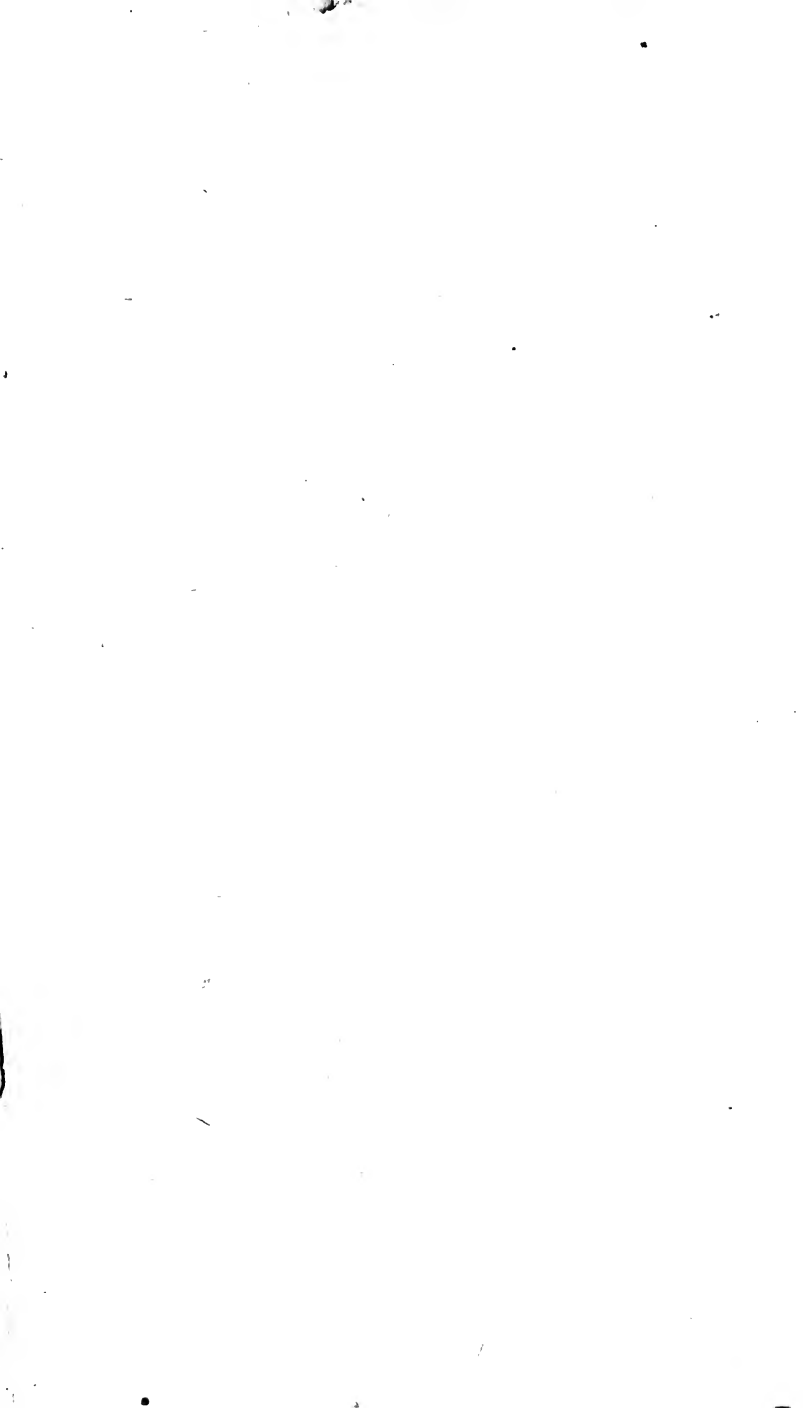




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Professor Samuel Miller  
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A

FREE INQUIRY

INTO THE

MIRACULOUS POWERS,

Which are supposed to have subsisted in the

CHRISTIAN CHURCH,

From the EARLIEST AGES through several  
successive CENTURIES.

By which it is shewn,

That we have no sufficient Reason to believe, upon  
the Authority of the PRIMITIVE FATHERS,

That any such Powers were continued to the CHURCH,  
after the Days of the APOSTLES.

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By CONYERS MIDDLETON, D. D.

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Hæ sunt religiones, quas sibi a Majoribus suis traditas pertinacissime tueri ac defendere perseverant: nec considerant quales sint, sed ex hoc probatas atque veras esse confident, quod eas Veteres tradiderunt. Tantaque est auctoritas vetustatis, ut inquirere in eam, scelus esse ducatur. Itaque creditur ei passim, tanquam cognitæ veritati.

LACTANT. Div. Inst. l. 2. c. 7.

Τὰς κατὰ ἀλήθειαν εὐσεβεῖς καὶ φιλοσόφους, μόνον τ' ἀληθὲς τιμᾶν καὶ σέβειν. ὁ λόγος ὑπαγορεύει, παραίτημένους δόξαις παλαιῶν ἐξακολουθεῖν, ἂν φαίλων ᾖσιν.

JUSTIN. MART. Apol. 1.

Num fingo? num mentor? cupio refelli. Quid enim laboro, nisi ut veritas in omni quæstione illustretur. Cic. Tusc. Quæst. 3. 20.

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# P R E F A C E.

**W**HEN I first sent abroad my *Introductory Discourse*, this larger work, which I then promised, and now offer to the public, was actually prepared, and intended to have been published at the same time and in the same form, in which it now appears, with that Discourse prefixed to it. But when I recollected the great importance of the subject, which had never before been professedly examined; and that the part especially, which I had undertaken to defend, was not only new, but contradictory to the general opinion, which prevails among Christians; and above all, that I had nothing to trust to in the management of it, but my own private judgment; I began to think it a duty, which candor and prudence prescribed, not to alarm the public at once with an argument so strange and so little understood; nor to hazard an experiment so big with consequences, till I had first given out some sketch or general plan of what I was projecting; so that all, who were disposed

to examine it, might have notice and leisure, to inquire into the grounds of it, and qualify themselves to form a proper judgment of that evidence, which I might afterwards produce in its defence. I was in hopes also, by this method, of reaping some benefit to myself, from the opportunity which it would give, not only of drawing out other people's sentiments, but, if any just cause should be offered, of changing even my own ; while I kept it still in my power, either to drop the pursuit of my scheme, or to reform it, in such a manner, as any new light or better information might happen to direct me.

This was my view, in publishing a separate edition of the *Introductory Discourse* : which, as I easily foresaw, was sure to encounter all the opposition, that prejudice, bigotry, and superstition are ever prepared to give to all free inquiries into opinions, which depend on the prevalence of their power. I was aware, that the very novelty of it would offend, and the matter of it still more : that many would rise up against it, and some of them by writing, others, by noise and clamor, try to raise a popular odium upon it ; but my comfort was, that this would excite the candid inquirers also, to take it into their consideration, and to weigh the merit and consequences

consequences of it ; and it was the judgment of these alone, by which I proposed to determine my future measures and resolution with regard to it.

The event has answered, not only to my expectation, but to my wishes : for notwithstanding all which has been published against it, from the Press, the Pulpit, and the Theological Schools, the general approbation, which it has every where received from those, whose authority I chiefly value, has given me the utmost encouragement to persevere in the prosecution of my argument, as being of the greatest importance to the Protestant religion, and the sole expedient, which can effectually secure it, from being gradually undermined, and finally subverted by the efforts of *Rome*.

But besides the favorable reception which it has met with both among the Clergy and the Layety, it was an unexpected satisfaction to me, to be informed lately by a friend, that Mr. *Lock* had many years ago declared the same opinion with mine, concerning *the miracles of the Primitive Church*, in a paragraph of his *third Letter on Toleration* ; which I had never read or seen, but shall now offer to the reader in his own words ; being persuaded, that the authority of so eminent a

writer, and so singularly qualified by his talents and studies, to discern the exact relations and consequences of things, will add great weight and confirmation to the cause which I am here defending.

“ And so I leave you, says Mr. *Lock* to his Antagonist, “ to dispose of the credit of  
 “ Ecclesiastical writers, as you shall think  
 “ fit, and by your authority, to establish or  
 “ invalidate theirs, as you please. But this,  
 “ I think, is evident, that he, who will  
 “ build his faith or reasonings upon miracles  
 “ delivered by Church-Historians, *will find*  
 “ *cause to go no farther than the Apostles time,*  
 “ *or else, not to stop at Constantine’s* : since  
 “ the writers after that period, whose word  
 “ we take, as unquestionable in other things,  
 “ speak of miracles in their time with no less  
 “ assurance, than the Fathers before the  
 “ fourth century : and a great part of the  
 “ miracles of the second and third centuries  
 “ stand upon the credit of the writers of the  
 “ fourth. So that, that sort of argument,  
 “ which takes and rejects the testimony of  
 “ the ancients at pleasure, as it may best suit  
 “ with it, will not have much force with  
 “ those, who are not disposed to embrace  
 “ the hypothesis, without any arguments at  
 “ all [*a*].”

[*a*] See Lett. 3d on Tolerat. c. x. p. 269.

As to the writers, who have hitherto declared themselves against this opinion, signified here in short by Mr. *Lock*, and explained at large by myself, they have shewn a great eagerness indeed, to distinguish their zeal, but a very little knowledge of the question, which they have undertaken to discuss; urged by the hopes of those honors, which they have seen others acquire, by former attacks upon me; and, like true soldiers of the militant Church, prepared to fight for every establishment, that offers such pay and rewards to its defenders. Who, from a blind deference to authority, think the credibility of a witness sufficient, to evince the certainty of all facts indifferently, whether natural or supernatural, probable or improbable; and knowing no distinction between faith and credulity, take a facility of believing, to be the surest mark of a sound Christian. Their arguments are conformable to their principles: for instead of entering into the merits of the cause, and shewing my opinion to be false or contradictory to any truth subsisting in the world, they think it a full confutation of it, to prove it contrary to the belief of the primitive ages, to the testimony of the ancient Fathers, and to the tradition of the Catholic Church: by the help of which venerable names, they insinuate

ate fears and jealousies, of I know not what consequences, dangerous to Christianity, ruinous to the faith of History, and introductive of an universal Scepticism. Terrors purely imaginary ; grounded on error and prejudice ; which if suffered to prevail, would produce consequences much more to be dreaded ; subversive of all true religion, as well as of every thing else, that is rational and virtuous among men. But after all their invectives, it is a pleasure to find them obliged, in the course of the debate, to confute their own clamors ; and to declare at last with me, that, whatever be the fate of my argument, or were it allowed even to be true, the credit of the Gospel-miracles could not in any degree be shaken by it [*b*].

But to speak my mind freely on the subject of consequences. I am not so scrupulous perhaps in my regard to them, as many of my profession are apt to be : my nature is frank and open, and warmly disposed, not only to seek, but to speak what I take to be true : which disposition has been greatly confirmed by the situation, into which Providence has thrown me. For I was never trained to pace

[*b*] See Remarks on two Pamphlets against the Introd. Disc. p. 8, 9.

in the trammels of the Church, nor tempted by the sweets of its preferments, to sacrifice the philosophic freedom of a studious, to the servile restraints of an ambitious life : and from this very circumstance, as often as I reflect upon it, I feel that comfort in my own breast, which no external honors can bestow. I persuade myself, that the life and faculties of man, at the best but short and limited, cannot be employed more rationally or laudably, than in the search of knowledge ; and especially of that sort, which relates to our duty, and conduces to our happiness. In these Inquiries therefore, where-ever I perceive any glimmering of truth before me ; I readily pursue, and endeavour to trace it to its source ; without any reserve or caution of pushing the discovery too far, or opening too great a glare of it to the public. I look upon the discovery of any thing which is true, as a valuable acquisition to society ; which cannot possibly hurt, or obstruct the good effect of any other truth whatsoever : for they all partake of one common essence, and necessarily coincide with each other ; and like the drops of rain, which fall separately into the river, mix themselves at once with the stream, and strengthen the general current.

The light of truth indeed is sure to expose the vanity of all those popular systems and prejudices, which are to be found in every country ; derived originally from error, fraud, or superstition ; and craftily imposed upon the many, to serve the interests of a few. Hence it is, that upon the detection of any of these, and especially of the religious kind, we see all that rage of fierce Bigots, hypocritical Zealots, and interested Politicians ; and of all, whose credit or fortunes in any manner depend on the establishment of error and ignorance among men : and hence, all those horrible massacres and persecutions, of which we frequently read, both in Pagan and Christian Countries, which, under the pretext of serving God, have destroyed so many thousands of his best servants. But truth was never known to be on the persecuting side, or to have had any other effect, than to promote the general good, and to co-operate with Heaven itself, in bringing us still nearer to the perfection of our being, and to the knowledge of that eternal rule of good and ill, which God originally marked out and prescribed to the nature of man. Let the consequences then of truth reach as far as they can ; the farther they reach the better : the more errors they will detect, and the more they



they will dissipate of those clouds and mists, in which the crafty and interested part of mankind are apt to involve and disguise the real nature of things, from the view of their fellow creatures.

The present question, concerning the reality of the miraculous powers of the primitive Church, depends on the joint credibility of the facts, pretended to have been produced by those powers, and of the witnesses, who attest them. If either part be infirm, their credit must sink in proportion; and if the facts especially be incredible, must of course fall to the ground: because no force of testimony can alter the nature of things. The credibility of facts lies open to the trial of our reason and senses, but the credibility of witnesses depends on a variety of principles, wholly concealed from us; and tho', in many cases, it may reasonably be presumed, yet in none, can it certainly be known. For it is common with men, out of crafty and selfish views, to dissemble and deceive; or, out of weakness and credulity, to embrace and defend with zeal, what the craft of others had imposed upon them: but plain facts cannot delude us; cannot speak any other language, or give any other information, but what flows from nature and truth. The testimony

timony therefore of facts, as it is offered to our senses, in this wonderful fabric and constitution of worldly things, may properly be called the testimony of God himself; as it carries with it the surest instruction in all cases, and to all nations, which in the ordinary course of his providence, he has thought fit to appoint for the guidance of human life.

But before we procede to examine the particular facts and testimonies, which antiquity has furnished for the decision of this dispute, our first care should be, to inform ourselves of the proper nature and condition of those miraculous powers, which are the subject of it, as they are represented to us in the history of the Gospel: for till we have learnt from those sacred records, what they really were, for what purposes granted, and in what manner exerted by the Apostles and first possessors of them, we cannot form a proper judgment on those evidences, which are brought either to confirm or confute their continuance in the Church, and must dispute consequently at random, as chance or prejudice may prompt us, about things unknown to us.

And this indeed appears to be the case of all these zealous Champions, who have attempted to refute the *Introductory Discourse*.

Among

Among whom, I have not observed one, who seems to have spent a thought, in considering the origin and use of those powers, as they are set forth in the New Testament. They appeal indeed to the Texts, in which they were promised by our Lord to his disciples : where tho' there is not the least hint of any particular time, for which they were to last, yet this they supply from their own imagination, and by the help of a postulatum, which all people will grant, *that they continued as long, as they were necessary to the Church*, they presently extend that necessity to what length they please, or as far as they find it agreeable to the several systems, which they had previously entertained about them.

They urge especially that passage from St. Mark, in which our Lord, just ready to ascend into Heaven, and giving his last instructions to his Apostles, *to go and preach to all nations*, immediately adds ; *And these signs shall follow them who believe : in my name they shall cast out Devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover* [c].

[c] Mark xvi. 17.

From these words, one of my Antagonists argues thus: “ It will here be observed, that  
 “ this promise was not made to the Apo-  
 “ stles personally, but to them, that should  
 “ believe through their preaching, with-  
 “ out any limitation of time for the con-  
 “ tinuance of these powers to their days.  
 “ And when it is considered how great a  
 “ part of the Heathen world remained un-  
 “ converted after their days, it is no un-  
 “ reasonable supposition, that these powers  
 “ did not expire with the Apostles, but  
 “ were continued to their Successors, in  
 “ the work of propagating the Gospel.  
 “ How long, I say not: and perhaps there  
 “ is not light enough in history, to settle  
 “ this point; as indeed it nothing concerns  
 “ us. But the earliest Fathers unanimously  
 “ affirm, that these powers subsisted in the  
 “ Church in their days; and why they are  
 “ not to be believed, it is the Author’s bu-  
 “ siness to shew [d].”

Another Advocate of the same cause makes the following remark on the same passage:  
 “ Our Saviour, before he left the world,  
 “ promises these miraculous powers not  
 “ onely to the Apostles, but to private Chris-

[d] See Observat. on the Introd, Disc. p. 25.

“ tians: and the rules and directions, which  
 “ St. *Paul* afterwards gave the *Corinthians*,  
 “ concerning the exercise of them, plainly  
 “ shew, that they must have continued some  
 “ considerable time in the Church. And as  
 “ Christ’s promise is without any limitation  
 “ of time, we may reasonably suppose,  
 “ that they lasted as long as the Church  
 “ had an immediate occasion for them, such  
 “ as the farther conversion of the world.”  
 —For which purpose of converting those  
 nations, who had not as yet heard of the  
 Gospel he declares it, “ to be necessary,  
 “ that the Successors of the Apostles should  
 “ be indued with miraculous powers, espe-  
 “ cially with *the gift tongues*, without which  
 “ they could not expect, any considerable  
 “ success—and he concludes therefore, that  
 “ it is highly probable, if not absolutely  
 “ certain, that they did actually subsist in  
 “ in the Church for some considerable time,  
 “ after the days of the Apostles [*e*].”

It being agreed then, that in the original  
 promise of these miraculous gifts, there is  
 no intimation of any particular period, to  
 which their continuance was limited, the

[*e*] See Postscript of a Treatise on Mirac. by Abr.  
 Lemoine, p. 511, 512, 515.

next question is, by what sort of evidence the precise time of their duration is to be determined? But to this point one of the writers just referred to, excuses himself, as we have seen, from giving any answer; and thinks it sufficient to declare in general, that *the earliest Fathers unanimously affirm them to have continued down to their times.* Yet he has not told us, as he ought to have done, to what age he limits the character of *the earliest Fathers*; whether to the second or to the third Century, or, with the generality of our writers, means also to include the 4th. But to whatever age he may restrain it, the difficulty at last will be, to assign a reason, why we must needs stop there. In the mean while, by his appealing thus to the *earliest Fathers* onely, as unanimous on this article, a common Reader would be apt to infer, that the later Fathers are more cold or diffident, or divided upon it; whereas the reverse of this is true, and the more we descend from those earliest Fathers, the more strong and explicit we find their Successors, in attesting the perpetual succession and daily exertion of the same miraculous powers, in their several ages: so that if the cause must be determined by *the unanimous consent of Fathers*, we shall find

find as much reason to believe, that those powers were continued even to the latest ages, as to any other, how early and primitive soever, after the days of the Apostles.

But the same writer gives us two reasons, why he does not chuse to say any thing upon the subject of their duration : 1st, because, *there is not light enough in history, to settle it* : 2dly, because, *the thing itself is of no concern to us.*

As to his first reason, I am at a loss to conceive, what farther light a professed Advocate of the primitive ages and Fathers can possibly require in this case. For as far as the Church-Historians can illustrate or throw light upon any thing, there is not a single point in all history, so constantly, explicitly and unanimously affirmed by them all, as the continual succession of these powers through all ages, from the earliest Father, who first mentions them, down to the time of the Reformation. Which same succession is still farther deduced, by persons of the most eminent character, for their probity, learning, and dignity in the *Romish* Church, to this very day. So that the onely doubt, which can remain with us, is ; whether the Church-Historians are to be trusted or not : for if any

credit be due to them in the present case, it must reach either to all, or to none : because the reason of believing them in any one age, will be found to be of equal Force in all, as far as it depends on the characters of the persons attesting, or the nature of the things attested.

The second reason is still more curious ; *that the point of their duration is of no concern to us.* This indeed is strange, from a writer of his principles ; for if primitive antiquity, as all these champions contend, is to be the rule, of regulating the doctrines and discipline of all modern Churches, it must surely be of the utmost concern to us to know, how far its authority may be trusted, and how far the hand of God continued to cooperate visibly with the saints of those ages, by giving a divine sanction to the doctrines, which they taught, and the rites, which they established. For that God did actually exert himself in such an extraordinary manner, in those primitive days, this writer affirms from the unanimous testimony of *the earliest Fathers* ; yet owns withal, that the same ages were imposed upon also by false and fictitious pretensions to miraculous powers. As far therefore, as it is our duty,  
to



to conform ourselves to the doctrines and usages of those early ages, so far it must be of great importance, to have a rule of distinguishing the true from the false; of discerning those, which God had stamped with his authority for the common good of mankind, from those, which fraud and craft had imposed, for the private interest of a few Impostors: towards which, nothing could afford more light and help to us, than to know the precise duration of true miracles, and to be able to pronounce, that they proceeded thus far and no farther. On my part indeed, it might very consistently be said, that it is of no use to inquire or dispute how long those powers subsisted, since, according to my principles, they never subsisted at all, after the days of the Apostles: but when a writer affirms the Primitive Church to be a guide to us, and to have been indued with miraculous powers, for the confirmation of its divine authority, yet declares it of *no concern to us*, to know, how long those powers continued in it, or at what time God was pleased to withdraw them, on account of the prevailing corruptions and forgeries of the same Church, he acts not only in contradiction to his own principles,

but to reason and common sense, and betrays a great want either of judgement or sincerity.

The argument also, which these writers alledge for the continuance of miracles, and especially *of the gift of tongues, from the unconverted state of the Heathen world*, is not less impertinent and injudicious: because it might have been alledged as justly and with equal force, through all ages of the Church, from the Apostolic times down to our own; and will justify the *Romanists* themselves in their pretensions to the same powers at this very day: since the greatest part of this habitable Globe remains still in the same *unconverted state*; immersed in gross idolatry; without any knowledge of the true God, or light of the Gospel among them.

But in truth, this same consideration, *of the unconverted state of the Heathens*, was thought to have so much weight in it by *Grotius*, as to persuade him from a parity, both of reason, and of evidence also, which was found in every age, that these extraordinary gifts were certainly continued to the later, as well as to the earlier times of the Church. Nay, he took the conversion of the Heathens, to be an occasion so worthy

thy of the divine interposition, as not to doubt, he says, but, that *if any person were employed in it at this day, in a manner agreeable to the will of our Lord, he would find himself indued with a power of working miracles* [f]. From which declaration, of so learned and judicious a Critic, we may observe in the first place, what I have elsewhere frequently signified; how naturally the allowance of those powers to the earlier ages, will engage us, if we are consistent with ourselves, to allow the same also to the later ages: and, in the second place, how fallacious the judgement even of the wisest will ever be found, when deserting the path of nature and experience, and giving the reins to fancy and conjecture, they attempt to illustrate the secret councils of Providence.

For experience has long taught us, that though all the different Churches and Sects of Christians, have sent abroad their several Missionaries, to propagate the Gospel among

[f] Cum vero multo etiam seiora secula plena sint testimoniis ejus rei, nescio qua ratione moti quidam id donum ad prima tantum tempora restringant.——

Quare si quis nunc etiam

Gentibus Christi ignaris— Christum, ita ut ipse annuciari voluit, annunciet, promissionis vim duraturam non dubito. In Marc. xvi. 17.

the remote and Idolatrous nations, yet none of them have ever been inabled to work a single miracle in confirmation of their mission. The *Romanists* indeed make a pretension to such a power, and boast of several miracles performed by their Missionaries in both the *Indies*: yet, as I have elsewhere observed, one of their gravest writers has openly acknowledged the vanity of such pretensions; and one of their most eminent wonder-workers, St. *Francis Xavier*, called the *Apostle of the Indies*, laments in some of his letters, “ that through his ignorance of  
 “ the language of those nations, he found  
 “ himself incapable of doing any service to  
 “ the Christian cause, and was but little bet-  
 “ ter than a mute Statue among them, till  
 “ he could acquire some competent know-  
 “ ledge of it: for which purpose, he was  
 “ forced to act the boy again, and apply  
 “ himself to the task of learning the rudi-  
 “ ments of it [g].”

Now this *gift of tongues* is what the adversaries of my scheme lay the greatest stress upon. They declare it to be so peculiarly necessary to the propagation of the Gospel, that no considerable success could be ex-

[g] See Prefat. Disc. to my Letter from *Rome*, p. 99.

pected without it; and from this necessity infer the certainty of its continuance after the days of the Apostles. But they will have the mortification to find, in the sequel of this work, their imaginary hypothesis effectually confuted by the evidence of real fact; and this very gift, of whose continuance they are so assured, to have been of all others, the most evidently and confessedly withdrawn in the earliest ages of the Church. They will find, I say, that the single Father, who lays any claim to it, and one of the gravest and most venerable of them all, laments, like the *Romish Apostle of the Indies*, his own want of it, in the work of propagating the Gospel among a rude and barbarous people: and that, in all the succeeding ages, while all the other kinds of miraculous gifts are frequently celebrated, and affirmed to flourish still in great abundance, there is not a single instance to be met with of this, nor the least pretension made to it by any writer whatsoever.

From this fact, and many more of the same sort, which might be produced, the reader will observe, how rash and presumptuous it is, to form arguments so peremptorily upon the supposed necessity or propriety of a divine interposition, in this or that particular

ticular ease ; and to decide upon' the views and motives of the Deity, by the narrow conceptions of human reason. Whereas the whole, which the wit of man can possibly discover, either of the ways or will of the Creator, must be acquired by a contrary method ; not by imagining vainly within ourselves, what may be proper or improper for him to do ; but by looking abroad, and contemplating, what he has actually done ; and attending seriously to that revelation, which he made of himself from the beginning, and placed continually before our eyes, in the wonderful works, and beautiful fabric of this visible world.

There is another mistake, which is common to all these Advocates of the primitive miracles, and the chief source of their prejudices against *the Introductory Discourse* ; in taking it for granted, as they all do, that these miraculous powers, when they had once been conferred by our Lord, upon any of his Disciples, were ever after perpetually inherent in them, and ready to be exerted at their will and pleasure : whereas it is evident, from several instances, both of the collation and exercise of them, which we find in the New Testament, that they were merely temporary and occasional ; adapted

dapted to particular exigencies, thought worthy of them by our Lord ; and imparted only at the moment of their exertion, which, by some special impulse, was notified at the same time to the agent ; and as soon as those particular occasions were served, that they were withdrawn again or suspended, and the Agents reduced to the condition of all other men, and left to the guidance of their own natural prudence.

This, I say, is evident, from the account of these gifts and the effects of them, which is given to us in the Gospel ; as it has been observed also and declared by some of the best Expositors. Thus *Grotius*, in his comment on our Lord's promise of them to all true believers, remarks ; *that these wonderful faculties were severally distributed to each faithful Disciple, yet not so, as to be exerted of themselves, or at pleasure, but reserved to special occasions* [b]. And the same thing is signified by our Lord himself, in his first promise of them to his Apostles, when he sent them out, *two by two, to preach his Gospel to the Jews* : on which occasion he tells them, *that when they were brought before Governors*

[b] Non omnibus omnia— ita tamen cuilibet, ut oportet, credenti aliqua tunc data fit admirabilis facultas, quæ se non semper quidem, sed data occasione explicaret. In Mar. xvi. 17.

*and Kings, they should not take any thought, about what they were to say for themselves, for it would be given to them, in that very hour, what they should speak* [i]. And that it was not peculiar to the gift of language or tongues only to be given at the moment of its exertion, but common likewise to all the rest, will be shewn probably, on some other occasion, more at large in a particular treatise, which is already prepared by me, on that subject.

As this then was the state of those extraordinary powers, with which our Lord thought fit, to arm his Apostles, against the first struggles and difficulties of their mission; so in his more intimate conversations with them, we find him frequently inculcating, as an essential qualification also for the same mission, the practice of all those moral virtues, which are peculiarly adapted to conciliate the favor and good will of men: a general benevolence, modesty, affability, gentleness of behaviour, with great circumspection and caution of giving offence. *Behold, says he, I send ye forth as sheep, in the midst of wolves: be ye wise therefore as serpents, and harmless as doves* [k]: as if he meant to admonish them, that they were not to be perpe-

[i] Mar. x. 19.

[k] Matt. x. 16.



tually directed by divine impulses and inspirations, but left on many occasions to the ordinary direction of their own natural faculties: and that their success would depend as much on the purity of their lives, as the force of their wonderful works: and that the miraculous gifts, which were indulged to them, in this infancy of the Gospel, were intended to draw people's attention more strongly to the contemplation of their manners; and to make them reflect on the excellency of that doctrine, which produced such rare fruits, and offered such examples of innocence and sanctity, for the correction of a depraved and sinful world.

The writers however, of whom I am speaking, prepossessed with the notion of the perpetual inherence of those powers, in all, who had once been indued with them, harangue with great gayety on the folly, which they impute to me, of imagining, that they should all be extinguished in a moment, upon the death of the last of the Apostles. They observe, that *St. John* outlived all the rest near forty years; and that some of the most eminent and gifted of the other disciples, who are mentioned in the Gospel, survived him also, and were employing themselves, in different parts of the earth, in propagating the  
Gospel,

Gospel, and working perpetual miracles for the conversion of Unbelievers; and it was incredible, that these powers, which they were exerting every hour, with such success and honour to the Christian cause, in all the principal Cities and Countries of the world, and at so wide a distance from each other, should all fail them at once, and expire at that very instant, in which St. *John* happened to die at *Ephesus*.

But while they fancy themselves, to be displaying the force of their reasoning and eloquence, they are but exposing their own ignorance, not only of the nature of those extraordinary powers, which are the ground of the dispute, but of the particular question, against which they are disputing. For it is no where affirmed in the *Introductory Discourse*, as their way of arguing implies, that those powers either vanished instantaneously, upon the death of St. *John*; or subsisted even so long, as St. *John* remained alive: but the single point in dispute, as far as it arises from that Discourse, is, whether we have sufficient ground to believe, upon the testimony of the ancient Fathers, that they subsisted at all, after the days of the Apostles.

If the nature then of these powers be such, as I have signified above, and shall endeavour hereafter to demonstrate; and if what I am now disputing with regard to the same powers, should appear also to be true; some perhaps may be apt to demand, what it is, that we are to judge at last, concerning their real duration; and to what period we may reasonably venture to restrain them. And tho' such a demand be rather curious than pertinent, and the solution of it of no consequence to the point in debate; yet as we cannot help forming some opinion or other on all subjects, which have fallen under our particular observation, so I shall not scruple to declare in this, what I take it to be the most probable, as far as I have been able to collect it, from the facts and instances relating to it, which are to be found in the New Testament: but I propose it only as a conjecture, which may excite others also to search, and to guess for themselves, till they can hit upon something more satisfactory. In the mean while, my opinion in short is this; that in those first efforts of planting the Gospel, after our Lord's ascension, the extraordinary gifts, which he had promised, were poured out in the fullest measure on the Apostles, and those other Disciples, whom he had ordained to be  
the

the primary Instruments of that great work ; in order to inable them, more easily to overrule the inveterate prejudices both of the Jews and Gentiles, and to bear up against the discouraging shocks of popular rage and persecution, which they were taught to expect, in this noviciate of their ministry. But in process of time, when they had laid a foundation, sufficient to sustain the great fabrick designed to be erected upon it, and, by an invincible courage, had conquered the first and principal difficulties ; and planted Churches in all the chief Cities of the *Roman* Empire, and settled a regular ministry to succeed them, in the government of the same ; it may reasonably be presumed, that as the benefit of miraculous powers began to be less and less wanted, in proportion to the increase of those Churches, so the use and exercise of them began gradually to decline ; and as soon as Christianity had gained an establishment in every quarter of the known world, that they were finally withdrawn, and the Gospel left to make the rest of its way, by its own genuine strength, and the natural force of those divine graces, with which it was so richly stored, *faith, hope, and charity* : graces ! which never fail to inspire all, who truly possess them, with a zeal and courage, which no  
terrors

terrors can daunt, nor worldly powers subdue. And all this, as far as I am able to judge, from the nature of the gifts themselves, and from the instances or effects of them, which I have any where observed, may probably be thought to have happened, while some of the Apostles were still living : who, in the times even of the Gospel, appear, on several occasions, to have been destitute of any extraordinary gifts : and of whose miracles, when we go beyond the limits of the Gospel, we meet with nothing in the later histories, on which we can depend, or nothing rather, but what is apparently fabulous. And as to St. *John* in particular, who survived all the rest, the whole, that is delivered of him with any probability, is, “ that he spent the last years of  
 “ his life in writing his Gospel and Revelati-  
 “ ons, and in visiting and confirming all  
 “ those Churches of *Asia*, which had been  
 “ planted by himself and his brethren, and  
 “ were allotted to him, as his peculiar pro-  
 “ vince [1].” But in the miraculous kind, the principal story related of him, is, *that being thrown, by the command of Domitian, into a caldron of boiling oil, he came out safe and unburnt from it* : in memory of which, a chappel was afterwards built, and is still re-

[1] Vid. Testimonia de Johanne, præfixa Evangelio ejus a Millio, in Editione N. T.

maining, at *the Latine Gate of Old Rome* ; the spot, where the fact is supposed to have happened ; in which I saw the story of it represented in painting. Yet this, with a few other trifling tales, which are recorded of the same Apostle, may justly be considered, as the fiction of the later ages.

But to return once more to the subject of the following sheets. The reader will find in them none of those arts, which are commonly employed by disputants, either to perplex a good cause, or to palliate a bad one ; no subtil refinements, forced constructions, or evasive distinctions ; but plain reasoning grounded on plain facts, and published with an honest and disinterested view, to free the minds of men from an inveterate imposture, which, through a long succession of ages, has disgraced the religion of the Gospel, and tyrannized over the reason and senses of the Christian world. In the pursuit of which end, I have shewn, by many indisputable facts, that the ancient Fathers, by whose authority that delusion was originally imposed, and has ever since been supported, were extremely credulous and superstitious ; possessed with strong prejudices and an enthusiastic zeal, in favor, not onely of Christianity in general, but of every  
every

every particular doctrine, which a wild imagination could ingraft upon it; and scrupling no art or means, by which they might propagate the same principles. In short, that they were of a character, from which nothing could be expected, that was candid and impartial; nothing, but what a weak or crafty understanding could supply, towards confirming those prejudices, with which they happened to be possessed; especially where religion was the subject, which above all other motives, strengthens every bias, and inflames every passion of the human mind. And that this was actually the case, I have shewn also by many instances; in which we find them roundly affirming as true, things evidently false and fictitious; in order to strengthen, as they fancied, the evidences of the Gospel; or to serve a present turn of confuting an adversary; or of inforcing a particular point, which they were laboring to establish.

The chief instrument, by which they acquired and maintained their credit in the world, was an appeal to *a divine and miraculous power*, as residing continually among them, and giving testimony to the truth of what they taught and practised. This is the particular question, which I have undertaken

here to examine : and, I persuade myself, that, as far as a negative can be demonstrated, I have proved all their appeals and positive attestations to be unworthy of any credit ; mere words unsupported by facts ; and in many cases directly confuted by opposite facts and testimonies. For example ; among the miraculous gifts, which are expressly claimed by the Fathers, we find these three ; *the gift of raising the dead ; of speaking with tongues ; of understanding the holy Scriptures.* Now, with regard to the two first, the most signal and important of all gifts, after weighing all the circumstances relating to them, and all that antiquity has delivered concerning them, I find the strongest reason to be convinced, that there never was a genuine instance of either of them, in any age, after the days of the Apostles : which I collect, not onely from the improbability of the things themselves, as they are affirmed by the Fathers, but from facts also, which evince the contrary. And as to the third gift ; it is allowed and frankly confessed by all, as well friends as enemies, that instead of a divine and infallible interpretation of the Scriptures, a most absurd and ridiculous method of interpreting them,

was



was the very characteristic even of the earliest ages.

If any one therefore should be disposed to answer or confute, what I have affirmed in this book, he must take a different method, from what my Antagonists have hitherto pursued; must not expect to bear down facts with systems; and from the supposed integrity and piety of the Fathers, to infer the certainty of what they attest: but must refer us to instances, which tally with their testimonies, and experimentally prove the truth of them. When any of the Fathers tell us then, *that many were raised from the dead in their days, in every place where there was a Christian Church, and lived afterwards several years among them; and that others were heard to speak in all kinds of languages*: these Answerers must shew, how those testimonies were verified by facts; and what particular persons were so raised, and indued with languages; or must alledge at least some special effects of those miracles, credibly reported by the ancient writers, either Heathens or Christians. Again, when any of them declare, *that they were enlightened by the grace of God, with the gift of understanding the Scriptures*: it must be shewn, that those specimens, which

xxxvi P R E F A C E.

they have given, as the fruit and proof of that gift, will justify such a pretension, and may reasonably pass for divinely inspired. This I say, is the onely way of answering, which can satisfy men of sense; and what alone can in any manner affect or invalidate the force of my argument.

T H E

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T H E

Introductory DISCOURSE.

**I**T is an opinion commonly received among Christians, and above all, among those of the *Romish* communion, that after the days of the Apostles, there resided still in the Primitive Church, through several successive ages, a divine and extraordinary power of working miracles, which was frequently and openly exerted, in confirmation of the truth of the Gospel, and for the conviction of unbelievers. This is generally alledged by the Divines of all Churches, in their disputes with the Sceptics, as a subsidiary proof of the Divinity of the Christian Doctrine; and as it is managed by the Church of *Rome*, is rendered more persuasive and affecting to the multitude, than what the Gospel itself affords, by deducing the succession of those apostolical gifts down to our own times, and offering the testimony of the same miracles to the senses even of the present Age.

This then being universally adopted by the Papists, as an indisputable fact, or an article rather of the Christian Faith; and espoused likewise in part by the Protestants, as subservient in some degree to the Christian cause, I thought it my duty to inquire into the grounds of it. For as it is the part of every Christian, to inform himself, as far as he is able, of every thing, which his religion requires him either to believe or to practise, so it is more especially of those, whom Providence has blessed with a capacity, and leisure, and the opportunities of inquiring; nor yet merely for their own information, but for the instruction likewise of others, who want the same advantages.

It was this, which gave rise to the present inquiry, and what induced me also, to publish the result of it. I was not led to the one, by an idle curiosity; nor to the other, by the vanity of combating established opinions, but the duty of declaring my own: which, by the most impartial judgment, that I am able to form, I take not only to be true, but useful also, and even necessary to the defence of Christianity, as it is generally received, and ought always to be defended, in Protestant Churches.

But

But if the facts and testimonies, which obliged me to embrace it, should not have the same force, nor suggest the same reflections to others, I shall neither be surprized, nor concerned at it : for it is every man's right to judge for himself ; and a difference of opinion is as natural to us, as a difference of taste ; and when the sensual faculties are perpetually passing different judgments on the same objects in different men, it cannot be thought strange, that the intellectual, in which nature seems to have formed a greater disparity, should act with the same variety. But if to the principles implanted in our nature, we add that peculiar bias, which every individual receives from education, example, or habit ; and consider what strong prejudices, a zeal for opinions once imbibed, or an interest especially accruing from them, is apt to instill even into the better sort, we should have cause rather to wonder, that any number of men should ever be of one mind, in any question of difficulty or importance. Hence contrary doctrines in religion are frequently deduced from the same texts, and contrary systems of politics, from the same monuments.

Whatever judgment therefore any other man may form, or whatever he may write, on the subject of this performance, I shall not easily be drawn into any controversy with him about it; but contenting myself with the discharge of my own conscience, by this free declaration of my real sentiments, and indulging the same liberty to every body else, shall leave the rest to the judgment of the public. I do not mean however, by this profession, to preclude myself so intirely from all farther concern with the present argument, as not to be ready on all occasions, to acknowledge any mistake, of which I may be convinced, in the representation of any fact, or testimony, or character, which I have applied to the support of it, and to retract it, in the same public manner, in which I committed it.

But besides that general obligation, which is common to me with all other Christians, of searching into the origin and evidences of our religion, I found myself particularly excited to this task, by what I had occasionally observed and heard, of the late growth of Popery in this Kingdom, and the great number of Popish books, which have been printed and dispersed amongst us, within these few years: in which their writers make much use of that prejudice, in favour

*of*

*of primitive antiquity*, which prevails even in this Protestant Country, towards drawing weak people into their cause, and shewing their worship to be the best, because it is the most conformable to that ancient pattern. But the most powerful of all their arguments, and what gains them the most profelytes, is, their confident attestation of miracles, as subsisting still in their Church, and the clear succession of them, which they deduce through all history, from the Apostolic times, down to our own. This their Apologists never fail to display, with all the force of their rhetoric ; and with good reason ; since it is a proof, of all others, the most striking to vulgar minds, and the most decisive indeed to all minds, as far as it is believed to be true.

Thus one of their principal Champions, with whom I have been engaged, demonstrates the orthodoxy of their faith, and their true descent from that Church, to which our Lord has promised his presence to the end of the world. For speaking of the miracles of the Pagans, which I had opposed to those of the Papists, he says ; “ God has been pleased in every  
 “ age, to work far more evident miracles in  
 “ his Church, by the ministry of his Saints ;  
 “ in raising the dead to life ; in curing the  
 “ blind

“ blind and the lame ; in casting out Devils ;  
 “ in healing in a moment inveterate diseases,  
 “ and the like stupendous works of his pow-  
 “ er ; attested by the most authentic monu-  
 “ ments ; and very frequently, as may be  
 “ seen in the acts of the canonization of  
 “ Saints, by the depositions of innumerable  
 “ eye-witnesses, examined upon oath ; and  
 “ by the public notoriety of the facts : which  
 “ kind of miracles, so authentically attested,  
 “ will be to all ages a standing evidence, that  
 “ the Church, in whose Communion they  
 “ have all been wrought, is not that idola-  
 “ trous, pagan Church, which the Doctor  
 “ pretends, but the true spouse of Christ.”

[a] And in a second piece, which the same  
 writer has since published, he promises to  
 give

[a] See *Catholic Christian*.  
 Pref. xviii.

N. B. I have been well  
 informed, that among the  
 deserters from the *English*  
 army in *Flanders*, who were  
 taken in the time of the late  
 rebellion and shot to death  
 in *London*, there was one  
 who professed to die in the  
*Romish* Communion, and  
 being asked by the Clergy-  
 man, who assisted him,  
 what were the motives,  
 which induced him to ser-

fake the religion, in which  
 he was bred, made answer,  
 “ That a Priest of a very  
 “ grave and civil behavi-  
 “ our had assured him,  
 “ that miracles had been  
 “ wrought in confirmation  
 “ of the Popish doctrine,  
 “ and particularly, that a  
 “ Protestant woman came  
 “ one day to their Sacra-  
 “ ment, with intent to  
 “ make sport with it, and  
 “ instead of swallowing the  
 “ consecrated bread, found  
 “ means



give us an *history of the Christian miracles* in a particular treatise, deduced, I suppose, from the earliest ages, down to the present.

Now *these pious cheats of the Romish Church*, as Mr. Leslie says, are the *forest disgraces of Christianity*, and bid the fairest of any one contrivance to overturn the certainty of the miracles of Christ, and the whole truth of the Gospel, by putting them all upon the same foot [b]. This history therefore of miracles, which is promised by that writer, induced me, more particularly at this time, to inquire into the genuin state and succession of them, through all the several ages of the Christian Church, from the times of the Apostles; in order to discover the precise period and duration of them; and to settle some rule of discerning the true from the false; so as to be able to give a proper reason, for admitting the miracles of one age, and rejecting those of another.

“ means to convey it into  
 “ her pocket; but when  
 “ she was making merry  
 “ afterwards in company,  
 “ with what she had done,  
 “ and was going to pro-  
 “ duce the piece of bread,  
 “ which she had pocketed,  
 “ she found it changed in-  
 “ to real flesh and blood.”

And he added, “ that there  
 “ was no reason to ima-  
 “ gine, that a person, of  
 “ so reverend a character,  
 “ could have any design or  
 “ interest, to deceive him  
 “ in the attestation of such  
 “ a miracle.”

[b] See *Leslie's Short method*, vol. I. p. 24.

It

It must be confessed however, in the first place, that this claim of a miraculous power, which is now peculiar to the Church of *Rome*, was universally asserted and believed in all Christian Countries, and in all ages of the Church, till the time of the Reformation. For Ecclesiastical History makes no difference between one age and another ; but carries on the succession of its miracles, as of all other common events, through all of them indifferently, to that memorable period. But the light of the Reformation dispelled the charm : and what *Cicero* says of the *Pythian Oracle*, may be as truly said of the Popish miracles ; *when men began to be less credulous, their power vanished* [c]. For that spirit of inquiry, with which Christendom was then animated, detected the cheat, and exposed to public view, the hidden springs and machinery of those lying wonders, by which the world had been seduced and enslaved to the tyranny of *Rome* [d].

And

[c] Quando autem ista vis evanuit an postquam homines minus creduli esse coeperunt ? Cic. de Divin. 2. 57.

[d] Some of their Images were brought to *London*,

and publicly broken there at *St. Paul's Cross*, in the sight of the people ; that they might be fully convinced of the juggling impostures of the Monks. And in particular, the *Crucifix of Boxley*

And as the miracles of that age could not stand the test of a scrutiny, but were found, upon trial, to be the forgeries of a corrupt Clergy, so it gave just cause to suspect, that those *golden legends* of them, as they were called, which had been transmitted to them from their Ancestors, were of no better stamp, and that the Church of Christ had long been governed by the same arts. This also was found to be true by those, who made it their business, to search into the records of past ages: where, though it was easy to trace the marks of the same fictions, exerted in the same manner, and for the same ends, even up to the early times of the primitive Church, yet it was difficult, to fix the origin of them, or to mark the precise æra, in which the cheat first began.

*ley in Kent*, commonly called *the Rood of Grace*; to which many pilgrimages had been made; because it was observed sometimes to bow, and to lift itself up; to shake and stir its head, hands and feet; to rowl its eyes; move the lips; and bend its brows: all which were looked upon by the

abused multitude, as the effects of a divine power. These were now publicly discovered to have been cheats. For the springs were shewed, by which all these motions were made, &c.

See *Burnet's History of the Reformation*, vol. I. 242.

Many

Many learned men among the Protestants have attempted indeed to settle this point ; but with so little success, as to leave it at last as uncertain, as they found it ; none of them having been able to adjust the exact limits between true and false miracles, or to shew, by any solid reason, how long after the days of the Apostles, the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit continued in the Church, or in what age they were actually withdrawn.

The most prevailing opinion is, that they subsisted through the three first Centuries, and then ceased in the beginning of the fourth ; or as soon as Christianity came to be established by the civil power. This, I say, seems to be the most prevailing notion at this day, among the generality of the Protestants ; who think it reasonable to imagine, that miracles should then cease, when the end of them was obtained, and the Church no longer in want of them ; being now delivered from all danger, and secure of success, under the protection of the greatest power on earth.

Agreeably to this notion, Archbishop *Tillotson* says, “ that on the first planting of  
“ the

“ the Christian religion in the world, God  
“ was pleased to accompany it with a mi-  
“ raculous power ; but after it was planted,  
“ that power ceased, and God left it to be  
“ maintained by ordinary ways.” And in  
another place, speaking of the particular gift,  
*of casting out Devils*, he observes, “ that  
“ it continued the longest of any, and there  
“ was reason, that it should continue, as long  
“ as the Devil reigned, and Pagan Idolatry  
“ was kept up.—But when the powers of  
“ the world became Christian, and Satan’s  
“ kingdom was every where destroyed, then  
“ this miraculous gift also ceased, there be-  
“ ing no farther occasion for it [*e*].” The  
late Dr. *Marshall* also, who translated the  
works of St. *Cyprian* into *English*, taking  
notice of the continuance of miracles and su-  
pernatural gifts, and especially of *prophecies*  
*and visions*, in that *Cyprianic* age, declares,  
“ that there are successive evidences of  
“ them, which speak full and home to this  
“ point, from the beginning of Christianity,  
“ down to the age of *Constantine*, in whose  
“ times, when Christianity had acquired  
“ the support of human powers, those ex-

[*e*] Serm. Fol. 3. it. Vol. 3. p. 488. Edit. 1735.

“ traordi-

“traordinary affiftances were discontinued  
“ [f].” Yet this opinion, though generally received by the Proteftants, is found liable ftill to fuch objections, and perplexed with fuch difficulties, that even thofe, who principally espoufe it, cannot wholly acquiefce in it, but are forced to propofe it with fome referve and exception.

Mr. *Dodwell*, one of the moft zealous admirers of primitive antiquity, and who has deduced the hiftory of its miracles with the greateft accuracy, through the three firft Centuries, closes his account of them, with the converfion of the *Roman Empire* to Chriftianity; not daring, as he frequently declares, to venture any farther, on account of *the fabulous genius and manifefit impoftures of the fourth Century* [g]. But

[f] Epiftles of Cyprian VII. not. b.

[g] Fateor ibi multa legi, quarti feculi impoftorumque genium referentia, ut nolim ea certioribus immifcere— Quam fuerint quarti feculi Scriptores fabulis dediti, è *vitâ Pauli Hieronymiana*; & *Athanaſiana Antonii*, &c. intelligimus. *Differt. in Iren. 2. § LV.*

Ex ipfa miraculorum hiftoria fatiſ conſtat, a quarto tandem ſeculo & temporibus *Eufebii*, ſenſim decreviſſe vera, & in deſuetudinem abiſſe miracula. *ib. LIX.*

Ego me infra prima ſecula contineo, ante receptam in Imperio Chriftianitatem, &c. *ib. LXII.*

though

though he supposes the true miracles to have generally ceased from that time, yet he finds some particular instances of them, so strongly attested by the Fathers of the the best credit, through the rest of the same century, that he cannot but admit them, as exceptions to his general rule [b].

Mr. *Whiston* contends, “ that these miraculous powers were totally withdrawn at the very time when the *Athanasian Heresy*, as he calls it, was established by the second Council of *Constantinople*, about *A. D.* 381: and that as soon as the Church became *Athanasian*, *Antichristian*, and *Popish*, they ceased immediately, and the Devil lent it his own cheating and fatal powers in their stead [i].”

Dr. *Waterland* on the other hand, the perpetual defender of *Athanasius*, in his treatise on *the importance of the Doctrine of the*

[b] *Chrysostomus*—fatetur suo etiamnum tempore nonnulla fuisse signa, sed & numero pauca, & locis variis hinc inde dispersa.—Qui hæc itaque agnovit negatis

tamen aliis, erat proculdubio & illa agniturus, si pari omnia evidentia constitissent. *ib.* LIX.

[i] See his Account of *the Dæmoniacks*, p. 65.

1 *Introductory* DISCOURSE.

*Trinity*, often affirms, “ that the miracu-  
“ lous powers of the Church continued  
“ through the three first centuries at least,  
“ as a manifest proof, that the true faith  
“ was there preserved, where the spirit of  
“ truth so visibly resided [*k*]:” and in the  
*Addenda* to the same work, he corrects him-  
self, as it were, for a mistake, in confining  
them to such narrow limits, which, on the  
authority of *Paulinus*, he endeavours to ex-  
tend, to the latter end of the fourth cen-  
tury [*l*].

Dr. *Chapman* declares, “ that though the  
“ establishment of Christianity by the civil  
“ power abated the necessity of miracles,  
“ and occasioned a visible decrease of them,  
“ yet after that revolution, there were in-  
“ stances of them still, as public, as clear,  
“ as well attested, as any in the earlier  
“ ages [*m*].”

And not content, like Dr. *Waterland*,  
with carrying the succession of them, to the  
end of the fourth century, he goes on to

[*k*] See p. 299, 382,  
383, 425.

[*m*] See *Miscell. Tracts*,  
p. 170.

[*l*] *Ibid.* p. 497.



assure us, *that the fifth also had its portion, though smaller than the fourth* [n]: which he confirms by several instances, drawn from the middle of that fifth century, and then refers us to Dr. *Berriman*, for the accurate defence of another miracle, wrought in confutation of the *Arian Heresy*, which brings us to the end of it [o].

Thus these eminent Divines, pursuing their several systems, and ambitious of improving still upon each other's discoveries, seem unwarily to have betrayed the Protestant cause, by transferring the miraculous powers of the Church, the pretended insigns of truth and orthodoxy, into the hands of its enemies; and yielding up this sacred *depositum*, like the old *Ancilia of Pagan Rome*, to the defence and support of *Popish Rome*. For it was in these very primitive ages, and especially in the *third, fourth and fifth centuries, those flourishing times of miraculous powers*, as Dr. *Chapman* calls them, in which the chief corruptions of Popery were either actually introduced, or the seeds of them so effectually sown, that they could

[n] Ibid. p. 173.

[o] Ib. p. 175.

not fail of producing the fruits, which we now see. By these corruptions I mean, *the institution of Monkery; the worship of reliques; invocation of Saints; prayers for the Dead; the superstitious use of Images; of the Sacraments; of the Sign of the Cross; and of consecrated Oil;* by the efficacy of all which rites, and as a proof of their divine origin, perpetual miracles are affirmed to have been wrought in these very centuries.

For example; Monkery had its beginning in the third, and a full establishment in the fourth century: in which all the principal Fathers of the Church, both *Greek* and *Latin*, employed their authority and eloquence, to extol the perfection and recommend the practice of it; by writing the lives of particular Monks; celebrating their wonderful sanctity and miraculous gifts; and founding monasteries also, where-ever they travelled. *St. Athanasius* was one of the first, who, from the pattern of the *Ægyptian* Monasteries, introduced them into *Italy and Rome*, where they had been held before in utter contempt [p]. *St. Basil* calls it an *Angelical*

[p] Ignominiosum, ut Oper. Tom. 4. par. 2. p. tunc putabatur, & vile in 780. Edit. Benedict. populis nomen.—Hieron.

*institution:*

*institution: a blessed and Evangelic life, leading to the mansions of the Lord [q]. St. Jerom declares, the Societies of Monks and Nuns, to be the very flower and most precious stone among all the ornaments of the Church [r]. St. Chrysoptom calls it, a way of life worthy of heaven, nor at all inferior to that of Angels [s]. And St. Austin stiles them always*

[q] Basil. Oper. Tom. 3. p. 101, 261, 310, 473.

[r] Certe flos quidam & pretiosissimus lapis inter Ecclesiastica ornamenta, Monachorum & Virginum chorus est. Hieron. ib. p. 551.

[s] Καὶ γὰρ πολυλείαν ἑρανῶν περῆσαν εἴλαντο, καὶ ἀγγέλων ἕθεν χεῖρον διάκεινται. Chryf. Oper. Tom. 1. p. 94. A. Edit. Benedict.

N. B. This same Father wrote three books against *the Oppugners of the Monastic life*; [Oper. T. 1. p. 44.] and a separate one besides, to prove it to be preferable even to that of a King. [ib. p. 116.] Among many other instances of this preference, he observes, that a King, when deposed and fallen from his throne, cannot recover it without the utmost difficulty; whereas

a Monk, who falls from his virtue, quickly recovers it by his penitence: of which he gives a curious example, in a story, which he relates in another place, of an old Monk, who after he had nobly sustained all the difficulties and fatigues of that discipline, was caught at last by the wiles of Satan, and fired with so violent a concupiscence for women, that he ran away from his Cell, to a bawdy-house in the neighbouring City, in order to quench his flame: where he had no sooner satiated his lust, than returning presently to his duty, he became so strict a penitent, that within a short time after, when the country was afflicted with a famine, the people were directed by an express revelation from

ways in a peculiar manner, *the Servants of God* [t]. By the influence therefore of these Fathers, and the many lies and forged miracles, which they diligently propagated in honor of the Monks, innumerable Monasteries, as they themselves tell us, were over the *eastern World*; but especially in *Syria, Palæstine and Ægypt*; whose deserts were covered with them; and where, in the next age, there were some, which are said to have had *five thousand Monks* in them [u].

As to *the reliques of the Martyrs*, we find *St. Chrysoſtom* frequently haranguing on the great blessings, which the Church reaped from them, *and the daily miracles which were wrought by them* [x]: and he concludes one

from heaven, to apply to him, as the onely person, who could relieve them from it by his prayers; by the force of which, the famine was accordingly averted. *Ibid.* p. 29, 30.

[t] *De Servis Dei* sæpissime dicitur, tot annos ille in hoc vel in illo Monasterio sedit. *August. Serm.* 215. *Op. T.* 5. p. 947. *D. Edit. Bened.*

Cupiebas in ea vita vivere, in qua *Servi Dei*, Monachi vivunt. *Epist. ad Bonifac.* 220. *T.* 2. p. 812.

[u] Exemplo itaque ejus, per totam Palæstinam innumerabilia Monasteria esse cœperunt. [*Hieron. Op. T.* 4. par. 2. p. 82.] Quid referamus Armenios, quid Persas, quid Indiæ & Æthiopiæ populos, ipsamque juxta Ægyptum, fertilem Monachorum—cunctaque Orientis examina—*ibid.* p. 551.

[x] Ἰκανα μὲν τὸν λόγον πιστώσασθαι, καὶ τὰ καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν ὑπὸ τῶν μαρτύρων γινόμενα θαύματα. *Chrysoſt. Op. T.* 2. p. 555. *Ed. Bened.*

of his Homilies, on two female Martyrs, *Bernice and Prosdoco*, in the following manner; “ with this ardor therefore, let us fall  
 “ down before their reliques: let us em-  
 “ brace their coffins; for these may have  
 “ some power, since their bones have so  
 “ great an one: and not onely on the day  
 “ of their Festival, but on other days like-  
 “ wise, let us fix ourselves as it were to  
 “ them, and entreat them to be our pa-  
 “ trons [y]:” and in his other Homilies, he  
 often uses the same peroration “ to dwell in  
 “ their Sepulchres, to fix themselves to their  
 “ coffins; that not only their bones, but  
 “ their tombs, and their urns also over-  
 “ flowed with benedictions [z].”

St. *Basil* informs us, “ that all, who were  
 “ pressed with any difficulty or distress, used  
 “ to fly for relief to the tombs of the  
 “ Martyrs; and whosoever did but touch  
 “ their reliques, acquired some share of  
 “ their sanctity [a].” In the same age also,  
 when *Vigilantius*, a learned and eminent  
 Presbyter of the Church, wrote a book just  
 as a Protestant would now write, *against the*

[y] Ibid. p. 645. C.

[z] Ib. p. 669. E.

[a] Basil. Op. T. 2. p.

155. it. T. 3. 536.

*institution of Monks ; the celibacy of the Clergy ; praying for the dead, and to the Martyrs ; adoring their reliques ; celebrating their Vigils ; and lighting up candles to them after the manner of the Pagans ; St. Jerom, who answers him, defends all those rites with a most outrageous zeal and acrimony of language, and treats Vigilantius, as a most profligate Heretic, uttering the blasphemies, with which the Devil had inspired him against the sacred doctrines of the Church : “ Answer me, says he, how it comes to pass, that in this vile dust and ashes of the Martyrs, there is so great a manifestation of signs and wonders. I see thou most wretched of mortals, what thou art so grieved at, what so afraid of ; that unclean spirit, which compels thee to write thus, has oft been tortured, and even now is tortured by this vile dust [b].”* St. *Austin* also affirms, “ that at *Milan*, while he was there present, the reliques of the Martyrs, *Protasius* and *Gervasius*, which lay buried in a place unknown, were revealed to St. *Ambrose* in a dream ; and that by the touch onely of the same reliques, a blind man was restored to his

[b] Hieron. Tom. 4 par. 2. p. 285, 286.

fight ;

“ fight; of which the whole people was  
 “ witness, who flocked in crouds to the bo-  
 “ dies of the said Martyrs [c].”

In the sacrament also of *the Eucharist*, several strange abuses were introduced long before this fourth age. In *Justin Martyr's* time, within fifty years after the days of the Apostles, *the cup was constantly mixed with water, and a portion of the consecrated elements sent also to the absent [d]*: which soon became the source of much Superstition. For that mixture, considered at first as prudential onely, and indifferent, is declared by *Irenæus*, *to have been taught and practised by our Saviour [e]*; and by *St. Cyprian*, to have been enjoined to himself *by a divine revelation [f]*. The consecrated

[c] Immenso populo teste res gesta est. De Civ. Dei. lib. 22. c. 8. Vid. etiam Hieron. ibid. p. 552. Samaritanam pergere, & Johannis Baptistæ, & Elisæi, & Abdiæ pariter cineres adorare.

[d] Just. Mart. Apol. 1. p. 96. Edit. Thirlb.

[e] Accipens panem, suum corpus esse confitebatur; & temperamentum calicis, suum sanguinem confir-

mavit. Iren. l. 4. c. 57. it. l. 5. c. 2. & 36.

[f] Nec nos putes, nostra & humana conscribere, aut ultronea voluntate hoc nobis audacter assumere—admonitos autem nos scias, ut in calice offerendo Dominica traditio fervetur—ut calix, qui in commemoratione ejus offertur, mixtus vino offeratur. Epist. ad Cæcil. 63. Edit. Rigalt.

bread also, which was sent at first onely to the sick, was in *Tertullian's* and *Cyprian's* days, carried home by the communicants, and locked up in boxes as a divine treasure for their private use [g]. From this time it began to work Miracles; and was applied to drive Devils out of haunted houses [b]; and carried with them by people, in their journeys, and voyages, as an amulet or charm, to secure them from all dangers both by sea and land [i].

This

[g] Cum quædam arcam suam, in qua Domini sanctum fuit, manibus indignis tentasset aperire, igne inde surgente deterrita est. *Cypr. de lapsis*, p. 176.

[b] Nam etiam nunc fiunt miracula, in ejus nomine, sine per Sacramenta ejus, &c. Vid. *August. de Civ. D.* 22. 8. § 1, 6.

[i] St. *Ambrose* relates a remarkable instance of this, in the case of one of his intimate friends, called *Satyrus*; who was a pious and zealous Christian, but had not yet received the Sacrament, or *been initiated*, as he calls it, *in the more per-*

*fect mysteries*. In this state, he happened to suffer Shipwreck in his passage from *Afric*, and the Ship itself to be broken to Pieces, upon which, says *Ambrose*, “ *Satyrus* not being afraid of death, but to die only, before he had partaken of those mysteries, begged of some of the company, who had been initiated, that they would lend him the divine Sacrament, (which they carried about with them) not to feed his curiosity, by peeping into the inside of the Box, but to obtain the benefit  
“ of



This Sacrament was administered likewise, in all their public communions, to infants, even of the tenderest age, before they were able to speak [k]: and was constantly stiled, *the Sacrifice of the body of Christ, which was always offered up, as Cyprian says, for the Martyrs, in their annual Festivals*: as it was also, according to St. Jerom, *by the Bishop of Rome, over the venerable bones of St. Peter and St. Paul* [l]. Hence flowed those amazing titles, which were given to it in this fourth age; of *most tremendous mystery; dreadful solemnity; terrible to Angels; Mystic table* [m]; *whose very Utensils and sacred coverings,*

“ of his Faith, for he  
 “ wrapped up the Myste-  
 “ ries in his Handkerchief,  
 “ and then tying it about  
 “ his neck, threw himself  
 “ into the Sea; never  
 “ troubling himself to look  
 “ out for a plank, which  
 “ might help him to swim,  
 “ since he wanted nothing  
 “ more, than the Arms of  
 “ his Faith: nor did his  
 “ Hopes fail him, for he  
 “ was the first of the com-  
 “ pany, who got safe to  
 “ the Shore.” De Excessu

Satyri, l. i. § 43, 44. p. 1125. Op. T. 2. Ed. Bened.

[k] Cypr. *ibid.* p. 175.

[l] Sacrificia pro eis semper, ut meministis, offerimus, quoties Martyrum passiones & dies, anniversaria commemoratione celebramus. Id. Epist. 34. p. 48. Vid. it. Hieron. T. 4. par. 2. p. 284.

[m] Επ' αὐτῶν πάλιν Φρικωδεσάτων μυστηρίων. Chrysoft. Oper. T. x. p. 568.] τραπέζης καὶ σφόδρα φρικωδεσάτης. [ib.]

verings, as St. Jerom says, were not to be considered, like things inanimate, and void of sense, to have no sanctity, but to be worshipped with the same majesty, as the body and blood of our Lord [n]. And what is all this, but a description of *that Sacrifice of the Mass*, which the Romanists offer at this day, both, for the living and the dead; and the same miraculous tales, which they still relate, of their *transubstantiated* bread?

The custom of *praying for the dead*, had also a very early origin: for it was common, as we learn from *Tertullian*, even in the second century [o]; and became the universal practice of the following ages: so that in the fourth, we find it reckoned as a sort of *Heresy*,

[ib. p. 245. D.] ἦν καὶ Ἀγγελ-  
λοι φρίττισσοι. Id. T. xi. p.  
22. C.

[n] Ut discant, qui ignorant, — qua debeant veneratione sancta suscipere, & altaris Christi ministerio deferre; sacrosque calices, & sancta velamina, & cetera, quæ ad cultum Dominicæ passionis pertinent, non quasi inania & sensu carentia, sanctimoniam non

habere, sed ex consortio corporis & sanguinis Domini, eadem qua corpus ejus & sanguis majestate veneranda. Hieron. Ep. 88. ad Theopil. T. 4. par. 2. p. 728.

[o] Enimvero & pro anima ejus orat, & refrigerium interim adpostulat ei, & in prima resurrectione consortium, & offert annuis diebus dormitionis

*refy*, to deny the efficacy of it [*p*]. The purpose of it was to procure relief and refreshment to the departed souls, in some intermediate state of expiatory pains, which, according to the opinion of those times, all men were to suffer for their sins, except the Martyrs, and Saints of the first class [*q*]. A doctrine and practice, which could not fail of giving birth to the Popish Purgatory.

The *Sign of the Cross* likewise, was the subject of much superstition in those ages.

dormitionis ejus. De Monogam. x. p. 682. A. Edit. Nic. Rigalt. N. B. This passage may want a little explication. *Tertullian*, in this treatise, is labouring to prove, that the second marriages of Christians are utterly unlawful, and forbidden to them by the Gospel, and though the parties be separated from each other by the death of either, that the matrimonial bond still subsists, and obliges the Survivor: *For the widow*, says he, *prays for the Soul of her departed husband; and begs refreshment for him in his in-*

*termediate state; and to be a partner with him in the first resurrection; and makes an oblation for him every year, on the Day of his death.* By all which she acknowledges and keeps up her conjugal union, and cannot therefore marry any other man; because, to have one husband in the Spirit, and another in the Flesh, is adultery, &c.

[*p*] Vid. Epiphani. Hæres. lxxv. § 3 and 7.

[*q*] Vid. Orig. con. Celsum, l. 6. p. 292. Tertull. De Anim. c. 55, 58.

Every

“ Every step that we take, says Tertullian ;  
 “ when we come in or go out ; put on our  
 “ cloaths, or our shoes ; when we bathe, eat,  
 “ light up candles, go to bed, or sit down ; we  
 “ mark our foreheads with the sign of the Cross.  
 “ If for these, and other acts of discipline of  
 “ the same kind, you demand a text of  
 “ Scripture, you will find none ; but tradi-  
 “ tion will be alledged to you, as the prescri-  
 “ ber of them [r].” It was thought a sure  
 preservative against all sorts of malignity, poi-  
 sons, or facination ; and effectual to drive  
 away evil spirits ; and is affirmed by the prin-  
 cipal Fathers of the fourth century, to have  
 wrought many illustrious miracles. “ This  
 “ sign, says St. Chrysostom, both in the days of  
 “ our Forefathers, and in our own, has  
 “ thrown open gates, that were shut ; de-  
 “ stroyed the effects of poisonous drugs ; dis-  
 “ solved the force of hemlock ; and cured  
 “ the bites of venomous beasts [s].”

[r] Ad omnem progres-  
 sum atque promotum ; ad  
 omnem aditum atque exitum,  
 ad vestitum, ad calciatum,  
 ad lavacra, ad mensas,  
 ad lumina, ad cubilia,  
 ad sedilia, quæcunque nos  
 conversatio exercet, frontem  
 crucis signaculo terimus.  
 Harum & aliarum

ejusmodi disciplinarum si  
 legem exoptules Scriptura-  
 rum, nullam invenies, tradi-  
 tio tibi prætendetur auc-  
 trix, &c. De. Coron. 3.

[s] Τὸτο τὸ σημεῖον καὶ ἐπὶ  
 τῶν προγόνων ἡμῶν, καὶ νῦν, θύρας  
 ἀνέωξε κεκλεισμένας, &c. Tom.  
 7. p. 552. A.

The *sacred oil* also of the Church, was held in great veneration in these same days, as an universal remedy in all diseases. For which purpose, it was either prepared and dispensed by Priests and holy Monks; or was taken from *the lamps* which were burning before the reliques of the Martyrs. St. *Jerom* mentions great numbers, who had been cured of *the bites of venomous animals*, by touching their wounds with the first sort [t]: And St. *Chrysofom* speaks of many, who had been healed of their distempers, by anointing themselves with the second [u]. And St. *Austin* affirms, from his own knowledge, that a young woman had been freed from a Devil; and a young man restored even from death to life, by the use of it (x.)

[t] Benedicto itaque oleo universi agricolæ atque pastores, tangentes vulnera, certam salutem resumebant. Vit. S. Hilarion. Op. T. 4. par. 2. p. 86.

[u] Καὶ ἴσασι ὅσοι μετὰ πίσσεως ἢ εὐκαίρως ἐλαίῳ χρυσόμενοι νοσήματα ἔλυσαν. Chryf. ib. p. 337. C.

[x] Hipponensem quandam Virginem scio, cum se oleo perunxisset, cui pro illa orans Presbyter instillaverat

lacrymas suas, mox a Dæmonio fuisse sanatam. [De Civ. D. l. 22. c. 8. §. 8.]

Rursus apud nos, *Irenæi* cujusdam filius ægritudine extinctus est. Cumque corpus jaceret exanimum, atque exequiæ pararentur, amicorum quidam suggestit, ut ejusdem Martyris oleo, corpus perungeretur. Factum est, & revixit. *ibid.* § 18.

Lastly,

Lastly, as to *Images and pictures*, it appears from St. *Cyriostom*, that great numbers of them were standing in the principal Churches of that age [y]; and from the other writers of the same age; that the acts of the Saints and Martyrs began to be painted on the walls of those particular Churches, which were dedicated to their names [z]: and it is natural to imagine, that they would not long be considered, as mere ornaments, or memorials, or books, as they were called, for the illiterate, but would gradually acquire a share of that veneration, which the bones of those, whom they represented, had already acquired in the same Churches: and we are told accordingly by St. *Austin*, that he knew many, *who were actually the adorers of them* [a].

These were the principles and the practices of the fourth Century; as they are declared by the most eminent Fathers of that age:

[y] Oper. Tom. xi. p. 78.

[z] Forte requiratur quam ratione gerendi  
Sederit hæc nobis sententia, *pingere Sanctas*  
*Raro more damos*, &c. Vid. Paulini Oper. Natal. ix.

[a] Novi multos esse Se- clef. Cathol. Op. T. i. p.  
pulchrorum & picturarum 34.  
adoratores. De Morib. Ec-

whence

whence every one may see, what a resemblance they bear to the present rites of the Popish Church. But some perhaps will be apt to suspect, that I am really defending the corruptions of that Church, by assigning to them an origin so ancient and venerable : and the suspicion indeed may seem plausible, since I have been saying little else, but what the Papists themselves would say on the same occasion. Yet it is no more, than what fact and truth oblige me to say ; and no controversy, I hope, will ever heat me, or prejudice bias me so far, as to make me deny or dissemble, what the conviction of my own mind requires me to confess. But whatever advantage the Romanists may hope to reap from this concession, it really gives them none at all. Our dispute with them is, not how ancient, but how true their doctrines and practices are : And if they are not derived from Christ or his Apostles, nor founded in the holy Scriptures, it is wholly indifferent to us Protestants, from what age they drew their birth ; whether it was from the *four first*, or the *four last* centuries of the Church.

But this short sketch, which I have been giving, of those primitive times, was not designed

signed so much, to illustrate the origin of their rites, as to lay open the grounds of their miracles ; and to shew what reasons the Romish Church hath to espouse, and what the Protestant Churches, if they are consistent with themselves, to suspect and disclame them. For example, after the conversion of the *Roman* Empire to Christianity, we shall find the greatest part of their boasted miracles to have been wrought either by *Monks*, or *Reliques*, or *the Sign of the Cross*, or *consecrated Oil* : wherefore if we admit the miracles, we must necessarily admit the rites, for the sake of which they were wrought : they both rest on the same bottom, and mutually establish each other. For it is a maxim, which must be allowed by all Christians, that whenever any sacred rite or religious institution becomes the instrument of miracles, we ought to consider that rite, as confirmed by divine approbation. “ I know, says  
 “ one of the ablest writers of the *Romish*  
 “ Church, by the evidence of manifest and  
 “ incorrupt tradition, that there hath al-  
 “ ways been a never-interrupted succession  
 “ of men from the Apostles time, believing,  
 “ professing, and practising such and such  
 “ doctrines, by evident argument of credibi-  
 “ lity, as miracles, sanctity, unity, &c.  
 “ and



“ and by all those ways, whereby the Apostles and our blessed Saviour himself confirmed their doctrines: And we are assured, that what the said never-interrupted Church proposeth, doth deserve to be accepted and acknowledged as a divine truth [b].” And thus far we must own, the Jesuit argues rightly; that if we receive those *arguments of credibility*, as he calls them, we must receive the doctrines which accompany them, as so many *divine verities, revealed and attested by Almighty God*. So that if the authority of a *Chrysoptom*, or a *Jerom*, or an *Austin* can oblige us to believe the miracles of the fourth century, they must oblige us also, to espouse the rites, which those miracles confirmed, and those Fathers practised.

Dr. *Chapman* however, not aware perhaps of this consequence, or not allowing it to have any force, is not satisfied with asserting the miracles of the fourth century, but, as if more were still wanted to the support of the Christian cause, frankly undertakes the defence also of the fifth; in which all those superstitious practices, above-mentioned, had

[b] See Mr. *Knot*, on Charity maintained, &c. in the Works of *Chillingworth*, 7th Edit. c. vi. p. 228. § 6.

gained a greater root, and more general establishment : And while the warmest admirers of the primitive times, can hardly digest the wonderful tales of the fourth age, on the united testimony of all its renowned Fathers, he thinks himself obliged, to espouse those of the more corrupt age, which follows, upon the single authority of *Theodoret*.

But to this, I shall speak more fully hereafter, in the following work ; where I shall consider those particular miracles, which Dr. *Chapman* has selected, as the proper objects of our belief, and defended as such, against the enemies of the Christian faith. In the meanwhile, I shall offer only a single passage from the same *Theodoret*, on whose testimony he lays so great a stress, which will help, not only to confirm what I have already been advancing, but give us a specimen also, of the character of this Father, as well as of the state of Christianity in this fifth age.

“ The Temples of our Martyrs, says he,  
 “ are shining and conspicuous ; eminent for  
 “ their grandor, and the variety of their or-  
 “ naments ; and displaying far and wide the  
 “ splendor of their beauty. These we visit,  
 “ not

“ not once or twice, or five times in the  
“ year, but frequently offer up hymns each  
“ day to the Lord of them ; in health we  
“ beg the continuance of it ; in sickness, the  
“ removal of it ; the childless beg children,  
“ and the barren to become mothers ; and  
“ when these blessings are obtained, we beg  
“ the secure enjoyment of them. When we  
“ undertake any journey, we beg them to be  
“ our companions and guides in it : and when  
“ we return safe, we pay them our thanks :  
“ and that those, who pray with faith and  
“ sincerity, obtain what they ask, is mani-  
“ festly testified by the number of offerings,  
“ which are made to them, in consequence  
“ of the benefits received. For some offer  
“ the figures of eyes ; some of feet ; some of  
“ hands, made either of gold or of silver ;  
“ which the Lord accepts, tho’ but of little  
“ value ; measuring the gift, by the faculties  
“ of the giver. But all these are the evident  
“ proofs of the cures of as many distem-  
“ pers ; being placed there, as monuments of  
“ the fact, by those, who have been made  
“ whole. The same monuments likewise  
“ proclaim the power of the dead. Whose  
“ power also demonstrates their God, to be  
“ the true God [c]”.

[c] Serm. 8. de Martyrib.

Now this is nothing else, but the very picture of that same superstition, which is practised at this day by the Papists, and was borrowed of old from the Pagans [d]. *Livy* tells the same thing of the Temples of the Heathen Gods which *Theodoret* does here of the Temples of their Saints; that *they were rich in the number of offerings*, which the people used to make *in return for the cures*, and benefits which they had received from them [e]. In both cases, we allow the offerings to be real, but take the cures, or the miraculous part of them at least, to be imaginary: and as we reject *Livy's* miracles without scruple, or any hurt to the faith of history, so we may reject *Theodoret's* too, without shaking the evidence of any thing else, that is credible.

Thus we see, to what a state of things, the miracles of the fourth and fifth centuries would reduce us: they would call us back again to the old superstition of our ancestors; would fill us with *Monks and reliques*, and

[d] See my Letter from *Rome* on this subject.

[e] Epidaurus, inclita  
Æsculapij nobili templo, —

tum donis dives erat, quæ  
remediorum salutarium ægri  
mercedem sacraverant Deo.  
lib. 45. 28.

*Masses*, and all the other trinkets, which the treasury of *Rome* can supply : for this is the necessary effect of that zeal, which would engage us in the defence of them. But if the miracles of these later ages must needs be rejected ; and if, as I have said above, Ecclesiastical History makes no difference between them, and those of the earlier ages, it may reasonably be asked, where then are we to stop ? and to what period must we confine ourselves ? And this indeed is the grand difficulty, which was the chief object of my attention, through this whole inquiry ; and what has puzzled all the other Doctors, who have been considering the same question before me. But before I give any answer to it, or declare my own opinion, it may be proper, to premise a remark or two, on the insufficiency of the several systems already advanced ; and to lay down some general principles, which may lead us to a more rational solution of the matter, than what has hitherto been offered.

Mr. *Dodwell*, as we have seen above, chuses to shut up the history of true miracles with the *three first centuries* ; condemning those of the fourth, as generally forged and

fabulous: for the proof of which, he appeals to the monstrous fictions, which St. *Athanasius*, St. *Jerom*, and St. *Gregory* of *Nyssa*, have related. And thus far, I intirely agree with him; that the pretended miracles of this age are utterly incredible; and particularly those, to which he refers us, and to which we might add many more, affirmed also from their own knowledge, by St. *Austin*, St. *Epiphanius*, and all the other Saints of the same times. Yet after so free a censure on the miracles of the fourth age, the same learned writer thinks it necessary still, to make some exceptions, for a few of them, which St. *Chrysoptom* has attested. But such a distinction appears to be wholly groundless: or if there be any difference between this particular Father and the rest of them, it is clearly to the disadvantage of *Chrysoptom*, when considered in the character of a witness. For his peculiar talents were those of a declamatory Preacher, whose art lay, in warming the passions, not in convincing the reason; and whose pompous stile and rhetorical flourishes, instead of being adapted to a simple narrative of plain facts, was apt rather to exaggerate plain facts into miracles [*f*]. And

as

[*f*] Ac ne forsitan Rhetores vobis displiceant, quorum

as there is no ground for any preference, in his personal character, so there is none likewise in the particular miracles, which he attests ; which are all said to be wrought, not by the ministry of any living and holy men, but by *the reliques of the dead* ; or *the oil of their lamps* ; or *the sign of the Cross*.

Dr. *Waterland* seems to have been of the same mind in general with Mr. *Dodwell*, concerning the miracles of the fourth century ; yet being loth to part with them, and much more, to fix any slur on the credit of its principal Fathers, has used a little artifice in the manner of declaring it. For after he has often affirmed, *that the miraculous powers of the Church subsisted through the three first centuries at least*, he adds the following amendment to it, *Nay, and if we may believe Paulinus, who reports it as an eye-witness, they continued down to the latter end of the fourth* [g]. But why must we be referred to *Paulinus* only, in a question of such importance ? a name unknown to the greatest part of his readers ; while the names of *Athanasius, Basil, Austin,*

rum artis est verisimilia ma- p. 236.

gis, quam vera dicere— [g] Import. of the Trin.

Hieron, Oper. T. 4. par. 2. p. 497.

*Jerom,*

*Jerom, Chrysoſtom,* are in every body's mouth, and appealed to by himſelf on every other occaſion ; and who have written whole books on the miracles of that very age, wrought by *Saints, and Monks, and reliques* ; many of which they have reported likewiſe, as eye-witneſſes, as well as *Paulinus*. The omiſſion therefore of theſe greater names, which could not poſſibly be accidental, is a clear, tho' tacit confeſſion that he knew them all to have forfeited their credit, in this particular cauſe : and that even his beloved *Athanaſius*, on whoſe faith he had pinned his own, and on the defence of whoſe orthodoxy, he had ſpent his whole life and ſtudies, was not to be truſted at laſt with the report of a miracle.

But what is it after all, that *Paulinus* could teach us, more credibly than any of the reſt? He was a noble convert from Paganism, and Biſhop of *Nola* in *Italy* : where he built a Church to *St. Felix* the Martyr, with whoſe acts he painted it, and with whoſe reliques he enriched it ; and has celebrated, both in proſe and verſe, the miracles performed by thoſe reliques [*b*]. But the particular miracle,

[*b*] Vid. Paulin. Pcom. xvii. p. 77, 78. Oper. Edit. Par. 4to.



for which we are referred to him by the Doctor as an eye-witness, is this; that  
“ when St. *Ambrose*, upon the conviction  
“ of a certain offender, was pronouncing  
“ the sentence of excommunication against  
“ him in the very instant of delivering him  
“ over to Satan, and while the words were  
“ yet in his mouth, the Devil began to seize  
“ and tear him, as his own, to the great  
“ amazement and wonder of *Paulinus*, and  
“ the rest who were present [*i*].”

On the whole then; after the strictest attention to what both the ancients and the moderns also have delivered on this subject, I find great reason to be convinced, that the pretended miracles of the fourth century, were not onely in general, and for the greatest part, but intirely and universally, the effects of fraud and imposture. Nor can I see the least ground to admit any exception, either with Mr. *Dodwell*, for those reported by St. *Chrysoſtom*; or with Dr. *Waterland*, for those, by *Paulinus*; for I take it to be a maxim, on which we may safely depend, that wherever the Bishops, the Clergy, and the principal Cham-

[*i*] See Dr. *Waterland*, *ibid*.

pions of the Christian cause, are found to be tampering with false miracles, and establishing new rites and doctrines by lies and forgeries, it would be vain for us, to look for any true miracles in that age, and that Church. And this was actually the case of the fourth Century: in which all its most illustrious Fathers, now Saints of the Catholic Church; St. *Athanasius*, St. *Epiphanius*, St. *Basil*, St. *Gregory of Nyssa*, St. *Ambrose*, St. *Jerom*, St. *Austin*, and St. *Chrysostom*, have all severally recorded and solemnly attested a number of miracles, said to be wrought in confirmation of some favorite institutions of those days, which, in the judgement of all the learned and candid Protestants, are manifestly fictitious, and utterly incredible.

We have now therefore gained some footing and ground as it were to stand upon. For this discovery of the state of the fourth century, will reflect fresh light on our searches, both backwards and forwards; and from its middle situation, give us a clearer view, as well into the earlier, as the later ages. For example; if we suppose the miraculous powers of the Church to have been withdrawn, in the beginning of this century, the

the first inference, which it suggests, is, that they were withdrawn likewise through all the succeeding centuries. Because the reasons, for which they are imagined to have ceased at this particular period, grow stronger still in every later age, as the Church was every day gaining strength and a firmer establishment, not onely from the protection of the Magistrate, but from an authority and power of its own, independent on the civil Government.

But above all, when, in all these later ages, instead of meeting with genuin miracles, we find fables and fictions, assuming that sacred character, and abounding still more and more, and, by the pretence of a divine authority, giving a sanction to *Heathenish rites and superstitious doctrines*, it would be childish, to expect the revival of real miracles, unless it were to detect and destroy the effects of those false ones, which were so evidently corrupting the faith and worship of the Christian Church. Since the miracles then of the fifth century, which our Doctors so strenuously defend, instead of defeating the frauds of the fourth, tend still to confirm them; being performed chiefly by the same instruments, and for the same ends;

we

we must necessarily rank them all under the same class of mere forgeries. But these advocates of the primitive miracles have not yet given us the least hint, or reason to imagine, that they intend to stop here, or to confine themselves even to the fifth century: since the same principles which carried them so far, would carry them still farther, if the credit of Ecclesiastical History, or its miracles should happen to be attacked by an Infidel or Heretic.

For example; *Pope Gregory* the first, commonly called *the Great*, wrote *four books of Dialogues*, in which he describes *the lives and miracles of the Italian Monks*; many of them from his own knowledge, and the rest, as he declares, from the testimony of grave and venerable persons, on whose fidelity he could depend. These books were written in the end of the sixth century, and are filled with a number of stories, so grossly absurd, and fabulous, that it would be difficult, one would think, to find any old woman in these days, so weakly credulous, as to believe them. They inform us of many persons “ actually raised from the dead; ma-  
 “ ny blind restored to sight; and, all sorts  
 “ of diseases cured, by the prayers or touch  
 “ of

“ of those Monks [k]: Of their walking  
 “ upon water as freely, as upon dry land;  
 “ of rivers drawn by them from their na-  
 “ tural course, and following them into a  
 “ new channel, which they traced out to  
 “ them. Of inundations of water rising up  
 “ almost to the roofs of Churches, without  
 “ entering the doors of them, which stood  
 “ open: of the arm of an Executioner,  
 “ fixed upright in the air, as it was lifted  
 “ up, to strike off the head of one of those  
 “ holy men, and restored by him on condi-  
 “ tion, that it should never again behead any  
 “ Christian: of vessels of oil and wine mira-  
 “ culously replenished; and of pieces of gold,  
 “ as fresh as from the mint, dropt from hea-  
 “ ven into their laps:” With numberless  
 other miracles, more trifling still and despica-  
 ble contrived chiefly to advance *the honor of*  
*Monkery; the worship of Saints and of the*  
*blessed Virgin; the belief of a Purgatory;*  
*and the divine effects of Holy water, &c.*  
 [l].

The apparent forgery of these miracles,  
 and the confident attestation of them by Gre-

[k] Vid. Gregor. Magn. Dial. l. 1. c. 2. 10. 12: l. 2. 9, 19, 37: l. 1, 5, 9, 10: 32: l. 2, 17, 33, &c. [l] Ibid. l. 2. c. 7: l. 3, 4, 15, 16, 39, 40.

gory, has induced many Protestants, and even some Papists also, to call in question the genuineness of these books: but the learned *Cave*, after duly weighing all the arguments, on the one side and the other, takes them to have been really written by *Gregory the Great*; who indulged his credulity in them, he says, and gave more attention to fables, than he ought to have done, as all, who judge equitably and without prejudice, will easily allow [m]. But these Dialogues contain several miracles, said to have been wrought in confutation of the *Arian Heresy*; of which *Dr. Berriman* makes some use, in his elaborate defence of the *Athanasian Doctrines*; where speaking of the objections, which have been made against the authority of the Dialogues, he takes occasion to observe; *that as far as those objections arise from the miraculousness of the things related, he sees not, why we should dispute the facts, unless it could be proved, as it certainly cannot, that miracles were then ceased* [n].

Thus the miraculous powers of the Church are expressly avowed by him, to the end

[m] Hist. Litter. V. 1. count of the Trinitarian  
 P. 543. Cont over. Sermon. VII. p.  
 [n] See Historical Ac- 356. not. q.

even of the sixth century; in which Popery had gained a full establishment: yet this Protestant Divine cannot conceive the least reason to dispute *the miraculousness of those facts* which established it; nay, defies any man to prove, *that miracles were yet ceased in this Popish age.*

In his accurate defence of that miracle of the fifth century, referred to above, amongst his other testimonies, he mentions the authority of this same *Gregory the Great*, and of his contemporary, *Isidore of Sevil*, who had too much learning and judgement, he says, *to be deceived in so important a fact* [o]. And since he thinks them infallible, in reporting a fact, which happened, as he owns, near *an hundred years* before, he has much more reason, to think them so, in relating the facts of their own times: of which times however, Dr. *Cave* gives us the following character, under that of *Evagrius*, the principal Historian of them, of whom he says; “ that  
“ he was agreeable enough in his stile, and  
“ moré accurate in the orthodoxy of his  
“ doctrines, than the other Historians, but  
“ too credulous, and much addicted to fa-

[o] See Berrim. *ibid.* p. 330.

“ bles, as it is manifest to all, who are not  
 “ blinded by their prejudices, from the sto-  
 “ ries, which he relates on every occasion,  
 “ concerning *the Cross, and reliques, and*  
 “ *forged miracles*, to be in high esteem in  
 “ those days [p].” Yet neither the fabulous  
 genius of this age: nor the incredibility of  
 the miracles, said to have been wrought in  
 it; nor the impertinence, the absurdity, nor  
 the impiety, I may say, of the ends, for  
 which they were wrought, can shock the  
 faith of Dr. Berriman; or raise any suspicion  
 of *the miraculousness of facts*, affirmed by the  
*infallibility of Pope Gregory*.

Since the zeal then of these Protestant  
 Guides has now brought us within the very  
 pale of the *Romish Church*, I see nothing,  
 which can stop their progress, from the sixth  
 age, down to the present: from *Pope Gre-*  
*gory the Great, to Pope Clement, the twelfth*;  
 the last of whom I personally knew, and  
 believe to have been as honest and religious a  
 Pontif, as the first. For each succeeding age  
 will furnish miracles, and witnesses too, of  
 as good credit as those of the sixth. The  
 next supplies a *venerable Bede*; whose very

[p] Hist. Litterar. Vol. I. p. 547.



name carries authority; and whose learning, zeal and purity of faith and manners, were celebrated through the Christian world; yet whose works are filled with miracles, which no man of sense can believe [q]. The eighth age yields a *Damascene*: whose great knowledge and erudition in all the learned sciences, no body, says *Cave*, in his senses can deny: yet he was monstrously credulous, and, as the *Popish* writers themselves allow, abounds with lies [r]. And thus we may proceed, through every following age, to find men of the same character; eminent for their learning, zeal and piety; yet all of them still carrying on the same frauds, down to the *Perrens*, the *Baronius's*, the *Bellarmines*, and the *Huetius's*, of these later times; whose names are full as venerable, and testimonies as credible, as any of the more ancient.

From these premises, it is evident, that the forged miracles of the fourth century, must necessarily taint the credit of all the later miracles, down even to the present age. For they depend as it were upon each other, as the parts of one uniform series, or chain, so

[q] Vid. *Bed. de Vita & miraculis Sancti Cuthbert.* Op. Historic, Ed. Cantab. p. 229. [r] *Cave* *ibid.* p. 624.

that where-ever we draw out a link, all the rest which hang upon it, must of course fall to the ground. Let us consider then in the next place, what light the same forgeries will afford us, in looking backwards also into the earlier ages, up to the times of the Apostles.

And first, when we reflect on that surprising confidence and security, with which the principal Fathers of this fourth age have affirmed as true, what they themselves had either forged, or what they knew at least to be forged; it is natural to suspect, that so bold a defiance of sacred truth could not be acquired, or become general at once, but must have been carried gradually to that height, by custom and the example of former times, and a long experience of what the credulity and superstition of the multitude would bear.

Secondly, this suspicion will be strengthened, by considering, that this age, in which Christianity was established by the civil power, had no real occasion for any miracles. For which reason, the learned among the Protestants have generally supposed it to have been the very æra of their cessation: and for  
the

the same reason, the Fathers also themselves, when they were disposed to speak the truth, have not scrupled to confess, *that the miraculous gifts were then actually withdrawn, because the Church stood no longer in need of them* [s]. So that it must have been a rash, and dangerous experiment, to begin to forge miracles, at a time, when there was no particular temptation to it; if the use of such fictions had not long been tried, and the benefit of them approved and recommended by their ancestors; who wanted every help, towards supporting themselves under the pressures and persecutions, with which the powers on earth were afflicting them.

Thirdly, If we compare the principal Fathers of the fourth, with those of the earlier ages; we shall observe the same characters of zeal and piety in them all, but more learning, more judgement, and less credulity in the later Fathers. If these then be found, either to have forged miracles themselves; or to have propagated, what they knew to be forged; or to have been deluded so far by other people's forgeries, as to take them for real miracles; (of the one or the other of which, they were all unquestionably guilty) it will

[s] This will be particularly shewn in the course of my following argument.

naturally excite in us, the same suspicion of their predecessors; who, in the same cause, and with the same zeal, were less learned, and more credulous, and in greater need of such arts for their defence and security.

Fourthly, As the personal characters of the earlier Fathers give them no advantage over their Successors; so neither does the character of the earlier ages afford any real cause of preference, as to the point of their integrity, above the later. The first indeed are generally called, and held to be *the purest*: but when they had once acquired that title, from the authority of a few leading men, it is not strange, to find it ascribed to them implicitly by every body else, without knowing or inquiring into the grounds of it. But whatever advantage of purity those first ages may claim in some particular respects, it is certain, that they were defective in some others, above all, which have since succeeded them. For there never was any period of time in all Ecclesiastical History, in which so many *rank Heresies* were publicly professed [t] nor in which so many *spurious books* were forged

[t] The learned, I think, have reckoned about ninety Heresies, which all sprang up within the three first centuries.

and

and published by the Christians, under the names of Christ, and the Apostles, and the Apostolic Writers, as in those primitive ages: several of which forged books are frequently cited and applied to the defence of Christianity, by the most eminent Fathers of the same ages, as true and genuine pieces, and of equal authority, with the Scriptures themselves [u], And no man surely can doubt, but that those, who would either forge, or make use of forged books, would in the same cause, and for the same ends, make use of forged miracles.

But the true character of these ages may best be learnt from one, who lived in the very

[u] See Archbishop Wake's Preliminary Discourse to the Genuine Epistles of the Apostolic Fathers, p. 89. where he has given us a list of a great part of those spurious pieces, with a short account of each—in which he tells us, *that it would be endless to insist on all the spurious pieces, which were attributed onely to St. Paul; but that the superstitious books, ascribed to St. Peter, viz. his Acts, his Gospel, his Preaching, his Revelations,*

*were of much greater authority even to the times of Eusebius. [§ 18, 19.] He observes also, that the book called the Recognitions of St. Clement, which he takes to be the most learned, as well as the most ancient of any of those pieces, was not set forth till about the middle of the second Century; and is rejected by Eusebius, as one of those many Impostures, which were even then published under the name of that Saint. § 28.*

midst of them, and was himself the chief ornament of them, I mean St. *Cyprian*, who has left us the following account of the state of the Church, just before the *Decian* persecution ; about *A. D.* 250, when its discipline, as he says, was corrupted, and its faith almost lost, by a long ease and peace, which it had then enjoyed, for near forty years ; during which interval, he tells us,

“ that the body of Christians studied nothing,  
 “ but how to increase their patrimony : and  
 “ forgetting, what the faithful had done,  
 “ either in the times of the Apostles, or  
 “ what they ought to do at all times, had  
 “ no other passion, but an insatiable ardor,  
 “ of enlarging their fortunes. That there  
 “ was no true devotion in the Priests, no  
 “ sound faith in the ministers : no mercy in  
 “ their works, no discipline in their man-  
 “ ners : that the men destroyed the comeli-  
 “ ness of their beards, and women of their  
 “ faces, by paint and false arts : their eyes  
 “ also, so finished by the hand of God, were  
 “ adulterated ; and their hair stained with  
 “ colors, not their own. That the simple  
 “ were deluded, and the brethren circum-  
 “ vented by craft and fraud. That it was  
 “ common, to contract marriages with un-  
 “ believers ;

“ believers: and to prostitute the members  
“ of Christ to the Gentiles: and to swear  
“ not onely rashly, but falsely: to contemn  
“ their rulers with an insolent pride; to  
“ speak against them with spite and ran-  
“ cour; and to quarrel among themselves,  
“ with an obstinate hatred. That great  
“ numbers of the Bishops, who ought to  
“ be an example and lesson to the rest, con-  
“ temning their divine Stewardship, made  
“ themselves the stewards of secular affairs;  
“ rambling about into other people’s pro-  
“ vinces; and seeking out the markets of  
“ traffic and gain; and instead of relieving  
“ their hungry brethren in the Church, were  
“ eager onely, to heap up money; to seize  
“ people’s lands by treachery and fraud;  
“ and to increase their stock by exorbitant  
“ ufury [x].”

This is the picture of those ages, which people affect to call the *purest*, as it was drawn from the life, by the ablest Master of the times, which he describes: and though the character of the drawer must oblige us to believe, that it bore a great likeness to the original, yet it is so far from giving us any

[x] De Lapsis, p. 170. Ed. Rigalt.

idea of purity or perfection, that if it had been drawn, even for our own times, we might justly think the coloring too coarse, and the features charged beyond the truth.

Now from all these considerations taken together, it must, I think, be allowed, that the forged miracles of the fourth century give us just reason to suspect the pretensions of every other age both before and after it. My argument would be much the same, if it were grounded on the allowed forgeries of any later age. Dr. *Chapman*, who defends the miracles of the fifth century, declares, *that there were some of these later instances, as public, as clear and as well attested, as any in the earlier ages; and by an evidence, equal to that, by which most of the ancient miracles are supported* [y]. Dr. *Berriman*, in his defence of a particular miracle near the end of the same century, insists, *that it cannot be discredited, without shaking the whole faith of History, and rejecting all accounts of miracles, except those of the Scriptures* [z]. And so far I agree with them both, and own their defence to be true; that the earlier miracles rest on no better foundation, nor are

[y] *Miscellan. Tracts*, p. 170, 175.

[z] *Serm.* p. 327.



supported by any better evidence, than the later. But then, if these later, after all the confidence of their Advocates, may certainly be discredited, and must consequently be rejected; it follows from their own principles, that the earlier may with as much reason, be rejected too. Which brings me at last to that general conclusion, which I have undertaken to illustrate; *that there is no sufficient reason to believe, from the testimony of antiquity, that any miraculous powers did ever actually subsist in any age of the Church, after the times of the Apostles.*

But this will be the proper business of the subsequent Treatise, in which, I shall endeavour to evince, by particular facts and testimonies, what this general view of the question, here given, and the reflections naturally arising from it, would previously dispose us to suspect; that the pretended miracles of the primitive Church were all mere fictions; which the pious and zealous Fathers, partly from a weak credulity, and partly, from reasons of policy; believing some perhaps to be true, and knowing all of them to be useful, were induced to espouse and propagate, for the support of a righteous cause.

I have

I have already observed, that many spurious books were forged in the earliest times of the Church, in the Names of Christ and his Apostles, which passed upon all the Fathers, as genuin and divine through several successive ages. Now as the high authority of the Apostolic writings, and the zeal, with which they were sought for by all Churches, was the motive, without doubt, which excited some of the ablest, and most learned of the Christians, to take the pains of forging and vending such books under those false titles; so the great fame and success of the Apostolic miracles, would naturally excite some also of the most crafty, when the Apostles themselves were dead, to attempt some juggling tricks in imitation of them, and by the pretence of a divine power, to impose upon that *simplicity and credulity*, which distinguished the character of those early ages. And [a] when these artful pretenders,

[a] The Primitive Christians were perpetually reproached for their gross *credulity* by all their enemies. *Celsus* says, that they cared neither to receive, nor to give any reason of their faith, and that it was an usual saying with them, *do not examine, but believe onely, and thy faith will save thee.* *Julian* affirms, that the sum of all their wisdom was comprised in this single precept, *believe.* The Gentiles, says *Arnobius*, make it their constant business

tenders, by insinuating themselves chiefly in private houses, or among the ignorant populace, had been able to maintain their ground through the three first centuries, the leading Clergy of the 4th, who were then established by the civil power, and at liberty to apply all arts without reserve to the conversion of the Heathens, understood their interest too well, to part with the old plea of miraculous gifts, which had been found so effectual, to dazzle the senses and possess the minds of the multitude.

This seems to have been the general state of the case in question : and though it may shock the prejudices of many, and clash with the systems, which are commonly entertained ; yet it will be found, I dare say, to be true, or at least the most probable ; and as

*business to laugh at our faith, and to lash our credulity with their facetious jokes.* Orig. con. Cels. l. 1. p. 8, 9. Greg. Nazian. Invect. 1. Arnob. l. 2. p. 22, 23.

The Fathers, on the other hand, defend themselves by saying, that they did nothing more on this occasion, than what the Philosophers had always done ; that *Pythagoras's*

precepts were inculcated by an *Ipse dixit*, and that they had found the same method useful with the vulgar, who were not at leisure to examine things ; whom they taught therefore *to believe, even without reasons* : and that the Heathens themselves, tho' they did not confess it in word, yet practised the same in their acts. *Ibid.*

such

such, the most useful also, to the real Defence of the Christian cause. For, as far as miracles can evince the divinity of a religion, the pretensions of Christianity are confirmed by the evidence of such, as of all others on record, are the least liable to exception, and carry the clearest marks of their sincerity; being wrought by Christ and his Apostles, for an end so great, so important, and so universally beneficial, as to be highly worthy of the interposition of the Deity; and wrought by the ministry of mean and simple men, in the open view of the people, as the testimonial of that divine mission, to which they pretended; and delivered to us by eye-witnesses, whose honest characters exclude the suspicion of fraud, and whose knowledge of the facts, which they relate, scarce admits the probability of a mistake. This is the genuine ground on which Christianity rests; the history of our Saviour's doctrine and miracles, as it is declared and comprized within the canon of the Holy Scriptures. Whenever we go beyond this, we weaken its foundation, by endeavouring to enlarge it; and by recurring to an evidence less strong and of doubtful credit, take pains only, to render a good cause suspected, and expose it to the perpetual

perpetual ridicule of the Sceptics and Free-thinkers.

Should our Infidels then be disposed, to make themselves merry with the miracles of a *Symeon Stylites*, or any other crack'd-brain monk of the 4th or 5th century, there is no reason for *Dr. Chapman*, to be so angry with them [b]: let us suffer them to laugh on, and even laugh with them ourselves; and by throwing out an empty tub to their sport, secure the vessel itself from their attacks. Or should the Romanists, on the other hand, pretend to urge us with their miracles, and to shew the succession of them from the earliest ages, we have no reason to be moved at it, but may tell them without scruple, that we admit no miracles, but those of the Scriptures; and that all the rest are either justly suspected, or certainly forged. By putting

[b] This *Symeon*, (who acquired the name of *Stylites*, by a most extravagant whim, which he took, of spending the best part of his life on the top of a pillar, six and thirty cubits high) was a mad, enthusiastic Monk of the 5th Century, to whom many monstrous and superstitious acts are ascribed, by the Ecclesiastical writers, as the effects of a divine inspiration; all which *Dr. Chapman* most strenuously and zealously defends, against the raillery of the Author of Christianity as old as the Creation. See his *Miscell. Tracts*, p. 165. § III.

she

the controversy on this issue, we shall either disarm them at once, or if they persist in the dispute, may be sure to convict them of fraud and imposture : whereas by granting them but a single age of miracles, after the times of the Apostles, we shall be entangled in a series of difficulties, whence we can never fairly extricate ourselves, till we allow the same powers also to the present age.

And in truth, it has always been considered, as a fundamental principle of the Reformation, *that the Scriptures are a compleat rule both of faith and manners ; and as such are clear also and intelligible, in all fundamental points, to every private Christian.* In this, all Protestant Churches agree, how much soever they may differ in any other article : and if this be true, then whatever be the characters of the antient Fathers, or whatever they may have taught, and practised in any age of the Church, is a matter wholly indifferent, and makes no part in the religion of a Protestant : and consequently, no difference of judgment with regard to those Fathers, ought to give any cause of offence or hatred among the members of that communion. For if the Scriptures are sufficient, we do not want them as guides ; or if clear, as interpreters.

Every

Every one therefore may enjoy his opinion of them, with the same liberty, as of any other writers whatsoever, with this caution onely; that an esteem of them is apt to carry us too far, and has actually carried many into great and dangerous errors: whereas the neglect of them cannot be attended with any ill consequence, since the Scriptures teach every thing, that is necessary, either to be believed or practised.

I cannot illustrate this principle so effectually, as by the following words of the excellent *Chillingworth*, who, of all men, best understood the real grounds of the controversy, between the Protestants and the Papists.

“ The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the  
“ religion of Protestants. Whatsoever else  
“ they believe besides it, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable consequences of it,  
“ well may they hold it, as a matter of opinion, but as matter of faith and religion,  
“ neither can they, with coherence to their  
“ own grounds, believe it themselves, nor  
“ require the belief of it of others, without  
“ most high and most schismatical presumption.  
“ I, for my part, after a long, and

“ (as I verily believe and hope) impartial  
 “ search of the *true way to eternal happiness*,  
 “ do profess plainly, that I cannot find any  
 “ rest for the sole of my foot, but on this  
 “ rock only. I see plainly, and with my  
 “ own eyes, that there are Popes against  
 “ Popes ; Councils against Councils ; some  
 “ Fathers against others ; the same Fathers  
 “ against themselves ; a consent of Fathers  
 “ of one age, against a consent of Fathers of  
 “ another age ; the Church of one age,  
 “ against the Church of another age : Tra-  
 “ ditive interpretations of Scripture are pre-  
 “ tended, but there are none to be found.  
 “ No tradition, but only of Scripture, can  
 “ derive itself from the fountain, but may  
 “ be plainly proved, either to have been  
 “ brought in, in such an age after Christ,  
 “ or that in such an age, it was not in. In a  
 “ word, there is no sufficient certainty, but of  
 “ Scripture only, for any considerate man to  
 “ build upon, &c.”

But tho' this doctrine of the sufficiency of  
 the Scriptures be generally professed through  
 all the reformed Churches, yet it has happen-  
 ed, I know not how, in our own, that its  
 Divines have been apt on all occasions, to join  
 the



the authority of the primitive Church, to that of sacred writ ; to supply doctrines from the ancient Councils, in which the Scriptures are either silent or thought defective ; to add the Holy Fathers, to the College of the Apostles ; and by ascribing the same gifts and powers to them both, to advance the primitive traditions, to a parity with Apostolic precepts.

Thus the late Dr. *Waterland*, who was supposed to speak the sense of our present Rulers, seldom appeals to the Scriptures in his controversial writings, without joining antiquity to them, or the authority of *the three first centuries at least*, that *golden age of Christianity*, as he calls it [c]. He declares, “ that the true interpretation of Scripture, “ cannot run counter in things fundamental “ to the judgment of the first and purest “ ages: that to depreciate the value of Ec- “ clesiastical Antiquity, and to throw con- “ tempt on the primitive Fathers, is to wound “ Christianity through their sides [d]: and “ that Christ never sits so secure and easy on “ his throne, as with these faithful guards “ about him [e] ; and he concludes his el-

[c] Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 426.

[d] Ibid. p. 395.

[e] Ibid. 396.

“ borate treatise on *the use and value of Anti-*  
 “ *quity*, in these words.

“ The sum of what I have been endea-  
 “ vouring through this whole chapter is,  
 “ that Scripture and Antiquity (under the  
 “ conduct of right reason) are what we  
 “ ought to abide by, in settling points of doc-  
 “ trine. I have not put the case of Scrip-  
 “ ture and Antiquity interfering, or clashing  
 “ with each other; because it is a case,  
 “ which will never appear in points of im-  
 “ portance, such as this is, which we are  
 “ now upon. However, as to the general  
 “ case, we may say, that those two ought  
 “ always to go together, and to coincide with  
 “ each other: and when they do so, they  
 “ stand the firmer in their united strength:  
 “ but if ever they clash, or appear to clash,  
 “ then undoubtedly there is an error some-  
 “ where, like as when two accountants vary  
 “ in casting up the same sum, &c. [*f*].”

Here we see Antiquity joined as a necessary and inseparable companion to the Scripture and put even upon a level with it, by this eminent Advocate of the Christian Faith. But since this seems to be a flat contradiction

to the principles of the Reformation, and dangerous to the general credit and interests of the Protestant religion, it may be worthwhile to consider a little, from what particular motives and circumstances, so inconsistent a practice should happen to prevail more remarkably in this, than in any other Protestant Church.

Our first and principal Reformers, in the reign of *Henry* the VIIIth, had not the power, to carry the Reformation so far, as they desired; nor to make such changes in the old worship, as put them under a necessity of discarding the authority of the primitive Fathers; but on the contrary, were obliged against their wills, to comply still with many rites and doctrines, which had no other foundation, but in that authority; which therefore, in those circumstances, they were forced to assert and defend. For how much soever they might be disposed, to abolish such rites, and the authority too, on which they stood, they were restrained by the will of an arbitrary Prince, who would not suffer them to take the least step but by his immediate direction, and from his high conceit of his Theological learning, gave the law even to his Bishops, in all the religious disputes of those

days : and whose chief view after all was, to banish rather the power, than the religion of the Pope, out of his realm.

In the next reign of *Edward the sixth*, tho' the same reforming Bishops found themselves at liberty, to carry on their great work to its full perfection, yet for the sake, either of their former conduct, and prejudices ; or to preserve a character of constancy ; and to give the less scandal to the Clergy, who still generally favoured the old forms ; they endeavoured, as far as they were able, tho' sometimes by forced and unnatural constructions, to justify all their proceedings, by the example and usages of the antient Fathers.

On the accession therefore of *Queen Mary*, and the sad catastrophe, which ensued, when the same Reformers, now doomed to be Martyrs, and especially *Cranmer* and *Ridley*, (two Fathers of the Protestant Church, as truly venerable, as Christianity perhaps has to boast of, since the times of the Apostles ; ) when these, I say, were brought out of their prisons, on pretence of holding public disputations, but in truth, to be exposed only to the scoffs and contumelies of their cruel enemies ; and when they had solidly evinced the truth  
of

of their doctrines, and baffled all the sophistry of their opponents, by the clear and unanswerable testimonies of the Scriptures, it grieves us after all, to see them laboring and gravelled, at a passage of *Chrysofom*, or *Ambröse*, or *Hilary*, &c. and giving their adversaries an occasion of triumph, by submitting to an authority, which was nothing to the purpose, and which in those unhappy circumstances, they were neither at liberty to reject, nor yet able to reconcile to their cause.

Queen *Elizabeth*, who next succeeded, and finally established the Reformation, affected to retain more pomp and splendor in the external part of religion, than many of her chief Divines approved ; who, in compliance however with her humour, submitted to several things, which they hoped in time to get rid of [g]. Her view was, to moderate the prejudices

[g] In the Preamble of the Will of *Edw. Sandys*, Archbishop of *York*, who died *A. D.* 1588. there is the following passage relating to the rites and ceremonies of the Church, as they were then settled by public Authority.

“ I am persuaded, that “ such, as are now set “ down by public Authority—are no way either “ ungodly or unlawful, “ but may with good conscience, for order and “ obedience sake be used. “ — So I have ever been “ persuaded, that some of “ them be not so expedient

dices of the Popish clergy ; and to reconcile them by degrees to the new settlement, by leaving in it an outward shew, and some resemblance of the old. From the same principle, a reverence was still kept up to Antiquity : and appeals made on both sides, to the primitive Fathers and antient Councils, by the Professors of the new, as well as of the old doctrines : which practice has been followed ever since, by the greatest part of our leading Churchmen. But from the little success which it has had, or ever can have, in our controversies with the Papists, it is evident, that it cannot be considered in any other light, but as a vain ostentation of learning, and an impatient zeal, to repel that charge of ignorance, and contempt of primitive Antiquity, with which the Protestant Churches are constantly reproached by the Romanists.

In the two following reigns, the Popish interest began to raise its head again in *Eng-*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>ent for this Church, but<br/>         that they may better be<br/>         difused by little and lit-<br/>         tle, than more and more<br/>         urged. As I do easily<br/>         acknowledge, that our</p> | <p>“ Ecclesiastical polity may<br/>         “ in some points be better-<br/>         “ ed—So I do utterly dis-<br/>         “ like all such rude plat-<br/>         “ forms, &amp;c.”</p> |
|---|---|

*land.*

land. *James* the First was a mere School-Divine, fond of theological disputes; and tho' he wrote against the Papists, yet *being afraid of them*, as Bishop *Burnet* says, *always acted for them* [b]. And *Charles the First's* Queen, who was a zealot to that religion, used all her power with the King, which was very great, to support and propagate its credit in the Kingdom, and to suspend the rigor of the laws against it. "By the King's connivance, says the learned Dr. *Heylin*, and the Queen's indulgence, the Popish faction gathered not only strength, but confidence; multiplying in some numbers about the Court, and resorting in a more open manner to the Masses at *Somerset* House; where the *Capuchins* had obtained a Chappel and Convent [i]." The leading Churchmen also, from a compliance with the principles of the Court, and an abhorrence of those of the Puritans, seemed to have formed that senseless project of a reconciliation with *Rome*, and made considerable advances towards it, by giving such an interpretation to the doctrines, and form to the disci-

[b] See Bishop *Burnet's* shop *Laud* by Dr. *Pet.*  
 History of his Times, Vol. *Heylin.* Par. 2. l. iv. p.  
 I. p. 11, 12. 337.

[i] See Life of Archbi-

pline of our Church, as might invite all moderate Papists, to join with them in its communion. But this compliance had no other effect, nor ever can have, than to weaken the Protestant cause, and to furnish its enemies with the greater power and means to oppress it. Nor did they fail to make their full advantage of it ; by representing it, “ as a proof of the fickle and unsettled state  
 “ of the *English* Church ; that it was grown  
 “ sick, as it were, and weary of itself, and  
 “ could find no rest in the novelties, which  
 “ it had embraced, but was returning apace  
 “ to it’s old principles, and resuming many of  
 “ the rites and doctrines, for which it had  
 “ forsaken the Church of *Rome*.” All this was urged with great force against our *Chillingworth*, by that subtil Jesuit, Mr. *Knot* ; and exemplified by him in many particulars, which the learned Dr. *Heylin*, who was perfectly acquainted with the ecclesiastical principles of that age, and a strenuous espouser of them, declares to be true, in the following words, drawn from his *Life of Archbishop Laud*.

“ If you will take the character of the  
 “ Church of *England*, says he, from the pen  
 “ of a Jesuit, you shall find him speaking  
 among



“ among other falshoods, these undoubted  
“ truths ; *viz.* that the Professors of it, they  
“ especially of greatest worth, learning, and  
“ authority, love temper and moderation ;  
“ that the doctrines are altered in many things ;  
“ as for example, The Pope not Antichrist ;  
“ pictures, free-will, predestination, universal  
“ grace, inherent righteousness ; the prefer-  
“ ring of charity before knowledge ; the merit  
“ or reward rather of good works ; the thirty  
“ nine articles seeming patient, if not ambiti-  
“ ous also of some catholic sense ; that their  
“ Churches begin to look with a new face ;  
“ their walls to speak a new language ; and  
“ some of their Divines to teach, that the  
“ Church hath authority in determining con-  
“ troversies of faith, and interpreting the  
“ Scriptures ; that men, in talk and writing,  
“ use willingly the once fearful names of  
“ Priests and Altars, and are now put in  
“ mind, that for the exposition of Scripture,  
“ they are by Canon bound to follow the Fa-  
“ thers.—So far the Jesuit, says he, may  
“ be thought to speak nothing but truth [*k*].”

It is needless to descend to the later reigns ;  
or to observe, how far the discipline and princi-

[*k*] See *Ibid.* p. 238. and the Life also of Mr. *Chillingworth*, by Monsieur Des Maizeaux. p. 113. Not. (AA.)

ples of *Archbishop Laud* were adopted again at the Restoration ; or what credit they still obtain with some of the principal Clergy of our own times ; since this can hardly escape the notice of all, who pay any attention to Ecclesiastical affairs. But there is another circumstance, that I must not omit to mention, as it is peculiar to our Church, and from Queen *Elizabeth's* time down to our own, has had no small influence on it's principles and practice, and which will always keep up amongst us a full respect to Ecclesiastical antiquity. I mean those unhappy dissensions among the Protestants of this nation, which have split them into different sects and separate communions. For in these disputes, which wholly turn on points of discipline, and external forms of worship, as the authority of the Fathers, whatever weight it ought to have, is mostly on the side of the established Church, so the Church will always be disposed to support that authority, which helps it to depress a set of men, who, tho' agreeing with it in essentials, and dissenting only about things indifferent, are yet more odious, than the Papists themselves, to all the zealous advocates, and warm admirers of the primitive Fathers.

These

These seem to have been the chief reasons, which from the time even of our reformation, have advanced the credit of Ecclesiastical antiquity to an higher pitch in this Kingdom, than in any other Protestant country. Which same principles, by the encouragement, which they have generally received from our Governors, are now carried, as we have seen, to an heighth, that must needs alarm all serious Protestants, as they have no other tendency, nor can have any other effect, but to throw us again into the arms of the *Romish* Church. For I have long been of opinion, that the success, which their Missionaries have ever found in this Island, and which of late has been more particularly complained of, is chiefly owing, to those high notions of the primitive discipline, and that great reverence for the ancient Fathers, which are entertained and propagated by a great part of our Clergy. For by agreeing with the *Romanists* thus far, and joining with them in a common appeal to primitive antiquity, we allow all which they can fairly draw from it, to be sound and orthodox; and tho' in the end, they may not perhaps gain every thing; which they aim at, yet they will be sure always, to come off with great advantage.

Mr.

Mr. *Chillingworth* himself is a memorable example of this truth: who, in his account of the several motives, which induced him to embrace the *Romish* faith, mentions the two following;

“ Because, if any credit may be given to  
 “ as creditable records, as any are extant,  
 “ the doctrine of Catholics hath been fre-  
 “ quently confirmed, and the opposite doc-  
 “ trine of Protestants confounded, with su-  
 “ pernatural and divine miracles.

“ Because, the doctrine of the church of  
 “ *Rome* is conformable, and the doctrine of  
 “ Protestants contrary, to the doctrine of the  
 “ Fathers, even by the confession of Protec-  
 “ tants themselves: I mean those Fathers,  
 “ who lived within the compass of the first  
 “ six hundred years; to whom Protestants  
 “ do very frequently and very confidently  
 “ appeal [1].”

These seem to have been the principal arguments, which abused this great man, as he expresses it, and hurried him into the Church of *Rome*. *Silly Sophisms*, as he af-

[1] See Pref. to *Charity maintained*. § 43. in *Chillingworth's Works*, seventh Edition.

terwards calls them, *grounded on mistakes and false suppositions, which he unadvisedly took for granted* [m]. Till upon a clear view of the errors, into which they had drawn him, he perceived, that the means could not be pure, when the end was so corrupt, and found no other way of retrieving his mistake, and becoming Protestant again, but by discarding those fallacious records, and fictitious miracles, which had seduced him, and committing himself to the sole guidance, and infallible authority of the holy Scriptures. On this foundation, he has built the most solid and rational defence of the Protestant cause, which has ever been offered to the public since the Reformation. Yet our Champions of these days are employing all their skill, to demolish what he had built, and to adopt again into the system of our faith, all that he had thrown out of it ; all the nonsense, the superstition, and the pious frauds of the primitive ages ; nor will they allow us even to be Christians, but on those very principles, which must finally make us Papists.

The design of the present treatise, is to give some check to the current of this zeal, and to fix the religion of Protestants, on its

[m] See *ibid.* § 42.

proper basis, that is, on the sacred Scriptures; not on the authority of weak and fallible men, the detection of whose errors, and the suspicion of whose frauds would necessarily give a wound to Christianity itself; which yet in reality, is no more concerned or affected by the characters of the ancient, than of the modern Fathers of the Church. But to declare my opinion in short on the real value of those primitive writers, I freely own them to be of some use and service on several accounts.

1<sup>st</sup>, In attesting and transmitting to us the genuin books of the holy Scriptures. Yet this is not owing to any particular sanctity or sagacity of those ancient times, but to the notoriety of the thing, and the authority, with which the books themselves were received from their first publication, in all Churches: whence they have since been handed down to us, in the same manner, as the works of all other ancient writers, by the perpetual tradition of successive ages, whether pure or corrupt, learned or unlearned.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Their more immediate and proper use, is, to teach us the doctrines, the rites, the manners, and the learning of the several  
ages,

ages, in which they lived: yet as witnesses only, not as guides: as declaring, what was then believed, not what was true; what was practised, not what ought to be practised: since their works abound with instances of foolish, false and dangerous opinions, universally maintained and zealously propagated by them all.

Lastly, Their very errors also afford an useful and profitable lesson to us: for the many corruptions, which crept into the Church in those very early ages, are a standing proof and admonition to all the later ages, that there is no way of preserving a purity of faith and worship in any Church, but by reviewing them from time to time, and reducing them to the original test and standard of the holy Scriptures.

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## P O S T S C R I P T.

AFTER I had finished this Introductory Treatise, and was preparing to send it to the press, I happened to meet with an Archidiaconal charge, delivered to the Clergy at a visitation, by the same learned Dr. *Chapman*, whom I have had frequent occasion to mention, in the course of my argument. And since this charge is of a singular kind, and bears some relation to the subject of the present inquiry, with regard both to *Popery* and *Primitive Antiquity*, the reader, I hope, will excuse me, if I detain him here a while, with a few short remarks upon it.

The Archdeacon enters directly into the matter of his speech; and instead of congratulating with his reverend brethren, on their deliverance from the *late rebellion*, drops but a slight hint on that, as the prelude onely to *another plot*, of a more dreadful and fatal kind which he is in haste to communicate; the  
last



last effort of *subtil Jesuits*, who seeing every other method baffled and ineffectual, resolved to try a new, though bold expedient for their Church; more big, he says, with pest and confusion, than all the former devices of their party against us; striking decisively at the very root of the Reformation, and at the basis of all protestant Churches; and secretly working, at this very time, incredible mischief against our whole religion [a]. Then as to the Leader in this Plot, he describes him like another *Catiline*; furnished with every great talent, proper for the purpose; an head acute and prolific; learning extensive and various; language dogmatical and lively; a zeal never destitute of address, and length of days, attending constant studies and vivacity of genius: in short, with every art, to draw every creature; Papist and Protestant; zealot and freethinker, into his scheme [b].

After such an exordium, one cannot help figuring to himself what a surprize, so strange a piece of news must needs excite in this reverend Assembly, to find themselves exposed again so unexpectedly, to the effects of so direful a conspiracy; and what an impatience

[a] See page 1, 2, 3.

[b] Pag. 11, 12, 18, &c.

it would create, to hear the rest, and to learn by what arts and instruments, this calamity was to be brought upon them; which the Archdeacon proceeds to disclose in the following manner :

That *there were certain Loyolites in France, who had assumed of a sudden a new character, and blazed out most fastidious Hypercritics* : that these had entered into a vow, to deprive us of all our learning and religion at once, and by one desperate furious push, to stab the protestant cause to the heart, with the admired spirit of incredulity and freethinking : that their method of doing it was; to make all the world believe, that *the ancient writers of Greece and Rome, were either figments, or worthless triflers*; and by that means, to confound and dissipate all our notions in Chronology, History, Laws, usages, doctrines ecclesiastical and profane, together with the genius and vitals of all the dead languages : that, in the execution of this design, they had already gone so far, as to reproach Thucydides and Xenophon very tartly, with modern Gallicisms and suspicious phraseologies ; and had superciliously lashed all the rest ; Diodorus, Polybius, Dionysius of Halicanassus, Livy, Justin, Suetonius, Quintilian, Tacitus, Plutarch, Athenæus,

næus, Dion Caffius, *with multitudes of others, as mere counterfeit Romances; the works of recent Sophists, Impostors, and Fabulators* [c].

And lest any one should interrupt him here, and ask; how *the protestant cause could be ruined and our whole religion overturned, by the loss onely of those Pagan writers,* he clears up that doubt in the following words, by declaring; that this blow, *how daring soever, was but the introduction to the fatal stroke, which was to insue; for that the Clements, the Chrysoftoms, the Jeroms, and the Austins, were to fall the next in this massacre; and the ancient Councils themselves, both general and provincial, would not long survive them* [d].

This is the substance of his plot, as it is set forth by himself. For if we *could penetrate the very marrow,* as he says, or, in a metaphor still more elegant, *the very vitals of the dead languages themselves,* we could not find any words, so well suited to his subject, or so adapted, to spread wonder and amazement through an Assembly, as his own. As to the success of the plot, he represents

[c] See pag. 3, 4, 5.

[d] Page 6.

it every where, as most easy and probable. For the Papists would favour it of course, as it could not fail of reducing all Christendom under the absolute power of *Rome*; and *the Protestants, among whom a fantastical passion for novelties, and a brisk giddy spirit of Pyrrhonism was rising very fast* [e], would rejoice at any blow given to ecclesiastical history and the Scriptures, and readily give up even their favourite Virgils and Horaces, &c. on condition onely, that the Jeroms might be sacrificed at the same time [f].

Now whatever surprize the first opening of this speech might give, either to the hearer or reader, the conclusion, I dare say, will give as great, to find *this crafty projection*, as he calls it, which he has been dressing up with such solemnity and laboured pomp of words, as a most desperate plot of the *Romish Church*, to be nothing at last but the stale and senseless whim of a single old Jesuit, formed by no concert or confederacy with any set of men in the world, and published about forty years ago without any other effect whatsoever, than of being laughed at ever since by all men of sense, and particu-

[e] Page 12.

[f] Page 22, 23.

larly contemned at *Rome*, as I have been certainly informed, as the mere delirium of a doting Critic.

One would not easily conceive, at the first thought, what should put it into this Archdeacon's head, to think of alarming the Provincial Clergy, at this time of day, with the vain terrors of such an exploded and obsolete tale. But his scheme was artfully laid, and the time exactly hit by him. He saw that a *Panic* was spread over the land; that people's heads were filled with nothing, but conspiracies and Popish invasions; that this was the moment, to make a figure with his plot, and if the discovery was postponed, the merit of it would be lost. *He struck it roundly* therefore, as he expresses it, *and like a true man of craft, with this taste and turn of the age* [g]; and snatched the opportunity of displaying his abilities before his reverend brethren, and while he was rousing all their fears, of administering comfort to them at the same time; by shewing, what a champion they had got to defend them; that the old Jesuit himself could not out-do him, in those very talents of his, which he had been enumerating; *the acuteness of his prolific head; the*

[g] See page 12.

*extent of his various learning; the force of his dogmatical language: and that the Free-thinkers were nothing to him, even in their own arts, and the management of those everlasting arms of theirs, in which their strength lay; the alertness of their sneers; their affectation of appearing significant in erudition, and their fluent pompous shew of some depth in letters [b].*

But surely, no *Archidiaconal Charge* was ever more learnedly trifling, or pompously absurd than this. He confesses, that this conceit of the Jesuit raised so general an outcry against it, among the Papists themselves, that he was obliged to recant it, as soon almost as it was divulged; that his own Society of the Jesuits published a formal protestation against it [i]; and that the learned of all the other Orders both in France and Italy, sharply declared their abhorrence of it [k]. Yet this despicable project of a cloistered visionary, conceived so many years ago, retracted by himself, censured by his own Order, and abhorred by all the other Orders of France and Italy, is here puffed and dressed out by

[b] See page 22, 23. [i] (Note †). [k] Pag. 20.

our Archdeacon, in an Assembly of *English* Clergy, as a most dreadful plot, spreadin itsg infection far and wide, threatening ruin to our whole religion, *fire and sword to all Protestants* [l].

In opening the evidences of this plot, he declares from his own knowledge, *that it was certainly begun, and is carried on to this day, with art and success; and is assisted also by a favourable concurrence of circumstances in this very age* [m]: *that one great man in France had loudly proclaimed a very high esteem for the author: that another person at Amsterdam had the confidence to suppose gravely, even in print, that the Jesuit's new system would bear a debate among the learned, and by degrees gain a strong, if not the ablest party to its side* [n]: and if any farther proof be required, he assures us, *that though it may justly seem so extravagant and chimerical, as to make some good men believe it incapable of doing any mischief, yet he can prove, on the contrary, that it has already spread a taint too far: among some, for catholic advantages, among others, for want of knowing that secret, or from passionate biasses to their coins, or to favour their Pyrrhonism* [o].

[l] Pag. *ibid.* [m] See Pag. 11. [n] Pag. 19.  
[o] Pag. 11, 20.

The reader will be apt to wonder here again, why our Archdeacon is not more explicit and particular in declaring his proofs, in a cause, which, of all others, seems to want them the most. *He knows, that the plot is carried on with success to this day; and can prove, he says, that it has spread a taint too far:* yet after he has prepared us to expect the history and progress of the infection, and what particular persons it has tainted in this and that nation; he drops all that at once, as if there were some latent fore in it, too tender for him to touch. But it is not very difficult to guess at the reason: it is his great regard for certain good friends of his, whom he is loth to impeach, as accomplices in this *Jesuitical plot*, which yet he must necessarily do, whenever he is forced to speak out; I mean the *Tunstalls* and the *Marklands* of our own country: who, with that same *malignant spirit against the ancients*, of which he talks [p], have been lately making the same *desperate furious push*, in this very Protestant land, to deprive us of the works of Cicero, by adding them to the Jesuit's list of *counterfeit romances*, and shewing them to be *the fragments of those*

[p] Page 17. Note [†].



*same busy Sophists and recent Fabulators.* For of all the learned in this kingdom, there are none, who, like the *Loyolites of France*, have ventured, *to assume that new character, of blazing and fastidious Hypercritics*, or have pushed *their protestant Pyrrobonism* so far, as they.

Yet after all, which I have been saying of the Archdeacon's Speech, I must do him the justice to own, that there are many observations occasionally intersperfed in it, both exceedingly curious, and intirely new. I shall just give one of them, as a specimen of the rest; by which he informs his reverend brethren, *that the real necessaries of learned authors, in these times of ours, are extremely great; nay, almost infinitely so, beyond any thing, which the multitude can imagine [q].* This is a discovery so recondite, and remote from vulgar apprehension, that it could not possibly be made by any, but himself. For, though his modesty would fain conceal it, he is but drawing his own picture, under the character, which he gives of *those great lights and pillars of Protef-*

[q] See pag. 26.

*tantism, whom he proposes to the Clergy as patterns of their studies: men, who spent their whole lives in the pursuit of erudition, penetrated the very marrow of all the learned languages, traversed, with the same zeal, every ancient, and monument they could find, had all antiquity before them in one grand and comprehensive view, and attained to that abounding richness in learning, which rendered them the glories of their age, and a scourge and terror to any bold superficial pretenders, who should offer to impose upon the public any mischievous sophistries or chicanery of science [r]. For, how could any man know the real necessities of such deep scholars, as these, if he himself was not as profound, as they? or how indeed can any one else, reach even the sense of so deep a discovery; for as those bold and superficial pretenders, whom he justly derides, for skimming onely the surface of literature, and contenting themselves, as he tells us, with a few select authors, the most eminent, and elegant in each class [s]; they would be apt to pronounce at once, that there is no sense at all in it.*

[r] Pag. 27, 28.

[s] Page 27.

But,

But, if I may presume to offer my opinion, the sense of it, I think, will be found clear and good by a due attention to the context ; in which the Archdeacon, having first taken occasion to declare, *that our Church is far inferior to the Romish in the provision of emoluments for the clergy*, artfully introduces his observation, by way of complaint, or petition, as it were, to the public, on behalf of himself, and all the other learned authors, among the Clergy, that, whereas their learning, in these protestant days, is infinitely superior, to what it was in the Popish, yet our Governors do not consider, that *their real necessities* are increased to them likewise, in the same proportion. For though he has not given any reasons, to confirm this, yet the truth of it may be demonstrated by a known and memorable fact. For instance ; *Erasmus*, an *Author*, competently *learned*, for those Popish times, was supplied with all *real necessities*, and a large overplus besides, from one single benefice, conferred upon him by an *Archbishop of Canterbury* : Our Archdeacon, on the contrary, in these protestant times, holds the same benefice, which *Erasmus* then held, with a second still better, and the profits of an Archdeaconry into the bargain, yet  
out

out of *the infinite superiority of his learning*, wants the addition still of more preferment, *to supply his infinite want of real necessaries.*

But I am drawn insensibly too far, and wasting too much time in pointing out the solemn trifles, and elaborate nonsense of this strange speech. My chief purpose, in taking notice of it, was of a more serious kind; to shew, by the example of this very performance, to what poor shifts this *Defender of the primitive monks, and their miracles*, will naturally be reduced, whenever he finds it expedient, to give a public testimony of his zeal against *Rome*; and while he pretends to be fighting against Popery, how he will be driven, by the force of his principles, to make but a mock-fight of it, a mere theatrical shew, and to combat only phantasms of his own dressing up.

This, I say, is the necessary consequence of his principles; of *that superstitious veneration of the primitive Fathers, and that implicit faith in Ecclesiastical History*, which it has been the business of his life and studies, to inculcate. For I have already shewn,

shewn, by facts and instances produced in this Introductory treatise, how those Divines of our Church, who carry the authority of the Fathers so high as to make them *the guides and interpreters of our religion*, and who *appeal to them especially in our controversies with the Papists*, preclude themselves of course, from attacking any of those principal corruptions, for the sake of which, the Protestants found it necessary, to separate themselves from the communion of *Rome*. Yet our Archdeacon maintains still, as we have seen, in this speech, that the Antient Fathers and Primitive Councils, the *Clements*, the *Chrysostoms*, the *Jeroms*, and the *Austins*, are the very bulwarks of Protestantism, and the instruments, through which *we may most glaringly expose to every common eye, the unscriptural and unprimitive crudities of the Romish Church* [t].

Now, as in all disputes, the readiest way to find out the truth, is, by reducing them, as far as it is possible, to questions of fact, and to the trial of our senses, so in this, I shall

[t] See pag. 2, &c

refer myself to a fact, which I have endeavoured to exemplify in the foregoing work, with regard to those very Fathers, to whom the Archdeacon appeals; and particularly, to *Cbryſostom*, *Jerom* and *Austin*; concerning whom, I have there affirmed, and do now again affirm, *that they have all severally taught, and practised, and warmly recommended to the practice of all Christians, certain rites and doctrines, which, upon their authority and example, are received and practised at this day by the Romish Church, but condemned and rejected by Protestant Churches, as unscriptural, superstitious and idolatrous.* If the Archdeacon allows this fact, every one will see at once, without asking his opinion any farther, on which side those Fathers, are to be ranged: if he denies it, he must deny at the same time, that those passages, which I have produced in proof of it, are really to be found in them; or otherwise, in spite of any distinction or comment, which he can frame upon them, every man of sense will allow the fact to be true.

But of all the Primitive Fathers, *Jerom* seems to be the peculiar favorite of our Archdeacon, and, as we may collect from this  
 very

very speech, is supposed by him, to be of more eminent service to us than any of them, both against the *Papists* and the *Freethinkers*: for which reason, I have chosen to employ the few pages, that remain, in considering his particular merit and principles a little more precisely: and with that view, shall propose another fact or two, drawn from his writings; which will enable the reader to form a clear judgement of his character, as far as it relates to the point, now in dispute, between the Archdeacon and myself.

This *Jerom* then, as I have observed in the foregoing work, was a most zealous admirer and promotor of the *monkish life*; and, for the sake of advancing its credit in the world, wrote the lives of two celebrated Monks; the one called *Paul*, and the other *Hilarion*; in which, after he has invoked *that same Holy Spirit, which inspired the said Monks, to inspire him also with language, equal to the wonderful acts, which he was going to relate*, he has inserted a number of tales, and miracles, so grossly fabulous, as not to admit the least doubt, of their being absolute forgeries. The *Life of Paul* was published

i

the

the first, and, as we learn from *Jerom* himself, was treated, as a *mere fable*, by the Freethinkers, or *Scyllæan-dogs*, as he calls them, of those days [u]. Nor is it considered at this day in any other character, or mentioned by the learned on any other account, than as a proof, of *that passion for fiction and imposture, which possessed the Fathers of the 4th century* [x]. Now whether *Jerom* forged these tales himself, or propagated what he knew to be forged by others, or whether he really believed them, and published onely, what he took to be true; our Archdeacon may chuse which he pleases, I shall not dispute it with him, since the fact, which I would lay before the reader, and with which alone, we are at present concerned, is uncontestable, *that it was one of the principal views of Jerom's zeal and writings, to recommend to all Christians, as the perfection of the Chris-*

[u] Unde & nos ———  
cœptum ab eo opus aggre-  
dientes, maledicorum voces  
contemnimus: qui olim de-  
trahentes *Paulo meo*, nunc  
forte detrahent Hilarioni---  
verum destinato operi im-  
ponam manum & *Scyllæos*  
*canes* obturata aure transibo.

Prolog. in vit. S. Hilarion.  
Op. T. 4. par. 2. p. 74.

[x] Quam fuerint quarti  
seculi Scriptores fabulis de-  
diti, e vita *Pauli Hierony-*  
*miana, ex Athanasiana An-*  
*tonii, &c.* intelligimus.  
Dodw. Dissert. in Irenæum  
2. § LV.



tian life, a species of monkery, not only abhorred by Protestants, but, in my opinion, more contemptible and superstitious, than any that is professed at this day in the Church of Rome.

Again, *Jerom*, as I have intimated also above, wrote a little piece or two against *Vigilantius*, in which he treats him, as a most blasphemous Heretic, and gives us all the particular articles of his heresy, drawn from *Vigilantius's* own words, to the following effect.

“ That the honors paid to the rotten bones  
 “ and dust of the saints and martyrs, by  
 “ adoring, kissing, wrapping them up in  
 “ silk and vessels of gold, lodging them in  
 “ their Churches and lighting up wax candles  
 “ before them, after the manner of the  
 “ Heathens, were the insigms of Idola-  
 “ try [y].

[y] Ais *Virgilantium*---- appellare cinerarios & idolo-  
 os foetidum rursus aperire, lolatras, qui mortuorum ho-  
 & putorem spurcissimum minum Ossa veneramur,  
 contra Sanctorum Marty- &c. Vide Hieron. Op. T.  
 rum proferre reliquias, & 4. par. 2. p. 278, 279,  
 nos, qui eas suscipimus, 282, &c.

“ That the Cœlibacy of the Clergy was  
 “ an Heresy, and their vows of chastity the  
 “ seminary of lewdness [*z*].

“ That to pray for the dead, or to desire  
 “ the prayers of the dead, was superstitious :  
 “ and that the souls of the departed Saints  
 “ and Martyrs were at rest, in some particu-  
 “ lar place, whence they could not remove  
 “ themselves at pleasure, so as to be present  
 “ every where to the prayers of their vota-  
 “ ries [*a*].

“ That the Sepulchers of the Martyrs  
 “ ought not to be worshipped, nor their fasts  
 “ and vigils to be observed [*b*].

“ That the signs and wonders, said to  
 “ be wrought by their reliques, and at their

[*z*] Dicit—— continen-  
 tiam, hæresim ; pudicitiam,  
 libidinis seminarium. *ibid.*  
 p. 281.

[*a*] Ais enim vel in sinu  
 Abrahæ, vel in loco re-  
 frigerii, vel subter aram  
 Dei animas Apostolorum &  
 Martyrum confedisse, nec  
 posse de suis tumulis, & ubi  
 voluerint, adesse præsentis

—— dicis in libello tuo,  
 quod dum vivimus, mutuo  
 pro nobis orare possumus ;  
 postquam autem mortui fu-  
 erimus, nullius sit pro alio  
 ex audienda oratio, &c.  
*ibid.* p. 283, &c.

[*b*] Qui Martyrum neget  
 sepulcra veneranda, dam-  
 nandas dicit esse vigiliis——  
*ibid.* 281.

Sepulchers,

“ Sepulchers, served to no good end or purpose of religion [c].”

These were the *sacrilegious* tenets, as *Jerom* calls them, which he could not bear *with patience, or without the utmost grief* [d]; and for which he declares *Vigilantius*, to be a most detestable heretic, venting his fool-mouthed blasphemies against the reliques of the Martyrs, which were working daily signs and wonders. He bids him, go into the Churches of those Martyrs, and he would be cleansed from the evil spirit, which possessed him, and feel himself burnt, not by those wax candles, which so much offended him, but by invisible flames, which would force that *Dæmon* who talked within him, to confess himself to be the same, who had personated a *Mercury*, perhaps, or a *Bacchus*, or some other of their Gods among the Heathens [e]. At which wild rate, this good Father raves on, through several pages,

[c] Argumentatur contra signa & virtutes, quæ in Basilicis Martyrum fiunt, p. 285.

[d] Fatebor tibi dolorem meum. Sacrilegium tantum, patienter audire non possum, p. 280.

[e] Ingredere basilicas Martyrum, & aliquando purgaberis: invenies ibi multos focios tuos, & nequaquam cereis Martyrum, qui tibi displicent, sed flammis invisibilibus combureris—— &c. p. 286.

in a strain much more furious, than the most bigotted Papist would use at this day, in the defence of the same rites.

Let our Archdeacon then speak directly to this fact, and tell us, which of these two is acting here the Protestant part, and serving the Protestant cause : whether it be *Jerom* or *Vigilantius* : whether the *Primitive Father*, who, by *lies* and *forgeries*, so fiercely maintains the honor of *monkery* and *reliques* ; or the *Primitive Heretic*, who, by the Principles of reason and the Gospel, so firmly rejects them.

But he has told us already in his speech, that the *Jeroms* are the men, who must enable us, to expose *the unprimitive crudities of the Romish principles and practices* : and he will try again, perhaps on this occasion, what he has tried with success on others, to accommodate these very facts to his own system : and by an art, which he has learnt from *Jerom* himself, will teach us, “ that  
 “ we ought to distinguish between *the dog-*  
 “ *matical and the agonistical stile* ; that in  
 “ the first, indeed, truth is the object aimed  
 “ at, but in the second, nothing but victory ;  
 “ that

“ that sincerity therefore is necessary in the  
 “ one, but art only in the other : that *Je-*  
 “ *rom* was not here dogmatizing, but fight-  
 “ ing with an enemy ; and in that case ac-  
 “ cording to his custom, not saying what  
 “ he thought true, but what was ne-  
 “ cessary to his cause, and catching up  
 “ any words, to throw at him, which  
 “ would best serve, to knock him down :  
 “ then he will cry out again, in the same  
 “ lamentable stile, *that this is not the first*  
 “ *time, that poor St. Jerom has been thus*  
 “ *mangled and misrepresented* [*f*] ; that I  
 “ have suppressed the very expressions, which  
 “ would have cleared up the matter and  
 “ justified the purity of his principles ; for  
 “ when *Vigilantius* charges him with *Idola-*  
 “ *try*, for worshipping rotten bones, in the  
 “ manner above-mentioned, that I had omit-  
 “ ted to acquaint the reader, how *Jerom*  
 “ denies the charge, and declares, *that they*  
 “ *paid no divine worship to any thing but to*

[*f*] Honoramus autem ad Dominum ; qui ait ; qui  
 reliquias Martyrum, ut eum, vos suscipit, me suscipit. Hi-  
 cius sunt Martyres, adore-eron. Op. T. 4. par. 2. p.  
 mus. Honoramus servos, 279.  
 et honor servorum redundet

those Primitive times. Must we with *Vigilantius*, call them acts of impiety, superstition and stupidity; or with *Jerom*, treat such an opinion, as blasphemous and heretical? but whatever answer he may give, we may venture to affirm, without waiting for it, what is sufficient for my purpose, and notorious to all, who have heard or seen what passes in the *Church of Rome*, that *Jerom's* account of *those primitive reliques and their translations*, is the very form, and pattern, by which *the Romanists translate, receive and venerate their holy reliques*, at this day.

I have now said enough, for the present occasion, concerning the use of the Fathers, and particularly of *Jerom*, with regard to our controversies with the Papists, yet cannot put an end to this *Postscript*, without adding a word or two, on what the Archdeacon has farther intimated, with respect to the same *Jerom*, and another sort of enemies, *the Freethinkers*; who make him likewise, as he would persuade us, the particular object of their spleen, and would be glad, as well as the Papists, to get rid of him at any rate. Now if this had been said of the Free-  
thinkers

thinkers onely, in popish Countries, there would have been some sence in it ; but as it is here applied, there is certainly none at all. For in the *Romish* Church, there are many without doubt, who from a freedom of thinking, superior to that of the vulgar, must needs condemn the whole system of their monkery, their worship of Saints and reliques, their holy water, holy oil, crosses, masses, exorcisms, and all their other superstitions ; manifestly contrived, to serve purposes merely secular ; to support the power, and increase the wealth of the Clergy : and it is natural to imagine, that men, whose scepticism turned chiefly on those rites and practices, might be particularly galled, by the writings of *Jerom*, or the other Fathers, by whose authority, they were all at first propagated, and are still maintained, and forcibly imposed upon them. But the case is widely different in Protestant countries ; where we are neither teized with such fopperies, nor tied down to the authority of the Fathers ; and where the Freethinkers consequently have no reason, to fancy themselves specially hurt by any of them ; but on the contrary, many obvious reasons, why they should enjoy and rejoice in them all ;

as affording infinite matter for the sport of sceptical wits; in the credulity, the superstition, the pious frauds, and forged miracles of those primitive times: all which, they have never failed to set forth, as the genuin characters of the Christian Priesthood, and Christian Churches of all ages; and to play them off with all their art, so as to make them bear against religion itself; and they bear indeed in the strongest manner against the religion of *Rome*, as being wholly founded, and still supported by those very arts. But the Protestants stand clear, and unconcerned in the dispute; and have nothing to do, but to look on, and divert themselves with the issue of it. For their religion rests on quite another foot, on the single, but solid foundation of the sacred Scriptures; unmixed with rubbish of ancient tradition, or ancient Fathers; and independent on the characters and writings of any men whatsoever, except of *Moses* and the Prophets; Christ and the Apostles. But when Protestant Divines, urged on by an unhappy zeal, or the vanity of displaying their superior learning, think fit, to take up the quarrel, as their own; and when *Archdeacons* especially, and *Lambeth Chaplains*, come forth, with a sort of oracular



cular authority, to defend those primitive frauds and forgeries, and declare the cause of the Fathers, to be the common cause of all Christians; then the affair indeed becomes serious; for this adds a real force and sting to the raileries of the Sceptics; turns their flight cavils, into grave objections, and points them directly against Protestantism itself.



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A

FREE INQUIRY

INTO THE

MIRACULOUS POWERS,

Which are supposed to have subsisted in the

CHRISTIAN CHURCH, &c.

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A N

# I N Q U I R Y

I N T O T H E

## MIRACULOUS POWERS, &c.

**I**NOW procede, according to my promise, to a more precise and accurate Discussion of the argument of the *Introductory Discourse*, and to open all the particular proofs, which induced me finally to embrace it, with that freedom and impartiality, which becomes every ingenuous and disinterested inquirer after truth: and, that I may lay the whole question before the reader in the clearest light, I propose to observe the following method.

I. To draw out, in their proper order, all the principal testimonies, which relate to the miraculous gifts of the Church, as they are found in the writings of the Fathers, from the earliest ages, after the days of the Apostles. Whence we shall see, at one view, the whole evidence, by which they have hitherto been supported.

A

II. To

II. To throw together all, which those Fathers also have delivered, concerning the condition of the persons who are said to have been indued with those gifts, and to have wrought the miracles, to which they appeal.

III. To illustrate the particular characters and opinions of the Fathers, who attest those miracles; so as to enable us to determine with more exactness, what degree of credit may be due to their testimony.

IV. To review all the several kinds of miracles, which are pretended to have been wrought, and to observe, from the nature of each, how far the credibility of them may reasonably be suspected.

V. To refute some of the most plausible objections, which have hitherto been made by my antagonists, or which the prejudices and prepossessions of many pious Christians may be apt to suggest to the general turn of my argument.

I. In collecting all the facts and testimonies, which relate to the present argument, from the earliest antiquity, after the days of the Apostles, our first thoughts are carried of course to the *Apostolic* Fathers, that is, to those, who had lived and conversed with the Apostles, and who, by their special appointment, were ordained to succeed them in the Government of the Church.

For

For as there are several of this character, whose writings still remain to us, *St. Barnabas*, *St. Clements*, *St. Ignatius*, *St. Polycarp*, *St. Hermas*, so it is natural to expect, that, in these valued remains, the History of the miraculous gifts, which are so much celebrated by the writers of the New Testament, should be carried on still in the same manner by these their immediate successors, thro' the next generation. For if any such gifts had been actually subsisting in their days, it is highly probable, that men of their eminent zeal and piety, who had seen the wonderful effects of them, under the management of the Apostles, and must themselves have possessed a large share of them, would have made some appeal or reference to them, in their circular epistles to the Churches, as their predecessors had done, for the honor of the Gospel, and the credit of their own ministry. But instead of this, it is remarkable, that there is not the least claim or pretension, in all their several pieces, to any of those extraordinary gifts, which are the subject of this inquiry; nor to any standing power of working miracles, as residing still among them, for the conversion of the Heathen world. The whole purpose of their writings is, to illustrate the excellence and purity of the Christian Doctrine; and the whole power of their ministry seems to have lain, in the innocent and amiable character of their lives, and in the pious, charitable, and fervent strain of their pastoral exhortations.

They speak indeed in general, of certain *spiritual Gifts*, as abounding among the Christians of

that age : yet these cannot reasonably be interpreted to mean any thing more than the *ordinary gifts and graces* of the Gospel, *faith, hope and charity ; the love of God and of man ;* which they all recommend in the warmest terms, and appear to have possessed in the highest degree. *Archbishop Wake*, however, who has translated their works into *English*, says, that, *in all probability, they were indued with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that there are sufficient indications of it in their writings* [a]: “ which  
 “ he endeavours to confirm, not by any facts or  
 “ express testimonies, drawn from themselves,  
 “ but by inferences onely or conjectures, ground-  
 “ ed on a supposed frequency of those indow-  
 “ ments in that age, and the communication  
 “ of them, as he says, to much lesser and worser  
 “ men ; on the sanctity of their lives, and the  
 “ greatness of the stations, to which they were  
 “ called by the Apostles ; and on the accounts  
 “ of them, transmitted to us by their Successors :  
 “ from all which he concludes, that they were  
 “ not onely instructed by persons inspired, but  
 “ were themselves also in some measure inspired  
 “ too, or indued with the extraordinary gifts of  
 “ the Holy Ghost [b].” But whatever gifts of  
 this sort they may be supposed to have possessed,  
 it is certain at least, as the same Translator of  
 their works takes occasion to inculcate, that their  
 indowments were *far inferior, both in their kind*

[a] See Prelim. Disc. c. x.      [b] *Ib.* §. 18, 23.  
 §. 11, 12.



and degree, to those of their Predecessors the Apostles [c].

But the learned *Mr. Dodwell*, a writer of a more sanguin complexion, peremptorily declares, from the mere title or address of *St. Ignatius's* Epistle to the Church of *Smyrna*, that miracles subsisted in great abundance in those days; because that Church is there stiled, *blessed with every good gift, and wanting in no good gift* [d]. Yet these words, as they are explained by the context, manifestly signify nothing more, than the ordinary gifts of the Gospel, *Faith and Charity*: for the whole passage runs thus: *To the Church of God the Father, and of the beloved Jesus Christ, which God hath mercifully blessed with every good gift, being filled with Faith and Charity, so as to be wanting in no good gift* [e]. In another Epistle likewise of *St. Ignatius*, to the *Romans*, written on his journey towards *Rome*, whither he was going to suffer martyrdom, there are these words; “ I am willing to die for God, “ unless you hinder me. I beseech you, that “ you shew not an unseasonable good will towards “ me: suffer me to be food for the wild beasts, “ by whom I shall attain unto God: for I am “ the wheat of God, and shall be ground by the “ teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found “ the pure bread of Christ, &c. [f]” From

[c] *Ib.* §. 11, 23.

[d] *Dissertat. in Iren.* 11.

§. VII.

[e] Ἡλεημένη ἐν παντὶ χάρισματι, περιπλεροφημένη ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ, ἀνυστερήτως οὕση παλῶς

χαρίσματι. Epist. ad Smyrn.

[f] Παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς, μὴ εὐνοια ἄκαιρος γένησθε μοι. Ἄφετε μὲ θηρίων εἶναι βορᾶν. &c. Ad Rom. c. iv.

which words, the same learned person again infers, *that the prayers of the primitive Christians had the power to disable the wild beasts from assaulting the Martyrs, who were exposed to them in the Amphitheatres* [g]. Yet the passage itself has not the least reference to prayers, or to any thing miraculous, but to the ordinary endeavours and intercession of the Christian brethren at *Rome*, who offered to use their interest to preserve him from that cruel death, which he was then going to suffer: to which sense it is expressly restrained, in the relation of his Martyrdom, written by those who accompanied him in this very journey, and were present at his death: by whom we are told; “ that the brethren, who came out to  
 “ meet him on his approach to that city, and  
 “ were zealous for his safety, *undertook to appease*  
 “ *the people*, so that when he came to be exposed  
 “ to the wild beasts in the Amphitheatre, *they*  
 “ *should not desire his destruction*: but the Saint  
 “ over-ruled, *and commanded them to be quiet* [b].” And to the same sense also *Dr. Cave* has interpreted it, in his *Life of this Saint*. “ The Chri-  
 “ stians at *Rome*, says he, came out to meet and  
 “ entertain him—and when some of them did  
 “ but intimate, that possibly the people might  
 “ be taken off from desiring his death; he ex-  
 “ pressed a pious indignation, intreating them to

[g] Ex Epistola ad Romanos intelligimus, Martyribus nonnullis datum, ne possent in eos bestiae immittæ sævire. Proinde illud a *Romanis* enixissimis

precibus contendit, ne eorum orationibus id in sua causa contingeret. *Diff. Iren.* 2. §. xxx.

[b] See *Relat. of Martyrd. of St. Ignat.* §. 9, 10, 12.

“ cast no rubs in his way, that might hinder  
 “ him, now he was hastening to his crown [i]”.

And in truth, all the other expressions of these Fathers, which are commonly understood to signify the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, may be interpreted more rationally and more agreeably to the general turn of their writings, to denote onely the ordinary graces of the Gospel, faith and charity; which they constantly extoll, as superior to all other perfections; as *things wonderfull and admirable*; and *the peculiar gifts of God*: [k] nay in some places, they seem even to disclaim all gifts of a more extraordinary kind. Thus *Polycarp*, in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, says; “ these things, my brethren,  
 “ I took not the liberty to write to you of my  
 “ self, concerning righteousness, but you before  
 “ encouraged me to it. For neither I, nor any  
 “ other such as I am, can come up to the wis-  
 “ dom of the blessed and renowned *Paul*. And  
 “ in the same Epistle he declares, that it was not  
 “ granted to him, to practise that, which is

[i] See *Cave's* Lives of the Saints, Vol. I. p. 105. §. 8.

[k] Clem. 1. Epist. ad Corinth. c. 49, 50. it. Ignat. Ep. ad Ephes. xiv.

Thus when St. *Clement* tells the *Corinthians*, that they had all been blessed with a large effusion of the Holy Spirit. [§ 11.] yet this effusion, as it appears from the context, was not of a kind which conferred any extraordinary powers, but only pious affections and good inclinations. And in the same E-

pistle, where he is exhorting them to submit themselves, one to another, according to *the gift*, which had been bestowed upon each: he means nothing more by *that gift*, or *charisma*, as he calls it, than the different talents, abilities, and advantages, whether natural or acquired, of *strength, wisdom, riches, continence, &c.* by which Providence thinks fit to distinguish the different characters of men.

§ 33.

“ written in the Scripture ; *be angry and sin not,*  
 “ *and let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*”  
 [l] *St. Ignatius* also, in his Epistle to the *Ephe-*  
*sians*, says ; “ these things I prescribe to you,  
 “ not as if I were some body extraordinary, for  
 “ though I am bound for his name, I am not  
 “ yet perfect in *Jesus Christ*, but now I begin to  
 “ learn, and speak to you, as to fellow disciples.  
 “ For I ought to have been stirred up by you in  
 “ faith, in admonition, &c.” [m].

This same Saint indeed, in one or two of his Epistles, seems to intimate, that the knowledge of certain events had been communicated to him by the Spirit. Thus, in his Epistle to the *Philadelphians*, speaking of the earnest exhortations, which he had given them, to unity and submission to their *Bishops, Priests and Deacons*, he says ; “ some people suspected, that I was acquainted before hand with the divisions among you : but he is my witness, for whom I am bound, that I did not know it from any human flesh, but the spirit declared it, speaking thus, *do nothing without your Bishop, &c.*” [n] from which Dr. *Wake* takes occasion to infer, *that he was indued with a large Portion of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost* : [o] yet I do not find, that any other Commentator has ventured to build any thing miraculous or supernatural upon it.

It is related likewise of *Polycarp*, in the ancient narrative of his martyrdom, “ how in the

[l] Ep. ad Philipp. c. 111.  
 it. c. x11.

[m] Ad Ephes. c. 111.

[n] Ibid. c. vii.

[o] See Prelim. Treat. c. x.

§. 13.

“ time of that perfecution, in which his life  
“ was particularly fought for by the Heathen  
“ Magistrates, he withdrew himself from *Smyrna*,  
“ by the advice of his friends, into a little vil-  
“ lage, where he spent his days and nights in  
“ prayer, with a few, who accompanied him ;  
“ and as he was praying, a vision was offered to  
“ him, three days before he was taken, in which  
“ he saw his pillow on fire : whereupon, turn-  
“ ing presently to his companions, he said pro-  
“ phetically, I must certainly be burnt alive.”

The same narrative calls him also a *Prophetic teacher* ; and declares, *that every word, which he uttered, had either been fullfilled, or would be fullfilled.* [p] Whence some later writers have affirmed, that he was indued with a spirit of prophecy, and foretold every thing, that was to happen to him. But the foresight of his death, and the manner of it, in the time of a cruel perfecution when his person was particularly hunted from village to village, as the principal and destined sacrifice, may reasonably be considered as the effect of common prudence, without recurring to any thing miraculous.

Here then we have an interval of about half a century, the earliest and purest of all Christian Antiquity after the days of the Apostles, in which we find not the least reference to any standing power of working miracles, as exerted openly in the Church, for the conviction of unbelievers ; but on the contrary, the strongest reason to presume, that the extraordinary gifts of the Apo-

[p] Vid. Martyr. Polyc. c. v, xvi.

stolic age were by this time actually withdrawn; and the Gospel left to make its way by its own strength, and the authority of those credentials, and original miracles, with which Christ had furnished it, as an effectual security of its success and triumphs over the powers of the earth. Yet before we take leave of these Apostolic Fathers, it may be proper to observe, for the prevention of unnecessary cavils; that, if from the passages referred to above, or from any other, which may be found in them, it should appear probable to any, that they were favored on some occasions, with *extraordinary illuminations, visions, or divine impressions*, I shall not dispute that point with them, but remind them only, that the gifts of that sort were merely personal, granted for their particular comfort, and reaching no farther than to themselves; and do not therefore in any manner affect or relate to the question now before us.

But if the Apostolic writers have left us in the dark, with regard to our present argument, their Successors, it must be owned, as far as their authority reaches, have cleared it from all obscurity, by their strong, explicit, and repeated attestations of many extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers, which were constantly and publicly exerted in the Christian Church, through each succeeding age.

*Justin Martyr*, who is supposed to have written his first Apology within fifty years after the days of the Apostles, says, “ There are prophetic  
 “ gifts among us at this day, and both men  
 “ and women indued with extraordinary powers  
 “ by

“ by the Spirit of God [q].” And he frequently appeals, “ to what every one might see with his own eyes, in every part of the world, and particularly in *Rome*, in the case of persons possessed with Devils; who were cured and set free, and the Devils themselves baffled and driven away by the Christians, adjuring or exorcising them in the name of *Jesus*, when all other Exorcists and Inchanters had tried in vain to help them [r].”

*Irenæus*, who was contemporary with *Justin*, but wrote somewhat later, and lived much longer, affirms; “ that all, who were truly disciples of *Jesus*, receiving grace from him, wrought miracles in his name, for the good of mankind, according to the gift, which each man had received: some cast out Devils, so that those, from whom they were ejected, often turned believers, and continued in the Church: others had the knowledge of future events, visions, and prophetic sayings: others healed the sick by the imposition of hands: that even the dead had been raised, and lived afterwards many years among them: that it was impossible, to reckon up all the mighty works, which the Church performed every day, to the benefit of nations; neither deceiving, nor making a gain of any, but freely bestowing,

[q] Παρὰ γὰρ ἡμῖν καὶ μέχρι  
νῦν προφητικὰ χαρίσματα ἔστιν, &c.  
Καὶ παρὰ ἡμῖν ἔστιν ἰδεῖν καὶ θηλείας  
καὶ ἄρσενας χαρίσματα ἀπὸ τῶ  
σπνεύματος τῶ θεῷ ἔχουσας. Dial.

par. 2. p. 315, & 330. Edit.  
Thirlb.

[r] Apolog. 2. p. 116. vid.  
etiam, p. 196, 303, 320, 212.  
&c.

“ what

“ what it had freely received [s].” And as to the particular miracle of *raising the dead*, he declares it, “ to have been frequently performed “ on necessary occasions ; when by great fasting, “ and the joint supplication of the Church of that “ place, the spirit of the dead person returned “ into him, and the man was given back to the “ prayers of the Saints [t].” And again, “ we “ hear many, says he, in the Church indued with “ prophetic gifts ; speaking with all kind of “ tongues ; laying open the secrets of men for “ the public good ; and expounding the myste- “ ries of God [u].”

*Theophilus*, Bishop of *Antioch*, who lived in the same age with *Irenæus*, speaking of the *evil and seducing Spirits*, which used to inspire the Poets and Prophets of the Heathen world, says ; “ the truth of this is manifestly shewn ; because “ those, who are possessed by such Spirits, are “ sometimes exorcised even at this day by us, “ in the name of the true God ; when these se- “ ducing Spirits confess themselves to be the “ same Dæmons, who had before inspired the “ Heathen Poets [x].”

*Tertullian*, who flourished towards the end of the second, and died in the beginning of the third century, challenges the Heathen Magistrates, “ to call before their tribunals, any person pos- “ sessed with a *Devil* ; and if the evil spirit, when

[s] Advers. Hæref. l. 11. c. ibid.

lvii. p. 188. Edit. Oxon. it.  
Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 5. c. 7.

[u] Ibid. l. 5. c. vi. p. 406.

[x] Ad Autolyc. l. 21. p. 87.

[t] Adv. Hæref. l. 2. c. lvi.  
p. 186. it. Euseb, Hist. Eccl.

c. ad calcem Oper. Just. Mart.  
Par. 1636.

“ exorcised



“ exorcised by any Christian whatsoever, did not  
 “ own himself to be a Devil, as truly, as in  
 “ other places, he would falsely call himself a  
 “ God, not daring to tell a lie to a Christian,  
 “ that then they should take the life of that  
 “ Christian: and what is more manifest, adds  
 “ he, than this operation; what more convin-  
 “ cing than this proof? [y]” In another place,  
 “ There is a Sister, saye he, among us, indued  
 “ with the gifts of revelations, which she suffers  
 “ in the Church, during the time of divine ser-  
 “ vice, by an ecstasy in the spirit: she converses  
 “ with Angels, and sometimes also with the  
 “ Lord: sees and hears mysteries: and knows  
 “ the hearts of some, and prescribes medicines  
 “ to those, who want them [z].”

*Minucius Felix*, who is supposed to have writ-  
 ten in the beginning of the third century, ad-  
 dressing himself to his Heathen friend, in his  
 Dialogue, called *Octavius*, says; “ the greatest  
 “ part of you know, what confessions the Dæ-  
 “ mons make concerning themselves, as oft as  
 “ they are expelled by us out of the bodies of  
 “ men, by the torture of our words, and the  
 “ fire of our speech. *Saturn* himself, and *Se-*  
 “ *rapis*, and *Jupiter*, and the rest of them, whom  
 “ you worship, constrained by the pain, which  
 “ they feel, confess what they are: nor in this,  
 “ do they tell us a lie, though it be to their own

[y] Edatur hic aliquis sub  
 tribunalibus vestris, quem Dæ-  
 mone agi constet. Jussus a quo-  
 libet Christiano loqui spiritus  
 ille, tam se Dæmonem confite-

bitur de vero, quam Deum ali-  
 bi de falso——quid isto opere  
 manifestius? quid hac proba-  
 tione fidelius? Apologat. c. 23.

[z] De Anima. §. 9.

“ shame,

“ shame, especially when some of your people  
 “ are present. Believe them therefore to be Dæ-  
 “ mons, from their own testimony, and true  
 “ confession. For being adjured by the true and  
 “ onely God, they unwillingly and wretchedly  
 “ betray their uneasiness in the bodies of men ;  
 “ and either fly out instantly, or vanish gradu-  
 “ ally, in proportion as the faith of the patient,  
 “ or the grace of the agent assists towards the  
 “ cure [a].”

*Origen*, who lived at the same time with *Mini-  
 nutius*, though something younger, declares ;  
 “ that there remained still among the Christians  
 “ of his days, the manifest indications of that  
 “ Holy spirit, which was seen in the shape of a  
 “ Dove. For they drive away Devils, says he ;  
 “ perform many cures ; foresee things to come ;  
 “ according to the will of the divine word : and  
 “ though *Celsus* and the *Jew*, who is introduced  
 “ by him, will make a jest, of what I am going  
 “ to say, I will say it nevertheless ; that many  
 “ people, as it were against their wills, have been  
 “ brought over to Christianity, by the Spirit  
 “ giving a sudden turn to their minds, and of-  
 “ fering visions to them either by day or by  
 “ night ; so that instead of hating the word,  
 “ they became ready even to lay down their  
 “ lives for it. I have seen many examples of  
 “ this sort ; and should I onely set down such of  
 “ them, as were transacted in my presence, I  
 “ should expose myself to the loud laughter of

[a] *Minuc. Octav.* p. 23. ad calcem Edit. Cyprian. per Ri-  
 galt. Paris.

“ the unbelievers, who imagine that we, like  
 “ the rest, whom they suspect of forging such  
 “ things, are imposing our forgeries also upon  
 “ them: but God is my witness, that my sole  
 “ purpose is, to recommend the religion of *Jesus*,  
 “ not by fictitious tales, but by clear and evident  
 “ facts [b].”

In another place, he says; “ that miracles  
 “ began with the preaching of *Jesus*, were mul-  
 “ tiplied after his ascension, and then again de-  
 “ creased; but that, even in his days, some  
 “ remains of them continued with a few, whose  
 “ souls were cleansed by the word, and a Life  
 “ conformable to it [c].” Again; “ Some, says  
 “ he, in proof of a miraculous power received  
 “ through faith in Christ, heal the sick, by in-  
 “ voking the name of God over them, and of  
 “ *Jesus*, with a recital of some story of his life.  
 “ I myself have seen many so healed in difficult  
 “ cases; loss of senses, madness, and innumerable  
 “ other evils, which neither men nor Devils  
 “ could cure [d].” Again; speaking of Devils,  
 “ We are so far, says he, from worshipping  
 “ them, that by prayers and the rehearsal of  
 “ some passages of the sacred writ, we drive  
 “ them before us, out of men and places, and  
 “ also out of beasts; for they sometimes attempt  
 “ to do mischief also to these [e].” Then as to

[b] Cont. Cels. l. 1. p. 34,  
 35. Edit. Cant.

[c] Σημεία δὲ τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύμα-  
 τος καὶ ἀρχαῖς μὲν τῆς Ἰησοῦ δι-  
 δασκαλίας, μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἀναληψιν  
 αὐτοῦ πλείοις ἐδείκνυτο, ὕστερον δὲ  
 ἐλάττωσαν. πλὴν καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἐστὶν ἰσχυρὰ

αὐτῶ παρ' ὀλίγοις. &c. ib. l. 7.  
 p. 337. it. l. 2. 62.

[d] Ibid. l. 3. p. 124.

[e] Εἴθ' ὅτε δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ζώων.  
 πολλάκις γὰρ ἐπὶ τῇ λύμῃ καὶ τῶν  
 ταύτων ἐνεργῶσι τινα οἱ δαίμονες.  
 Ibid. l. 7. p. 376.

the method of performing this miracle, “ it was “ not, he says, by any curious, magical, or in- “ chanting arts, but by prayer alone, and cer- “ tain plain adjurations or exorcisms, which any “ simple Christian might perform : for even com- “ mon and illiterate laymen were generally the “ actors in this case [f].” In which no man was more eminent, than one of his own disciples, *Gregory*, called the *Wonder-worker*, who cast out Devils, not only by word of mouth, but even by a *message or mandatory letter to them*; as the Ecclesiastical writers have recorded of him [g].

*Cyprian* the scholar of *Tertullian*, who wrote about the middle of the third century, speaking of *prophetic visions*, which was the peculiar gift of that age, says; “ besides the visions of the “ night, even boys among us are filled with the “ Holy Ghost, and in fits of ecstacy, see, hear, “ and speak things, by which the Lord thinks “ fit to instruct us [b].” And describing all the various pranks of the Devils, “ they insinuate “ themselves, says he, into the bodies of men, “ raise terrors in the mind, distortions in the “ limbs, break the constitution, and bring on “ diseases—yet adjured by us in the name of “ the true God, they presently yield, confess,

[f] Ὅτι ἐπίπαν γὰρ ἰδιῶται τὸ τοιοῦτον παράτησι. Ibid. p. 334.

[g] Κακεῖ πρῶτον μὲν λαϊκὸς ὢν, πολλὰ σημεῖα ἐποίησε, νοσην- τας θεραπεύων, καὶ δαίμονας δὲ ἐπισηολῶν φυγαδεύων. Socrat. Hist. l. 4. 27.

[b] Præter nocturnas enim

visiones, per dies quoque impletur apud nos Spiritu sancto puerorum innocens ætas, quæ in ekstasi videt oculis, & audit & loquitur ea, quibus nos Dominus monere & instruere dignatur. Epist. ix. Edit. Rigalt. Par.

“ and

“ and are forced to quit the bodies, which they  
 “ possessed. You may see them by our com-  
 “ mand, and the secret operation of the divine  
 “ power, lashed with scourges, scorched with  
 “ fire, tortured by an increase of pains; how-  
 “ ling, groaning, begging; confessing whence  
 “ they came, and whither they go, even in the  
 “ hearing of their own worshippers: and they ei-  
 “ ther fly out immediately, or vanish gradually,  
 “ according to the faith of the patient, or the grace  
 “ of him, who works the cure [*i*].” In another  
 place, treating again on the same miracle, “ it is  
 “ performed, says he, at this day, so that the devil  
 “ is lashed and burned and tortured by the Ex-  
 “ orcists, with human words, but a divine power:  
 “ and when he promises to go out, and to dis-  
 “ miss the men of God, he often deceives, and  
 “ by the same lie of obstinacy and fraud, does  
 “ what *Pharaoh* had done before, till he is op-  
 “ pressed by the salutary water of Baptism [*k*].”

*Arnobius*, who is supposed to have published  
 his book against the Gentiles, in the year of  
 Christ 303, tells us, “ that Christ used to ap-  
 “ pear sometimes in those days, to just and holy  
 “ men, not in vain dreams, but in his pure and

[*i*] Ibid. De Idolor. vanit. p. 206.

[*k*] Ibid. Epist. 76. p. 154.  
 The example of *Pharaoh* here alluded to, is explained by him in the following manner: King *Pharaoh* having struggled and persisted in his perfidy, was able to carry on his resistance so far, till he came to

the water, where he was subdued and destroyed. For that Sea, as St. *Paul* says, was the Sacrament of Baptism.—And so he shewshow the Devils used to act the same part, when adjured by the Christian Exorcists, and continued to afflict the people of God till they came to the water of Baptism.

“ simple form: and that the mention of his  
 “ name put the evil spirits to flight; struck  
 “ their prophets dumb; deprived the South-  
 “ fayers of the power of answering; and fru-  
 “ strated the acts of arrogant Magicians; not  
 “ by the terror or hatred of his name, as the  
 “ Heathens pretended, but by the efficacy of his  
 “ superior power [l].”

*Lactantius*, the disciple of *Arnobius*, who flourished and wrote about the same time, speaking of those Dæmons or evil spirits, says; “ that  
 “ being adjured by the Christians in the name of  
 “ God, they retire out of the bodies of men;  
 “ and being lashed by their words, as by scour-  
 “ ges, confess themselves to be Dæmons; and  
 “ even tell their names; the same, which are  
 “ adored in the Temples; and this even in the  
 “ presence of their worshippers; yet casting no  
 “ reproach on religion, but on their own honour,  
 “ because it is not in their power to lie either  
 “ to God, in whose name they are adjured, or  
 “ to the just, by whose voice they are tortured:  
 “ wherefore after many howlings, they frequently  
 “ cry out, that they are scourged and burned,  
 “ and are going out instantly [m].”

These are the principal testimonies, which assert the miraculous gifts of the Primitive Church,

[l] Qui iustissimis viris etiam nunc impollutis, ac diligentibus sese, non per vana insomnia, sed per puræ speciem simplicitatis apparet. Cujus nomen auditum fugat noxios spiritus. Imponit silentium vatibus. Haruspices inconsultos reddit. Ar-

rogantium Magorum frustrari efficit actiones, non horrore, ut dicitur, nominis, sed majoris licentia potestatis. lib. 1. p. 13. ad Calcem Oper. Cyprian. Edit. per Rigalt.

[m] Divin. Institut. lib. 2. c. 16.

through

through the three first centuries : which might be supported still by many more of the same kind, and from the same, as well as different writers, if it were necessary [n]. But these are sufficient for our purpose : and the warmest admirers of those ages, will not scruple, I dare say, to risk the fate of the cause upon the merit of them : for if these cannot command belief, the credit of the miracle in question must sink at once ; since Christian antiquity can furnish no other evidence in their favour, half so strong and authentic as this.

I shall close this first article with a remark or two, which it seems naturally to suggest. It has already been observed, that the silence of all the Apostolic writers, on the subject of these gifts, must dispose us to conclude, that in those days they were actually withdrawn. And if this conclusion be thought to have any weight in it, then surely the pretended revival of them, after a cessation of forty or fifty years, and the confident attestation of them made by all the succeeding Fathers, cannot fail of infusing a suspicion of some fiction in the case. For if they did really cease for so long an interval, and at a time, when the Christian cause seemed to want them the most, as being then deprived of its first and ablest champions, the Apostles, we cannot conceive any reason, why they should afterwards be revived, when the Church, without any such help, had been ga-

[n] See Mr. *Whiston's* Account of the *Dæmoniacs*, &c. in which he has collected many more testimonies relating to

them, to shew, that the gift of curing them continued to the middle of the fourth century.

thering more and more strength all that while, by its own natural force. But it is remarkable, that as the Church continued to increase in power and credit, so its miraculous gifts are said to have increased also in the same proportion: for though by an increase of power it certainly stood less in need of true miracles, yet by the same power it became more able to reward, and more likely therefore to excite false pretensions to them.

Again, the difference which every one may perceive, between the miraculous gifts of the Apostolic days, and these of the following ages, not only in the nature, but in the manner also of exerting them, will greatly confirm the suspicion just intimated. The Apostles wrought their miracles on special occasions, when they felt themselves prompted to it by a divine impulse; but at other times, were destitute of that power; as it is evident from many facts and instances, recorded in the New Testament. Agreeably to which, though they appeal sometimes, in confirmation of their mission, to the miraculous works, which their Master had enabled them to perform, yet we never find them calling out upon the Magistrates and people, to come and see the mighty wonders, which they were ready to exhibit before their eyes, on all occasions, at any warning, and in all places, whenever they thought fit. Whereas this confident and ostentatious manner of proclaiming their extraordinary powers, carries with it an air of quackery and imposture, as it was practised by the primitive wonder-workers; who, in the affair especially of casting out Devils, challenge



lunge all the world to come and see, with what a superiority of power they could chastise and drive those evil spirits out of the bodies of men, when no other *Conjurers, Inchanters, or Exorcists*, either among the Jews or the Gentiles, had been able to eject them.

II. Under this head, I shall briefly lay before the reader ; all such notices, as I have been able to draw, from any of the Primitive writers, concerning the persons who were indued with these extraordinary gifts, and wrought the several miracles, to which they appeal.

Now whenever we think, or speak with reverence, of those primitive times, it is with regard always to these very Fathers, whose testimonies I have been collecting ; who have left behind them, in their writings, the genuine specimens of their sanctity and abilities. *Venerable Saints, and eminent lights of the best and purest ages, as Dr. Waterland calls them, and of admirable indowments, ordinary extraordinary* [o]. And they were indeed the chief persons and champions of the Christian cause in those days ; the Pastors, Bishops, and Martyrs of the Primitive Church. Yet none of these *Venerable Saints* have any where affirmed, that either they themselves, or the Apostolic Fathers before them, were indued with any power of working miracles, but declare only in general, “ that such  
“ powers were actually subsisting in their days,  
“ and openly exerted in the Church ; that they

[o] Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 143, 160, 169.

“ had often seen the wonderful effects of them ;  
 “ and that every body else might see the same,  
 “ whenever they pleased :” but as to the persons,  
 who wrought them, they leave us strangely in the  
 dark ; for instead of specifying their names, con-  
 ditions, or characters, their general stile is, “ such  
 “ and such works are done among us, or by us ;  
 “ by our people ; by a few ; by many ; by our  
 “ Exorcists ; by ignorant laymen, women, boys,  
 “ and any simple Christian whatsoever :” but in  
 the particular case of *casting out Devils*, *Origen*  
 expressly says, *that it was performed generally by*  
*laymen* [p]. Agreeably to which *Mr. Wiston* de-  
 clares, “ that this gift, which he ranks amongst  
 “ the greatest of miracles, was wholly appropri-  
 “ ated by our Saviour, to the meaner sort of  
 “ Christians, with an exclusion even of the  
 “ Clergy, so that after the days of the Apostles,  
 “ none of the sacred order ever pretended to  
 “ it [q].

But of what condition soever the actors were,  
 it is certain, that in the performance of their mi-  
 racles, they were always charged with fraud and  
 imposture by their adversaries. *Lucian* tells us,  
*that whenever any crafty juggler, expert in his*  
*trade, and who knew how to make a right use of*  
*things, went over to the Christians, he was sure to*  
*grow rich immediately, by making a prey of their*  
*simplicity* [r]. And *Celsus* represents all the Chris-

[p] ὡς ἐπίπαν γὰρ ἰδιῶσαι τὸ  
 τυετον πράττεισι. Con. Celf. 7.

334.

[q] See his Account of the  
 Demoniacs, p. 52, 53, 57.

[r] Ἡγοοῦνται παρῆλθῃ τίς αὐτῆς

γῶς, καὶ τεχνίτης ἀνθρώπων, καὶ  
 πράγμασι χρῆσθαι δυνάμενος,  
 αὐτίκα μάλα πλέσσει ἐν βραχεῖ  
 ἐγένετο, ἰδιώταις ἀνθρώποις ἐγγχανών.  
 De Mort. Peregr. T. 2. p. 568.

Ed. Var.

tian wonder-workers, as mere vagabonds and common cheats, “ who rambled about to play  
 “ their tricks at fairs and markets; not in the  
 “ circles of the wiser and better sort, for among  
 “ such they never ventured to appear; but  
 “ wherever they observed a set of raw young  
 “ fellows, slaves or fools; there they took care  
 “ to intrude themselves and to display all their  
 “ arts [s].” *Cecilius* also calls them *a lurking nation; shunning the light; mute in public; prating in corners* [t].

The same charge was constantly urged against them by all the other enemies of the Christian Faith, *Julian, Porphyry, &c.* of whom *Dr. Waterland* however has taken occasion to declare, *that they had some regard to truth, in what they said, and to public report, and to their own characters* [u]. But as this seems to have been an hasty and inconsiderate concession, made to serve a particular point, which he was then urging, that *the ancient Infidels were better men than the moderns*, so I shall lay no stress upon it, but observe only on the whole, that from these short hints and characters of the primitive wonder-workers, as given both by friends

[s] Ὁ δὲ γόησις ἡμᾶς καλεῖ, καὶ φησὶν ὅτι φεύγομεν τῆς χαριεστέρης περιουσίας, ὡς ἐκ ἐτοίμης, ἀπατάσθαι, παλειόμεν δὲ τῆς ἀγροικότερης. &c. *Orig. con. Cels. l. 6. p. 284. vid. it. l. 3. p. 141.*

[t] Latebrofa & lucifuga natio; in publicum muta; in angulis garrula, &c. *Minuc. Fel. p. 7.*

[u] “ I know not whether *Celsus, Porphyry, or Julian* would have said such a thing, “ in the greatest extremity of “ their rage. They had some “ regard to truth and to public report, and to their own “ characters.” *Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 426.*

and enemies, we may fairly conclude ; that the celebrated gifts of those ages were generally engrossed and exercised by private Christians, chiefly of the layety ; who used to travel about from City to City, to assist the ordinary Pastors of the Church, and Preachers of the Gospel, in the conversion of the Pagans, by the extraordinary gifts with which they were supposed to be indued by the Spirit of God, and the miraculous works, which they pretended to perform.

And here again, we see a dispensation of things ascribed to God, quite different from that, which we meet with in the New-Testament. For in those days, the power of working miracles was committed to none but the Apostles, and to a few of the most eminent of the other disciples, who were particularly commissioned to propagate the Gospel, and preside in the Church of Christ : but upon the pretended revival of the same powers in the following ages, we find the administration of them committed, not to those, who were intrusted with the government of the Church ; not to the successors of the Apostles, to the Bishops, the Martyrs, or the principal Champions of the Christian cause ; but *to boys, to women*, and above all, *to private and obscure laymen*, not only of an inferior, but sometimes also of a *bad character* [x]. But if those venerable Saints and

[x] Νυνὶ δὲ καὶ δι' ἀναξίων ἐνεργεῖν ὁ Θεὸς εἴωθε. Chrysof. T. 3. p. 66. c. Edit. Benedict:

Adjicient præterea multa de auctoritate cujusque Doctoris Hæretici ; illos maxime doctri-

næ suæ fidem confirmasse, mortuos suscitasse, debiles reformasse, futura significasse, ut merito Apostoli crederentur. Tertull. De Præscript. Hæreticor. §. 44.

Martyrs were not indued with them when living, they had amends made to them when dead, if we can believe the reports of their Successors, by a profusion of them on their bones and reliques : which suggests a farther cause of suspecting the faith and judgment of those early ages. For how can we think it credible, that God should with-hold his distinguishing favors, from his faithful servants when living, to bestow them on their rotten bones ? or employ his extraordinary power, to no other use, but to perpetuate a manifest imposture in his Church ? since it is to those ancient tales, so gravely attested, of miracles wrought *by the bones of Saints and Martyrs*, that the Church of *Rome* owes all that trade which she still draws, from the same fund and treasure of her wonder-working reliques : and if we can believe such stories, as they are delivered to us by the Primitive writers, we cannot condemn a practice, which is evidently grounded upon them.

These things, I say, are so strange, as to give just reason to suspect, that there was some original fraud in the case ; and that those strolling wonder-workers, by a dexterity of juggling, which art, not Heaven had taught them, imposed upon the credulity of the pious Fathers, whose strong prejudices and ardent zeal for the interest of

Εκεῖνο δὲ προσέθεμεν τῷ λόγῳ,  
ὅτι οὔτε πᾶς ὁ προφητῶν, ἴσιος.  
οὔτε πᾶς ὁ δαίμονας ἐλαύνων. Con-  
stitut. Apostol. 1, 8. c. 2.

Ut intelligamus, quædam  
miracula etiam sceleratos ho-  
mines facere, qualia sancti fa-  
cere non possunt. August. Oper.  
T. 6. p. 71.

Christianity, would dispose them to embrace, without examination, whatever seemed to promote so good a cause. That this was really the case in some instances, is certain and notorious: and that it was so in all, will appear still more probable, when we have considered, in the next place, the particular characters of the several Fathers, on whose testimony, the credit of those wonderful narratives depends.

III. The authority of a writer, who affirms any questionable fact, must depend on the character of his veracity and of his judgment. As far as we are assured of the one, so far are we assured, that he does not willingly deceive us; and from our good opinion of the other, we persuade ourselves, that he was not deceived himself: but in proportion as there is reason to doubt of either; there will always be reason to doubt of the truth of what he delivers. Nay, in many cases, the want of judgment alone, has all the same effect, as the want of veracity too, towards invalidating the testimony of a witness: especially in cases of an extraordinary, or miraculous nature; where the weakness of men is the most liable to be imposed upon; and the more so, as it happens to be joined to the greater piety and simplicity of manners. Since this then is the sole rule of determining the measure of credit, which is due to a witness of any strange and questionable facts, I shall apply it to the case before us; and examine what proofs of a sound judgment and strict veracity are to be found in the writings of those

those Fathers, who attest the miraculous stories, which we are now considering.

As to the Apostolic Fathers, of whom I have spoken above, since they have contributed but little towards the illustration of the present question, and bear no direct testimony in it; or none at least, but what confirms the point, which I am defending; there is no reason to enter into the consideration of their particular characters. Their works, as I have said, are translated into *English*, so that every one may judge of them for himself. They appear to have been men of great piety, integrity, and simplicity: and that is all, I think, which we need to declare of them on this Occasion.

*Justin Martyr* comes next, whose genius will best be illustrated by some specimens of it, extracted from his writings. We have seen above, that among the indowments conferred in an extraordinary manner on the Primitive Christians, *the gift of expounding the holy Scriptures, or the mysteries of God*, was reckoned one: and this, as *Justin* frequently affirms, *was granted by the special grace of God to himself* [y]. Let us inquire then, what use he made of this divine gift: and if ever he was really enlightened by it, we might surely expect to find the effects of it there, where he is discoursing *on the mystery of the Cross*; which he declares to be the greatest symbol of power

[y] Απεκάλυψεν ἔν ἡμῖν πάντα ὅσα κ' ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτῆ νενοήκαμεν. Dial. par. 2. p. 352.

Οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναμις ἐμοὶ τοιαύτη τις ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ χάρις παρὰ θεῶ μόνη εἰς τὸ συνίεναι τὰς γραφὰς αὐτῆ εἶδθθαι μοι. Ib. p. 258.

and dominion, and explains in the following manner. “ Consider, says he, all the things in  
 “ the world, whether they could be administer-  
 “ ed, or have any communication with each  
 “ other, without this form of the Cross. The  
 “ Sea could not be passed, unless that trophy  
 “ called the sail, were preserved in the ship: the  
 “ earth could not be tilled without it: for neither  
 “ diggers nor artificers could do their work, but  
 “ by instruments of this shape. The form of man  
 “ differs in nothing else from other animals, but  
 “ in the erection of his body, and the extension  
 “ of his arms, and the projection of his nose  
 “ from the forehead, through which respiration  
 “ is made, and which shews nothing else but the  
 “ figure of the Cross: in which sense also it is  
 “ spoken by the Prophet; *Christ the Lord is the*  
 “ *breath before our face* [z].” Upon this passage  
 the very pious and learned Dr. *Grabe* makes the  
 following remark, which I would recommend to  
 all the zealous admirers of these *venerable Saints*  
 and *purest ages*; “ *that the holy Martyr must not*  
 “ *be rashly blamed, for an interpretation so forced*  
 “ *and far fetched; because it was the prevailing*  
 “ *custom of that age, to import into the sacred text*  
 “ *senses, which did not belong to it* [a].

[z] Κατανοήσατε γὰρ πάντα τὰ  
 ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, εἰ ἄνευ τοῦ σχήματος  
 τούτου διοικίσθαι, ἢ κοινωνίαν ἔχειν  
 δύναται, &c. Apol. i. p. 82.

[a] Alium autem sensum tradit hoc loco *Justinus*, qui nimis longe quidem petitus videtur:

nec tamen S. Martyr idcirco temere reprehendendus, quod mos istius ævi tam inter Judæos, quam Christianos obtinuerit, sacro textui haud innatos sensus sub inferre. Vid. not. (29) ad Justin. ibid.

Again ;



Again ; “ Hear, says *Justin*, how Christ, after  
 “ he was crucified, fulfilled the symbol of the  
 “ tree of life in Paradise, and of all the other  
 “ things, which were to happen afterwards to  
 “ the righteous. For *Moses* was sent with a rod,  
 “ to redeem his people : with this rod he divided  
 “ the sea ; brought water out of the rock ; and  
 “ with a piece of wood, made the bitter water  
 “ sweet. *Jacob* also with sticks, made his uncle  
 “ *Laban*’s sheep bring forth such lambs, as were to  
 “ be his own again, &c. [b].” And so he goes on,  
 in this way of allusion, to apply all the sticks  
 and pieces of wood in the Old Testament to the  
 Cross of Christ : and pursuing the same argu-  
 ment in another place, where he is describing the  
 fight of the *Israeletes* with *Amalek*, he says, “ that  
 “ when the son of *Nun*, called *Jesus*, led the  
 “ people on to battel, *Moses* employed himself  
 “ in prayer, with his hands stretched out in the  
 “ form of a Cross ; that, as long as he continued  
 “ in that posture, *Amelek* was beaten ; but when  
 “ he remitted any thing of it, his own people  
 “ suffered : and that all this was owing to the  
 “ power of the cross : for the people did not  
 “ conquer, because *Moses* prayed ; but because,  
 “ while the name of *Jesus* was at the head of the  
 “ battel, *Moses* was exhibiting the figure of the  
 “ Cross [c].” It would be endless to run through

[b] Ὅτι δὲ, μετὰ τὸ σταυροθῆναι  
 τῆτον—σύμβολον εἶχε τῆ ξύλης  
 τῆς ζωῆς, ὃ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ πεφυ-  
 τίσθαι ἐλέλεκτο, κὶ τῶν γενησομέν-  
 ων πᾶσι τοῖς δικαίοις, ἀκόσαστε, &c.  
 Id. Dial. p. 2. p. 325, 326.

[c] Οὐ γὰρ ὅτι, ἔτιωσ ἠύχαιο  
 Μωσῆς, διὰ τῆτο κρείσσων ὁ λαὸς  
 ἐγίνετο, ἀλλ’ ὅτι—αὐτὸς τὸ  
 σημεῖον τῆ σταυρῆ ἐποίησε. Ibid.  
 p. 336.

all the interpretations of the same kind, which are to be found in this Father; since his works are but little else, than a wretched collection of them: the pure flights of an enthusiastic fancy and heated brain, which no man in his sober senses could mistake for divine revelations. Yet as absurd as they now appear to be, this pious Father insists, that they were all suggested to him from Heaven; and appeals to the *Jews* themselves, against whom he was applying them, *whether they thought it possible for him, to acquire so perfect a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, if he had not received from the author of them, the grace or gift to understand them* [d]. What credit then can be due to this Father, in the report of other people's gifts and inspirations, who was so grossly deceived himself, or willing at least to deceive others, in this confident attestation of his own? Dr. *Cave* tells us, that *Justin was wholly ignorant of the Hebrew tongue*; which was the cause of his childish blunders, whenever he meddled with it. "Every one, says he, who has dipped but ever so little into that tongue, knows, that *Satan* in the *Hebrew* signifies an adversary: but see the ridiculous interpretation of *Justin*: He is called *Satanas*, says the Martyr; a name compounded agreeably to his nature, of *Sata*, which signifies an Apostate, and *Nas*, a Serpent, &c. [e]." But for a farther illustration of his character,

[d] Οἴεσθε ἂν ἡμᾶς ποιεῖ, ὃ ἄνδρες, νεροπέναι δυνήθῃαι ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς ταῦτα, εἰ μὴ θελήματι τοῦ θελήσαντος αὐτὰ ἐλάβομεν χάριν τῆ νοῆσαι. Dial. par. 2. p. 390.

[e] Litterarum Hebraicarum rudem penitus & imperitum fuisse, *Justino* vitio verti non debet, &c.—Hinc factum est, ut in Hebræis adeo pueriliter lapsus

character, I shall give an instance or two of the doctrines, which he teaches, as orthodox and Apostolical, as well as of the facts, which he asserts, as certain and unquestionable.

He declares, that all the Christians, who were in all points orthodox, embraced and believed the doctrine of the *millenium*: “ that all the Saints  
 “ should be raised in the flesh, and reign with Christ  
 “ in *Jerusalem*, enlarged and beautified in a wonderful manner for their reception, in the enjoyment of all sensual pleasures, for a thousand years before the general resurrection [f].” Which doctrine he deduces from the testimony of the Prophets and of St. *John* the Apostle; and was followed in it by the Fathers of the second and third centuries: yet the doctrine itself was afterwards exploded, as it well deserved, not only as absurd and monstrous, but as impious and heretical. St. *Jerom* treats it as a mere fable, or *dream of the Jews, and Judaizing Christians*. Yet from the authority of those Fathers, who asserted it, and the credit, which it had attained with the generality of Christians, he foresaw, as he tells us, *what a furious storm he should raise against himself by that freedom* [g]. The sure fate of all those,

lappus fit, exemplum dabo, &c.  
 Cave Hist. Litter. p. 61. Edit ult.

[f] Εγώ δὲ καὶ εἰ τινὲς εἰσιν ἑρ-  
 θογνώμονες κατὰ πάντα χριστιανοὶ, καὶ  
 σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν γενήσεσθαι ἐπιτά-  
 μεθα, καὶ χίλια ἔτη ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ,  
 οἰκοδομηθείση, καὶ κοσμηθείση, καὶ  
 πάλαινεύσει, &c. Dialog. par.  
 2. p. 313.

[g] Quæ qui recipiunt, mille  
 quoque annorum fabulam &  
 terrenum Salvatoris imperium  
 Judaico errore suscipient—  
 Comment. in Isa. c. 30. Oper.  
 Tom. 3. p. 262. Edit. Benedict.

Ex quo discimus mille an-  
 norum fabulam, in qua rursus  
 nuptiæ promittuntur, & cibi  
 &

those, who, in any age of the Church, from the earliest times down to the present, have had the virtue and courage to attack any popular error, or reigning superstition.

He asserts another doctrine full as monstrous ;  
 “ that God having created the world, committed  
 “ the care of it to Angels ; who transgressing  
 “ their duty, fell in love with women, and begot  
 “ children on them, whom we call Dæmons ;  
 “ who subdued mankind to their power ; partly  
 “ by magical writings ; partly by terrors, and  
 “ punishments ; and partly by the institution of  
 “ sacrifices, fumes, and libations ; of which they  
 “ began presently to stand in need, after they had  
 “ enslaved themselves to their lusts and passions,  
 “ &c. [b]” And in another place, “ the truth,  
 “ says he, shall come out ; that evil Dæmons of  
 “ old debauched women and corrupted boys, and  
 “ spread terrors among men ; who did not  
 “ examine things by reason ; but seized with fear,  
 “ and not knowing, that these Dæmons were evil  
 “ spirits, called them Gods, and gave every one  
 “ that name, which they had each taken to them-  
 “ selves. But when *Socrates* by true reason en-  
 “ deavoured to expose their practices, and draw  
 “ men away from their worship, they, by the  
 “ help of wicked men, took care to get him put  
 “ to death, as an Atheist and impious person [i].”

He

& terrenæ vitæ conversatio, ab-  
 jicendam. Ib. p. 436.

Ut præfaga mente jam cer-  
 nam, quantorum in me rabies  
 concitanda fit ibid. p. 478.

[b] Οἱ δὲ ἄγγελοι, παραεἰάντες

τήνδε τὴν τάξιν, γυναικῶν μίξεσιν  
 ἠτήθησαν, καὶ παῖδας ἐτέκνωσαν,  
 οἳ εἰσιν οἱ λεγόμενοι δαίμονες, &c.  
 Apol. 2. p. 112.

[i] Εἰρήσειαι γὰρ τὸ ἀληθές.  
 ἐπεὶ τὸ πάλαιον δαίμονες φαῦλοι  
 ἐπιφα-

He professes likewise the highest regard for certain spurious books, which were published under the names of the *Sibyl* and *Hystaspis*; which he treats with the same reverence as the Prophetic Scriptures; appeals to them as divine, and says, that “ *by the contrivance of Dæmons, it was made a capital crime to read them, in order to deter men from coming at the knowledge of what was good, and keep them still in subjection to themselves: which yet, adds he, they were not able to effect: for we not onely read them freely without fear, but offer them also, as you see, to your perusal; knowing, that they will be found acceptable to all [k].*” And it is certain, that from this example and authority of *Justin*, these silly writings were held in the highest veneration by the Fathers and rulers of the Church, through all succeeding ages.

*Clemens of Alexandria* supposes them to have been inspired by God, in the same manner as the Prophets of the Old Testament: which he confirms by the authority both of *St. Peter* and of *St. Paul*, whom he cites as appealing to them, for a prediction of the life and character of *Jesus*. “ For as God, says *Clemens*, out of his desire to save the *Jews*, gave them Prophets, so raising up Prophets also to the *Greeks*, from their own nation and language, as far as they were

ἐπιφανείας ποιησάμενοι, καὶ γυναῖ-  
κας ἐμοίχευσαν καὶ παῖδας διέφθει-  
ραν. &c. *ib.* *Apol.* i. p. x.

[k] Καὶ Σίβυλλα δὲ καὶ Ὑσα-  
σπισ, γενήσεσθαι τῶν φθαρτῶν ἀνά-  
λωσι διὰ πικρὸς ἴφασαν. *Apol.* i.

p. 30.

Καὶ ἐέργειαν δι τῶν φαύλων  
δαιμόνων, θάνατον ὠρίσθη κατὰ τῶν  
τὰς Ὑσάσπης, ἢ Σιδύλλης, ἢ τῶν  
προφητῶν βίβλης ἀναγινοσκόλων.  
&c. *ib.* p. 67.

C

capable

“ capable of receiving that good gift of God, he  
 “ separated them from the vulgar, as not onely  
 “ the Preaching of *Peter*, but the Apostle *Paul*  
 “ also declares, speaking thus; take the Greek  
 “ books into your hands, and look into the Sibyl,  
 “ how clearly she speaks of one God, and of the  
 “ things to come: then take *Hystaspes* also and  
 “ read, and you will find the Son of God much more  
 “ clearly and evidently described: and that many  
 “ Kings shall employ all their forces against Christ,  
 “ out of their hatred to him, and to all who bear  
 “ his name [l].”

The heathens on the other hand charged the Christians with the forgery of these books, and gave the title of *Sybillists*, by way of contempt, to those, who held them to be divine [m]. Which charge the Fathers constantly denied and treated as a pure calumny [n]: Yet all the Critics of these days

[l] Clem. Alex. Strom. 1. 6. p. 761. Edit. Ox. The *Preaching of Peter*, Κήρυγμα Πέτρου, was the title of a spurious book, ascribed to that Apostle: which is often cited as genuine by *Clemens*, *Origen*, and the other Fathers: and was forged probably in the age, immediately succeeding to that of the Apostles. [Vid. Cave Hist. Lit. V. 1. p. 6. it. Grab. Spicil. Patr. T. 1. p. 62.] The passage also cited here from *St. Paul*, was taken from some other spurious piece now unknown, which then passed for the work of that Apostle. [Vid. Not. ad

loc. Clem.] *Hystaspis* is called by *Lactantius*, a most ancient King of the Medes: [l. 7. c. 16.] and by *Animianus Marcellinus*, the Father of *Darius*: and is said to have been a master of all the doctrine of the *Magi*. Vid. Amm. Marc. 1. 23. c. 6. & Not. Valef.

[m] *Origen* speaking of *Celsus* says; Εἶπε δὲ τινὰς εἶναι καὶ Σιευλλιστὰς. &c. Con. Cel. 1. 5. 272.

[n] *Celsus* having charged the Christians with inserting many blasphemous passages into the verses of the *Sybil*, *Origen* observes in answer to him, that

days allow the fact to be true, and consider it, as one of the pious frauds of those primitive ages.

There

that he had neither produced any passages, so inserted, nor any ancient and correct copies of the verses themselves, which wanted such passages; which he ought to have done, if he had been able, [l. 7. 369.] this indeed was, to put the controversy upon a right foot; by which however, as the learned *Valesius* remarks, *Celsus* might easily have made good his charge, and detected the forgery. [Not. in Euseb. Vit. Constant. p. 700. Edit. Cant.] If he did not therefore produce any old copies, which wanted the passages in question, the reason of it must be, that he either thought it unnecessary, in a case so manifest, or that the books themselves were not easy to be found.

The succeeding Fathers treat the same objection in a manner

Εἰν ἄριστοι ἅμα πέντε καὶ ἰχθύεσσι δυοῖσιν  
 Ἄνδρῶν χιλιάδας ἐν ἐρήμῳ πέντε κορέσσει.  
 Καὶ τὰ περισσεύοντα λαβὼν μέγα κλάσματα πάντα,  
 Δώδεκα πληρώσει κοφίνης εἰς ἐλπίδα πολλῶν.

With five loafs and two fishes

He will satisfy five thousand men in the desert.

Then gathering up all the fragments, which remain,

He will fill twelve baskets for the confirmation of many.

*Eusebius* has preserved an *Acrostich*, said to have been taken from the *Erythraean Sibyl*; in which the initial letters

wholly equivocal and evasive. *Lactantius*, after he has alledged many verses from the *Sibyl*, in which the principal acts and miracles of *Jesus* are circumstantially described, says, "those who are confuted by these testimonies, usually fly to this shift, of declaring these verses, not to be the *Sibyl's*, but forged and composed by our people: which no man will believe, who has read *Cicero* and *Varro*, and the rest of the ancient writers, who make mention of the *Erythraean* and the other *Sibyls*, and who were all dead before *Christ* was born." [De Ver. Sap. l. 4. 15.] The four following verses, cited from the *Sibyl* by *Lactantius*, will serve as a specimen of the rest.

of each line compose the following Greek words, Ἰησοῦς, Χριστὸς, Θεοῦ Υἱὸς, Σωτὴρ, Σταυρὸς. *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.*

*There is no man, says Dr. Cave, who does not see, that they were forged for the advancement of the*

*viour, Crofs* He tells us however, "that many people, tho' they allowed the *Erythraean Sibyl* to have been a *Prophe- tics*, yet rejected this *Acro- stich*, suspecting it to have been forged by the Christians — but the truth, adds he, is manifest: and our people have been so exact in computing the times, as to leave no room to imagine, that the verses were made after the coming of Christ, and falsely sent abroad, as the predictions of the *Sibyl*. For it is agreed by all, that *Cicero* had read this poem, which he translated into the latin tongue, and inserted into his own works," [Vit. Constant. p. 700. Ed. Cant.] Now the sole ground of this confident assertion is, that *Cicero*, speaking of certain verses, ascribed to the *Sibyl*, which had really been forged by the partisans of *J. Caesar*, to serve a political design, after he has ridiculed the verses themselves, and the purpose of them, intimates, that they were composed in the form of an *Acrostich*, which was a work of labor and attention, not of madness or ecstasy, and could not therefore come from the *Sibyl*. Div. 2. 54

St. *Austin* has given us a latin translation of the same *Acrostich*, which he introduces

thus; "The *Erythraean Sibyl* has indeed written some things clearly and manifestly relating to Christ; which I have read in the latin tongue, tho' in bad verses, through the unskilfulness of the translator, as I afterwards understood. For *Flaccianus*, an eminent person, who had been Proconsul; a man of flowing eloquence and great learning; as we were conversing together on the subject of Christ, produced a greek book, being the verses, he said, of the *Erythraean Sibyl*, where he shewed in a certain place, how the initial letters of each verse were managed so, as to form the words, *Ἰησοῦς, Χριστός, &c.* [De Civ. Dei 18. 23.]" But the same Father declares in another place, that *there were some, who suspected all those prophecies, which related to Christ, and passed under the name of the Sibyl, to have been forged by the Christians.* [ib. c. 46.] Upon which the learned Editor of his works, *Ludovicus Vives*, remarks, that they could not be forged, because they are cited both by *Lactantius* and *Eusebius*. [Not in loc.] Thus a most gross and palpable forgery was imposed upon the Christian world, from the very midst of those best and purest ages;



*the Christian faith* [o]. Some impute the fraud to *Hermas*; some to *Papias*; and others to *Justin* himself. Mr. *Blondel* and Mr. *Dodwell* charge it upon the Heretics, called *Montanists*; but by a gross mistake, as Dr. *Cave* observes, since *Montanus* was not in being, till forty years after *the Sibylline books* were known to the world [p].

*Justin* affirms also that silly story, concerning the *Septuagint version* of the Old Testament. “That it was made by seventy Elders sent for that purpose from *Jerusalem* to *Aegypt*, at the request of King *Ptolemy*: whom that King shut up in as many separate cells, and obliged them, each to translate the whole Bible apart, and without any communication with each other: yet all their several translations were found to agree verbatim from the beginning to the end; and by that means were demonstrated to be of divine inspiration.” And to raise the greater attention to his story, he introduces it, by declaring, “that he is not telling us a fable or forged tale; but that he himself had seen at *Alexandria* the remains of those very cells, in

ages; which tho’ rejected and derided from the beginning by all men of sense among the Heathens, yet obtained full credit in the Church, through all ages, without any other ground to support it, but the utility of the deceit, and the authority of those venerable Fathers, who contrived and at-

tested it-

[o] Hadriano imperante, forsân circa ann. 136. nata videntur.—conficta esse, idque in gratiam Christianæ fidei nemo non videt. *Cave Hist. Litt.* Vol. I. p. 57. Edit. Oxon.

[p] Vid. *Cave ib.* p. 58. it. *Dodwell. Dissertation. Cyprian.* 4. §. x.

“ which the Translators had been shut up [q]. But repeating the same story in his Apology, he makes an unhappy blunder, by saying, that *King Ptolemy's message, to beg the assistance of those seventy translators, was sent to Herod King of Jerusalem*; whereas *Herod* happened to live about three hundred years later than *Ptolemy* [r]. Dr. *Grabe* endeavours to excuse *Justin* by the help of a forced criticism, which the ingenious Editor of *Justin's* Apology, with good reason derides; since this pious Father was certainly guilty here of that weakness, against which *St. Paul* warned both *Timothy*, and *Titus*, of giving too much heed to profane, Jewish, and old women's fables [s]; and furnishes a pregnant instance, how easily his prejudices might impose upon him in all other cases of the like nature.

To these specimens of his want of judgment, I might add several more, from his frequent use of *fabulous and apocryphal books*, forged by the first Christians, under the names of the Apostles; and likewise from his false and negligent manner of quoting the genuine Scriptures. Dr. *Grabe* has collected several instances of the first sort [t];

[q] Ταῦτα ἐ μῦθος ὑμῖν ᾧ ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες, ἐδὲ πεπλασμέναις ἱστορίας ἀπαγγέλλομεν. ἀλλ' αὐτοὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ γενόμενοι, καὶ τὰ ἴχνη τῶν οἰκισκῶν ἐν τῇ Φαράῳ ἐωρακότες ἔτι σώζόμενα, &c. *Cohort. ad Græc.* p. 14.

[r] Ὅτε δὲ Πτολεμαῖος ὁ Αἰγυπτίων βασιλεὺς — προσέπεμψε

τῷ τῶν Ἰσραηλίων τότε βασιλεύοντι Ἡρώδῃ, &c. *Apol.* i. p. 49. *vid. Not.* 8, 9.

[s] 1 *Tim.* iv. 7. *Tit.* i. 14. See *Ant. Van Dale Differt. de Arist.* p. 146.

[t] *Vid. Græbe Spicileg. Patr. Tom.* 1. p. 14. 327. *it.* p. 19.

and

and his learned Editor finds frequent occasion to animadvert upon the second [u].

It will be said perhaps, that these instances shew indeed a weakness of judgement, yet do not impeach the veracity of *Justin*, as a witness of fact. With regard to which, we must call to mind, what is hinted above, that the want of judgement alone may, in some cases, disqualify a man as effectually, from being a good witness, as if he wanted veracity too. For example, *Justin* expressly affirms, *that he had seen the cells, in which the seventy were shut up to the task of translating the Bible.* Now it is certain, that there never were any such cells, nor any such translators: and the best excuse, which can be made for him is, that he was imposed upon by some *Jews* or *Christians* of *Alexandria*, who might shew him some old ruins, under the name of Cells, which his prepossession in favour of the story, owing to his natural credulity and want of judgement, made him take to be really such.

Again, in his Apology, addressed to the Emperor and Senate of *Rome*, he charges them with paying divine honors to the Heretic and Impostor, *Simon*, of *Samaria*, commonly called the *Magician*: and for the truth of his charge, appeals to a Statue, then subsisting in *Rome*, and publicly dedicated to that *Simon* in the Island of the *Tiber*, with this Inscription, SIMONI DEO

[u] Vid. Just. Apol. 1. p. Not. 6. it. p. 206. Not. 20. it. 87. quæ disputat de feris venenosis, &c. in deserto. it. p. 92. p. 203. Not. 16. it. Not. 18. p. 327.

SANCTO [x]. But it is manifest beyond all reasonable doubt, as some learned men have shewn, that *Justin* was led here into a gross blunder, by his usual want of judgement and knowledge of *Roman* affairs, and his pre-conceived belief of certain fabulous stories, which passed current about this *Simon* among the first Christians [y]; for the Statue and Inscription, to which he appeals, were not dedicated to his Countryman, *Simon Magus*, of whose Deification there is not the least hint in any *Roman* writer, but to a *Sabine Deity*, of ancient worship in *Rome*, and of similar name, SEMONI SANCO [z], frequently mentioned by the old Writers: as the Inscription itself, dug up, about two centuries ago, from the ruins of that very place, or little Island, which *Justin* describes, has clearly demonstrated [a].

[x] Ὁς ἐπὶ Κλαυδίου καίσαρος  
— θεὸς ἐνομήσθη καὶ ἀνδριάντι παρὰ  
ἰμῶν ὡς θεὸς τελέμησαι. Ὁς ἀνδρίας  
ἀνεγέγραται ἐν τῷ Τιθερί ποταμῷ,  
μείλαξὺ τῶν δύο γεφυρῶν, ἔχων ἐπι-  
γραφήν Ῥωμαϊκὴν ταυτήν, Σίμωνι  
Δέω Σάστῳ. Apol. i. p. 39.

*Justin* was followed in the belief and assertion of this fact by all the succeeding Fathers. *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Augustinus*, *Epiphanius*, *Eusebius*.

[y] Vid. Ant. Van Dale de Statua Simoni Mago erecta. Differtat.

[z] *Sancus*, as *Dionysius* writes, was a Deity of the old Sabines, whom some called Δία Σάσιον. [Vid. Dionys. Hal. Antiq. l. 2. 49. it. 4. 58] and

the Romans *Deum Fidium*. And *Semones*, signified the same as Ἡμιθεοί, Demigods or Heroes deified. *Livy* mentions a Chappel of *Semo Sancus* in *Rome* —to whom the goods of certain enemies were consecrated. —bona Semoni Sanco consecranda positi—in Sacello Sanci versus ædem Quirini. Liv. 8. 20.

[a] SEMONI  
SANCO  
DEO FIDIO  
SACRVM.  
&c.

*Gruter*. Vol. 1. p. xcvi. 5. where there are several more Inscriptions to the same Deity.

Now

Now should we allow these cases to be clear of any fraud or design to deceive; yet they yield so bad a sample of his understanding, as to render his testimony of very little weight in any other relation whatsoever. For if he was deceived in such plain and obvious facts, where a common discernment and moderate knowledge of history, would have enabled him to have discovered the truth, how much the more easily would he be caught by a confederacy of subtle and crafty Impostors, employing all their arts, to amaze and dazzle the senses of the credulous, and to put off their surprizing tricks, for the miraculous effects of a divine power?

I cannot dismiss this Father, without taking notice of an accusation, which he frequently brings against the *Jews*, that they had expunged many passages out of the Greek Bibles, in which the character and sufferings of Jesus were clearly described: which charge all the learned of these later ages have found to be wholly groundless. Let us see then how he supports it. “ They have  
“ erased, says he, out of the book of *Esdras*,  
“ the following words; *Esdras* said to the peo-  
“ ple, this passover is our Saviour, and our re-  
“ fuge; and if you will but persuade yourselves,  
“ and be convinced in your hearts, that we are to  
“ humble him in a sign or figure, and afterwards  
“ to put our trust in him; this place shall not  
“ be made desolate to all ages, says the Lord of  
“ Hosts. But if you do not believe on him, nor  
“ attend to his preaching, you shall be as dirt to  
the

“ the nations [b].” The Editor of *Justin* remarks here, that this passage is not to be found, in any copies either of the *Apocryphal* or *Canonical Esdras*; nor in any other Christian writer, but *Lactantius*: and instead of being expunged by the *Jews*, appears to have been forged by the *Christians*: where he refers us to the censure of an able Critic and Protestant Divine, *John Croius*; who charges the forgery on *Justin* himself, in the following words: “ To propose what I think, freely and candidly; and what all honest and religious judges of these matters will allow to be true: I take this to have been a pious fraud of *Justin*, in which *Lactantius* followed him: who forged and published this passage, for the confirmation of the Christian Doctrine, as well as the greatest part of the *Sibylline Oracles*, and the Sentences of *Mercurius* [c].”

Again, *Justin* affirms, that in the 90th Psalm it was said, *tell the nations that the Lord reigned from the tree*: and that the *Jews* had erased the words, *from the tree*. But as there is no footstep of these words, either in the *Vulgate*, or any of the *Greek* or *Hebrew* copies, it is manifest, says the Editor, that *they were not expunged by the Jews, but added by the Christians* [d]. Lastly, he charges

[b] Από μὲν ἔν τῶν ἐξηγήσεων, ὧν ἐξηγήσατο Ἐσδρας εἰς τὸν νόμον τὸν περὶ τοῦ πάχρα, τὴν ἐξήγησιν ταύτην ἀφείλοιο, &c. Dial. 292.

[c] Sed satis patet ab aliquo Christiano conficta esse, non a Judæis deleta.—Quod autem *Joannes Croius*, Observat. in. N. T. p. 205, *Justinum* hujus fraudis artificem fuisse affirmat,

in eo sane non Martyris nostri, in quem ista suspicio non cadit, sed suam potius ipsius existimationem lædit, &c. Vid. Not. ad loc.

[d] Manifestissimum tamen est, hæc verba.—non fuisse a Judæis resecta, sed ab aliquo Christiano addita, &c. Not. ad Dial. p. 294.

them *with expunging a passage of Jeremiah*, which yet he owns to be retained in some copies of their synagogues: as it actually is in all copies, both Greek and Hebrew, to this day. Upon which the Editor says, *that he absolves the Jews again from all fraud, but cannot absolve Justin from the utmost negligence and rashness* [e]. So unlucky and injudicious was this Father, in his charge of these frauds on the Jews, as to give an occasion only for fixing them after all upon the Christians, and, in the opinion of some, even upon himself.

The learned and ingenious Editor of his *Apolo- gies and Dialogues*, who shews an inclination, to defend him on all occasions, where he is defensi- ble, and on some, even where he is not, yet is often forced to break out into a kind of astonish- ment, at his ignorance, negligence, rashness, cre- dularity, so gross in many instances, as to baffle all the art of criticism, nor to admit any certain rule of collecting his real sense. Yet *there are some still*, says he, *who extoll him, not only as a most learned, but a most eloquent writer* [f].

*Irenæus*, whose character and doctrines come next to be considered, was, of all the Fathers, whose works still remain to us, the most diligent collector and assertor of *Apostolic traditions*. And

[e] Καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν διὰ Ἰερεμίας  
λεχθέντων ταῦτα περιέκοψαν. Ib.  
293.

Nos quoque Judæos fraudis  
absolvimus, *Justinum* summæ  
negligentiæ & temeritatis ab-  
solvere non possumus. Not.  
ad loc.

[f] Vid Edit. Lond. 1722.  
& Clarissimi Thirlbii Annotat.  
ad p. 130, 205, 293, 378, &c.  
Et tamen sunt, qui hunc non  
tantum doctissimum, verum  
etiam eloquentissimum esse præ-  
dicant. p. 305.

in truth, as far as his judgement and veracity may be relied upon, he seems to have been well qualified for that character; being acquainted, as he tells us, with several, who had conversed familiarly with the Apostles, and curious also to inform himself, of all the particular doctrines, which they had ever taught by word of mouth. “ He lived, says Mr. *Dodwell*, so near to the times of the Apostles, as to be able, to transmit their doctrines to posterity with certainty and fidelity, as they were delivered to him by oral tradition, from their immediate Successors and Disciples [g].” Yet *Photius*, one of the ablest Critics of his own, or any other age of the Church, has intimated a different character of him in the following short censure upon his writings; in which, *he thought it necessary*, he says, *to advertise the reader, that in some of them, the purity of truth with respect to Ecclesiastical doctrines, is adulterated by his false and spurious reasonings [b]*. But the following instances of the doctrines, which he delivers, as orthodox and *Apostolic*, will be the surest rule of determining his real character, as well as the proper degree of credit, which may be due to his testimony.

He affirms then, *that our Saviour lived to an old age, or was fifty years old at the least*, at the time of his crucifixion; which he attempts to prove, first, from the reason of the thing; “ that

[g] Sufficit enim, ut Apostolorum tempora ita prope contingerit, ut quid senserint Apostoli, possent orali traditione ad

posterios deducere, traditionisque illius certus & fidelis esse testis. Diff. Iren. §. 3.

[b] Phot. Bibl. c. xxx.



“ as Christ came to save all men, of all ranks  
 “ and degrees, so it was necessary, that he should  
 “ pass through all the several stages of life, that  
 “ he might be a pattern to them all: 2dly,  
 “ from the unanimous tradition and positive testi-  
 “ mony of all the old men, who had lived with  
 “ St. *John*, and the other Apostles, from whom,  
 “ he says, they all received this account, and  
 “ constantly bore witness to the truth of it [i].”  
 Yet *this unanimous tradition*, so solemnly vouched  
 by this venerable Father, is as certainly false, as  
 the Gospels are true. Dr. *Whitby*, after he has  
 produced this same passage, cries out, as it were,  
 with astonishment. “ Behold here, according to  
 “ *Irenæus*, how all the Elders of *Asia* testify with  
 “ one voice, that they had received from St. *John*  
 “ and the other Apostles, a tradition, concern-  
 “ ing a fact manifestly false! behold an *Apostolic*  
 “ man, professing to prove from St. *John’s* *Go-*  
 “ *spel*, things not only contradictory to that  
 “ Gospel, but to the articles of our Creed [k]!  
 “ &c.” The learned *Cave* also, in his *Life of*  
*Irenæus*, tells us, “ that he was betrayed into

[i] Sic & Senior in Senioribus, ut sit perfectus Magister in omnibus, non solum secundum expositionem veritatis, sed & secundum ætatem, sanctificans simul Seniores, exemplum ipsis quoque siens— a quinquagesimo anno declinat jam in ætatem seniolem: quam habens Dominus noster docebat. Sicut Evangelium & omnes Seniores testantur, qui in Asia apud Joannem discipulum Do-

mini convenerunt, id ipsum tradidisse eis Joannem. Permanfit autem cum eis usque ad Trajani tempora. Quidam autem eorum non solum Joannem, sed & alios Apostolos viderunt, & hæc eadem de ipsis audierunt: & testantur de hujusmodi relatione. *Iren. l. 2, c. 39.* Edit. Oxon.

[k] Vid. *Whitby* *Strict. Patr. in Joh. c. 8. 57. p. 220.*

“ this

“ this error,——partly from a mistaken report,  
 “ which he had somewhere picked up, (and it  
 “ may be from his master *Papias*) and partly out  
 “ of opposition to his adversaries, who main-  
 “ tained, that our Saviour staid no longer upon  
 “ earth, than till the thirty-first year of his age ;  
 “ against whom the eagerness of disputation  
 “ tempted him to make good his assertion from  
 “ any plausible pretence [1], &c.

He asserts likewise the doctrine of the *Millen-*  
*nium*, in the grossest sense of it, from the same  
 authority of a tradition, handed down to him by  
 all the old men, who had conversed with St. *John*,  
 and heard him relate, *what our Saviour himself*  
*used to teach concerning it*: of which he has re-  
 corded the following passage ; “ The days will  
 “ come, in which there shall grow vineyards,  
 “ having each 10,000 vine stocks; and each  
 “ stock, 10,000 branches; each branch, 10,000  
 “ shoots; each shoot, 10,000 bunches; each  
 “ bunch 10,000 grapes; and each grape squee-  
 “ zed shall yield twenty-five measures of wine;  
 “ and when any of the Saints shall go to pluck  
 “ a bunch; another bunch will cry out, I am a  
 “ better, take me, and bless the Lord through  
 “ me. In like manner a grain of wheat sown  
 “ shall bear 10,000 stalks; each stalk, 10,000  
 “ grains; and each grain 10,000 pounds of the  
 “ finest flour; and so all others fruits, seeds and  
 “ herbs in the same proportion, &c. These  
 “ words, says he, *Papias*, a disciple of St. *John*,

[1] Life of Iren. § x. p. 170.

“ and companion of *Polycarp*, an ancient man, “ testifies in writing in his fourth book, and “ adds, that they are credible to those who be- “ lieve [*m*].” The pious and cautious *Dr. Grabe* “ remarks on this occasion, “ that what *Irenæus* “ says here about the stalks of grain, will be “ thought an argument of straw by those, to “ whom such things appear incredible : but, that “ we ought not however, either to deny or affirm “ an thing rashly [*n*].” But *Eusebius* gives a frank and clear solution of the matter, by informing us, that *Papias was a weak man, of a very shallow understanding, as it appeared from his writings, and by mistaking the meaning of the Apostles, imposed these silly traditions on Irenæus, and the greatest part of the Ecclesiastical writers, who reflecting on the age of the man, and his near approach to the Apostles, were drawn by him into the same opinions [o].*”

*Irenæus*

[*m*] Ταῦτα δὲ καὶ Παπίας, Ἰω-  
κωννη μὲν ἀκροῆς, Πολυκάρπῳ δὲ  
ἑταίρῳ γεγονώς, ἀρχαίῳ ἀνὴρ  
ἐγγράφως ἐπιμαρτυρεῖ.—Et adje-  
cit, dicens, hæc autem credibi-  
lia sunt credentibus. l. 5. p. 455.

*Irenæus* then proceeds to confirm this doctrine, by the testimonies, of the Prophets, *Isaiab, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the revelations of St. John* : and contends, that it cannot be interpreted Allegorically, but will be fulfilled according to the letter in an earthly Jerusalem.

[*n*] Hoc quod *Irenæus* pro

ubertate & magnitudine fructuum ex paleis necit argumentum, *Stramineum* fortasse vocaverint, quibus ista sunt incredibilia. Sed de hisce nihil temere negandum, uti nec affirmandum. Annot. ad loc. p. 455.

[*o*] Σφόδρα γάρτοι σμικρὸς ὦν τὸν νῦν. ὡς ἂν ἐκ τῶν αὐτῆ λόγων τεκμηράμενον εἰπεῖν, φαίνεσθαι. πλὴν καὶ τοῖς μετ' αὐτὸν πλείστοις, ὕσσις τῶν Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν, τῆς ὁμοίας αὐτῶ δόξης, παραίτησι γέγονε, τὴν ἀρχαιότητα τ' ἀνδρὸς ἀρβυροειδημέους. ὡς περ ἔν εἰρηναίῳ καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος τὰ ὅμοια φρονῶν ἀναπί-

*Irenæus* affirms also, on the same authority of tradition, delivered to him by those, who had received it from the Apostles, that *Enoch and Elias were translated into that very Paradise, from which Adam was expelled, to remain there, till the consummation of all things: and that it was the same place, into which St. Paul also was caught up [p].* This is affirmed likewise by all the later Fathers, both *Greek and Latin*; induced to it, we may imagine, by the pretence of an Apostolical tradition: which yet from the absurdity of it, must necessarily be as false, as the rest above-mentioned. *Feverdantius*, the learned Editor of *Irenæus*, remarks upon this place; that tho' *St. Austin* does not allow this opinion to be a point of faith, yet since *Irenæus* and all the Primitive Fathers declare it to have been the doctrine of the Apostles, he cannot think it safe to believe otherwise [q]. And we must needs own him to be in the right, if, according to the principles of the Church of *Rome*, we can think the positive testimony of *Irenæus*, or the concurrent authority of all the Fathers, of weight enough to bear down the common sense and reason of mankind.

ἀναπέφθηνεν. Euf. Hist. l. 3. 39.

N. B. *Eusebius* indeed, in another place, speaks of *Papias* in a very different strain, as of a person singularly remarkable for his eloquence and knowledge of the Scriptures. [l. 3. c. 36.] But this passage, as the learned *Valesius* informs us, is not found in any of the old copies, which he had consulted, nor in the ancient version of *Rufinus*.

Whence he concludes, that it was inserted by some ignorant Scholiast, as being contradictory to what *Eusebius* had more explicitly delivered elsewhere of the same *Papias*, Vid. Not. Vales. ad loc.

[p] Διὸ καὶ λέγουσιν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι, τῶν Ἀποστόλων μαθηταί, τὰς μετὰ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἐκεῖσε μετὰ τὴν ἐξουσίαν. &c. l. 5. p. 405.

[q] Vid. ibid. Not. 5.

He

He asserts likewise very strongly, the fabulous story of the *Septuagint version*, with all the particulars already recited, of its miraculous birth, and the separate cells, &c. To which he has added another, no less romantic; *that the sacred Scriptures were utterly destroyed in the Babylonish captivity, but restored again, after seventy years, by Esdras, inspired by God for that purpose* [r]. And tho' in this also, he was followed by all the principal Fathers of the succeeding centuries, yet as Dr. *Prideaux*, and other learned men have remarked, there is no better foundation for it, than that *fabulous relation, in the fourteenth chapter of the second apocryphal book of Esdras*: a book, too absurd even for the Romanists themselves, to admit into their canon [s]: and notwithstanding the authority of *Irenæus*, and of all the other Fathers, who assert the same opinion, Mr. *Tillemont* declares it to be very dangerous to religion, and tending extremely to weaken the authority of the Scriptures [t]. He intimates also more than once, his belief, of *Angels mixing with the daughters of men*: where his Editor takes notice, that all the early Fathers were drawn into the same error, by the authority of the *Apocryphal book of Enoch*, cited

[r] Ὅς—ἐν τῇ—αἰχμαλωσίᾳ τῆ λαῖ, διαφθαρεισῶν τῶν γραφῶν —ἐνέπνευσεν Εσδρα τῷ ἱερεϊ. &c.

l. 3. c. 25.

[s] Prid. Connect. par. 1. p. 260. Vid. Ant. Van Dale Dissert. de Aristeā, p. 151.

[t] Mais l'autorité de ces Pe-

res ne l'empêche pas d'alléguer diverses raisons contre une opinion, qu'on peut dire très dangereuse à la religion, puisqu'elle affoiblit extrêmement l'autorité de l'Écriture. Memoir. Eccles. Tom. 3. p. 93.

by St. Jude [u]. Yet as monstrous as this error was, it maintained its ground, as Dr. *Whitby* assures us, through the four first centuries; tho' St. *Chrystom* treats it, as *absurd and blasphemous, and all, who espoused it, as mad*; and *Theodoret* calls them *infatuated and very stupid* [x].

From some of the doctrines abovementioned, and particularly that of the *Millennium*, Mr. *Chillingworth* has proved against the *Romanists*, that the *Catholic Church, even in the earliest ages, and within thirty or forty years after the Apostles, was not infallible in matters of faith*: since all those absurdities were taught by the Fathers of those ages, not as their private opinions only, but as doctrines of the Universal Church, derived immediately from the Apostles, and held so necessary, that those, who held the contrary, were hardly considered, as real Christians: to which he adds the following remark; that if *Papias*, who first committed them to writing, *could either by his own error, or a desire to deceive, cozen the Fathers of the purest age in this, why not also in other things?*

[u] Cum Angeli transgressores commixti fuissent eis. l. 4. c. 70. p. 371. Not. 2. and l. 5. c. 29.

Neque *Judas Apostolus*, ad cujus testimonium *Tertullianus* provocat, libros *Enochi* canonicos fecit, dum quandam ex iis prophetiam de adventu Domini ad judicium allegavit, &c. *Grab. Spicil. Patr. Vol. I.* in Not. p. 344.

Hæc forte respexit S. *Judas*

vers. 6. scribens, Ἀγγέλως ἀπολιπόσας τὸ ἴδιον οἰκητήριον, &c.— Similiter ante ipsum S. *Petrus* in posteriori epistola, c. 2; v. 4. cujus obscura quodammodo verba ex his *Enochi* verbis bene explicantur. *ibid.* p. 351.

[x] Obtinuit hæc sententia apud Patres fere omnes, qui quatuor primævis seculis flourerunt, &c. vid. *Whitby Strictur. Patrum.* in Gen. c. vi. 4: p. 5.

*Why*

*Why not in twenty, as well as one? And why might not twenty others do it as well as he [y]?*

As to *Irenæus's* manner of expounding the Scriptures, it is much the same with that of *Justin*, or rather, according to *Dr. Grabe*, with that of the age, in which he lived: following no rule of criticism; nor giving any attention to the proper signification of words; but indulging a wild and enthusiastic fancy, in the invention of typical senses, and forced allusions, utterly trifling and contemptible: *which those, who read the Fathers, must always bear in mind, as a learned Critic observes, or they will be drawn into great and frequent errors [z].*

Treating of the distinction of Animals into clean and unclean, he says; “The law foretold  
“ these things figuratively; by animals denoting  
“ men. Those, who divide the hoof and chew  
“ the cud, it pronounces clean: those, who do  
“ neither, unclean. Who then are clean? Those,  
“ who believe in the Father and the Son. This  
“ is their Firmness, or double hoof: and to meditate day and night on the laws of God, so as  
“ to be adorned with good works, is to chew the  
“ cud. But the unclean neither divide the hoof,  
“ nor chew the cud: that is, neither have faith in

[y] See his Additional Discourses, p. 36, 37. at the end of his Works, in Edit. 7th.

[z] Quorum nec stylus magnopere est elaboratus, nec ratiocinationes ad rectæ rationis & veræ criticæ normam exactæ, nec notiones satis perspicuæ,

aut per omnia inter sese consentientes, nec principia usquequaque vera. Quod iis, qui Scriptores Ecclesiasticos legunt, perpetuo animo obversari oportet, ni in frequentes & graves errores incidere velint. Jo. Cleric. Hist. Eccles. p. 775.

“ God, nor meditate on his laws. This is the  
 “ abomination of the Gentiles. But such as  
 “ chew the cud, and do not divide the hoof, are  
 “ unclean: this is a figurative description of the  
 “ *Fæces* [a].” With much more to the same  
 purpose. In which method of reasoning, as he  
 followed *Barnabas*, and the Apostolic Fathers, so  
 he was followed himself by the later writers;  
 and especially by *Clemens of Alexandria*, who has  
 copied this very passage [b].

Again, endeavouring to prove that the *Mosaic*  
*law* was to fill up the middle age of the world,  
 between the natural law, and the law of Christ,  
 he says; “ This was typically shewn by many  
 “ things, but especially by *Thamar*, daughter-in-  
 “ law to *Judas*. For when she was bringing out  
 “ twins, one of them put out his hand the first;  
 “ and as the midwife supposed him to be the  
 “ firstborn, she tied a scarlet string about his  
 “ hand. But when this was done, he drew in  
 “ his hand again, and his brother *Phares* came  
 “ out first; and after him *Zara*, who had the  
 “ mark. The Scripture clearly manifesting by  
 “ it the people, who had the scarlet sign; that  
 “ is, the faith professed by those of the foreskin,  
 “ or the uncircumcised: which was first shewn  
 “ out in the Patriarchs, and then withdrawn,

[a] Prædixit hæc omnia fi-  
 guraliter lex, de animalibus  
 delineans hominem. — Qui  
 sunt ergo mundi? qui in Pa-  
 trem & Filium per fidem iter  
 firmiter faciunt: hæc est enim  
 firmitas eorum, qui duplicis  
 sunt unguæ. &c. l. 5. c. 8.

[b] Καθαρὰ καὶ δεξιὰ τῆς δεῦρ  
 παραδιδωσὶν ἡ γραφή. ὡς ἂν εἰς  
 πατέρα καὶ εἰς υἱὸν διὰ τῆς πίστεως  
 τῶν δικαίων τὴν πορείαν ποιημένων  
 αὐτῆ γὰρ ἡ τῶν διχληθῆτων ἰσραή-  
 της. Strom. l. 7. XVIII. p. 900.  
 Ed. Oxon.



“ that its brother might be brought out first ;  
 “ and then he be born afterwards, who had been  
 “ shewn before, and was known by the scarlet  
 “ sign : which is the passion of the Just one ;  
 “ prefigured from the beginning in *Abel*, de-  
 “ scribed by the Prophets, but perfected in the  
 “ last days by the Son of God [c].”

His reasoning also upon the number of the Gos-  
 pels is in the same strain : “ It is impossible,  
 “ says he, that there could have been more or  
 “ less than four. For there are four climates,  
 “ and four cardinal winds ; and the Church is  
 “ spread over the whole earth ; but the Gospel  
 “ is the pillar and foundation of the Church, and  
 “ its breath of life. The Church therefore was  
 “ to have four pillars, blowing immortality from  
 “ every quarter, and giving life to men, &c. [d].”

[c] Hoc & per alia quidem multa, jam vero & per Thamar Judæarum typice ostenditur, &c. l. 4. c. 42.

[d] Neque autem plura numero quam hæc sunt, neque rursus pauciora capit esse Evangelia. *Ἐπειδὴ* — τέσσαρα κλίματα τῆς κόσμου, ἐν ᾗ ἔσμεν, εἰσι, καὶ τέσσαρα καθόδικα πνεύματα, &c. l. 3. p. 220, 21.

N. B. This puts me in mind of a specimen also of *Tertulian's* judgement and way of reasoning, on the question ; why the number of the Apostles was twelve, and no other. I can account for this, says he, not only by the voices of the Prophets, but by arguments

drawn from things : for I find this number prefigured to us by the Creator. There were twelve wells in *Elim* : twelve gems in the vest of *Aaron* ; twelve stones chosen by *Josua* out of the river *Jordan*, and deposited in the Ark of the covenant : by all which the twelve Apostles were signified ; who like fountains, were to water the dry desert of the Gentile world ; like gems, to illuminate the sacred Vestment of the Church, which Christ the High Priest put on ; and like stones, were firm in the faith. Cont. Marcion. l. 4. p. 519. D.

I have been the fuller in opening the characters and opinions of *Justin* and *Irenæus*, that I might save myself the trouble of enlarging in the same manner on the rest: especially as their characters will be sufficiently illustrated, by the specimens of them occasionally interspersed, in the sequel of this argument. But the later Fathers, generally speaking, do but copy the notions, and even the blunders of these two. For as they are the earliest, who have left any considerable works behind them, so they are the first likewise in credit and authority with succeeding ages, on the account of their piety, learning, and abilities: and the case was the same with the ancients, as it is still with the moderns; that when any facts or doctrines have once been established by men of eminent character, they are usually taken upon trust by all who follow, till some new inquirer, arises, who, not content with opinions imposed on him by chance or education, resolves to judge for himself, and to use his natural right and liberty of searching into the real grounds of them.

For instance; *St. Clemens of Rome* having alleged the ridiculous story of the *Phoenix*, as a type and proof of the resurrection; all the later Fathers take it from him of course, and refer us to the same bird, not only as really existing, but as created on purpose by God, to refute the incredulity of the Gentiles, on the subject of this great article of our faith. Yet all the heathen writers, from whom they borrowed the story, from *Herodotus*, down to their own times, treat it as nothing

thing else but a mere fable [e]. The case is the same with all the other facts, and absurd doctrines above specified; of the *Millennium*; of *Angels debauching women, and begetting Demons*; of the *divinity of the Septuagint version*; of the *destruction of the sacred Scriptures in the Babylonish captivity, &c.* In all which, these two Fathers, whose principles I have been illustrating, were implicitly followed, for a century or two at least, by all their Successors. *Irenæus* indeed stands single in his account of *the old age of Christ*; tho' confidently affirmed by him, on the pretended authority of all the Apostles; because it was evidently inconsistent with the history of the Gospels. But the later Fathers generally ran into a contrary extreme, and affirmed, what was maintained by the *Heretics only of Irenæus's days, that our Lord preached but one complete year, and died at the age of thirty*: which, according to *Clemens of Alexandria*, was both foretold by the Prophets, and affirmed by the Evangelists [f]. Whereas from the history of the Gospels, it is evident, that his ministry continued through *several successive Passovers*, or as *Sir Isaac Newton* has with great pro-

[e] Ἐμοὶ μὲν ἔπι πλείονα λέγοντες, &c. Herodot. 1. 2. §. 73. Vid. it. Whitby Strictur. Patr. in Psalm. xcii. 12. p. 85. it. Borchart. Hierozoic. Par. poster. l. 6. c. 5. p. 817.

[f] Καὶ ὅτι ἐνιαυτὸν μόνον ἔδει αὐτὸν κηρύξαι, καὶ τὸτο γέγραπται ἔτιως. ἐνιαυτὸν δεχθὲν κυρίῳ κηρύξαι

ἀπέπειλε με. τὸτο καὶ ὁ προφήτης εἶπεν, καὶ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον. Strom. 1. p. 407. Vid. Not. in loc. Edit. Oxon. Quinto decimo anno imperii (Tiberii) passus est Christus, annos habens triginta cum pateretur. Tertull. adv. Jud. p. 215.

bability computed, through five; and that he died in his *thirty-fourth* year [g].

Now from what I have above collected, it is certain, that if a gross absurdity of opinions, and the belief of things impossible, be the proof of a weak mind; if expositions of the Scriptures, void of reason and common sense, betray a great want of judgement, then we may justly charge those defects upon these ancient fathers; from whose foolish reasonings, both in religion and morality, whole books have been compiled [b].

Mr.

[g] Thus have we, in the Gospels of *Matthew* and *John*, all things told in due order, from the beginning of *John's* preaching to the death of Christ; and the years distinguished by such essential characters, that they cannot be mistaken. *Observat. on the Proph. of Dan. c. xi. p. 159.*

[b] *Vid. Dan. Whitby. Stricturne Patrum—Traité de la Morale des Peres. Par Jean Barbeyrac—Dallæus, &c.*

*N. B.* I shall here take the liberty to transcribe the following note, from a very ingenious and candid Advocate of Christianity, the Rev. *Archdeacon of Carlisle*, as it exhibits a just idea of the characters and writings of these earliest Fathers

“ Christianity was in its infancy, at most in its childhood, when these men wrote, and therefore it is no

“ wonder, that they *spake as Children*, that they *understood as Children*, that they *thought as Children*. This was according to the economy they were then under. And besides, they had not time and leisure to search into the Christian doctrines, nor had they laid in a sufficient stock and fund for that purpose, they being but newly adopted into the Christian Church: yet they were willing to appear in its behalf, and to defend it as well as they could, which was accepted by Heaven. [Edward's *Patrologia*. p. 57.] Let me not be censured, tho' I should be so bold as to say, that we should have understood the Scriptures much better, if we had not had the writings of the Fathers: for they have obscured and depraved them by their

Mr. *Dodwell*, one of their most zealous admirers, does not pretend to defend them on this head; but frankly owns, that their way of reasoning is *loose, sophistical and declamatory; far short of the solidity of the moderns; who excell them not only in philosophy and learning, but in the knowledge of antiquity, and even of their own languages*: and all that he pleads for in favor of their interpretations, especially of the New Testament, is, *that they should not be wholly slighted, tho' they had but little sense in them, because they were agreeable to the custom or taste of those ages* [i].

As to the question of their veracity it may admit perhaps some debate, and it will probably be thought harsh in the opinion of many, to suspect men of such piety and sanctity of life, either of the invention, or the propagation of known forgeries. Yet there are many things so

“ their different and contrary  
 “ comments: They have rai-  
 “ sed controversies, taught  
 “ men to quarrel and dispute  
 “ about the sense of several  
 “ texts, which otherwise are  
 “ plain and obvious, and a-  
 “ bout several matters of prac-  
 “ tice, which are evident e-  
 “ nough in themselves, some  
 “ of which are superstitious,  
 “ &c. ib. p. 135.” See Con-  
 siderations on the State of the  
 World with regard to Religion,  
 &c. p. 174.

[i] *Quin bonas litteras stu-  
 diofus excultas a nuperis no-  
 stris Ecclesiæ Reformatoribus  
 libenter agnoscimus. Nec in  
 philosophia modo, sed in an-*

*tiquitate, in ipsis etiam linguis  
 eorum temporum vernaculis.  
 Sed & pressiore nostris & so-  
 lidiorem argumentandi metho-  
 dum agnoscimus, quam sit a-  
 lia illa laxior & sophistica &  
 declamatoria, quæ non apud  
 Patres duntaxat; sed & alios  
 eorundem temporum Scrip-  
 tores, erat receptissima ———  
 Dodwell. Præfat. ad Dissertat:  
 in Iren. §. 15.*

*Sic illis nimirum deferen-  
 dum esse in Scripturarum in-  
 terpretatione censemus, ut ne  
 quidem ratiocinia alioqui mi-  
 nus solida, quæ tamen fuerint  
 in more seculi, plane negli-  
 genda sint. ib. §. 16.*

peremp-

peremptorily affirmed, without any ground of truth or probability, by the two Fathers, whose characters I have been considering, as to give us too much cause for such a suspicion: which, as we have seen above, has been actually charged on *Justin*, by men of learning, and may, with equal reason, be charged also on *Irenæus*. For what other account can be given of his frequent appeals to the tradition and testimony of the Apostles, for the support of so many absurd and incredible doctrines? If the doctrines themselves be false; the pretended tradition of them could not possibly be true: and if we absolve *Irenæus* from the forgery; it must be charged on somebody else, more ancient still, and of authority enough, to impose it upon him; and on whomsoever it may fall, it gives but a lamentable idea of those primitive ages, and primitive champions of the christian cause.

*Papias*, who is supposed to have been the disciple of St. *John*, and Bishop of *Hierapolis*, is said to have given rise to most of the fabulous traditions, which obtained in those early days. Dr. *Whitby* joins *Irenæus* to him and says; “ it is very remarkable, that these two earliest writers of the second century, who, on the credit of idle reports and uncertain fame, have delivered to us things said to be done by the Apostles and their scholars, have shamefully imposed upon us, by the forgery of fables and false stories [k].” But whoever forged the rest of the

[k] Id denique imprimis observandum est, duos primos Scriptores

the spurious traditions above recited, yet that, which relates to *the old age of* Jesus, the most solemnly attested of them all, and peculiar to *Irenæus*, may be fairly presumed to be his own forgery, because it was never embraced by any body else, and was singularly adapted to the argument, which he was then asserting, in opposition to certain Heretics, called *Valentinians*, who allowed *but one intire year* to our Saviour's ministry [1].

But be that as it will ; since the very earliest of all traditions, and the nearest to the fountain's head, are found to be so corrupt ; it will demonstrate at least, what a treacherous foundation they must be, to build any opinion upon, and much more, any article of our faith : which might be exemplified by many other instances from the history of the first centuries. For as soon as religious disputes began to infest the Church, the plea of Apostolical tradition was presently employed, as the most effectual to silence an adversary ; and was taken up therefore and urged with equal confidence by all sides. And it is an argument indeed, which of all others seems the best calculated for the use of controversy : for wherever it meets with credit, it must necessarily have great weight ; and where it happens even to find

Scriptores secundi seculi, qui ex rumusculis fama que dubia res gestas a Domini Apostolis, eorumque discipulis nobis tradiderunt, — fabulis fingendis, falsisque narrationibus, nobis

turpiter illufisse. Præf. ad Strictur. Patr. p. LXXIII.

[1] Ἐνιαυτῷ γὰρ ἐνὶ βάλουσαι αὐτὸν μὲν τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτὸ κερχευχέται. *Iren.* l. 1. c. 1. p. 16.

none,

none, yet it cannot easily be confuted; as not being reducible to any clear test, or fixed rule, by which it may be tried. It is not therefore strange, to find its authority carried so high, and in some cases, magnified even above the Scriptures themselves, by all the dealers in controversy, from the earliest Fathers, down to Dr. *Waterland*.

For example; in that most ancient and celebrated dispute between the eastern and western Churches, *about the time of holding their Easter*, *St. Polycarp*, Bishop of *Smyrna*, the Disciple and immediate Successor of the Apostles, and *Anicetus* his contemporary, the Bishop of *Rome*, severally alledged the Authority of *Apostolic tradition* for their different practice, from which neither of them could be induced to depart [m]. But *Papias*, as it is hinted above, the disciple of *Polycarp*, was the chief promoter and assertor of it: “as oft, says he, as I met with any one, who had conversed with the ancients, I always inquired very diligently after their sayings and doctrines: what *Andrew*, *Peter*, *Philip*, *John*, ———, and the rest of our Lord’s Apostles used to teach. For I was persuaded, that I could not profit so much by books, as by the voice of living witnesses [n].” *Irenæus*, the scholar

[m] Οὐτε γὰρ ὁ Ανίκηλος τὸν Πολύκαρπον πείσαι ἰδύνατο μὴ τηρεῖν ἅτε μετὰ Ἰωάννη τῷ μαθητῇ τῷ Κερίῳ ἡμῶν, καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν Ἀποστόλων, οἷς συνδιέτριψεν, αἰετ

τηρηκότα. &c. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 5. c. 24.

[n] Εἰ δέ τις καὶ παρηλοαθητικῶς τις τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ἔλθοι, τῶν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἀνέγκρινον λόγους. τί Ανδρέας



scholar of *Papias*, who had learnt the use of it from his master, was likewise a zealous assertor of it. “ If a dispute, says he, should arise, “ about any matter, tho’ but of little mo- “ ment, ought we not to have recourse to the “ most ancient Churches, in which the Apostles “ resided, and take from them what is certain “ and clear about the point in quæstion [o] ?” *Tertullian* declares it to be the only weapon, that can knock down an Heretic: and in all such controversies, advances it’s authority above the Scriptures; nay, forbids any appeal to the Scriptures, as hurtful to the cause of truth. *We must not appeal to the Scriptures*, says he, *or trust the merits of the cause with them: in which there can either be no victory, or an uncertain one, or what is equivalent to uncertain* [p]. And in this, *Dr. Waterland* declares, *that he seems to have judged well, upon the prudential case, and like a wise and sagacious man, with regard to the circumstances of those times* [q]. And in another place the same learned

δρέας ἢ τί πέτρος εἶπεν. ἢ τί φίλιππος. ἢ τί δαμαῖος, ἢ Ἰάκωβος. ἢ τί Ἰωάννης. ἢ Ματθαῖος. ἢ τίς ἕτερος τῶν κυρίων μαθητῶν. &c. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 3. c. 39. p. 136.

[o] Refert *Irenæus*, vir Apostolicorum temporum, & *Papiæ*, auditoris Evangelistæ Joannis, discipulus. Hieron. Ep. 53. ad Theodoram. Op. Tom. 4. par. 2. p. 581. Edit. Benedic.

Et si aliquibus de aliqua modica quæstione disceptatio esset, nonne oporteret in antiquissi-

mas recurrere Ecclesias, in quibus Apostoli conversati sunt, & ab eis de præsentî quæstione sumere quod certum & reliquidum est? l. 3. c. 1v. p. 205.

[p] Ergo non ad Scripturas provocandum est: nec in his constituendum certamen; in quibus aut nulla aut incerta victoria est, aut par incertæ. De præscript. Hæreticor. 19.

[q] Wherein to me he seems to have judged very well upon the

learned Doctor observes from the authority of *Irenæus*, that *Polycarp* had converted great numbers to the Faith by the strength of tradition; being a sensible argument, and more affecting, he says, at that time, than any dispute from the bare letter of the Scripture could be [r].

Here then we see in short, the origin and history of tradition. *Papias*, a weak and silly man, who mistook the sense of the Apostles, was the first, who made it his particular business to recommend the use of it, and for that purpose took the pains to collect all the unwritten facts and sayings of Christ and his Apostles, from the report of those, who had conversed with them. These sayings, as *Eusebius* tells us, consisted of a number of strange parables, and doctrines of our Saviour, with several other fabulous stories; which the authority of so venerable a person, who had lived with the Apostles, imposed upon the Church for genuin [s]: and the gravity of his scholar  
*Irenæus*

the prudential case, and like a wise and sagacious man. Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 378.

[r] Ibid. p. 380. Not. y.

[s] Καὶ ἄλλα δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς συγγραφεὺς, ὡς ἐκ παραδόσεως ἀγράφου, εἰς αὐτὸν ἤκοιλα παραλίθειναι, ξένων τε τινος παραβολὰς τῷ Σωτῆρι καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ αὐτῷ, καὶ τινα ἄλλα μυθικώτερα. Euseb. Hist. l. 3. c. 39.

N. B. Nothing more effectually demonstrates the uncertainty of all tradition, than what is delivered to us by An-

tiquity, concerning this very *Papias*. *Irenæus* declares him, to have been the companion of *Polycarp*, and the Disciple of *St. John* the Apostle. [l. 5. c. 33.] But *Eusebius* tells us, that he was not a disciple of *John* the Apostle, but of *John*, called the Elder or Presbyter, who was a companion onely of the Apostles: and whom *Irenæus* by mistake imagined to be the Apostle. [Hist. l. 3. 38.] Now *Irenæus* might probably be born while *St. John* was still living, and had conversed very familiarly

*Irenæus* confirmed and propagated to succeeding ages: through which, every one still added to the collection, whatever he thought useful to the particular cause or opinion, that he favored. This account of the matter, deduced from the testimony of antiquity itself, confutes at once all the extravagant encomiums, which our leading Divines so lavishly bestow on those primitive Fathers, and their traditions. For if the earliest and best vouched traditions of all, which are transmitted to us, be true, or at all to be regard-

familiarly in his youth with *Polycarp*, the disciple of that Apostle, and declares, *that he retained the memory of all things which he had learnt from him, more distinctly, than of things, which had happened to him much later.* [Euseb. 5. 20.] He was well acquainted also with *Papias*, whom he calls an ancient man: which makes it seem probable, both that *Papias* was contemporary with the Apostle *John*, and that *Irenæus* could not be mistaken in his account of *Papias's* master, which he might have received from *Papias* himself: and for this reason the generality of the modern writers prefer the authority of *Irenæus* to that of *Eusebius*, who lived two hundred years later. Yet after all, it is evident, from the express words of *Papias*, as they are cited by *Eusebius*, that *Papias* had never personally heard or known any

of the Apostles, but received his reports of them only from those, who had: and that *Irenæus* therefore was deceived by the identity of the name, and had never heard perhaps of that other *John*, called the *Presbyter*; who is supposed by some of the principal Fathers, to have written *the second and third Epistles*, as well as *the book of Revelations*, now ascribed to the Apostle. [Euseb. Hist. 3. 38. Hieron. Catalog. Scriptor. de Joan. Apost. & Papia.] The learned Mr. *Dodwell* therefore declares it to be certain, that *John the master of Papias*, was a different man from the Apostle; and consequently, that *Irenæus himself*, and *Polycrates his contemporary*, and *Clemens Alexandrinus also*, who was but a little younger, were all mistaken, with regard to this fact, Dissert. in Iren. 1. § 14.

ed, it follows of course, that we ought to receive the absurd doctrines above mentioned, as articles of faith; *the fable of the Millennium*; of *Angels begetting Demons on the bodies of women*; of *the old age of Christ*, of *Ænoch translated into Adam's paradise*; with many more of the same stamp; which were all embraced by the earliest Fathers, and delivered to us on the authority of the Apostles, by some of their immediate Successors; and especially by those four, on whom Dr. *Waterland* lays the greatest stress; *Justin Martyr*, *Athenagoras*, *Irenæus* and *Clemens of Alexandria*; “ eminent personages, as he says, who flourished with-  
 “ in fifty, sixty, or at most ninety years from the  
 “ Apostolic age. Whose nearness to the time;  
 “ known fidelity; admirable indowments ordi-  
 “ nary and extraordinary, add great weight to  
 “ their testimony or doctrine, and make it a  
 “ probable rule of interpretation in the prime  
 “ things [t].” To which he subjoins in a marginal note, “ that *Clemens*, tho’ the latest of the four,  
 “ yet testifies of himself, that he had received  
 “ his doctrine from several disciples of the very  
 “ chief Apostles; who had truly preserved the  
 “ tradition of the blessed doctrine, as it came  
 “ directly from the holy Apostles, *Peter*, *James*,  
 “ and *John*.” Notwithstanding all which, the Doctor could not but know, that this very *Clemens* holds as many absurd, unsound, and exploded doctrines, and deals as largely in the fabulous and apochryphal books of the primitive Chri-

[t] Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 369.

stians, as any other Father whatsoever. These facts shew likewise the weakness of that argument, which the Doctor alledges for the truth of doctrines, from *the unanimity*, with which they are asserted by the ancient writers. “ This is the  
“ argument, says he, which *Irenæus* and *Tertul-*  
“ *lian* insist much upon, and triumph in, over  
“ the Heretics of their days — for it is high-  
“ ly unreasonable to suppose, that Churches di-  
“ stant in place, and of different languages, and  
“ under no common visible head, should all unite  
“ in the same errors — Again, such unanimity  
“ could never come by chance, but must be de-  
“ rived from one common source : and therefore  
“ the harmony of their doctrine was in itself a  
“ pregnant argument of the truth of it [u].”  
But if the unanimity of the primitive Fathers must be allowed to have so great a force, as to evince the truth of any opinion, it would necessarily establish all those monstrous doctrines above specified ; since it would be difficult to produce any other whatsoever, in which there was so great an harmony among them, or so general a consent of the whole Church, through the three first centuries, and that intirely grounded upon the pretence of Apostolic tradition.

But I cannot dismiss this article of the doctrines and opinions of those ancient Fathers, without taking notice of one which was universally received and believed through all ages of the primitive Church, *viz.* “ that there were a number  
“ of

[u] Ibid. p. 372, 3.

“ of Magicians, Necromancers or Conjurers,  
 “ both among the the Gentiles and the Hereti-  
 “ cal Christians, who had each their particular  
 “ Dæmons or evil Spirits, for their associates,  
 “ perpetually attending on their persons, and  
 “ obsequious to their commands ; by whose help  
 “ they could perform miracles, foretel future  
 “ events, call up the Souls of the dead, exhibit  
 “ them to open view, and infuse into people  
 “ whatever dreams or visions they thought fit.”

— All which is constantly affirmed by the Primitive Writers and Apologists, and commonly applied by them to prove the immortality of the Soul.

“ Let the powers of Necromancy, says *Justin Martyr*, and the evocations of human Souls, and of boys especially, who had suffered violent deaths, and of those Spirits, whom the Magicians call the Inspirers of dreams and affessors, and the works which are performed by the skillfull in these arts, convince you, that the Souls of men exist still after death [x] :

*Lactantius*, speaking of certain Philosophers, who held, *that the Soul perished with the body*, says, “ they durst not have declared such an opinion, in the presence of any Magician, or if they had done it, he would have confuted them upon the spot, by sensible experiments ; by calling up souls from the dead, and rendring

[x] Apol. 1. p. 27. Edit. Thirlb.

“ them

“ them visible to human eyes, and making them  
“ speak and foretell future events [y].”

The Author of the book, called the *Recognitions of St. Clemens*, one of the most ancient and most learned of those many spurious pieces which were forged by the first Christians, affirms, “ that *Simon Magus* confessed to one of  
“ his companions, that he wrote all his amazing works, by the help of the Soul of an  
“ healthy young boy, who had been violently  
“ put to death for that purpose, and then called  
“ up from the dead, by ineffable adjurations, and  
“ compelled to be his assistant [z].”

*Irenæus*, giving an account of the disciples of the same *Simon*, tells us, “ that they lived lewdly, exercising magical arts, and using exorcisms, incantations, and love-charms, and industriously practising all other curious arts, by the assistance of their familiar Spirits, and Inspirers of dreams [a].” And speaking afterwards of the Heretic *Carpocrates* and his followers, he says, “ These likewise practise magical arts, with incantations and love-charms, and have their assistant Dæmons and Inspirers of

[y] Qui profecto non audent de interitu animarum Mago aliquo presente differere, qui sciret certis carminibus eiere ab Inferis animas, &c. *Divin. Institut.* l. 7. c. 13.

[z] Pueri, inquit, incorrupti & violenter necati animam adjurantem ineffabilibus evocantem adistere mihi feci, &

per ipsam fit omne quod jubeo. *lib. 2. c. XIII.* Edit. Cotelerii.

[a] Igitur horum Mystici Sacerdotes libidinose quidem vivunt; Magias autem perficiunt — exorcismis & incantationibus utuntur, &c. *Adv. Hæres.* l. 1. c. xx.

“ dreams, with all the other malevolent Spirits [b].”

“ The Magicians, says *Clemens of Alexandria*,  
 “ boast of Dæmons, as the Ministers of their  
 “ impiety, reckoning them part of their family,  
 “ and forcing them by their incantations, to be  
 “ the slaves of their will [c].”

*Tertulian* declares of these Dæmons, “ that  
 “ they had the power of inflicting horrible dis-  
 “ eases both on the minds and bodies of men,  
 “ and even cruel deaths; yet they frequently  
 “ contrived to cure the disorders which they had  
 “ wrought, in order to support the credit of  
 “ their Divinity, and the honor of their Altars,  
 “ and secure to themselves their proper food and  
 “ nourishment from the rich steams and blood of  
 “ the victims, which were offered to them [d].”

For this likewise, as monstrous as it is, was the  
 common opinion of all the Fathers, taken, as  
 usual, upon trust, from the authority of *Justin  
 Martyr*, who was probably the inventor of it,  
 “ that the Dæmons, after they had given them-  
 “ selves up to their lusts and lewd debaucheries

[b] Artes etiam Magicas operantur & ipsi, & incantationes & philtrea. Quoque & charitefia, & paredros, & oneirepompas & reliquas malignationes, &c.— ib c. xxix.

[c] Μάγοι δὲ ἠδὲ ἀσεβείας τῆς σφάν αἰτῶν ἰσχυράς δαίμονας αἰχρῶν. &c. Cohort. ad Gent. p. 52. Edit. Potter.

[d] Itaque corporibus quidem & valetudines infligunt, &

aliquos casus acerbos; animæ vero repentinos, & extraordinarios per vim excessus.— Ut sibi pabula propria nidoris & sanguinis procuret.— Benefici plane & circa curas valetudinum. Lædunt enim primo, dehinc remedia præcipiunt. Apologet. c. 22. Pluribus notum est Dæmoniorum quoque opera & immaturas & atroces effici mortes — De Anim. c. 57.

“ with



“ with boys and women, began to want the rich  
 “ fumes and the fat of sacrifices, to strengthen  
 “ them for the enjoyment of their lustful plea-  
 “ sures [e].”

*Cyprian* affirms, “ that they commonly lay  
 “ lurking within the statues and images of the  
 “ Heathen Deities ; inspired the breasts of the  
 “ Southsayers ; animated the fibres of the en-  
 “ trails of victims ; directed the flight of birds,  
 “ and the chances of lots ; involving falshood  
 “ always with truth, and themselves sometimes  
 “ deceived, as well as deceiving others ; disqui-  
 “ eted the lives of men ; disturbed their sleep ;  
 “ excited terrors in their minds, convulsions in  
 “ their bodies ; destroyed health, and brought on  
 “ diseases, so as to force people to worship them ;  
 “ that being filled and fatted by the steams of Al-  
 “ tars and burnt sacrifices, they might seem to  
 “ cure the maladies, which they had inflicted ;  
 “ whereas all the cure, which they performed,  
 “ was by ceasing onely to do hurt [f].

And as the whole system of Pagan Idolatry was believed by the Fathers, to have been managed by the craft and agency of Dæmons, so the whole art of Magic was supposed also to be carried on by the same powers, for the sake of deluding and destroying mankind. In the case of Idolatry, they imagined them to assume the names, and to act the parts of the Heathen Gods,

[e] Ὅν ἰνδεεῖς γυγόνασι μείλ' αὐτὸ πάθεισιν ἐπιθυμιῶν δαλωθῆναι, &c. Apol. p. 113. Edit. Thirlb. statuis & imaginibus consecra-  
 tis delitescunt. Hi afflatu suo  
 vatum pectora inspirant, &c.

[f] Hi ergo Spiritus sub De Idolor. Van. p. 206.

and in Magic to assume the forms of departed souls, and to appear under the names of those who were called up from the dead; and as such, to foretell future events, and answer to all questions which should be demanded of them. And the reason which they give, why the souls called up from the dead, were chiefly of those who had been put to a violent death, is, because such spirits were generally thought to be the most malevolent and revengeful, and ready to perpetrate the same acts of violence on others, which they themselves had injuriously suffered [g]

Now the opinion, which I have here explained, is not only a proof of the grossest credulity, but of that peculiar species of it, which, of all others, lays a man the most open to the delusive arts of Impostors. For a mind, so totally possessed by superstitious fancies, and disturbed by vain terrors, could not have either the judgment to discern, or the inclination to examine, or the courage even to suspect the pretensions of those vaingrant Jugglers, who in those primitive ages, were so numerous, and so industriously employed in the affair of deluding their fellow creatures. Every man will perceive, how easy it must have been to men of that class, whether Heathens, Jews or Christians, (for they are all allowed to have had such Impostors among them) to impose the tricks

[g] Itaque invocantur quidem aori & Bixæothanati, sub illo fidei argumento, quod credibile videatur, eas potissimum animas ad vim & injuriam fa-

cere, quas per vim & injuriam sævus & immaturus finis extorsit, quasi ad vicem offensæ. Tert. de anim, c. 57. Cypr. ib. 206.

of their art, as the effects of a supernatural power, on a multitude already persuaded, that they lived on magic ground, exposed at every step to snares and charms, contrived by malicious Spirits, perpetually haunting them, and watching every unguarded moment to get possession both of their souls and bodies [b]. And when pious Christians are arrived to this pitch of credulity, as to believe that evil spirits or evil men can work real miracles, in defiance and opposition to the authority of the Gospel, their very piety will oblige them to admit as miraculous, whatever is pretended to be wrought in the defence of it, and so make them of course the implicit dupes of their own wonder-workers.

IV. I shall now procede, as I proposed, to take a particular review of all the several gifts, or miraculous powers, which were actually claimed, and pretended to have been possessed by the primitive Church: which, according to the testimonies produced above, were, *the power of raising the dead; of healing the sick; of casting out Devils; of prophesying; of seeing visions; of discovering the secrets of men; of expounding the scriptures; of speaking with tongues.*

SECT. I. As to the first, and the principal indeed of all miracles, that of raising the dead; it was frequently performed, as *Irenæus* affirms, *on*

[b] Nam & suggestimus nullum pæne hominem carere Dæmonio. Tert. ib.

necessary occasions; and men so raised had lived afterwards among them many years; but it is very strange, that from the time of the Apostles, there is not an instance of this miracle to be found in the three first centuries; except a single case, slightly intimated by *Eusebius*, from the books of *Papias*; which he seems to rank, among the other fabulous stories delivered by that weak man [i].

It is certain, that if a miracle of so surprizing a nature, had been so frequent, as *Irenæus* affirms it to have been; or performed, as it were, in every parish, or place where there was a Christian Church, it must have made great noise in the world, and been celebrated, not only by the primitive Fathers, but by all the Historians of those times. But it was so far from being commonly or openly effected, as every miracle should necessarily be, which is wrought for the conversion of Infidels, that all the enemies of the Gospel, as *Irenæus* himself confesses, constantly affirmed *the thing itself to be impossible* [k]. A sure proof, that they had never seen or known it to be done, unless in such a manner, as carried with it a strong suspicion of fraud or collusion. Mr. *Dodwell* however, from this single authority of *Irenæus*, asserts the miraculous powers of the second century, to be superior even to those of the

[i] Νεκρῶ γὰρ ἀνάστασιν, καὶ αὐτὸν γεγονυῖαν ἰστορεῖ. καὶ αὐτὸν πάλιν ἕτερον παράδοξον περὶ Ἰησοῦν, &c. Hist Eccl. 3. 39.

[k] Tantum enim absunt ab

eo, ut mortuum ipsi excitent, ut ne quidem credant, hoc in totum posse fieri. Iren. l. 2. c. 56.

first, or Apostolic age. *They raised the dead, says he, in the Apostolic Churches; yet we have few examples of it, in the genuin acts of the Apostles: but in Irenæus's days, they raised not a few, but very often [l].* And in the same strain he runs through all the other miracles of the primitive times, and gives them the preference, in their number at least, to those of the Apostles; yet is forced to own, after all, that towards the end of the second century, and while *Irenæus* himself might be still living, this power of raising the dead was lost and vanished. For in the very same age, when one *Autolytus*, an eminent heathen, challenged his friend *Theophilus*, Bishop of *Antioch*, a convert and champion of the Gospel, to show him but one person, who had been raised from the dead, on the condition of turning Christian himself upon it; *Theophilus* discovers by his answer, that he was not able to give him that satisfaction [m]. Upon which Mr. *Dodwell* remarks, that the great number of persons, who had been raised some years before, when the fact was common, were dead again for the second time in this interval; which, for the sake of his hypothesis,

[l] Excitabant mortuos in Ecclesiis Apostolicis, quos tamen raros legimus, — excitabant similiter mortuos fraternitates Irenæi, — nec illos tamen adeo raros sed sæpissime. Dissert. 2. in Iren. §. XLII. p. 165.

[m] Φησὶ γὰρ, δείξόν μοι καὶ ἓνα ἐγεγέρτα ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἵνα ἰδῶν πιστώσω, &c. Theoph. ad Autol.

l. 1. p. 77. c. Ad finem Oper. Just. Mart. Paris. 1639. Defecere item mortuorum excitationes. Certe Autolyco roganti vel unum ostenderet qui fuisset e mortuis revocatus, ita respondit *Theophilus*, quasi vel unum demonstrare minime potuerit. Dissert. in Iren. 2. § XLIV. p. 171.

he stretches, as well as he can, to *forty years* [n]. But in truth, the fact itself, as delivered by *Irenæus*, seems to be utterly incredible on many accounts: 1st, That a case of so wonderful a nature, should be common among them, yet not a single instance of it particularly described, or clearly attested in all history. 2dly, That it should be performed in every part of the world, where there was a Church or assembly of Christians; yet all those, who were not of that Church, and for whose sake it was chiefly performed, should be insisting all the while, *that the thing itself was impossible*. 3dly, That it should be common in the days of *Irenæus*, yet *Theophilus*, who lived at the same time, should not be able to alledge a single instance of it, when challenged to it by his friend, whom he was laboring to convert, and who offered to be converted upon the proof of that fact. Lastly, that a power, of all others, the most affecting and reputable to the Church, should be withdrawn at a time when its adversaries were defying them to shew any effects of it, and putting the merits of the controversy upon that very issue [o]. All which circumstances laid together, must needs leave the strongest suspicion on the claim of the primitive Church,

[n] Quo temporis intervallo rursus obierint, qui sub initium *Marci Aurelii* fuissent in vitam revocati. *ibid.*

[o] This shews the vanity of that distinction, which some are apt to make, between the primitive, and the Popish mira-

cles; that the first were wrought for the sake, and in the midst of unbelievers; the last among the faithful only. *Contra, recentiorum pleraque in fideles; in infideles paucissima, edita feruntur.* *Dodw. ib. § LXIII.*

with

with regard to this prime miracle of *raising the dead*.

Sect. 2. The next gift said to have resided in it, is that of *healing the sick and curing all sorts of diseases*: in favor of which the ancient testimonies are more full and express; though with some variation, concerning the method of cure. Some affirm, that it was done by *the imposition of hands* [p]: some, by *invoking the name of God, and of Jesus, and reciting some story of his life* [q]. And others, by the use of *oil*: which was consecrated by Holy men, and dispensed to the people for the cure of their diseases. *Tertullian* tells us, “ that a Christian, called *Proculus*, cured the “ Emperor *Severus* of a certain distemper by the “ use of oil: for which service that Emperor “ was favorable afterwards to the Christians, “ and kept *Proculus*, as long as he lived, in his “ palace [r].” And *St. Jerom* affirms, “ that “ *Hilarion the Monk* used to heal all the wounds “ of the Husbandmen and Shepherds with *consecrated oil*; and preserved the life of the son-in-law and daughter of an holy woman called “ *Constantia*, by anointing them with the same [s].”

Yet

[p] Ἄλλοι δὲ τὰς κάμνουσας διὰ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν ἰῶσαι. *Iren.* l. 2. c. 57.

[q] Οὐδὲν ἄλλο καλῆτες ἐπὶ τῆς δεομένης θεραπειᾶς, ἢ τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεόν, κ' τὸ τῷ Ἰησοῦ ὄνομα, μετὰ τῆς περὶ αὐτῷ ἱστορίας. *Con. Cels.* l. 3. p: 124.

[r] Ipse etiam Severus,—

Christianorum memor fuit. Nam & *Proculum* Christianum, qui eum per oleum aliquando curaverat, requisivit, & in palatio suo habuit usque ad mortem ejus. *Ad Scapul.* § 4.

[s] *Benedicto itaque oleo*, universi agricolæ atque pastores, tangentés vulnera, certam salutem

Yet these cures, if true, might be accounted for probably without a miracle, by the natural power and efficacy of the oil itself; since in our days, the bite of vipers, after inflaming a man's arm to a degree, which threatened destruction to him, is known to have been checked and cured in a short time by the application of oil: which might perhaps have been the very case of *Hilarion's Shepherds*. But be that as it will, the pretence of curing diseases by a miraculous power, was so successfully maintained in the heathen world by fraud and craft, that when it came to be challenged by the Christians, it was not capable of exciting any attention to it, among those, who themselves pretended to the same power; which, though the certain effect of imposture, was yet managed with so much art, that the Christians could neither deny nor detect it; but insisted always, that it was performed by *Dæmons* or evil Spirits, deluding mankind to their ruin: and from the supposed reality of the fact, inferred the reasonableness of believing, what was more credibly affirmed by the Christians, to be performed by the power of the true God. *We do not deny, says Athenagoras, that in different places, cities, and countries, there are some extraordinary works performed in the name of idols, from which some have received benefit, others harm.* But then he goes on to prove, that they were not performed by God, but by *Dæ-*

litem resumbant. Hieron. in Vit. Hilarion. Oper. Tom. 4. Par. 2. p. 86.

Sed & *Constantia* quædam,

sancta scemina, cujus generum & filiam de morte liberaverat unctiõne olei. ibid. p. 90.



mons [t]. “ If I should allow, says *Origen*, that  
 “ there is a *Dæmon* cunning in medicine, called  
 “ *Æsculapius*, who cures diseases: yet I would  
 “ say to those, who are surpris’d at it, as well as  
 “ at the predictions of *Apollo*, that if the cure  
 “ of diseases and prediction of events be things  
 “ of an indifferent nature, and which belong to  
 “ bad, as well as to good beings; shew me that  
 “ those, who cure and foretell, are not bad, but  
 “ good, and worthy to be held in a manner as  
 “ Gods [u].”

Whatever proof then the Primitive Church might have among themselves of this miraculous gift, yet it could have but little effect towards making profelytes among those, who pretended to the same gift; possessed more largely, and exerted more openly, than in the private assemblies of the Christians. For in the Temples of *Æsculapius*, all kinds of diseases were believed to be publickly cured, by the pretended help of that Deity: in proof of which there were erected in each Temple columns or tables of brass or marble, on which a distinct narrative of each particular cure was inscribed. *Pausanius* writes, “ that in  
 “ the Temple at *Epidaurus*, there were many  
 “ columns anciently of this kind, and six of  
 “ them remaining to his time, inscribed with  
 “ the names of men and women, who had been  
 “ cured by the God, with an account of their

[t] Τὸ μὲν δὲ κατὰ τόπους κὶ πόλεις κὶ ἔθνη γίνεσθαι τινὰς ἐπ’ οὐνόματι εἰδώλων ἐνεργείας, εὐδ’ ἡμεῖς ἀνιλέγομεν, &c. *Athenag. Apol.* p. 25.

[u] Ἴνα δὲ κὶ δῶ, Ἰατρικόν τινα Δαίμονα θεραπεύειν σώματα, τὸν καλούμενον Ἀσκληπιόν. εἰποιμ’ ἂν πρὸς τὰς θαυμάζουσας τὸ τοῦτο. &c. *Con. Cels.* l. 3. p. 124.

“ several

“ several cafes and the method of their cure :  
 “ and that there was an old pillar besides, which  
 “ stood apart, dedicated to the memory of *Hip-*  
 “ *polytus*, who had been raised from the dead [x].”  
*Strabo* also, another grave writer, informs us,  
 “ that these Temples were constantly filled with  
 “ the sick, imploring the help of the God : and  
 “ that they had tables hanging around them, in  
 “ which all the miraculous cures were descri-  
 “ bed [y].” There is a remarkable fragment of  
 one of these tables still extant, and exhibited by  
*Gruter* in his collection, as it was found in the  
 ruins of *Æsculapius’s* Temple, in the island of the  
 Tyber, in Rome ; which gives an account of two  
 blind men restored to sight by *Æsculapius*, in the  
 open view, and with the loud acclamations of the  
 people, acknowledging the manifest power of the  
 God. Upon which the learned *Montfaucon* makes  
 this reflection, that in this are seen, either the  
 wiles of the Devil, or the tricks of Pagan Priests,  
 suborning men to counterfeit diseases and miraculous  
 cures [z].

Now tho’ nothing can support the belief and  
 credit of miracles more authentically, than public  
 monuments, erected in proof and memory of  
 them, at the time when they were performed ;  
 yet in defiance of that authority, it is certain,  
 that all those heathen miracles were pure for-

[x] Στῆλαι δ’ εἰσῆκεσαν ἐνὸς  
 τῷ περιβόλῳ, τὸ μὲν ἀρχαῖον καὶ  
 πλέονες, ἐπ’ ἑμῶ δὲ ἐξ λοιπαῖ, &c.  
*Corinth.* l. 2. c. xxvii.

[y] Καὶ τὸ ἱερὸν πλήρες ἔχουσι  
 αἰ τῶν τε καμνόνων, καὶ τῶν ἀνα-

κειμένων πινάκων, ἐν οἷς ἀναγε-  
 γραμμένῳ τυγχάνουσι αἱ θεραπείαι.  
*Strab.* l. 8. p. 575. Ed. Amstel.

[z] See *Monfauc. Antiqu.*  
*Tom.* 2. par. 1. l. 4. c. 6. it.  
*Gruter. Inscr.* p. lxxi.

geries contrived to delude the credulous multitude. And in truth, this particular claim of *curing diseases miraculously*, affords great room for such a delusion, and a wide field for the exercise of craft. Every man's experience has taught him, that diseases thought fatal and desperate, are oft surprizingly healed of themselves, by some secret and sudden effort of nature, impenetrable to the skill of man : but to ascribe this presently to a miracle, as weak and superstitious minds are apt to do ; to the prayers of the living, or the intercessions of the dead ; is what neither sound reason, nor true religion will justify. Wherefore, when the narratives of these pretended cures are delivered to us by partial and interested, or by weak and credulous men, they will always furnish reason to suspect, that the relators were either deluded themselves, or willing to delude others : and unless we knew more precisely in this case the real bounds between nature and miracle, we cannot pay any great regard to such stories ; especially when we are informed at the same time by the Christians themselves, that the same cures were performed also by Knaves and Impostors, of all sects and nations ; by *Heathens*, *Jews*, and *Heretics* ; which according to the principles of those days, were ascribed either to the power of *Dæmons*, or to the magical force of amulets and charms.

Sect. 3. But the most eminent and celebrated of all the miraculous powers of the primitive Church was, the gift of *casting out Devils*, or the  
cure

cure of *Dæmoniacs*. To this the ancient Fathers and Apologists make the most frequent appeals; and on this they lay the greatest stress, towards evincing the divinity of the Christian Religion. It is not easy however to collect from their accounts, what was the real case of these *Dæmoniacs*, and the proper nature of their malady. The Fathers indeed themselves seem to have been fully persuaded, and labor to persuade every body else, that they were actually possessed and tormented by Devils, or evil Spirits: yet many learned men of modern times have imagined them rather to have been affected by the *Epilepsy*, or *falling sickness*. Mr. *Dodwell* himself takes their case to have been of this kind, and curable by the ordinary way of medicine, as well as by the extraordinary one of miracle [a]. And it is certain, that the effects constantly ascribed to it, seem to be nothing else but the ordinary symptoms of an *Epilepsy*, as they are described by the Physicians. *Justin* speaks of them as being thrown down always to the ground, by the Devils who possessed them [b]: And *Chrysostom*, in his elaborate consolation to *Stagirus*, who was also possessed, recites all the particulars of his case, as they were related to him by a common friend; the convulsion of his hands,

[a] Morbum itaque caducum, quem Comitialem seu Regium appellant, curabant passim exorcismis suis cœvi *Tertulliano* Christiani. Nec enim ego alium censuerim, quo laborarint *Dæmoniacci illi a Dæmone præcipitati*. --- Nihil enim impedit, quo minus iidem

per medicinam possint etiam curari. --- *Differt. in Iren.* 2. § XLVII. p 175.

[b] Καὶ οἱ ψυχαῖς ἀποθανόντων λαμβανόμενοι καὶ ἐπιτόμενοι ἄνθρωποι, ἕς δαιμονολήπτης καὶ μαινομένης καλῶσι πάντες. *Apol.* 1. p. 28.

*the distortion of his eyes, the foam of his mouth, his horrid and inarticulate voice, the tremor of his body, and the long privation of his senses [c].* St. Gregory of Nyssa, speaking of a woman also in the same case, says, *that groaning with a terrible and inarticulate voice, different from human, she fell flat on the ground, tearing her hair, her eyes distorted, her mouth foaming: nor did the Devil desist from strangling her, &c. [d].* Then as to what these Fathers declare, concerning their power of lashing, burning and tormenting the Devils; and of their groaning and howling under the torture of the Christian exorcism, such an imagination might easily be conceived, from the strange convulsions of the body, and the hollow sighs and groans which commonly attend such fits. And the other circumstances likewise, so constantly attested by them all, concerning *the speeches and confessions of the Devils; their answering to all questions; owning themselves to be wicked spirits; telling whence they came, and whither they were going, and pleading for favor and ease from the hands of the Exorcists* may not improbably be accounted for, either by the disordered state of the patient, answering wildly and at random to any questions

[c] Τὴν στρέλωσιν τῶν χειρῶν, τὴν διαστροφὴν τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν, τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἀφρόν, &c. Tom. 1. p. 156. E. Edit. Benedict.

Ita etiam Plinius, corruens morbo comitiali. [Hist. N. 28. 6] atque ita quoque S. Cyprianus—irrepentes in corporibus occulte, mentes ter-

rent, membra distortent, valetudinem frangunt, &c. De Idolor. Van. p. 206,

[d] Πνεύματι δαιμονίῳ στρέλωθεῖσα, καὶ βρυχηθμῶν θηριώδει παρὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπείην φωνὴν ἀνοιμώξεσα, ὡπίλει κρηνῆς, &c. in Vit. Greg. Thaum. p. 973. B. Oper. Edit. Paris.

propofed, or by the arts of impofture and contrivance between the parties concerned in the act.

This, I dare fay, will appear probable to every impartial reader, who, from the credulous and enthusiastic difpofition of thefe Fathers, and their preconceived and erroneous notions about the origin and power of Dæmons, will be apt to conclude, that they were either induced by their prejudices, to give too hafty a credit to thefe pretended poffeffions; or carried away by their zeal, to affift even in fupporting a delufion, which was ufeful to the Chriftian caufe. And though this may found harfh in the ears of many, it will not appear ftrange to thofe, who have given any attention to the hiftory of mankind; which will always fuggelt this fad reflection; that the greateft zealots in religion, or the leaders of fefts and parties, whatever purity or principles they pretend to, have feldom fcrupled to make ufe of a commodious lie, for the advancement, of what they call the truth. And with regard to thefe very Fathers, there is not one of them, as an eminent writer of ecclefiaftical hiftory declares, who made any fcruple in thofe ages, of uſing *the hyperbolical ſtyle*, to advance the honor of God, and the falvation of men [e]. For it is certain, that the greateft part of the wonderful things, which they relate, are in themſelves utterly incredible; and ſuch of them as happen to be the moſt diſtinctly deſcribed, carry always the greateſt marks

[e] In honorem Dei, ſalutemque hominum, hyperbolice oratione uti, nemo tunc tem-

poris religioni ducebat. Jo. Cleric. Hiſt. Eccleſ. p. 681.

of art and contrivance, for the sake of serving some particular purpose. For example, *Tertulian*, who was an utter enemy to plays and public shews in the Theatres, wrote a book, to deter all Christians from frequenting them, in which he tells the following story: “ An example happened, says he, as the Lord is witness, of a woman, who went to the Theatre, and came back with a Devil in her: whereupon when the unclean spirit was urged and threatened in the office of exorcising, for having dared to attack one of the faithfull; *I have done nothing*, replied he, *but what is very fair, for I found her on my own ground.*” He adds a second story still more dreadful, “ of another woman, who, in the very night, after she had seen a tragedy in the Theatre, had her winding-sheet shewn to her in a vision, in which she was reproached by name, with the Tragedian, whom she had been seeing, and did not live above five days after [f].”

Now in this last case, it is not improbable, that a poor weak woman, who went to sleep, under the consciousness of a grievous sin committed by her, might, by the terrors of a dream, be thrown into a disorder, that put an end to her life. But in the first, though God himself is appealed to, for the truth of it, yet when we re-

[f] Nam & exemplum accidit, Domino teste, ejus mulieris, quæ theatrum adiit, & inde cum Dæmonio rediit. Itaque in exorcismo, cum oneraretur

immundus spiritus, quod ausus esset fidelem adgredi; constanter & justissime quidem, inquit, feci, in meo eam inveni, &c. — De Spectac. 26.

flect on the principles of those times, and the particular warmth of *Tertullian's* zeal, we cannot but suspect, that the smart answer of the Devil, was contrived to enforce, what he was so warmly inculcating, the horrible sin and dangerous consequence of frequenting the public Theatres.

It is very remarkable, that all the Fathers, who lay so great a stress on this particular gift of casting out Devils, yet allow the same power both to the *Jews* and the Gentiles, as well before, as after our Saviour's coming. *Justin Martyr*, in his dialogue with *Trypho the Jew*, says, " that all  
 " Devils yield and submit to the name of *Jesus*,  
 " when they would not, to any other name of  
 " their Kings, Prophets or Patriarchs: yet if  
 " any should exorcise them in the name of the  
 " God of *Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob*, they would  
 " in like manner submit. For your Exorcists,  
 " adds he, as well as the Gentiles, use this art  
 " in exorcising, together with certain fume, and  
 " ligatures [g]." And the *Jews*, says *Irenæus*, even now, by this same invocation of the name of God, drive away Devils [b].

*Origen*, in his dispute with *Celsus*, asserting the descent of the *Jews* from *Abraham, Isaac*, and *Jacob*, says, " that these names joined to that of  
 " God, have such power, that not onely their  
 " own nation use them in their prayers, and in

[g] Ἦδη μέγιστοι οἱ ἐξ ἡμῶν  
 ἰσχυρίζονται τῇ τέχνῃ ὥσπερ καὶ τὰ  
 ἕθνη χρώμενοι ἐξορκίσεισι, καὶ θυμ-  
 ἀμασι καὶ κάλαδίσμοις χιρῶνται.  
 Dial. par, 2 p. 321.

[b] Et propter hoc Judæi  
 usque nunc hac ipsa adfatione  
 Dæmonas effugant.—l. 2. c. 5.  
 p. 123.



“ casting out Devils, but all other Inchantors,  
 “ and Magicians whatsoever : and that in magical  
 “ books, the same invocation and use of God’s  
 “ name is often found, as peculiar to the art,  
 “ and effectual against Devils [i].” And speak-  
 ing of *Abraham’s* great merit, he observes, “ that  
 “ it is not *Moses* onely, who celebrates it, but  
 “ that many of those, who charm or drive out  
 “ Devils, call upon the God of *Abraham*, with-  
 “ out knowing even who *Abraham* was [k].”  
 Again, “ if a man, says he, invoke or exorcise  
 “ by the name of the God of *Abraham, Isaac* and  
 “ *Jacob*, the Devils will obey, and do what they  
 “ are commanded ; but if he translate those  
 “ names, according to their meaning, into any  
 “ other language, they will have no force at all.  
 “ The same, adds he, is true of the word, *Sa-*  
 “ *baoth*, so much used in incantations : if it be  
 “ applied in its original *Hebrew*, it is effectual :  
 “ but if translated into another tongue, so as to  
 “ put for it, *the Lord of Hosts*, it avails nothing,  
 “ if we believe the skillfull in these matters [l].”

*Josephus*

[i] Ὡς τοσούτον δύναται τὰ ἐνό-  
 μαία συναπιόμενα τῇ τῷ θεῷ προ-  
 σήγοριαι, ὡς ἂ μόνον τὰς ἀπὸ τῶ  
 ἔθνους χρῆσθαι ἐν ταῖς πρὸς θεὸν  
 εὐχαῖς, καὶ ἐν τῷ κατεπάδειν δαί-  
 μονας, &c. Con. Celf. l. 4. p.  
 183, 84.

[k] Διὸ παραλαμβάνεις τὴν,  
 θεὸς Ἀβραάμ, λέξιν, ἐκ ἐπιτάμεινοι  
 δὲ τίς ἐστὶν ὁ Ἀβραάμ. ibid. l. 1.  
 p. 17.

[l] Τὰ δὲ ὅμοιον ἐρῶμεν καὶ περὶ  
 τῆς Σαβαὸθ φωνῆς πολλαχῶ τῶν  
 ἐπρωτῶν παραλαμβανόμενης. ὅτι εἰ

μεγαλαμβάνομεν τὸ ὄνομα εἰς τὴν  
 κύριον δυνάμειον.—ἐδὲν ποιήσο-  
 μεν, ib. l. 5. p. 262.

N. B. From what is here said  
 by *Origen*, and the other Fa-  
 thers, it appears ; that the  
 power of casting out Devils,  
 was considered as a peculiar  
 gift, or art rather, grounded on  
 certain rules, which were taught  
 and delivered in books ; and  
 was common both to the Jews  
 and the Heathens, as well as to  
 the Christians ; and, among  
 them

*Josephus* writes, “ that *Solomon* was particularly instructed by God in the art of casting out Devils, for the benefit of mankind; and that he left behind him a receipt of those charms and exorcisms, by which he used to drive them out: which same method was the most effectual even to his time. For I saw, says he, one of my countrymen, *Eleazar*, casting out Devils, in the presence of *Vespasian*, his sons and officers, and a multitude of soldiers. His method was this: he applied to the nose of a person possessed, a ring, which had a certain drug or root under the seal of it, which *Solomon* had prescribed; and so, by the smell of the ring, he drew out the Devil, through the nostrils of the patient; who fell presently to the ground; upon which, he adjured the Devil never to return, rehearsing the name of *Solomon*, with certain charms, which he had composed and left behind him; and being desirous to convince the company, that he was really indued with this power, to which he pretended, he placed a certain cup or vessel filled with water, at a little distance from the person possessed, and commanded the Devil, as he was going out of him, to overturn the cup, so as to give the spectators a manifest proof, that

them all, was administered by a particular set of men, called *Exorcists*: who about the time of *Origen's* death, or the middle of the third Century, began to be reckoned among the in-

ferior orders of the Church: [Vid. *Euseb.* l. 6. c. 43.] The form of whose ordination is given us by the learned *Fingham.* [Antiq. lib. 3. c. 4. § 5.]

“ he

“ he had quitted the body of the man [*m*].” Which shews, in contradiction to what *Justin Martyr* affirmed above, that besides the name of *Jesus*, the Devils were subject likewise to that of *Solomon*.

Now it will be granted, I suppose, by all men of sense, that these *Jewish* and *Gentile Exorcists* were mere *Knives* and *Impostors*; who, by their tricks and false miracles, contrived to delude the credulous multitude, in order to acquire gain or power to themselves, and to keep their people firm to the *Jewish* or *Heathenish* rites, in opposition to the *Christian*. *Ulpian* the lawyer speaks of *Exorcism* in general, as a term of art used by *Impostors*: by whom he is supposed by some, to mean the *Jewish*, by others, *Christian Exorcists* [*n*]. But *Tertullian*, and all the *Fathers* in general declare, that these *Magicians* and wandering *Jugglers* performed many wonderful things, above the force of human power, which they wholly ascribe to the assistance of *Dæmons*. And if they were so far deluded by those *Jewish* and *Gentile* pretenders, as to take such senseless charms, and tricks of legerdemain, for the effects of a supernatural power, their prejudices would operate much more strongly in favor of their own *Impostors*, who had taken up the same trade; or if they saw through the cheat of the *Gentile* practitioners, yet on account of the credit, which they had gained with the people, and the difficulty of

[*m*] Καὶ αὐτὴ μέχρι νῦν παρ' Ἀντιq. Jud, l. viii. c. 2 § 5.  
 ἡμῶν ἢ Θεραπεία πλείστον ἰσχύει. [*n*] Bingham. Antiq. B. 5.  
 ἰσόρησα γὰρ τινὰ Ελεάζαρον, &c. c. 4. § 3.

detecting the fraud, they might think it convenient perhaps, to oppose one cheat to another, and set up rival powers of their own, in opposition to those of their adversaries, in hopes of beating them at their own weapons.

For it is very hard to believe, what *Origen* declares above, that the Devils, for the sake of doing the greater mischief to men, *used to possess and destroy their cattle*. In confirmation of which, *St. Jerom* has related a most ridiculous story, in his life of *St. Hilarion* the Monk: where after a narrative of many cases of Devils, expelled by that saint from the bodies of men, he adds, “ but  
 “ it is to little purpose to talk of men; brute  
 “ animals also were daily brought to him, mad  
 “ or possessed: among the rest, a *Baſtrian Camel*,  
 “ of an enormous size, which had already de-  
 “ stroyed many people: above thirty men were  
 “ employed to drag him along with the strongest  
 “ ropes. His eyes were bloody; his mouth  
 “ foaming; his tongue rolling and swollen; and  
 “ his strange roaring above all terrors: the old  
 “ man ordered it to be let loose: upon which  
 “ all, who were about him, ran away immedi-  
 “ ately: the saint came forward alone, and in the  
 “ *Syriac* tongue, said, *thou dost not affright me,*  
 “ *Devil, with all that bulk of body: thou art one*  
 “ *and the same in a little fox, or in a camel:* and  
 “ so he stood firm with his arm stretched out;  
 “ and as the beast advanced towards him, fu-  
 “ rious and ready to devour him, it presently fell  
 “ down with its head to the ground; so that all  
 “ present were amazed at the sudden change, from  
 “ so

“ so great a fierceness, to such a tameness. Upon  
 “ which the old man took occasion to teach  
 “ them, that the Devil used to seize cattle, out  
 “ of his hatred to men, to whom he bore so great  
 “ a grudge, as to wish, not onely that they, but  
 “ that all which they had, might perish.” To  
 this story I cannot forbear adding, what is like-  
 wise affirmed by the same *Jerom*, of the same *Hil-*  
*laron*; that *he was so full of the power of the Ho-*  
*ly Spirit, as to be able to discover, from the smell of*  
*the bodies and the cloaths of men, or of any thing*  
*else, which they had but touched, to what particu-*  
*lar Dæmon, or to what vice they were severally sub-*  
*ject.* Now though this good Father invokes *the*  
*assistance of the Holy Spirit, in his attempt to de-*  
*scribe a life so wonderful*; yet all, who read it,  
 must needs be persuaded, that out of his zeal  
 and warm affection to the Monkish Order, which  
 he professed, and from a desire to advance its  
 credit in the world, he either wholly invented,  
 or at least willfully propagated all these extrava-  
 gant tales, which he himself could not possibly  
 believe: “ The time, says he, would fail me,  
 “ if I should attempt to relate all the wonder-  
 “ ful works, that were performed by him—  
 “ wherefore by the influence of his example, *in-*  
 “ *numerable Monasteries began to be founded through*  
 “ *all Palestine*: and all the Monks ran eagerly to  
 “ *Hilarion, &c. [o].*” This was the real pur-

[o] Vid. Oper. Tom. 4. par.  
 2. p. 82, 83, &c.

Tempus me deficiet, si vo-  
 luero univèrsa signa, quæ ab eo  
 perpetrata sunt, dicere.—Exem-

plo itaque ejus innumerabilia  
 Monasteria per totum Palæsti-  
 nam esse cœperunt, & ad eum  
 omnes Monachi certatim cur-  
 rere, &c.

pose of St. *Jerom's* zeal; this the fruit of his fictitious miracles. But to return to the *Dæmoniacs*. Since this gift of casting out Devils is what the Fathers, as I have said above, lay the greatest stress upon, and to which they make the most frequent appeals, it may be proper to strengthen what I have already been declaring upon it, by a few particular observations, which I would recommend to the attention of the reader.

1<sup>st</sup>, That there is such an uniformity in all the primitive accounts of them, though given by different Fathers and in different ages, of the Devils being scourged, burned, and tortured by the Christian Exorcists; and of their howlings, discourses and confessions, that they all seem to have been cast in the same mould; and to have been the copies rather of one original story, transcribed by the later writers from the earlier, than the natural descriptions, of what each of them had severally seen, at different times, and in distant places [p].

2<sup>dly</sup>, That the persons thus possessed, and in whom the Devils used to hold discourses, were called by the primitive Christians, ἑντασφύμβοι, or *Ventriloquists*; because they were believed to speak out of the belly, thro' the navel [q]. Thus in a book ascribed to *Justin Martyr*, containing a

[p] See what I have collected above on this subject, from *Tertullian*, *Minucius Felix*, *Cyprian*, and *Lactantius*. Thus *Mr. Whiston* also observes, that a good deal of what is said upon it by *Minucius Felix*, is made

use of by *Cyprian*, soon after his time, and that almost verbatim. Account of the *Dæmoniacs*, p. 42.

[q] See *Bingh. Antiq.* l. 16. c. 5. § 4.

number of Questions, with answers to them, for the use of the *Orthodox*, one of the Questions is this; “ if all the arts of delusion are abolished by  
“ the coming of Christ, how comes it to pass,  
“ that Dæmons still speak by those, who are  
“ called *Ventriloquists*, and that they do not make  
“ Christianity ridiculous and contemptible, by  
“ shewing forth the works of imposture, and ut-  
“ tering oracular predictions in the bodies of  
“ Christians? [r].”

Now many of us have seen, and may still see perhaps at this day, a sort of these *Ventriloquists*, who by a particular formation of their organs, managed by art and practice, could speak in such a manner, as to persuade the company, that the voice did not proceed from them, but from some invisible being: which they could direct likewise so, as to make it seem to come, from what part of the room they pleased: by which means, weak and ignorant people have been terrified almost out of their senses, believing it, to be the *voice of a Spirit or Demon*. If we suppose then, that there were any Artists of this kind among those ancient Christians, as there undoubtedly were among the ancient Gentiles, it is easy to imagine, what strange and surprizing feats might be performed, by a correspondence between the *Ventriloquist* and the *Exorcist*, so as to delude the most sensibly and sagacious of their audience, prepossessed with the belief of these diabolical possessions, and void of all suspicion, that such effects

[r] Vid. Quæst. & Responf. ad Orthodox. Quæst. 8.

could possibly be produced by any human art or natural cause.

3dly, From the testimony of Antiquity itself it is evident, that many of their Dæmoniacs could not possibly be cured by all the power of the Exorcists : and that the cures, which are pretended to have been wrought on any, were but temporary, and appear to have been the cessation rather of a particular fit, or access of the distemper, than the real expulsion of a Dæmon. This may be clearly collected from the method of treating them in the primitive Church, as it was regulated by several canons and rules, made for that purpose by Bishops and Councils, injoining : “ that they should not be received to baptism, but in the intervals of their disorder ;  
 “ nor to the communion, unless they shewed  
 “ signs of piety and sobriety, so as not to expose  
 “ and blaspheme the mysteries : in which case  
 “ they might communicate now and then : that  
 “ they should never be ordained or taken into  
 “ any order of the Clergy ; nor allowed to pray  
 “ in common with the congregation ; but be  
 “ produced always separately, and commanded  
 “ onely to bow down their heads, while the rest  
 “ of the Assembly were offering up a prayer for  
 “ them.” In different Churches however, a different discipline was observed with regard to them ; for in some, they were admitted to baptism, and even to daily communion ; by which means many are affirmed to have been relieved, when all the arts of the Exorcists had been tried  
 upon



upon them in vain [s]. Now these cases manifestly shew, that this celebrated gift, as it was managed by the primitive Church, was not able to work an absolute cure; or to drive out the Devils so effectually, as to reduce the patients to a permanent state of sanity; so as to render them ordinarily capable, either of baptism, or the Eucharist, or of joining even with the congregation, in the daily prayers of the Church. Whence we may reasonably conclude; that it was nothing else, but a false mimickry of that genuin power, which was exercised by our Lord, and conferred afterwards on his Apostles: a power which never did its work by halves, or left its cures imperfect. For, as we learn from the Gospel, *Mary Magdalen*, from whom *seven Devils* were cast out, continued ever after in her sober senses; accompanying and ministring on all occasions to our Lord, to the time of his death: and the man also, out of whom a *Legion* of them was ejected, was restored at once to perfect health both of mind and body, and sent away to proclaim in *Decapolis*, and the neighbouring country, the miraculous cure which *Jesus* had wrought upon him [t].

4thly, There is another circumstance belonging to these primitive Dæmoniacs, of which the reader perhaps may desire some farther explication; I mean the great numbers of them, which appear to have subsisted in those early ages: whose chief habitation was within a part of the Church,

[s] See Bingham. Antiq. book v. § 111, &c.

xl. c. v. § 111. it. ibid. book [t] Luke viii. 2. Matt. v. 20.  
xv. c. iv. § xvi. it. ib. xvii. c. Luke viii. 39.

allotted to them for that purpose; in which, as in a kind of Hospital, they were committed to the care of the Exorcists; whose business it was, “to pray over them on some occasions, “and to provide their daily food, and keep “them employed in some bodily exercise and “innocent business, of sweeping the Church and “the like, to prevent the more violent agitations “of Satan, and lest he should be tempted by “by their idleness to renew his attacks upon “them [u].” Which method of relieving so miserable a tribe of helpless mortals, will account for the numbers, with which the Churches were stored; as well as for the confidence of those challenges, made to the Heathens, by the Christian Apologists, to come and see at any hour, and any warning, how they could *torment, and lash, and burn, and drive the evil spirits* out of them; while they kept such numbers of them in constant pay, always ready for the shew; tried and disciplined by their Exorcists, to an habit of groaning and howling, and to give proper answers to all questions, which should be demanded of them.

It is observable also in the last place, that this power of *exorcising Dæmoniacs or casting out Devils*, which had hitherto been in the hands onely of the meaner sort of the Christian layety, was put under the direction of the Clergy, by the *Council of Laodicea*, about the year of Christ three hundred and sixty-seven, in which it was decreed,

[u] Bingham. book III. c. IV. § VII.

that none should be Exorcists, but those, who were appointed by the Bishop. After which appropriation of it, as Mr. *Whiston* informs us, “few or none of the Clergy, nor indeed of the Layety, were any longer able to cast out Devils: so that the old Christian exorcism or prayer for the *Energumens* in the Church, began soon after to be omitted as wholly usefess [x].” Which sudden failure of so eminent a gift seems to be ascribed by him to that fatal step of this *unhappy Council*, as he calls it; as if, by their presumptuous attempt to controul the divine power, they had provoked God to withdraw it. But tho’ this solution of the case may be agreeable to the character and principles of that very learned and pious writer; yet it is more agreeable to reason, and the experience of mankind, to suppose, that the licentious abuse of this imaginary power, by the many false and impudent pretensions of crafty impostors on the one hand, and wrong-headed Enthusiasts on the other, had brought such scandal on Christianity itself, that the Clergy were forced at last to interpose, and take the affair into their own hands. For that this was really the case, is manifestly shewn by the event: since the exercise of this gift was no sooner subjected to any regulation, even by those, who favored and desired to support it, than it gradually decreased and expired.

§. 4. The next miraculous gift ascribed to the primitive Church, is that of *Prophetic visions, and*

[x] See Mr. *Whiston’s* Account of *Dæmoniacks*, p. 53.

extatic trances, and the discovery of men's hearts : for these seem to be the fruit of one and the same spirit : which exerted itself chiefly about the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, through *Tertullian's* and *Cyprian's* days. " The divine censure, says *Cyprian*, does not  
 " cease to chastise us, neither by night, nor by  
 " day, for besides nightly visions, even boys  
 " among us are filled with the Holy Ghost, and  
 " in fits of ecstasy, see, hear, and utter things,  
 " by which the Lord thinks fit to admonish and  
 " instruct us [y]." This ecstasy was a temporary madness or loss of senses, and is called by *Tertullian*, the *spiritual virtue*, in which prophecy consists [z]. *Suidas* says, that of all the kinds of fury or madness, that of the Poets and Prophets was alone to be wished for [a].

Mr. *Dodwell* observes, " that visions were peculiar to the young, dreams to the old : because it required a great strength of body to support the violence of such divine agitations [b]." *Philo*, the Jew, treating of the same

[y] Castigare nos itaque divina censura nec noctibus desinit nec diebus. Præter nocturnas enim visiones, per dies quoque impletur apud nos Spiritu sancto puerorum innocens ætas, quæ in extasi videt & audit & loquitur ea, quibus nos dominus monere & instruere dignatur. Epist. ad Cler. ix. p. 22. Ed. Nic. Rigalt.

[z] Quum in illum Deus amentiam immisit, spiritalem

vim, qua constat prophetia. De Anim. c. 21. it. 24.

[a] Τῶν μανῶν—αἱ δὲ αἰρεῖται καὶ εὐχῆς ἀξίαι, οἷαι τῶν ποιητῶν, καὶ τῶν χρησιμολόγων. in voce *Μανίαι*.

[b] Plane senibus ita somnia aptantur, ut Juvenibus *Visiones*. Vehemens nimirum illa humorum agitatio non erat nisi in ætatis vigore toleranda. &c. Vid. Dissert. *Cyprian*. iv. § 40.

ecstasies,

ecstasies, with which the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Testament used to be affected, reasons thus, “ the human mind, says he, is symbolically called the Sun by *Moses*—— while our mind therefore shines, and exerts itself within us, spreading as it were a meridian light through the Soul, we are then in our right senses, without any divine influx : but when the mind goes down, then a divine ecstasy and prophetic madness fall upon us : for when the divine light shines, the human sets : and when that sets, this again rises ; and this is what usually happens to the prophetic race : for the mind is driven out of us, when the divine spirit comes in ; and when this again quits us, the other returns : for it is not fit, that mortal should cohabit with immortal [c].”

From these testimonies we may collect, that the Prophecy of the Primitive Church by *vision* or *ecstasy*, was of the same kind, as to its outward appearance, with that *divination by fury*, as it was called among the Gentiles, which was practised by the *Delphic Pythia*, and *Cumæan Sibyl*, when agitated by the pretended power and instinct of the God [d]. Of which *Cicero* says, in way

[c] Ἡλιον δὲ διὰ συμβόλων τὸν ἡμέτερον νῦν καλεῖ. — ὅτε μὲν γὰρ φῶς ἐπιλάμπει τὸ θεῖον, δύεται τὸ ἀνθρώπινον, ὅτε δ' ἐκεῖνο δύει, τῷτ' ἀνίχει καὶ ἀνατέλλει. τῷ δὲ προσωφητικῷ γένει φιλεῖ τῷτο συμβαίνειν—θέμις γὰρ ἔκ ἔστι, θνητὸν ἀθανάτῳ συνοικῆσαι. &c. Philo. Ques. Divinor.

Hæc. Oper. Tom. 1. p. 511. Edit. Lond. 1742.

[d] Inest igitur in animis præfagitio—— ea si exarsit acrius, furor appellatur, quum a corpore animus abstractus divino instinctu concitatur. Cic. de Div. 1. 31.

way of raillery ; “ what authority can that mad-  
 “ nefs have, which you call divine ; that a wife  
 “ man ſhould not be able to foreſee, what a  
 “ madman can ; and that he, who has loſt all  
 “ human ſenſes, ſhould preſently acquire divine  
 “ ones [e].”

*Montanus* the Heretic, and his female Affociates, ſeem to have been the authors of theſe prophetic trances, towards the end of the ſecond century ; and acquired great credit by their *viſions and ecſtaſies*, in which they acted their part ſo well, by feigned diſtortions and convulſive agitations of the body, as to appear to be out of their ſenſes : and in thoſe fits, uttered many wild prophecies and predictions, which they impoſed upon the people for divine revelations ; and by affecting at the ſame time a peculiar fanci- tity and ſeverity of diſcipline, gathered a great number of diſciples [f], who firſt raiſed and propagated that ſpirit of enthufiaſm in the Church, which ſubſiſted in it for near a century, under the title of *viſion and prophecy*, and then gradually ſunk into utter contempt.

*Tertullian*, a writer of this enthufiaſtic turn, ſevere in his manners, and ſtiff in his opinions,

————— ea fræna furenti

Concutit, & ſtimulos ſub pectore vertit Apollo.

Ut primum ceſſit furor, & rabida ora quierunt.

Virg. *Æn.* 6. 102.

[e] Quid vero aſtoritatis habet furor iſte, quem divinum vocatis, ut quæ ſapiens non videat, ea videat infanus ; & is, qui humanos ſenſus amiſerit,

divinos adſecutus ſit ? De Div. 2. 54.

[f] Vid. Cave Hiſt. litt. Vol. I. p. 74. it. Jo. Cleric. Hiſt. Eccleſ. ad Ann. clvii.

wrote

wrote with great vehemence against Plays and Shews: in which, as we have seen above, he made great use of visions, towards enforcing his argument. He wrote another book to prove, *that it was a Sin, for a Soldier, to wear a garland or crown on any occasion, and that a Christian should rather suffer martyrdom than submit to it* [g]: and in a third book, he affirms it to be rank idolatry, *to deck their doors with garlands or flowers, on Festival days, according to the custom of the Heathens*: “and calls the name of God to witness, “ that he knew a person, who had been grievously chastised in a vision, because his servants, “ even without his knowledge, and in his absence, “ had crowned the door with flowers, on some “ occasion of public joy [b].” He wrote a treatise likewise, to prove the soul of man to be *corporeal and of human shape*: and for the truth of his opinion, appeals to his ecstatic maid abovementioned, of whom he tells this story; that “ as he happened to be discoursing on the “ nature of the soul, she fell into one of her “ trances: and as soon as the service was over, “ and the people dismissed, she came, as usual, “ to relate to him, what she had seen; which was “ always carefully taken down in writing, in order to be examined: when she declared, that “ there was shewn to her among other things, an “ human soul in bodily form; yet so, as to ap-

[g] Vid. lib. de Corona.

[b] Ex auctoritate quoque Dei confessor — scio fratrem per visionem eadem nocte

castigatum graviter, quod januam ejus subito annuntiatis gaudiis publicis servi coronassent. &c. De. Idolat. 15.

“pear to be a spirit : not of a void and empty  
 “quality, but what might even be handled,  
 “tender, and lucid, of an airy color, and in all  
 “points of human shape [i].” Which wild  
 dream of a frantic, or fiction rather of a silly wo-  
 man, this Father applies, as the testimony of  
 God himself, to evince the certainty of his opi-  
 nion. Lastly, in another book, written to prove,  
 that women ought always to wear a veil, he de-  
 clares, that God, in a vision to a certain sister, had  
 prescribed to her, by a special revelation, the exact  
 length and measure of the veil [k].

Now it is easy to imagine, how *Tertullian* might  
 be imposed upon by the craft of these extatic  
 visionaries ; and by the warmth of his temper and  
 force of his prejudices, be drawn to espouse any  
 delusion, that flattered his particular zeal and fa-  
 vorite opinions. But it is difficult to account for  
 the same conduct in his scholar *Cyprian* ; a man  
 of a more acute head, and sober mind ; but  
 fond of power and Episcopal Authority ; whose  
 character would tempt us to suspect, that he was  
 the inventor, rather than the believer of such idle-  
 stories ; and the director, rather than the dupe of  
 senseless visionaries. Yet in all questionable points  
 of doctrine or discipline, which he had a mind to

[i] Forte nescio quid de ani-  
 ma differebamus, cum ea foror  
 in Spiritu esset. Post transacta  
 solennia, dimissa plebe — in-  
 ter cetera, inquit, ostensa est  
 mihi anima corporaliter, &c.  
 Hoc visio, & Deus testis, &  
 Apostolus Charismatum in Ec-

clesia futurorum Sponsor— De  
 Anima. c. 9.

[k] Nobis Dominus etiam  
 revelationibus, velaminis spa-  
 tia metatus est. Nam cuidam  
 Sorori nostræ Angelus in Som-  
 nis. &c. De Virgin. Veland.  
 17.

introduce



introduce into the Christian worship, we find him constantly appealing to the testimony of *heavenly visions and divine revelations*. It is certain, says Mr. Dodwell, that all things of great moment, which related to the public state of the Church, were foretold to him in visions [l]. For instance, in a letter to *Cæcilius*, he declares, that he had received a divine admonition, to mix water with wine in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, in order to render it effectual [m]. In another to the Clergy, concerning certain Priests, who had restored some lapsed Christians too hastily to the Communion of the Church; he threatens them, to execute, what he was ordered to do against them, in a vision, if they did not desist [n]. He makes the same threat to one *Pupianus*, who had spoken ill of him, and withdrawn himself from his communion [o]: where his Editor *Rigaltius* makes this remark, “ that the argument of visions and divine revelations, which *Cyprian* so frequently uses, is a “ weapon of great force in the hands of so good

[l] Adeo familiares *Cypriano* erant hujusmodi visiones, ut disciplinæ etiam Ecclesiasticæ exercitio illas acceperit, aliasque deinceps expectaret, &c. Dissert. *Cyprian.* iv. § 20.

Ita constat gravioris momenti omnia, quæ quidem publicum Ecclesiæ statum attinerent, esse istiusmodi visionibus prædicta. *ibid.* §. 21.

[m] Nec nos putes, frater carissime, nostra & humana conscribere, aut ultronea voluntate hoc nobis audaçter assinnere.—

Sed quando aliquid Deo aspirante & mandante præcipitur, necesse est Domino servus fidelis obtemperet— admonitos autem nos scias, ut calix, qui in commemoratione ejus offeritur, mixtus vino offeratur &c. *Epist.* LXIII.

[n] Quoniam si ultra in iisdem perseveraverint, utar ea admonitione, qua me Dominus uti jubet.—*Ep.* ix. p. 22.

[o] *Epist.* LXIX. p. 118. Memini enim quid mihi ostensum sit, &c.

“ a man, otherwise a vain and contemptible one ;  
 “ since crafty Sophists might easily invent such  
 “ visions, in favor of any cause, to delude the  
 “ simple and unwary [p].

In a letter likewise to the Clergy and the people, *Cyprian* tells them, “ how he had been admonished and directed by God, to ordain one *Numidicus* a Priest: who by his persuasive exhortations had sent a large number of the Martyrs before him to the other world, either stoned or burnt to death ; and beheld even with joy, the wife of his bosom burnt, together with the rest ; being himself also left for dead, half burnt, and buried in stones, till he was found scarce alive, and carried off by the piety of his daughter, and so restored to the world against his will. But the Lord had now signified the cause of it ; that he might add him to the Priesthood of his Church [q].” In another letter he recommends them to one *Celerinus*, whom he had ordained a lecturer : *whose modesty*, he says, *had been over-ruled and compelled by a divine vision, to accept*

[p] Hic etiam (*Cyprianus*) utitur ostensionibus & visionibus: telo, ad conterendos adversarios, in manu præferam *Cypriani*, viri optimi atque divini, valentissimo; alias vano ac futuli. Nam & callidus Rhetor & Sophista vafer hujusmodi visa ad causam suam appositissima, poterit comminisci, & fallere incautos & simplices. Rigalt. Not. ibid.

[q] Nam admonitos nos & instructos sciatis dignatione di-

vina, ut *Numidicus* Presbyter ascribatur—— qui hortatu suo copiosum Martyrum numerum, lapidibus & flammis necatum ante se misit: quique uxorem adhærentem lateri suo, concrematam simul cum ceteris—lætitis aspexit. Ipse semiustulatus & lapidibus obrutus, & pro mortuo derelictus, — remansit invitus, sed remanendi, ut videmus, hæc fuit causa, ut eum Clero nostro Dominus adjungeret. Ep. 35.

that

*that office* [r]. Where *Rigaltius* once more reflects, *on the great diligence of Cyprian, in making such use of visions* [s]. But *Cyprian* himself suggests the reason of it, in the Epistle immediately preceding, addressed likewise to the Clergy and the people, concerning one *Aurelius*, whom he had ordained a lecturer, by a *divine admonition*, without calling them together and consulting with them in common, concerning the character and merit of the Candidate, as it was the custom of those days in all *Clerical Ordinations*; for which he excuses himself by saying, that there was no occasion, in the present case, *to wait for human testimonies, when the divine suffrage had already been signified* [t]. This then seems to be the meaning of *Cyprian's diligence in the use of visions*, that whenever he thought fit to exert his Episcopal authority, *without the previous consent of his Clergy and people*, he might obviate their murmurs by alledging a divine command for it.

But the most memorable effect of any of his visions was, his flight and retreat, when he withdrew himself from his Church, in the time of persecution. A step which gave great scandal, and seems to have been considered by the Clergy of *Rome*, in a public letter written upon the

[r] Referimus ad vos *Celerinum*.—Clero nostro non humana suffragatione sed divina dignatione conjunctum, &c. Ep. 34.

[s] Notanda hic etiam est industria *Cypriani*, visionum efficacia tam suaviter utentis. Not. b. *ibid.*

[t] In Ordinationibus Clericis, Fratres carissimi, solemus vos ante consulere, & mores ac merita singulorum communi consilio ponderare, sed expectanda non sunt testimonia humana, cum præcedunt divina suffragia, &c. Ep. 33.

subject of it, to the Clergy of *Carthage*, as a desertion of his post, and pastoral duty [*u*]. So that it was no wonder to find *Cyprian* himself as well as his Apologist *Pontius*, the writer of his Life, so solicitous to excuse it. “ There is no  
 “ doubt, says *Rigaltius*, but that the severity of  
 “ his master *Tertullian*, who wrote a book against  
 “ all flight in time of persecution, raised such  
 “ scruples and shame in the mind of *Cyprian*, as  
 “ made him labor hard to wipe off that disgrace ;  
 “ as the pains and perplexity of his Advocate  
 “ *Pontius* likewise shew [*x*].” They both of them therefore affirm, “ that he was commanded to  
 “ retire, by a special revelation from heaven : and  
 “ that his flight was not the effect of any other  
 “ fear, but that of offending God : and that his  
 “ mind, wholly devoted and subservient to the  
 “ admonitions of God, was persuaded, that if  
 “ he had not obeyed the Lord, when he com-  
 “ manded him to retreat, he should sin even by  
 “ suffering martyrdom [*y*].” Yet this plea was  
 nothing

[*u*] Vid. *Cyprian*. *Epist.* 2.

[*x*] *Secessus* iste *Cypriani* fugæ probro minime caruit,— nec dubito quin ipsa tanti Magistri severitas discipuli mentem adeo suffuderit, vel aliquo saltem scrupulo sic pupugerit, ut fugæ suspicionem *Cyprianus* abs se amoliri magno studio contenderet. Hoc & *Pontii* familiaris sui fati intricata sedulitas ostendit, ipsiusque *Cypriani* *Epistolæ* sequentes declarant. Et si verum amamus,

haud aliud magis ista *Romani Cleri* tam argumentosa quam incondita commonitio proscribit. *Rigalt.* *ibid.* Not b.

[*y*] Et audietis omnia quando ad vos reducem me Dominus fecerit, qui, ut *secederem*, iussit. *Epist.* 1x. p. 22.

Fuit vero formido illa, sed iusta ; formido, quæ Dominum timeret offendere. Formido, quæ præceptis Dei mallet obsequi, quam sic coronari. *Dicata* enim in omnibus *Deo mens*,

nothing else without doubt, but a mere fiction, contrived for the purpose of quieting the scandal, that was raised by his flight, and is in effect confuted by himself in another letter to the Clergy, in which he declares, “ that it was the advice “ and authority of one *Tortullus*, which prevailed “ with him to withdraw himself from a place, “ where his life was so much sought for : where- “ fore he desires them, to perform all the func- “ tions of his office for him during his retreat, “ since their persons were not exposed to so much “ envy and danger as his would be [z].”

*Dionysius*, Bishop of *Alexandria*, who lived in the same age, has left the same story likewise concerning himself, and swears to the truth of it : that in the time of a persecution, he was commanded by God in a vision, to retire from *Alexandria*, and was wonderfully preserved and guarded by him in his retreat [a]. *And shall we not believe a most holy Bishop*, says Mr. Dodwell, *even upon his oath* [b] ? The same *Dionysius* af-

mens, & fides divinis admonitionibus mancipata, credit se, nisi Domino latebram tunc jubenti paruisset, etiam ipsa passione peccare. Cyprian. Vit. per Pontium. p. 13.

[z] A *Tertullo*, fratre nostro carissimo, ratio reddetur : qui pro cetera sua cura, quam impendens divinis operibus impertit, etiam hujus consilii auctor fuit, ut cautus & moderatus existerem, nec me in conspectum publicum, & maxime ejus loci, ubi toties flagitatus & quaesitus fuisset, temere

committerem. Fretus ergo & dilectione & religione vestra, his litteris & hortor & mando, ut vos quorum minime illic invidiosa & non adeo periculosa praesentia est, vice mea fungamini, &c. Ep. 5. p. 13.

[a] Ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ λαλῶ, καὶ αὐτὸς οἶδεν ὅτι ἐ ψεύδομαι. ἐδεδίμαιν ἐπ’ ἐμαυτῷ βαλλόμενος, ἐδ’ ἀθεοῖ πεποιήμαι τὴν φυγὴν. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 6. c. 40.

[b] Quid hic faciemus ? Viro Sanctissimo ne jurato quidem credemus ? Dissert. Cyprian. 1v. § 17.

firmis

firms likewise that he had another vision, upon the subject of *reading Heretical books*, about which, he had some scruples, till a *voice from Heaven expressly enjoined him, to read them all without reserve, because he was able to examine and confute them* [c]. This reminds me of a vision also which *St. Jerom* declares, to have been given to himself, about a century after; *in which he was dragged to the Tribunal of Christ, and terribly threatened, and even scourged for the grievous sin of reading secular and profane writers, Cicero, Virgil, and Horace; whom for that reason he resolved never to take into his hands any more*: upon which *Ruffinus* rallies him with great spirit and smartness, for inventing and publishing so silly a lie [d]. And it must needs be thought strange, that God should injoin contrarieties to his Saints and Servants; should command one *Father* to read *Heretical books*, because he was able to confute them, yet forbid it afterwards to another, who was full as able, to confute them, as his predecessor. But if *Jerom's* vision deserved to be treated by his contemporaries as a fiction, I see no reason, either from the nature of the thing, or the use which is made of it, or the

[c] Ὁραμα θεόπεμπτον ἐπέβρωσέ με. καὶ λόγος πρὸς με γινόμενος, πωσέταξε διαρρήδην λέγων, πᾶσιν ἐνύγχανε οἷς ἂν εἰς χειρᾶς λάβοις. διευθύνειν γὰρ ἕκαστα καὶ δοκιμάζειν ἱκανὸς εἶ. Euseb. Hist. 7. 7.

[d] Ostendam apud ipsum (*Hieronymum*) tam licita haberi perjuriam, ut in scriptis quoque suis deprehendi ea non erube-

scat.—Et cetera cum dixisset ejusmodi, quibus alienam esse a Christiano assereret librorum sæcularium lectionem, inserit etiam revelationem quandam ad se divinitus factum. &c. Rufin. Adv. Hieron. Vid. Oper. Hieron. Tom. 4. par. 2. p. 414. Edit. Benedict.

character

characters of the persons concerned, why *the visions of Cyprian and Dionysius*, should not merit the same treatment.

But how credible soever these visions might appear to the generality of Christians in those days, yet there were many at the same time, as *Cyprian* himself confesses, who contemned and made a jest of them all, as mere illusions and impertinent fancies : but they were a sort of men, he says, *who would sooner believe any thing against a Priest, than believe a Priest* [e].

In one of the Dialogues, commonly ascribed to *Lucian*, the Christians seem to be ridiculed, on the account of their *fasting and watching whole nights in hymns and prayers, as if they could infuse by that means, what sort of dreams or visions they thought fit* [f]. Now there is a passage so applicable to this remark, in the ancient narrative of the martyrdom of *St. Ignatius*, as to make us almost imagine, that the author had alluded to it. The narrative was drawn up by persons, who had accompanied the Martyr from *Asia to Rome*, whose thoughts, for several months past, had been employed on nothing else but the subject of his Martyrdom, and it concludes thus, “ These things were done on  
“ the 13th of the Kalends of *January*; *Sura* and  
“ *Synecius* being the second time Consuls of

[e] *Quanquam sciam somnia ridicula, & visiones ineptas quibusdam videri; sed utique illis, qui malunt contra sacerdotes credere, quam sacerdoti.*  
Ep. 68. p. 113.

[f] “*Ἐλεγον γὰρ εἰλέως δέκα ἄσσοι διαμνηόμεν. κ' ἐπὶ παννύχως ἱμνωδίας ἐπαγρυπνήσεις, ὄνειρώτιομεν τὰ τοιαῦτα*—*Philopatris.*  
vers. fin.

“ Rome, of which we ourselves were eye witnesses.  
 “ And the night following, as we were watching  
 “ with tears in the house, and praying to God  
 “ with bended knees, that he would impart to  
 “ us weak men, some assurance of what was  
 “ done, [with regard to the Martyr ;] it hap-  
 “ pened, that falling into a slumber, some of us,  
 “ on a sudden, saw the blessed *Ignatius* standing  
 “ before us and embracing us ; others beheld  
 “ the blessed Martyr praying for us ; others, as  
 “ it were dropping with sweat, as if just come  
 “ from his great labor, and standing by the  
 “ Lord : which when we saw, being filled with  
 “ joy, and comparing the visions of our dreams  
 “ with each other, we glorified God the giver  
 “ of all good, and being assured of the blessed-  
 “ ness of the Saint, we have made known un-  
 “ to you, both the day and the time, that being  
 “ assembled together, according to the time of  
 “ his Martyrdom, we may communicate with  
 “ the combatant and most valiant Martyr of  
 “ Christ [g].

But to declare freely what I think : whatever  
 ground there might be in those primitive ages,  
 either to reject or to allow the authority of those  
 visions, yet from all the accounts of them, that  
 remain to us in these days, there seems to be the  
 greatest reason to suspect, that they were all con-  
 trived, or authorized at least, by the leading

[g] Vid. Coteler. Patr. A- Archbishop *Wake's* Transla-  
 postol. Vol. II. Martyr. S. tion.  
 Ignat. § vii. p. 161. See also



men of the Church, for the sake of moderating and governing with more ease, the unruly spirit of the populace, in those times of danger and difficulty. For they are generally applied, to excuse the conduct of particular persons, in some instances of it liable to censure; or to enforce some particular doctrine or discipline, warmly pressed by some, and not well relished by others; or to confirm things not only trifling and frivolous, but sometimes even superstitious and hurtful to true religion.

I have already observed, that it was the Heretic *Montanus*, who first gave a vogue to *prophetic visions and ecstasies*, in the primitive Church. But when his pretensions came afterwards to be suspected and decried, it is remarkable, that those, who undertook to expose and confute them, employed such arguments against his prophecy, as seemed to shake the credit of all prophecy. For whereas the *Montanists* delivered their prophecies always in *ecstasy*, or with loss of senses; it was then urged against them, “that this was the proof  
“ of a Diabolical spirit; that the true Prophets  
“ never had such fits; never lost their senses;  
“ but calmly and sedately received and under-  
“ stood whatever was revealed to them.” And *Epiphanius* makes this the very criterion or distinguishing character between a true and false prophet; *that the true had no ecstasies, constantly retained his senses, and with firmness of mind apprehended and uttered the divine oracles* [b]. St. Je-

1077

[b] “Ὅτε γὰρ ἦν χρεία, ἐν προφήταις, ἐν ἀληθινῷ πνεύματι, καὶ  
ἠσκημένῳ

rom also declares, that the true Prophets never spake in ecstasy, or madness of heart, like Montanus and his mad women, Prisca and Maximilla, but understood what they delivered, and could speak or hold their tongues, whenever they pleased, which those, who spake in ecstasy, could not do [i]. Eusebius also mentions a book of one Miltiades, written against Montanus, the purpose of which was, to prove, that a Prophet ought not to speak in ecstasy [k]. Yet from the testimonies collected above, we have seen, that before the Montanists had brought those ecstasies into disgrace, the prophecy of the orthodox, as well as that of the Heretics, was declared to have been exerted in ecstasy. And it appears to have been the current opinion in those earlier days, that the Prophets also of the old Testament received and uttered their revelations in ecstasy.

Athenagoras expressly affirms it, and says, “ that while they were under the divine impulse, “ they were transported out of their senses, and “ delivered in ecstasy what was inspired, being “ mere organs of the Holy Spirit, just as a pipe “ or flute is of him, who blows into it [l].”

Justin

ἐξζημένη διανοία καὶ παρακολυθηλί-  
κῳ, οἱ αὐτῶ ἀγιοὶ τὰ πάντα προε-  
φήτευσαν. &c. Adv. Hæres. l. 2.  
T. 1. § III p. 404.

[i] Non enim loquitur (Propheta) in ἐκστάσει extasi, ut Montanus ἔφ' Prisca Maximillaque delirant, sed quod prophetat, liber est visionis intelligentis universa quæ loquitur. Hier.

Op. Vol. III. p. 1559. Prolog. in Naum Proph.

Qui autem in ecstasi, id est, invitus loquitur, nec tacere nec loqui in sua potestate habet. ibid. Prol. in Abacuc. p. 1591.

[k] Ἐν ᾧ ἀποδείκνυσι περὶ τὸ μὴ δεῖν προφήτην ἐν ἐκστάσει λαλεῖν. Euseb. Hist. l. 5. c. 17.

[l] Οἱ καὶ ἐκστασιν τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς,

*Justin Martyr* speaks of them in the same strain, “that the spirit of God descending from above, made use of them, as of an instrument, just as the quill strikes the harp or lyre, to reveal to us the knowledge of divine and heavenly things [m].” *Tertullian* also declares, “that he, who has the spirit within him, must necessarily be deprived of his senses, especially whenever he beholds the glory of God, or when God speaks by him, as being then overshadowed by the divine power [n].”

Again, *Montanus's* Associate *Maximilla*, gave out, that the gift of prophecy was to cease with her, and no other Prophet to arise after her. In answer to which, the Orthodox asserted, that the true spirit of prophecy could never fail or cease in the Church, till the consummation of all things [o]. In which, as *Mr. Dodwell* owns, “the Ancients argued rashly, and were mistaken in their notion of the perpetuity of prophecy: since *Eusebius*, who made it his business to explore and deduce the succession of those prophetic gifts,

τοῖς λογισμῶν, κινήσει αὐτὰς τὸ θεῖον πνεῦμα, ἃ ἐργάσει ἐξέφώνησαν. ὡσεὶ καὶ αὐτῆς αὐτὸν ἐμπνεῦσαι. Legat. pr. Christian. p. 9. Edit. ad calcem Oper. Just. Mart.

[m] “Ὅτι αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον ἐξ ἑρανῶ καλὸν πνεῦμα, ὡς περὶ ἑργῶν κινήσει τὸν ἄνθρωπον, τοῖς δικαίοις ἀνδράσι χράμενον, τὴν τῶν θεῶν ἡμῶν καὶ ἑρανῶν ἀποκαλύψει γνώσιν. Cohort. ad gent. p. 9. B.

[n] in spiritu enim homo constitutus, præsertim quum

gloriam Dei conspicit, vel per ipsum Deus loquitur, necesse est, excidat sensu.——Adv. Marcion. l. 4. p. 537.

[o] Φάσκει γὰρ ἡ παρ’ αὐτοῖς λεγομένη Μαξιμίλλα ἡ προφήτις —μέγ’ ἐμὲ προφήτις ἐκέτι εἶσαι, ἀλλὰ συλλέλεια, &c. Epiphani. Hæref. 48. §. 2. Δεῖν γὰρ εἶναι τὸ προφήτικον χάρισμα ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Εκκλησίᾳ μέχρι τῆς τελείας παρουσίας, ὁ Απόστολος ἀξιοῖ. Euseb. Hist. 5. 17.

“ intimates,

“ intimates, that they were ceased and vanished  
 “ in his days [*p*] :” that is, about the middle of  
 the fourth century.

Since we are now considering the miracles of the *Cyprianic* age, I cannot forbear taking notice of two or three of those wonderful stories, which *Cyprian* himself attests, in that *magnificent treatise*, as it was called, concerning *the lapsed Christians*, who in the time of persecution, had been induced, by the terrors of present death or tortures, to deny Christ or offer incense to an Idol. “ There  
 “ was a man, says he, who went up voluntarily  
 “ to the Capitol, to deny the Lord ; and when  
 “ he had denied him, was presently struck dumb.  
 “ —— A woman also, who, after her lapse had  
 “ the impudence to go to the baths, was there  
 “ seized by an unclean spirit, and thrown to the  
 “ ground, and with her teeth tore that tongue,  
 “ with which she had been either talking, or  
 “ feeding impiously ; and so became her own ex-  
 “ ecutioner ; for she died not long after in great  
 “ anguish and torments of her bowells.” He introduces the next story more solemnly, by declaring, that he himself was present and an eyewitness of it. “ Certain Parents, says he, too  
 “ solicitous for their own safety, and flying from  
 “ persecution, left an infant daughter to the care  
 “ of a nurse ; who carried it presently to the Ma-

[*p*] Scio equidem lubensque concedo, in tota hac *de prophetiarum perpetuitate*, hallucinatos esse veteres. *Dissert. Cypr.* iv. § 13.

*Eusebius*, qui hoc in sua hi-

storia notatu dignum duxerit, quousque *donorum prophetiarum* successio permanavit, id sane inuuit, suo jam tempore illam defecisse. *ibid.* § 22.

“ gistrates.

“ gistrates. These, being then assembled with  
“ the people before an idol, and seeing the child  
“ not yet old enough to eat flesh, gave it a piece  
“ of bread dipt in wine, being the remains of  
“ what had been offered to the Idol. The mo-  
“ ther, ignorant of the fact, within a short time  
“ after took her daughter home again: but the  
“ child was yet no more able to discover the  
“ crime committed, than she was before, to un-  
“ derstand or to hinder it: The mother brought  
“ her therefore to us at the sacrament, while we  
“ knew nothing of the matter. But the child  
“ being now mingled with the Saints, and im-  
“ patient of the service and prayers, began to  
“ be seized, sometimes with fits of crying, some-  
“ times with tortures of the mind, and, as if it  
“ had been upon the rack, betrayed by all the  
“ signs, which its tender age could give, a sense  
“ of guilt and conscioufness of the fact. The  
“ service being ended, when the Deacon began  
“ to give the Cup to all present, and it came  
“ to the child’s turn, the little one, by divine  
“ instinct, turned away its face, held its lips close  
“ shut, and refused the cup: the Deacon persisted,  
“ and poured a little down its throat, though by  
“ force: upon this, convulsions and vomitings  
“ ensued: the Eucharist could not stay in a body  
“ and mouth so defiled: the consecrated potion  
“ of the Lord’s blood burst out of its polluted  
“ bowels: so great is the power, so great the  
“ majesty of the Lord: the secrets of darkness  
“ are detected by its light: nor could hidden  
“ crimes be concealed from the Priest of God:

H

“ for

“ for this happened to an infant, which was not  
 “ yet of age to speak, or tell the crimes, which  
 “ others had committed upon it. There was an-  
 “ other woman, says *Cyprian*, who, after she had  
 “ taken the Sacrament with us unobserved, was  
 “ instantly seized, with pains and torments, and  
 “ fell down convulsed and trembling, as if she  
 “ had swallowed a sword or deadly poison: and  
 “ her crime, which had escaped the notice of  
 “ men, met with its punishment from God. An-  
 “ other, who had attempted with her polluted  
 “ hands to open her chest,” (in which the conse-  
 crated elements, according to the custom of that  
 age, were kept for her use at home.) “ fire burst  
 “ out of it in such a manner, that she durst not  
 “ touch it. Another man, who had also been  
 “ defiled, having had the assurance to take a  
 “ part of the consecrated bread, among the rest,  
 “ undiscovered, could neither eat nor handle it,  
 “ but instead of it, found a coal of fire in his  
 “ hands [q].”

Now what other notion can we reasonably en-  
 tertain of these strange stories, but that they were  
 partly forged, and partly aggravated and dressed  
 up into this tragical form, from some accidental  
 disorders, which the sense of a concealed guilt,  
 and the dread of God’s judgments upon it,  
 would naturally raise in anxious minds, on that  
 awfull occasion of receiving the Sacrament? For  
 it is certain, that they were of the greatest use,  
 in these times of danger and trial, to support the  
 discipline of the Church, which the *Lord guarded*,

[q] Vid. *Cyprian. de Lapsis. Edit. Nic. Rigalt. p. 175.*

as Mr. *Dodwell* says, by *these terrors, as by the sword of a Cherubim* [r]. Since none of those, who had secretly lapsed, or been weak enough to deny the faith, and from a desire of concealing their shame, had evaded the penance of the Church, durst either come openly to the Sacrament, or take it even privately at home, or yet wholly abstain from it, when the divine judgments were so signally exerted upon all, who had ventured on any of those expedients, before they had made a public satisfaction for their crime, and been absolved of it in form by the Pastors of the Church. And it was without doubt for this end, that all these stories, with many more of the same kind, were so pompously and rhetorically set forth by this eminent Bishop, in his celebrated treatise concerning the *lapsed* Christians.

§ 5. As to the gift of *expounding the Scriptures, or the mysteries of God*, by a divine inspiration, which is claimed likewise by the Primitive Fathers, there is not the least trace of it to be found in any age of the Church, from the days of the Apostles. For in the second and third Centuries, the very period, in which all the other miraculous gifts are supposed to have flourished in their greatest vigor, it is certain, as we have seen above, that a most senseless, extravagant, and enthusiastick method of expounding prevailed, which has ever since been utterly slighted and rejected:

[r] Ita munivit Ecclesiæ suæ que disciplinam. Diff. Iren. 2.  
 Dominus, quasi gladio quodam § 54.  
 Cherubico, sanctam undequa-

whereas in these later days, when all extraordinary gifts are confessedly ceased, a clear, solid, and rational way of interpreting generally obtains, as the warmest advocates of Antiquity are forced to allow. And whenever any particular Father happens to be censured for his ridiculous comments on Sacred Writ, his Apologifts with one voice alledge, that such expositions are not to be charged to the man, *but to the age, in which he lived*, which could not relish or indure any better.

*Justin Martyr* however lays claim to this gift, as *conferred upon him by the special grace of God [s]*, upon which *Mr. Tillemont* declares, “ that  
 “ of all the extraordinary graces, which the Ho-  
 “ ly Spirit bestowed upon the Church in those  
 “ times, there were few so considerable, as that  
 “ of understanding the Scriptures, which was  
 “ communicated by singular favor to *Justin [t]*.”  
 Yet from all the writings and monuments of the very earliest Fathers, which remain to us, it is manifest beyond all contradiction, that there never was any such gift in the Church, after the times of the Apostles; and that *Justin* in particular, had no better claim to it, than any of the rest. And if those Fathers then, through a fervency of zeal, or an enthusiastic turn of mind, could mistake such fancifull expositions, for divine inspirations, I see no reason, why they might

[s] Ἀπεκάλυψεν ἔν ἡμῖν πάντα ὅσα κὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτῆ νενοήκαμεν. *Just. Dial. Par. 2. p. 352. Edit.*

*Thirlb. it. p. 258, 391.*

[t] *Memoirs. Tom. 2. p. 358, 380.*



not as easily be deluded in every other instance of those pretended gifts, which flattered the same zeal and spirit, that so strongly possessed them.

It is a common case with men of great piety, zealously persuaded of the truth and high importance of any religious doctrine, to think it reasonable, that God should interpose himself miraculously in favor of it, when it happens to be opposed by any earthly power and in danger of being oppressed: and when they are thus prepared, by their prejudices, to expect a divine interposition, they listen to every pretension of that sort, which craft or wild enthusiasm can devise, without allowing their reason to examine it, or to suggest the suspicion of a fraud. There are many instances of this in History, and a remarkable one in our own; that of *the Holy Maid of Kent*, in the reign of *Henry the 8th*: who, by the pretence of *visions and divine revelations*, communicated in *trances or ecstasy*, contrived by Popish Priests, to raise the sinking credit of their cause, drew in Bishop *Fisher*, with many other eminent persons, to take her for a *Prophetess*, divinely inspired, as *Tertullian* did his *ecstatic Maid*. Yet this modern Prelate was more learned and judicious, than any one perhaps of all the ancient Fathers, and by all accounts of him, as pious and religious too: since he lost his life, or, in the stile of the *Romish Church*, suffered martyrdom, for the sake of those very prejudices, which betrayed him into this folly. But the Lord *Cromwell*, expostulating with him on that subject, rightly told him, “ that the true reason, which

“ induced him to give credit to the maid, was  
 “ the matter of her prophecies ; to which he was  
 “ so addicted, that nothing could come amiss,  
 “ which served to that end ; and he appealed to  
 “ his conscience, whether, if she had prophesied  
 “ in favor of the king’s proceedings, he would  
 “ have given such easy credit to her, and not  
 “ have examined the matter farther [u].”

§ 6. The *gift of tongues* also is claimed, as we have seen, among the rest, and affirmed to have been actually possessed by the primitive Christians : for if the testimony of *Irenæus* can be credited, many were indued with it in his days, and heard to *speak all kind of languages in the Church*. And in truth, this gift, in the common estimation of human reason, has been thought so essentially necessary to the propagation of the Gospel, in those first ages, that the Advocates of the primitive miracles, trusting to that hypothesis, instead of searching into the fact, urge the necessity of its continuance after the days of the Apostles, as a proof of the continuance of all the rest. Yet, how great soever the importance of it may seem to be, it is evident, as I have elsewhere shewn, from the origin, nature and exercise of it, as they are represented in the New Testament, that it was not permanent or lasting, either in the Church at large, or in those particular persons, who were principally favored with it, but was granted only on certain special occasions, and then again with-

[u] See Bp. Burnet, *Hist. Reform.* Vol. I, p. 154.

drawn, even from the Apostles themselves; so that, in the ordinary course of their ministry, they appear to have been generally destitute of it.

*Irenæus* however declares it to have been indulged to many in his days. But it is very remarkable, that this Primitive Bishop, who ascribes it so liberally to others, appears to have been in great want of it himself, for the propagation of the Gospel in his own *Diocese*, among the *Celts*, or *Gauls*; where, as *Dr. Cave* interprets his words, *it was not the least part of his trouble, that he was forced to learn the language of the country; a rude and barbarous dialect, before he could do any good upon them* [x]. Nor is it less strange also, that from the time of *Irenæus*, there is not a single Father, in all the succeeding ages, who, upon his authority, has ventured to carry on the same pretension, or make the least claim to it; or to speak of it in any other manner, than as a gift peculiar to the first Christians, in the times of the Apostles. And I might risk the merit of my argument on this single point; that, after the Apostolic times, there is not in all history one instance, either well attested, or even so much as mentioned, of any particular person, who had ever exercised this gift, or pretended to exercise it, in any age or country whatsoever. *Mr. Dodwell* supposes it to have ceased, in the reign of *M. Aurelius*, about sixty years after the death of

[x] See *Cave's Lives of Saints*, Vol. I p. 169. § 1x.

St. *John* [y]. But it is not credible, that a gift of such eminent use should intirely cease, while all the rest were subsisting in full vigor, and abounding every day more and more. If, according to the common hypothesis, we admit them all to be true, it is not possible, I say, to imagine any cause, why this in particular should be withdrawn, and the rest continued: but if, agreeably to my system, we consider them all, as fictitious, we then see an obvious and manifest reason for it. For all the other extraordinary gifts, *of healing diseases, casting out Devils, visions, and ecstatic revelations*, afford great room to Impostors to exert all their craft of surprizing and dazzling the senses of the simple, the credulous, and the superstitious of all ranks: whereas the *gift of tongues* cannot easily be counterfeited, or a pretension to it imposed on men of sense, or on any indeed, but those, who are utterly illiterate and strangers to all tongues but their own: and to acquire a number of languages by natural means, and to a degree, that might make them pass for a supernatural gift, was a work of so much difficulty and labor, as rendered it impracticable, to support a pretension of that kind, for a succession of many years. And this, in all probability, was the real cause of its being dropped so early in those primitive ages: for after the mention of it by *Irenæus*, we find it no longer in any subsequent list of the mira-

[y] A Marci temporibus runderem dona linguarum. Diff. deficere cœperunt gratiæ illæ in Iren. 2. § 44. extraordinariæ—defecere eo-

culous gifts, nor the least hint of its continuance in the Church, in any later writer, from that time, down to the present. If this then appears to have been the case of this particular gift; that a false claim to it was made by the early Fathers, and held up for a while, till it could no longer be supported; it is sufficient, one would think, of itself, to blast the general credit of all the rest, though no particular mark of fraud could have been fixed on each of them separately: but when there is not a single one among them all, which, either from its nature, or end, or manner of exertion, or the character of its witnesses, does not furnish just ground to suspect it as fictitious, it must needs persuade every rational inquirer, that they were all derived from the same source of craft and imposture.

In short; if we trace the history of this gift from its origin, we shall find, that in the times of the Gospel, in which alone the miracles of the Church are allowed to be true by all Christians, it was the first gift, which was conferred upon the Apostles, in a public and illustrious manner, and reckoned ever after among the principal of those, which were imparted to the first converts. But in the succeeding ages, when miracles began to be of a suspected and dubious character, it is observable; that this gift is mentioned but once by a single writer, and then vanished of a sudden, without the least notice, or hint given by any of the ancients, either of the manner, or time, or cause of its vanishing. Lastly, in the later ages, when the miracles of the  
Church

Church were not only suspected, but found to be false by our Reformers, and considered as such ever since by all Protestants, this gift has never once been heard of, or pretended to by the Romanists themselves, though they challenge at the same time all the other gifts of the Apostolic days. From all which, I think, we may reasonably infer, that *the gift of tongues*, may be considered as a proper test and criterion, for determining the miraculous pretensions of all Churches, which derive their descent from the Apostles: and consequently, if, in the list of their extraordinary gifts, they cannot shew us this, we may fairly conclude, that they have none else to shew, which are real and genuin.

I have now run through all the various kinds of the miraculous gifts, which are pretended to have subsisted in the Church, during the second and third centuries; and have opened the genuin state of them, as far as it is discoverable to us at this distance, from the most authentic monuments and testimonies of the principal Fathers of those centuries. Ages, which are always stiled the purest, and in which these very Fathers bore the first character; not onely on the account of their piety and integrity, but of their abilities also and learning. If any suspicions then can be entertained against such witnesses, they will be stronger still against all who succeeded them, especially after the Empire became Christian, when, according to the hypothesis of the very Admirers of these Primitive ages, a general corruption both of faith and morals began more openly to infect  
the

the Christian Church; which by that revolution, as *St. Jerom* says, *lost as much of her virtue, as it had gained of power and wealth* [z].

But in the case of these miracles, there is one circumstance, common to all the writers, who attest them, as well in the earlier, as the later ages; that though their assertions be strong, their instances are weak; and when, in proof of what they affirm, they descend to alledge any particular facts, they are usually so unlucky in the choice of them, that instead of strengthening, they weaken the credit of their general affirmation, and, from the absurdity of each miracle related by them, furnish a fresh objection to their power of working any. This the reader can hardly fail to observe, from the examples already produced; to which I shall add one or two more, of the most considerable, which are transmitted to us from the same ages, and which I had before omitted to recite.

One of the most authentic and celebrated pieces in all Primitive antiquity, is *the circular letter of the Church of Smyrna*, containing a narrative of the Martyrdom of *St. Polycarp*, their Bishop, and *of the many miracles*, as *Mr. Dodwell* says, *which made it illustrious* [a], This letter, written about the middle of the second century,

[z] Et postquam ad Christianos Principes venerit, potentia quidem & divitiis major, sed virtutibus minor est. Oper. Tom. 2. par. 2. p. 91.

[a] Inter præcipua sacræ antiquitatis monumenta, quæ ex primis Ecclesiæ temporibus, ad nostram ætatem pervenerunt, jure merito computatur illa e-

gregia epistola, quam de beati Polycarpi martyrio Ecclesia Smyrnenfis conscripsit. Ruitart. Act. Martyr. p. 28.

Quanta autem miracula hoc Martyrium insignierint, testes habemus ipsos illos Polycarpi Smyrnæos. Dodw. Diff. Iren. II. § XXXII.

informs

informs us, “ that when that Saint was entring  
 “ the lifts, in which he was to be burnt, there  
 “ was so great a tumult, that no body could be  
 “ heard.—But there came a voice to him from  
 “ heaven, saying, *be strong, Polycarp, and acquit*  
 “ *thyself like a man:* and though no body saw,  
 “ who it was that spake, yet many of the bre-  
 “ thren heard the voice [*b*].—As soon as he  
 “ had finished his prayer, the executioner kindled  
 “ the fire, and the flame began to blaze to a  
 “ great height. When behold, says the writer,  
 “ a mighty wonder appeared to us, whose lot it  
 “ was to see it, and who were reserved by hea-  
 “ ven, to declare to others what we had seen.  
 “ For the flame, forming a kind of arch, like  
 “ to the sail of a ship filled with the wind, en-  
 “ compassed the body of the martyr, as in a  
 “ circle; who stood in the midst of it, not as  
 “ flesh, which is burnt, but bread, which is  
 “ baked, or as gold and silver glowing in a fur-  
 “ nace: and so sweet a smell issued from him all  
 “ the while, as if it had been the smoak of  
 “ frankincense, or some rich spices. At length,  
 “ when these wicked men saw, that his body  
 “ could not be consumed by fire, they com-  
 “ manded the executioner to draw near, and to  
 “ thrust his sword into him; which being done  
 “ accordingly, there came out of his Body a  
 “ *Dove*, and so great a quantity of blood, as  
 “ quite extinguished the fire: so that the whole  
 “ multitude were amazed, to see so great a dif-

[*b*] Vid. Martyr. Polyc. c. Apost. T. 2. p. 198,  
 §, 9. Apud Coteler. Patres.



ference between the Unbelievers, and the "Elect [c]." Yet it appears from the sequel of the narrative, that there was fire enough still left, to consume the body to ashes, which was executed with great care, that the Christians might not be able to preserve the least remains of it.

The greatest part of this Epistle is transcribed by *Eusebius*, who has omitted the mention of *the Dove*, which flew out of his body; for which reason *Mr. Dodwell* and *Archbishop Wake* have thought fit also to omit it. Yet all the oldest copies still extant, from which *Archbishop Usher*, *Cotelerius* and *Ruinart*, published their several editions, retain this passage [d]: which *Eusebius* might probably drop for the same reason, for which *Mr. Dodwell* and *Bishop Wake* also, profess to have dropt it; viz. for the sake of rendering the narrative *the less suspected* [e]. To the end

[c] Vid. *ibid.* c. 15, 16.

[d] Præ aliis latinis versionibus, id habet *Usseriana*, quod omnium omnino aliarum longe antiquissima sit, utpote quæ non multo post *Eusebii* tempora facta fuerit: quamque existimat *Usserius* ipsam eandem fuisse, quæ olim in *Ecclesia Gallicana* legebatur. *Ruinart.* *ib.* p. 28. Vid. *it.* *Euseb. Hist. Eccles.* l. 4. c. 15.

[e] Nec enim illa urgemus, quæ de *Columba* habet *Codex Usserianus*, quæ nulla utique comparent in *Eusebio* aut *Rufino*. Nec enim suppositiis,

suspectæ fidei monumentis immixtis, verorum fidem censuimus derogandam. *Dodw. Diss. Iren.* 11. § xxxii.

*N. B.* *Archbishop Wake* explaining his reasons for omitting the story of *the Dove*, says; "Now tho' there may seem  
"to have been something of  
"a foundation for such a miracle, in the raillery of *Lucian*, upon the death of *Pe-  
"regrinus* the Philosopher,  
"who burnt himself about the  
"same time that *Polycarp* suffered, and from whose *Fu-  
"neral Pile* he makes a *Vul-*  
"ture

end of this letter is annexed the following advertisement. “ This Epistle was transcribed by  
 “ Caius, from the copy of *Irenæus*, the disciple  
 “ of *Polycarp*; and I, *Socrates*, transcribed it at  
 “ *Corinth*. After which, I, *Pionius*, again wrote  
 “ it out, from the copy above mentioned, hav-  
 “ ing searched it out by the revelation of *Poly-*  
 “ *carp*, who directed me to it, &c.”

*Eusebius* also relates a miracle, wrought by *Narcissus*, Bishop of *Jerusalem*, about the end of the second, or the beginning of the third century: “ that when the sacred oil was almost spent,  
 “ in the vigil of *Easter*, and the people were in  
 “ a great consternation about it, he ordered those,  
 “ who had the care of the lamps, to go and  
 “ draw water from a certain well in the neigh-  
 “ bourhood, and to bring it away to him: which  
 “ being accordingly done, *Narcissus*, after he  
 “ had prayed over it, commanded them to pour

“ *ture to ascend*, in opposition,  
 “ it may be, to *St. Polycarp's*  
 “ *Pigeon*, (if indeed he design-  
 “ ed, as a learned man has  
 “ conjectured, under the story  
 “ of that Philosopher, to ridi-  
 “ cule the life and sufferings  
 “ of *Polycarp*) yet I confess, I  
 “ am so little a friend to *such*  
 “ *kind of miracles*, that I thought  
 “ it better with *Eusebius*, to  
 “ omit that circumstance, than  
 “ to mention it from Bishop  
 “ *Usher's Manuscript*, &c.”  
 [Prelim. Discour. p. 57.] which  
 Manuscript however, he after-  
 wards declares, *to be so well*  
*attested, that we need not any*  
*farther assurance of the truth*

*of it*, p. 59.

These deaths of the Primitive Martyrs seldom failed of being accompanied by miracles, which, as we find them related in the old Martyrologies, were generally copied from each other: concerning sweet smells issuing from their bodies, and their wonderfull resistance of all kinds of torture; and the miraculous cures of their wounds and bruises, so as to tire their tormentors by the difficulty of destroying them, which yet, after a vain profusion of miracles, was always effected at the last.

“ it

“ it into the lamps with a sincere faith in Christ ;  
 “ upon which, by a miraculous and divine power,  
 “ the nature of the water was changed into the  
 “ fatness of oil : of which oil, as *Eusebius* says,  
 “ several small quantities were preserved by great  
 “ numbers of the faithful, to his time, which  
 “ was about an hundred years after the date of  
 “ the miracle [f].”

The same Historian, giving an account of the horrible barbarities, which were exercised upon the Christians of *Palæstine*, concludes one of his stories in the following manner ; “ after these  
 “ things had been transacted many days succes-  
 “ sively, this miracle appeared. There was a  
 “ clear and bright sky, and a remarkable serene-  
 “ nity of the air : when on a sudden, the pillars  
 “ in the portico’s of the City, poured out drops  
 “ of tears ; and when there was not the least  
 “ moisture in the air, the streets and public places  
 “ were all wet, no body knew how, as if water  
 “ had been thrown upon them : so that it became  
 “ a common talk, that the earth wept for the  
 “ impiety, which was committed ; and to re-  
 “ prove the relentless and savage nature of men,  
 “ stones, and inanimate bodies shed tears for  
 “ what had happened [g].” A description of this kind, might easily be excused in an Orator or a Poet, but when an Historian after he has raised our

[f] Παρά δὲ πλείστοις τῶν ἀ-  
 δελφῶν ἐπὶ μήκιστον ἐξ ἑκείνου καὶ εἰς  
 ἡμᾶς βραχὺ τι δεῖγμα τῆ τότε  
 θαύματι φελαχθῆναι. Hist.  
 Eccl. 6. 9.

[g] Εφ’ οἷς πλείστοις ἡμέραις  
 ἐπιτελεσμένοις, τοιοῦτόν τι παρά-  
 δοξον συμβαίνει. Ibid. c. ix. p.  
 425.

attention,

attention, and prepared us to expect something great and miraculous, tells us only, of *stones shedding tears for the impieties of men*, he debases the gravity of History, and makes miracles themselves contemptible.

Mr. *Dodwell*, as I have before said, has, with great diligence, deduced the History of the Primitive miracles, down to these very times of *Eusebius*; which he then shuts up with the establishment of Christianity by human laws, declaring, “that many things concurred to recommend the credit of the preceding ages, which have no place in those that followed [b]:” and speaking of the Life of *Gregory*, called the *wonder-worker*, written by *Gregory of Nyssa*, a Bishop of the greatest piety and gravity, he says, “in this Life there are many things, which breathe the air of imposture and the genius of the fourth century, so that I dare not mix them with what is more genuin, for fear of hurting the credit of all [i].” For this reason therefore, it was my first intention, to confine my inquiries also to the same period; but having since perceived, that several of our learned Divines and principal advocates of the Christian faith have not scrupled, to assert the succession of true miracles, to the end even of the fifth century, I thought it necessary, to extend my argument to

[b] *Multa enim faciunt ad primorum Seculorum commendandam fidem, quæ locum in sequentium seculorum testimoniis prorsus nullum habent.*

*Differt. Iren. 2. § 62.*

[i] *Fateor ibi multa legi, quarti, in quo vixit Gregorius, seculi, Impostorumque genium referentia, &c. ibid. § 55.*

the

the same length, lest I should seem to neglect any evidence, which could be offered to me, and especially such, as is declared to be *convincing* and *decisive* by men of their character. But from every step, that we advance forward, we shall readily perceive, that Mr. *Dodwell*, who had as much piety and more learning, than any of them, has in this respect shewn more judgement too, by restraining the miraculous powers of the Church to the three first centuries.

In the fourth century, we find some of the principal Fathers delivering themselves on this subject so variously and inconsistently, as shews, that though they were ashamed to deny, what they knew to be true, yet they were desirous to inculcate, what they knew to be false. For on some occasions, when they are pressed, they plainly confess, that miracles were then ceased; yet on others, they appeal to them again as common, and performed among them every day. For example, St. *Chrysoptom* observes, “ that in  
“ the infancy of the Church, the extraordinary  
“ gifts of the spirit were bestowed even on the  
“ unworthy, because those early times stood in  
“ need of that help, for the more easy propaga-  
“ tion of the Gospel; but now, says he, they  
“ are not given even to the worthy, because the  
“ present strength of the Christian faith is no  
“ longer in want of them [k].” In another place, speaking of the miraculous powers of the Apostles, and of the force, which they had in con-

[k] Νῦν δὲ εἰς ἀξιότους δέδωται, ἢ  
γὰρ ἰχθὺς τῆς πίστεως ἐκίσι ταύτης

δεῖται τῆς συμμαχίας Op. T. 3.  
p. 65. Edit. Bened.

verting the Gentle world, “ wherefore, adds he, be-  
 “ cause no miracles are wrought now, we are not to  
 “ take it for a proof, that none were wrought then ;  
 “ for then they were of use, but now they are  
 “ not : for the first planters of the Gospel were  
 “ simple and ignorant men, and had nothing to  
 “ teach from themselves ; but what they received  
 “ from God, that they delivered to the world :  
 “ so we likewise of these times, bring nothing  
 “ indeed of our own, but what we received from  
 “ them, that we declare to all.—Nor do  
 “ we yet persuade by the force of our reason,  
 “ but evince the truth of our doctrines from the  
 “ holy Scriptures, and the miracles then wrought  
 “ in confirmation of them [l].” Again, speak-  
 ing of the Jews, in our Saviour’s time, who *de-*  
*sired a sign*, he says, “ there are some also even  
 “ now, who desire and ask, why are not miracles  
 “ performed still at this day ? and why are there  
 “ no persons, who raise the dead and cure di-  
 “ seases ?” To which he replies, “ that it was  
 “ was owing to the want of faith and virtue and  
 “ piety in those times [m].” On another occa-  
 sion also he declares, “ that St. Paul’s Handker-  
 “ chiefs could once do greater miracles, than  
 “ all the Christians of his days could do, with  
 “ ten thousand prayers and tears [n].” Lastly,  
 in *his books of consolation*, addressed to his friend

[l] Ibid. Op. T. x. p. 45, p. 138. A. it. T. xi. p. 387,  
 46. 388.

[m] Καὶ γὰρ καὶ νῦν εἰσιν οἱ ζη-  
 τῶντες καὶ λέγοντες, διὰ τί μὴ καὶ νῦν  
 σημεῖα γίνονται, &c. lb. T. 8.

[n] Id. de Sacerdot. l. 4.  
 Op. T. i. p. 411. A.

*Stagirius*, who was supposed to be possessed and horribly tormented by an evil spirit, it is expressly signified, “ that neither the tombs of the  
 “ Martyrs, to which he had often applied for  
 “ relief, nor the repeated endeavours of the most  
 “ holy and celebrated Exorcists of those days,  
 “ were able to drive the Devil out of him [o].”

There

[o] Ad *Stagir.* lib. 1. Oper. T. 1. p. 179. A.

*N.B.* *St. Chrysoptom* is thought to have written these books to *Stagirius*, about A. D. 380, which *Mr. Whiston* recommends, as very curious, and well worth the perusal of inquisitive men. [See *Dæmoniacks*, p. 60.] I have run them slightly over, and shall give the reader a short abstract, of what I chiefly collected from them, since it relates to my present subject, and helps still to illustrate the true character and principles of this fourth age.

*Stagirius* was the Son and Heir of a noble family in *Antioch*, trained up in the Christian Religion; who, in contradiction to the will, and earnest remonstrances of his Father, had taken a resolution to enter into a Monastic life: for which purpose he seems to have withdrawn himself, in a secret manner, tho' with the privity of his Mother, into a certain Monastery, where he lay concealed from the pursuit and discovery of his Father. On his first entrance however, he did not ea-

sily relish the rough discipline of the cloyster; but presuming on the splendor of his birth, expected some exemption from the severer parts of it: till being inured to it by degrees, and confirmed by the example and admonitions of the Elder Monks, he became equal to the most perfect of them in the frequency of his fastings and watchings, and all the other arts of mortifying his body. But now the Devil resolved, if possible, to shake his constancy, and attacked him with all that train of evils, which his power and malice could inflict: by which he reduced him at last to such a state of melancholy and despair, as made life itself insupportable to him. In this condition he laid open his complaints to his friends, and particularly to *St. Chrysoptom*, by whom they are severally enumerated and summed up in the following manner.

*First*, That in the former part of his life, while he lived like other men in the world, he never suffered any thing of this

There are several other passages in this Father of the same strain: in which he allows the cessation

kind; but after he had crucified himself to the world, he presently fell under the sense of this disorder, which was sufficient to throw him into despair.

2dly, That many, who, from a luxurious life, had been afflicted in the same way, were yet relieved in a short time, and restored to perfect health, so as to marry, and become the Fathers of many children, and enjoy all the other delights of the world, without ever relapsing into the same misery: whereas he who had spent so much time in fastings and watchings and the other austerities of the Monkish discipline, could find no respite from his affliction.

3dly, That the holy man, who had shewn so much power in healing others in the same case, was not able to do him any service; neither he himself, nor any of the rest, who were with him, and more powerful even than he in these cures, but were all forced to go away with shame to themselves.

4thly, That he was so oppressed on this account with grief and despair, as to be frequently tempted to hang, or

drown, or throw himself from some precipice.

5thly, That his companions, who entered with him into the same sort of life, continued to live at their ease and undisturbed, while he had no peace or rest, but was confined as it were to a prison, of all others the most wretched, since no fetters of iron were so grievous as the chain, with which he was bound.

6thly, That what chiefly disturbed and made him tremble even with fear, was, lest his Father should come to the knowledge of his case, and do some great mischief to those holy men, who first received him, and trusting to his power and wealth, and hurried on by his passion, should attempt all sorts of violence against them. That his mother indeed had hitherto been able to conceal the matter from him, and elude the effect of his inquiries; but if he should happen to detect her dissimulation, his resentment would be intolerable both to her and to the Monks.

Lastly, That the completion of his misery was, to have no confidence or hope in what was to come: and not to know, whether he should ever find any



tion of miracles, and speaks of them even with contempt, “ as proper only to rouse the dull and  
“ sluggish,

any cure or ease, since his expectations had been so often frustrated, by relapsing still into the same evil.

Now from this detail of his complaints, as they were represented by himself, what else can we collect, but that this noble Youth, disgusted perhaps by some little domestic uneasiness, had been seduced by certain Monks, to bid adieu to the world and retire into a Convent. In which retreat, by reflecting at leisure on the rashness of his resolution, and the provocation which he had given by it to an indulgent Parent, he seems to have been stung with remorse: while the austerities, which he now practised, and by which he hoped to calm his mind, and conciliate the favor of heaven, instead of appeasing, served only to increase his anxiety, and reduced him by degrees to such a weakness and dejection both of body and mind, as brought on horrible Symptoms, and Epileptic fits, and made him compleatly miserable. This naturally infused scruples and suspicions, which he himself gently intimates, that he was in a wrong way, and owed all his sufferings to his unhappy change of life; and that a return therefore to the world, where he had never felt any

such, would free him from them again, by affording him the comforts of matrimony, and children, and all the other sweets of social life.

That this was the real cause and source of his complaints, is evident from his own account of them. Let us see then what sort of comfort St. *Chrysofom* thought fit to administer to him in this sad state. This holy Father had himself also, when young, taken the same resolution of retiring from the world: in consequence of which, after he had spent several years in a Monastery, he betook himself to the mountains, where he lived, as an Hermit, in a solitary cave, for two years more, till perceiving at last, that the infirmity of his body could no longer endure the severity of that discipline, he quitted his solitude, and chose to reside in *Antioch*, where he is supposed to have written this elaborate consolation to *Stagirius*. But tho' he left the *Ascetic life* himself, when he found it hurtfull to his health, he never once suggests the same advice to his friend *Stagirius*, nor ever mentions the only remedy which could afford him any solid comfort; *viz.* to quit the place and way of life which had given birth to all his troubles; and to reconcile himself to his Father, by returning to

“ fluggish, but useles to men of philosophical  
 “ minds ; that they were frequently liable to  
 “ sinister

the world, and by the use of its innocent pleasures, to calm the disorders of his mind, and restore it to its former tranquillity.

This, I say, was the most rational and effectual comfort which could be administered to him ; but instead of this, St. *Chrysoptom* employs all his rhetorick to persuade him that his sufferings were the sure marks of the divine favor, and had been of the greatest service to him : that he could not but remember, on his first entrance into the Monastery, and before the Devil began to vex him, how difficult he found it, to comply with the rules of the society ; how haughty and fluggish he was ; how hard to be roused from his bed : and how angry with those, who disturbed him : but from the time of this trial and struggle with the Devil, all that difficulty was at an end, and no man surpassed him in all those austerities and exercises of devotion, which constitute the perfection of the Christian life. He exhorts him therefore to persevere in his fastings and watchings, and all his other mortifications, as the only means of baffling all these efforts and terrors, by which the Devil was labouring to drive him from that blessed course. That while he was immersed

in the pleasures of the world, or was yet a novice and raw in the Monastic life, God would not expose him to this trial, nor suffer the Devil to attack him ; knowing, that he would then be an unequal match, and fall an easy prey to the Adversary : but now that he was become firm and perfect in all his exercises, God committed him to the Stadium, as an expert champion, and sure to come off with glory from the combat. That as to the trouble, which he suffered on the account of his Father, it was a weakness to afflict himself for what might or might not happen hereafter : that his Father perhaps would never come to the knowledge of his case ; or if he did, would not be so much disturbed at it, as he imagined : that a man of his temper, fond of vain expenses, and jovial company, puffed with pride and haughtiness, and enslaved to a Concubine, whom he kept in his house, would have but little concern for the distress of a Son. That he had shewn this already by experiments ; for tho' he had once loved him with the utmost tenderness, and above all things in the world, yet all that love was extinguished, upon his entrance into the monastery ; which his Father declared to be

“ finifter fufpicions, of being mere phantafms  
 “ and illufions, and that it was a proof of the  
 “ greater

be a bafenefs, unworthy of his Anceftors, and difgraceful to the fplendor of his Family. It was probable therefore, that he would rejoice at his calamity, and think it a punishment of his difobedience to him, in betaking himfelf to a way of life, from which he had laboured fo earnestly to diffuade him.—In fhort the Summ of St. *Chryfoftom's* confoiation is this; *that the more* Stagirius *suffered in this conflict, the more affured he might be, that he was under the peculiar care of heaven; and that by finding no relief, either from the tombs of the Martyrs, which he had fo often vifited, or from his long abode with thefe holy Exorcifts, who had never failed of fuccefs before, he had a clear demonftration of God's particular regard for him; who would never have hindred the effect of fo much grace, nor expofed his own fervants to fo much fhame, if he had not known it conducive to the greater good and probation of Stagirius.*

Such were the arts, by which the Saints of this fourth age were fubjecting the world to the tyranny of fuperftition. Not content to make men Chriftians, they could not reft, till they had made them alfo Monks; till they had perfuaded them, that the only way of

ferving God, was, by rendering themfelves ufelefs to man; and of faving their fouls, by doing mischief to their bodies. By this fenfelefs cant, they made it their bufinefs, to gain the Mothers chiefly in the firft place, and through them, their children: efpecially thofe of the rich and the great; without the leaft regard to the will of their fathers, the diftreff of their families, the breach of filial duty, or the ruin which they wrought to the health, the fortunes, and the happinefs of thofe, whom they infnared. We find feveral other instances of this kind in the works of this fame *Chryfoftom*, concerning the heirs of rich families ftollen away from their fathers by the artifices of Monks, which, as he himfelf informs us, raifed fuch a clamour and indignation againft the whole Monkifh Order, among the generality of the better fort, as transported them almoft to madnefs; to fee their children decoyed from them into a life, which they confidered as utterly fordid and defpicable. It was for the fake of appeafing thefe clamours, that he compofed his three books, *againft the Oppugners of the Monkifh life*; one of which is addreffed to the believing, and another to the unbelieving Fathers;

“ greater generosity of that age, to take God’s  
“ word without such pledges [p].”

From these testimonies, one would necessarily conclude, upon the authority of St. *Chrysoftom*, that miracles were ceased in his days : yet in other parts of his works we find him in a different story, and haranguing on the mighty wonders, which were performed among them every day, *by the reliques of the Martyrs, in casting out Devils, curing all diseases, and drawing whole Cities and people to their Sepulchres* [q]. He displays also the miraculous cures, wrought by the use of *consecrated oil, and by the sign of the Cross*; which last he calls *a defence against all evil, and a medicine against all sickness, and affirms it to have been miraculously impressed, in his own time, on people’s garments* [r].

St. *Austin* also, who lived at the same time, though in a different part of the world, takes notice of the same objection, made by the Sceptics, with which the Christians were commonly urged in this age. “ They ask us, says he, *why are not those miracles performed now, which you declare to have been wrought formerly?* I could tell them, that they were then necessary, before the world believed, for this very purpose, that the world might believe; but he, who still

thers, in order to convince them both, of the excellence of this divine *philosophy*, as it was called, and of the happiness accruing to their sons, from their choice and pursuit of it.

[p] Vid. Oper. T. 5. p. 455, 271. it. T. 7. 375. E. 376. B. &c.

[q] Ibid. T. 3. p. 338, 339.

[r] Ibid. T. xi. p. 387. A. it. T. 5. p. 271. D.

“ requires

“ requires prodigies, that he may become a be-  
 “ liever, is himself a great prodigy, who does  
 “ not believe now, when the world does be-  
 “ lieve [s].” One would not imagine, that these  
 words, which seem to imply a cessation of mi-  
 racles, were the preface to an elaborate narrative  
 and solemn attestation of great numbers of them,  
 said to have been wrought in these very times :  
 which, if true, as they are here affirmed by St.  
*Austin* from his own knowledge, must have been  
 more illustrious, both for the number and the  
 excellence of them, than all, which were wrought  
 by the Apostles themselves.

But before we descend to particulars, I cannot  
 forbear observing, what this Father has delivered  
 concerning the general state and credit of them  
 among the Christians themselves, at the very  
 time, when they were wrought. He tells us then,  
 “ that though miracles were frequently wrought,  
 “ either by the *name of Jesus, or by his Sacra-*  
 “ *ments, or by the prayers or the memorials of the*  
 “ *Martyrs*; yet the fame of them was not so il-  
 “ lustrious, as of those of the Apostles: since  
 “ they were scarce ever known to the whole City  
 “ or place, where they happened to be perform-  
 “ ed; but for the most part, to a very few on-  
 “ ly; while all the rest were utterly ignorant of  
 “ them; especially if the city was large: and if

[s] Cur, inquit, nunc illa  
 miracula, quæ prædicatis facta  
 esse, non fiunt? possem qui-  
 dem dicere, necessaria prius fu-  
 isse, quam crederet mundus,  
 ad hoc, ut crederet mundus.

Quisquis adhuc prodigia, ut  
 credat, inquit, magnum est  
 ipse prodigium, qui, mundo  
 credente, non credit. De Civ.  
 Dei. l. 22. c. 8.

“ ever

“ ever they were told abroad to other people,  
 “ yet they were not recommended with such au-  
 “ thority, as to be received without difficulty and  
 “ doubting, though reported by true believers,  
 “ to true believers [t].”

That he might put an end therefore to this strange negligence of the Christians, with regard to their own miracles, he took care, as oft as he heard of any miracle, “ that the parties concerned  
 “ in it should be examined, and a verbal proces,  
 “ or authentic narrative be drawn of the fact,  
 “ which was afterwards publicly read to the  
 “ people. Yet all this caution, as he says, was  
 “ not sufficient to make the miracles known,  
 “ or at all regarded: because those, who were  
 “ present at the recital of such narratives, heard  
 “ them but once, while the greater part were  
 “ absent; and even those, who heard them, re-  
 “ tained nothing, a few days after, of what they  
 “ had heard, and seldom or never took the  
 “ pains to tell it to any body else, whom they  
 “ knew to be absent [u].” This account of the matter would be very surprizing, were it not explained to us by the miracles themselves; of which I have here added a few specimens, whence we

[t] Nam etiam nunc sunt miracula, in ejus nomine, five per sacramenta ejus, five per orationes vel memorias Sanctorum ejus, sed non eadem claritate illustrantur——& quando alibi, aliisque narrantur, non tanta ea commendat auctoritas, ut sine difficultate, vel dubitatione credantur,

quamvis Christianis fidelibus a fidelibus indicentur. Ibid. § 1.

[u] Ut nec illi, qui adfuerunt, post aliquot dies, quod audierunt, mente retineant; & vix quisquam reperiatur illorum, qui ei, quem non adfuisse cognoverit, indicet quod audivit. Ibid. § 21,

shall

shall easily collect the reason of that coldness and indifference, which the people of those days expressed towards them.

For instance, among many other stories of the same kind, he relates these, which follow: “ A  
“ pious old Cobler of *Hippo*, where he himself  
“ was Bishop, having lost his old coat, and want-  
“ ing money to buy a new one, betook himself  
“ to *the twenty Martyrs*, whose chappel or me-  
“ morial was famous in that city; where he  
“ prayed to them very earnestly, that he might  
“ be enabled by them to get some cloaths. Some  
“ young Fellows, who overheard him, began to  
“ make sport with him, and pursued him with  
“ their scoffs, for begging money to buy a coat.  
“ But as the old man walked away, without  
“ minding them, he saw a large fish lie gasping  
“ on the shore, which he caught by the help of  
“ the young men, and sold to a Christian Cook  
“ for three hundred pence; and laying out the  
“ money on wooll, set his wife to work, to pro-  
“ vide cloaths for him: but the Cook, cutting  
“ open the fish, found a gold ring also in the  
“ belly of it; which, out of compassion to the  
“ poor man, and the terror also of religion, he  
“ presently carried to the Cobler, saying, *see here*  
“ *is the cloathing, which the twenty Martyrs have*  
“ *given you* [x].

“ There was one *Hesperius* likewise, as he tells  
“ us, a man of Tribunician quality, whose coun-

[x] Ad viginti Martyres, celeberrima, clara voce, ut ve-  
quorum Memoria apud nos est stiretur, oravit, &c. ib. § 9.

“ try house near *Hippo* was haunted by evil spi-  
 “ rits, and his cattle also and servants afflicted  
 “ by them : upon which he sent a message to the  
 “ Priests at *Hippo*, when *Austin* happened to be  
 “ absent, that some of them would come over to  
 “ him, and drive the evil Spirits away by their  
 “ prayers. One of them accordingly went, and  
 “ offered *the sacrifice of Christ's body* upon the  
 “ spot, praying at the same time, as fervently as  
 “ he was able, that this vexation might be re-  
 “ moved ; upon which by God's mercy it in-  
 “ stantly ceased [y].

“ The same *Hesperius* had received from a  
 “ friend some *holy earth*, brought from *Jerusa-*  
 “ *lem*, where Christ rose from his grave on the  
 “ third day ; which earth he hung up in his bed-  
 “ chamber, to secure himself from the mischief  
 “ of those evil spirits. But since his house was  
 “ now cleared of them, he was considering,  
 “ what he should do with this earth, being un-  
 “ willing, out of reverence to it, to keep it any  
 “ longer in his bed-chamber. It happened, that  
 “ *Austin* and another Bishop, called *Maximinus*,  
 “ were then in the neighbourhood ; so that *Hespe-*  
 “ *rius* sent them an invitation to come to his  
 “ house ; which they immediately accepted ; and  
 “ after he had acquainted them with the whole  
 “ affair, he desired, that *the sacred earth* might  
 “ be deposited somewhere in the ground, and an  
 “ Oratory built over it, where the Christians  
 “ might assemble for the performance of divine

[y] *Ib.* § 6.



“ service : the two Bishops had no objection, so  
“ that his project was presently executed. There  
“ was at the same place a country lad, afflicted  
“ with the palsy ; who having heard what was  
“ done, begged of his parents, that they would  
“ carry him without delay to that holy place :  
“ whither as soon as he was brought, he put up  
“ his prayers, and presently returned back on  
“ foot in perfect health [z].”

There are many more tales of this sort, as contemptible, as any in the Popish legends, and all attested by this celebrated Father, from his own knowledge : yet these are nothing to the extravagant things, which he goes on to relate, of *the reliques of the Martyr Stephen*. For as *reliques* were now become the most precious treasure of the Church, so these of *St. Stephen*, after they had lain buried and unknown for near four centuries, were revealed in a vision, to one *Lucianus*, a Priest, by *Gamaliel*, *the celebrated Dr. of the law*, at whose feet *St. Paul* had been bred, and being found by his direction, were removed with great Solemnity and many miracles into *Jerusalem* [a]. The fame of these reliques was soon spread thro' the Christian world ; and many little portions of them brought away by holy Pilgrims, to enrich the particular Churches of their own countries.

[z] Ibid.

[a] The history of this revelation of *St. Stephen's reliques*, and of the miracles, which were wrought by them, is particularly delivered by several ancient writers, whose pieces

are annexed, as an Appendix to the seventh Volume of *St. Austin*. Edit. Benedict. And the same revelation is referred to likewise by *St. Austin* himself in different parts of his works.

For

For wherever any reliques were deposited, an Oratory or Chappel was always built over them, which was called a *Memorial* of that Martyr, whose reliques it contained. Several reliques therefore of *St. Stephen* having been brought by different people into *Afric*, as many *Memorials* of him were consequently erected in different places, of which three were peculiarly famous; one at *Hippo*, where *St. Austin* was Bishop; a second at *Calama*; and a third at *Uzalis*, two other Episcopal Cities; and many great and illustrious miracles were continually wrought in them all.

*St. Austin* has given us a particular relation of some of them, by which *the gout, the stone, and fistula's* were instantly cured; *the blind restored to sight*; and *five different persons raised even from death to life*. Two of whom were *carried dead to the reliques, and brought back alive*: two more restored to life, by the virtue of *their garments only*, which had touched the reliques; and a fifth, *by the oil of the martyr's lamps*. After all which wonderful stories, he adds the following apology, not for telling us so many of them but so few, out of the infinite number, which were publicly known and recorded.

“ What shall I do? says he: I am engaged by  
 “ promise, to finish the present work, so that it  
 “ is not possible for me in this place, to relate all  
 “ the miracles, which I know; and our people  
 “ without doubt, when they read these, will be  
 “ grieved, that I have omitted so many, which  
 “ they know to be true, as well as I. But I  
 “ beg them to excuse me, and to consider what  
 a tedious

“ a tedious piece of work it would be, to do that,  
“ which the nature of my argument does not  
“ oblige me to do here. For were I to relate on-  
“ ly the miracles of cures, without mentioning  
“ the rest, which have been performed by this  
“ Martyr, the most glorious *Stephen*, in the co-  
“ lony of *Calama*, and in our own, it would fill  
“ a great number of volumes. Nor would it be  
“ possible to collect them all, but such of them  
“ only, of which certificates have been made,  
“ and read to the people. For this I ordered to  
“ be done, when I saw the effects of the divine  
“ powers, like to those of the ancients, so fre-  
“ quently exerted also in our own times, which  
“ ought not to be lost from the notice of the  
“ multitude. It is not yet two years, since this  
“ Memorial was founded at *Hippo*, and tho’ I am  
“ certain, that no account was taken of many of  
“ the miracles, yet at the time when I wrote  
“ this, the number of certificates publicly made,  
“ amounted to near seventy : But at *Calama*,  
“ where the Memorial is of longer standing, and  
“ certificates more frequently taken, they reach  
“ to a far greater number.

“ At *Uzalis* also, we know many eminent mi-  
“ racles wrought by the same Martyr ; whose  
“ Memorial was instituted there by their Bishop  
“ *Evodius*, much earlier than with us. But it is  
“ not the custom with them to take certificates,  
“ or it was not rather, because now it is probably  
“ begun. For when I was lately there, I exhor-  
“ ted *Petronia*, a celebrated Matron, who had  
“ been miraculously cured of a great and linger-

“ ing

“ ing illnefs, in which the Phyficians were not  
 “ able to help her, to get a certificate drawn of  
 “ of the cafe, and read publicly to the people, to  
 “ which, by the advice alfo of the faid Bifhop  
 “ of the place, ſhe willingly confented, and in-  
 “ ferted in it another miracle, which, notwith-  
 “ ſtanding the haſt that I am in to put an end  
 “ to this work, I cannot forbear relating, &c.  
 “ [b].”

I have dwelt longer on theſe miracles, than the importance of them perhaps may be thought to require : but they are ſo precisely deſcribed and authentically atteſted by one of the moſt venerable Fathers in all antiquity, who affirms them to have been wrought within his own knowledge, and under his own Eyes, that they ſeem of all others the beſt adapted to evince the truth of what I have been advancing, and to illuſtrate the real character of all the other miracles of the primitive times, both before and after them. Dr. *Chapman* however, ſpeaking of the very ſame miracles, roundly declares them all, *to be ſo ſtrongly atteſted, both by the effects, and the relators of them, that to doubt their reality, were to doubt the evidence of ſenſe* [c]. On theſe then, I am content to reſt the fate of my whole argument ; and if either Dr. *Chapman* or Dr. *Berriman* can maintain theſe miracles to be credible, ſhall no longer diſpute the credibility of any, from the Apoſtolic times, down to our own. But, on the other hand, if miracles ſo ſtrictly examined by a moſt Holy

[b] De Civ. Dei. l. 22. c.  
 3. § 20, 21.

[c] Miſcell. Tracts p. 174.

Bishop, confirmed by the certificates of eyewitnesses, and rehearsed publicly to the people, at the time when they are said to have been wrought, cannot command our belief, these Doctors must needs confess, nay, they have already confessed, that the Christian Church can shew no other, except those of Christ and his Apostles, which can make any better pretensions to it.

For not to insist on the objections, which might reasonably be made to the probability of the facts themselves ; to the incompetency of the instruments, by which, and of the ends, for which they are said to have been performed ; to the credulity of a prejudiced, or the fidelity rather of an artfull and interested relator ; it seems evident, from the neglect with which they were treated by the Christians themselves ; from the obscurity in which they lay ; from the diligence of St. *Austin*, to search them out ; to get certificates of them ; and to publish them to the people ; and from the insufficiency of all his pains, to make them still regarded or at all remembered ; that the people themselves saw or suspected the cheat, and were tired with the repeated frauds of this kind, which their Bishops were imposing upon them. For it is not possible to conceive any other reason of so surprizing a coldness, in a case of all others the most warming, but a general persuasion, grounded on experience, that these pretended miracles were nothing else but forgeries, contrived to enforce some favorite doctrine or rite, which the rulers of the Church were desirous to establish.

Yet these are not the stories, which chiefly shock Mr. *Dodwell*, and oblige him to reject the miracles of the fourth Century; but others still more extravagant, tho' attested likewise by persons of equal eminence and authority; by St. *Athanasius*, St. *Gregory of Nyssa*, St. *Jerom*, St. *Epiphanius*, &c. Of which therefore, it will be necessary to add a specimen or two, from each of those Fathers.

St. *Athanasius*, in the Preface to his life of St. *Antony* the Monk, declares, “ that he had inferred nothing in it, but what he either knew to be true, having often seen the saint himself, or what he had learnt from one, who had long ministered to him, and poured water upon his hands [d].” In this life then, after a great number of monstrous stories, concerning the personal conflicts, which this Saint continually sustained with all the several Devils, and powers of Hell, who assaulted him in every shape, which could imprint terror; and exerted every art and even corporal punishments, to drive him from the Monastic life, which threatened the speedy ruin of their Kingdom, he tells us; “ that some body knocking one day at his Cell, *Antony* went to the door, where he saw a tall meager person, who being asked his name, answered, *that he was Satan*.——His business, it seems,

[d] Διὰ τῆτο ἄπερ αὐτός τε γνώσκω (πολλάκις γὰρ αὐτὸν εἶρακα) καὶ ἁ μαθεῖν ἠδυνήθη παρὰ τῷ ἀκολουθήσαντι αὐτῷ χρόνον ἐκ ὀλίγον--γράφαι τῇ εὐλαθείᾳ ὑμῶν ἐσπέδασα. Oper. T. 2. p. 451. Edit. Par.

“ was, to beg a truce of the Saint, and to expof-  
“ tulate with him, on account of the perpetual  
“ reproaches and curfes, which the Monks fo  
“ undeservedly beftowed upon him, when he was  
“ no longer in condition to give them any  
“ trouble : for fince the defert was now filled  
“ with Monks, and the Chriftians fpread into all  
“ places, he was difarmed of all power to do  
“ them any mischief : fo that the Chriftians had  
“ nothing more to do, but to take care of them-  
“ felves, and to forbear their needless curfes  
“ againft him [e].” The reft of this piece is fil-  
led with many other miracles of the fame ftamp,  
too trifling to deferve any regard.

St. *Gregory of Nyffa*, in the life of his Name-  
fake, called the wonder-worker, has this ftory,  
“ that the *Virgin Mary*, accompanied by St. *John*  
“ the Evangelift, appeared to *Gregory* in a vifion,  
“ and explained to him the myftery of Godlinefs,  
“ in a fhort Creed or divine fummery of faith,  
“ which he took down in writing, as they dicta-  
“ ted it to him, and left the copy of it, a lega-  
“ cy to the Church of *Neocæfarea*, of which he  
“ was Bifhop : and if any one, fays he, has a  
“ mind to be fatisfied of the truth of this, let  
“ him inquire of that Church, in which the very  
“ words, as they were written by his blefled  
“ hand, are preferved to this day : which, for the  
“ excellency of the divine grace, may be com-

[e] Ibid. p. 476.

“pared with those tables of the law, made by  
“ God and delivered to *Moses* [f].”

Dr. *Waterland* has given us a translation of this Creed, and Dr. *Berriman*, an abstract of it; which is *as express as possible*, they say, *for the Doctrine of the Trinity, as it was taught afterwards by Athanasius*. They both however intimate, that the genuineness of the Creed had been called in question, tho’ without any sufficient cause [g]. Yet the learned *Cave*, who for zeal, and orthodoxy, and facility of believing, was scarce inferior to any, declares, *that notwithstanding the authority of Gregory Nyssen, who was apt to be too credulous, this short exposition of the Christian faith will hardly find credit with prudent and sensible men* [b]. But whatever may be alledged to persuade us, that this Creed was actually professed and taught by *Gregory*, in his Church of *Neocæsarea*, yet no man surely but Dr. *Berriman*, could have any scruple to own, that the story of the vision, and of it’s delivery to him from heaven, was a forgery, contrived to support the *Athanasian doctrine*, at a time when it was warmly controverted, and in danger of being suppressed. But as the revelation of it, if admitted to be true, would put an end at once to all dispute, and give a divine Sanction to the doctrine itself, so the Dr. seems re-

[f] Vid. Greg. Nyss. Vit. S. Greg. Thaumaturg. p. 978. Op. T. 2. Ed. Par.  
[g] See Waterland. Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 232. And Berrim. Historic.

Acc. of the Trinitar. Controvers. p. 138, 141.

[b] Vid. Hiltor. Litterar. In Vita Greg. Thaumaturgi. p. 132.



solved not to part with it: for in his *Historical account of the Trinitarian controversy*, speaking on this very point, he says; “there are many arguments to convince us of the genuineness and authority of this Creed of St. Gregory: I do not mean of it’s being taught him by revelation, (*tho’ that may be well attested too, and will not seem incredible to those, who shall consider, how highly this great person was distinguished by the charismata, or extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost*) but I mean, as to the certainty, of it’s having been taught by St. Gregory, &c. [i].” From which we see, that tho’ his sole business in this place was, to prove the Creed to have been really Gregory’s, yet he could not forbear to acquaint us, that, if there was occasion, he could prove *the revelation* also to be genuin: since it cannot enter into his head, how any one should think it incredible, that, in those miraculous ages, a person of Gregory’s exalted character might be favored with a visit from heaven, by *the Virgin Mary* and St. *John the Apostle*.

The same Gregory of *Nyssa* relates likewise, “how his Namesake, being upon a journey, was forced one night, to take shelter in an Heathen Temple, famed for an Oracle and divination; where the Dæmons used to appear visibly and offer themselves to the Priests. But the holy Father, by invoking the name of *Jesus*, put them all to flight; and by making the Sign of the Cross, purified the air, polluted by the

[i] Berrim. *ibid.* p. 138.

“ steam of their sacrifices——the next morning  
 “ when the Priest came to perform his usual func-  
 “ tions ; the Devils appeared, and acquainted  
 “ him, that they had been driven out the night  
 “ before by a stranger, and had not the power to  
 “ return : nor was he able to recall them by all  
 “ the charms of his expiatory sacrifices. Upon  
 “ this, the Priest pursued *Gregory* in great wrath,  
 “ and overtaking him on the road, threatened  
 “ him most terribly, for what he had done. But  
 “ *Gregory*, despising his threats, gave him to un-  
 “ derstand, that he had a power superior to that  
 “ of Devils, and could drive them whithersoever  
 “ he pleased. The Priest amazed at what he  
 “ said, began to beg, that for a proof of his  
 “ power, he would fetch them back again into  
 “ the Temple ; to which *Gregory* consenting,  
 “ wrote this short note only, upon a Schedule of  
 “ paper, *Gregory to Satan. Enter.* With this, the  
 “ Priest was dismissed ; and laying the little Sche-  
 “ dule upon the Altar, brought the Devils back  
 “ again immediately to their old Seats.” The  
 miracle however had the good effect of converting  
 the Pagan Priest [k].

I have already given a passage from the Life of  
 St. *Hilarion* the Monk, written by St. *Jerom*, as  
 a specimen of the fidelity of the writer.——  
 But for a proof of the fabulous genius of the  
 fourth century, Mr. *Dodwell* refers us to another  
 Life of *the Hermit Paul*, compiled by the same  
 Father, which is filled with stories still more mon-  
 strous ; “ of *Satyrs and Fauns* presenting them-

[k] Vid. Greg. Nyss. *ibid.* p. 981.

“ selves

“ selves to the Hermit, and confessing their own  
 “ mortality, and the folly of the Gentiles in  
 “ paying them any worship, and begging his re-  
 “ commendation of them to their common Lord,  
 “ who came to save the world: of a raven,  
 “ bringing half a loaf for sixty years successively  
 “ to the Hermit, for his daily food in the wil-  
 “ derness; and then a whole loaf, when St. *An-*  
 “ *tony* came to visit him: of two Lions, com-  
 “ ing to assist *Antony* in the burial of *Paul*, by  
 “ digging a grave for him with their feet, and  
 “ then departing with the blessing of *Antony* [1].”

St. *Epiphanius*, Bishop of *Salamis* in *Cyprus*, who is said to have wrought miracles himself, both in his life-time and after [m], affirms several false and absurd miracles from his own knowledge, which his advocates gently pass over, by remarking onely, that *this most holy Father was too credulous, or not so accurate, as we could wish* [n]. He declares, “ that in imitation of  
 “ our Saviour’s miracle at *Cana* in *Galilee*, sever-  
 “ ral fountains and rivers in his days were an-  
 “ nually turned into wine. A fountain of *Cibyra*  
 “ a City of *Caria*, says he, and another at *Gerasa*  
 “ in *Arabia*, prove the truth of this, I myself have  
 “ drunk out of the fountain of *Cibyra*, and my

[1] Hieron. Vit. Pauli Eremit. Op. T. 4. par. 2. p. 71. Ed. Benedict.

[m] Vid. Vit. Epiphani. c. 37, 66, &c. Op. Tom. 2. p. 350. Edit. Par.

[n] Quæ de Melchisedeci parentibus narrat *Epiphanius*, recolent apocryphorum som-

nia, cujusmodi multa sunt in hoc opere bona fide a Sanctissimo Patre descripta. Petav. Not. in pag. 217. Tom. 2.

Majori fide digna, quam quæ habet alia pleraque Pater ille parum accuratus. Dodw. Diff. Iren. 2. § 29.

“ brethren, out of the other at *Gerasa*: and many  
 “ testify the same thing of the river *Nile* in *Æ-*  
 “ *gypt* [o].” Should we then be asked here, as  
 we were before in a similar case; *will ye not be-*  
*lieve a most holy Bishop, in a fact attested by his*  
*own senses?* the answer is clear and short; *the*  
*fact is not credible.*

St. *Chrysoſtom*, celebrating the acts of the Mar-  
 tyr St. *Babylas*, Bishop of *Antioch*, says; “ the  
 “ Gentiles will laugh to hear me talk of the acts  
 “ of persons dead, and buried, and consumed to  
 “ dust; but they are not to imagine, that the  
 “ bodies of Martyrs, like to those of common  
 “ men, are left destitute of all active force and  
 “ energy, since a greater power than that of the  
 “ human soul is superadded to them, the power  
 “ of the Holy Spirit: which, by working mi-  
 “ racles in them, demonstrates the truth of the  
 “ resurrection.”——He then proceeds to in-  
 “ form us, how the remains of this Martyr were  
 “ removed by a certain Emperor, out of the City  
 “ of *Antioch*, into a suburb of it, called *Daphne*,  
 “ famous for the delights of its situation, and  
 “ the variety of pleasures, which it afforded to its  
 “ inhabitants, as well as for a celebrated Temple  
 “ and Oracle of *Apollo Daphneus*; to which the body  
 “ of the faint was thought proper to be removed,  
 “ for the sake of giving some check to the lewd-  
 “ nefs and licentiousness, that reigned in the place.  
 “ The Coffin therefore was no sooner deposited  
 “ in a chappel provided for it, than the Oracle

[o] Πείλωκαμεν ἀπὸ τῆς Κιβύ- δὲ καὶ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ περὶ τῆ Νείλου  
 ρης, ἡμέτεροι δὲ ἀδελφοὶ ἀπὸ τῆς τῆτο μαρτυροῦσι. Adv. Hæref.  
 ἐν Γεράσῃ πηγῆς——καὶ πολλοὶ 1. 2. cxxx. p. 451. Tom. 1.

“ of *Apollo* was struck dumb at once: so that  
 “ when *Julian* the Apostate came afterwards to  
 “ consult it, he could receive no other answer  
 “ from *Apello*, but that the dead would not suffer  
 “ him to speak any longer [p]. Wherefore *Julian*  
 “ commanded the bones of *St. Babylas* to be con-  
 “ veyed back again into *Antioch*; but in the very  
 “ moment, when they entered into the City, the  
 “ Statue of the God, and the roof of his Tem-  
 “ ple were destroyed by lightning, upon the in-  
 “ tercession of the Saint [q].” *St. Chrysoptom* em-  
 ploys an intire Homily, and a larger discourse,  
 which follows it, in haranguing on this same sub-  
 ject of *Babylas*; and on the blessings and daily  
 miracles, wrought by the reliques of the Mar-  
 tyrs, to the edification of the Church, and the  
 confusion of unbelievers [r]. Yet his History of  
 this Saint is so evidently fabulous and romantic,  
 that the *Benedictin Monks*, who published the last  
 and best edition of his works, found it necessary  
 to admonish the reader, that it is written in a de-  
 clamatory stile, overflowing with rhetorical figures,  
 and for the most part destitute of truth [s]. In  
 which those learned Papists have shewn more

[p] “ By which answer we  
 “ may understand, says Sir *Is.*  
 “ *Newton*, that some Christian  
 “ was got into the place,  
 “ where the Heathen Priests  
 “ used to speak through a pipe  
 “ in delivering their Oracles.”  
 See *Observat.* on the Prophe-  
 cies of *Daniel*, par. 1. p. 210.

[q] Vid. *Oper.* Tom. 2. p.  
 531, 533, 534, 564, &c.

[r] Καὶ ὅτι ἐκ ἀπλῶς κομπά-  
 ζων ταῦτα λέγω νῦν—ἴκανα μὲν  
 τὸν λόγον πιστώσασθαι, καὶ τὰ καθ'  
 ἑκάστην ἡμέραν ὑπὸ τῶν Μαρτύρων  
 γινόμενα θαύματα. *Ibid.* p. 555.

[s] Argumentum libri, est  
 historia Martyrii S. Babylæ—  
 declamatorio more narrata, tropi-  
 que redundans; in qua ple-  
 rumque veritatem desideres.  
*Admonit.* in *Serm.* *ibid.* p. 530.

candor

candor as well as judgment, than our Protestant Doctor *Cæve*; who, in his Life of the same *Babylas*, after relating the particular story just described, which he calls *one of the most memorable occurrences that Church-antiquity has conveyed to us*, adds the following attestation to it.

“ The reader ’tis like, may be apt to scruple  
 “ this story, as favouring a little of superstition,  
 “ and giving too much honor to the reliques of  
 “ saints. To which I shall say no more, than that  
 “ the credit of it seems unquestionable: it being  
 “ reported not onely by *Socrates*, *Sozomen*, and  
 “ *Theodoret*, who all lived very near that time,  
 “ but by *Chrysoftom*, who was born at *Antioch*,  
 “ and was a long time Presbyter of that Church,  
 “ and was scholar there to *Libanius* the Sophist,  
 “ at the very time when the thing was done, and  
 “ an eye-witness of it; and who not onely preach-  
 “ ed the thing, but wrote a discourse against the  
 “ Gentiles on this very subject; where he ap-  
 “ peals to the knowledge both of young and old  
 “ then alive, who had seen it, and challenges  
 “ them to stand up and contradict, if they could,  
 “ the truth of what he related. Nay, which  
 “ farther puts the case past all peradventure, *Li-*  
 “ *banius* the Orator evidently confesses it, &c. [t].”  
 Whereas all, which that Orator confesses, and  
 which the Benedictins allow to be well grounded  
 in the whole relation is, that the reliques of *Baby-*  
*las* were carried back again, by *Julian’s* order,  
 out of *Daphne* into the City; and that the Tem-

[t] See his Lives of the Vol. I. p. 247.  
 Prim. Fathers. Life of Babyl.

ple of the *Daphnean Apollo* was soon after destroyed in the night by fire; which the Christians declared to have been sent from heaven by the power of the Saint; and the Heathens ascribed to the revenge and contrivance of the Christians [u].

A Popish writer, with whom I have been engaged, in order to reprove my raillery on their fictitious Saints and Image-worship, has alledged also a most notable miracle, from this fourth century; which I shall here add to the Specimens already given:

“ When *Julian the Apostate* was pursuing his  
 “ *Persian* expedition, and at the very time, when  
 “ he is supposed to have been destroyed by the  
 “ immediate hand of God, the Great *St. Basil*  
 “ was standing before the *Image of the Blessed*  
 “ *Virgin*, on which there was painted likewise the  
 “ figure of *St. Mercurius*, an eminent Martyr:  
 “ and while *St. Basil* was fervently praying, that  
 “ the impious and atheistical *Julian* might be cut  
 “ off, he received this revelation from the pic-  
 “ ture; out of which, the figure of the Martyr  
 “ quite vanished for a little while, but presently

[u] *Julian* suspected the Christians to have set fire to this Temple, on the account of his removal of the body of *St. Babylas*: for which reason, he ordered some of them to be put to the rack, and their great Church in *Antioch* to be shut up; as we are told by *Ammianus Marcellinus*; who mentions another report also, tho' more

slightly grounded, of a different cause of that accident. [l. 22. c. 13. Vid. it. *Julian. Misopogon. Oper. T. 1. p. 361. Edit. Spanh. 1696.*] The Christians, says *Sozomen*, took the fire to be sent from heaven at the request of the Martyr, but the Gentiles look upon it as the act of the Christians. lib. 5 c. xx.

“ appeared

“ appeared again, and held out a bloody spear :  
 “ as a token of what had happened in the same  
 “ moment to *Julian* [x].”

But *Julian's* death was foretold likewise by *visions*, and *divine revelations*, as the Ecclesiastical writers inform us, to several other Saints and holy men, in different parts of the world, who were severally addressing their prayers to God for his destruction [y]. Whence we cannot but observe, what a total change there was, both of principles and practice, between the Fathers of the fourth, and those of the preceding ages ; or between the Church when persecuted, and when established in power and authority. For in the earlier times, under the very worst of the Heathen Emperors, and the cruellest persecutors of the Church, when the Christians were treated every where, as traitors to the government, all their Apologists, through the three first centuries, declare with one voice, that they were obliged by the precepts of their religion, to be of all men the most loyal to their Princes, and that it was their daily practice, to put up their united prayers for their prosperity. We pray, says *Tertullian*, for every Emperor, that he may have a long life, secure reign, a safe house, strong armies, faithfull Senate, honest people,

[x] Ἐξ ἧς εἰκόνος ἐμνήθη ταύτην τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν. ἰώρα γὰρ πρὸς μὲν βραχὺ ἀφανῆ τὸν μάρτυρα, μετ' ἕ ποτὸν δὲ, τὸ δόρυ ἡμαγμένον κατέχουσα. Joh. Damaf. Oper. T. 1. p. 327. E. Edit. Par. pr. Lequien.

N. B. This story is said to

have been recorded by *Helladius*, the disciple and successor of St. *Basil*, in the Bishoprick of *Cæsarea*, in the Life which he wrote of St. *Basil*.

[y] Vid. Sozom. lib. 6. c. 2.

a quiet



*a quiet world, and whatsoever else, man, or Cæsar himself can wish [z]. Yet after the Church had gained a firm establishment, its temper was quite altered; and the Emperors no sooner began to give them any disturbance, than their prayers were turned into curses; and the divine vengeance confessedly implored to destroy them. So true it is, what all the Popish writers have not scrupled to affirm, from Pope Gregory the Great, down to Cardinal Bellarmine, that it was not the want of will, but of the power onely to rebel, which made the primitive Christians so patient under the persecuting Emperors, and particularly under Julian, because the Church had not yet acquired strength enough, to controul the Princes of the earth [a].*

Now it is agreed by all, that these Fathers, whose testimonies I have been reciting, were the most eminent lights of the fourth century; all of them fainted by the Catholic Church; and highly revered at this day in all Churches, for their piety, probity and learning: yet from the specimens of them above given, it is evident, that they would not scruple to propagate any fiction, how gross soever, which served to pro-

[z] "Ὅθεν θεὸν μὲν μόνον προσκυνῶμεν, ἡμῖν δὲ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα χάρρους ὑπερέβημεν καὶ εὐχόμενοι μὴ τῆς βασιλικῆς δυνάμεως καὶ σάφρονα τὸν λόγισμον ἔχουσας ὑμᾶς εὐρεθῆναι. Just. Martyr. Apol. 1. p. 26.

Oramus pro omnibus Imperatoribus, vitam illis prolixam, imperium securum—& quæcunque hominis & Cæsaris vo-

ta sunt. Apolog. § 30.

Deprecamur diebus ac noctibus & pro salute populi, & pro statu Imperatorum vestrorum Vid. Act. Passion. Cyprian. apud Cyprian. p. 16. Edit. Rigaltii.

[a] See Chillingworth's Works, 7th Edit. p. 283. & Not. \*

mote the interest either of Christianity in general, or of any particular rite or doctrine, which they were desirous to recommend. St. *Jerom* in effect confesses it; for after the mention of a silly story, concerning the Christians of *Jerusalem*, who used to shew, in the ruins of the Temple, *certain stones of reddish color*, which they pretended to have been stained by the blood of *Zacharias the Son of Barachias*, who was slain between the Temple and the Altar, he adds, *but I do not find fault with an error, which flows from an hatred of the Jews, and a pious zeal for the Christian faith.* [b].

If the miracles then of the fourth century, so solemnly attested by the most celebrated and revered Fathers of the Church, are to be rejected after all as fabulous, it must needs give a fatal blow to the credit of all the miracles even of the preceding centuries; since there is not a single

[b] Non condemnamus errorem, qui de odio Judæorum & fidei pietate descendit. Oper. T. 4. p. 113.

N. B. The same *Jerom* speaking, in another place, of the different manner, which writers found themselves obliged to use, in their controversial and their dogmatical writings, intimates, that in controversy, whose end was victory rather than truth, it was allowable, to employ every artifice, which would best serve to conquer an adversary: in proof of which, "*Origen*, "*says he, Methodius, Eusebius, Apollinaris*, have written  
" many thousands of lines

" against *Celsus* and *Porphyrus*:  
" consider with what arguments and what slippery problems, they baffle what was  
" contrived against them by the Spirit of the Devil: and  
" because they are sometimes forced to speak; they speak  
" not what they think, but what is necessary against  
" those, who are called Gentiles. I do not mention the  
" latin writers, *Tertullian, Cyprian, Minutius, Victorinus, Lactantius, Hilarius*, lest I  
" be thought, not so much to be defending myself, as  
" accusing others, &c." Op. T. 4. p. 2. p. 236.

Father,

Father, whom I have mentioned in this fourth age, who for zeal and piety, may not be compared with the best of the more ancient, and for knowledge and learning, be preferred to them all. For instance, there was not a person in all the primitive Church, more highly respected in his own days, than *St. Epiphanius*, for the purity of his life, as well as the extent of his learning. He was a Master of *five languages*, and has left behind him one of the most usefull works, which remain to us from antiquity. *St. Jerom*, who personally knew him, calls him, *the Father of all Bishops, and a shining Star among them; the pattern of ancient sanctity; the man of God of blessed memory; to whom the people used to flock in crouds, offering their little children to his benediction; kissing his feet; and catching the hem of his garment* [c].

All the rest were men of the same character, who spent their lives and studies in propagating the faith, and in combating the vices and heresies of their times. Yet none of them have scrupled, we see, to pledge their faith for the truth of facts, which no man of sense can believe, and which their warmest admirers are forced to give up as fabulous. If such persons then could willfully attempt to deceive; and if the sanctity of their characters cannot assure us of their fidelity; what better security can we have from those who lived before them? or what cure for our Scepticism, with regard to any of the miracles

[c] Oper. Tom: 4. par. 2. p. 312, 313, 417, 443, 727.

above mentioned? was the first Assertor of them, *Justin Martyr*, more pious, cautious, learned, judicious, or less credulous than *Epiphanius*? or were those virtues more conspicuous in *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, *Arnobius*, and *Lactantius*, than in *Athanasius*, *Gregory*, *Chrysofom*, *Ferom*, *Austin*? No body, I dare say, will venture to affirm it. If these later Fathers then, biassed by a false zeal or interest, could be tempted to propagate a known lie; or, with all their learning and knowledge, could be so weakly credulous, as to believe the absurd stories, which they themselves attest; there must always be reason to suspect, that the same prejudices would operate even more strongly in the earlier Fathers; prompted by the same zeal and the same interests, yet indued with less learning, less judgement, and more credulity.

But whatever light the fourth Century may give us, in discovering the real character of the earlier ages, it affords us at least a sure presage, of what we are to expect from the fifth, into which we are now entering. Dr. *Waterland* himself allows, on the authority of *Nazianzen*, that the state of the Church towards the end of the fourth century was become very corrupt [d]: for that reason, as we have elsewhere seen, he durst not venture to appeal, in the case of its miracles, to any of the celebrated Fathers above mentioned, as being evidently infected with that corruption. The learned *Mosheim* also, a foreign Divine, and zealous advocate of Christianity, who, by his writings against the Freethinkers, as Dr. *Chap-*

[d] Import. of the Doct. of the Trin. p 424.

*man* tells us, *has deserved the esteem of all good and learned men*, intimates his fears, “ that those, “ who search with any attention into the writings of the greatest and most holy Doctors “ of the fourth century, will find them all without exception, disposed to deceive and to lie, “ whenever the interest of religion requires it “ [e].” Since the degeneracy therefore of this age has obliged the most devoted admirers of antiquity, not onely to suspect, but to reject its miracles as spurious, we cannot be at a loss, what judgement we ought to form on the miracles of the following age, which is allowed by all to have been still more corrupt.

The succeeding Fathers however go on still as before, to assert the same miraculous gifts, and even more of them to the fifth, than to any of the preceding ages. Whence a certain infidel writer has taken occasion to censure the credit of Ecclesiastical History, as being *full of miracles, wrought by such madmen*, as Symeon Stylites [f], a Monk of the fifth century; who spent the greatest part of his life on the top of a pillar, from which he drew his surname; and whose wonderfull acts are particularly related by *Theodoret*. Now whether this *Symeon* was a madman or not, the credit of Christianity is no way affected by it. The History of the Gospel, I hope may be true, though the History of the Church be fabulous. And if the ecclesiastic

[e] See Dr. Chapm. Miscellan. Tracts, p. 191, 207.

[f] See Christianity as old as the Creat, c. 8. p. 89.

Historians have recorded many silly fictions, under the name of miracles, as they undoubtedly have, the blame must be charged to the writers, not to their religion. But the censure came from an Infidel, and for that reason, was at all events to be confuted; since to allow a grain of truth to one of that class, is to betray the cause of Christianity, and to strengthen the hands of its enemies.

This is the principle, which generally animates the zeal, and glares through the writings of the modern advocates of our religion: and which in reality, has done more hurt and discredit to it, than all the attacks of its open adversaries: and it was the same principle without doubt, that gave birth to the defence of *Symeon Stylites*, which Dr. *Chapman*, in his remarks on the Author referred to, has thought fit to attempt in the following words;

“ I know our Author too well, to take his  
 “ judgement either of madness or sense. ’Tis  
 “ more than probable, that it is madness with  
 “ him, to believe any miracles at all, of any per-  
 “ son, or at any time. So that we are not to  
 “ wonder, if *Symeon* and his miracles have no sort  
 “ of credit with him. For this reason I address  
 “ myself here, not to him, but to those, who  
 “ distinguish between truth and imposture, be-  
 “ tween clear and indisputable evidence, and that  
 “ which is dark and suspicious. The great *The-*  
 “ *odoret*, whose character for sense, learning and  
 “ piety, is abundantly known and confessed, was  
 “ himself contemporary with *Symeon Stylites*, was  
 “ personally

“ personally and intimately acquainted with him,  
“ conversed with him for many years together,  
“ and declares himself an eye-witness to the won-  
“ derfull things related of him. He has given  
“ us an account of a great part of his Life,  
“ which he wrote, while *Symeon* was yet alive,  
“ and appeals to all the world for the truth of  
“ what he says of him. He farther tells us, that  
“ *Symeon* by his miracles converted many thou-  
“ sands of Pagans, especially the *Isbmaelites* or  
“ *Saracens*, to the Christian religion; that he  
“ himself, at *Symeon*’s desire, gave many of them  
“ the Sacerdotal benediction, and was in mani-  
“ fest danger of losing his life, by the impa-  
“ tience and eagerness of the barbarians to re-  
“ ceive it from him. If we may not admit such  
“ evidence as this in proof of a matter of fact, I  
“ am afraid, we must shake the evidence of all  
“ human testimony, and believe nothing, but  
“ what we see, and feel, and know ourselves.  
“ Nay farther, our Author cannot prove, that  
“ there ever existed such a man as *Symeon Sty-*  
“ *lites*, by better evidence, than that, which I  
“ have produced, to prove his miracles [g].’;

Here we see what a sort of character and lan-  
guage is prepared for those, who dare to reject  
the miracles of *Symeon*. They must be men, who  
*know not how to distinguish between truth and im-*  
*posture; between indisputable and suspicious evi-*  
*dence; who shake the credit of all human testi-*  
*mony, and believe nothing but what they see them-*

[g] See Miscell. Tracts, p. 165.

*selves.* And all this assurance is grounded on the single testimony of *Theodoret*, to whom, in order to enhance his authority, he has added, according to his usual way, the title of *the Great*. But as the Doctor has carried his defence of Monks and their miracles much farther than any other Protestant, I believe, would venture to do, so it was natural to suspect, that he had been drawn into it by some Popish writer, of whom he had conceived a favorable opinion, and we find accordingly, that he has borrowed, not onely his notions, but his very expressions from *Monf. Tillemont*, who talks in the same pompous strain, of *Le Grand Theodoret*, whose evidence cannot be slighted, he says, without shaking the credit of all human testimony [b].

But let him borrow them from whomsoever he pleases; my business is, to inquire onely whether what he has borrowed and so peremptorily affirmed, be true, or credible, or fit for a Protestant Divine to impose upon the consciences of Christians. This therefore is the point, which I shall now procede to consider, from the authority of those very testimonies, to which he himself has referred us.

We are told then by *Theodoret*, “ that this  
 “ *Symeon* spent the first part of his life in certain  
 “ Monasteries near *Antioch* in *Syria*, mortifying  
 “ his body by horrible austerities, not onely be-  
 “ yond the rules of their ordinary discipline,  
 “ but above the force even of nature itself; till

[b] See *Tillem. Memoir. Vol. XV. p. 348.*



“ for his perfeverance in thefe extravagancies,  
“ contrary to the Admonitions of his rulers, he  
“ was turned out of the fociety, as giving an  
“ example, that might be dangerous or fatal to  
“ thofe, who attempted to imitate it. Upon  
“ this he retired to a feparate Cave or Hut,  
“ where he took a fancy, after the example of  
“ *Mofes* and *Elias*, to keep a faft and total  
“ abftinence from food, for forty intire days.  
“ But when another holy man called *Baffus*, re-  
“ prefented to him the danger and even fin of  
“ an attempt, which would probably deftroy  
“ him, he complied fo far, as to fuffer ten  
“ loaves, and a pitcher of water to be immured  
“ with him in his cell, with a promife to make  
“ ufe of them, if he happened to want any re-  
“ freshment. *Baffus* then clofed up his door with  
“ mud, and left him for forty days; at the end  
“ of which, he returned, and clearing away the  
“ mud from the door, found the ten loaves in-  
“ tire, and the pitcher alfo full, but *Symeon*  
“ ftretched upon the ground, quite fpiritlefs and  
“ unable to fpeak or ftir, till by the care of his  
“ friend, and the application of the fymbols of  
“ the holy mysteries, he was gradually reftored  
“ to his ftrength and former health. From which  
“ time, as *Theodoret* adds, he had then perfe-  
“ vered twenty-eight years, in the fame practice  
“ of fafting forty days in each year. During the  
“ firft part of which days, he ufed constantly to  
“ ftand: and when through want of nourifhment  
“ he grew too weak to endure that pofture, he

“ then began to sit ; but at the last, was forced  
 “ to lie down half dead and almost spent [*i*].

His next whim was, “ to fix his perpetual sta-  
 “ tion on the top of a pillar, whose circumfe-  
 “ rence was hardly of two cubits : and after he  
 “ had spent many years in that position, like a  
 “ statue upon it’s pedestal, on several different  
 “ pillars, he mounted one at last, thirty six cu-  
 “ bits high, and lived thirty years upon it : be-  
 “ ing placed in the middle region, as it were,  
 “ between heaven and earth ; where he conversed  
 “ with God, and glorified him with Angels ; of-  
 “ fering up for the men on earth his supplications  
 “ to God, and drawing down from heaven the  
 “ blessings of God upon men [*k*].” But because  
 these pillars allowed no other posture but that  
 of standing, he contrived a method, which ena-  
 bled him to endure still the fatigue of his usual  
 fasts. “ For he got a beam fixed to the top of  
 “ his pillar, to which he tied himself, and by that  
 “ support held out the whole forty Days without  
 “ changing his position ; till being strengthened  
 “ by heaven with a larger measure of grace, he  
 “ no longer wanted that help, but stood all the  
 “ time, without tasting the least food, yet with  
 “ ease and chearfulness [*l*].”

The manner of passing his time on the pillar  
 was this ; “ all the nights and days also, till three  
 “ in the afternoon, were spent by him in prayer,  
 “ in which he used continual bowings of his bo-

[*i*] Vid. Theodoret. Reli-  
 gios. Histor. p. 880. Oper. T.  
 3. Edit. Paris.

[*k*] Ibid. p. 88z.

[*l*] Ibid. 880.

“ dy, and always touched his very toes with his  
“ head. For this, says *Theodoret*, was easy to  
“ him, because he made but one meal in the  
“ week, and that a very light one, so that his  
“ belly being generally empty, gave him no ob-  
“ struction in bending his back. One of those,  
“ who stood by, looking upon him with *Theodo-*  
“ *ret*, had the curiosity to count the number of  
“ his bowings, but when he had counted to  
“ twelve hundred and forty four, he was tired  
“ and would count them no longer [*m*]. On so-  
“ lemn Festivals, he stood with his hands stretch-  
“ ed out towards heaven, from the setting of the  
“ Sun, to it’s rising, without a wink of sleep the  
“ whole night [*n*].

“ From three in the afternoon it was his prac-  
“ tice, to preach and to give divine lectures; to  
“ answer all questions and petitions, which were  
“ offered to him; to cure diseases, and to com-  
“ pose differences; but at Sun-setting he began  
“ converse again with God [*o*]. He wrought in-  
“ numerable miracles; giving health to the sick,  
“ children to the barren; and dispensing sacred  
“ oil to those likewise who desired it [*p*].” To  
many of which miracles *Theodoret* declares him-  
self to have been an eye-witness, as well as to his  
gift of prophecy, for he heard “ him foretell a  
“ famine and a pestilence, and an irruption of  
“ locusts, and the death of one of *Theodoret*’s  
“ enemies, fifteen days before it happened [*q*].”

[*m*] Ibid. 887. A.

[*n*] Ibid. D.

[*o*] Ibid. 888. B.

[*p*] Ibid. 885, 886, &c.

[*q*] Ibid. 885.

One of the miracles, which *Theodoret* saw, was this; “ an eminent *Ishmaelite* and believer in  
 “ Christ, made a vow to God in the presence of  
 “ *Symeon*, that he would abstain from all animal  
 “ food during the rest of his life : but being  
 “ tempted afterwards to break his vow, he resol-  
 “ ved to eat a fowl, and ordered it to be dressed  
 “ for him accordingly ; but when he sat down to  
 “ eat, he found the flesh of it turned into stone.  
 “ The Barbarian, amazed at this miracle, ran  
 “ away in all hast to the Saint, proclaiming his  
 “ secret crime to all people, and imploring the  
 “ Saint, by the omnipotence of his prayers, to  
 “ release him from the bond of this sin. There  
 “ were many eye-witnesses of this miracle, who  
 “ handled the fowl, and found the part of it  
 “ about the breast, to be compounded of bone  
 “ and of stone [r].”

By these miracles and austerities, the fame of *Symeon*, as *Theodoret* says, was spread through the whole world : so that people of all nations and languages flocked to him in crouds from the remotest parts of the earth ; from *Spain* and *Gaul*, and even *Britain* itself ; and his name was so celebrated at *Rome*, that the Artificers of all kinds had little images of him, placed in the entrance of their shops, as a guard and security to them against all sorts of mischief [s].

This is the account in short of the Life of *Symeon Stylites* : the bare recital of which, tho’ attested by ten *Theodorets*, must needs expose the absurdity of believing, that it could in any manner

[r] Ibid. B.

[s] 882. A.

be suggested or directed by divine inspiration. Yet Dr. *Chapman* contends, *that there is no better evidence for the very existence of Symeon, than we have for his miracles* [t]. By which he means, I suppose, that we have the same evidence for both; the testimony of the same *Theodoret*, which he imagines to be as good in the one case, as in the other: not reflecting, that the same witness, of whatever character he be, will necessarily find a very different degree of credit, according to the different nature of the facts, which he attests; and tho' credible in some, may be justly contemptible in others. For example, when we are told by *Theodoret*, and after him by *Evagrius*, that a certain Monk called *Symeon*, who was personally known to them, took a fancy to live upon a pillar, where he was seen every day by many thousands; we have no reason to doubt of it; the thing was notorious, and there were many such Enthusiasts in the same age; and every one of those thousands, who saw him, were as good witnesses of it, as *Theodoret* himself. But when we are told by the same writers, that *Symeon was inspired by God, and performed many things above the force of human nature*: this is a different case, which cannot command the same belief; being a matter of opinion, rather than of fact; of which very few could judge, fewer still be certain, and scarce one perhaps of all the thousands who saw him, could be a competent witness: while the character of *Symeon* on the one side, and of *Theo-*

[t] *Miscell. Tracts*, p. 167.

doret on the other, suggest many obvious reasons against the credibility of it.

To illustrate this more clearly by a similar instance from profane history. Two classical writers of undoubted credit, *Suetonius* and *Tacitus*, have each written the Life and acts of the Emperor *Vespasian*: who alone, they say, of all the Princes before him, was made a better man, by his advancement to the Empire [u]. But the same writers also declare, that this good Emperor, by a divine admonition from the God *Serapis*, publicly restored a blind man to his sight, and a cripple to his limbs, in the view of the people of Alexandria: and that many years after his death, when there was no reward or temptation for telling such a lie, several witnesses were still living, who had seen those miracles performed, and bore testimony to the truth of them [x]. Now it is certain, that no body in any age, ever doubted of the existence of *Vespasian*, yet many probably in all, and every single man in the present, not only doubt, but reject the story of his miracles: tho' these last be affirmed by the same writers, who assure us of the first: to whose authority still we pay all the regard, that is due, by believing them in every thing, that is credible; in every thing, of which they were competent witnesses; and charging the absurd and fabulous part,

[u] Solusque omnium ante se Principum, in melius mutatus est. Tacit. Hist. l. 1. c. 50.

[x] E plebe quidam luminibus orbatus, item alius debilerure, sedentem pro tribunali pariter adierunt, orantes opem

valetudinis, demonstratam a *Serapide* per quietem, &c. Sueton. in Vit. c. 7.

Utrumque qui interfuere, nunc quoque memorant, postquam nullum mendacio pretium. Tacit. Hist. l. 4. c. 81.

to the superstition, prejudices, and false principles, which prevailed in those ages.

The case is the same with *Theodoret* and all the Ecclesiastical Historians, who have transmitted to us the Lives and miracles of the Monks, and other pious men of their own times. We take their word, as far as reason and religion will permit us ; and ascribe the rest, to the credulity, the prejudices, and erroneous principles, which infected all the writers of those days. The Romaniſts indeed roundly embrace and espouse all the absurd and fictitious stories which they have delivered to us ; and are under a necessity of doing so, since they teach the same corrupt doctrines, retain the same superstitious rites, and exercise the same usurped powers, for the sake of which, those very stories were originally forged. But no Protestants, as far as I have observed, except the two Doctors above mentioned, have ever attempted to defend either the miracles, or the principles of the fifth century ; but on the contrary, have constantly signified either their suspicion, or utter contempt of them.

Mr. *Dodwell*, whose piety and zeal for the honor of Christianity were as conspicuous as his learning, declares, “ that nothing does so much dis-  
“ credit to the cause of miracles in general, among  
“ the Infidels and Atheists, as the impostures of  
“ the later ages ; meaning the fourth, fifth, and  
“ following centuries. These, says he, they op-  
“ pose to the undoubted credit of the earlier  
“ ages ; and because these false prodigies deceiv-  
“ ed the whole world, they infer, that the anti-  
“ ent

“ent ones likewise, tho’ false, might impose in  
“the same manner upon the credulity of man-  
“kind [y].”

Dr. *Cave*, the large extent of whose faith shines through every page of his writings, yet plainly intimates his suspicion, of what *Theodoret* has attested concerning this very *Symeon*: for speaking of the amazing austerities which he practised, he adds, *moreover, if the Greek writers are to be regarded, he wrought innumerable miracles [z].*

Mr. *Collier* also, whose Ecclesiastical History shews, that miracles even of the grossest kind were of no hard digestion with him, could not yet digest these of our *Symeon*, but declares them to be wholly *fabulous, and such, as render the truth itself suspected [a].*

Dr. *Hody*, so highly esteemed for his critical and theological learning, observes, “that stories  
“concerning miracles are common to all the writers of Lives, among the Christians of the middle ages, tho’ otherwise good authors: and that  
“the professed Historians themselves, as *Theodoret* and *Evagrius*, are full of relations, which  
“were the result of a superstitious piety [b].”

Since the most learned then, as well as orthodox of our Divines, and the most conversant also

[y] Atqui nihil est quod miraculorum causæ universæ apud Atheos magis noceat, quam recentiorum Fabulatorum τειγαλισματα. &c. Dodw. Dissert. Iren. 2. § 69.

[z] Histor. Litterar. T. 1.

[a] See Dictionar. in *Symeon*. Styl.

[b] The Case of Sees vacated by an unjust deprivation. c. x. p. 120.



in Ecclesiastical antiquity, have so strongly signified their distrust, both of the testimony of *Theodoret*, and the particular acts of this *Symeon*, it is surprizing, that *Dr. Chapman* should think it of service to Christianity, to lay so great a stress upon them, and in so peremptory a manner, to vindicate the credit of miracles, whose sole tendency is to recommend, as a perfect pattern of the Christian life, the most extravagant enthusiasm and contemptible superstition, that any age or history perhaps has ever produced. For that this was really the case, is evident from the writings of *Theodoret* himself, whose *Life of Symeon Stylites*, is a part only of his *religious history*, as it is called; filled with the *Lives of thirty Monks*, of the same class and character; distinguished by their peculiar austerities; and vying with each other, who could invent the most whimsical methods and painful arts of mortifying their bodies.

One of these called *Baradatus*, contrived a sort of cage for his habitation, coarsly formed of lattice work, so wide and open, as to expose him to all the inclemencies of the weather, and so low at the same time, that it could not admit the full height of his body, but obliged him *to stand always in the posture of stooping* [c].

Another of them called *Tbalaleus*, of a very bulky size, suspended himself in the air, in a cage of a different kind, contrived by himself, and made so low and so strait also, that it left him no more room, than to sit with *his head perpetually*

[c] *Histor. Religios. c. xxvii.*

bent down between his knees ; in which posture, he had spent ten years, when *Theodoret* first saw him [d]. Yet all these ridiculous whims and extravagancies are considered by *Theodoret*, as the suggestions of the holy Spirit [e], and divine inventions, to baffle the artifices of the Devil ; or so many ladders, as he tells us, by which they mounted up to heaven, [f] ; and which were all confirmed by miracles, as a proof of the divine approbation.

These were the wonder-workers, and these the miracles of the fifth century ; the character of which *Dr. Chapman* sums up to this effect in the following articles.

1. That they were of a public nature, and performed in such a manner, as left no room for delusion.

2. That they were attended with beneficial effects, which could not possibly have gained credit, unless the strongest evidence of sense had proved them to be true.

3. That the end of them was not to confirm any idle errors or superstitions, but purely to advance the glory of truth and virtue.

4. That the accounts of them are given by men of unquestionable integrity, piety, and lear-

[d] Ibid. c. xxviii.

[e] Ἐγὼ δὲ τῆς θείας ἀνευ οἰκονομίας ταύτην πιστεύω γενέσθαι τὴν σάσιν. ib. p. 882. B.

[f] Καὶ τῆς εὐσεβείας οἱ τρέφοιμοι τῆς εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀνόδου πολλὰς καὶ διαφορὰς ἐμηχανήσαντο κλίμακας. Ib. p. 889. A.

ning, who were eye-witnesses of many of the facts, and declare in the most solemn manner, that they knew them to be true.

5. That they were far from being vain and unnecessary, so as to render them doubtfull to after ages—but were attested by the strongest moral evidence, equal to that, by which most of the ancient miracles are supported.

6. That they are incapable of giving any countenance to the fabulous pretences of the Papists: and that a Protestant of common capacity will discern as much difference between them and the Popish miracles, as between gold and brass, between light and darkness [g].

Yet from the short specimen of these miracles already given, and much more, from a full list of them, which, if it were required, may hereafter be given, the very contrary character of them, I am persuaded, will appear to be the true one, to all unprejudiced readers, in every one of those articles.

1. That they were all of such a nature, and performed in such a manner, as would necessarily inject a suspicion of fraud and delusion.

2. That the cures and beneficial effects of them, were either false, or imaginary, or accidental.

[g] Miscell. Tracts, p. 175, &c.

3. That

3. That they tend to confirm the idleness of all errors and superstitions.

4. That the integrity of the witnesses is either highly questionable, or their credulity at least so gross, as to render them unworthy of any credit.

5. That they were not only vain and unnecessary, but generally speaking, so trifling also, as to excite nothing but contempt.

And lastly, that the belief and defence of them, are the only means in the world, that can possibly support, or that does in fact give any sort of countenance, to the modern impostures in the Romish Church.

Then as to the Monks also, who are said to have wrought those miracles, the Doctor is not less zealous in defending and extolling all their extravagancies. He declares, “ that they were intended for the best and most excellent purposes [b]. That all the friends to Christianity must think, that in their voluntary austerities, they shewed such prudence, virtue, and greatness of mind, as deserve the highest encomiums of posterity [i]. And that the ancient Monasteries were very different from the modern; quite remote from the corruptions of Popery, and deserving the approbation of the

[b] Ibid. p. 162.

[i] Ibid. p. 165.

“ strictest Protestants [k].” Yet for my own part, notwithstanding all his panegyric on those primitive Monks and monasteries, I shall not scruple to own, 1st, That I look upon the whole institution of monkery, from what age or what Saint soever it drew its origin, to be contrary not only to the principles of the Gospel, but to the interests of all civil society, and the chief source of all the corruptions, which have ever since infested the Christian Church. 2dly, That by all, which I have ever read of the old, and have seen of the modern Monks, I take the preference to be clearly due to the last, as having a more regular discipline, more good learning, and less superstition among them than the first [l].

Before

[k] Ibid. p. 180, 181.

[l] Sir *J. Newton* has shewn, that the Monks are the spawn and genuin offspring of those Hereticks, who in the second and third centuries, affected an extraordinary strictness of life: forbidding to marry and to eat the flesh of animals; and practising many absurd austerities of fastings and watchings, which they enjoined as necessary to all Christians: whose doctrines and practices were rejected and condemned by all the Churches of those ages. But certain Enthusiasts, near the beginning of the fourth century, possessed with the same principles, yet with some little refinement and correction of them, retired into the de-

ferts, where they spent their lives with an high reputation of sanctity, in exercises of devotion and divine contemplation: not imposing the same severities on all, as their predecessors, the Heretics had done, but on those only, who voluntarily preferred the same monastic life. These therefore began to be highly revered, and before the end of the fourth century, increased so fast, that they overflowed both the Greek and the Latin Church like a torrent: especially when *Constantin* the Great professed to esteem and honor them above all Christians: being persuaded, as *Eusebius* tells us, that God did surely dwell in those souls, who had devoted themselves intirely to his service.

M

Before we take leave of this subject, I shall just add a word or two concerning the character of *Theodoret* himself, to whose testimony Dr. *Chapman* pays so extraordinary a regard, and whose authority he declares to be decisive in the case before us. The learned *Monf. Du Pin*, in his account of him, extracted from his writings, says, “ that he was born at *Antioch*, A. D. 386. “ that his birth was accompanied by miracles, “ both before and after it, which he himself relates in his religious history: that, *if we may believe him*, his mother was healed of an incurable disease in her eye, by one *Peter* a Monk: that upon the prayers of another Monk, called *Macedonius*, God granted her to conceive a son, after thirteen years of barrenness, and to bring him safely into the world: that by the prayers of the first of those Monks, *Peter*, she was preserved also from death after her delivery: and that her husband and her son had often felt the effects of *Peter’s* virtue and sanctity, and were cured of their distempers by touching onely his girdle [m].”

This account, I say, is drawn from *Theodoret* himself; whence we learn, that he was nursed and trained in all the bigotry and superstition,

*service*. In *Ægypt* therefore, where this enthusiasm principally reigned, a third part of the people are said to have betaken themselves to the deserts: whence they soon spread themselves through the Christian world, and were the ringleaders in establishing the *worship*

of *Saints, and reliques*, and all those other Superstitions, with which the fourth and all succeeding centuries ever after abounded. *Observat. on the Proph. of Dan. par. 1. c. XIII.*

[m] See *Du Pin’s* account of *Theodoret*, Vol. IV. p. 55.

with

with which that age abounded : taught from his very cradle, to venerate Monks and their miracles : and made to believe, with the first knowledge which he received, that he owed his very existence to the efficacy of their prayers. He tells us, “ that his mother sent him once every “ week to beg the blessing of the Monk, *Peter* ; “ and that he went as often also, to receive the “ instructions and benediction of the other Monk, “ *Macedonius* ; who never failed to remind him, “ of the great pains, which it had cost, to bring “ him into the world, and how many nights he “ had spent in praying to God for nothing else, “ but his birth [n].” And as *Theodoret* is said to have been very tenacious of the principles, which he had once imbibed [o], so it was his constant practice through his whole life, to visit the cells and habitations of all the celebrated Monks of those times ; with whose lives and miracles he has filled his *religious history* : from which I shall here transcribe a story or two, out of the great number, which he has recorded, of the same sort, and of his own knowledge, as a specimen both of the judgement and the fidelity of the compiler.

In his life of the Monk *Peter*, he declares, “ that his very garments wrought wonders, like “ to those of *St. Paul* : which I do not mention, “ says he, by way of hyperbole, but with the

[n] Vid. Theodor. Hist. Religios. c. 9. p. 821. E. it. c. 13. p. 840. D. 839. D.

[o] Animo erat excelso & elato ; sententiæ, quam semel

imbiberat, tenacissimus, injuriarum & contradictionum haud fatis patiens, &c. Cave Hist. Litt. de Theodorit. T. 1. p. 406.

“ testimony of truth for what I am saying. For  
 “ his girdle made of coarse linnen, being very  
 “ broad and long, he cut it into two parts, with  
 “ the one of which he girded his own loins,  
 “ and mine, with the other. This last my mo-  
 “ ther has often applied to me and to my Fa-  
 “ ther, when we were sick, and driven away our  
 “ distempers by it; and made use of it also her-  
 “ self, as a remedy for her own health. Many  
 “ of our acquaintance, who knew this, frequent-  
 “ ly borrowed the girdle, for the service of  
 “ other sick people, and always found the same  
 “ good effects of its virtue: till a certain person,  
 “ who borrowed it, ungratefull to his benefactors,  
 “ never restored it, and so we were deprived of  
 “ the benefit of this gift [p].”

In the life of another Monk, called *James*, he  
 tells this story, “ that the reliques of some of  
 “ the ancient *Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles*  
 “ were brought to him in a chest from *Phœnicia*  
 “ and *Palestine*, and received by a public pro-  
 “ cession of all the orders of the Clergy and the  
 “ Layety. But the Monk *James* did not think  
 “ fit to assist at this solemnity, having conceiv-  
 “ ed some doubts, it seems, whether the reliques,  
 “ said to be *John Baptist’s*, were really so or not.  
 “ Upon which, in the night following, as he  
 “ was praying, there appeared to him a certain  
 “ person cloathed in white, and demanded of  
 “ him, *why he did not come out to meet them?* and  
 “ when *James* asked, who they were, of whom

[p] Hist. Relig. c. ix. p. 826. B.



“ he spake ; he replied, those, who came the  
 “ other day from *Phœnicia* and *Palæstine*. The  
 “ next night also the same person appeared to  
 “ him again : and in order to remove all his  
 “ scruples, brought along with him *St. John*  
 “ *Baptist*, and the *Patriarch Joseph*, who were  
 “ severally presented to him, and held discourse  
 “ with him on the subject of their reliques [q].”  
 With these stories, I shall leave it to the reader  
 to determine, whether a writer of this turn and  
 character can reasonably be thought unprejudiced,  
 and of an authority uncontestable, or worthy in-  
 deed of any credit at all, where the honor of  
 Monks, and the reality of their miracles are the  
 points in question.

The same *Monf. Du Pin*, after he has given us  
 an abstract of *Theodoret's religious history*, adds  
 the following reflection : “ this History contains  
 “ many things remarkable, concerning the disci-  
 “ pline of this time. By it we see, that great  
 “ honor was given to the Saints ; that they were  
 “ invoked ; that men expected to be helped by  
 “ their prayers ; that their reliques were sought  
 “ after with great earnestness ; that people be-  
 “ lieved very easily in them ; attributed great  
 “ virtue and many miracles to them ; and were  
 “ very credulous, &c. [r].” But though the  
 whole turn and purpose of *Theodoret's sacred*  
*History*, tends to strengthen the interest of the Ro-  
 mish, and to hurt the credit of the Protestant  
 cause ; by celebrating the forged miracles of

[q] *Ibid.* c. XXI. p. 862. D.

[r] See *Du Pin.* *ibid.* p. 65.

Monks, and Saints, and reliques, and holy water, and sacred oil, it is curious to observe, with what a different temper, the Popish writer, *Monf. Du Pin*, and the Protestant writer, *Dr. Chapman*, have each expressed themselves, on the subject of his testimony. The Papist, candidly intimating his doubts, says; *if we may believe Theodoret*, such and such miracles were performed. The Protestant on the contrary, contemning all doubts, declares, *that we must believe him, that his evidence is uncontestable, that to reject it, is to destroy the faith of history* [s]. The fortunes of these two writers were as different also, as their principles: the candor of the Papist being thought too favorable to Protestantism, was censured and disgraced by the Popish Bishops; the zeal of the Protestant, tending directly to Popery, was extolled and rewarded by the Protestant Bishops.

We have dwelt already so long on the miracles of the fifth century, that it must be needless, to examine the particular merit of that miracle, which *Dr. Berriman* has so accurately defended. I shall employ therefore but a very few words upon it. The story is this: “ *Hunneric the Vandal* a Christian Prince, of the *Arian heresy*, in his persecution of the orthodox party in *Africa*, ordered the tongues of a certain society of them to be cut to the roots: but by a surprising instance of God’s good Providence,

[s] *If we may not admit nothing but what we see, feel, such evidence as this in proof of and know ourselves. Miscel. a matter of fact, I am afraid, Tracts, p. 167. it. p. 174, we must shake the evidence of &c. all human testimony, and believe*

“ they

“ they were enabled to speak articulately and  
“ distinctly without their tongues; and so con-  
“ tinuing to make open profession of the same  
“ doctrine, they became not only the preachers,  
“ but living witnesses of its truth; and a per-  
“ petual rebuke to the *Arian* faction [1].” This  
miracle is attested by several contemporary writ-  
ters, who affirm, that they had seen and heard  
some of those Confessors *speaking distinctly, after*  
*they had lost their tongues.*

Now it may not improbably be supposed on  
this occasion, that though their tongues were or-  
dered to be cut to the roots, and are said to have  
been so cut, yet the sentence might not be so  
strictly executed, as not to leave in some of them,  
such a share of that organ, as was sufficient, in  
a tolerable degree, for the use of speech. It is  
remarkable also, that two of this company are said  
to have utterly lost the faculty of speaking; who  
had been deprived perhaps of their intire tongues:  
for though this be ascribed, to the peculiar  
judgement of God, for a punishment of the im-  
moralities, of which they were afterwards guilty,  
yet that seems to be a forced and improbable so-  
lution of the matter. We are told likewise, that  
another of these Confessors, *who had been dumb*  
*from his birth, yet by losing his tongue with the*  
*rest, acquired also the use of speech:* which is a  
circumstance so singular and extraordinary, that  
it carries with it a suspicion of art and contri-  
vance, to enhance the lustre of the miracle.

[1] See Berrim. *Historic*: p. 327, &c. and Dr. Chapm.  
*account of the Trinitar. Cont. Misc. Tracts*, p. 174.

But to come still more close to the point. If we should allow after all, that the tongues of these Confessors were cut away to the very roots ; what will the learned Doctor say, if this boasted miracle, which he so strenuously defends, should be found at last to be no miracle at all ? The tongue indeed has generally been considered, as absolutely necessary to the use of speech : so that to hear men talk without it, might easily pass for a miracle, in that credulous age ; especially, when it gave so illustrious a confirmation to the orthodox faith, and so signal an overthrow to the *Arian Heresy*. Yet the opportunities of examining the truth of the case by experiment, have been so rare in the world, that there was always room to doubt, whether there was any thing miraculous in it or not. But we have an instance in the present century, indisputably attested, and published about thirty years ago, which clears up all our doubts, and intirely decides the question. I mean the case of *a Girl, born without a tongue, who yet talked as distinctly and easily, as if she had enjoyed the full benefit of that organ* : a particular account of which is given, in *the memoires of the Academy of Sciences at Paris*, drawn up by an eminent Physician, who had carefully examined the mouth of the Girl, and all the several parts of it, in order to discover, by what means her speech was performed without the help of a tongue : which he has there explained with great skill and accuracy. In the same account he refers us likewise to another instance, published about eighty years before, by *a Surgeon of Saurmur*,

*mur*, of a boy, who at the age of eight or nine years, lost his tongue, by a gangrene or ulcer, occasioned by the small-pox, yet retained the faculty of speaking, in the same manner as the Girl [u].

Let our Doctor then defend this miracle with all the power of his zeal and learning: let him urge the testimonies of *Senators, Chancellors, Bishops, Archbishops and Popes*; of persons, who had too much learning and judgement, he says, to be deceived in so important a fact, though they lived an hundred years after it; of *Æneas* also of *Gaza*, who opened their very mouths, as he tells us, to make his observations with more exactness [x]. Yet the humble testimony of this single Physician, grounded on real experiment, will overturn at once all his pompous list of dignified authorities, and convince every man of judgement, that this pretended miracle, like all the other fictions, which have been imposed upon the world, under that character, owed its whole credit to our ignorance of the powers of nature.

In short; when we reflect on the corrupt and degenerate state of the Church, in the end of the fourth century, allowed by the most diligent inquirers into Antiquity; and that this age was the pattern to all that succeeded it; in which the same corruptions were not onely practised, but agreeably to the nature of all corruption, carried still to a greater excess, and improved from bad to worse, down to the time of the Reformation; we may safely conclude, without weigh-

[u] *Memoires de L'Acad. des Scienc. Ann. 1718. p. 6.*

[x] See *Berrim. ibid:*

ing the particular scruples, which may arise upon each single miracle, that they were all, in the gross, of the same class and species, the mere effects of fraud and imposture. For we can hardly dip into any part of Ecclesiastical History, of what age soever, without being shocked by the attestation of several, which from the mere incredibility of them, appear at first sight to be fabulous. This is confessed on all sides, even by the warmest defenders of the Primitive Fathers, and cannot be accounted for in any other way, than by ascribing it, to the experience, which those Fathers had, of the blind credulity and superstition of the ages, in which they lived, and which had been trained by them, to consider *the impossibility of a thing, as an argument for the belief of it* [y]. But in whatever light we contemplate these stories; whether as believed, or as forged by them, or as affirmed onely, and not believed; it necessarily destroys their credit in all other miraculous relations whatsoever. Yet it is surprizing to see, with what ease, the Advocates of these miracles overlook and contemn all reflections of this kind, and think it sufficient to tell us, that *the Fathers though honest, were apt to be very credulous*: for with these disputants, credulity, it seems, how gross soever, casts not the

[y] *Tertullian*, disputing against certain Heretics, who denied the reality of Christ's human nature; reasons thus. "The Son of God was crucified: it is no shame to own it, because it is a thing to

" be ashamed of. The Son of God died: it is wholly credible, because it is absurd. When buried, he rose again to life: it is certain, because it is impossible. De Carne Christi. § 5."

least

least slur upon their testimony; which, in all cases, where it does not confute itself by its own extravagance, they maintain to be convincing and decisive, and superior to all suspicion. Whereas the sole inference, which reason would teach us to draw from an attestation of miracles, so conspicuously fabulous, is; that the same witnesses are not to be trusted in any; as being either incapable, from a weakness of judgement, of discerning the truth and probability of things; or determined by craft or fraud, to defend every thing that was usefull to them. In a word, in all inquiries of this nature, we may take it for a certain rule; that those, who are conscious of the power of working true miracles, can never be tempted either to invent, or to propagate any, which are false; because the detection of any one, would taint the credit of all the rest, and defeat the end proposed by them. But impostors are naturally drawn, by a long course of success, into a security, which puts them off their guard, and tempts them gradually, out of mere wantonness, and contempt of those whom they had so frequently deluded, to stretch their frauds beyond the bounds of probability, till by repeated acts of this kind, they tire the patience of the most credulous, and expose their tricks to the scorn even of the populace.

I have now thrown together all, which I had collected for the support of my argument, or as much at least, as I thought sufficient to illustrate the real state of the primitive miracles: and if

we cast up the sum of all that boasted evidence, which the *unanimity of the Fathers, the tradition of the Catholic Church, and the faith of history* have produced at last on the other side, towards the confirmation of the said miracles, we shall find the whole, to amount in reality to no proof at all. For to run over them all again in short.

The gift of *raising the dead*, is affirmed only by the single authority of *Irenæus*, Bishop of *Lyons*; and was either not known, or not believed at least, in the very same age, by another Bishop, full as venerable, *Theophilus of Antioch*. The *gift of tongues*, which rests likewise on the single testimony of the same *Irenæus*; is confuted even by himself, who complains of his own want of it, in the very work of propagating the Gospel. The *gift of expounding the Scriptures*, which is reckoned commonly with the rest, and claimed in particular by *Justin Martyr*, is allowed to have had no subsistence at all, in any age, or any writer of the primitive Church. The *gift of casting out Devils*, the most celebrated of them all, is reduced to nothing, by the accounts even of the Ancients themselves, which plainly testify, that it had no effect in many cases, and could not work a perfect cure in any. And as to other diseases, where oil especially was applied, they might probably enough be cured without a miracle; or by the same arts, with which the same cures were performed among the Heathens: which, tho' the undoubted effects of fraud, were yet managed so dexterously, as to be constantly ascribed by the Christians to the power of Dæmons. Lastly, *the gift of Prophe-*  
tic



*tic visions and trances*, was of a kind, which could not easily be proved to the satisfaction of any ; was of no service therefore to the propagation of the Gospel, or the conviction of unbelievers ; being wholly exercised among the Christians themselves ; and owing it's chief credit to Heretics and Enthusiasts ; and always suspected by the sober and judicious : so that, after flourishing for a while through a visionary generation or two, it presently after fell into utter contempt.

This then being the real state of the miracles of the primitive Church, I freely commit them once more to the *Chapmans*, the *Berrimans*, and the *Stebbing's*, to defend and enjoy them, as much as they please ; happy without doubt, in this sceptical age, to find themselves blessed with that heroic faith, which can remove mountains, and beat down every obstacle, which sense, or reason, or fact can possibly oppose to it. Dr. *Chapman* has declared beforehand, *that whenever my larger work should appear, the primitive Fathers would find greater friends to their memory, and abler advocates to their cause, than I would wish to exist* [z]. That time is now come ; and those abler Advocates expected : but let them appear when they will, I am so far from grudging their help to the Fathers, that I wish them the ablest, which Popery itself can afford : for Protestantism, I am sure, can supply none, whom they would chuse to retain in their cause ; none, who can defend them, without contradicting their own profession, and disgracing their own character ; or produce any thing, but

[z] See *Jes. Cabal* farther opened, p. 45.

what deserves to be laughed at, rather than answered. I must however except one, who acts indeed with a better grace and more consistency : for when I had treated him by mistake, as a *Protestant*, he flatly disowns the name, and calls himself a *Catholic Christian* [a] ; the same title, which a Popish writer had before assumed, in his remarks on my *Letter from Rome* ; and what all these Advocates, who hang, as it were, between the two religions, affect to assume, that they may evade for a while the more invidious name of *Papist*.

V. All that remains, towards the final confirmation of my argument, is, to refute, as I promised, some of the most plausible objections, which have been made to it by my Antagonists ; and which by humouring the prejudices and prepossessions of many pious Christians, seem the most likely, to make an impression to its disadvantage.

§ 1. In the first place then ; It is objected, that by the character, which I have given of the ancient Fathers, *the authority of the books of the New Testament*, which were transmitted to us through their hands, will be rendered *precarious and uncertain*.

To which I answer ; that the objection is trifling and groundless, and that the authority of those books does not depend upon the faith of the Fa-

[a] See Apolegetic. Epist. p. 27, 28.

thers, or of any particular set of men, but on the general credit and reception which they found, not only in all the Churches, but with all the private Christians of those ages, who were able to purchase copies of them : among whom, tho' it might perhaps be the desire of a few to corrupt, yet it was the common interest of all, to preserve, and of none, to destroy them. And we find accordingly, that they were guarded by all with the strictest care, so as to be concealed from the knowledge and search of their heathen adversaries, who alone were desirous to extirpate them. After such a publication therefore, and wide dispersion of them from their very origin, it is hardly possible, that they should either be corrupted, or suppressed, or counterfeited by a few, of what character or abilities soever ; or that, according to the natural course of things, they should not be handed down from age to age, in the same manner, with the works of all the other ancient writers of *Greece* and *Rome*, which tho' transmitted through the hands of many profligate and faithless generations of men, yet have suffered no diminution of their credit on that account : for tho' in every age there were several, perhaps, who, from crafty and selfish motives, might be disposed to deprave, or even to suppress some particular books, yet their malice could reach only to a few copies, and would be restrained therefore from the attempt, or corrected at least after the attempt, by the greater number of the same books, which were out of their reach, and remained still incorrupt. But besides all this, there were some circumstances peculiar

culiar to the books of the New Testament, which insured the preservation of them more effectually, than of any other ancient books whatsoever ; the divinity of their character ; and the religious regard, which was paid to them by all the sects and parties of Christians ; and above all, the mutual jealousies of those very parties, which were perpetually watching over each other, lest any of them should corrupt the sources of that pure doctrine, which they all professed to teach and to deduce from the same books. Let the craft therefore of the ancient Fathers be as great, as we can suppose it to be : let it be capable of adding some of their own forgeries for a while to the Canon of Scripture ; yet it was not in the power of any craft, to impose spurious pieces, in the room of those genuin ones, which were actually deposited in all Churches, and preserved with the utmost reverence, in the hands of so many private Christians.

But I may go a step farther, and venture to declare ; that if we should allow the objection to be true, it cannot in any manner hurt my argument : for if it be natural and necessary, that the craft and credulity of witnesses should always detract from the credit of their testimony ; who can help it ? or on what is the consequence to be charged, but on that nature and constitution of things, from which it flows ? or if the authority of any books be really weakened, by the character which I have given of the Fathers, will it follow from thence, that the character must necessarily be false, and that the Fathers were neither crafty nor credulous ?  
 that

that surely can never be pretended; because the craft and credulity which are charged upon them must be determined by another sort of evidence; not by consequences, but by facts; and if the charge be confirmed by these, it must be admitted as true, how far soever the consequences may reach.

§ 2. It has been alledged, “ that all suspicion  
“ of fraud in the case of the primitive miracles  
“ seems to be precluded, by that public appeal  
“ and challenge, which the Christian Apologists  
“ make to their enemies the Heathens, to come  
“ and see with their own eyes the reality of the  
“ facts which they attest.” But this objection, tho’ it may seem plausible indeed to a common reader, yet to all who are acquainted with the condition of the Christians in those days, and the difficulty of making their Apologies known to the world, will be found to have no real weight in it. The Gospel indeed soon began to make a considerable progress among the vulgar, and to gain some few also of a more distinguished rank, yet continued to be held in such contempt by the generality of the better sort, through the three first centuries, that they scarce ever thought it worth while to make any inquiry about it, or to examine the merit of it’s pretensions. The principal writers of *Rome*, who make any mention of the Christians, about the Time of *Trajan*, plainly shew, that they knew nothing more of them, or their religion, than what they had picked up, as it were, by chance, from the gross misrepresenta-

tion of common fame, and ſpeak of them accordingly, as *a ſet of deſpicable, ſtubborn, and even wicked Entuſiaſts.*

*Suetonius* calls them, *a race of men of a new and miſchievous ſuperſtition* [b]. And *Tacitus*, deſcribing the horrible tortures, which they ſuffered under *Nero*, for the pretended crime of burning the City of *Rome*, ſays; “ that they were deteſted for their flagitious practices; poſſeſſed with  
“ an abominable ſuperſtition; and condemned,  
“ not ſo much for their ſuppoſed crime of ſetting fire to the City, as for the hatred of all  
“ mankind: and tho’ they deſerved the moſt exemplary puniſhments, yet it raiſed ſome pity  
“ towards them, to ſee them ſo miſerably deſtroyed, not on the account of the public utility,  
“ but to ſatiſfy the cruelty of a ſingle man [c].”

*Pliny* alſo, when he was the Governor of a Province, in which the Chriſtians were very numerous, and under an actual perſecution in the reign of *Trajan*, yet in his celebrated letter to that Emperor concerning them, declares; “ that he had  
“ never been preſent at any of their examinations,  
“ and did not ſo much as know, for what they  
“ were puniſhed, or how far they deſerved  
“ puniſhment: that by all the inquiries, which he  
“ had ſince made, he could not diſcover any practices among them, but what were harmleſs and

[b] Afflicti ſuppliciiſ Chriſtiani: genus hominum ſuperſtitionis novæ & maleficæ. in *Ner.* c. 16.

[c] Quos per flagitia inviſos, vulgus Chriſtianos appellabat--

exitabilis Superſtitio ruruſ erumpebat—haud perinde in crimine incendi. quam odio humani generis, convicti—&c. *Ann.* l. 15. 44.

“ innocent.

“ innocent.— And nothing in short, but a  
 “ wretched and extravagant superstition, which  
 “ had spread itself very wide, among persons of  
 “ both sexes, of every age and condition ; which  
 “ might however be subdued by gentler methods ;  
 “ by moderating the rigor of the persecution, and  
 “ pardoning the penitent ; by which lenity, great  
 “ numbers of them had already been recalled to  
 “ their ancient worship [d].”

This is the whole account, which we have of the Primitive Christians, from the best Heathen writers, to the time of *Antoninus Pius* : in whose reign, and that of his Successor, *M. Aurelius*, the ancient Apologies of *Justin Martyr*, *Melito* and *Athenagoras*, were addressed to the Emperor and Senate of *Rome* : notwithstanding which, their condition, generally speaking, continued much the same, through the following ages, till they were established at last by the civil power : during all which time, they were constantly insulted and calumniated by their Heathen Adversaries, as a *stupid, credulous, impious sect ; the scum of mankind, and the prey of crafty Impostors* : calumnies, of which all the ancient Apologists complain, and

[d] *Cognitionibus de Christianis interfui nunquam, ideo nescio, quid aut quatenus aut puniri soleat, aut quæri—&c. Ep. l. x. 97.*

*N. B. Pliny* says in this letter, that many of both sexes, and of all ages, ranks or orders of men, had embraced Christianity. *Tertullian* also gives the same account, about an

hundred years later. [*Apolog. 1. ad Scapul. vers. fin.*] but it must be observed, that their accounts were given from the Provinces of *Bithynia* and *Africa*, where the dignity even of the most eminent was but very little considered or respected in the great Republic of *Rome*.

take great pains to confute. *Tertullian* expostulates very warmly with the Heathen Magistrates, “ that they would not give themselves the trouble, “ to make the least inquiry into their manners “ and doctrines; but condemned them for the “ mere name, without examination or trial; “ treating a Christian of course, as guilty of every crime; *as an enemy of the Gods, Emperors, “ laws, customs, and even of nature itself*—— “ and what, says he, can be more unjust than to “ hate, what you know nothing of, even tho’ it “ deserved to be hated? [e].” *Arnobius* and *Lactantius* make the same complaint near an hundred years later, in the beginning of the fourth century, that they were derided every where by the Gentiles, *as a senseless, stupid race of blockheads and brutes, to whose impieties, all the calamities, which afflicted the several countries, where they lived, were constantly imputed* [f].

In these circumstances, it cannot be imagined, that men of figure and fortunes would pay any

[e] Christianum hominem, omnium Scelerum reum, Deorum, Imperatorum, legum, morum, naturæ totius inimicum existimas &c. Apol. §. 1, 2—Ἐφ’ ἡμῶν δὲ τὸ ὄνομα ὡς ἔλεγχον λαμβάνετε. &c vid. Just. Mart. apol. 1. p. 8.

[f] Nos hebetes, stolidi, obtusi pronuntiamur & bruti sed pesilentias, inquirunt, & ficitates, bella, frugum inopiam—resque alias noxias—Dii nobis important injuriis vestris, atque

offensionibus exasperati —— Arnob. 1. 1. p. 2, 7.

Cur igitur pro stultis, vanis ineptis habemur? Lact. 1. 4. c. 13. Illud quoque ortum est vulgare proverbium; *pluvia deficit*, fit causa Christiani. Aug. Civ. D. 1. 2. 3.

Si Tiberis ascendit ad mœnia; si Nilus non ascendit in arva; si cœlum stetit; terra movit; si fames; si lues; statim, Christianos ad Leonem. Tertull. Apol. 40.

attention



attention to the Apologies or writings of a sect, so utterly despised: especially, when on the one hand, there was no elegance of stile or composition, to invite them to read; and on the other, all the discouragements, which the Government could give, to deter them from reading. Much less can we believe, that the Emperor and Senate of *Rome*, should take any notice of those Apologies, or even know indeed, that any such were addressed to them. For should the like case happen in our own days, that any Methodist, Moravian, or French Prophet, should publish an apology for his brethren, addressed to the King and the Parliament; is it not wholly improbable, that the Government would pay any regard to it, or take it at all into their consideration? How can it then be supposed, that the Emperor and Senate of *Rome*, who had a worse opinion of the ancient Christians, than we of our modern Fanatics, and instead of tolerating, were using all methods to destroy them, would give themselves the trouble to read, or to consider the merit of their writings?

We must add to all this, the great difficulty of publishing books, or of making them known to the world in those ages. The ease, which we now find in providing and dispersing what number of copies we please, by the opportunity of the press, makes us apt to imagine, without considering the matter, that the publication of books was the same easy affair in all former times, as in the present. But the case was quite different. For when there were no books in the world, but what

were written out by hand, with great labour and expence, the method of publishing them was necessarily very slow and the price very dear; so that the rich only and curious would be disposed or able to purchase them; and to such also, it was often difficult to procure them, or to know even where they were to be bought.

In the Epistle of the Church of *Smyrna*, mentioned above, concerning the Martyrdom of St. *Polycarp*, there is a passage or two, which will help to confirm what I am now asserting. For towards the end of it, the *Philadelphians*, to whom it is addressed, are desired, as soon as they have informed themselves of the contents, *to send it forward to all the other brethren*, who lived more remote, or beyond *Philadelphia*, that they also might read it and glorify God. The note likewise, which is annexed to the end of the Epistle, declares, “ that the copy of this most valued piece, which  
“ had been transcribed from the book of *Irenæus*,  
“ had lain buried and unknown at *Corinth* for several ages, almost destroyed by time, and in  
“ danger of being lost to the world, till it was  
“ discovered by a revelation from *Polycarp* himself, made to one *Pionius*,” from whose transcript, all the copies of it now extant are derived [g]. These passages, I say, plainly intimate, how difficult it must have been to the Christians of those days to provide such books as were wanted even for their own use, and much

[g] Μαθόντες ἕν ταῦτα, καὶ τοῖς ἀπέμψατε, ἵνα καὶ ἐκεῖνοι δοξάζωσι ἐπίκεινα ἀδελφοῖς τὴν ἐπιστολὴν δι- τὸν κύριον. § xx. it. xxiii, xxiv.

more to difperfe fuch a number of them, as was fufficient for the information of the public.

Since this then was the condition of publishing books in thofe primitive ages, in which the Chriftians were neither able to bear the expence of copying, nor the Heathens difpofed to buy them, there is great reason to believe, that their Apologies, how gravely foever addreffed to Emperors and Senates, lay concealed and unknown to the public for many years, in a few private hands, and among the faithful only; efppecially, when the publication of them was not only difficult and expenfive, but fo criminal alfo, as to expofe them often to danger, and even to capital punifhment; and when the books themfelves, as oft as they were found by the magistrate, inftead of being read, were generally ordered to be burnt [b].

§ 3. It is urged againft me, “ that no fufpicion of craft can reasonably be entertained againft perfons of fo exalted a piety, who expofed themfelves to perfecution and even to Martyrdom, in confirmation of the truth of what they taught.” But this likewise will appear to have as little folidity in it as the former. For all who are converfant with hiftory know, that no-

[b] Καίπερ θανάτω ἰρισθέντι κατὰ τῶν διδασκόντων, ἢ ὕλως ὁμολογῶν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἡμεῖς παύλαχθῆ καὶ ἀσπαζόμεθα, καὶ διδάσκομεν. εἰ δὲ καὶ ἡμεῖς ὡς ἔχθροὶ ἐπιεύξεσθε τοῖσδε τοῖς λόγοις,

ἔ πλείονι δύνασθε—τῷ φονεύειν. Just. M. Apol. i. p. 69.

Nam nostra quidem scripta cur ignibus meruerunt dari? cur immaniter conventicula dirui? Arnob. l. 4. vers. fin.

thing gives so invincible a prejudice, and so strong a bias to the mind of man, as religious zeal, in favour of every thing, that is thought useful to the object, which excites it. And the several facts, which I have already stated, will inable us to judge, in what manner the extraordinary zeal of those ancients may be presumed to have operated in the case now in question. I shall say nothing more therefore on that head : but since some of those Fathers, to whose testimony I have chiefly appealed, as *Papias, Justin, Irenæus, Cyprian, &c.* were not only persons of the greatest piety and zeal, but said to have been Martyrs also for the faith of Christ ; it may be proper to add a reflection or two on the particular case of Martyrdom ; in order to shew, that this venerable name made no real difference in the personal characters of men, nor ought to give any additional weight to the authority of a Christian witness.

There were various motives of different kinds, as Mr. *Dodwell* has shewn, which would naturally induce the primitive Christians, not only to endure, but even to wish and aspire to Martyrdom. He observes, “ that among the ancient  
 “ *Jews*, the *Galileans* were remarkable for the  
 “ obstinacy of their temper and a contempt of  
 “ death : whose example, he imagines, might  
 “ have some influence on those first Christians,  
 “ who drew their origin from that country, and  
 “ were constantly called *Galileans*, and charged  
 “ with the same spirit of obstinacy by their adver-  
 “ saries

“faries [i].” A character, which seems to be particularly verified in the Christians of *Palæstine*, concerning whom, *Tiberianus*, the Governor of *Syria*, sends the following account to the Emperor *Trajan*.

“I am quite tired with punishing and destroying the *Galileans*, or those of the sect called Christians, according to your orders. Yet they never cease to profess voluntarily, what they are, and to offer themselves to death. Wherefore I have laboured by exhortations and and threats, to discourage them from daring to confess to me, that they are of that Sect. Yet in spite of all persecution, they continue still to do it. Be pleased therefore to let me know, what your Highness thinks proper to be done with them [k].”

Glory also, or reputation was another great spur to Martyrdom: for by the principles of those ages, nothing was esteemed more glorious, than the *crown of Martyrdom*, as it was called. There was an anniversary festival instituted to the honor of each Martyr: in which their memories were celebrated by panegyric orations, and a veneration, next to divine, paid to their reliques. In their prisons, they were visited by the Christians of all ranks; proud to minister to them in the very lowest offices, and to kiss their chains: and if they happened to escape with life from their tor-

[i] Poterat & Judæorum, præsertim *Galilæorum* obstinata illa indoles in primorum Christianorum patientia locum habere. Dodw. Dissert. Cy-

prian. 12. 2.

[k] Vid. *Tiberian. Epist.* apud Coteler. Edit. Patre Apostol. V. 2. p. 181.

tures, as they frequently did, their authority was ever after most highly respected; in the decision of all controversies; in absolving men from the ordinary discipline of the Church; in granting pardon to lapsed Christians; and restoring them to communion, on what terms they thought fit [1].

But the principal incentive to Martyrdom, was the assurance, not onely of an immortality of glory, and happiness in another world, in

[1] Quis in carcerem ad osculanda vincula Martyris repere patietur? [Tertull. ad Uxor, 2. 4.] Quam pacem quidam in Ecclesia non habentes, a Martyribus in carcere exorare solebant. [Id. ad Martyr. 2.] [Vid. Dodw. Dissert. Cyprian. xi. 9, 10.]

Sacrificia pro eis semper, ut meministis, offerimus, quoties Martyrum passiones & dies anniversaria commemoratione celebramus. [Cypr. Ep. 34. it. 37.]

Mandant aliquid Martyres fieri? si iusta, si licita, si non contra ipsum Dominum, a Dei Sacerdote facienda sunt. [Cypr. de Lapsis. p. 174.] Ut qui libellem a Martyribus acceperunt, & auxilio eorum adjuvari apud Dominum in delictis suis possunt——cum pace a Martyribus promissa ad Dominum remittantur. [Id. Ep. 13. & 12.]

N. B. Eusebius speaking of the persecution under M. Au-

relius and L. Verus, says, “that those, who were then racked and tortured for the confession of their faith, were so humble, that they would not assume the title of Martyrs, nor suffer it to be given to them, declaring none to be worthy of that name, but those who were made perfect by suffering death; and praying, that they also might arrive at that perfection.” [Hist. Eccles. 5. 2.] But we find a contrary practice in Cyprian’s time, who freely gives the title of Martyr to all, who had endured torments for the faith of Christ. Which was so far from being rejected by them, that many, as he complains, were so puffed up with pride on that account, as to give great disturbance to the peace and discipline of the Church. Vid. Epist. x, xi, xii, xiii, &c.

common

common with all other pious Christians, but of extraordinary and distinguished rewards, and a degree of happiness, proportionable to the degree of their sufferings. For while the souls of ordinary Christians were to wait their doom in some intermediate state; or pass to their final bliss thro' a purgation by fire; it was a general belief, that the Martyrs were admitted *to the immediate fruition of Paradise, and the fire of Martyrdom purged all their sins away at once* [m]. And the opinion likewise, which commonly prevailed in these days, that this world was near to its end, made them the more eager still to snatch that crown, which would intitle them to such high privileges; give them a power with God, so as to procure benefits for others, and make them

[m] Sed & justos cum judicaverit, etiam igni eos examinabit, &c. Laët. vii. 21.

Nemo peregrinatus a corpore, statim immoratur penes Dominum, nisi ex Martyrii prærogativa; paradiso scilicet, non inferis diversurus. Tertull. de Resurr. carn. 43.

Quis non—pati exoptat? ut Dei totam gratiam redimat; ut omnem veniam ab eo compensatione sanguinis sui expediat? omnia enim huic operi delicta donantur. Id. Apologet. ad fin.

N. B. Cyprian, speaking of the different state of the lapsed Christians, tho' restored afterwards to the Church by penance, and of the Martyrs, who had nobly suffered death

or torments for the faith of Christ, says; it is one thing, to lie at mercy; another, to arrive at glory: one thing, to be thrown into prison, and not to be discharged, till you have paid the uttermost farthing; another, to receive the immediate reward of your faith and virtue: one thing, to be cleansed from your sins by a long course of torments, and a purgation by fire; another, to have all your sins wiped off at once by martyrdom: in a word, one thing, to hang in suspense about your doom, in the day of judgement; another, to be crowned directly by the Lord. Ep. 51. p. 71. ad fin.

Assessor:

Affessors and Judges with Christ himself at the last day [n].

There was another notion, diligently inculcated and generally believed at the same time, which was sufficient of itself to efface all the terrors of Martyrdom, *viz.* that under all that dreadful apparatus of racks and fires, and the seeming atrocity of their tortures, the Martyrs were miraculously freed from all sense of pain, nay felt nothing but transports of joy, from the cruelty of their tormentors. All which is expressly affirmed by many of the ecclesiastical writers. *The visible assistance of heaven, says Dr. Chapman, relieving the pains of some, extinguishing them in others, and converting them into pleasure and rapture in many——which facts, he declares, to be so well known and so well attested; so plain and so indisputable, that there was no occasion for him to take the trouble of proving them [o].* Socrates, the Historian, has furnished an instance of them in the case of one *Theodorus*: and the old Martyrologies, as they are published by the Romanists, and especially *the Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas*, to which the Doctor refers us for the indisputable proof of true miracles, will supply us with many more [p]. This *Theodorus* was a  
young

[n] Αὐτοὶ τοίνυν οἱ θεῖοι Μάρτυρες παρ' ἡμῖν, οἱ νῦν τῷ χριστῷ ἀρέδρον, καὶ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτῷ κοινωνοὶ, καὶ μέτοχοι τῆς κρίσεως αὐτῷ. Euseb. Hist. l. 6. c. 42.

[o] Miscell Tracts, p. 156.

[p] As appears beyond all dispute from the acts of *Perpe-*

*tua and Felicitas, &c. Ibid. p. 169.*

*N. B.* It is strange, that a Protestant Divine should lay so much stress on these Acts, as to make them the unquestionable vouchers of true miracles: which, while they excite our compas-



young Christian, of eminent zeal and piety, who is said to have suffered the most cruel tortures by

compassion for the sufferings, and our admiration of the courage of these two female Martyrs, yet shock and disgust us at the same time, to see all this virtue and fortitude derived, not from the calm and sober principles of the Gospel, but from the impetuosity of a wild and extravagant enthusiasm. Among many other instances of this, written by *Perpetua* herself, in her prison, she relates what follows. "That, " as she was praying with the " rest of her fellow-martyrs, " she happened to mention, all " of a sudden, and to her own " surprize, the name of *Dinocrates*, which had not come " into her mind of a long time, " till that very moment. It " was the name of her brother, who died of a Cancer " in his face, when he was but " seven years old. This renewed her grief for his unhappy case; and convinced her, that she ought to pray for him, as being now held worthy to intercede for others: whereupon she began to put up her prayers and sighs for him to the Lord, and in the same night received this vision. She saw *Dinocrates* coming out of a dark place, in which there were many others with him, greatly tormented by heat

" and thirst; with a fordid and " pale countenance, and the " same wound in his face, " which he had when he died. " There was a pool of water " also in the place, but with a " brink deeper than the Stature of the boy, who stretched himself out, as desirous to drink, but was not able to reach the water. This grieved *Perpetua*, who, as soon as she was awake, knew by this vision, that her brother was in an uneasy state: but being assured, that she could relieve him by her prayers, she continued to intercede day and night, with groans and tears, that his punishment might be remitted for her sake. Upon which, she shortly after received another vision, when the place, which before was dark, appeared bright and shining; and *Dinocrates* was now quite clean, well dressed and refreshed; and instead of the wound, with a Scar onely in his face: and the brink of the pool was reduced to the height onely of his navel, whence he instantly drew water: on the brink also stood a vial full of water, out of which he began to drink, yet the water in it never failed: so that the boy, having now " satisfied

by the command of the Emperor *Julian*; but after he was left for dead by his tormentors, was

“ satisfied his thirst, went away  
 “ cheerfully to play, as chil-  
 “ dren usually do, by which  
 “ *Perpetua* understood, that  
 “ her brother was removed  
 “ from the place of his pu-  
 “ nishment.”

The case of this infant *Dino-  
 crates* was alledged by an an-  
 cient writer, in a controversy  
 with *St. Austin*, as a proof, that  
 baptism was not absolutely ne-  
 cessary to an admission into pa-  
 radise: to which *St. Austin* an-  
 swers, “ that tho’ the boy was  
 “ but seven years old, he  
 “ might probably be baptized  
 “ at that age, and after bap-  
 “ tism be guilty of lying or  
 “ denying Christ; or in the  
 “ time of persecution might  
 “ be drawn perhaps by his  
 “ impious Father, who was an  
 “ Heathen, into some act of  
 “ Idolatry, for which he was  
 “ doomed to a place of tor-  
 “ ments, till his pardon was ob-  
 “ tained by the prayers of his  
 “ Sister, then going to die for  
 “ Christ ” [de Origin. anim.  
 l. 1. c. x. and l. 3. c. 9.] From  
 these and several other visions  
 of the same kind, which are  
 related in the same Acts, the  
 Romanists draw what they take  
 to be a demonstrative and ex-  
 perimental proof of every  
 thing which they teach with  
 regard to the other world; of  
 an Hell, a Purgatory, a Lim-

*bus, or separate place of Infants,  
 and another Limbus of the An-  
 cient Fathers, with a Paradise  
 for the immediate reception of  
 Martyrs: and that the dead  
 may be relieved also from their  
 pains by the prayers of the liv-  
 ing.* [Vid. *Ruinart. Acta Mart.  
 de SS. Perpet. & Felic. § VII  
 and VIII, & notas Holstenii &  
 Poffini.*]

Such are the miracles, which  
*Dr. Chapman* affirms to be in-  
 disputably proved by the Acts  
 of *Perpetua* and *Felicitas*; and  
 such the doctrines, which are  
 deduced from them: but tho’  
 neither the enthusiasm nor the  
 Popery, with which they ab-  
 bound, could check his Pro-  
 testant zeal from ascribing a  
 divine authority to them, there  
 is another circumstance still be-  
 longing to them, sufficient, one  
 would think, to have destroy-  
 ed their whole credit with an  
 Advocate of primitive and or-  
 thodox Antiquity: for the ori-  
 ginal Collector and publisher  
 of them appears to have been  
 one of those Heretics and dis-  
 ciples of *Montanus*, who gave  
 so much disturbance to the  
 Church in the early ages. This  
 is declared to be most certain  
 by the learned *Valesius*, tho’ a  
 Papist; and notwithstanding  
 the pains, which *Mr. Ruinart*,  
 the Editor of the *Martyrologies*,  
 takes to confute that im-  
 putation,

was providentially preserved and restored to life,  
 “ *Ruffinus* happening to meet with him many  
 “ years after, took occasion to ask him, whether  
 “ he had been sensible of any very sharp pains  
 “ under the agony of his torture; to which he  
 “ answered; that he had felt but very little,  
 “ and that a certain young person stood by him  
 “ all the time, wiping away the sweat, which

putation, the truth of it seems to be unquestionable. *Valsius* indeed, like a good Catholic, desires, that this circumstance may not detract, either from the authority of those Acts, or the veneration due to those holy Martyrs, and charges it as a piece of craft on the Montanists, that they made use of these visions, to support the credit of their own dreams. But when we reflect on the enthusiastic spirit of *Perpetua*, and with what a confidence she relates her wonderful visions and intercourse with the Lord; and when we find her character and revelations mentioned with praise by *Tertullian*, then a *Montanist*, it is highly probable, that *Perpetua* also herself was tainted with the same Heresy; and that *St. Austin* consequently, as an eminent Critic has observed, was drawn by some false tradition concerning these Martyrs, to honor them as true Saints, when in reality, they were Heretics. [Vid. Ittig. Dissert. de Hæres. Arch. Sect. 2. c. 13. § 28.]

From the same Acts we see

likewise, as I have said, how these primitive Martyrs went out to meet their cruel deaths with a firm persuasion, that they should feel no pain from them. *Felicitas* was eight months gone with child, when their execution drew near, and being afraid, as her companions also were, that, on the account of her pregnancy, she should be left by them alone in the way to their common hope; they all put up their joint prayers to heaven, three days before they suffered, upon which she fell presently into labor, and was delivered of a female child: but in the time of delivery, when she expressed a sharp sense of the pains which she felt; one of the Servants of the prison said to her; *if you lament so much now; what will you do, when you are thrown to the beasts, which you despised, when you refused to sacrifice?* to which she answered; *I now feel, what I suffer; but then, another will be in me, who will feel for me, because I am to suffer for him.* Vid. Act. *ibid.*

§ xv.

“ flowed

“ flowed from him, strengthening his mind, and  
 “ filling him with delight rather than torment,  
 “ during his continuance on the rack [q].”

Lastly, we must add to these several motives, the scandal of flying from persecution, and the infamy, which attended the lapsed Christians; so as to make life hardly supportable to those, who through fear of the rack and a cruel death, had been tempted to deny their faith, or guilty of any compliance with the idolatry of their persecutors. All which topics, when displayed with art and eloquence by their ablest Teachers, were sufficient to inflame the multitude to what pitch of zeal they pleased, so as to make them even provoke, and offer themselves forwardly to the most dreadful torments. “ Who  
 “ is there, says *Cyprian*, who would not strive  
 “ with all his might, to arrive at so great a  
 “ glory; to be a friend of God; enter into pre-  
 “ sent joy with Christ; and after earthly tor-  
 “ ments receive heavenly rewards? If it be glo-  
 “ rious to worldly soldiers, after conquering an  
 “ enemy, to return triumphant into their coun-  
 “ try, how much greater glory is it, after hav-  
 “ ing vanquished the Devil, to return triumphant  
 “ into paradise, whence *Adam* was expelled, and  
 “ there to erect trophies over that very enemy  
 “ who expelled him? to accompany God, when  
 “ he comes to take vengeance on his enemies;  
 “ to be placed at his side, when he sits in judge-  
 “ ment; to be made coheirs with Christ; equal  
 “ with Angels; and together with *the Apostles*,

[q] Socrat. Hist. l. 3. c. 19. it. Sozom. l. 5. c. xx.

“ *Prophets*,

“ *Prophets, and Patriarchs*, to rejoice in the possession of an heavenly Kingdom? These things you are to bear in your minds and memories. What persecution can get the better of such meditations? What torments be superior to them? [r]”

These principles and motives, I say, had such force, as sometimes to animate even bad men to endure a Martyrdom. For the Heretics also had their Martyrs, as all history informs us, as well as the Orthodox; who yet in their common sufferings and death, continued to testify their mutual averfion, *and to refuse all communion with each other* [s]. But by bad men, who became Martyrs, I do not mean such onely, as were called Heretics, for that name was often given even to the best; but the proud, the contentious, the drunken, and the lewd, among the orthodox Martyrs themselves: of all which kinds, there were many, as *St. Cyprian* complains, who, after they had nobly sustained the trial of Martyrdom, and escaped with life from the torments of their persecutors, yet by a petulant, factious, and pro-

[r] Exhortat. ad Martyr c. 12. This may serve as a specimen of that *true and noble and genuin cloquence* of *Cyprian*, which, as *Dr. Marshall*, the Translator of his works says, *resembles an irrt tuous torrent, which carries away with it every thing it meets; since he was capable of raising what passions he pleased, and of persuading us to do whatever he*

*had a mind to.* Pref. to his Translation, p. 17.

[s] Καὶ ἐπειδὴν οἱ ἐπὶ τὸ τῆς καλῆς ἀλήθειαν πίστεως μαρτυρίου κληθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τύχῃσι μετὰ τινῶν τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν Φρυγῶν α.ρ.ε. ὡς λεγομένων μαρτύρων, διαφέρουσαι τὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς, καὶ μὴ κοινωνήσαι αὐτοῖς τελειῖσθαι. Euseb. Hist. l. 5. c. 16. it. c. 18.

fligate behaviour, gave great scandal and disturbance to the discipline of the Church.

This is expressly declared by *Cyprian* in several of his letters: in one of which, addressed to the whole body of the Confessors, after he has signified his joy, “ that the greatest part of them “ were made the better by the honor of their “ confession, and preserved their glory, by a “ quiet and inoffensive carriage, yet he had been “ informed, he says, of others, who infected their “ society, and disgraced the laudable name of “ Confessor by their evil conversation: some of “ them being drunken and lascivious, some puffed up and swollen with pride: while others, “ as he had heard with the utmost grief, defiled “ their bodies, the temples of God, sanctified “ by their confession, with the promiscuous and “ infamous use of lewd women [t].” In one of his letters also to the Clergy, he says, “ I am “ grieved, when I hear how some of them run “ about, wickedly and insolently, spending their “ time in trifles, or in sowing discord; and defiling the members of Christ, and which have “ already confessed Christ, by the unlawful use “ of women [u].” And in another treatise, where he is touching the same subject, “ let no “ man wonder, says he, that some of the Con-

[t] Sed quosdam audio inficere numerum vestrum, & laudem præcipui nominis præva sua conversatione destruere, &c. Epist. 6.

[u] Doleo enim, quando audio quosdam improbe & info-

lenter discurrere, & ad ineptias vel discordias vacare: Christi membra & jam Christum confessa, per concubitus illicitos inquinare. Ep. 5. it. 7, 22, 24.

“ confessors commit such horrible and grievous  
 “ sins ; for confession does not secure them from  
 “ the snares and temptations of the Devil——  
 “ otherwise we should never after see any frauds,  
 “ and whoredoms and adulteries in Confessors,  
 “ which I now groan and grieve to see in some  
 “ of them [x].”

It

[x] De Unitat. Eccles. vers. fin. p. 185.

N. B. The name of Martyr was given, as I have said above, to all those, who had suffered tortures for the public profession of their faith before the Magistrates. And the title of Confessor to those, who, after making the same profession, had been committed only to prison, in order to be reserved to the same tortures, or punished with death. Whence *Tertullian* calls them, *Martyres designati*, or Martyrs elect. [ad Martyr. 1. vid. Cypr. Ep. 8. & Not. Rigalt. 8.]

But with regard to this case of Martyrdom, I cannot forbear observing a strange contrariety both of principle and practice in these primitive ages, between the times of *Polycarp* and *Tertullian*. The Martyrdom of *Polycarp*, in the narrative of it, written by the Church of *Smyrna*, is twice called an *Evangelical Martyrdom*, or performed according to the rules of the Gospel and

in imitation of Christ : [§ 1, 19.] who did not offer himself forwardly to his enemies, but withdrew himself from them, and waited till he was betrayed into their hands : and commanded his Apostles also, *when they were persecuted in one City, to flee into another.* [Mat. x. 29.] When the persecution therefore grew hot in *Smyrna*, *Polycarp* withdrew himself from that City into the neighbouring Villages ; shifting his quarters still from Village to Village, to avoid his pursuers, till he was betrayed by one of his own domestics ; [§ 9.] and so fulfilled both the example and precept of our Lord. And upon the same authority also *Clemens of Alexandria* declares it to be a sin, and a kind of self-murder ; not to flee on such an occasion from the malice of their persecutors [Stro. l. 4. c. x.]

*Tertullian*, on the contrary, about half a century after, wrote a book against *all flight in persecution*, in which he labors to prove, “ that our Saviour’s

It is not my design, by what is said here on the subject of Martyrdom, to detract in any manner from

“ your’s precept was tempo-  
 “ rary, and peculiar to the  
 “ circumstances of those times,  
 “ and addressed wholly to the  
 “ Apostles; who yet after-  
 “ wards, when those circum-  
 “ stances were changed, both  
 “ practised and prescribed a  
 “ different conduct. That it  
 “ was base in private Christi-  
 “ ans to fly, and much more  
 “ in Bishops and Pastors.—  
 “ That a good Shepherd will  
 “ lay down his life for his  
 “ flock, but a bad one fly at  
 “ the sight of the wolf, and  
 “ leave his sheep to be torn in  
 “ pieces”—[p. 97, 696] He  
 inveighs also against another  
 practice, which seems to have  
 been common among the  
 Christians of those days, of  
*ransoming themselves from their*  
*persecutors by a sum of money;*  
 and declares it to be “ an at-  
 “ front to God to redeem those  
 “ by money, whom Christ  
 “ had redeemed with his  
 “ blood: and to make secret  
 “ bargains with an infor-  
 “ mer or soldier, or knavish  
 “ President, for the life of a  
 “ Christian (whom Christ had  
 “ purchased and set free in  
 “ the face of the world) as if  
 “ it were for a thief. [p. 697,  
 “ 698] He exhorts them  
 “ therefore to commit them-  
 “ selves intirely to God: who  
 “ could either throw them in-

“ to the midst of their ene-  
 “ mies, while they were fly-  
 “ ing, or cover them from  
 “ danger even in the midst of  
 “ the people: and he shews  
 “ by an eminent example,  
 “ that neither flight nor mo-  
 “ ney was effectual to procure  
 “ their safety. *Rutilius*, says  
 “ he, a most holy Martyr,  
 “ after he had oft escaped by  
 “ flying from place to place,  
 “ and redeemed himself, as he  
 “ imagined, from all danger  
 “ by his money, yet in all this  
 “ security, was unexpectedly  
 “ apprehended, carried before  
 “ the President, and put to a  
 “ severe torture, for the cor-  
 “ rection, I believe, of his  
 “ flight: and being commit-  
 “ ted at last to the flames, he  
 “ then ascribed the Martyr-  
 “ dom, which he had been  
 “ avoiding, to the mercy of  
 “ God: and what else did the  
 “ Lord intend to teach us by  
 “ this example, but that we  
 “ ought not to fly from perfe-  
 “ cution?” [p. 93.]

These were the principles,  
 which generally prevailed in  
 the Church from the time of  
*Tertullian*: so that when two  
 of the most eminent Bishops,  
 who succeeded him, *St. Cypri-  
 an of Carthage*, and *St. Dio-  
 nyfius of Alexandria* found it  
 expedient in a time of perfe-  
 cution, to preserve their lives  
 by



from the real merit and just praise of those primitive Martyrs, who with an invincible constancy, sustained the cause of Christ, at the expence of their lives. It is reasonable to believe, that, generally speaking, they were the best sort of Christians, distinguished by their exemplary zeal and piety; and the chief ornaments of the Church in their several ages; yet it is certain, that they were subject still to the same passions, prejudices, and errors, which were common to all the other pious Christians of the same age. My sole view therefore is, to expose the vanity of those extravagant honors, and that idolatrous worship, which are paid to them indiscriminately by the Church of *Rome*; and to shew especially, that the circumstance of their Martyrdom, while it gives the strongest proof of the sincerity of their faith and trust in the promises of the Gospel, adds nothing to the character of their knowledge or their sagacity; nor consequently, any weight to their testimony, in preference to that of any other just and devout Christian whatsoever [y].

§ 4.

by retiring from their several Sees, they had no other excuse to recur to, but the plea of a divine revelation. and the express command of God for it: the precept and example of our Saviour; the practice of his Apostles; and *the Evangelical Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*, being no longer of any force, against the Enthusiastic

zeal, and visionary temper of that age. Which zeal however, because it happened to be ridiculed by an infidel writer, is strenuously defended by Dr. *Chapman*, in the very words and reasoning of *Tertullian*. See *Miscell. Tracts*, p. 157.

[y] *Savonarola*, a most pious and learned Monk of the fifteenth

§ 4. It has been frequently objected by my Antagonists, that to reject the unanimous testimony of the Fathers, in their reports of the primi-

fifteenth century, preached with great force and eloquence in *Italy*, against the corruptions of the Court of *Rome*, and the flagitious life and practices of *Pope Alexander* the sixth, who not being able to silence him, condemned him to be hanged: of whom *Dr. Jer. Taylor* tells the following story.

“ Two *Franciscan Friars*,  
 “ says he, offered themselves  
 “ to the fire, to prove *Savonarola*  
 “ to be an Heretic. But  
 “ a certain *Jacobin* offered  
 “ himself to the fire, to prove,  
 “ that *Savonarola* had true re-  
 “ velations, and was no He-  
 “ retic. In the mean time,  
 “ *Savonarola* preached, but  
 “ made no such confident of-  
 “ fer, nor durst he venture  
 “ at that new kind of *fire or-*  
 “ *deal*; and put the case, that  
 “ all four had passed through  
 “ the fire, and died in the  
 “ flames, what would that  
 “ have proved? Had he  
 “ been a Heretic, or no He-  
 “ retic, the more or the less,  
 “ for the confidence of these  
 “ zealous Idiots? If we mark  
 “ it, a great many arguments  
 “ on which many Sects rely,  
 “ are no better probation  
 “ than this. *Lib. of Proph.*  
 “ *Ep. Dedic. p. 39.*

There is another story like-  
 wise, somewhat applicable to  
 the present purpose, which  
 I have elsewhere made use  
 of, as it is told by *Sir Tho.*  
*Roe*; “ that the house and  
 “ Church of the Jesuits in *In-*  
 “ *dia* happening to be burnt,  
 “ the Crucifix was found un-  
 “ touched, which was given  
 “ out as a miracle. Upon  
 “ this, the King sent for the  
 “ Jesuit, and having exami-  
 “ ned him about the fact,  
 “ made this proposal to him,  
 “ that if he would cast the  
 “ Crucifix into the fire before  
 “ his face, and it did not burn,  
 “ he would turn *Christian*.  
 “ The Jesuit would not ven-  
 “ ture the credit of his religi-  
 “ on on so hazardous an ex-  
 “ periment, yet offered to  
 “ cast himself into the fire as a  
 “ proof of his own faith,  
 “ which the King would not  
 “ allow.” For he had sense  
 enough to know the difference,  
 between the effect of a mira-  
 cle and a martyrdom; that  
 the last could prove nothing  
 but the Jesuit’s sincerity, in  
 what he professed to believe;  
 whereas the first would yield  
 the strongest confirmation to  
 the truth also of what he  
 taught. [*See Lett. from Rome.*  
*Prefat. Disc. p. 100.*]

tive

tive miracles, will destroy the faith and credit of all history.

This was the constant cant of all the zealots, even of the Heathen world, whenever any of their established superstitions were attacked by men of sense. “ If these things, they cried, ap-  
 “ proved by the wisdom of our ancestors, and  
 “ confirmed by the consent of ages, can be shewn  
 “ at last to be false, we must burn all our annals,  
 “ and believe nothing at all [z].” And the same outcry, as *Eusebius* tells us, was made by them also against the Christians, when the Gospel first began to spread itself among them: “ that to reject a belief and worship universally  
 “ established by Kings, Legislators, and Philoso-  
 “ phers of all nations, whether *Greeks*, or *Barba-*  
 “ *rians*, was an impious apostacy from the rites  
 “ of their ancestors, and a contradiction to the  
 “ sense and judgment of mankind [a].” The Christians on the other hand constantly derided this plea, and declared, “ that to follow the in-  
 “ ventions of their ancestors without any judg-  
 “ ment or examination, and to be led perpetual-  
 “ ly by others, like brute animals, was to pre-  
 “ clude themselves from that search of wisdom  
 “ and knowledge, which is natural to man [b].” Yet when it came at last to their own turn, to find

[z] *Negemus omnia ; com-  
 buramus annales ; ficta hæc  
 esse dicamus, &c. Cic. de Di-  
 vin. l. 1. 17.*

[a] *Euseb. Præpar. Evan-  
 gel. l. 1. c. 2.*

[b] *Quare cum sapere, id*

*est, sapientiam quærere, om-  
 nibus sit innatum ; sapientiam  
 sibi adimunt, qui sine ullo ju-  
 dicio inventa majorum prob-  
 bant, & ab aliis, pecudum  
 more, ducuntur. &c. Lactant,  
 Divin. Instit. l. 2. c. 8.*

the authority of ages on their side, they took up the same plea, which they had before rejected; and urge it at this day, as the principal objection to Protestantism; “that it is a *meer novelty*, “which had no existence in the world before *Luther*, contradictory to the practice of all the “primitive Saints and Martyrs of the Catholic “Church, and to the unanimous consent of fifteen centuries.”

If this objection therefore had ever been found to have any force in it, the ancient Christians could never have over-ruled the impostures of Paganism; nor our Reformers, the superstitions of Popery. But in truth, when it comes to be seriously considered, it will appear to have no sense at all in it: and if the Doctors *Chapman* and *Berriman*, who now revive and so zealously urge it, were called upon to explain themselves upon it, they would find it difficult, I dare say, to tell us what they mean by it. If they mean, that a contempt of those miracles, which they would persuade us to believe, would necessarily derive the same contempt on History itself; all experience has shewn the contrary: for tho’ there have been doubters and contemners of such miracles in all ages, yet history has maintained its ground through them all. During the three first centuries, the whole world in a manner not only doubted, but rejected the miracles of the primitive Christians: yet history was written and read with the same pleasure and profit as before, and applied by the unbelievers themselves to the confirmation of their very doubts. Our commerce with  
the

the times past, as they are represented to us in history, is of much the same kind, with our manner of dealing with the present. We find many men in the world, whose fidelity we have just ground to suspect; yet a number of others, whom we can readily trust, sufficient to support that credit and mutual confidence, by which the business of life is carried on: just so in ancient History; we find many things, of which we have cause to doubt; many, which we are obliged to reject; yet its use still subsists and from real and indisputable facts, supplies sufficient matter both of instruction and entertainment to every judicious reader.

If our Doctors therefore mean any thing by the objection, which we are examining, it must be this; that the same principle which induces us to suspect the primitive miracles, and particularly those of *Simeon Stylites*, when so forcibly and credibly attested, must induce us also, if we are consistent with ourselves, to suspect every thing that is delivered to us from ancient history. But they widely mistake the matter; and do not at all reflect on what I have intimated above, that the history of miracles is of a kind totally different from that of common events, the one, to be suspected always of course, without the strongest evidence to confirm it; the other, to be admitted of course, without as strong reason to suspect it. Ordinary facts, related by a credible person, furnish no cause of doubting from the nature of the thing: but if they be strange and extraordinary; doubts naturally arise, and in proportion as they approach

approach towards the marvellous, those doubts still increase and grow stronger : for mere honesty will not warrant them ; we require other qualities in the Historian ; a degree of knowledge, experience, and discernment, sufficient to judge of the whole nature and circumstances of the case : and if any of these be wanting, we necessarily suspend our belief. A weak man indeed, if honest, may attest common events, as credibly as the wisest ; yet can hardly make any report, that is credible, of such as are miraculous ; because a suspicion will always occur, that his weakness, and imperfect knowledge of the extent of human art, had been imposed upon by the craft of cunning Jugglers. On the other hand, should a man of known abilities and judgment relate to us things miraculous, or undertake to perform them himself, the very notion of his skill, without an assurance also of his integrity, would excite only the greater suspicion of him [c] ; especially, if he had any interest to promote, or any favorite opinion to recommend, by the authority of such works : because a pretension to miracles, has, in all ages and nations, been found the most effectual instrument of Impostors, towards deluding the multitude, and gaining their ends upon them.

There is not a single Historian of Antiquity, whether Greek or Latin, who had not recorded *Oracles, prodigies, prophecies and miracles*, on the occasion of some memorable events, or revolutions of States and Kingdoms. Many of these are

[c] Quo quis versutior & peffior, detracta opinione pro-  
callidior est, hoc invifior & fuf- bitatis. Cic. Off. 2. IX.

attested

attested in the gravest manner and by the gravest writers, and were firmly believed at the time by the populace: yet it is certain, that there is not one of them, which we can reasonably take to be genuine: not one, but what was either wholly forged, or from the opportunity of some unusual circumstance attending it, improved and aggravated into something supernatural. This was undoubtedly the case of all the Heathen miracles; and though it may hurt in some measure the general credit of miracles, yet, as experience has plainly shewn, it has not in any degree affected the credit of common history. For example, *Dionysius of Hallicarnassus* is esteemed one of the most faithful and accurate Historians of Antiquity: we take his word without scruple, and preferably even to the *Roman* writers, in his account of the civil affairs of *Rome*; yet we laugh at the fictitious miracles, which he has interspersed in it. “ In the war with the *Latins*, he tells us, “ how the Gods, *Castor and Pollux*, appeared visibly on white horses, and fought on the side “ of *the Romans*, who by their assistance gained “ a complete victory; and that for a perpetual “ memorial of it, a Temple was publicly erected, “ and a yearly festival, sacrifice and procession “ instituted to the honor of those Deities [*d*].”

Now

[*d*] Vid. *Dionys. Hal. Antiqu.* l. 6. p. 337 Edit. Oxon.

*N. B.* A late Historian of our own Kingdom, in his description of the battel of *Worcester*, between *Charles II.* and

*Oliver Cromwell*, has delivered a story to posterity, concerning a certain contract made in form, between *Oliver and the Devil*, in a personal conference. Which story was so strongly

Now though no body at this day, believes a tittle of the miracle, yet the faith of History is not hurt by it. We admit the battle and the victory; and take the miraculous part to be, what it certainly was, the fiction of the Commanders or persons interested; contrived for the sake of some private, as well as public benefit, which the nature of the case will easily suggest.

Thus in the narrative also, abovementioned, of the Martyrdom of St. *Polycarp*, the point of his history is, that he was condemned to death at *Smyrna*, of which he was Bishop, and there actually burnt at the Stake, for his profession of the Christian faith. We have no doubt therefore of his Martyrdom, yet may reasonably pause at the miracles, which are said to have attended it. The voice pretended to come from heaven, was heard only by a few; and that in a time of such hurry, in which nothing could be heard distinctly. If such a voice therefore had been uttered by any one of the croud, as it was hardly possible to discern whence it came, so those whose zeal and imagination were particularly affected by so moving an occasion, might easily mistake it for miraculous. The flame also is said to have made an arch round his body, and could

strongly attested, that he thought himself obliged to insert it, as I heard him say, by the advice of some learned Friends. But the faith of history would rest on a very slippery bottom, could it be shaken in any degree by our contempt of so silly a tale: which tho'

no man of a sound judgement can think credible, yet none will conceive the least doubt on that account, about the reality of the battle, or the other circumstances of it, as they are related by the same Historian. See *Echard's Hist. of Engl.*

not



not burn it: an appearance, which might easily happen from the common effects of the wind, or something at least so like it as to afford matter enough to a superstitious fancy, to supply the rest. But the circumstance of a *Dove flying out of his body, when pierced by a sword*, is beyond all belief: or if a *Dove* was really seen to fly out of the wood, which was prepared to consume him, it might have been conveyed thither, probably by design, in order to be let loose at a certain moment: as in the funerals of the *Roman* Emperors, an Eagle was always observed to fly out of the funeral pile, as soon as it began to blaze, which was supposed to convey the soul of the deceased into heaven: of which a solemn deposition was constantly made upon oath, in order to the Deification of those Emperors [e].

But the case of witchcraft affords the most effectual proof of the truth of what I am advancing. There is not in all history any one miraculous fact, so authentically attested as the existence of witches. All Christian nations whatsoever have consented in the belief of them, and provided capital laws against them: in consequence of which, many hundreds of both Sexes have suffered a cruel death. In our own coun-

[e] Ἄετις δὲ τις ἐξ αὐτῆς ἀφελθεῖς ἀνιήλατο, ὡς καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῆ εἰς τὸν ἔρανον ἀναφέρειν. Dio. de Fun. August. l. 56. p. 598.

Γενομένη δὲ τέτυα, αἰεὶς τις ἐξ αὐτῆς ἀνιήλατο. καὶ ὁ μὲν Περσινὰξ ἔτυχῃ θανατίσθη. Id. de Fun. Pertinac. l. 74. p. 842.

Καὶ τί γὰρ τῆς ἀποθήσκειας παρ' ὑμῖν αὐτοκράτορας ἀεὶ ἀπαθανάτιζεσθαι ἀξιῶντες, καὶ ἑμῶν τινα προάγει ἑωρακέναι· ἐκ τῆς πυρῆς ἀνερχόμενον εἰς τὸν ἔρανον τὸν κατακαέειναι Καίσαρα. Just. Martyr. Apol. 1. p. 32, Ed. Thirlb.

try,

try, great numbers have been condemned to die, at different times, after a public trial, by the most eminent Judges of the Kingdom: and in some places, for a perpetual memorial of their diabolical practices, anniversary sermons and solemnities have been piously instituted, and subsist at this day, to propagate a detestation of them to all posterity [f]. Now to deny the reality of

Facts

[f] In the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the Court seems to have been greatly alarmed by an imaginary increase of this Infernal Art, and and the horrible mischiefs, which it was then actually perpetrating in the Kingdom; and which were loudly proclaimed from the Pulpit, by many of the celebrated Preachers. Among the rest, it is surprizing to perceive, to what a length of superstition and credulity the great Bishop *Jewel* was carried on this occasion, by his prejudices and prepossession in favor of this popular delusion: a Prelate as venerable for his piety, learning and judgement, as any, in the earliest ages of the Church: who, in a Sermon preached before the Queen, taking occasion to touch upon this subject, addresses himself to Her in the following words; "It may please your Grace to understand, that this kind of People, I mean witches and forcerers, within these few years are marvelously increased within your Grace's

realm. These eyes have seen most evident and manifest marks of their wickedness. Your Grace's Subjects pine away, even unto death; their colour fadeth; their flesh rotteth; their speech is benumbed; their senses bereft. Wherefore your poor Subject's humble petition to your Highness is, that the laws touching such Malefactors may be put in due execution. For the shoal of them is great, their doings horrible, their malice intolerable, their examples most miserable: and I pray God, they never practise farther than upon the subject" Upon which passage Mr. *Strype* remarks, that the remonstrances of this kind made by this Bishop and others gave occasion, to bring a Bill into the next Parliament, for making *Inchantments and Witchcraft Felony*. See annals of the Reformat. vol. 1. p. 8.

When *Tertullian*, in proof of the miraculous powers, which were claimed by the Christians

of

Facts so solemnly attested, and so universally believed, seems to give the lie to the sense and experience of all Christendom; to the wisest and best of every nation, to public monuments subsisting to our own times: yet the incredibility of the thing prevailed, and was found at last too strong for all this force of human testimony: so that the belief of witches is now utterly extinct, and quietly buried, without involving history in its ruin, or leaving even the least disgrace or censure upon it.

There is another instance also, within our own times, more directly applicable to our present

of that age, challenges the Heathen Magistrates, to come and see how easily the Christian *Exorcists* could drive Devils out of the bodies of men, he might be assured probably at the same time, that the notice of his challenge would never reach those Magistrates, or at least, that they would never pay any regard to it: yet pluming himself, as it were, upon it, he adds; *and what can be more manifest than this operation, what more convincing than this proof?* [Apolog. c. 23] But I would ask the warmest advocates of the primitive miracles, whether this *convincing proof of Tertullian*, or the express testimony of any other Father, or any number of them, can in any manner be compared with that strength of evidence, which, through all ages, affirmed the existence of witches,

and their direful practices, by the most solemn acts of Kings and Parliaments and whole nations; who, after many public trials and the strictest examinations, have constantly attested the reality of the facts and crimes, with which they were charged, of inflicting horrible pains and diseases, and destroying the lives of many innocent People, by the force of their charms and forceries. See the printed trials of *nineteen witches*, ten of whom were condemned together at *Lancaster*, 1612, where the Judge, in passing sentence of death upon them, speaks of *many cruel and barbarous murders*, of which they had been found guilty, besides other crimes, of tormenting the bodies and destroying the cattle of their neighbours.

purpose.

purpose. I mean the pretended miracles of the late *Abbé de Paris*, which made such a noise in *France* a few years ago, and are still believed by a great part of that Kingdom, or by all, perhaps, who believe any other miracles of that Church. This *Abbé* was a zealous *Jansenist*, and warm opposer of that Bull or Constitution of *Pope Clemens XI.* called *Unigenitus*, by which all the doctrines of his sect were expressly condemned. He died in 1725, and was buried in the Church-yard of *St. Medard* in *Paris*; whither the great reputation of his sanctity drew many People to visit his tomb, and pay their devotions to him, as to a Saint: and this concurrence gradually increasing, made him soon be considered as a subject, proper to revive the credit of that party, now utterly depressed by the power of the *Jesuits*, supported by the authority of the Court. Within six years therefore after his death, the confident report of miracles, wrought at his tomb, began to alarm not only the City of *Paris*, but the whole nation: while infinite crowds were perpetually pressing to the place, and proclaiming the benefits received from the Saint: nor could all the power of the Government give a check to the rapidity of this superstition, till by inclosing the tomb within a wall, they effectually obstructed all access to it [g].

[g] This step gave occasion to the following Epigram, which was fixed upon the in-

De par le Roy. Défense a Dieu  
De faire miracles, en ce lieu.

This

This expedient, though it put an end to the external worship of the Saint, could not shake the credit of his miracles: distinct accounts of which were carefully drawn up, and dispersed among the people, with an attestation of them much more strong and authentic, than what has ever been alledged for the miracles of any other age, since the days of the Apostles. *Monf. de Montgeron*, a person of eminent rank in *Paris* [*b*], published a select number of them, in a pompous volume in quarto, which he dedicated to the King, and presented to him in Person; being induced to the publication of them, as he declares, by the incontestable evidence of the facts; by which he himself, from a libertin and professed Deist, became a sincere convert to the Christian faith. But besides the collection of *Mr. de Montgeron*, several other collections were made, containing in the whole above an hundred miracles, which are all published together in three volumes, with their original vouchers, certificates, affidavits, and letters annexed to each of them at full length.

The greatest part of these miracles were employed in the cures of desperate diseases, in their last and deplored state, and after all human remedies had for many years been tried upon them in vain: but the Patients no sooner addressed themselves to the tomb of this Saint, than the most inveterate cases, and complications of Palsies, Apoplexies and Dropsies, and even blind-

[*b*] Conseiller au Parlement de Paris.

ness and lameness, &c. were either instantly cured, or greatly relieved, and within a short time after wholly removed. All which cures were performed in the Church-yard of St. *Médard*, in the open view of the people, and with so general a belief of the finger of God in them, that many *Infidels*, *Debauchés*, *Schismatics*, and *Heretics* are said to have been converted by them to the Catholic faith. And the reality of them is attested by some of the principal Physicians and Surgeons in *France*, as well as the Clergy of the first dignity; several of whom were eye-witnesses of them, who presented a verbal proces of each to the Archbishops, with a petition signed by above twenty *Curés* or Rectors of the Parishes of *Paris*, desiring that they might be authentically registred, and solemnly published to the people, as true miracles.

I have seen an answer to these miracles by a Protestant writer, Mr. *Des Voeux*; who does not deny the facts, but the miraculous nature of them onely, which by many reasons he endeavours to render suspected. Yet another writer on the same side, declares, that all his reasons are too weak, to do them any hurt; and that there is no other way of shaking their credit, than by shewing them to be the works of the Devil. Which he undertakes to prove, in three letters to the said Mr. *Des Voeux*, to be the genuine character of them.

Let our Declaimers then on the authority of the Fathers, and the faith of history, produce if they can, any evidence of the primitive miracles, half so  
strong,

strong, as what is alledged for the miracles of the *Abbe de Paris*: or if they cannot do it, let them give us a reason, why we must receive the one, and reject the other: or if they fail likewise in this, let them be so ingenuous at last to confess, that we have no other part left, but either to admit them all, or reject them all; for otherwise, they can never be thought to act consistently. And if, from their avowed principles and blind deference to authority, we may guess at their real sentiments in the present case, they will be as little scrupulous about the modern, as the ancient miracles of the Church, but patiently admit them all; as being more agreeable to that rule, which is prescribed by their primitive Guides; “ that  
 “ the true disciples of Christ, *have nothing more*  
 “ *to do with curiosity or inquiry, but when they are*  
 “ *once become believers, their sole business is to be-*  
 “ *lieve on [i].”*

Again, The celebrated Historian, Mr. *de Vertot*, whose *revolutions of Rome, of Sweden and of Portugal*, afford so much entertainment to the public, has written a defence also of a certain miracle, which is imagined to do some honor to the Church and Kingdom of *France*: I mean the miracle of *the sacred vial, or sainte Ampouille*, as it is called, with which their Kings are anointed at their coronation [k]. This

[i] Nobis curiositate non opus est post Jesum Christum, nec inquisitione post Evangelium, cum credimus, nihil desideramus ultra credere. Tertull. de Præscript. Hæret. § 8.

[k] The *Abbe de Vertot* be-

gins his Dissertation on this vial, in the following manner.

“ There has scarce ever been  
 “ a more sensible and illustri-  
 “ ous mark of the visible pro-  
 “ tection of God, over the  
 “ Monarchy of *France*, than

This Vial is said to have been brought from heaven by a Dove, for the baptismal unction of *Clovis, the first Christian King of France*, and dropped into the hands of *St. Remigius*, then Bishop of *Rheims*, about the end of the fifth century: where it has been preserved ever since for the purpose of anointing all succeeding Kings [l]. And its divine descent is said to be confirmed by this miracle; that *as soon as the coronation is over, the oil in the Vial begins to waste and vanish, but is constantly renewed of itself, for the service of each new Coronation* [m].

The *Abbe de Vertot* defends the truth of this miracle by the authority of several witnesses, who lived at the time of *Remigius* or near to it; and of many later writers also, who give testimony to the same, through each succeeding age. Yet a learned Professor at *Utrecht*, in a dissertation upon this subject, treats it as a mere for-

“ the celebrated miracle of the  
 “ sacred vial. On the day of  
 “ Great *Clovis's* baptism, hea-  
 “ ven declared itself in favor  
 “ of that Prince and his suc-  
 “ cessors, in a particular man-  
 “ ner; and by way of prefe-  
 “ rence to all the other Sove-  
 “ reigns of Christendom. So  
 “ that we may justly apply to

[l] ————— Idem primus & omnes

Post ipsum Reges, Francorum ad scepra vocati,  
 Quando coronantur, oleo sacrantur eodem.—ib. p. 674.

[m] ————— cujus prece rorem

Misit in ampullam cœlestem Rector Olympi,  
 Corpus ut hoc lavacro Regis deberet inungi,  
 Deficeretque liquor, ibi corpore Regis inuncto.

Niç. de Braia. de S. Remigio.

gery,

“ every one of our Kings, on  
 “ the day of their coronation,  
 “ the words of the Royal Pro-  
 “ phet.” *God, even thy God*  
*has anointed thee with the oil of*  
*gladness, above thy fellows.*  
 Dissertat. au sujet de la sainte  
 Ampouille.—Dans les Me-  
 moires de l'Acad. des Inscript.  
 & Bell. Lett. Tom. 2. p. 665.



gery, or pious fraud, contrived to support the dignity of the *Kings and Clergy of France*; and ranks it in the same class with the *Palladium of Troy*; the *Ancilia of old Rome*; and the *Cross*, which *Constantin pretended to see in the heavens*; and the rest of those political fictions, which we meet with in the histories of all ages [n].

Now what will our Advocates of the primitive miracles say to this? Will they tell us here, as they have often done on similar occasions, that by rejecting the authority of Mr. *Vertot* and his witnesses in this story, we destroy the faith of all his other stories, and can no longer take his word for any thing, which he has related of *Rome*, or *Sweden*, or *Portugal*? Let them talk at this silly rate, as long as they please, men of sense will always know, how to distinguish in such cases; how to extract all the instruction, which is offered to them, in one part of his writings; yet guard themselves from all the superstition, which is inculcated in the other. They know, that, on subjects of common history, a writer of sense and credit can hardly have any other motive of writing, but to please and instruct; and to illustrate the truth of facts, as far as he was able, by the perspicuity of his style, and the proper disposition of his materials: but on subjects of a miraculous kind, they know

[n] Vid. Everard Ottonis. *lius lapsa Ancilia cælo—veneratur. Constantinus, litteras ἐν τέρῳ ἰκὰ in cælo legisse fertur, &c. vid. ibid.*  
 J. C. Dissertat. &c. § iv. p. 365. De Unctione Remensi. Traject. ad Rhen. quarto 1723.  
 Trojani *Palladium*—Virgi-

likewise, how forcibly the prejudices of education, a superstitious turn of mind, the interests of a party, or the views of ambition are apt to operate on the defender of those miracles, which the government and religion of his country are engaged to support.

These few instances are sufficient to evince the reasonableness and prudence of suspending our assent to reports of a miraculous kind, though attested by an authority, which might safely be trusted, in the report of ordinary events. They teach us also how opinions, wholly absurd and contrary to nature, may gain credit and establishment, through ages and nations, which, by the force of education, custom, and example, have once contracted a superstitious and credulous turn; till being checked from time to time by the gradual improvements of science, and the successive efforts of reason, inquiring occasionally into the uncertain grounds, and reflecting on the certain mischiefs of them, they have fallen at last into such utter contempt, as to make us wonder, how it was possible for them, ever to have obtained any credit.

But whatever be the uncertainty of ancient History, there is one thing at least, which we may certainly learn from it; that human nature has always been the same; agitated by the same appetites and passions, and liable to the same excesses and abuses of them, in all ages and countries of the world; so that our experience of what passes in the present age, will be the best comment, on what is delivered to us concerning the past. To apply it then to the case before us :  
there

there is hardly a single fact, which I have charged upon the primitive times, but what we still see performed, in one or other of the Sects of Christians, of our own times. Among some we see *diseases cured; Devils cast out, and all the other miracles*, which are said to have been wrought in the primitive Church: among others, we see the boasted gifts of *Tertullian's and Cyprian's* days; *pretended revelations, prophetic visions, and divine impressions*: now all these modern pretensions we readily ascribe to their true cause; to the artifices and craft of a few, playing upon the credulity, the superstition, and the enthusiasm of the many, for the sake of some private interest: when we read therefore, that the same things were performed by the ancients, and for the same ends, of acquiring a superiority of credit, or wealth, or power, over their fellow creatures; how can we possibly hesitate, to impute them to the same cause, of fraud and imposture?

In a word; to submit our belief implicitly and indifferently, to the mere force of authority, in all cases, whether miraculous or natural, without any rule of discerning the credible from the incredible, might support indeed the faith, as it is called, but would certainly destroy the use of all history; by leading us into perpetual errors, and possessing our minds with invincible prejudices, and false notions both of men and things. But to distinguish between things, totally different from each other; between miracle and nature; the extraordinary acts of God, and the ordinary transactions of man; to suspend our belief of the one, while,

on the same testimony, we grant it freely to the other; and to require a different degree of evidence for each, in proportion to the different degrees of their credibility; is so far from hurting the credit of history, or of any thing else, which we ought to believe, that it is the onely way to purge history from its dross, and render it beneficial to us; and by a right use of our reason and judgement, to raise our minds above the low prejudices, and childish superstitions of the credulous vulgar.

There cannot be a stronger proof of the stupid credulity and superstition of those primitive ages, into which we have been inquiring, and of the facility of imposing any fictions upon them, which their leaders though fit to inculcate, than what is related by *St. Austin, from the report*, as he says, of *credible persons*, “that at *Ephesus*, “where *St. John*, the Apostle, lay buried, he “was not believed to be dead, but to be sleeping onely in the grave, which he had provided for himself, till our Lord’s second coming: in proof of which, they affirmed, that “the earth, under which he lay, was seen to “heave up and down perpetually, in conformity to the motion of his body, in the act of “breathing.” Which ridiculous conceit was grounded on those words spoken by our Lord of that Apostle, *if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* Whence the other disciples inferred, *that St. John should not die.* [Jo. xxi. 23.]

23.] Vid. Augustin, in loc. Oper. T. 3. p. 819, 820.

But we have another instance, in our own country, of a credulity not less extravagant, than what is just mentioned, in the case of a person believed to be possessed by the Devil; an account of which was printed and published with the following title. “*The Surey Demoniack. Or an account of Satan’s strange and dreadful Actings, in and about the body of Richard Dugdale, of Surey near Whalley in Lancashire. And how he was dispossessed by God’s blessing on the Fastings and Prayers of divers Ministers and people. The matter of fact attested by the oaths of several credible persons, before some of his Majesty’s Justices of the peace in the said County. London 1697.*”——These dreadful actings of *Satan* continued above a year: during which, there was a desperate struggle between him, and nine Ministers of the Gospel, who had undertaken to cast him out; and for that purpose, successively relieved each other in their daily combats with him: while *Satan*, as in the days of *Tertullian*, tried all his arts to baffle their attempts; insulting them with scoffs and raillery; puzzling them sometimes with Latin and Greek, and threatening them with the effects of his vengeance; till he was finally vanquished and put to flight by the persevering prayers and fastings of the said Ministers: the truth of which fact is more substantially attested, than any case of the same kind, in all the primitive ages. *Monf. de Fontenelle*, a writer justly celebrated for his

his admirable parts and learning, speaking of the origin and progress of these popular superstitions, says, " Give me but half a dozen persons, whom  
" I can persuade, that it is not the sun, which  
" makes our day light, and I should not despair  
" of drawing whole nations to embrace the same  
" belief. For how ridiculous soever the opinion  
" be, let it be supported onely for a certain  
" time, and the business is done: for when it  
" once becomes ancient, it is sufficiently prov-  
" ed."—*Hist. des oracles*, c. xi.

T H E

T H E

I N D E X.

*N. B.* Præf. stands for Præface, Intr. for Introductory Discourse, Post. for Postscript. N. for Note, the Numerals refer to the Præface and Introduction, and the Figures to the Work.

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|---|---|
| <p><b>Æ</b>NEAS GAZÆUS at-<br/>tests the pretended mi-<br/>racle of the orthodox,<br/>whose tongues were<br/>cut out by order of <i>Hunmeric</i><br/>the Vandal, and yet spoke<br/>afterwards. 185</p> <p><b>Æ</b>SCULAPIUS, supposed by<br/><i>Origen</i> to be a Dæmon, cun-<br/>ning in medicine. 77. In his<br/>temples all kinds of diseases<br/>were believed to be publicly<br/>cur'd. 78</p> <p><b>A</b>MBOSE St. relates a story of<br/><i>Satyrus</i>, who was saved from<br/>shipwreck by a piece of con-<br/>secrated bread. Intr. note [i]<br/>lviii.</p> <p><b>A</b>MMIANUS MARCELLINUS:<br/>his account of <i>Apollo Daph-<br/>neus's</i> temple being set on fire<br/>Note [u] 155</p> <p><b>A</b>NCIENT FATHERS extremely<br/>credulous, superstitious, pre-<br/>judiced, enthusiastic, and scrup-<br/>ling no art or means of pro-<br/>pagating their notions and</p> | <p>principles. Præf. xxv, xxxii.<br/>The chief instrument, by<br/>which they acquired and<br/>maintained their credit in the<br/>world, was an appeal to a di-<br/>vine and miraculous power, as<br/>residing among them. xxxii.<br/>Claim, among other miracu-<br/>lous gifts, these three, the<br/>gift of raising the dead; of<br/>speaking with tongues; and<br/>of understanding the holy<br/>scriptures. Præf. xxxiii.<br/>Whatever their character be,<br/>or whatever they have taught<br/>or practised, is a matter, that<br/>makes no part in the religion<br/>of a Protestant. Intr. xcvi.<br/>Not wanted either as guides or<br/>interpreters of the scriptures.<br/>xcvii. Their authority reject-<br/>ed by <i>Chillingworth</i>. xcvii.<br/>Their authority carried higher<br/>by the Church of <i>England</i>,<br/>than in any other Protestant<br/>country. Intr. cix. An high<br/>reverence for them entertained<br/>and propagated by a great<br/>part</p> |
|---|---|

# I N D E X

part of our clergy. cix. Christianity no more concerned in, or affected by, the characters of the ancient, than of the modern fathers of the church. cxi, cxii. The uses of them. cxii, cxiii. They, particularly *Chrysoftom, Jerom, and Augustin*, taught, practised, and recommended rites and doctrines, received by the Romish Church, but condemned and rejected by Protestant churches. Post. cxxviii. No where affirm, that either they themselves, or the Apostolic Fathers before them, were indued with any power of working Miracles 21. Their credulity and zeal imposed upon by the juggling of strolling wonder-workers. 25. Their absurd reasonings, both in religion and morality, the subject of several whole books, 56, 57. Their veracity questionable. 58. Their unanimity of no force to prove the truth of any opinion 65. Universally believed, that there were magicians both among the Gentiles and heretical Christians, who had each their particular Dæmons. 66. Believed the whole system of Pagan idolatry to have been managed by the craft and agency of Dæmons, 69. Supposed the art of magic to be carried on by the same powers, *Ibid.* Their notions of the power of Dæmons a proof of the grossest credulity, 70, 71. Ascribe the wonderful things, pretended to be performed by

magicians and jugglers, to the assistance of Dæmons. 85. Gave too hasty a credit to pretended possessions, or carried away by their zeal to assist in supporting the delusion, 82. Not one of them, according to *Le Clerc*, made any scruple of using the *hyperbolical stile, ibid.* Allow the power of casting out Devils, both to Jews and Gentiles, 84. Observations on their accounts of the casting out Devils 90 & *seqq.* Some of the principal of thom in the fourth century deliver themselves variously and inconsistently upon the subject of the pretended miracles of that age, 129. A total change of principles and practice between the Fathers of the fourth, and those of the preceding Ages, with regard to their behaviour to the Emperors, 156, 157. Those of the fourth century made no scruple to propagate fictions in favour of their religion, 157. The admirers of them insist upon their honesty, but allow them to have been very credulous, 186. Their credulity sufficient to affect their testimony, 187. Their character does not affect the authority of the books of the New Testament. 190

ANCIENT SAINTS and MARTYRS, tho' they performed no miracles when living, yet their bones and reliques are reported by their successors to have had that power. 25

ANGELS:



# I N D E X.

- ANGELS**: the notion of their mixing with the daughters of men maintained thro' the four first centuries, 50. This notion censured by St. *Chryso- stom* and *Theodoret*, 49, 50.
- ANICETUS**, Bp. of *Rome*, urges apostolical tradition in the dispute about the time of holding *Easter*, 61
- ANTONY**, St. the monk; his life by St. *Athanasius*, 146, 147
- APOLOGETICAL EPISTLE**: author of it disowns the name of *Protestant*, 190  
Calls himself a *Catholic Christian*, *ibid.*
- APOSTLES**, not perpetually directed by divine impulses and inspirations, but left on many occasions to the ordinary direction of their own natural faculties, *Præf.* xxv.
- APOSTOLIC FATHERS**, were those, who had lived and conversed with the Apostles, and were ordained to succede them in the government of the Church, 2. Were eminent for their zeal and piety, 3. In all their writings there is not the least claim or pretension to any extraordinary gifts or miraculous powers, *ibid.* The whole purpose of their writings is, to illustrate the excellence and purity of the Christian doctrine, *ibid.* They seem to disclaim all gifts of an extraordinary kind, 7. Have not the least reference in their writings to any standing power of working miracles, as exerted openly in the Church, for the conviction of unbelievers, 9. If they were favoured on some occasions with extraordinary illuminations, visions, or divine impressions, these were merely personal, 10. Their silence on the subject of miraculous gifts disposes us to conclude, that in their days those gifts were actually withdrawn, 19. Appear to have been men of great piety, integrity, and simplicity, 27
- APOSTOLICAL TRADITION**, as soon as religious disputes began, employed to silence an adversary, 61. Uncertainty of it. N. [s] 62, 63.
- ARNOBIUS** remarks, that the Gentiles made it their constant business to laugh at the faith of the Christians. *Intr.* N. [a] xcii. Affirms, that Christ used to appear in his time to holy men in his pure and simple form, 17. And that the mention of Christ's name put the evil spirit to flight, struck the heathen prophets dumb, and frustrated the acts of magicians, 18. Complaints, that the Christians of his time were unjustly treated by the Gentiles, 196
- ATHENAGORAS** allows extraordinary works to have been performed by Dæmons, 76. Affirms, that the prophets of the old Testament, while under the divine impulse, were transported out of their senses, 110
- ATHANASIUS**, St. one of the first, who introduced monks into

# I N D E X.

- into *Italy*, Intr. lii. His life of *St. Antony* the monk full of miracles of that saint, 146, 147. Affirms, that he had inserted nothing in that life, but what he either knew to be true, or what he had learnt from one, who long ministered to the saint, 146
- AUGUSTIN, St. files monks the servants of God, Intr. liii, liv. His account of a miracle performed by the reliques of the martyrs *Protasius* and *Gerwasius*, lvi. Asserts two miraculous cures performed by oil from the lamps of martyrs lxxiii. Knew many who were adorers of the sepulchres and pictures in churches, lxiv. Gives us a Latin translation of an acrostich ascribed to the *Erythraean Sibyl*, N. [n] 36. Owns, that some suspected all the prophecies relating to Christ, which passed under the name of the Sibyl, to have been forged by the Christians, N. [n] 36. His answer to the question, Why miracles were not performed in his time? seems to imply a cessation of them, 136. Maintains, that tho' miracles were frequently wrought, yet the fame of them was not so illustrious, as of those of the Apostles, 137. Stories of miracles related by him as from his own knowledge, as contemptible as any in the Popish legends, 138 & seq. His account of miracles wrought by the reliques of *St. Stephen*, 142, 143. Remarks on those miracles, 144, 145. His remark on the case of *Dinocrates* an infant, urged as a proof, that baptism was not absolutely necessary to an Admission into paradise, 205. n. Relates, that *St. John* was not believed to be dead, but only sleeping in his grave at *Ephesus*, 232.
- AUTOLYCUS, an eminent heathen, challenged *Theophilus* Bishop of *Antioch* to shew him one person, who had been raised from the dead, 73
- B.
- BABYLAS, St. his acts and miracles celebrated by *St. Chrysostom*, 152
- BAPTISM compared by *St. Cyprian* to the *Red Sea* in the time of *Pharaoh*, 17
- BARADATUS, a monk, who lived in a cage, 173
- BASIL, St. files monkery an angelical institution, Intr. li. His encomium upon the reliques of the martyrs, lv. His pretended revelation of *Julian* the Emperor's death, 155
- BEDE: his works filled with miracles, Int. lxxxiii.
- BERRIMAN, Dr. His defence of a miracle wrought in the middle of the fifth century, in confutation of the *Arian Heresy*, Intr. li, lxxxii. Makes use of several miracles related by *Pope Gregory* the Great, lxxx. Avows the miraculous powers of the Church to the end of the sixth century, lxxxii. Cites the Authority of *Gregory* the Great, and *Isidore* of *Seville*, as men of

# I N D E X.

of too much learning and judgment to be deceived, lxxxi, lxxxii. Defends a miracle near the end of the fifth century, and insists, that it cannot be discredited without shaking the whole faith of history, xc. Asserts the genuineness of the Creed said to be communicated to St. Gregory the wonder-worker by the *Virgin Mary* and St. *John*, 148, 149. Affirms St. Gregory to have been highly distinguished by the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, 149. No Protestant but he and Dr. *Chapman* ever attempted to defend, either the miracles, or the principles of the fifth century, 172. Defends a miracle of the fifth century, 182. His defence examined, 183, & seq.

**BINGHAM**, Mr. gives the form of the ordination of exorcists, N. [A] 85.

**BOOKS**: difficulty of publishing them, or making them known to the world, before the invention of printing, 197, 198, 199

## C

**CÆCILIUS**, in *Minutius Felix*, stiles the Christians of his times, who pretended to work miracles, a lurking nation, shunning the light, &c. 23

**CASTOR** and *Pollux* reported by *Dionysius of Halicarnassus* to have appeared and fought for the *Romans*, 219

**CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTED**: author of that

book maintains the pretended miracles of the Church of *Rome*, as a proof of it's being the spouse of Christ, Intr. xliii. Promises an history of the Christian miracles, xli.

**CAVE**, Dr. his character of *Evangrius*, Intr. lxxxii. Of *Damascene*, lxxxiii. Owns that *Sibylline* oracles were forged for the advancement of the Christian faith, 37. His remarks on *Iræneus's* assertion, that our Saviour lived to at least fifty years of age, 46. Censures St. Gregory of *Nyssa* as apt to be too credulous, 148. Disallows of the genuineness of the Creed said to be communicated to St. Gregory the wonder-worker by the *Virgin Mary* and St. *John* the evangelist, 148. Asserts the truth of the miracles wrought by St. *Babylas's* reliques, 154. Intimates his suspicion of what *Theodoret* has attested concerning *Simeon Stylites*, 172

**CELSUS** says, that the primitive Christians cared neither to receive, nor to give any reason of their faith, Intr. Note [a] xcii. Represents all the Christian wonder-workers as mere vagabonds and common cheats, 23. Charges the Christians with inserting many blasphemous passages in the Verses of the Sibyl. Note [n] 34

**CHAPMAN**, Dr. extends the succession of miracles to the fifth century, Intr. li, lxvii, lxviii. Stiles the third, fourth and fifth centuries *the flourishing times of miraculous powers*, li. De-

fends:

# I N D E X.

sends the miracles of the fifth century, and declares, some of these later instances were as well attested, as any in the earlier ages, Int. xc. Defends the superstitious acts of *Symeon Stylites*, Note [b] xcv. His Archidiaconal Charge, Post. cxiv. His account of a plot of the Jesuits, Ibid. & seq. His character of father *Hardouin*, cxv. Affirms, that the real necessities of learned authors in these times are extremely great, cxxiii. Declares, that the Church of *England* is far inferior to the *Romish*, in the provision for the emoluments for the clergy, cxxv. A defender of the primitive monks and their miracles, cxxvi. The business of his life and studies, has been to inculcate a superstitious veneration of the primitive Fathers, and an implicit faith in ecclesiastical history, cxxvi. Maintains, that the ancient Fathers and primitive Councils are the bulwark of Protestantism, cxxvii. Distinguishes between *St. Jerom's* dogmatical, and his agonistical style, Post, cxxxiv. Would persuade us, that *St. Jerom* is the particular object of the spleen of the freethinkers, cxxxviii. His defence of *Simeon Stylites*, 162, 163. His character of *Theodoret*, ibid. Borrows his notions and expressions, with relation to *Theodoret*, from *M. Tillamont*, 164. Contends, that there is no better evidence for the existence of *Simcon Stylites*,

than for his miracles, 163, 169. No Protestant but he and *Dr. Berriman* ever attempted to defend, either the miracles, or the principles of the fifth century, 171. His character of the miracles of the fifth century, 174. The opposite character the true one, 175. Defends and extols all the extravagancies of the antient monks, 176. Less candid than *Du Pin*, 182. Asserts that the primitive Martyrs were miraculously relieved from all sense of pain, 204. Lays great stress on the acts of *Perpetua* and *Felicitas*, as unquestionable vouchers of true miracles, n. [p] 204, 205, 206. Defends the zeal of *Tertullian*, and other Fathers, against all flight from persecution, 212. n.

**CHILLINGWORTH**, Mr. affirms the bible to be the religion of protestants. Intr. xcvii. Declares against the authority of the antient Fathers, xcvi. Induced to embrace the *Romish* faith by the popish pretensions to miracles, and the conformity between the doctrine of the Church of *Rome* and that of the antient Fathers, cx. Shews from the doctrine of the Millennium and others, that the catholic church, even in the earliest ages, was not infallible in matters of faith, 50  
**CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS**, their appeals to the heathens for the truth of the miracles, which they attest, examined, 193 & seq.

# I N D E X.

- CHRISTIAN CHURCH, as it continued to increase in power and credit, so its miraculous gifts are said to have increased in the same proportion, 20
- CHRISTIANITY founded on the history of our Saviour's doctrine and miracles, as declared and comprised within the canon of scripture, *Intr.* xciv. No more concerned in, or affected by, the character of the antient than of the modern Fathers of the church. *Intr.* cxi, cxii.
- CHRISTIANS of *Palestine* offer themselves to death, 201
- CHRYSOSTOM, St. styles monachery a way of life worthy of heaven, *Intr.* liii. Wrote three books against the *Oppugners of the monastic life*, *ibid.* n. [s]. Prefers a monastic life to that of kings, *ibid.* Harangues on the blessings reaped by the church from the reliques of martyrs, and the daily miracles wrought by them, lv. His character, lxxii. His account of the efficacy of the sign of the cross, *Intr.* lxii. Speaks of great numbers healed by oil from the lamps of martyrs, lxxiii. Denies, that miracles were performed in his time, 129 & *seq.* Maintains the contrary in other parts of his works, 136 & *seq.* His *books of consolation to Stagirus* recommended by Mr. *Whiston*, n. [o] 131. An abstract of those books, *ibid.* & *seq.* Resolved, when young, to retire from the world, 134, n. Lived two years as an hermit, *ibid.*
- Quits his solitude, not being able to endure the severity of that discipline, *ibid.* Writers against the *oppugners of the monkish life*, 136. Displays the miraculous cures performed by the use of consecrated oil, and the sign of the cross, 136. Celebrates the acts and miracles of the martyr *Babylas*, 152. His history of that saint, fabulous and romantic, 153
- CHURCH corrupted in faith and morals after the empire became Christian, 123
- CHURCH OF ROME; a project of a reconciliation with it, formed by the leading men of the church of *England*, in the reign of *Charles I.* *Intr.* cv.
- CICERO, his observation on the *Pythian* oracle applied to the miracles of the church of *Rome*, *Intr.* xliv. Mentions certain verses ascribed to the Sibyl, and forged by the partisans of *Julius Cæsar*, Note 36. His remark on prophetic madness, 98
- CLEMENS of *Rome*, his epistle to the *Corinthians*, Note [k] 7. Alleges the story of the *Phoenix* as a type and proof of the resurrection, 54
- CLEMENS of *Alexandria* affirms, that Christ preached but one year, and died at the age of thirty, 55. Affirms, that he had received his doctrine from several disciples of the very chief Apostle, *Gal.* Holds many absurd unground, and exploded doctrines, *ibid.* Deals largely in fabulous and apo-

# N D E X.

- cryptal books, *ibid.* Believes the power of magicians over dæmons, 68. Declares it to be a sin, not to flee from the malice of persecutors, Note [x] 211.
- CLEMENT XII. as honest and religious a pope as *Gregory the Great*, Intr. lxxxii.
- LE CLERC, his remark on the manner of interpreting the scripture used by the Fathers, 51
- COLLIER, Mr. his ecclesiastical history shews, that miracles of the grossest kind were of no hard digestion with him, 172. Declares the miracles of *Simon Stylites* to be wholly fabulous, *ibid.*
- CONFESSOR, that title given to those, who were designed to be tortured, or put to death, Note [x] 211.
- CONSECRATED OIL held in great veneration in the primitive times, as a universal remedy in all diseases, Intr. lxiii.
- CRANMER and *Ridley* gravelled in their disputes from the Fathers, Intr. ciii.
- CREDULITY, primitive Christians perpetually reproached for it by their enemies. Intr. n. [a] xcii.
- CROIUS, JOHN, charges *Justin Martyr* with forging a passage in *Esdra*, 42
- CROMWELL, lord, expostulates with bishop *Fisher* upon the latter's giving credit to the *holly maid of Kent*, 117
- CROSS, *Justin Martyr's* discourse on the mystery of it, 27. The sign of it affirmed by *St. Chrysofom*, to have performed miraculous cures, 136
- CYPRIAN St. declares, that the mixing water with wine in the Eucharist was enjoined him by a divine revelation, Intr. lvii. His account of the state of the church just before the *Decian* persecution. lxxxviii. Asserts, that even boys among the Christians of his time were filled with the Holy Ghost, 16. And that devils were lashed, and burned, and tortured by the Christian exorcists, 17. His notion of the power of dæmons, 69. Affirms, that visions and extasies were frequent in his time, 96. Fond of power and episcopal authority, 100. Rather an inventor, than the believer of stories of visions, *ibid.* Appeals in doubtful points to heavenly visions and divine revelations, *ibid.* & *seq.* Uses visions, whenever he exerts the episcopal authority without the previous consent of his clergy and people, 104. Flies from his church in time of persecution, *ibid.* Pleads a special revelation commanding his flight, 105, 212. This plea confuted by himself, 105. Wonderful stories related by him, 112, & *seq.* Gives the title of *martyrs* to all, who had endured torments for the faith of Christ, tho' without suffering death, n. [I] 202. His account of the state of the lapsed Christians, N. [m] 203. His exhortation to martyrdom, 208. A specimen of his eloquence, 208, 209.

# I N D E X.

209. Character of his eloquence, by Dr. *Marshall*, N. [r] 209. Complains, that many persons, who had suffered persecution for Christianity, gave afterwards great offence to the church, 209, 210, 211.

## D

**DÆMONIACS**: the cure of them, pretended to in the primitive church, examined, 79, & *seq.* Believed by the ancient Fathers to have been actually possessed by the devils and evil spirits, 80. Supposed by learned men to have been affected by the epilepsy, 80. An account of them by *Justin Martyr*, *St. Chrysostom*, and *St. Gregory of Nyssa*, 81. The cure of them common both to *Jews* and *Heathens*, as well as to *Christians*, 85, 86. Canons of the primitive church relating to them, 92. Many of them not cured by the ancient exorcists, *ibid.* Perfectly cured by our Saviour and his Apostles, 93. Great numbers of them in the primitive church, *ibid.* Committed to the care of exorcists, *ibid.* The power of exorcising them put under the direction of the clergy by the council of *Laodicea*, 94. Account of *Richard Dugdale* the pretended *Dæmoniac* of *Surey* in *Lancashire*, 230 n.

**DAMASCENE**, **JOHN**, monstrously credulous, and abounds with lies, *Intr.* lxxxiii.

**DIFFERENCE** of Opinion: Causes of it, *Intr.* xxxix

**DIONYSIUS**, bishop of *Alexandria*, pretends a vision from God commanding him to retire in the time of persecution, 105. Another vision injoining him to read heretical books, 106. Pleads a divine revelation for flying from his see, on account of persecution, 212 n.

**DIONYSIUS** of *Halicarnassus*, one of the most faithful and accurate historians of antiquity, 219. Intersperces fictitious miracles in his history, *ibid.*

**DIVINATION** by **FURY**, practised by the *Delphic*, *Pythian* and *Cumæan* Sibyl, 97. *Cicero's* remark on it, 98

**DODWELL**, **Mr.** deduces the history of the primitive miracles through the three first centuries, *Intr.* xlviiii, lxxi. Acknowledges the fabulous genius and manifest impostures of the fourth century, xlviiii, lxxii. Admits some miracles of the fourth century, xlix, lxxii. Declares, from the title or address of *St. Ignatius's* epistle to the church of *Smyrna*, that miracles subsisted in great abundance in those days, 5. Affirms, that the prayers of the primitive Christians had power to disable the wild beasts from assaulting the martyrs exposed to them in the amphitheatres, 6. His assertions on those points examined, *ibid.* His character of *Irenæus*, 44. His censure of the

# I N D E X.

- the way of reasoning used by the Fathers, 57. Asserts the miraculous power of the second century to be superior even to those of the first or apostolic age, 72. His remark on *Theophilus's* not being able to shew one person raised from the dead, 73. Supposes the antient *Dæmoniacks* to have been affected with an epilepsy, 80. His reason why visions were peculiar to the young, and dreams to the old, 96. Declares, that all things of great moment to the church were foretold to *St. Cyprian* in visions, 101. Censures the antient Fathers for asserting the perpetuity of prophecy, 111. Supposes the gift of tongues to have ceased in the reign of *M. Aurelius*, 119. Omits the story of the dove, which flew out of *St. Polycarp's* body at his martyrdom, 125, 126. Deduces the history of primitive miracles to the times of *Eusebius*, 128. Restrains the miraculous powers to the three first centuries, 128, 129. Ours *Epiphanius* not to have been accurate, 151. Declares nothing does so much discredit to the cause of miracles, as the impostures of the fourth, fifth, and following ages, 171. Assigns various motives, which would naturally induce the primitive Christians to wish for and aspire to martyrdom, 200
- DU PIN: his character of *Theodoret*, 178. His remark upon *Theodoret's religious history*, 181. More candid than *Dr. Chapman*, 182
- ## E
- EARTH brought from *Jerusalem* affirmed by *St. Augustin* to drive away evil spirits, and cure the palsy, 140
- ECHARD: his account of the contract between *Oliver Cromwell* and the devil, a silly story, N. [d] 219.
- ELIZABETH, Queen, affected to retain more of the pomp and splendor in the external part of religion, than many of her chief divines approved  
Intr. ciii.
- EPIPHANIUS *St.* asserts, that a true prophet has no ecstasies, 110. Said to have wrought miracles, 151. Affirms several false and absurd miracles from his own knowledge, *ibid.* Acknowledged by *Petavius* to have been too credulous, and by *Dodwell* not very accurate, *ibid.* No person more highly respected in his own days, 159. His character by *St. Jerom*, *ibid.*
- ERASMUS has but one single benefice to support him in *England*, Post. cxxv.
- ESDRAS, a passage in that book supposed by *Mr. Thirlby* to have been forged by the Christians, 41. That forgery charged by *John Creius* upon *Justin Martyr*, 42
- EVAGRIUS: his character by *Dr. Cave*, Intr. lxxxii. His account of *Symeon Stylites* living upon



# I N D E X.

upon a pillar, 169. Affirms, that *Symeon* was inspired by God, and performed many things above the force of human nature, *ibid.* Declared by *Dr. Holy* to be full of relations, which were the result of a superstitious piety, 172

**EUCCHARIST**: strange abuses in it introduced long before the fourth century, *Intr. lvii, & seq.* Administered to infants, *lix.* Offered up for the martyrs in their annual festivals, *ibid.* Amazing titles given it in the fourth century, *ibid.*

**EUSEBIUS** preserves an acrostic ascribed to the *Erythraean Sibyl*, *N. [n] 36.* Intimates, that the gift of prophecy was ceased in his days, 112. His account of a miracle of *Narcissus* Bishop of *Jerusalem*, 126. And of the pillars and stones in a city in *Palestine* shedding tears, 127, 128

**EXORCISTS** began in the middle of the third century to be reckoned among the inferior orders of the church, *n. 86.* Jewish and Gentile exorcists impostors, 87. All their power could not cure many of the *Dæmoniacks*, 92

## F

**FACTS**: the credibility lies open to the trial of our reason and senses, *Pref. ix.*

**FELICITAS**: see **PERPETUA** and **FELICITAS**.

**FISHER**, Bishop of *Rocheſter*, believes the *holy maid of Kent*, to be a prophetess, 117. More

learned and judicious than any one perhaps of all the antient Fathers, and as pious and religious, *ibid.*

**FONTENELLE**: his remarks on the rise and progress of popular superstitions. 230 N.

## G

**GALILEANS**, among the antient *Jews*, remarkable for the obstinacy of their temper, and a contempt of death, 200

**GIFT** of *casting out devils* reduced to nothing by the accounts even of the ancients themselves 188. *Of expounding the scriptures* allowed to have had no subsistence at all in any age or any writer of the primitive Church, *ibid.* *Of prophetic visions and trances* could not easily be proved, and of no service therefore to the propagation of the Gospel, 188, 189. *Of raising the dead* affirmed only by *Irenæus*, 188. *Of Tongues* evidently and confessedly withdrawn in the earliest ages of the church, *Pref. xxi, xxii.* Claimed by the primitive Church, 119. Not permanent and lasting in the Church at large, or in particular persons, but granted only on certain special occasions, *Pref. xxiv, 119.* No antient Father since *Irenæus* laid the least claim to it, 120. No instance since the apostolic times of any person, who exercised it, *ibid.* Supposed by *Mr. Dodwell* to have ceased in the reign of *M. Aurelius*, *ibid.* Not easily

# I N D E X.

- easily counterfeited, 121. Never pretended to by the Romanists, 122. Rests on the single testimony of *Irenæus*, 188
- GLORY, a spur to martyrdom among the primitive Christians, 201
- GOD, his ways and will to be discovered, not by imagining within ourselves, what may be proper or improper for him to do, but by looking abroad, and contemplating what he has done, Pref. xxii.
- GOSPELS: *Irenæus's* and *Tertullians's* reasons why they were but four, 53
- GRABE, Dr. owns, that it was the custom of *Justin Martyr's* age to import into the sacred text senses, which did not belong to it, 28, 29. Endeavours to excuse a gross mistake of *Justin Martyr* by a forced criticism, 38. Collects several instances of *Justin Martyr's* citing fabulous and apocryphal books, 39. His remark on *Irenæus's* account of the *millennium*, 47
- GREGORY, *the wonder-worker*, a disciple of *Origen*, cast out devils, by a message, or mandatory Letter to them, 16. His life written by *Gregory Bishop of Nyssa*, 128. Many things in it, according to *Mr. Dodwell*, which breath the air of imposture, and the genius of the fourth century, 129. The Virgin Mary, accompanied with *St. John* the evangelist, appears to him, and gives him a creed, 147, 148.
- The genuineness of this creed asserted by *Dr. Waterland* and *Dr. Berriman*, 148. Affirmed by *Dr. Berriman* to be highly distinguished by the extraordinary gifts of the holy Ghost, 149. Drives the devils from an heathen temple, and recalls them by a letter, 149, 150
- GREGORY, St. of *Nyssa*, his life of *Gregory* the wonder-worker, 147, 148, 149, 150. Censured by *Dr. Cave* as too credulous, 148
- GREGORY the Great: his dialogues concerning the lives and miracles of the *Italian* monks, Intr. lxxviii, lxxix. The miracles related by him contrived chiefly to advance the honour of monkery, the worship of the saints, &c. lxxix. The genuineness of his *dialogues* questioned by some, but asserted by *Dr. Cave*, lxxx.
- GROTIUS believes, that a person employed at this day in the conversion of the heathens, in a manner agreeable to the will of the Lord, would be endued with a power of working miracles, Pref. xviii. Observes from *St. Mark* xvi. 17. that the wonderful faculties distributed to each disciple were not exerted of themselves, or at pleasure, but reserved to special occasions, Pref. xxiii. xxiv.
- GRUTER gives a fragment of a table mentioning two blind men restored to sight by *Æsculapius*, 78

# I N D E X.

## H

**HARDOUIN**: His character by Dr. *Chapman*, Post. cxv. His notion of the forgery of the ancient writers a senseless whim, cxviii. Obligated to recant it, and censured by his own order, cxx.

**HEALING** the sick: This power, as pretended to be in the primitive Church, examined, 75, & *seqq.* Pretended to by the heathens, 76, 77. Affords great room for delusion, 79

**HELLADIUS**, the disciple and successor of St. *Basil*, said to have recorded a revelation of St. *Basil*, concerning the death of *Julian* the emperor, N. [x] 156

**HENRIETTA**, queen of *Charles I.* a zealot for the popish religion, uses all her power with that king to support and propagate it, Intr. cv.

**HERESIES**: ninety different ones sprung up within the three first centuries, Intr. N. [t] lxxxvi.

**HERETICS**: had their martyrs, 209

**HERMAS**: supposed by some, to have forged the Sibylline oracles, 37

**HEYLIN**, Dr. a strenuous espouser of the ecclesiastical principles of the reign of king *Charles I.* Intr. cvi. Agrees with *Knox* the jesuit in his character of the Church of *England* in that time, *ibid.*

**HILARION**, the monk: his life written by St. *Jerom*, Post.

ccxx, 150. Affirmed by St. *Jerom* to have healed wounds, and preserved the lives of two persons, by consecrated oil, 76. Exorcises a camel possessed by the devil, 88. Could discover by the smell, to what dæmon or vice every man was subject, 90

**HISTORIANS**: not a single one of antiquity, who has not recorded oracles, prodigies, &c. 218

**HISTORY**: the credit of it not destroyed by rejecting the unanimous testimony of the Fathers, in their reports of the primitive miracles, 214 & *seqq.* Of miracles, of a kind totally different from that of common events, 217. The faith of it not hurt by disbelieving false miracles, 218, 232

**HODY**, declares, that *Theodoret* and *Evagrius* are full of relations, which were the result of a superstitious piety, 172

**HOLY MAID OF KENT**, an impostor, believed by bishop *Fisher* and others to be a prophetess, 117

**HYSTASPIS**: a spurious book, ascribed to him, believed to be genuine by *Justin Martyr*, 33

## I

**JAMES I.** king, a mere school divine, Intr. civ. Afraid of of the papists, and acted for them, *ibid.*

**JEROM**, St. his encomium upon monastic life, Intr. liii. Writes against *Vigilantius* in defence of

# I N D E X.

of monkery, &c. lvi. Declares, that the utensils and coverings of the eucharist were to be worshipped with the same majesty, as the body and blood of our Lord, lx. Mentions great numbers cured by consecrated oil, lxxiii. A most zealous admirer and promoter of the monkish life, Post. cxxix, cxxx, cxxxi. Wrote the lives of two celebrated monks, *Paul* and *Hilarion*, cxxx. Inserts in these lives a number of tales and miracles, *ibid.* His life of *Paul* treated by Mr. *Dodwell* as a proof of that passion for fiction and imposture, which possessed the Fathers of the fourth century, *ibid.* Wrote against *Vigilantius*, whom he treats as a most blasphemous heretic, cxxxi & seqq. Maintains the honour of monkery and reliques by lies and forgeries, cxxxiv. His dogmatical and agonistical style distinguished by Dr. *Chapman*, cxxxv. His distinction about the honour paid to the reliques of martyrs trifling and evasive, cxxxvi. His account of the translations and processions of reliques, cxxxvii. That account the very form and pattern, by which the Romanists translate, receive and venerate their reliques at this day, cxxxviii. Treats the notion of the Millennium as a dream of the Jews and judaizing Christians, 31, 32. Apprehends, that by opposing that notion he should raise a furious storm against himself, 32. Relates a story

of a camel possessed by a devil, and exorcised by *Hilarion*, 88. Invokes the assistance of the holy Spirit in writing the *life of Hilarion*, 90. Invented or wilfully propagated the extravagant tales in that book, *ibid.* His zeal and affection to the monastic order, *ibid.* His vision, in which he is dragged before the tribunal of Christ, for reading *Cicero*, *Virgil*, and *Horace*, 106. This vision ridiculed by *Ruffinus*, *ibid.* Declares, that true prophets never spake in ecstasy, 110. Owns, that the Church, after the empire became Christian, lost as much of her virtue, as she gained of power and wealth, 123. His life of *Hilarion* the monk, 150. Of *Paul* the hermit, 151. Approves of a fiction in favour of religion, 158. Intimates, that it is allowable to employ every artifice in controversy against an adversary, *ibid.* N. [b]. His character of *Epiphanius*,

159

JEWEL, Bp. superstitious with regard to witchcraft, N. [f].

222

IGNATIUS, St. his epistle to the Church of *Smyrna*, 5. To the *Romans*, 5, 6. To the *Ephesians*, 7, 8. To the *Philadelphians*, 8. He intimates, that the knowledge of certain events had been communicated to him by the Spirit, 8. The antient narrative of his martyrdom mentions his appearing to the writers of it the night after his death

- death. 108
- IMAGES and pictures in the Churches as early as St. *Cbrystom's* time, Intr. lxiv.
- IMPOSITION OF HANDS, a method of healing the sick used in the primitive Church, 75
- INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE: reasons of publishing it before this *larger work*, Præf. 1. Opposition it met with from the press, pulpit and theological schools, iii. General approbation of it, and favourable reception, both among the clergy and laity, *ibid.* The argument of it of the greatest importance to the Protestant Religion, *ibid.* Character and conduct of the writers against it, v, vi, xi.
- INVOCATION of the name of God or Jesus a method of healing the sick in the primitive Church. 75
- JOHN, St. the story of his being thrown into a caldron of boiling oyl, and coming safe and unhurt from it, the fiction of the later ages, Præf. xxix, xxx. Reported by St. *Augustin* not to be dead, but sleeping in his grave, 232.
- JOHN the Presbyter, a companion of the Apostles, N. [s] 62. Supposed by some of the principal Fathers to have written the *second* and *third epistle*, as well as the book of *Revelations*, now ascribed to the Apostle, N. 63
- JOSEPHUS affirms, that *Solomon* was instructed by God in the art of casting out devils, 86
- KRENÆUS declares, that the mixing water with wine in the eucharist was taught and practised by our Saviour, Intr. lvii. Affirms, that the dead were raised, and many other miraculous works performed by the Christian Church in his time, 11, 12. His character, 43 & *seqq.* The most diligent collector and assertor of apostolical traditions, 44. Affirms, that our Saviour lived to an old age, or was fifty years old at the least, 44, 56. Asserts the doctrine of the Millennium, 46, 47. Maintains from tradition, that *Enoch* and *Elias* were translated into that very Paradise, from which *Adam* was expelled, 48. Believes the fabulous story of the version of the Septuagint, 49. And the destruction of the scriptures in the *Babylonish* captivity, and their reiteration by *Esdra*s, *ibid.* His manner of expounding the scriptures fanciful, 51 & *seqq.* In which he followed *Barnabas* and the apostolic Fathers, and was followed by the later writers, 52, 53. The tradition of Christ's old age fairly presumed to be his forgery, 59. A zealous assertor of apostolical tradition, 60, 63. Mistaken in his account of *Papias's* having been a disciple of *John* the Apostle, N. [s] 62, 63. Affirms, that the disciples of *Simon Magus* and the heretic *Carpocrates* and his followers were necromancers, 67. Affirms, that the raising of the dead was frequently performed,

# I N D E X.

- ed, 71. That fact incredible on many accounts 74. Affirms, that the Jews in his time drove away devils by the invocation of the name of God, 84. Declares, that the gift of tongues was granted to many in his days, 119. In great want of that gift himself, *ibid.*
- ISIDORE of *Sevil* cited by Dr. *Berriman*, Intr. lxxxii.
- JUDGMENT: the want of it has in many cases all the same effect, as the want of veracity, towards invalidating the testimony of a witness, 26
- JULIAN affirms, that the sum of all the wisdom of the antient Christians was comprised in this single precept, Believe, Intr. N. [a] xcii.
- JULIAN the Emperor, suspects the Christians to have set fire to the temple of *Apollo Daphneus*, N. [u] 155. His death said to be foretold by visions and divine revelations, 156
- JUSTIN MARTYR is supposed to have written his first apology within fifty years after the days of the Apostles, 10. Asserts, that prophetic gifts and extraordinary powers subsisted in the Church in his time, 10, 11. His character 27 & *seqq.* Affirms, that the gift of expounding the scriptures was granted to him by the special grace of God, 27, 30. His discourse on the mystery of the cross, 28. His method of interpreting scripture, 28, 29. Applies all the sticks and pieces of wood in the old testament to the cross of Christ, 29. His works little else than a collection of fanciful and absurd interpretations of scripture, 30. Acknowledged by Dr. *Carve* to have been wholly ignorant of the *Hebrew* tongue, 30, 31. Believes the doctrine of the Millenium, 31. Asserts, that God committed the world to Angels, who falling in love with women begot dæmons, 32. Believes the spurious books published under the name of Sibyl and *Hystaspis* to be genuine, 33. Supposed by some to have forged the Sibylline oracles, 37. Believes the divinity of the Septuagint version, 37. Commits a gross mistake in chronology, 38. Frequently cites fabulous and apocryphal books, 39. Quotes the scriptures falsely and negligently, *ibid.* His mistake in confounding *Semo Sancus*, a *Sabine* deity, with *Simon Magus*, 40. Falsely charges the Jews with having expunged many passages out of the *Greek* bibles, in which the character and sufferings of Jesus were described, 41, 42, 43. Charged by *John Croius* with having forged a passage in *Esdras*, 42. Accused by *Thirlby* of the utmost negligence and rashness, 43, 44. Believes that Angels mixed with the daughters of men, 49. Alledges necromancy as a proof of the immortality of the soul, 66. Probably the inventor of the opinion, that dæmons, after

# I N D E X.

after their debaucheries with boys and women, wanted the fumes of sacrifices to recruit their vigour, 69. Declares, that dæmons exorcised in the name of the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, would submit, 84. Says, that the Spirit of God made use of the prophets of the Old Testament as of an instrument, 110. Lays claim to the gift of expounding the scriptures,

116

## K

**KNOT**, the jesuit, his argument from miracles in favour of the Church of *Rome*, Intr. lxvi, lxvii. Urges against *Chillingworth*, that the Church of *England* was returning back to that of *Rome*, Intr. cvi.

## L

**LACTANTIUS** asserts, that the Christians of his age could exorcise possessed persons, and drive dæmons away, 18. Maintains the genuineness of the Sibylline oracles, N. [n] 35. Urges necromancy as a proof of the immortality of the soul,

66

**LAUD**, Archbp. his conduct with regard to the Church, Intr. cv. cvii.

**LAW**, archdeacon of *Carlisle*, his censure of the manner of interpreting the scripture used by the Fathers, N. [b].

56

**LAYMEN** among the antient

Christians affirmed by *Origen* to be generally the persons, who cast out devils, 22. This gift wholly appropriated to them by our Saviour, according to Mr. *Whiston*, *ibid.*

**LESLIE** remarks, that the pretended miracles of the Church of *Rome* are the forest disgraces of Christianity, Intr. xliii.

**LIBANIUS**: his account of the removal of the reliques of St. *Babylas*,

154

**LIVY** gives the same account of the temples of the heathen Gods, as *Theodoret* does of the temples of the saints, Intr. lxx.

**LOCKE** of the same opinion with the author concerning the miracles of the primitive Church, Præf. iii.

**LUCIAN** charges the Christians of his time, who pretended to work miracles, with imposture,

22

**LUDOVICUS VIVES** affirms, that the Sibylline oracles could not be forged, because cited both by *Eusebius* and *Lactantius*, [n] 36.

## M

**MARK** xvi. 17. applied by the author of the *Observations on the Introductory Discourse*, and Mr. *Le Moine*, to prove the continuance of the miraculous powers without any limitation of time, Præf. xi, xii.

**MARKLAND**, Mr. attacks the genuine-

# I N D E X.

- genuineness of *Cicero's* letters to *Brutus*, Post. cxxii.
- MARSHAL, Dr. declares, that the miraculous powers continued in the Church, till it was established by *Constantine*, Intr. xlvii. His character of *St. Cyprian's* eloquence, N. [r] 209.
- MARTYRDOM: examination of the case of it among the primitive Christians, 200, & *seqq.* Made no real difference in the personal characters of men, nor ought to give any additional weight to the authority of a Christian witness, 200. Believed to purge all sins, *ibid.* Contrariety both of principle and practice with regard to it, between the times of *Polycarp* and *Tertullian*, N. [x] 211. Adds nothing to the character of the martyrs knowledge or sagacity, nor any weight to their testimonies, 213
- MARTYRS of the primitive Church: their deaths seldom failed of being accompanied with supposed miracles, N. [e] 126. The honours paid them by the primitive Christians, 201, 202. *St. Cyprian*, gives that title to all, who had endured torments for the faith of Christ, tho' without suffering death, N. [l] 202. Believed to be admitted to the immediate fruition of paradise, 203. Thought to be miraculously freed from all sense of pain, 204. The heretics had their martyrs, 209. Bad men sometimes martyrs, *ibid.* The author has no intentions to de-
- tract from the merit of the primitive martyrs, 212, 213
- MAXIMILLA *Montanus's* associate, affirmed, that the gift of prophecy was to cease with her, 111
- MILLENNIUM taught by the Fathers of the earliest ages, as a doctrine of the universal Church, derived immediately from the Apostles, 50
- MILTIADES wrote a Book against *Montanus*, to shew that a prophet ought not to speak in ecstacy, 110, 111
- MINUCIUS FELIX affirms, that the Christians of his time had the power of exorcising persons possessed by dæmons, 13
- MIRACLES of the primitive Church: question concerning them depends on the joint credibility of the facts, and of the witnesses, Pref. ix. Not one worked by any missionary of any Church or sect of Christians, in propagating the gospel among the remote and idolatrous Nations, Pref. xx. Romanists boast of miracles performed by their missionaries in both the Indies, *ib.* The greatest part of them, after the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, wrought by monks, or reliques, or the sign of the cross, or consecrated oil, Intr. lxvi. If these miracles are admitted, the rites, for the sake of which they were wrought, must be admitted, *ib.* Those of the fourth century the effect of fraud and imposture, lxxv. Those of Christ and his Apostles confirm Christianity, Intr.



# I N D E X.

xciv. Vanity of the distinction made by some between the primitive and Popish miracles. N. [o] 74. The pretension to them the most effectual instrument of impostors, 218. None of the heathen miracles true, 219. Miracles, of *Abbé de Paris*, 223, & seq. No evidence of primitive miracles half so strong, as what is alledged for these of *Abbé de Paris*. 226

MIRACULOUS POWERS; nature and condition of them, as represented in the history of the Gospel, for what purposes granted, and in what manner exerted by the Apostles and first possessors of them, Pref. x, xi. The origin and use of these powers not at all considered by any one of the writers against the *Introductory Discourse*, xi. These powers continued as long, as they were necessary to the Church, ib. The continual succession of them through all ages, from the earliest Fathers down to the time of the reformation, affirmed by all the Church historians, Pref. xiv, xv. The same succession deduced by persons of the most eminent character for their probity, learning, and dignity in the Romish Church, to this day, xvi. Unconverted state of the heathen world no argument for the continuance of miraculous powers, xviii. When conferred by our Lord upon any of his disciples, not perpetually inherent in them, and ready to be exerted at their will and pleasure, but merely temporary and occasional, Pref. xxiii, xxiv. 20. Were, after our Lord's ascension, poured out in the fullest measure on the Apostles and other disciples, Pref. xxviii. When Churches were planted in all the chief cities of the Roman Empire, the benefit of those powers began to be less and less wanted, and the use and exercise of them gradually to decline, xxix. When Christianity had gained an establishment in every quarter of the known world, they were finally withdrawn, ib. This probably happened, while some of the Apostles were still living, ib. The Continuance of them in the primitive Church alledged by the divines of all Churches, as a proof of the divinity of the Christian doctrine, Intr. xxxvii. The succession of them deduced by the Church of *Rome* down to our own times, ib. The pretence of their still subsisting in that Church much insisted by the writers of it, xli. The claim of these powers universally asserted till the time of the reformation, xliv. The most prevailing opinion of Protestants, that these powers ceased in the beginning of the fourth century, xlvi. Confessed by the Fathers to have been withdrawn, when Christianity was established by the civil power, lxxxiv, lxxxv. The revival of them, after a cessation of forty or fifty years in the time of the Apostolic Fathers, infuses a suspicion of some fiction in the

the

# I N D E X.

the case, 19, 20. The miraculous powers of the Apostolic days, and those of the following ages, differed not only in nature, but in the manner also of exerting them, 20. Ostentatious manner of proclaiming them by the Christians after the Apostolic age, 21. In the primitive ages were generally engrossed and exercised by private Christians, chiefly of the laity, 24. The administration of them committed to boys, women, and private and obscure laymen, sometimes of a bad character, 24, 25. The succession of them to the end of the fifth century asserted by some of our divines, 122

LE MOINE affirms, that our Saviour, Mark xvi. 17. promises miraculous powers, not only to the Apostles, but to private Christians, and that this promise is without any limitation of time, Pref. xiii. Supposes that these powers lasted as long as the Church had an immediate occasion for them, such as the farther conversion of the world, *ib.* Declares it necessary, that the successors of the Apostles should be indued with miraculous powers, especially with the gift of tongues, *ibid.*

MONASTIC LIFE had its beginning in the third, and full establishment in the fourth century, *Intr.* lii. Arts, by which the Saints of the fourth century promoted it, 135, 136. St. Chryostom writes against the opposers of it, 136

MONTGERON, *Monf. de*, publishes an account of a select number of *Abbé de Paris's* miracles, 224. Declares, that he was converted by those miracles to the Christian Faith, *ib.*

MONKS; all the extravagancies of the ancient monks defended and extolled by Dr *Chapman*, 176. Their Institution contrary to the principles of the gospel, and the interests of all civil society, and the chief source of all the corruptions of the Church, 177. Modern Monks preferable to the ancient, *ib.* Account of their rise by Sir *Isaac Newton*, N. [1] 177.

MONTANISTS charged by *Blondel* and *Dodwell* with forging the Sibylline oracles. 37. Acquire great credit by visions and ecstasies, 98. Their peculiar sanctity and severity of discipline, *ib.* They bring ecstasies into disgrace, 110

MONTANUS and his female associates seem to have been the authors of prophetic trances, 98, 110

MONTFAUCON: his remark on the table found in the ruins of *Æsculapius's* temple, 78

MOSHEIM apprehends the greatest and most holy Doctors of the fourth century will all be found disposed to deceive and lie for the sake of religion, 160

## N

NARCISSUS, Bp. of *Jerusalem*: miracle related by *Eusebius*

# I N D E X.

*sebius* to have been performed by him, 126

NEWTON, Sir Isaac, computes, that Christ's ministry continued thro' five successive Passovers, 55. His remark on the answer of the oracle of *Apollo Daphneus* to *Julian* the emperor, N. [p] 153. His account of the rise of monkery, N. [l] 177.

NEW TESTAMENT: the books of it do not depend upon the Fathers, 190, 191.

## O

OBSERVATIONS on the *Introductory Discourse*: author of them maintains, that the promise of our Lord, Mark xvi. 17. implies the continuance of the miraculous powers, without any limitation of time, Præf. xii. Affirms, that there is not light enough in history to settle the duration of the miraculous powers, *ibid.* Declares, that it nothing concerns us to settle that question. *ibid.* Asserts, that the earliest Fathers unanimously affirm, that these powers subsisted in the Church in their days, xiii. His assertions examined, xiv. & *seqq.* Owns, that the primitive ages were imposed upon by false and fictitious pretensions to miraculous powers, xvii

OIL consecrated by holy men, and used in healing the sick in the primitive Church, 75. When consecrated, performs, according to St. *Chrysofom*, miraculous cures, 136

ORIGEN declares, that the Christians of his age could drive away devils, perform cures, and foresee things to come, 14, 15. Affirms, that the casting out devils was performed generally by laymen, 22. Cites a spurious book, intitled, *the preaching of Peter*, as genuine, N. [l] 34. Denies the charge of *Celsus*, that the Christians interpolated the verses of the Sibyl, N. [n] 34. Seems to allow that there was a dæmon cunning in medicine called *Æsculapius*, 77. Declares, that the Jews cast out devils by the name of the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, 84, 85. Asserts, that the Devils used to possess and destroy cattle, 88

OTTO, Everard, professor at *Utrecht*: his dissertation to prove the *Sainte Ampoule* at *Rheims* to be a forgery, 228

## P

PAPIAS supposed by some to have forged the Sibylline oracles, 37. His account of the *Millennium*, 47. Acknowledged by *Eusebius* to be a weak man, *ibid.* Gave rise to the most fabulous traditions, 59. The chief promoter and assertor of apostolical traditions, 61, 62. Collects all the unwritten sayings of Christ and his Apostles, 62. Affirmed by *Eusebius* not to have been a disciple of *John* the Apostle, but of *John* the elder or presbyter. N. 63. Never heard or knew

# I N D E X.

- knew any of the Apostles, *ibid.*
- PARADISE, whence *Adam* was expelled, the place, into which *Enoch* and *Elias* were translated, and *St Paul* caught up, according to *Irenæus* and all the later Fathers, 48
- PARIS, Abbé de, account of him and his miracles, 223, & *seq.* His tomb being inclosed within a wall puts a stop to the miracles supposed to be performed there, 224. Answer to his miracles by Mr. *Des Vœux*, a protestant, 225. His miracles affirmed by a protestant writer to be the works of the devil, 226. No evidence of primitive miracles half so strong, as what is alledged for those of the *Abbe de Paris*, *ibid.*
- PAUL, St. a spurious piece ascribed to him by *Clemens Alexandrinus*, N. [1] 34
- PAUL, the monk: his life written by *St. Jerom*, Post. cxxx.
- PAULINUS: upon his authority *Dr. Waterland* extends the succession of the miraculous powers in the Church to the later end of the fourth century, *Intr.* l, lxxiii, lxxiv. Account of him, lxxiv. A miracle related by him, lxxv
- PAUSANIAS: his account of *Æsculapius's* temple at *Epidaurus*, 77
- PERPETUA and FELICITAS, two female martyrs: their *acts* appealed to by *Dr. Chapman*, as unquestionable vouchers of true miracles, N. [p] 204. Remarks on those acts, *ibid.* The fortitude of these two martyrs derived from the impetuosity of a wild and extravagant enthusiasm, *ibid.*
- PHARAOH: his conduct compared by *St. Cyprian* to that of the devil in possessed persons, 17
- PHILO: his remarks on the ecstasy of the old patriarchs and prophets, 96
- PETAVIUS, the Jesuit, owns *Epiphanius* to have been too credulous, 151
- PHILOPATRIS; the author of that dialogue ridicules the Christians for watching and fasting in expectation of visions, 107
- PHOTIUS: his character of *Irenæus*, 44
- PLINY, the younger: his account of the Christians in his province, 194, and N. [d] 195
- POLYCARP, his epistle to the *Philippians*, 7. His vision of the martyrdom, 9. Affirmed by later writers to have been indued with a spirit of prophecy, *ibid.* Urges apostolical tradition in the dispute about the time of holding *Easter*, 60. Affirmed by *Irenæus* to have converted great numbers to the faith by the strength of tradition, 61. *Letter of the Church of Smyrna* concerning his martyrdom, written about the middle of the second century, 123. Miracles said to have attended his martyrdom, 124, 125. Remark upon them, 125. The mention of the dove, said in that letter to have flown out of his body, omitted by

# I N D E X.

- by *Eusebius*, *Dodwell*, and *Wake*, 125. The two last omit that circumstance, for the sake of rendering the narrative less suspected, *ibid.* Epistle of the Church of *Smyrna* concerning his martyrdom in danger of being lost, till it was discovered by a revelation from *Polycarp* himself, 198. Flies from persecution, N. 211. The miracles said to have attended his martyrdom questionable, 220
- PONTIUS sollicitous to excuse *St. Cyprian's* withdrawing from his Church in the time of persecution, 104
- POPERY: late growth of it, *Intr.* xli. Writers for it make great use of the prejudice in this Protestant country in favour of primitive antiquity, *ibid.* The chief corruptions of it introduced, or the seeds of them sown, in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, *Intr.* li, lii.
- PORPHYRY, 23
- PRAYING for the dead, common in the second century, *Intr.* lx.
- PREACHING of *Peter*, a spurious book ascribed to that Apostle, often cited as genuine by *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Origen*, and other Fathers, N. [1] 34
- PRIDEAUX confutes the notion of *Irenæus* and other Fathers, of the scriptures being destroyed in the *Babylonish* captivity, 49
- PRIMITIVE antiquity affirmed by its admirers to be the rule of regulating the doctrines and discipline of all modern churches, *Pref.* xvi.
- PRIMITIVE Christians reproached perpetually for their gross credulity by their enemies, *Intr.* N. [a] xcii. The ancient Father's defence of themselves on that head, *ibid.* xciii. Account of them from the best heathen writers, 194
- PROCLUSUS affirmed by *Tertullian* to have cured the emperor *Serverus* by oil, 75
- PROPHECY of the primitive Church by vision or ecstacy, 98, 112. The perpetuity of it asserted by the Orthodox, 111
- PROPHETIC visions and ecstacy in the primitive Church, 95
- PROTESTANTS: the disputes between them, in *England* turn wholly on points of discipline and external forms of worship, *Intr.* cvii. Their religion rests on the single but solid foundation of the sacred scriptures, unmixed with the rubbish of ancient tradition or ancient Fathers, *Post.* cxl.

## R

- RAISING the dead affirmed by *Irenæus* to have been frequently done, 72. Not one instance of this to be found in the three first centuries, except a single case slightly intimated by *Eusebius*, *ibid.* This power acknowledged by Mr. *Dodwell* to be lost towards the end of the second century, 73
- RECOGNITIONS of *St. Clemens*,

## R

an

# I N D E X.

an ancient but spurious piece, affirms, that *Simon Magus* confessed himself to be a necromancer,

67

REFORMATION: effect of it in exposing the pretended miracles of the Church of *Rome*, Intr. xliv, xlv. The fundamental principle of it, that the scriptures are a complete rule both of faith and manners, xcvi. State of it under *Henry VIII.* ci. Under *Edward VI.* cii. Under *Queen Mary*, *ibid.* Under *Queen Elizabeth*, ciii. Under *King James I.* and *King Charles I.* civ. & *seqq.* Under the following reigns, cvii.

REFORMERS: the first and principal of them in the reign of *Henry VIII.* had not the power to carry the reformation so far as they desired, Intr. ci.

RELIQUES of martyrs: *St. Chrysofom's* zeal for them, Intr. lv. The translations and processions of them solemnized with great pomp in the primitive times, Post. cxxxviii. Affirmed by *St. Chrysofom* to cast out devils, and cure all diseases, 136. Of *St. Stephen* revealed in a vision by *Gamaliel*, 141, 142. Performed miracles, 142

RIGALTIVS: his remark upon *St. Cyprian's* use of visions and divine revelations, 103.  
ROE, Sir Tho. relates a story of a Jesuit in *China*, 214, N.

S

SAINTE AMPOULLE: the miracle of it defended by *Vertot*, 227. Account of it, *ibid.* Treated as a mere forgery by *Otto*, a professor at *Utrecht*, 228

SANDYS, Archbp. of *York*; a passage from his will relating to the rites and ceremonies of the church, Intr. N. [g] ciii.

SATAN, *Justin Martyr's* absurd etymology of that word, 30

SAVONAROLA, *Jerom*, preached against the corruption of the court of *Rome*, N. [y] 213. A story of him related by *Dr. Jeremy Taylor*, *ibid.*

SCRIPTURES; a most absurd and ridiculous method of interpreting them was the very characteristic of the earliest ages of Christianity. Præf. xxxiii. A complete rule both of faith and manners, Intr. xcvi. The joining of antiquity as a necessary companion to them a flat contradiction to the principles of the reformation, c. Gift of expounding them claimed by the primitive Fathers, 115. Not the least trace of this gift to be found in any age of the Church from the days of the Apostles, *ibid.*

SEMO SANCUS, a Sabine deity, mistaken by *Justin Martyr*, *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Augustin*, *Epiphanius*, and *Eusebius*, for *Simon Magus*, 40

SEP-

# I N D E X.

- SEPTUAGINT version: the divinity of it believed by *Justin Martyr*, 37. By *Irenæus*, 48
- SIBYLLINE oracles believed to be genuine by *Justin Martyr*, 33. And by *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *ibid.* The forgery of them charged by the heathens upon the ancient Christians, 34. Obtained full credit in the Church thro' all ages, N. 37
- SIGN of the cross the subject of much superstition in the primitive ages, Intr. lxi, lxii.
- SOCRATES: his account of *Theodorus* a martyr, 204, & *seqq.*
- SOZOMEN: his account of *Apollonia Daphneus's* temple being set on fire, N. [u] 155
- SPIRITUAL gifts, spoken of by the apostolical Fathers, as abounding among the Christians of that age, mean only the ordinary gifts and graces of the gospel, faith, hope, charity, &c. 3, 7
- SPURIOUS books forged and published in the earliest ages of the Christian Church, Intr. lxxxvii. Cited as genuine by the most eminent Fathers of those ages, *ibid.* and xcii. Archbp. *Wake's* account of those books. N. [u] lxxxvii.
- STAGIRIUS supposed to be possessed by an evil spirit, 131. An account of him. N. [e] 131, 132. *St. Chrysostom's* books of consolation addressed to him, 131
- STRABO: his account of *Æsculapius's* temples, 78
- SUETONIUS affirms, that *Vespasian* restored a blind man to his sight, and a cripple to his limbs, 170. His account of the Christians, 104
- SUIDAS: his remark on the madness of poets and prophets 96
- SYMEON STYLITES a mad enthusiastic monk of the fifth century, Intr. N. [b] xcvi. His monstrous and superstitious acts defended by Dr. *Chapman*, *ibid.* His miracles recorded by *Theodoret*, 161. Called a madman by the author of *Christianity as old as the creation*, *ibid.* Christianity not concerned, whether he was a madman, or not, *ibid.* Defended by Dr. *Chapman*, 162, 163. Account of him by *Theodoret*, 163, & *seqq.* His fame spread through the whole world, 168. Affirmed by *Theodoret* and *Evagrius* to have been inspired by God, and to have performed many things above the force of human nature, 169. His miracles doubted by Dr. *Cuvæ*, 172. And declared wholly fabulous by Mr. *Collier*, *ibid.*

## T

- TACITUS, his account of the Christians, 194. Affirms, that *Vespasian* restored a blind man to his sight, and a cripple to his limbs, 170
- TAYLOR, Dr. Jeremy, relates a story of *Jerom Saxonarola*, N [y] 213
- T E R T

# I N D E X.

TERTULLIAN, a passage in his book *de Monogom.* explained, Intr N. [o] lx, lxi. Alledges tradition for the use of the sign of the cross, lxii. Asserts the power of the Christians of his time to exorcise any person possessed with a devil, 12, 13. Mentions a sister among the Christians of that age indued with the gift of revelations, and who conversed with Angels and Christ himself, 13. His reason why the number of the Apostles was twelve, N. [d] 53. Declares, that Apostolical tradition is the only weapon, that can knock down an heretic, 61, 62. His notion of the power of dæmons, 68. Affirms, that *Proculus*, a Christian, cured the Emperor *Severus* by oil, 75. Relates two tragical stories of Christian women, who went to the theatre, 83, 84. Remarks on those stories, 84. Stiles ecstacy a spiritual virtue, in which prophecy consists, 96. A writer of an euthusiastic turn, severe in his manners, and stiff in his opinions, 98. Makes great use of visions in his writings, 99, 100. Writes a treatise to prove the soul of man corporeal and of human shape, 100. Easily drawn by his temper and prejudices to espouse any delusion suitable to his favorite opinions, 101. Declares, that he, who has the spirit within him, must necessarily be deprived of his senses, 111. Asserts the

absolute submission of the Christians to their emperors, 156. Considers the impossibility of a thing as an argument for the belief of it, N. [y] 186. His account of the number of the Christians in his time, 195. Expostulates with the heathen magistrates for not inquiring into the manners and doctrines of the Christians, 196. Calls confessors *martyres designati*, N. [x] 211. Writes a book against all flight in persecution, *ibid.* His challenge to the heathen magistrates to come and see the power of the Christian exorcists, 222. N. Declares, that the true disciples of Christ have nothing to do with curiosity or inquiry, but to believe on, 227, N. [i]

THALALEUS, a monk, who suspended himself in the air in a cage, 173

THEODORET: upon his single authority Dr. *Chapman* maintains the pretended miracles of the fifth century, Intr. lxxviii. His account of the reverence paid to the temples of the martyrs in his own time, lxxviii, lxxix. Stiled *Great* by Dr. *Chapman*, 162. His character by the same, 163. His life of *Simeon Stylites*, 164, & *seqq.* Declares himself an eye-witness of many of the miracles of *Simeon Stylites*, 167. Affirms *Simeon* to have been inspired by God, and to have performed many things above the force of human nature

ture



# I N D E X.

ture, 169. Declared by Dr. *Hody* to be full of relations, which were the result of a superstitious piety, 172. His life of *Simon Stylites*, a part only of his *religious history*, filled with the *lives of thirty monks*, 173, 179. His account of *Baradatus* and *Ithalaleus*, two of those monks, whose whims and extravagancies he considers as the suggestions of the holy Spirit, *ibid.* His character by *Du Pin*, 178. Miracles pretended by him to have accompanied his own birth, *ibid.* Nursed and trained up in all the bigotry and superstition, with which his age abounded, 178, 179. A zealous admirer of monks, 179. His account of the miracles of *Peter* and *James*, two monks, 179, 180, 181. Remark upon his *religious history* by *Du Pin*, 181. His *religious history* tends to strengthen the interest of the Romish, and to hurt the credit of the Protestant cause, 181

**THEOPHILUS**, Bishop of *Antioch*, affirms, that persons possessed by such dæmons, as used to inspire the heathen poets and prophets, were exorcised by the Christians in his time, 12. Challenged by *Autolycus*, an ancient heathen, to shew one person, who had been raised from the dead, 73

**THIRLBY**, Mr. frequently animadverts upon *Justin Martyr's* false and negligent manner of quoting scripture, 39. Charges the Christians with forging a passage in *Esdra's*, 42.

Accuses *Justin Martyr* of the utmost negligence and rashness, 43. Remarks, that all the early Fathers were drawn into the notion of Angels mixing with the daughters of men, by the apocryphal book of *Enoch* cited by *St. Jude*, 49

**TIBERIANUS**: his account of the obstinacy of the Christians in *Palestine* in offering themselves to death, 201

**TILLEMONT** declares, that the opinion of *Irenæus* and other Fathers with relation to the destruction of the Scriptures in the *Babylonish* captivity, is dangerous to religion, 49. Dr. *Chapman* borrows from him his notions and expressions, with relation to *Theodoret*, 164

**TILLOTSON**, Archbishop, supposed, that the miraculous powers ceased in the Church when Christianity was established, *Intr.* xlvi. And that the gift of casting out devils continued the longest of any, *ibid.*

**TONGUES**: a pretended miracle performed upon the orthodox, who spake after their tongues were cut out by order of *Huneric the Vandal*, 182. A girl born without one, speaks distinctly and easily, 184. A boy, who lost his tongue by a gangrene, retains the faculty of speaking, 185

**TRUTH**: every discovery of it a valuable acquisition to society, *Pref.* vii. The light of it exposes the vanity of all popular systems and prejudices, viii. Never known to be on the perfe-

# I N D E X.

persecuting side, *ibid.* Has no other effect than to promote the general good, *ibid.* Brings us nearer to the perfection of our being, ix.

TUNSTALL, Dr. attacks the genuineness of *Cicero's* letters to *Brutus*, Post. cxxii, cxxiii.

## V

VENTRILOQUISTS, mentioned by the antient Fathers, 90. Modern Ventriloquists, 91

VERTOT, *Monf. de*, his defence of the miracle of the sacred vial or *Sainte Ampulle*, 227, 228

VESPASIAN became a better man by his advancement to the empire, 170. Affirmed by *Suctonius* and *Tacitus* to have restored a blind man to his sight, and a cripple to his limbs, 170

VIGILANTIUS wrote against monkery, celibacy of the clergy, &c. *Intr.* lvi. Written against by St. *Jerom*, and treated by him as a most blasphemous heretic, Post. cxxxi, & *seq.* His pretended heresies, *ibid.* Opposes monkery and the honour paid to reliques, cxxxiv. Charges St. *Jerom* with Idolatry for worshipping reliques, cxxxvi.

VISIONS confessed by St. *Cyprian* to be contemned by many in his age, 107. Seem all to be contrived or authorized by the leading men of the Church, for the sake of governing the people, 109

ULPIAN speaks of exorcism as

a term of art used by impostors. 87

VOEUX, *Mon. des*, a Protestant, writes an Answer to *Abbe de Paris's* miracles, denying the miraculous nature of the facts, 225, 226. Three letters to him maintaining those miracles to be the works of the devil, 226

## W

WAKE, Archbishop, his account of the spurious books in the primitive times, *Int.* lxxxvii. Asserts, that in all probability the apostolic Fathers were indued with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, 4. And that they were in some measure inspired, *ibid.* Affirms, that *Ignatius* was indued with a large portion of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, 8. Omits the story of the dove, which flew out of St. *Polycarp's* body at his martyrdom, 125, 126. Professes himself little a friend to such kind of miracles, N. [e] 126

WATERLAND, Dr. extends the succession of the miraculous powers in the Church to the latter end of the fourth century, *Intr.* l, lxxiii. Supposed to speak the sense of our present rulers, xcix. Seldom appeals to the Scriptures without joining antiquity to them, *ibid.* and c. Affirms, that to deprectate the value of ecclesiastical antiquity, and to throw contempt on the primitive Fathers, is to wound Christianity through

# I N D E X.

through their sides, xcix. His character of the ancient Fathers, 21. Declares, that *Celsus*, *Porphyry*, and *Julian* had some regard to truth, and to public report, and to their characters, N. [t] 23. Magnifies apostolical tradition, in some cases, above the Scriptures themselves, 60, 61, 65. Lays great stress on the authority of *Justin Martyr*, *Athenagoras*, *Irenæus*, and *Clemens of Alexandria*, 64. Asserts the genuineness of the creed said to be communicated to St. *Gregory* the wonder-worker by the *Virgin Mary* and St. *John*, 148. Allows, that the state of the Church towards the end of the fourth century was become very corrupt, 160

**WHISTON**, Mr. asserts, that the miraculous powers were totally withdrawn upon the establishment of the *Athanasian heresy*, Intr. xlix. Collects testimonies of the ancient Fathers, to shew, that the gift of curing *Dæmoniaks* continued to the middle of the fourth century, N. [n] 19. Declares, that the gift of curing *Dæmoniaks* was wholly appropriated by our Saviour to the meaner sort of Christians, with an exclusion even of the clergy, 22. Ob-

erves, that after the exorcising of *Dæmoniaks* was appropriated to the Clergy, few or none of them were cured, 95

**WHITBY**, Dr. his remarks on the falsity of the tradition concerning our Saviour's living to at least fifty years of age, 45. Charges *Papias* and *Irenæus* with the forgery of fables and false stories, 58

**WITCHCRAFT**: no miraculous fact so authentically attested in history, 221. The imaginary increase of it alarms the court in the beginning of *Queen Elizabeth's* reign, N. [f] 222. Bishop *Jewel's* credulity with regard to it, *ibid.* Made felony, 222, N.

**WITCHES**: all Christian nations believed and made capital laws against them, 221, 222. The belief of them now utterly extinct, 223

**WITNESSES**: their credibility depends on a variety of principles wholly concealed from us, Pref. ix.

## X

**XAVIER**, FRANCIS, called the *Apostle of the Indies*, laments his ignorance of the language of those nations, among whom he was a missionary, Pref. xx.

# F I N I S.

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