this, because if our Saviour's Sentiments should really appear to be what they are here represented, all Argument is at an End: And Nothing will remain for Us to do, but, submitting to his sacred Authority, to guard against any ill Application of his Opinion, and to prevent his own Declaration from being turned to the Destruction of his Cause.

Two Circumstances well understood, will lead Us to a clear Apprehension of the Force of this Passage as far as the present Question is concerned, *viz.* what was the Point, and what were the Means, of Perswasion proposed. Dr. M. thinks that the Point of Perswasion was the Truth of the Gospel, and the Means, expressed by *Moses and the Prophets, and the Rising of one from the dead, Prophecies and Miracles.* Now granting that he is right in this Opinion, still our Saviour's declaring that the latter would be ineffectual where the former had failed, will be far from amounting to a clear Intimation; that the *Word of Prophecy carried with it a firmer Proof of the Truth of the Gospel, than the greatest of all Miracles:* because he does not say that Prophecy could do more than Miracles, but only that Miracles could not do more than Prophecy; not, that Prophecy could bring Conviction to the Mind of an Infidel where Miracles had failed, but that the latter could not overcome that Degree of Infidelity which had been Proof against the former. The Inference then can be carried no farther than that Miracles are not of superior Force

to Prophecy, which differs widely from a Declaration in Favour of the Superiority of Prophecy: For still they may stand both upon a Level, and their Powers may remain equal. Allowing then that He has taken both these Points right, it appears that our Saviour has not decided the Question as he would have it. But we are not yet sure that He has not mistaken the Design of the Parable. We find that it was spoken to the Pharisees, who it is said were covetous. Accordingly a Rich Man is made the chief Character in the Parable. The Use he made of his Riches was not, to communicate to others, and to relieve the Wants of the distressed: For when *Lazarus* was laid at his Gate full of Sores, and desiring to be fed with the Crumbs which fell from the Rich Man's Table, we do not read that He had any Relief except from the Dogs, which came and licked his Sores: But He applied them to the Indulgence of his Appetites, and spent them upon himself in all the Splendour and Luxury of Life. He was clothed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared sumptuously every Day. This is all that is related of his Life. We find him next in very different Circumstances, in the Torments of Hell. For He died, and was buried, and in Hell he lift up his Eyes, being in Torments. Now what do we imagine our Saviour expected his Hearers should understand to be the Cause of his Punishment? Surely those Crimes alone which He had reported of his Life, amongst which a Rejection of the Gospel has no Place.

He now, in his Turn, becomes a Supplicant, and begs first for a Relief of his own Miseries. But, when this is denied him, he petitions next for a Prevention of the Miseries of his Relations. *Then He said, I pray Thee, Father, that Thou wouldest send Lazarus to my Father's House : For I have Five Brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this Place of Torment.* What was he desirous that *Lazarus* should testify to his Brethren? We can suppose it to be Nothing else than that which his own Case suggested and which *Lazarus* had been a Witness to, the Event of a luxurious and immoral Life, and the Miseries which attended the wicked in a future State. He thought that this could not fail of deterring them from pursuing his Steps in Life, and thereby would prevent their coming into the same Place of Torment with himself. *Abraham* said that an Attention to *Moses* and the Prophets, which they were already possessed of, was sufficient to effect what he desired. *They have Moses and the Prophets ; let them hear them.* *And he said, nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* The ordinary Methods of Admonition, which they have been so long accustomed to disregard, will make no Impression upon their hardened Minds ; but so astonishing a Call as this could not fail of striking their Attention, and producing their Reformation. *And Abraham said unto him, if they bear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

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FROM this View of the Parable It does not seem in the least probable, that the Truth of the Gospel was what the Rich Man desired to have his Friends perswaded of. There is no Room to imagine that the Characters of this Parable are taken from such as were supposed to have had the Gospel preached unto them. And except they were such, the Reception of the Gospel cannot possibly be concerned in the Discourse. A Disbelief of its Truth was not amongst the Sins for which the Rich Man himself suffered. Nor is there the least Intimation that he wanted to have charged *Lazarus* with any other Commission, than to testify unto them the Truths which arose from his own sad Example. But what must entirely clear up the Matter is that he himself expressly tells us for what End he wanted to have sent to his Brethren a Herald from the dead: not, to perswade them to embrace the Gospel, but to repent: *But if one went unto them from the dead, says He, they will repent.* It is clear then that the Point of Perswasion is not the Truth of the Gospel, but the Necessity of Repentance and a virtuous Life in Order to future Happiness. Whence it will follow as clearly, that the Means of Perswasion recommended by *Abrabam* under the Name of *Moses and the Prophets*, could not be those Predictions of the Messiah which were contained in the Old Testament, because these, of all the Parts of the Scriptures, could have the least direct Tendency to bring about the desired End. I hope we need not be reminded here that
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by a familiar Custom of speaking, *Moses and the Prophets* was a Term signifying the whole Volume of the Jewish Scriptures. Whatever Rules of Life then were disseminated through these Scriptures, whatever instructive Precepts or Examples they contained, whatever Descriptions and Monuments were to be found in them of God's eternal Justice and Mercy, whatever they taught of his Hatred to Vice and Love of Virtue, whatever Motives and Encouragement they held up to Mankind to draw them to the practice of the latter, or whatever Denunciations of Vengeance they proclaimed to deter them from the former, these were the Parts in them peculiarly fitted to impress upon the Minds of Men a Sense of their Duty, to reclaim them from their Errors, and to awe or allure them into the Study of Godliness: And therefore these must have been the Parts which *Abraham* is made to point out to the Regard of those whom he wanted to bring back into the Paths of Life. And whoever is so hardened as not to be wrought upon by these powerful Arguments, whoever refuses to hear the Voice of *Moses* and the Prophets instructing him with the greatest Clearness and Authority, and giving undoubted Proofs of their divine Commission, such an one, of so stubborn and insensible an Heart, would not be moved nor persuaded though one rose from the dead: For even a Messenger from the dead could not bring clearer Discoveries of the Will of God, nor stronger Credentials of his bearing the divine Authority, than had

had already been unsuccessfully applied to them. It is not then the Prophecies, but the Doctrines supported by the Authority of the sacred Writings, that are here spoken of as sufficient to work a Reformation in any Mind yet open to Conviction. And therefore it is a Misapplication of this Parable to produce it as an Argument of our Saviour's Opinion concerning the Efficacy of Prophecy and Miracles in attesting the Truth of his Gospel. And it is still a greater Misapplication of it to produce it as an Argument that his Opinion was in Favour of the superior Efficacy of the former.

SINCE then it may be done without any Trefpafs on the sacred Authority of our Saviour, let us reason of the relative Powers of Prophecy and Miracles, and endeavour to set them in so clear a Light, that it may be easy for every one to compare them together, and to form a clear Notion of their mutual Proportions. The plainest and most natural Way to this is to gain a distinct Knowledge of the Things to be compared, their separate and independent Powers. By what Virtue is it then that Prophecy becomes a divine Evidence of the Mission of him for whose Sake it is given, and whence is its Power derived? The Solution of this Question cannot be very difficult: It requires Nothing more than a little Attention to the Steps by which we are led to see the Evidence of Prophecy. When we see a Prophecy given out long before the Time of the Event which it foretells, or clearly foretelling a

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Contingency, in either Case we readily discern that it cannot be the Result of human Wisdom. For the Event, in the former Case, is too remote to be perceived by human Sight, and in the latter, lies concealed behind such Obstacles as no mortal Eye can pierce through. We cannot stretch over the immense Distance by which it is divided from Us in one Case, nor trace out those intricate Windings that lead to it in the other. When therefore we see such an Event, which is plainly out of the Reach of human Discernment, as clearly described in the Prophecy of it, as if it had gone before the Description, we perceive that it must come from that all-wise Being before whom alone all Things and Events are laid open and naked, whose Knowledge passes beyond all conceivable Bounds of Time or Space, and who sees the whole Series of future Beings unfolded before they have Existence. Here now grows the Testimony of a divine Mission in Behalf of him, for whose Sake the Prophecy is given. The Wisdom of God undeniably witnesseth his Truth, and proclaims the Justice of his Pretensions. He brings a Ray of Light, which could be borrowed from no one else but from the Father of Lights. And therefore the Virtue of Prophecy lies here, that its Testimony is manifestly the Testimony of divine Knowledge.

LET Us now in like Manner endeavour to discover where the Virtue of Miracles lies. We behold an Effect produced, which is manifestly beyond the Power of those sensible Means used
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in its Production, We must readily see that it cannot be the Work of any natural Cause, or of any human Agent. For no Efficacy of Nature can produce any other Effect than barely that which is adequate to the Power of those Means or Causes it sets to Work. Neither can any Art of Man add to natural Causes that Force which they are naturally destitute of, so as to enable them to effect what they are naturally incapable of effecting. If, for Instance, a Piece of Clay be naturally unable to restore Sight to the blind, no human Power can enrich it with that Virtue which Nature has denied it. We may indeed, by changing their Texture, make many Things Instruments of that for which they were unfit under a different Form. But even this Power is limited under certain Laws of Nature; And the utmost that our Abilities can pretend to, is sometimes to assist Nature in its Operations, and to sooth it as it were, into Action, by tempting it to bring forth that Energy it strove to conceal, and by putting it in a proper Posture for exerting the greatest Force with which it is endowed. When therefore such Operations appear as far exceed the Powers of Nature and the Skill of Man united, discerning the Impotency of all created Beings, We can solve them no otherwise than by recurring to that supreme Being *who hath created all these Things, and bringeth out their Most by Number: Who encreaseth Strength to them that have no Might.* Hence ariseth the Testimony of Miracles for the divine Mission of him in whose

Behalf they are wrought. The Power of God undeniably witnesseth his Truth, and proclaims the Justice of his Pretensions. And therefore the Virtue of Miracles lies here, that their Testimony is manifestly the Testimony of divine Power.

THIS then is common to both Kinds of Evidence that they are Manifestations of the divine Interposition in Favour of his Pretensions to whom, or for whose Sake, they are vouchsafed. But they differ in the Methods of making this Interposition known. They both lead to the Discovery of the same great First-Mover, but by different Ways. Prophecy shews him as the great Lawgiver of the Universe, as He to whom alone the Volumes of Futurity are expanded, and to whom alone belongs the Privilege of seeing and directing every Movement of Nature, and beholding every Event with which the Womb of Time is pregnant. Miracles lay bare the Hand of the great Ruler of the Universe, and shew the awful Majesty of him whose *Fiat* is a Law to the obedient World, who commands all the Springs of Nature, and bends them to his Will. He, for whom Prophecy speaks, brings for his Credentials a Secret which could come only from the Cabinet-Council of Heaven: He, whose Claim is upheld by Miracles, demands Credit from Us by Virtue of a Power which none but the Almighty could delegate. In a Word, Prophecy demonstrates God's Patronage of a Cause by Virtue of his Omniscience, and Miracles by Virtue of his Omnipotence.

WE see now wherein the Force of these Two different Kinds of Evidence consists, what they have in common, and in what they are distinguished. Whence the Method of comparing them together in Order to discover where the Superiority lies, is easy. For, substituting that wherein their Powers consist, the Comparison will be betwixt these Attributes of God, and the Question will become, which of the Two is the more convincing Argument of the Countenance and Concurrence of that God to whom they both belong. Let Us ask Ourselves then, does a Display of the infinite Wisdom make Us acknowledge God's Presence sooner than the stupendous Operations of his outstretched Arm? Or are the Wonders of his Power clearer Demonstrations of his attending Favour and Protection, than the illustrious Records of his Wisdom? In whatever Hand We now entrust the Balance, I am perswaded that He, who holds it, will declare for an Equipollency. For the Attributes of the Deity are all alike his own, inseparable, and incommunicable.

BUT though in their own Natures the Power of Prophecy and Miracles is equal, yet they may not always seem so to our Apprehensions. Our Minds are not all alike affected with the same Things. Whether it be from some original and native Cast in their Frame, or the Influence of that bodily Machine to which they are united; or whether Commerce with others, Habit, and Education impresses the Bias upon them, it is

certain that howsoever they have contracted it, there is a peculiar Turn in the Minds of Men by which some are inclined to receive Pleasure and Conviction from one Kind of Argument more readily than from another, and to be most easily wrought upon by that, with which others are less moved. The same Truths become more attractive and amiable to their Understandings when placed in one Light than in another, as the same Objects do to their Sight. And to all both are most agreeable by being shewn in new and various Lights.

BUT to Us especially, who live at a Distance from the Times when the Prophecies were completed, and the Miracles wrought, who feel not their Efficacy by sensible, but by rational Impressions, there may be another Reason assigned for some Difference in them. For though the Manifestations of the divine Wisdom, and the divine Power, when both are clearly felt, might make us equally sensible of God's Interposition, yet the Steps which lead to the clear Apprehension of them may not be equally easy to all. When we are once convinced that there were Prophecies given out and completed in the Person of our Saviour, and that there were Miracles wrought in Vindication of his Doctrine, they may seem to our Understandings equipollent Proofs of his Divine Mission; but then the Way to this Conviction may not be in both Cases equally obvious. In Order to be convinced that there were Miracles wrought in Proof of our Saviour's

viour's Pretensions, we have only to satisfy ourselves of the Authenticity of the Gospel History, and to learn from thence that such particular Works were exhibited, and that such particular Facts did really happen. But the Truth of Prophecies must be introduced to our Assent by a longer Progress. For after we are, in the same Manner as before, satisfied that some particular Events did happen in the Life of our Saviour, we are still advanced but a little Way to a full Perswasion that the Prophecies of the Messiah received their Completion in these Events. There remains behind large Matter of Enquiry. The Authority of the Scriptures of the Old Testament must first be proved: these must be carefully examined for the Prophecies they contain: And, when they are found, we are to be assured that they belonged to the Character of the promised Messiah. After all this, a Comparison is still to be nicely made between them and the Events, for shewing the Fitness and Agreement between them. And when their Correspondency is clearly seen, and we have no longer any Scruples remaining of the Reality both of the Events and Predictions separately, or Suspicion that the one may not yet belong to the other, then only are we fully sensible of the Proof which Prophecies yield of the divine Mission of our Saviour.

WHEN both are clearly apprehended, they may have equal Power over our Minds. But the Truth of the one is not so soon established there as of the other. They both lead finally to the

the same End, and if pursued bring us with equal Certainty to it, but not by Ways equally short or easy. While some make their Approaches to the important Truth to which they lead by one Path, others may delight to investigate it by another. But it must surely be equally agreeable and serviceable to all to know that it is accessible by more Ways than one, and that they are at Liberty to pursue that to which the Bent of their Mind, their Studies, or Opportunities shall determine them; or with varied and renewed Pleasure, to explore both in their Turns.

WHAT has been said may be illustrated by a familiar Example. *Euclid* has left us a Series of Mathematical Truths demonstrated in a very elegant Manner. His Commentators, endeavouring to render such useful Knowledge as easily attainable as possible, have adapted different Demonstrations to all those Propositions which seemed most difficult to be understood; drawing those out into a fuller Explanation which He had delivered in a conciser Manner, and demonstrating those by sensible Schemes which he had treated in a more abstracted Way. We allow the Design its due Praise: not that one Demonstration is truer than another, or gives better Evidence to the Proposition, but because various Geniuses are better suited, pleased, or assisted by these different Demonstrations than they could have been by one alone. They are all equally convincing when understood, but, it may be, not equally pleasing, nor equally clear to all Capacities.

capacities. . However it contributes more to the Entertainment and Instruction of all, that they can place the Proposition in that Light which themselves shall most approve of, than if they had been confined to one View of it, and that, by trying several, one Position of it may at last be found which shall strike every Capacity.

Thus We see that any Difference which may be in the Forces of Prophecy and Miracles for proving our Saviour's divine Mission, is not natural but accidental to them; and arises solely from the different Reception they meet with in the different Natures, or Abilities of those to whom they are applied. God has graciously been pleased, in manifesting to the World a Truth of such universal Importance, to lead Us to it by various Ways, that different Natures, thus accommodated with what is most suitable to them, might not want the Means of attaining to that Knowledge which is equally necessary for all. If its Divinity had been attested by either of these singly, Christianity would in all Ages have wanted many Converts, which it now owes to their joint Efficacy: And both Ways lying open, many have constantly been brought into the Flock of Christ who might have strayed for ever without the Pale, if only one Entrance had been afforded them. Let not us then defraud the Gospel of its Rights, by making the Gate which leads into it straiter than its great Author has thought fit to make it: Nor allow such poor ridiculous Sophistry to deceive Us which would
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prove its Weakness from its Strength; which would make its numerous Forces hurtful to it, and take an Advantage against it from its having more Proofs, which could not have been found had it been supported by one alone: Which, by comparing one Argument of its Truth with another, would destroy all Arguments; and by shewing that Prophecy is stronger than Miracles make the World believe that it is weaker than if it had stood by the Force either of Prophecy or Miracles alone. Let us beware of receiving such Refinements into Reasoning, as have long ago been admitted into Life; which skilfully create Want out of Plenty, and industriously turn the Bounties of Heaven into Curses, by making that Poison which was designed for wholesome Food. If one of these great Proofs of the Divinity of the Gospel should have more Power over the Minds of particular Men than the other, they, who feel it, are the only Judges which that is. Every Man is sensible of the Workings of his own Mind alone, and therefore we might as well pretend to be conscious for others, as to determine with which of these Proofs they shall be most affected, or which shall draw them most mightily to Conviction. Let not Us quarrel with Men because they will not be convinced in the same Way with Ourselves. If they are gained over to Conviction, by what Road they arrived at it is hardly worth Enquiry; all is done that any just Concern of ours for them can prompt Us to wish, or their own Salvation does demand.

It

It is the Business of the Friends and Assertors of Christianity to set both these Proofs in the clearest Light they are able, and then to leave all Men to apprehend for Themselves: To press Home the great Argument for its Truth in its full Extent, not confining themselves to any peculiar Branch of it; And, while they now try one Power and then another till they find out the prevailing one, not to suffer one Soul to fail of the Kingdom of Christ which may by any Industry of theirs be gained over to it: to light some into it by setting up to their View the glorious Effulgency of Gods eternal Wisdom, and to draw others by displaying before them all the Wonders of his Power: Like skilful Artists, still to encrease the Force of their Machine by combining Powers with Powers, as the Greatness of the Work to be done shall require it: to add Prophecy to Prophecy till the whole shall grow up into one grand complicated Prophecy; and to join Miracle to Miracle, till all shall stand embattled in one invincible Body: And then last of all, to unite both these Powers also, till that Energy, which was before scattered and distributed through various Parts, being now collected into one, the Gospel shall stand forth impregnable, and all the Forces of Infidelity shall sink before it.

F I N I S.

