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RESOLUTIONS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

1842

Resolved, That the sum of £100,000 be granted to the Commissioners of the General Land Office, to be applied in the purchase of land for the use of the Poor Law Commission, and that the said sum be paid out of the Consolidated Fund.

Resolved, That the sum of £50,000 be granted to the Commissioners of the General Land Office, to be applied in the purchase of land for the use of the Poor Law Commission, and that the said sum be paid out of the Consolidated Fund.

Resolved, That the sum of £25,000 be granted to the Commissioners of the General Land Office, to be applied in the purchase of land for the use of the Poor Law Commission, and that the said sum be paid out of the Consolidated Fund.

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Approved by the House of Commons on the 10th day of March 1842.

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By Order of the House of Commons,  
 J. B. [Name],  
 Secretary to the House of Commons.

C O N T E N T S.

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T H E

RESURRECTION DEFENDERS

Strip of all Defence.

In a Letter to a FRIEND.

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§. I. *The* INTRODUCTION.

S I R,

**A**S a traveller on a journey, to make the best of his way, waits not for company, so I shall not for your conversation to finish our discourse on the subject we had begun; that I may dispatch it in fewer words.

Having sufficiently vindicated myself in the first part, called the *Resurrection Reconsidered*, which title I now think was a misnomer, I purpose to pass over all reflections, regard nothing but the argument, and to handle it in as serious a manner, as I can, to gratify such serious enquirers as yourself.

You have been acquainted, that the CLEARER'S insinuations against me are false, I hope to your satisfaction; and I don't doubt to make it appear, that all his arguments, with those of Mr. SYLVESTER'S, Mr. CHANDLER'S, and Mr. JACKSON'S, are

of the same kind; if common sense may be allowed to determine the controversy; for I lay claim to nothing uncommon, tho' Mr. *Sylvester* charges me with so doing; nor does the argument on my side need it; and that which does, shows a weak cause: for plain truth is easily defended, and is my defence. She is the *MINERVA* that covers me with her invisible shield, and gives good courage to a good conscience. But the easy credulity of the vulgar is that bubble of imagination, which is broke with the least blast of good sense.

§. 2. *Of Christ foretelling his own Resurrection.*

I am now to begin with Christ's foretelling his own resurrection: I shewed, that what is said to be delivered in public, that of the temple and of *Jonah*, were parables, and not understood; this is not denied. So that what was public, was not plain, and what was plain, was not public; and those predictions that were plain and private, 'tis said, were not understood. This is well said, because the circumstances attending the fact contradict the predictions: therefore, as the disciples fore-knew nothing of their Master's rising from the dead, the Jew rulers must have been ignorant of any such prediction; and if so, the story of setting a watch, and the private predictions, must have been interpolations.

Against this 'tis urged, *1st*, That the five predictions to the disciples were not all delivered in private. *2dly*, That they were not enjoined secrecy in the case. *3dly*, That some disciples might acquaint the Jew rulers with it. And, *4thly*, that they listened to the prophecy, because they were convinced, that Jesus wrought miracles.

I shall answer all these objections to my arguments.

§. 3. *Whether the predictions were all delivered in private.*

*Obj.* That the five predictions of Jesus to his disciples were not all delivered in private. The *Clearer* says, (p. 45.) to take them as I have rang'd them, 'The first and third were made to the disciples: Is there not reason then to suppose they were made to more than to the twelve, for he had seventy disciples.'

*Ans.* There is no reason to suppose this the case the first time; for *St. Luke* (ix. 18.) says, *When he was alone praying, his disciples were with him.* Could he be alone, when seventy persons were with him? I think it signifies, that *less* than the twelve, rather than *more*, were with him; for his being *alone* argues privacy, and that at most it can mean no more, than that he was with the twelve alone, mentioned a little before, ver. 10. 12. Besides, this was at a time when he enquired of them privately, What person the people took him to be? Tho', by the way, if Jesus knew mens thoughts, as the evangelists say, what need had he to ask his disciples, what men said of him? for in that case he must have known before-hand, what men said, and what they would answer.

The third time was, when *he passed thro' Galilee, and would not that any man should know it,* (*Mark* ix. 30.) therefore he had not the multitude of the disciples, nor the 70 with him; for then he must have been known. Besides, at this third time, they that heard, did not understand what he said, nor ask'd what he meant, (ver. 32.) Therefore, 'tis more likely they were not seven, than that they were 70, unless all the disciples were without understanding.

So that every one of the five predictions to the disciples were private to the apostles only.

§. 4. *Whether secrecy was enjoined the apostles?*

*Obj.* ' But they were not enjoined secrecy in the affair; only in this point, that Jesus was the Christ.'

*Ans.* The reason why Jesus desired privacy was, according to *Mark*, (ix. 31.) for this very cause, that *he taught his disciples, and said unto them, the son of man must be killed, and rise again; and this the disciples kept private, says Mark, ver. 10.* After the transfiguration he charged them they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the son of man was risen from the dead; *And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another, what the rising from the dead should mean.* But *St. Luke*, (ix. 44.) has it only, *that he should be delivered into the hands of men, without a word of his rising again, the most essential point; so that either the one seems to have stretch'd, or the other to have forgot himself, and wrote without the guidance of the Holy Spirit; for that St. John* (xiv. 26.) *was to bring all things to their remembrance, that Christ had said unto them.* *St. Luke* (ix. 45.) *writes; that they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them; that they perceived it not, and they feared to ask him of that saying.* Surely he kept them in a very awful subjection! But what did they not understand? 'Tis very plain they did not understand what he meant, that he should be delivered into the hands of men, and rise from the dead.

The fourth time, when Jesus is said to deliver this secret to the twelve, apart from the rest, it was secret enough, for *they knew not the things that were spoken, that is, they knew not what he said; therefore they could not discover it.* Fit receptacles these

these for the secrets of divine wisdom! There was no fear of their disclosing the divine secrets. 'Tis no wonder they are not yet disclosed; and that the mysteries of the kingdom are always explaining, and never explained. If *they* understood not their Master, how should *we*, who have our lessons from *them*.

*Obj.* But says the *Clearer*, 'Tho' the disciples 'did not understand the meaning of the prophecy, 'they understood the language or import of the 'words, or else what did *St. Peter* reprove our 'Lord for?'

*Ans.* How they understood not the meaning, but the import of the words, passes my understanding: *St. Peter* understood what he said about his sufferings and death, but not what he said about his rising again; and 'tis most trifling to say, 'If 'they understood the literal sense of the words 'spoken to them, they might report them, and 'others understand the meaning, tho' they did 'not; and thus at least the chief priests might 'come to know that *Jesus* had foretold his resurrection.' If they knew the literal meaning of the words, they knew all the meaning the words had; for 'tis not pretended they had any other. But I should never have done, if I was to take notice of all their weak arguments.

#### §. 5. *Objections answered.*

*Obj.* 'But the thing they did not understand 'was, how the Messiah, who (according to their 'notions) was to live for ever, was to die and rise 'again.'

*Ans.* But if they understood what he said, they had the more reason to believe he would live for ever, if he was to rise to life again, after he was dead,

*Obj.*

*Obj.* ‘ The Apostles were enjoin’d secrecy, not  
 ‘ with respect to the death and resurrection of Je-  
 ‘ sus; but with respect expressly to this point only,  
 ‘ that he was the Christ.’

*Ans.* But I have proved the former part of this  
 assertion to be wrong. The *Clearer* himself tells us  
 of another secrecy enjoined the disciples, besides  
 his being the Christ, which is the vision of the trans-  
 figuration. Therefore the Injunction was not with  
 respect to that ‘ one point only,’ as the *Clearer*  
 says, p. 50. That such a fine show should be  
 made only to three men, and kept private till after  
 the resurrection, is as dark a story as the vision  
 is said to be bright.

*Obj.* The *Clearer* argues (p. 50.) ‘ That the pro-  
 ‘ hibition to divulge it, was enjoined the disciples,  
 ‘ that they should not from hence raise false no-  
 ‘ tions of Christ’s power.’

*Ans.* Did their keeping it a secret prevent what  
 false notions they might receive from it? But how  
 could they raise false notions of his power, if he  
 was God as well as man? And why was the voice  
 of God secreted from the people’s knowledge? Jesus  
 was declared to be the son of God to a very  
 few: and they too that already believed it. ’Twas  
 a *still small voice*. John the Baptist and Jesus only  
 heard it before, and these three his familiars now.  
 Had the voice spoke to the scribes, pharisees, and  
 infidels, they, perhaps if they had heard the son  
 declared, would have wanted to know the father;  
 but this voice was not fit for priests to hear; for  
 they that keep others in ignorance ought to be  
 kept in ignorance. Yet, as I wish their conversion,  
 I would they had heard; for perhaps the father  
 might have converted them, tho’ the son could not.

§. 6. *Of Jesus enjoining his disciples to secrete his character.*

But wherefore did Jesus charge his disciples to tell no man that he was the Christ? The *Clearer* says (p. 47, 48.) to prevent the ill effects of it; 'for such declaration to the people, according to their notion of Christ, would have amounted to a claim of temporal power, which our Lord (he says) took all proper occasions to disclaim.'

*Ans.* Had he done so, in all probability he had saved his life. But if he wrought Miracles, he had more than temporal power; and therefore had no need to fear any thing, when he was invested with a power divine. Does he mean that the fears of death were so strong in him, that he forbid his disciples while he was living to own him the Christ; but commanded them, after he was dead and gone, to constrain all men to believe and own it by the terrors of damnation? If saying he was the Christ amounted to a claim of temporal power, according to the peoples notion, should not his first and chief business have been to set his disciples and the people right in their notions, what the expected Messiah really was, before he declared himself that person? Had he convinced them of the former, the way had been pav'd to the latter. What signified referring the people to *search the Scriptures*, and telling them that *they testified of him*, when they did not understand its Testimony: For while their notion remained of a temporal redeemer, they could not see the scriptures testified of him. To what end were they to search the scriptures, which represented the Messiah to them in a wrong character, as a prince possessing, and not disclaiming temporal power? That the Father should deceive his own people by

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his

his prophets, and they thro' faith in that word should be so bigotted to the deception, that the Son could not undeceive them, is so very unaccountable, that it can pass with none but a thorough-pac'd believer. To what end did he make them his apostles? How could the world believe in him, if he prevented himself from being known to the world? *How could they believe in him on whom they had not heard? And how could they bear without a preacher? And how could they preach if they were not sent,* but forbidden? If Jesus did not come to make himself known as the Christ, wherefore came he? If he did, why did he forbid his disciples to make him known? And why were they sent to preach that his kingdom was at hand? If his coming was to be made public, why was secrecy enjoin'd? If the old testament gave the Messiah a character the new does not, 'tis plain they differ as widely as flesh and spirit, things temporal and spiritual. 'Tis probable, Jesus finding his disciples rude and ignorant, knew that their manner of divulging his pretensions would do him more injury than advantage, therefore he forbad their telling it, and cautiously delivered it himself to proper persons, for he knew some too well to commit himself to them. *John ii. 24.*

§. 7. *Whether the disciples or Judas divulged the prediction of Christ's resurrection.*

'Tis objected, that some disciples, or at least *Judas*, might acquaint the scribes and pharisees with the private prediction of Jesus concerning his dying and rising again.

And yet the *Clearer* says (p. 71.) that ' There is not the least intimation in the gospel, that the chief priests knew the opinion of the disciples in this case, or that they would have considered it

‘ of any weight or moment at all.’ For as he ‘ says, ‘ The rulers had them in contempt,’ how then did they believe their story if they heard it ? But this they could not do ; for ’tis not at all probable the disciples should discover what they knew not, for they own that they did not understand Jesus was to rise again from the dead ; this the scripture and the *Clearer* confesses, p. 49. and what men do not understand they don’t know. But that some of the disciples should blab the secret, and surprize the scribes and pharisees with the discovery, or that *Judas*, who betrayed his master, might betray his secrets ; as it is not at all likely, for the reason already given, so ’tis probable the Jew rulers gave no manner of regard to it, if any of them did. ’Tis very unlikely they should credit so idle a story told them by his credulous disciples, at least what *Judas* said, who in their opinion must needs pass for a deluded fool, and a treacherous villain. Besides, *Judas* making a sale of his master, shews he did not believe a word of it, unless he was in hopes after his resurrection to sell him again. But had the scribes and pharisees been told of it, why should they fear lest he should be as good as his word, when at the same time not one of those who believed in him, believed one word about it : For if ever they heard the prediction, they regarded it so little, that they forgot it, though it was of the last importance to them to remember it ; and how should they do otherwise, if they did not understand what was said about it. *St. John* delivers it by way of excuse, that *as yet they knew not the scriptures that he was to rise again from the dead.* But if they knew not what the scriptures or old prophecies said, they knew what their master had prophesied, if he said what is reported, which was enough to inform them of it. The words *as yet*, the defenders say, is a kind of proof that they knew

it afterwards : But *none of them know it yet* out of the old prophets. Those enigmatical expressions of the temple and *Jonah*, which the apostles did not understand when spoken, they might know, but *as yet* had not given them the force of prophecies. Words not understood, as they raise no expectations of any thing to come in the hearers, so they foretell nothing, and are no prophecies. Mr. *Sylvester* has found the prophecy only in types, and Mr. *Chandler* in strain'd inferences. This shews they are so distress'd to find any of this sort, that they are obliged to make them ; for he that makes the scripture to speak what it don't, makes scripture to serve his turn.

The *Clearer* objects. ' Suppose now the disciples want of understanding to be true, it shews their honesty and sincerity in reporting it fairly ; and asks what purpose could be serv'd by it.'

I answer, *viri vera simplicitate boni !* Are we then to depend on the sincerity and honesty of men that want understanding ? Alas, how easily are such men deceived ! But this purpose it might serve, supposing them not altogether so honest as the *Clearer* presumes. When they said their master was risen, some Jews might ' put this question to them, which they could not answer : ' You say your master rose from the dead, and that he knew all things ; how came it then to pass that he did not foretel his own resurrection ? To which they, ' to prevent the same question being asked again, ' told of some predictions of this sort delivered in a private manner ; and the reason they never divulged them before his resurrection, nor expected it themselves, was, because they never rightly knew what the words meant, but took them for parables. Pleading their Incapacity to understand them, is the best excuse they could give for not divulging them.

§. 8. *Whether the Jew rulers believed the prediction of Christ's resurrection ?*

The *Clearer* queries, ' What then is to be said for the chief priests, why did they fear his resurrection ? ' And answers, ' Because he had foretold it, that they took him for a great prophet, and had been witnesses to his miracles ; therefore they listened to a prophecy in this case, which in any other they would have despised ; for had the *Jews* been persuaded that he performed no wonders in this life, they would not have been afraid of seeing any done by him after his death.'

*Ans.* Nor does it appear they were. This is, Sir, putting it upon a different footing than what *St. Matthew* does ; but let us try the case in this light. That Jesus had foretold his resurrection, at least to the scribes and pharisees, is not proved ; and that he did it at all, wants consistent proof ; for had the disciples known it, they must have foreknown his rising again ; but that none of them foreknew this, is confessed by words and deeds. If they did not suspect him to rise again, who believed in him, and (as 'tis reported) heard him foretel it plainly, and frequently, how could *they* expect it who believed him not, nor the flying reports that were told of him ; nor, as far as we can find, ever heard of any such prediction from himself or others ? But waving the advantage, suppose the chief priests heard of this prophecy, would they regard it from the mouth of one whom they put to death as a deceiver ? Or, suppose they thought him to be a great prophet, could they possibly put him to death, to such a kind of death as an impostor, and wish his blood might be on them and their children ? Or believing him to be a great prophet,

prophet, did they therefore suspect he might possibly rise again? Were great prophets used to rise again? Or is it possible for them to do so? No certainly; prophets once dead lay as quiet as other men. But ‘The wonders he had wrought in his life made them listen to a prophecy in this case.’ Did they on this account suspect he would do wonders when he was dead? It cannot be: The *Clearer* says (p. 39.) when they saw him on the cross, ‘They thought they had found the extent of his power, and that he could not save himself.’ But suppose all that has or can be supposed, (p. 61.) that ‘They feared he would come from the grave, armed with power to take vengeance of their wicked and cruel treatment of him.’ Did they for this set a guard of soldiers to kill him again, as Mr. *Chandler* insinuates, p. 56, 57. ‘Had he appear’d as himself, who knows what the watch might have done, in acting the same bloody scene over again, were it not for the angels that defended him?’ Or did the chief priests set a watch to give them warning to run away, if he should rise again? Nay, but they set a watch to be certainly inform’d of the truth. How could they doubt but the truth would discover itself, by his personal appearance, if he should rise; or by his non-appearance, if he should not? The case was of such a nature, there was no reason to believe it could be concealed; *fieri aliter non potest*; light cannot be hid; and *no man lights a candle to put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick*. Sir, they must naturally conclude, as we should have done in the same case, that there was nothing in it, if they saw nothing of it.

§. 9. *Whether the gospel history be a proof that the Jews believed the miracles of Jesus ?*

But tho', to give their argument full scope, I have supposed the scribes, priests, and pharisees, had some apprehensions from miracles ; yet now I intend to enter into the merits of the cause, and examine what influence the miracles of Jesus, as recorded in the gospel, had upon them.

The *Clearer* has recourse to the gospels, to prove that the scribes and pharisees believ'd the miracles of Christ : No doubt but those writers would have it thought so, and unthinking Christians believe it; but what argument is this with Deists, with whom his engagement is, and whom he should attempt to convince? How is this evidence a proof to those that doubt the evidence by which arguments are found for both sides? And if for what makes against itself, those will be looked upon as the most credible : For not so much heed is given to what an evidence affirms on the side he espouses, as to what probable facts he inadvertently confesses on the contrary side. For what can that evidence prove to the satisfaction of the enquirer, who finds reason by his enquiry to be dissatisfied about the evidence? Witnesses that disagree, prove nothing in their own favour ; for their disagreements destroy their own authority, and make void what they insinuate by what they confess. The consistency and validity of the writings out of which the proofs are taken, and the probability of every thing they relate, should first be clear'd up, before the proofs out of it in their favour are to be taken for granted. For deists think it reasonable, that as these histories relate more improbable, and much more incredible things than other histories, they ought to bring with them some more substantial proof than others

to confirm the truth of such prodigies as they relate; or else that every relation in them which is not as probable as other true history should stand for nought; that what is to pass for the current coin of *Cæsar* should have *Cæsar's* image and superscription on it. Stories that are not miraculous may pass for truth, and often do, though they are not so. All the difference that I know of between a believer and an unbeliever, is this; one can believe what has the face of romance, and the other cannot. In common things they both believe, and may be impos'd on alike. For instance, should it be reported that the archbishop of *Canterbury* with his coach and horses went over the *Thames*, in the ferry, from *Lambeth* to *Palace-yard*, on a certain day; it might be credible, and Deists and Christians might believe it alike, though the report be false: But should it be affirm'd, that his grace's horses flew over the *Thames*, with the coach after them, even by the assistance of angels, I fear it would be incredible to those who are slow of heart to believe all that is written or reported, even tho' the bench of bishops had no more grace than to swear it, with reverence to them be it spoken, was it possible that they could report any thing so incredible: And why must we needs believe, on the bare report of unknown reporters, things seemingly as impossible or unlikely, because they are generally believ'd by those that never made a particular enquiry. Many believers have not time, some have no disposition, others no capacity to examine rightly. Besides, when principles are fixed by authority as only right, it discountenances all examination; and in all such cases it is done for that end, lest men should see different than their seers would have them. For my own part, Sir, I am determin'd to believe what appears to me to be right, and to examine into the appearances of things. Truth is  
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the touchstone of the gospel, not the gospel of truth; and the rule of truth is the reason and nature of things. No book can prove it self, but by its own internal marks; and must perish with the authority by which it is supported, unless it have this eternal character. But I must cut short this copious subject, because I have many articles to run thro'.

§. 10. *Whether the Jew rulers believed Christ's miracles?*

The *Clearer* endeavours to prove the book by the book, *viz.* that the priests, scribes, and pharisees believed the miracles of Christ; but the instances he brings, are no more a proof, than that telling a story is a proof of it. Such proofs may do for believers; but not for those he has to do with. If the effects don't agree with the causes, those causes are consequently disproved: as the tree is known by its fruits, so are the premises by their consequences. That the rulers did not believe them is plain, from what is there objected, *Have any of the rulers of the people believed in him?* And had they been satisfied with the reality of his miracles, they would not have desired others. Why does Jesus call upon them to believe his works, *John x. 25, 26. 38.* but because they didn't believe them, can any thing be more plain? They accuse him, *John viii. 13.* of bearing record of himself, without other sufficient testimony, and therefore that it was not true; to provoke him perhaps to work some miracle publickly in their sight. They call'd for signs and wonders, that they might believe, yet he gave them none, when they called for them: tho' all the wonders he is said to work, was for this end, that they might believe, yet this end they never effected. A bare declaration that he was the Christ, did

did not convince them ; nor did his prophecies, that he should rise again, convince even his disciples, which renders both doubtful. And 'tis own'd, that he obtain'd least credit among those who should have known him best, his own countrymen, and his own house. An evident miracle for the proof of his mission seems all along to be the contest between the unbelieving Jews, and him. The GREAT AUTHOR of *the Trial* seems to allow it, by saying, that Jesus put the proof of his mission on the truth of the resurrection before predicted : but this prediction, as well as the resurrection, appear to want that clear and proper evidence, which 'tis reasonable to expect in so important and extraordinary a case.

§. 11. *The Clearer's arguments to prove Christ's miracles believed, prove the contrary.*

Sir, If ' the Jews believed his miracles, and ' had a jealousy, that he might possibly be the ' Christ,' as the *Clearer* insinuates, (p. 39.) would they have used him as they did? The high priest putting the question to him in a solemn manner, Whether he was the Christ, does not prove that they suspected it ; it only proves his pretensions to that character, not so *Barabbas*, or any other common malefactor. They had put that question to him before, *John* x. 24. and probably often ; for had they been suspicious of it, and for that reason made a solemn enquiry, they would have been better satisfied with his answer, than it appears they were. He told them he was the Christ, and what was the consequence? The high priest rent his clothes, and cried out blasphemy for his assuming that character : and perhaps the high priest ask'd him with no other view, but to condemn him out  
of

of his own mouth, whether he denied, or affirmed it. Had he denied it, they had proof of his pretensions; and he affirming it, they condemn'd it for blasphemy: this might perhaps be to provoke him to work a miracle then, to prove it; for Jesus told them they should see one hereafter, but that would not satisfy them; and the high priest seem'd obliged to make the demand in that solemn manner, that he might give him an answer, because he answered nothing to questions that were ask'd him.

Again. When *Pilate* was willing to acquit him, lest he should not be crucified, *all the people*, as well as the priests, the scribes and pharisees, cried out earnestly, *Crucify him, crucify him, his blood be on us and on our children*; which shews, that what was the sense of the rulers, was the sense of all the people, except those that were his disciples; therefore his miracles were not generally believed.

*Obj.* ' But *St. Mark* says the people were influenc'd by their priests to make this clamorous demand.'

*Ans.* With *St. Mark's* leave, If the people had been well acquainted with his miraculous cures, as 'tis at other places insinuated, they could not have been thus unanimous with *loud voices* in making such demand; and I think, that ' He shews himself to be ' little acquainted with the sentiments of human nature' who thinks they could believe his miracles, believe him a prophet, and yet be influenc'd to speak and act in such a manner.

Again. *Herod* was glad when he had him in his custody, because he expected to see him do some miracle to save his life: but when he found nothing of that power display'd by him, he concluded it was not in him, thereupon he and his men of war despised him, and *set him at nought*, concluding certainly that the extraordinary power of God was

most necessary to be displayed, on the most extraordinary and necessary occasions; and therefore they mockt him on the cross, saying, *He saved others, himself he cannot save.* And, *Ab! thou that savedst others, save thyself, come down from the cross, and we will believe thee;* i. e. We will believe thou canst save others, if now thou canst save thyself. The *Clearer* supposing this to be mockery, argues that the mockery lies only in the last words, *himself he cannot save*, but that in the former, *he saved others*, they spake as they meant, and ‘acknowledge his miracles by which others are saved.’ But then these are words of pity, and from them no mockery can be drawn: but if the words, *himself he cannot save*, are not such as betoken pity, the whole is mockery, and signify, they believed nothing less than the former words express, that *he saved others*; these therefore are irony, if the others are drollery. As if they had said, See the proofs of his saving others, when he cannot save himself. It seems naturally impossible, they should believe he saved others, confess it, and droll upon it, or make it the subject of mockery, from which none can be drawn.

‘They go on with their mockery, says the *Clearer*, ‘*If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross: Why all this triumph in being delivered from the king of Israel, had they never suspected he might probably prove so indeed? What occasion for this sudden joy and exultation?*’ Certainly none, had they suspected he might have proved so, what advantage was it to them, to crucify one whom they suspected might one day be their king, and deliver them from their subjection to a foreign yoke? Had this gentleman quoted the whole text, it had set him right. *If he be the king of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him*, which shews they did not believe his miraculous power, nor that he

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was the Christ. As if they had said, If he be Christ the King of *Israel*, as he would be esteem'd, let him deliver himself now from the *Roman* power, without which he cannot deliver us, nor be our king, and then we will believe his power and character.

St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* say, *They that passed by rail'd on him, and reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, if thou be the son of God, come down from the cross: this is mockery both in words and gesture. He said, He is the son of God, if he be, let God deliver him now, if he will have him, i. e. for his son; let God shew it by a signal deliverance; which shews they had no such extraordinary opinion of him, and also the small credit and confidence they put in him, or his miraculous works.*

§. 12. *Miracles, without correspondent effects, improbable.*

The *Clearer* says, (p. 40.) ‘ Their mirth did not last long: when Christ died, nature seem'd to die with him; the sun was darkened, the veil of the temple was rent in the midst, the graves opened, the rocks rent, &c.’

And yet the nature of the Jews remain'd the same; their hearts were not rent, tho' the rocks rent; nor quaked, tho' the earth quaked; and tho' the graves opened, their understandings appear not to be opened! What a strange thing is infidelity, that no miracle can work upon it. The only persons these miracles were wrought to affect, were unaffected by any, which is itself another miracle! unless they were wrought only for show, and to be gaz'd at, to affect mens eyes, and not their hearts; or were they design'd not to do it? or could the

devil's power prevent God's from taking effect? Indeed the evangelists bring in the *Roman* centurion, saying, *this was a righteous man*, and the people smiting their breasts. But though all were smitten, none were wounded, none are said to be converted. The *Clearer* says, 'Probably the scribes and pharisees withdrew silently, unwilling to discover any fear or apprehension before the people.' And 'tis as probable they saw none of these sights, since we read of no effect these miracles had upon them. If we may judge by probabilities, is it probable that God, or Christ, should work wonders in vain, so that an uncommon power should be exerted, and produce no common effect! or that miracles should be wrought to contradict miracles! as those must be that have a contrary effect to their natural tendency, and the design of the Great Author. For according to the *Clearer*, concerning Christ's miracles, 'The question now is (saith he p. 38.) what effect this had upon the scribes and chief priests? That they were extremely alarm'd, appears plainly; and that they sought his life, as the only method to stop the influence he gain'd over the people, is notorious. But were they clear of all doubts themselves? Had they no misgivings of mind that he might possibly be what he pretended to be?' I say, Sir, to me it seems impossible, that they should seek his life to stop the influence he gain'd over the people by miraculous works, or that they sought his life, and brought about his death in a judicial way, and yet had misgivings or doubts in their minds, that he might possibly be what he pretended to be. 'Whoever can suppose it, shews himself to be but little acquainted with the sentiments of human nature.' If the *Romans* had acted thus towards him, for fear of his becoming a king, and breaking their power, it had been more reasonable; but that the Jews believing

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his miracles, should crucify him, for fear of his delivering them from the *Romans*, is altogether absurd. Had they believed he wrought many miracles, they had the less reason to fear the *Roman* power, and the more to let him alone, and let the *Romans* deal with him. But the case is, while some believed him to be *a good man*, it was the opinion of others, *that he deceived the people*; and the great men objected, that only the ignorant believed in him. If probability may be allowed, we may judge of effects by their causes, and of causes by their effects; *i. e.* wonderful causes will produce wonderful effects; and where no wonderful effects are produced, 'tis probable there were no wonderful producing causes: Or otherwise they are of no consequence or signification; they proceed from no natural cause; therefore, they being not a link of the great chain of nature, have no natural effects; they appear to be works in vain; extraordinary power displayed to no purpose; being out of nature, nature is not affected by them; they go no farther than themselves. A tryal of skill one may call it, that leaves every thing as it found them; him that is unjust, to be unjust still; he that is filthy, to be filthy still; he that is righteous, to be righteous still; and he that is a fool, a deceiver, or a believer, a wise or an honest man, or an infidel, to be the same still: So it was if the rulers and men of learning among the *Jews* had been witnesses of his power to work miracles, as 'tis insinuated, and yet behaved in so violent and outrageous a manner against him. That they should conspire to put *Jesus* to death because he wrought miracles, is to out-do miracles.

If it be objected, that this was the will of God, *That they seeing might see, and not perceive; and hearing might hear, and not understand; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears,*  
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and understand with their hearts, and should be converted and saved; and that the Lord gave them eyes that they might not see, ears that they might not hear, and hearts that they might not understand. Then one would be apt to think it had been more gracious to have given them neither eyes, ears, or hearts; and that the Lord had better concealed his wisdom, by saying nothing. This either made them rebellious, or hardened them in their rebellion; without which, 'tis confessed, they might have been converted. But this is throwing all the odium on God, to make the story good; and rather than that may be false, he must be rendered cruel and unjust. This way of accounting for such unaccountable things, may account for any thing, be it ever so absurd. Nor will a judicial hardning salve the sore, and be the consistent practice of him that *delights not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn and live*, of him whose *tender mercies are over all his works*, of him in whom *mercy rejoices against judgment*, and of him who *came to call sinners to repentance, and to seek and to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. Sir, I must own I think in this case, as 'tis represented, nothing could prevent nature from yielding, but a supernatural hardening power, an inflexible stubbornness miraculously infused in the leading Jews, or they must have shudder'd, and recoil'd, if they had seen such amazing power displayed by the mighty Jews.

§. 13. *Of the Jews ascribing Christ's miracles to the Devil.*

*Obj.* 'But the Jews, who could not deny his miracles, ascribed them to the power of the devil.'

*Ans.* 'Tis wonderful strange, that the Lord Jesus never cast this devil out of their hearts, and yet cast  
out

out all devils every where else ! Or that the devil of infidelity should be an invincible devil ! If the devil can work miracles as well as God, and they are not easy to distinguish, and miracles are the proofs of a divine mission, these proofs are not easily known ; and then we are little the better for having it signed and sealed with miracles. Mr. *Hardy*, a reverend, grave pate, that wrote against Mr. *Chubb*, says they are distinguished by superior power ; if so, good and evil are not criteria, but power gives right ; and the devil is right, when he is not contradicted, or confounded by superior power : But if Mr. *Chubb* had held such doctrine, what a devil would they make of him, for his powerful dulness. Supposing God and the devil both work miracles, I apprehend that natural reason can inform men how to distinguish the one from the other ; *viz.* by their nature, tendency, and effects. The devil's miracles must discover themselves by doing mischief to the bodies and properties of men, and acts of violence tending to some ill end, as the setting up another Deity, teaching immoral acts for religious duties, or doctrines destructive of reason and mankind, by introducing wars, tyranny, ignorance, persecution, and all mischiefs injurious to civil society. But suppose the miracles wrought are a mixture of good and evil, to whom then may they be ascribed ? If a man cannot serve God and Mammon, and there be no communion of light with darkness, if also God be absolutely good, they cannot be from him. And if the devil could speak truth for an ill end, as in *Job* ; or if he can transform himself into an angel of light, why may he not do good that evil may come ? Since we believe Jesus was sent from God, and acted by his Authority in all he did for the good of men, *that he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth ; that he went about doing*

good, to seek and to save those that were lost : If any works are said to be done by him, which are instances of power, but not of goodness, those stories must be look'd upon as forgery ; therefore the gospel of our Saviour's infancy is rejected, in which are many wonders reported to be done by him in his infancy, and some things mischievous : But, Sir, seeing the miraculous works of the blessed Jesus were all divinely good, those that were witnesses of them could not ascribe them to the devil. The tree is known by its fruit. If on this account *his fame went thro' all Syria* for the great and good works that he wrought ; if ' all the ' country was alarmed with his miracles, so that ' the chief priests could not be unacquainted with ' them, if many of his miracles were perform'd ' in public places of resort, in presence of the ' scribes and pharisees,' as the *Clearer* says, p. 37. How could they desire of him a sign from heaven, when they had so many, and such glaring wonders had been done before them ? And why did he answer that *no sign should be given them*, if he gave them so many ? What need had they to fear any thing, either as to his not being the person they expected, or being unable to perform what they desired ? And how could some of them say he deceived the people, call him a deceiver, and put him to death, and in the manner they did, had his miracles in doing good been so well known ; neither priest nor infidel would cry *crucify him, crucify him*, (which is the same as hang him, hang him,) in this age, nor any other age ; for men are in general the same in all ages ; they must needs think it weak, as well as wicked, to attempt to put to death one whom they knew had power to raise the dead.

Sir, if the enemies of Jesus doubted the reality of his miracles, or believing them, were foolish enough

enough to think they could be wrought by any other than the power of God; they might imagine if they had him in their custody they should have a proof of his ability, and so be convinc'd; or by putting him to death, put an end to their own fears of mutiny, and contentions on that score. This only will account for their actions towards him, and for despising his pretensions, as well as dismissing all their apprehensions concerning him, or what his weak, dispers'd, and terrified party, after his death, were able to do with his dead body.

If the Jews saw his miracles, and sometimes suspected they might be from God, at other times from the devil; those miracles were not of that sort as could certainly convince them *by what authority he did those things*, but left them in as much suspense as if he had not done any, and then all the great works he wrought were to no purpose, nor any true sign of his mission.

Sir, if the story was then reported, that Jesus had been in private conference with the devil forty days, and some had seen them on the pinnacle of the temple, it might give them a great deal of suspicion that he had to do with the devil, and was entered into contract with him to cure diseases and cast out devils by Beelzebub; not to divide, but to establish his kingdom in the world. But the story that gives colour to such an insinuation is so infamous, that it ought with scorn to be torn out of the gospels, and excommunicated as apocryphal and heretical.

§. 14. *Remarks on some particulars in the Clearer.*

As to my examination of St. *John*, concerning Christ's foretelling his resurrection, the *Clearer* is by no means willing to rely on it, and begs leave to examine for himself. Very well. To examine

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for one's self is right. But has he found me in an error? No: Then he confirms my search.

What the *Clearer* finds in St. *John* which he supposes predicted Christ's death, I pass over, that being no part of this argument. He imagines the resurrection indicated in *John* xiv. 1. 2. 16. 18. xv. 16. 22. which he says were far from being delivered as secrets. Tho' the meaning of those words must needs have been a secret then, if they are not so yet. He owns (p. 58.) that 'The disciples themselves little apprehended what Christ's dying and rising again meant, thought it mysterious, and a parable: They had been long accustomed to this sort of language, and had frequently been puzzled with it.' And elsewhere, 'When he was crucified, all their hopes died with him; and when he was risen again, they could scarce credit it.'

The *Clearer's* method of finding out the sense of expressions, by applying one to another uttered at different times and occasions, shews him to be in the utmost distress.

He thinks that prophecies may not be understood, till the thing prophesied comes to pass; but a prophecy not understood, is understood to be no prophecy.

The *Clearer* and the other defenders suppose too, that the evangelists were great grammarians, and had a critical knowledge of the *Greek* tongue, or why do they reason so grammatically in several places. A thousand suppositions not to be proved are not to the purpose.

#### §. 15. *Of the predictions of the resurrection.*

In my *Resurrection of Jesus consider'd*, it was observed, that it does not appear to be foretold, nor expected, for reasons which I shall now corroborate.

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I. Because what was said to be given in public, was not understood to relate to it, nor fulfill'd.

1st. As to time; tho' much pains has been taken to make out the time from Friday evening to Sunday morning, answer to three days and three nights, the little I have said will not convince them, and the great deal they have said will not convince me. Mr. *Whiston* says on this subject, ' I cannot pretend, that two nights alone are three nights;' and therefore he thinks the three days and three nights in *Matthew* xii. 40. a later interpolation: and I think Christ cannot be said to rise on the third day, if he rose before the third day came. He laid in the grave no part of the third day, nor the third night: this difficulty has no doubt been a thousand times repeated, but never confuted, neither in the *TRIAL*, *the Evidence clear'd*, nor any other, nor can be; therefore it would be lost time to take notice of what has been said, or say any more about it. But,

2dly. The prediction says no sign should be given to that evil generation, but that of *Jonah*; and yet neither the sign, nor the thing signified, was ever given to that evil generation, who required it: but these gentlemen can see no promise of a resurrection to *them* in this sign, only of lying a certain time in the grave. But, says the *Clearer*, ' that Christ would appear to them in person after his resurrection, there is not a word about it.' Then it was no sign at all to them; it signified only, that he should, when dead, lie three days in the grave, and who doubted it: well then, what did they expect, that he would afterwards rise again; ' there is not a word about it,' says he: what then were they afraid of? and why did they watch?

3dly. The Jews were told *no* sign should be given them, but that of the prophet *Jonas*; whereas the *Clearer* says, he gave them many other signs or miracles,

miracles, which if he did, this sentence is not true, and if this sentence be true, he gave them no sign, but disclaimed all miraculous power; tho' if any sign was given, why should they demand another; and why did he not then refer them to those signs and wonders he had given them? Or why not tell them of the resurrection of *Lazarus*, that was to be? If he intended to give them a sign, why was not *Lazarus* rather given for a sign to that generation than *Jonas*, whom they knew nothing of, but by tradition? If *Lazarus* was fairly dead, and rais'd again to life by divine power, it could not have been prevented by their fore-knowing it: to have given them notice of it at such time, when they call'd upon him for a sign from heaven, must have been a full and satisfactory answer. All my antagonists have passed over in silence the remarks I made on what followed the raising of *Lazarus*, in the *Resurrection considered*, third edition, page 28. That affair is set in so true and converting a light, that it dazzles their interested optics.

The prediction in *John* ii. 20. was not understood by any, therefore no prediction; and when spoken, conveyed no such meaning to the hearers, as his resurrection from the dead.

II. The predictions said to be given in private were not understood to have any signification of a real resurrection, but only as parables, and dark enigma's, therefore no predictions.

1<sup>st</sup>. Because 'tis confessed, the disciples did not understand the words that were spoken, what rising from the dead meant; therefore they could not blab it to the high priest and pharisees, nor alarm them with what they were not alarm'd of, nor expected. And those that heard not his prophecies, nor believ'd his miracles, but were ever and anon calling for a miracle, could not expect the rising again of *Jesus* after his death.

But

But if a fraudulent resurrection was apprehended, as St. *Matthew* relates, and Mr. *Chandler* supposes, of the disciples making, and therefore they sat a watch, and a true one unexpectedly happen'd, 'tis not probable.

1<sup>st</sup>. Because 'tis not credible that the watchmen should be almost killed by miracles, and deny those miracles that had such an effect upon them.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Because 'tis not credible that the Jew rulers should believe them, and hire the soldiers to deny that truth which they themselves believed.

3<sup>dly</sup>, Because 'tis not credible that the rulers and soldiers should by so doing think to conceal the consequence of a true resurrection.

4<sup>thly</sup>, Because 'tis confessed that Jesus never appeared in public to any, but to his disciples only.

5<sup>thly</sup>, Because the accounts of the appearances of Jesus, even to his disciples, do not agree, nor can they make them agree, tho' they have rack'd their inventions all manner of ways, and would have their unauthoriz'd explanations pass for gospel authority.

6<sup>thly</sup>, I have to add, that the miraculous circumstances of the resurrection as related, and the miracles said to be done afterwards to prove it, do all want equal proof as the resurrection itself.

§. 16. *The defenders characteriz'd.*

I wish, Sir, I could find any fair Arguments against these, in the writings of any of my reverend opponents, who 'tis likely may imagine they have said something which deserves regard: I wish I could with an honest heart pay them a compliment that I find any of them produce better than the great *Clearer* himself, who has the art of making assertions and suppositions look like reason and argument.

As for Mr. *Chandler*, I declare without flattery or envy, maugre all his snarling, (tho' if he snarl'd less, he would write better) he is next to a bishop in his way, greater than St. *Paul* for learning, and almost like him, scarce behind the very chiefest of the apostles; with this difference, St. *Paul* had a thorn in the flesh, but he has a thorn in the spirit.

Respecting Mr. *Silvester*, I am sorry that any honest man should not see that truth and honesty are nearly related: However, as he is churchman, and what he has wrote is for the church, 'tis excusable. He but modestly supposes things, and hopes his suppositions will be admitted to pass for authentic:

But Mr. *Jackson* does more; he asserts many things, which would be labour lost for me to repeat, and himself to attempt to prove; it is much the shorter method to assert all, than to prove any thing. I expected better things of so good an author, but men cannot make bricks without clay, whatever they may do without straw. However, he asserts so boldly, one would almost think he had been one of the witnesses.

When men are in palpable distress, what can they do? These brave defendants do all that men in their circumstances can. 'Tis not therefore the fault of the pleaders that the cause is not clear'd up; but the inexplicable darkness that envelopes it. They want neither understanding to brighten their own side nor blacken the other.

§. 17. *Of spicing the body of Jesus, and other circumstances.*

The *Clearer* thinks, p. 70, 71. that the disciples spicing their master's body, is no argument of their believing or not believing his resurrection. But were the *Clearer's* friends to offer to give him the extreme unction at going to bed, supposing his religion

ligion allowed of that ceremony, he would think either that they did not expect him to rise again, or that their senses were not so sound as his body.

The *Clearer* seems hardly to believe those he calls the witnesses, who tell him the disciples did not expect the resurrection of their master. But had they expected it, what need was there of this cost and ceremony? Dead bodies were spiced to preserve them from stinking; I think there was no fear of that in two days, had they expected him to rise the third. Or would the power of the resurrection not have sweetened it? *Martha* said her brother *Lazarus* had been dead four days, and by this time he stinketh; yet I suppose he rose sweet enough. Why was not he spiced, but because probably 'twas expected he should rise again. And why was the body of Jesus spiced, but because the disciples confessed they had no expectation of it. This plainly enough betrays their want of faith and foreknowledge of the resurrection of Jesus.

If *Nicodemus*, who was a ruler and a disciple, interr'd the body with an hundred pound weight of spices, it's evident neither the rulers nor disciples had any notice of his rising again from the dead, and knew not any prophecy concerning it; and plainly that they thought him dead to all intents and purposes, since they were so officious, when they had so little time to do it, the sabbath drawing on.

It appears, Sir, then, that the chief priests having never had any information that Jesus was to rise again, nor seen any wonderful thing done by him, tho' they desired to see something of that sort which had been reported to them, they could have no anxiety about his dead body to occasion them to set a watch. As for the disciples, 'tis own'd they had them in contempt, and therefore could be under no apprehension of their power, or plotting to  
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steal away the body, and pretend it was risen, or of making any hand of it if they did; for could the people believe he was risen from the grave, if they saw him not afterwards, who to them seem'd not able to deliver himself from the pains of death, of the public ignominious death of a criminal. No wonder this was *to the Jews a stumbling block*.

Why could not the Jew rulers set a watch at the sepulchre without asking leave of *Pilate*? Or why should they desire him to do that for them, which they were capable of doing for themselves? since it appears to me that any private person might have done this, or hired another, or some others to do it, unless they were afraid the persons so doing might be murdered in the night, and therefore it was necessary for them to watch armed. If this was the case, it is plain they were afraid of dark villany, not of the appearance of Jesus and honesty, and then a strong guard was necessary; then the more public, the more wonderful the women did not hear of it, as the *Clearer* suggests, and then the greater wonder the guard should all agree to spread about a false report, contrary to their knowledge; and the less reason to suppose their sleepy story could be credited, or that one or two angels in winding sheets should frighten all and convert none. Not to mention the angels going away when the light came, as if they were afraid or ashamed of being seen: Why was this done in the dark? and why did Jesus rise before the sun? Why did the angels and the soldiers run away at the approach of day? I wish, if true, they had not a fellow-feeling, for there was no seeing in the case. The story is as dark as the night it was done in. ‘ You see, ‘ Sir, how this demonstration *for* the gospel-evidence turns out.’

§. 18. *Of the women disciples that attended the sepulchre.*

To expose some things is a sufficient answer. The *Clearer* insinuates that the women who followed the body from the cross to the sepulchre, knew nothing what was done to it, for *Joseph* and *Nicodemus* wrapt it in linen, nor did they nor any one else vouchsafe to tell the women, though they were those who had subsisted and attended Jesus in his preaching and travels: Yet, as they never left the corps till they saw it deposited, they might undoubtedly have smelt an hundred pound weight of spices. The *Clearer*, Sir, queries whether it was sufficient, and supposes, that ‘ the funeral ceremonies ‘ were reserved to be perform’d after the sabbath ‘ with more spices, had not providence prevented ‘ it by a more wonderful event,’ by the unbelieving women disciples, who had buried their faith with their master, while the faith of infidel priests grew out of his grave, and would have had no other evidence of his resurrection than what the apostles gave them, if they had not watch’d the sepulchre. ‘ This more wonderful event’ neither the men nor women disciples expected; and though it is said to be known to, and believed by the unbelieving Jew rulers, *Nicodemus* the only believer among the rulers, did not believe it; for spicing the body was a sign of his infidelity or ignorance, not of his faith or knowledge. As for the women, poor creatures, the *Clearer* argues they were ignorant of every thing, knew nothing of the prediction, nor of *Nicodemus*’s spicing the body, or that a watch had been seen set, ’twas done ‘ while ‘ they were confined at home,’ and rested devoutly on the sabbath, ‘ without stirring abroad,’ or gossiping, or asking or hearing any news all that

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live-long day ; for neither ‘ the *Roman* governor ‘ nor the chief priests thought it necessary to inform these poor women ; ’ nor could any one else, for they set a public watch privately, the women therefore could not know, for they were no witches, nor were any of the disciples conjurers enough to inform them of it ; and being the sabbath, no body came near them, nor stirr’d out of doors, but the Jew rulers to beg the body might be watch’d, and the watchmen. These things being granted, ‘ I cannot apprehend how it was possible they should know what was done at the ‘ sepulchre ; therefore they went early in the morning after the sabbath was past, to pay their last respects to it, by anointing and perfuming it, and consulted about rolling away the stone from the sepulchre. And therefore ‘ where is the inconsistency of all this ? Or how are these different stories ? ’

’Tis said, Sir, that the women at the sepulchre *mourned and wept*. Why should they weep if they knew he was to rise again, and in so short a time ? Had they known this, certainly they would have watch’d the grave with eager expectation and joy. But they had forgot his words (*Luke xxiv. 6, 7, 8.*) till put in mind of it by two shining men at the sepulchre. A likely story ! How could they forget at so remarkable a time, such repeated assurances of the most amazing action that ever was, and they his most intimate friends, acquaintance, and believers in him ?

§. 19. *Of the effect the apparition made to the watch, bad on them and the priests.*

The *Clearer* says, ‘ that the chief priests well knew ‘ what effect the report of the watch would naturally have on the minds of the people, if fairly made.’ How could they know it, if it made none

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on them nor the watch? And if it had an effect on both the watch and them, why does he only in contradiction to what I argued about it, endeavour to prove it had not? If it had an effect, how could they think to prevent it by means of those very men that had found it irresistible. But tush, he insinuates that was but ‘a fright,’ (p. 87, 88.) ‘There is not the least reason to suspect they were acquainted with the character and pretensions of the person lying in the grave,’ tho’ all Jerusalem knew it. ‘They did not expect to be disturb’d by invisible powers.’ True; but if they were, and the invisible powers appear’d visible, it must have been the more surprizing. But after they had been so greatly disturbed, that they became as dead men, and had told it to the high priest and rulers, it affected them no more. Why? They were common soldiers, and therefore not common men; they were scared and terrified by a surprizing sight, but unaffected with the consequences; and the chief priests too, though they were alarm’d at it. The soldiers, bribed by them with ready money, reported what the priests invented; who, though they admitted his miracles, and were witnesses to some of them, so that (p. 61.) ‘Whether they thought him to be the Christ or no, could not but suspect him to be a great prophet at least;’ yet they ascribed his miracles to the power of Beelzebub; and tho’ they suspected ‘He might possibly come from the grave arm’d with power to take vengeance for their wicked and cruel treatment of him,’ yet ‘Might ascribe all the guards reported to be done at the sepulchre to the power of the devil:’ *Supra quam cuique credibile est.* Priests and infidels, or infidel priests have generally more sense than to believe so much in the devil.

The *Clearer* thinks it proper that neither the watch, the angels, nor the priests should be witnesses of the resurrection, p. 91. but such chosen witnesses to convince the world, as the world would not chuse of all men, interested in the case, whose honesty was suspected, and judg'd to require a strict watch, lest they should be guilty of foul play. But tho' the high priest and rulers knew the disciples, and we not, we can confide in the integrity of the disciples, tho' they could not, whereby our faith is approved: thus we being spiritually begotten, and their offspring thro' faith by a lineal descent, we go to heaven in a right line.

§. 20. *Remarks on Mr. Chandler's assertions.*

Mr. *Chandler* (p. 8, and 9.) assures us, that the ' predictions of Christ to his disciples of his sufferings and resurrection, as to the sense and meaning of them, were too clear to be misunderstood; ' and p. 10. ' they understood the meaning of these ' expressions perfectly well; ' tho' the evangelists ' say the disciples did *not* understand them, *Mark* ix. 10. 32. as also appears by their actions: but he presumes, that they did not understand how the Messiah was to suffer and rise again, and yet they understood Jesus to be the Messiah, and the sense of what he told them about it, very well. If they did understand his words, why did they not believe, and expect the fulfilling them? If they did not understand how the Messiah was to suffer, why did he not open their understandings? without which, whatever he taught them, they learnt nothing. Why did he, who was called *the light of the world*, find and leave them in the dark. He calls *them* the light of the world, *Matt.* v. 14. and yet they groped in darkness. Jesus said, *All that*  
*ever*

*ever came before me were thieves and robbers,* John x. 8. so are all that have been after him, for they have stole away our light. Their prejudices, say these pleaders, darkened their minds; strange! that the light of God which came down from heaven being with them, could not, or did not remove those prejudices! That God should not enlighten his own people, nor Christ his disciples is a very dark story.

Mr. C. adds, that 'if they were not satisfied, 'twas because they demanded unreasonable satisfaction:' this is an unreasonable assertion; for what is more reasonable, than such proof of the truth of a fact, as the nature of it could and ought to give; and p. 19. 'Supposing they were an evil, adulterous, profligate, hypocritical, persecuting, bigotted generation, how was it possible to satisfy them?' says he. Were they too bad to be made good? Or were they to have the less motives to make them so, in proportion as they were the more wicked? Or, suppose men are unreasonably bad, are not reasonable methods therefore to be used to make them better? You know, Sir, let men be ever so bad, they nevertheless believe their own eyes. Had Jesus personally and publickly appeared to them after his resurrection, as before, the trouble of after miracles might have been spared, and the the Holy Ghost might have staid in heaven. If a miracle be necessary at all to confirm it, 'tis now; but then it required no other than a personal manifestation.

It would be lost time, Sir, particularly to shew how greatly Mr. C. affirms and suggests, and how little he proves, like the other gentlemen in this unbloody war; they make desperate attacks, but shameful retreats. Arguments founded merely on imagination, are but imaginary arguments: suppositions

sitions are fit answers to suppositions; and assertions to assertions; which may be done without end.

§. 21. *Whether the watch were credible evidence in favour of the resurrection.*

Sir, If the Jew rulers found it necessary policy to bribe the soldiers to report a lye, and did it; if they could bribe them to deny what they had affirm'd, the rulers had little reason to believe their former affirmations; but might reasonably conclude, that those mercenary rogues had been before-hand hired by the disciples to lye to them, as they had hired them to lye to the people. If they did not scruple lying for a bribe in one case, they would do the same in the other; for either side was equal to them. They that can assert any thing for a bribe, and those who say and unsay, prove nothing: what is an equal proof to both sides, is a proof to neither. If they could be bribed to lye at all; there is the less reason to believe any thing they reported; they are a perjured evidence, and not to be credited in any respect, or for any party. Thus, supposing there was a watch as pretended, they prove nothing in favour of the resurrection; because if they were liable to be corrupted by the priests, they might have been also corrupted by the disciples. Or, who knows but the hundred pound weight of spices might allure them to remove the body in the dark; if that was not enough, *an angel* a-piece might induce them to run away, and let the disciples do what they pleas'd with it. What certainty have we, supposing there was a watch, that it was not so? or that countenance and encouragement was not given to this angelic story by *Pilate*?

§. 22. *Of the sufficiency of gospel evidence, and my errors.*

I asked, Why do the evangelists tell different stories? ‘What do you mean?’ says the *Clearer*, St. *Matthew* alone tells the story of guarding the sepulchre, the rest are quite silent in that point, but say nothing that is inconsistent with it.’ The inconsistency I have already shewn. ‘St. *Matthew* alone tells the story of watching the sepulchre, the rest are quite silent about it;’ what, not one word by the others, but of facts that cannot at all stand with it? Why did not *Matthew* mention what the women came for to roll away the stone, and spice the body? No; ’twas not agreeable to the story of the watch. That the gospel evidence may be as remarkable as the gospel facts, one witness unknown and absent, must be sufficient in uncommon cases; but common cases in law require at least two living witnesses present to establish the truth; for the gospel is founded on faith, but the law on reason.

All the *Considerer’s* reasons are to be esteem’d of no weight: why? because, says Mr. *Jackson*, he blunders, and mistakes one man for another, and one woman for another. Well, I am convinc’d of these two errors, and make a public recantation: 1<sup>st</sup>, I mentioned that *Agrippa*, which should have been *Festus*, told *Paul* he was mad, p. 71. of the 2<sup>d</sup> edition, line 30. ’tis easily mended, for *he* read *Festus*; but what is this to the argument? and p. 35, for *Mary* the mother of *Jesus*, read *Joses*; and p. 36, for *Jesus’s* own mother, read the mother of *Joses*; for ’tis a question, whether we may not reckon the mother of *Jesus* among his brethren, *Matt.* xii. 47, 48, 49. *John* vii. 3, 4, 5. and one  
of

of his own kindred, and his own house, *Mark* v. 4. for it seems he had little to do with his own mother, *John* ii. 4.

§. 23. *Of the defenders attempts to reconcile the appearances of Christ.*

All the four gentlemen agree to affirm, that there is no inconsistency at all in the relation of the appearances of Christ in the four gospels; yet, Sir, there is no agreement among them and the gospels, nor among one another in making them consistent.

Mr. *Chandler* says, (p. 79.) that 'Grotius and most other interpreters make this appearance of Christ to *Mary Magdalene*, mentioned by *St. John*, the same with that to the women mentioned by *St. Matthew*, and think, that the appearance of the angel mentioned by *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, which was made to the women in common, was also the same as that which *St. John* mentions as made to *M. Magdalene*. But Mr. C. being full of himself, thinks there is the *fullest evidence* to the contrary; if so, 'tis surprizing that others could not, as well as himself, distinguish by the *fullest evidence*: but if he means, that in such light there is the fullest evidence, that the story does not harmonize, it may be true. 'What then is to be done in this distress,' but to suppose them two distinct appearances, to reconcile the inconsistencies that attend their being one appearance. It is to be observed, Sir,

1<sup>st</sup>, That they have no authority for doing this, but the necessity they are under to reconcile the differences, that arise from their being considered as one appearance.

2<sup>dly</sup>, That considering them as two distinct appearances does not reconcile the differences.

3<sup>dly</sup>,

3dly, That tho' they affirm nothing more than that they are consistent in every part, they prove nothing less.

But the *great Clearer* has endeavoured to reconcile the differences in one appearance, (if I understand him aright) tho' his great patron supposed two to *M. Magdalene*.

§. 24. *Mr. Sylvester's account of the appearances of Jesus compared with the evangelists.*

I shall mention *Mr. Sylvester* next, because the others seem to have followed him, with some variation where they are cramp't, to make it, as they think, more consistent, they fall under a necessity, as men shipwrack't, each to shift for himself. *Mr. T. S.* from *Lucas Brugensis*, delivers it thus, p. 63, 64.

1. ' When the women saw the body was gone, and had seen the vision of angels, who said that he was alive, and communicated it to the disciples;

2. ' Then ran *Peter* and *John* quickly to the sepulchre, and not finding the body of *Jesus*, returned home astonish'd, *Luke* xxiv. 12. *John* xx. 3.

3. ' *Mary Magdalene* returning to the sepulchre, and continuing there weeping, had the honour of the first appearance from our Lord, *Mark* x. 9. *John* xx. 11.

4. ' When she had communicated this to the other women, and was going together with them to the apostles, to signify what had happened, *Jesus* met them, appearing to them all, *Matt.* xxviii. 9.

5. ' During this, after the appearance of the angels to the soldiers, who were appointed for the watch, being bribed, they went into the city, and reported, that the disciples came by night,

‘ and stole the body of Jesus away, *Matt.*  
‘ xxviii. 4. 11.

6. ‘ The women giving testimony that Jesus was  
‘ alive, and the apostles being incredulous, he ap-  
‘ peared then to *Peter*, *Luke* xxiv. 34.

7. ‘ Afterwards he appeared to the two disciples  
‘ going to *Emmaus*, *Luke* xxiv. 13. *Mark* xvi. 12.

8. ‘ And then on the evening of the first day of  
‘ the week, that is, the Lord’s day, he appeared  
‘ to all the apostles together, *Thomas* alone being  
‘ absent; *Mark* xvi. 14. *Luke* xxiv. 36. *John*  
‘ xx. 19.

9. ‘ *Thomas* remaining incredulous to the report  
‘ of the disciples, Jesus presented himself before  
‘ them all, to be seen and felt on the eighth day  
‘ after, *John* xx. 24.

10. ‘ Afterwards the disciples repairing to *Gali-*  
‘ *lee*, as they were commanded, they saw Jesus at  
‘ the sea of *Tiberias*, and there he dined with  
‘ them, *John* xxi. 1.

11. ‘ And afterwards he was seen by a great num-  
‘ ber on the mount, *Matt.* xxviii. 16.

12. ‘ So then after the completion of forty days,  
‘ in which he conversed with his disciples, speaking  
‘ to them the things that concern the kingdom of  
‘ God, on the fortieth day, while they beheld he  
‘ ascended into heaven, *Mark* xvi. 19. *Luke* xxiv.  
‘ 50. *Acts* i. 3.’

Against this, Sir, I have these objections.

That the women went and found the body was gone, came and told *Peter* and *John*, and went again with them, and saw Jesus in their second return, is not agreeable to any evangelical account. *Matthew* says, in their return from thence the first time, they met Jesus by the way. It must be the first time, because they carried spices with them.

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If they went twice to the sepulchre, and saw angels at the first time, who told them, that Jesus was alive, why did they not tell it to *Peter* and *John*? and if they did, why does not *John* mention it? but on the contrary, that they said, they have taken the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. This, says Mr. C. is only a rehearsal of what she said to the angel; but no angel told him so: and why did she or *John* tell one part of the story, and not the other?

If the soldiers were but going into the city, when the women were the last time going to tell the disciples, certainly they must have seen them at the sepulchre the first time; but that they could not do, for the soldiers fled at the opening the sepulchre, and *M. Magdalene* with the women came the first time after it was opened.

Where was Jesus gone, that he did not appear to *Peter* and *John* at the sepulchre, yet must of necessity be there but a little before, and was there afterwards? So were the angels, yet *Peter* and *John* saw them not, neither in the sepulchre nor out of it.

§. 25. *The manner of the first appearance to Mary Magdalene, according to the Clearer.*

The *Clearer* differs from *Lucas Brugenfis*, in that he conceives these two appearances are one, and says *Mary Magdalene* was only mention'd as being the principal, and that she saw Jesus after going the second time to the sepulchre with the women, (which *Matthew* says was in their first return.) By this accommodation of the appearance, *standing* and *going*, at the sepulchre, and *at a distance* from it, are the same thing. The *Clearer* says Jesus forbid them to touch his body, after they had touch'd him. ' If *Mary* had not laid hold of Jesus's feet,

‘ he could have no occasion to say, *touch me not.*’ Thus he alone attempts to reconcile the accounts in one appearance. To do him justice, as after all, he does not conceal his diffidence of the truth according to his explanation ; so I will not conceal his modesty. ‘ Upon the whole (says he) I think the account here given seems to me to be the most probable, which I would be understood to say without prejudice to other interpretations, which many worthy and learned writers have followed.’

§. 26. *The history of Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene according to Mr. Chandler.*

But Mr. *Chandler* will have it, that *M. Magd.* in one journey to the sepulchre saw Jesus twice, once alone, according to St. *John*, and once with her companions, according to St. *Matthew*. And (p. 83, 84.) that ‘ They afterwards came to *Peter* and *John*, and that *M. Magd.* told them she had a message from Christ to them all : That the two apostles gathered the rest together, with *M. Magd.* and the other women ; she related to them the several appearances as they happened in order, who had a greater command of her spirits, and was able calmly to give them the important relation, who heard all without believing any thing. It does not appear (adds he) from this account, that *M. Magd.* ran back and told the disciples what she had seen at the sepulchre, and then return'd to it and saw Jesus.— (p. 84.) ‘ ’Tis absolutely improbable.’ (p. 86, 87.) *Mark* and *John* speak of the first appearance of Christ to *Mary* and the rest of her companions, as they were at a distance from the sepulchre, and hastening home to make their report to the apostles.’ — (p. 79.) ‘ Either *M. Magd.* did not flee at all from it, (*i. e.* the sepulchre) or immediately returned to it.’ —

(p. 88.) ‘ Though St. *John* mentions *M. Magdalen*’s running to *Peter* immediately after the account that she saw the stone taken from the sepulchre, yet St. *John* never gives the least intimation that *M. Magd.* returned back to the sepulchre; but after the series of the history had been interrupted by the relation of *Peter* and *John*’s running to the sepulchre, he resumes it again, and connects it by a word that plainly shews it to be a continuance of the foregoing narration.’ Thus by interpolations these holy writings are defended against any interpolations, and the story is justified from being a blunder by making the story-tellers blunderers.

§. 27. *Mr. Jackson’s relation of the appearance of Jesus to M. Magdalen.*

Mr. *Jackson*’s gospel of the resurrection, p. 124, 125, 126, differs from Mr. *Sylvester*’s and the rest, of which this is the substance: *M. Magd.* with the other women go to the sepulchre, and find not the body; *Mary Magdalene* leaves them, and runs to tell *Peter* and *John*; the other women stay and see Angels; they go to tell the disciples; when they are gone, come *Peter* and *John*; *M. Magd.* follows; the men examine the sepulchre, and go home; *M. Magdalen* stays, sees angels and Jesus; she runs to tell the disciples of it; after this Jesus appeared to the other women also by the way, that were gone before, and suffered them to lay hold of his feet, though he would not permit *M. Magdalene* to touch him.

§. 28. *Remarks on the expositions of these gospel-defenders.*

Thus, Sir, these gentlemen have tryed all manner of ways to make the story consistent, though every  
every

every one of them assert there is no inconsistency in the several accounts of the evangelists ; yet in endeavouring to make them agree, the gospels of the resurrection of the *Clearer*, of Mr. *Sylvester*, of Mr. *Chandler*, and of Mr. *Jackson*, differ as much as *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*. *Nulli duo concinnunt*. Their understanding it so differently shews it is above *their* understanding as well as mine ; yet every one seems sure his own is right ; and if it be, I am sure no man knows which to take, or refuse. But above all that are sure, as Mr. *Jackson* expresses it, p. 139, that ‘ There is no contradiction nor inconsistencies ‘ in the several accounts of Christ’s resurrection, nor ‘ any other difference but one evangelist omits some ‘ circumstances which are related in others :’ I say above all the rest I recommend you, Sir, to Mr. *Chandler*, if positiveness be a proof of being in the right, he is positively the man. And to compleat the jest he pretends to scrape acquaintance with *honesty*, whom you may believe him acquainted with, if he is so weak in judgment as to be strong in faith. He says, p. 86. ‘ Upon the whole, as ‘ the several accounts are fairly capable of being ‘ reconcil’d without any unnatural suppositions and ‘ forced constructions upon the plain letter of the ‘ words, and the intimations dropt by one or other ‘ of the historians themselves ; I am forced as an ‘ *honest man*, and a lover of justice, to bring in my ‘ verdict in favour of these witnesses, and declare ‘ them fully consistent.’ p. 80. ‘ So that compar- ‘ ing these several accounts, we have the whole his- ‘ tory of this important event compleat, and every ‘ part of it is a confirmation of the whole.’ p. 82. ‘ So that the testimony of the evangelists in ‘ their different narrations is perfectly consistent.’ p. 92. ‘ ’Tis not necessity, any other than that ‘ irresistible necessity of fact, and the strongest cir- ‘ cumstances, that drives us to assert two appear- ‘ ances,

ances, which removes all absurdity from the account, and justifies the whole, without receding one tittle from the letter of the history, &c.'

To affirm at this rate, after such transpositions, interpolations, and constructions, which he is forced to make use of, to make it in any tolerable manner hang together, and accord, is intollerable, and shews that *modesty* is an utter stranger to him. I wish he had better acquaintance with that polite lady, and was more in favour with her grace.

If such dividing and tacking of the evangelists together, as all these gentlemen are forc'd to contrive to make discord look like concord, was done to make them disagree, what would christian preachers and believers think and say, or rather what would they not say to expose and reproach such male practice. Tho' the *Clearer* says, 'All the evidence is on the side of the resurrection,' 'tis evident they find it very difficult to bring them all on one side, and that the methods they are oblig'd to take, shews them reduc'd to the greatest distress. What does all these contrivances demonstrate, but the palpable patchwork of an ill connected story, to make the best of it. They tell us St. *John* wrote his gospel to correct the defects of the others: Certainly they were very defective, and his correction very incorrect. 'Tis confessing the evangelists told their story by halves, and so badly, that if they had not the Holy Ghost to direct them, no body stood in more need of it; nor is there less need of him now to inform us what they mean, than was at first to teach them what he meant. If they had learn'd their lesson right, they certainly would have taught us better; but their blundering shews their honesty: Though the Holy Ghost may pardon an honest blunderer, yet sure he would never chuse to send such of an errand. To make up their defects, these gentlemen give us for

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gospel

gospel their own conjectures, for which there is no authority, the pure offspring of invention and necessity to make the accounts correspond, which yet fail in doing. But such mangling and cobling of the text shews manifest confusion and egregious blunders not easy to make on the side of truth and understanding, nor easy to reconcile with it. And it seems very unreasonable that the worst story-tellers should demand the best credit, and that on the severest penalties. This, Sir, to me is a demonstration of the badness of the story, that it needs such penalties to make it pass; for the most shining truth is always attended with the clearest evidence, and virtue is wholly without compulsion, 'tis the best natured thing in the world. Truth and virtue go hand in hand, always attended by freedom; but error dwells with confusion, vice and compulsion.

Tho' every one knows, that stories which do not agree, cannot be all true, yet they do not consider, that 'tis more likely they may be all false; and that many that do agree, are also false; therefore the agreement of stories is no proof of the truth of them; and if probability be absent, it shews proof is wanting. Improbable histories that rightly tally, prove the fact no more, than a false story often repeated by one person, or told by several, prove it to be true.

§. 29: *The harmony of the gospel defenders.*

Having shewn, Sir, how each of these gentlemen endeavour to state the account of Christ's first appearance, to make the evidence agree, and what agreement is between them and the evidence, I now come to shew, how in endeavouring to remove all disagreements they agree one with another.

I hope, Sir, that you now clearly see, that there is such agreement in the gospel, and gospel ex-  
pounders

pounders and defenders, that whether the first appearance of Christ after his resurrection was to *Mary* alone, according to St. *John*, Mr. *Sylvester*, p. 65. Mr. *Chandler*, p. 78, 79. and Mr. *Jackson*, p. 126. or to her in company with other women, as St. *Matthew* and the *Clearer* say, in contradiction to St. *John* and the rest; both are consistent, and agreeable to them and the text. Whether *Mary* toucht not Jesus's feet at first, but embrac'd them afterwards, as Mr. *Sylvester* has it; or whether she and the women embrac'd them, and were forbidden at the same time, as the *Clearer* says, p. 114. or that *Mary* was not forbid at all, and that 'there is no reason to think it,' as Mr. C. p. 89, says; and that she was forbid, and did not touch him at all, as Mr. *Jackson* says, p. 126. Is either way intirely consistent? Whether *M. M.* went with other women to the sepulchre, and afterwards came and told *Peter* and *John*, and left the other women behind, as Mr. *Jackson* says; or whether they went away, and left her behind, or went a little way with them, and then return'd alone, and afterwards join'd them, as Mr. *Chandler* says; or whether they all went together, as say Mr. *Sylvester* and the *Clearer*, is all concordant and consistent? Whether *M. M.* with the women, reported to the apostles they had seen angels and Jesus Christ, as St. *Matthew* and Mr. C. says, (p. 85.) or that they reported not a word about it, only that the body was gone, as St. *John* and the *Clearer* relate, (p. 105.) is perfectly natural and harmonious? So, whether *Mary* saw Christ after *Peter* and *John* went to the sepulchre, as St. *John* and the *Clearer* and Mr. *Jackson* relate? Or whether she saw him at the sepulchre before *Peter* and *John* went there, as Mr. C. places it, 'I am forc'd, as an honest man, and a lover of justice, to bring in my verdict in favour of these jury-men, and declare them fully consistent.' That St.

*Mark* and *St. John* speak of one appearance to *M. Magd.* alone, standing by the sepulchre, and *Matthew* of another to her and her companions, going away, and at a distance from it, as they were hastening home, as *Mr. C.* has it, (p. 86, 87.) or that it was but one appearance in all to *M. M.* and her companions, as the *Clearer* supposes; and therefore standing or running, being at the sepulchre or at a distance from it, by herself or in company, to make *Matthew* and *John* agree, is all one; nor is there any manner of contradiction in it, nor in their contradictions, which last is as true as all the rest.

§. 30. *Remarks on attempting to reconcile irreconcilable history.*

Is it, Sir, a proof of the history and its consistency, that every interpreter differs about the sense of it, and to bring it out of confusion confounds it, and is confounded? Is it, Sir, a fair representation of the sense and critereon of the veracity of it, that not two of those who swear to the truth of it, can agree about the meaning, nor in what sense to represent it? If the evangelists don't agree in what they tell, I see no reason, that men should therefore suggest, they tell what they don't. What would, or might be said to those, that should thus mangle and distort a history, to make it contradict itself, I think may be said to those, that by such means endeavour to take away these contradictions that are in it. Sir, I do not see, that truth indulges believers to new coin the face of faith, to preserve its currency, more than it does others to falsify it; nor to strain the sense of *Greek* words, or *Englisch* sentences, to a sense unthought of before, to help them out at a dead lift. Have the evangelists expressed their own sense clear and right, how  
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can the expositors do it better? Have the gospel historians expressed themselves in such manner, that men cannot agree what their sense is? 'tis not in their power to clear it up: this one thing is clear from hence, that the believers and defenders are greatly in the dark, and nothing discovers it more, than their affirming that to be true, which they know nothing of, and asserting those things to be right, which their own ignorance of is a demonstration, that such assertions are manifestly wrong. If it cannot be known, let it remain doubtful, or a thing indifferent: if it be not right, why should men endeavour to make it appear so? If the honesty of the historians in relating, was equal to their understanding in expressing, what men can't agree about, I leave it to their defenders to consider, what credit they deserve. If they had the Holy Ghost to bring all things to their remembrance, and the gift of tongues to express them, 'tis very strange, they knew not how to agree together to tell a consistent story: if they say they had these helps, and there appears plainly their want of them, they can obtain credit with none but the credulous. Sir, it is my opinion, that the apostles on whom these things are father'd, were innocent of the matter; but others have done it in their names. What mended their hearts and tongues must have mended their intellects, and better directed their pens: if there is no proof of the latter, there is no reason to believe the former; for the more of the one is ascribed to them, and the less appearance there is of the other, the more (tinker like) in mending, it mars the metal.

§. 31. *Of the next appearance, and other circumstances.*

The *Clearer* thinks Christ had no occasion to mention his intention to see them that night in *Jerusalem*, (p. 122.) but I cannot help thinking, it had been better for him to have mentioned this first, and in that visit, he had an opportunity to tell them of his pleasure to see them in *Galilee*; for if the last was first, and only mentioned, without doubt it would have set the disciples on making the best of their way thither immediately, by which means they would have lost the pleasure and opportunity of seeing him in *Jerusalem*; so his most faithful disciples would have been worst treated, as being by their faith and obedience most likely to be most disappointed of the advantage given to others, who unexpectedly saw him at *Jerusalem*. But notwithstanding the message pretended to be given by the angels and himself, they were in no haste to go there: And why should he trudge them there and back again, when it don't appear, he went or came with them. He could have skim'd thro' the air to see his disciples there, when they, 'tis likely, were forc'd to trudge it all the way on foot. According to St. *Luke*, he never went to *Galilee*, but ascended the evening of the day he arose: to get off from this dilemma, they say nothing but what is monstrously absurd. Mr. *Chandler* has it, p. 112. 'That  
' the account of the appearance to the apostles,  
' and what belongs to it, ends at ver. 43. and the  
' 44th verse, *And he said unto them*, or as he renders  
' it, ' moreover he said unto them, relate to an  
' appearance forty days after,' to reconcile it with  
*Acts* i. 4. which nothing but a spirit of divination could have found out: A notable discovery!

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This is a revelation indeed! Alas, Sir, what does not necessity drive men to! The *Clearer* says, p. 132. ‘ The orders to go to *Galilee*, and continue at *Jerusalem*, were given at different times; yes, the order in the morning bade them go to *Galilee*, but in the evening of the same day, if St. *Luke* writes like honest men that are no saints, they were (ver. 49.) ordered to tarry at *Jerusalem*, by that time Jesus had chang’d his mind, and instead of going to *Galilee*, took the open road thro’ the air, from mount *Olivet* to heaven.

The gentlemen take much pains to explain the meaning of those words concerning the appearance of Jesus to the two disciples travelling to *Emmaus*, *he appeared in another form, their eyes were holden that they should not know him, and he vanished out of sight*; in doing which they do not well agree: but by what they say, ’tis plain, all the interpretation which can be given it, is but guessing at the meaning, and endeavouring to account for it, as well as they can. And to follow their pattern, he that guesses what is most probable, and farthest off from miracle, seems to come nearest the mark. So that miracles are only to be allowed in cases of necessity; but he does best, who can do without them.

The gentlemen are very careful to convince me of my error, that *Simon Peter* was not the other disciple that went with *Cleopas* to *Emmaus*; but this care is of no moment; ’twas but a mere supposition or conjecture of mine, and delivered as such, at the overthrow of which they seem to glory, as if they had obtained some sort of victory: but what, pray, does it signify to the argument, whether it was *Simon Peter* with *Cleopas*, that knew Christ very well, or somebody, that nobody knows not so much as his bare name; and who perhaps, as Mr. C. supposes, (p. 97.) was not so well acquainted with his  
manner,

manner, person, and voice, and might, for aught we know, as little know Christ, as we know him, or *Cleopas*, of whom we know no more than the name of one of them. If the *Cleopas* here mentioned, be that *Cleopas* which *Mary* is called the wife of, *John* xix. 25. who saw Jesus crucified, and was with *M. Magdalene*, we know nothing more of him; therefore 'tis to little purpose to tell us of this appearance: for if these two were those that knew Jesus very well, the account is the more unaccountable, that they should not know him, when risen; but if they had little knowledge of him, or we of them, their evidence is of so much the less weight. But whether they were both worth naming or not, (as it seems one of them was not) 'tis not to be accounted for by me, that Jesus should spend his time in a private appearance with those on the public road, when the eleven principals had not yet seen him, nor knew whether he was moved off alive or dead, all the day long, and wanted to have their understandings opened by the resurrection, which were not opened by the prediction of it, save only 'tis said, he appear'd to *Peter*; but of this appearance 'tis very remarkable, that there is nothing remarkable in it, not so much as when, where, in what manner, or on what account this private appearance to *Peter* was made, and what makes it more so, tho' he had appear'd to *Peter*, one of the eleven, and two of the peripatetic disciples came to the apostles, and heard them talking about it, and saying the Lord is risen indeed, and has appear'd to *Simon*, (which my gentlemen say is *Peter*) and tho' they told the eleven themselves, what they knew of his appearance to them, yet, says *St. Mark*, they did not believe them, (ver. 13.) nay, they could hardly believe Christ himself, *St. Luke* says, (ver. 41.) So that either these are bad accounts of his appearance, or the disciples were bad sort of believers.

believers. If it was so hard to make believers believe, they were not far from unbelievers; and therefore we may hope for the more grace hereafter, who have here no evidence of Christ's resurrection, nor of his appearance, fit to convince a reasonable man.

The appearance of Jesus upon the day of his resurrection was to one woman alone, then to two or three or more, for a minute or two, in the morning early, or to them altogether. He supp'd and din'd with none that we read of. At some time of the day afterwards somewhere he appear'd to some *Simon* or other, and either before or after two men incog. one unknown, who knew so little whether it was him or no, and told their story so evangelically, that they could not convince the other disciples of the truth of it; nor could *Mary*, nor the rest of the women, nor this *Simon*, so that Jesus was forc'd to come himself, and ventured to slip in among them at candle-light, which was so dim, that they were forc'd partly to feel him out. *Luke* v. 39. One would have thought it more natural and reasonable, first to appear to them altogether, by appointment, in or near *Jerusalem*, where he and they are described to have been, at noon day, and fac'd the sun itself. Why had none but his disciples the gift of seeing him? This objection alone, raised from what the evidence confess, that he was never seen in public afterwards, though he rose again for a public good, is sufficient to overbalance all that can possibly be urg'd in favour of it. Some want to know what Jesus said to these two disciples, when he opened their understandings that they might understand the scriptures, and think the secret should have been revealed, not considering that the men who get their livings by the secrets of their function must not blab them; if they did, the mystery would be at an end, and their  
gain

gain be gone. The magi understand magic better ; if he opened their understandings, they never open ours, nor ever will, no, they live by confounding them ; for when that lock is opened, we ourselves shall keep the keys of the kingdom.

§. 32. *Of unintelligible history, and the manner of defending it.*

They object, that I don't understand the scriptures. Sir, I own it ; therefore I propose my objections, that I may be taught to understand it: But I find those that pretend to teach others know as little, since they don't agree how it is to be understood ; 'tis plain they do but guess at it, and others may guess at it as well as they. I don't know, Sir, whether the manner of apprehending the true knowledge of it be by the language of *Canaan*, or of *Greece*. I see plainly that 'tis no infallible rule in itself in any language ; for none that make it their director, whether they expound it by the help of the spirit or the letter, agree in their expositions. As the sense is not infallibly clear, there is also no infallible way to know it ; therefore disbelief and misbelief are the certain consequents of reading holy writ, (for there is no certainty of true belief, because neither party do, nor can understand it.) Unbelievers are ignorant of the truth of it, and if believers had sense sufficient to understand it, they would agree in the sense of it. It is not to be said the fault is in the gospel, therefore it is in all that read it, whether they are unbelievers or believers.

These defenders, if they cunningly answer an objection, that the words of the text, or the nature of the story occasions, in such manner as to cover the imperfections of it, though by a different sense than 'tis probable the writers ever meant or designed,  
and

and of which themselves are certain they but guess, if they make it passable, how they vaunt, exult, and crow, as if they were masters of the field, whereas 'tis only like skinning over an old ulcer that after a while breaks out a-fresh, and discovers the latent corruption, though they affirm stoutly to the insensible patient that the cure is good, and the flesh is sound, when it is plainly tending to a mortification.

Differences in prophane history not easy to reconcile, imposed on mankind to aggrandize heathen gods or heroes, they freely call evident marks of fraud or folly; but in what is called sacred history (though I think truth only makes history sacred, and falsehood renders it prophane) these to them are plain proofs of the simplicity and integrity of the writers, 'without the least design of imposition on the weak and credulous part of mankind,' (as Mr. C. says, p. 77.) and the least agreement in any part of these proves the truth of the whole; but in those, the disagreement of the parts is apt to make men question the whole, or at least to read it with caution, and receive it with diffidence. Such is the marvellous pre-eminence of gospel history.

§. 33. *On the harmony of the other appearance or appearances.*

'Twould be endless, Sir, to trace the wildness of their Imaginations, and shew how boldly they guess, how weakly they prove, and what necessities they are reduc'd to. Mr. C. p. 125. tartly assures us, he will not allow any thing against him without evidence; but by what evidence does he prove any thing, but by that of the names of persons of whom 'tis unknown whether they ever wrote or read, whose books when or where penn'd God only

I

knows,

knows, have no authority but their own, though their stories are sufficient to amaze the world, yet no proof remains (besides these books) that the world knew any thing of them. Evangelical harmony no numbers can confound. The eleven *Mark* xvi. 14, *Luke* xxiv. 33, are ten to make it tally with *John* xx. 24, and the eleven at another time, *Mat.* xxviii. 16. are twelve to make it agree with *1 Cor.* xv. 5. as Mr. C. will have it, p. 119, or the eleven are 500 with Mr. *Sylvester*, p. 64, and Mr. *Jackson*, p. 127. With the *Clearer*, p. 133, ten, eleven, and twelve mean the same; but he is careful in what appearance to account for the 500, therefore accounts for it no where, or in none that he mentions. p. 125, Mr. C. not knowing how to charge this account to any in the gospel, sets it by itself next to that of *Matthew* xxviii. 16. Mr. C. makes *Mark* xvi. 14, and *John* xx. 16, to be the same appearance, because they both intimate that Christ appeared to the eleven, p. 110, 111. But the *Clearer* supposes the appearance mentioned by St. *Mark* xvi. 14, is the same as that of St. *Luke* xxiv. 36, and St. *John* xx. 19, because St. *Mark* says at that appearance our Saviour upbraided the eleven for not believing them which had seen him after he was risen, which he well says shews it was the first time he appeared to them himself, and for the same reason that of *Matthew* was the first time that he appeared to the eleven, because *some doubted*, which must be some of the eleven, because they are expressly mentioned, and no more: But the scene of this being placed on a mountain in *Galilee*, and that of *Mark* and *Luke* at *Jerusalem*, because they cannot make *Galilee* and *Jerusalem* the same place, they will have it that it was a different appearance; but they have no other reason to make it so, but the distress the different accounts reduce them to,

to make them agree. As to this appearance, for which you have three evidences, they do not agree; that to *M. Magd.* for which they have four evidences, they agree worse, so that the more evidence we have, the worse is they proof: And as for the other appearances, for which you have only single evidences, and extreme short ones, they cannot disagree, except they had said a little more to disagree with themselves. Lo these are the proofs of the harmony of the gospel!

§. 34. *Of the other appearances of Jesus, according to the defenders.*

Sir, I now purpose to give you at one view in what order the defenders range the appearances of Christ, after he appear'd to the two disciples going to *Emmaus*; whereby, Sir, you will see, that though they are all certain that I am wrong in saying according to *Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, that Jesus made but one appearance to his disciples, yet that that they cannot agree how certainly to understand them as different appearances; and though they say I confound one appearance with another, yet it appears themselves are confounded in what order to take them. I have separated every appearance by a line, according to their different definitions of the text.

Mr. Syfoester.

Mark xvi. 14.  
Luke xxiv. 36.  
John xx. 19.

John xx. 24.

John xxi. 1.

Matthew xxviii. 16.  
this to 500.

Mark xvi. 19.  
Luke xxiv. 50.  
Acts i. 3.

The Clearer.

Mark xvi. 14.  
Luke xxiv. 36.  
John xx. 19.

John xx. 26.

John xx. 21.

Matthew xxviii. 16.  
Luke xxiv. 49.  
Acts i. 4.

Acts i. 6.  
Luke xxiv. 51.  
Mark xvi. 19.

He omits those in 1 Cor.  
xv. saying his account  
creates no difficulty.

Mr. Candler.

Luke xxiv. 36. — 40.  
John xx. 19. — 24.

Mark xvi. 14.

John xx. 16. — 29.

John xx. 1. 12. 14.

Matthew xxviii. 16. — 20.  
1 Cor. xv. 5.

1 Cor. xv. 6.

1 Cor. xv. 7.

1 Cor. xv. 7.  
Luke xxiv. 46. — 31.  
Acts i. 4. — 9.

Mr. Jackson.

Luke xxiv. 13. 15. 16.  
30. — 44.  
Mark xvi. 12. 13. 14.  
John xx. 19. 20. 24. — 29.

Matthew xxviii. 16. 17.  
18.

1 Cor. xv. 5, 6, 7.  
John xxi. 1, 2.

Luke xxiv. 50, 51, 52.  
Acts i. 3. 9. 12.

These texts are easily seen in those affixed to my *Resurrection considered*.

If the appearances of Jesus in the evangelists can be reconciled, they think all is proved, tho' this they attempt in vain; and tho' there is not the least intimation they are so to be understood, in order to be reconcil'd, therefore, a new revelation is necessary that we may understand the old. They reconcile as many as they can, as well as they can, and the others they call different appearances.

If Jesus's disciples followed him before his death to *Jerusalem*, why should he afterwards order them to go to meet him in *Galilee*, then trudge them back again to *Jerusalem*? It seems by *St. John* as if the disciples after their master's resurrection went to *Galilee*, and followed their occupation, and only saw Jesus there by accident, as a visitor that eat a bit with them and went his way.

*St. Matthew* says, the angel and Jesus too, gave orders for the disciples to meet him in *Galilee*, therefore, he says, they went and saw him there.

*St. Mark* tells us, the young man, (*i. e.* a young angel) bade the women tell the disciples they should see Jesus in *Galilee*; but of the appearance of Jesus that he gives us, he forgot to mention the time and place, therefore we may suppose it to be where we please; but he gives not the least intimation of any other appearance.

According to *St. Luke*, two men in shining garments (angels because of their heavenly apparel) reminded the women what Jesus said in *Galilee*, that he should rise again, but not a word that the disciples should meet him there; therefore he tells us nothing of the disciples going into *Galilee*, but makes his appearance at *Jerusalem*. *St. Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* deliver it as plain as they tell any story, for the first as well as the last time, for they give us

not the least intimation of any before to the eleven, nor *Matthew* of any after. *St. Luke* is plainly one connected story, all from first to last on the day of the resurrection. There is not the least appearance in *St. Matthew*, *Mark*, or *Luke*, that either of them dream'd or thought of any other than that which each of them mention. But these in after-times not being thought sufficient, *St. John*, like one newly risen to make new revelations, tells of more, and gives liberty to others to stretch after him; accordingly, the author of the *Acts* tells us he was forty days before he ascended; and *St. Paul*, that he appeared to more than 500 at one time, but unluckily for infidels, for they were every one brethren, nor does it appear he either saw or was seen by any other all the while.

'Tis a jesuitical way of reasoning, that because one evangelist does not absolutely deny in *totidem verbis* what another says, therefore 'tis allowed to be true, and so both are right. Is all then that may be said of Christ true, if not contradicted by the evangelists? Is the gospel of the infancy of Jesus true, because none of our gospels flatly deny it? Does not the *romish* clergy make this the plea for all their unscriptural tradition, that they are not forbidden?

Tho' 'twas promised the Holy Ghost should bring all things to their remembrance, if this promise was made good to them, it was to so little purpose, that never were men better qualified for their business, and did it worse; their memory was very little, or their negligence very great, or their capacities exceeding bad, not to give us a better account of what Jesus did during the 40 days he abode with them, which ought to have been journalized; the appearing of Jesus after his resurrection was the most essential part of his life. This was done, as the AUTHOR OF THE *TRIAL* allows, to convince the world of his character; yet we don't find he appeared

peared to convince any but his disciples, or to make one convert more than he had done before; so that either he rose from the dead to a very little purpose, or we have a very wretched account of it.

One would imagine, if a man is raised from the dead, it is to some great end, not merely to catch fish, eat and drink, and visit his friends. If 500 saw Jesus after he was risen, where and when was it? And why do none of the evangelists mention it, but because they knew nothing of it; for had they known it, it had been an inexcusable neglect to be silent about it; as also not to mention the other public appearances of Jesus after his resurrection, if they knew of any. Three gospel writers are very careful to acquaint us of what mighty power the devil had, how he carried Jesus about from the top of an exceeding high mountain to the top of the temple, as one has it, or from the temple to a mountain, as another relates it, and persecuted him 40 days; so that he could not eat a bit of bread all that while, because he would yield to no temptation: How devils possessed many persons, and particularly the man they kept day and night in the tombs, and made him so strong, that no fetters could bind him, that he had an army of devils within him. What should induce them to possess that poor fellow in such crouds, as if there were no more men in the world to give them a lodging, I cannot imagine. What execution might these 5000 devils have done, if they had separated themselves, and taken every devil his man. Then, that Jesus, to gratify the devils, should suffer them to ruin the *Gadarenes*, by destroying 2000 of their swine, is surprizing: These, and such like stories, which in any other book it would be no crime to call them romantic, they tell us, as it were, after one another; but the personal appearances of Jesus after his resurrection are so miserably related, as if they

they thought those relations of no importance, or of not so much as those, concerning which I dare not be diverting, because you, Sir, are so very grave.

St. *John*, who is allowed to write after all the rest, and unluckily contradicts them all, tells us stories of the appearances of Jesus in *Jerusalem* and *Galilee*; but then he talks nothing of his disciples going back again to *Jerusalem*, but that Jesus parted with him in *Galilee*, going indeed some where, and ordering *John* to stay till his return, but when that return was, we want another gospel to inform us. The straining the sense of St. *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*, to take in the stories of St. *John*, the *Acts*, and St. *Paul*, is what would not be done to reconcile any other historians in the world, especially in relating uncommon and unaccountable things: we should say of them, that they were not fit to be credited.

'Tis quite absurd, that *Matthew* should mention only Jesus meeting his disciples in *Galilee*, if he knew or thought of their meeting any where else, and at that time, that some who saw him should doubt, if they had seen him before at *Jerusalem*; therefore this apparition of St. *Matthew's* relating at *Galilee*, appears, according to him, to be the first and last time he appeared to the eleven, as he had appointed, which appointment cuts off all expectation of their seeing him in *Jerusalem*, and all reason for believing that appearance.

'Tis quite absurd to suppose, that St. *Mark* and *Luke* should mention only the last appearance, without giving the least hint of any former, if they knew or thought of any other at the time of writing; and if this was not designed by them, as the only one. It is absurd, and looks like an interpolation in St. *Mark*, that the angels should order the disciples to meet Jesus in *Galilee*, yet not mention one word of his meeting them there. And St.

*Luke's*

*Luke's* account cuts off all reason for believing that meeting.

And 'tis quite absurd, that Jesus should be forty days present with his disciples after his resurrection, and be seen by above 500 brethren at once, and none of the evangelists in the least mention either the one or the other.

Permit me, Sir, to remark the deep distress the defenders are reduced to, to answer my objections, and make the different accounts agree, (yet all in vain) tho' they translate and transpose words and sentences as they please, add sense, and take away at pleasure, (intolerable in any but orthodox believers). From forced constructions and distorted parts they repeatedly assert, that all is natural, plain and consistent; whereas nothing is more evident, than that a sense so remote from the natural meaning of the words, and such dislocation of parts which they make, prove the history to be very contrary to these assertions. This distress makes them spit their spleen freely, which would have choak'd them else. *The poison of asps is under their lips*; I pass over and despise the many instances of it, which are no proofs of the goodness of their nature, nor their arguments. As I promised you, Sir, at first to regard the subject alone; so I have kept my promise. Truth is the plainest, and virtue the best natured thing in the world; but error and falsehood being blots in nature, (if I may so call them) and mazes of perplexity, plunge men into those torments, in which *they gnaw their tongues for pain, and where there is gnashing of teeth*. I do not expect them to quit the darkness they are involv'd in; but having answered all their seeming arguments, I now bid them good night.

I proceed to make some remarks on the historical text.

§. 35. *Of the miracles performed when Jesus was apprehended.*

When Jesus was seized by the officers, and soldiers sent to take him, 'tis said, they were struck down backwards by his word, and that he healed *Malchus's* ear, which *Peter* had cut off; but he might as well have done nothing: for tho' they fell to the ground by a miraculous power, without any miraculous power they seized him afterwards. And tho' *Malchus's* ear was cut off, and immediately healed, we read not a word of its being mentioned at his trial: and tho' *St. Mark* and *St. John* say, that one of the disciples cut off the high priest's servant's ear, yet they don't say Jesus cured it, which is very surprizing. They must be blessed historians, that omit giving an account of the best and principal part of a story. Sir, they tell us there was bloody work in the taking of Jesus, and not the wonderful cure that was immediately wrought. A little more, and *Peter* had cleav'd *Malchus's* head, for I suppose he miss'd his aim in cutting off his ear; tho' that might have been as easily cured as this: for the power of working miracles being once granted, 'tis not to be limited; and exceeding all human reason, can as easily cure a cleft skull as a cut finger, and raise a dead man, as cure a paralytic. That the high priest's servant should lose his ear in taking Jesus, if it was not cured, as two evangelists seem to know nothing of, and one of these two was present at the action, the other, some say, had it from *Peter's* own mouth, it must have exceedingly irritated the high priest. If it was cured, surely *St. Mark* and *St. John* are inexcusable to omit so remarkable an action of him, whose life they wrote; and 'tis as wonderful, that 'twas not mentioned at the trial, nor mitigated the resentment of the high priest

priest against Jesus: but of this there is not a word, nor of any persons appearing to witness any of his other cures.

§. 36. *Observations on the history of Judas.*

Another observation, Sir, I have made out of these historians, is concerning *Judas*, who *St. Matthew xxvii.* says, *repented, brought again the thirty pieces of silver, and went and hang'd himself; and that the chief priests bought a field with the money to bury strangers in, which being the price of blood, that field was called the field of blood.* But in *Acts i. 18.* we are told, that *Judas purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gusked out; therefore that field was called the field of blood.* Now here are two different stories, not easy for me to reconcile, therefore I desire they would try their parts, who have the knack of it, and are men of subtil invention. How the falling down of *Judas*, and bursting his guts, agrees with his hanging himself, I cannot tell: and I would be inform'd, how *Judas* bought a field with his thirty pieces of silver, and afterwards died in that field, agrees with his returning the silver to the chief priests, and went and hang'd himself, and they afterwards bought a field with the money to bury strangers in; and whether it was call'd the field of blood for the one reason or the other before-mentioned. I don't presume to call these contradictions or inconsistencies; no, in profane history it would be so, but being sanctified by the word of God, the contradiction vanishes.

§. 37. *Observations on some circumstances at the crucifixion.*

Permit me, Sir, to remark how little these historians regarded exactness in their narrations: I observe they don't agree exactly in the words of the title over the cross, that all *Jerusalem* might read; for 'tis, according to

St. *Matthew*, *This is Jesus the king of the Jews.*

St. *Mark*, *The king of the Jews.*

St. *Luke*, *This is the king of the Jews.*

St. *John*, *Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews.*

St. *Mark* xv. 25. says, it was the third hour, when they crucified Jesus; but St. *John* xix. 14. tells us, 'twas the sixth hour, when Jesus stood before *Pilate*, before he delivered him to be crucified.

I observe concerning the thieves that were crucified with Jesus, that St. *Matthew* tells us, *they cast the same* (reproaches) *in his teeth*, as the people did. St. *Mark*, they that were crucified with him, reviled him. St. *Luke*, that one only railed on him, and that the other rebuked the railer.

'Tis observable, Sir, that the historians do not agree in their reports of the miraculous stories at the crucifixion, but I do not say they disagree, only that some of them seem to write what the others knew nothing of, or had forgot, miracles being at that time so common, they were not regarded. St. *Matthew* relates that the vail of the temple was rent in twain, the earth quaked, and the rocks rent, the graves were opened, and many bodies of the faints which slept arose, and came out of their graves after Christ's resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. St. *Mark* only tells us of the rending of the vail of the temple in twain; St. *Luke* that there was darkness over all the earth three hours, and the vail of the temple was

rent in the midst. St. *John* relates no wonders at the death of Jesus, but that he seem'd to take notice of his mother. Strange historians these, to omit the principal parts of the history they wrote, for such they were, if they were any parts of it; but 'tis very excusable in the writers, for in a century or two men are apt to forget. And 'tis to be fear'd some of the gospels made a very late appearance, even our St. *Matthew* the very first of them; the story of the dead saints arising at the resurrection of Jesus, seems to shew it was wrote after the doctrine of purgatory took place, or that story looks as if it was then lugg'd in, which is said to be about the latter part of the second century. This story is very remarkable, and the more so, because none of the others make any remark of it. I know my adversaries tell me 'tis nevertheless true. It may be so in their opinion; I am sure there is so much the less proof of it, and the less proof there is of a thing, the less reason there is to believe it, and the more to suspect it. Is the proof of God's truth less than that of man's? less reasonable? less probable? and less possible? Is God's truth darker than man's truth? or of less consequence, that it is so carelessly transmitted to us? This story of the saints resurrection deserves a particular consideration and enquiry.

It seems, Sir, by the account, that the crucifixion of Jesus gave such disturbance to many sleeping saints, that their bodies could not rest in their graves, nor their souls in heaven, if they were there, or else there must have been a jail-delivery from purgatory, for the souls of saints do not go to hell. These graves, 'tis said, opened at the crucifixion of Christ, and the bodies came out after his resurrection, whence I suppose they stood gaping open all that time, which made it the more known, therefore the more remarkable, when *many*, that is, not a few,  
*bodies,*

*bodies*, not souls only, of the saints which slept arose. Whether this was written to support the gospel of *Nicodemus*, or this story gave occasion to that, I know not. This resurrection of the saints was more miraculous than the resurrection of Jesus, for God knows how long some of them had slept; however they were *bodies*, not skeletons, and they might as well have new cloaths given them as new flesh, and new bones as either. Besides, in the winter-time to go bare would make all the city stare at them; but saints would not go into the *holy* city in an unholy manner, as void of shame; therefore 'tis fit to conclude they had clothes on, and new cloaths too, for where should they find their old ones, which had new possessors, or were new modell'd, or worn out. They went into the holy city; where else should saints walk? But, was that the *New Jerusalem* or the *Old*? The *Old* it could not be, for that was called *Sodom and Egypt*, where our Lord was crucified, and which he himself said was worse than *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Is the *New Jerusalem* the holy city? No doubt of it; but no body ever yet saw that, therefore no body could see the saints there; then the saints appear'd no where. 'Tis said they appear'd unto many; but unless they visited their late acquaintance, other people might not know they had been dead. But though they appear'd, they only appear'd. I do not read that they said a word to any, nor any one to them, or gave them any entertainment. Tho' these new raised saints had got their tongues with them as well as their legs, and so might have used one as well as the other, yet they were mute as ghosts; they might as well have slept still in their graves, for when they came out, no body knew nor regarded them but *St. Matthew*; but sure he did not raise them, for he was an apostle, and we are well assur'd the apostles were no conjurers. Did no one ask any of these travelling saints, what

what news from *Hades*? Did they only stare and look about them? Or, being sleepy, did they walk in their sleep? Had they testified the resurrection of their great deliverer, this had been a proper errand. Never was the like heard of. The *divi minores*, or lesser gods, sent from one world to make their public entrance in another, to say and do nothing! Well, but how long did they stay? and what beame of them? Where did they go, to heaven or to sleep again? As this resurrection was in the dark, we are left in the dark about it.

§. 38. *Reflections on the miraculous gift of tongues:*

Indulge me, kind Sir, to tell you, that the pretended miraculous proofs said to be given by the apostles to confirm the resurrection want proofs of their own veracity. 'Tis no wonder one miracle is said to be wrought to prove another; miracles are defended by nothing but miracles; for if they could be proved by any thing else, that proof would be a miracle. *De quibus nutrimur, ex iis existimus*: Homogeneous things nourish and support each other; flesh is supported by flesh, life by life, truth by truth, lies by lies, fraud by fraud, and force by force. It is altogether as improbable as it is unaccountable, that *Peter*, with the rest of the apostles and a strong gale of wind, should bring three thousand converts into the haven of faith in one day. Whether these came in spontaneously as free agents, or drove in by a mighty wind, and compell'd by stress of weather, is a query? For I don't see any thing so wonderfully convincing in *Peter's* Sermon to produce it, and less reason to believe their receiving the gift of tongues, for after this they were still ignorant and unlearned, *Acts* iv. 13. and *St. Paul*, who we never read had that gift by inspiration, but knew no more than what he had been taught, says,

1 Cor. xiv. 18. *I thank God I speak with tongues more than they all.* If so, all of them did not speak many tongues, though we are told that all the hearers of every nation under heaven *heard every man speak in his own language*; and therefore wondering (as well they might) said, *how hear we every man speak in our own tongue*; insinuating, as I suppose, Sir, that every apostle spoke every language. But if this was the case, how could some of them ascribe it to drunkenness? Wine is so far from inspiring men with the gift of tongues, that it oft-times deprives the tongue of its gift. Or did the apostles only speak one tongue, and the Holy Ghost, the interpreter, made each hearer believe that what each speaker said was spoken in his own tongue? If so, did the Holy Ghost speak in their ears, and the devil in their hearts at the same time to say they were drunk? If the gospel was then preached to every nation under heaven in this wonderful manner, 'tis wonderful that no nation under heaven should mention it but this nameless author. 'Tis said, *cloven tongues of fire sat upon each of them.* Was the Holy Ghost divided then, or how many Holy Ghosts were there; And who saw, besides the disciples, these cloven tongues? If they alone saw for all the rest, their eyes saw double.

§. 39. *Remarks on Jesus being the son of God.*

*Matthew* and *Luke* represent Jesus to be the son of God, by the Holy Ghost over-shadowing the Body of the virgin *Mary*, (which would be thought a blasphemous notion, and heathen invention, if not supported by gospel authority; ) yet in the *Acts* (xiii. 32, 33.) *Paul* being distress'd for a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus, applies thereto his being begotten of God, in these words; *And now we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise*  
*which*

which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written in the second psalm, *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.* If by this means Jesus was the begotten son of God, he could not be his *only* begotten son, if *Lazarus* was raised from the dead before; for then *Lazarus* was the first begotten of the dead, and so Christ's elder brother. If Jesus was begotten of God, and brought forth by *Mary*, how was he the seed of *David* according to the flesh? Had *Mary* not been above three or seven years old, the miracle had certainly been the greater; but thus it pleased the Lord to espouse himself to the church who, I fear, is no virgin.

§. 40. *Observations on St. John's gospel.*

Permit me, Sir, to add a few observations on *St. John's* gospel, because the *Clearer* tells us, that it was wrote, 'not with design of repeating what the other evangelists had fully delivered, but chiefly to preserve the memory of what they had omitted.' Yet *St. John* tells the same story as *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke*, of Christ's walking on the water in bad weather, and in the night, when he might have gone by shipping; a journey that scarce any one would have chose, besides himself, had it been in his power. *St. Matthew* indeed says, *St. Peter* had a fancy to do the same, but had like to have been soft for it, and glad he was to get aboard again with wet feet, the floor gave way; he seems to have been over shoes and boots, if he had any; *Peter* began to sink; it was his stony heart that weighed him down: they had such natural hard hearts, that a supernatural power could not keep them soft. But *St. Mark* and *St. John* omit that

part of the story; yet St. *John* is supposed to be present. But, *Cui bono?* where's the goodness of this action?

St. *John* also tells the same story as St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* do, of Christ's feeding the multitude with five loaves and two fishes; and to this St. *John* adds something so very remarkable, that 'tis worth notice. The people whom Jesus had fed in the wilderness with bread and fish, as much as they could eat, took shipping, 5000 of them, besides women and children, which no doubt made as many more; (How they found transports ready for such a number, we are not to enquire;) and when they had found him on the other side, and he admonished them to believe in him, those very people said to him, *What sign shewest thou, that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work?* as if they believed nothing of yesterday's miracle, of which they had had a belly full, *Our fathers*, say they, *did eat manna in the wilderness, as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat.* A surprizing objection, when Jesus had given them bread and fish too both from heaven, (tho' he found the seed of them on earth.) Nay, the very disciples themselves did not consider, or had already forgot the miracle of the loaves, as if the miracle was easier of digestion than their food. Poor creatures, their hearts were hardened! Never did master take so much care, and exert so much power, to teach his scholars and the people in so extraordinary a manner, to so little purpose! Jesus did not satisfy their carnal minds, as he had done their carnal maws, with a sign from heaven, he was above being tempted. They said, *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert, he (Moses) gave them bread from heaven to eat,* Jesus told them, that he himself was bread from heaven, and they were to eat him; but such sort of bread they could not relish: besides, that eating flesh  
with

with the blood in it was forbidden by the *Mosaic* law. The eating his flesh and drinking his blood was so ill digested by them, that *many even of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*, thinking no doubt, as his brethren did, that he was beside himself, and conceived a very mean opinion of him from such unintelligible discourse.

St. *John* writes, that Jesus came up to *Jerusalem* at a feast of the passover, soon after his beginning to make himself public, *John* ii. 13, &c. and that *then* it was he drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, when the Jews required him, since he acted in that manner, to shew his authority by some sign or miracle; he answered, *If they would destroy that temple, he would build it up in three days*; but he very well knew, according to their understanding of his words, they neither could nor would try him. And as St. *John* has it, he went into and returned from his own country three times afterwards. But the other evangelists tell us of his coming to *Jerusalem* but a little before he suffered, and then it was according to them that he drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple.

As it was the business of this evangelist to set forth Jesus as God, it behoved him more than the rest to give us a narration of his divine extraction; *HOW the word was made flesh*. He might suppose with reason that all Christians did not see all gospels, and that his might be seen by those who never saw any others; besides, so wonderful a story, if true, could not be too well attested and confirmed; it is surely of more importance than that which the other historians were ashamed of, *viz.* the drunken marriage feast.

St. *John* acquaints us, that Jesus went into *Samaria*, and made disciples there. But St. *Matthew* (xv.) that when he sent his missionaries to disciple the Jews, he expressly forbid them going *into any*

*city of the Samaritans, and declared, he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

Permit me, Sir, to remark, there is no rule in reason to judge of miraculous reports but by the ability and honesty of the reporters, nor of their sagacity and fidelity, but by the ability and honesty of all those that transmit their accounts and characters to us, and how certain this rule is, I leave, Sir, to your consideration, and whether the history of uncommon, supernatural, and unaccountable things are as credible as common and natural history. If that of *Julius Cæsar* was mix'd with fable and romance, the romantic parts, at least, would not find easy credit with considerate readers. Were men easily to believe such stories, they would be liable to be everlastingly deceived by falsities, frauds, and fictions: 'Tis not reasonable, therefore, to credit unreasonable accounts, that are no better attested than holy writings, which *were sown in weakness, but are raised in power.* The strangest stories in the world should carry with them the most convincing proofs, to render them credible; and this is the more reasonable, as the matters that demand our belief are said to be of the greater importance, or may be productive of the greater fraud and imposition; yet scarce were ever any histories received in the world as authentic on so dark testimonies, and so uncertain foundation, as those that are with us commonly esteem'd the most bright and certain of all historical facts in the world. I know that credulity is a folly that governs the weak minds that cannot, and the idle that will not examine for themselves, and ever will govern an ignorant world; but the wise will endeavour to judge of sterling truths by the touchstone of pure reason, which only can discover them; and all faith which cannot bear this test is folly and stupidity. In answer therefore to Mr. Jackson's *Address to the deists*, 'tis not impossible

possible to prove the impossibility of supernatural revelation.

§. 41. *On the authority of the gospels.*

I believe, Sir, upon the strictest enquiry it will be found impossible to us to know for certain who were the writers of the gospels, and the acts of the apostles, or when, or where they were first written, or that they are the same as at first without corruption or innovation ; and one would think a deficiency in any of these points, in their defence as the uncorrupted word of God, is sufficient to silence a modest author, and put his assurance out of countenance : Though the *Clearer* delivers it as if it was a thing not to be doubted, that St. *Matthew* wrote his gospel for the use of the *Hebrews*, when thousands were living in *Judea* who knew the circumstances he reported. And Mr. *Sylvester* says it was wrote eight years after Christ's ascension ; but neither of them know any thing of the matter.

Mr. *Jeremiah Jones* has shewn much care and learning in endeavouring to find out on what authorities the gospels stand, in two volumes to that end, and was far enough from favouring infidelity : But he is obliged to confess,

1. That 'tis impossible to assign any certain time when the canonical books were collected. That there is no proof they were fixed in the first, nor beginning of the second century.

2. That they have been all or most of them rejected by some Christians in the first ages, even by some that did not go under the name of heretics, as well as by those that did. And several of them have had their authority disputed by learned men in later times.

3. *Fauftus Manichæus*, and his followers, are said to have rejected all the new testament, as not written by the apostles.

4. The *Allogians* rejected the gospel of St. *John*.

5. *Severus* and his sect rejected the *Acts* of the apostles, and all *Paul's* epistles.

Certain it is, that Christianity was no sooner propagated than it was divided into sects and parties, and each pretended to be right, and have Christ and the apostles on his side ; and therefore forged books under the name of some apostle or disciple ; and each sect have ever condemned the other of forgery, heresy, ignorance, or misconstruction.

‘ The learned *Causaubon*, than whom no one was either more acquainted with, or more judicious in christian antiquities, in his dissertation against *Baronius* says, I cannot but much resent the practice of many in the earliest ages of the church, who reckoned it an action very meritorious to make additions of their own to the truths of the gospel, with this view, that christianity might meet with the better reception among the Gentiles. They called these officious lies, contrived for a pious end. This produced innumerable books in those ages, wrote by men, not bad, under the name of our Saviour, his apostles and followers.’

If what *Pappus* in his *Synodicon* says be true, it shews what an inextricable dilemma the church was involv'd in, to distinguish what scripture was proper for them to take and refuse, since they desired the Lord to chuse for them, and his miraculous kindness in determining their choice as directed by them. That the bishops assembled at the council of *Nice* having put together all the books that pretended to inspiration in a church under the communion table, they prayed to God that those which which were of divine inspiration might be found upon

upon the table, and those which were apocryphal under it, and accordingly as they prayed it came to pass. This action is not altogether incredible, for some angel of the church is always at the church's service.

St. *Paul*, or some one in his name, was so sanguin as to advise the *Galatians* to receive no gospel but his, though it should come from heaven, and even to curse the angel that brings it.

The gospels were kept private more than a century, at least to infidels, if they were wrote before. And since 'tis owned that the first ages of christiannity which produced gospels abounded with more forged than true, how can we be infallibly certain of the truth of any.

No such objections lie against profane or heathen as holy history. How can the incredible accounts, delivered we know not by whom, when, where, or how, be set on a level with probable facts, whose authors and writings have been generally allowed : what advances the credit of these, and lessens those is, the liberty always allowed to be taken with the one, but the danger there is in scrutinizing the other.

### §. Of St. Matthew's gospel.

*Sandius* says, it is impossible to determine any thing about its true author.—And so many names it has had, or is thought to have had, as shew the doubtfulness of its original.—It is also thought to be in many places altered and interpolated. The *Nazarines* are accused of corrupting it almost as soon as they had it.

*Ireneus* of *France*, who lived about the middle of the second century, is the first father of the church that writes of the time, tells us, that *Matthew* published his gospel when *Peter* and *Paul* were at *Rome*.  
But

But some learned men have much questioned whether those apostles were ever there. Ecclesiastic writers place this in the year 64, or later, about 30 years after Christ's death or ascension. A fine time, if it was so, to begin to write his life and resurrection, to be depended upon for authentic. 'Tis strange, that of him who was so famous, as the evangelists report, no body began it sooner, and that none wrote it but his negligent servants, who omitted so long, so essential a point, on the faith of which the salvation of the world depended.

Perhaps some such objection made *Eusebius*, who lived in the beginning of the fourth century, say *Matthew's* gospel was wrote eight years after Christ's ascension. And what carries it on his side against *Irenæus* is, that to the end of the old *Arabic* version there is affixed the following testimony: 'The end  
' of the holy gospel of the preaching of St. *Mat-*  
' *thew*, which he preached in *Hebrew*, in the land  
' of *Palestine*, by the influence of the holy spirit,  
' eight years after our Lord Christ ascended in his  
' flesh to heaven, and the first year of the *Roman*  
' emperor *Claudius*.' And to be sure the testimony was not interpolated, though the gospel was, nor would believers father a lie on the Holy Ghost. But this *Irenæus* never saw, or he would not have said it was written twenty years later: but *Eusebius*, who came 150 years after, knew exactly the time of the old revelation by some new one made to him then, or to his works since his death by the infallible church. As for *Eusebius*, 'tis owned he was a credulous man, and none was guilty of more mistakes: besides, 'tis supposed things have been foisted into his works of which he was not the author.

Notwithstanding the preceding testimony, it is not agreed in what language St. *Matthew's* gospel was wrote, the original text being lost, nor can the copies of the original be determined. Some fathers

of the church would have it believed it was wrote in *Hebrew* ; but many of our first reformers by their learned criticifms have endeavoured to prove, that the gospel we now have according to St. *Matthew* is from some *Greek* original.

*Epiphanius*, bishop of *Salamis* in *Cyprus*, anno 370, or thereabouts, fays, the gospel of St. *Matthew*, used by the *Ebionites*, (who it's thought were the first Christians) and the *Cerinthians* was altered and corrupted, having not the genealogy nor the two first chapters. 'Tis much to be questioned, whether those chapters have not been added since that gospel was first written. The marvellous catches the croud ; and he that affirms with most assurance is most firmly believed.

The *German* anabaptists of the last preceding century, and Dr. *Servetus*, who was burnt for a heretic, by that heretical pope *Calvin* at *Geneva*, denied the credit and authority of this gospel.

#### §. 43. On St. Mark's gospel.

Concerning St. *Mark's* gospel there is scarce any thing to be found in ecclesiastical history, which can be depended on: " One *Mark* is mentioned in the *Acts* of the apostles, in St. *Paul's* epistles, and by St. *Peter* ; and 'tis supposed, that *Mark* was the author of this gospel: but *Grotius*, *Crotelerius*, Dr. *Cave*, *Dupin*, Mr. *Echard*, and other moderns, are of a contrary opinion."

*Eusebius* tells us, that *Clemens Alexandrinus* in one place testifies St. *Peter's* approbation of the church of *Rome's* request to *Mark* to write those occurrences of the life of Christ, which he had heard of St. *Peter*, which we now call the gospel of St. *Mark*, and that St. *Peter* approved of it. In another place the same author fays, that St. *Peter* nei-

ther encouraged nor obstructed *Mark* in his undertaking.

This *Clemens* lived about the middle of the second century, and 'tis therefore very likely he knew very little of the matter; nor might *Eusebius* be well inform'd of what he said; yet such is church authority. There is but little credit to be given to ecclesiastical history; the historians affirm'd what they thought best tended to the good of the church, and the church confirm'd it; and have condemn'd and destroyed all other.

*Irenæus*, who lived in the second century, says, that *Mark*, *St. Peter's* interpreter, wrote his gospel after the death of *Peter*, what he had heard him preach; but *Origen*, who lived in the third century, writes, that *Mark* wrote his gospel according to the directions of *St. Peter*; and *Jerom*, who lived in the fourth century, tells us, that *Peter* published it in the churches, and commanded the reading of it by his own authority: thus, the later the historian, the greater the confirmation. *Fama volans augetur.*

'Tis urged, that the *Syriac*, *Arabic*, and *Persic* versions affirm *St. Mark* to have wrote in *Latin*; to which *Mr. Jones* answers, That these epitaphs or postscripts at the end of these versions are of very uncertain authority; and that as to the time when *St. Mark* wrote his gospel, 'tis exceeding difficult to come to any clear determination, tho' 'tis pretended to be wrote in *Nero's* reign.

So that 'tis not knowable for certain, when, where, in what language, or by whom this gospel was wrote; for 'tis said, he wrote what he had heard from *St. Peter* at *Rome*, and 'tis much questioned, whether ever *St. Peter* was there. It is thought by some, to be only an abridgment of *St. Matthew's* gospel, with an additional section concerning *Christ's* resurrection after the end of the 8th  
verse,

verse, which St. *Jerom* says most of the *Greek* copies have not; so says *Gregory Nyssene*; but *Grotius* supposes it was left out with design, because it seem'd to contradict St. *Matthew*, that *Porphyry*, *Julian*, and such others, might not take occasion from thence to ridicule the gospel; as Mr. *Fabricius* also observes, and adds, that 'tis a case like what happened to those words *Mark* xiii. 32. to avoid the force of the *Arian* objections. It is confessed by Mr. *Jones*, vol. I. p. 564, that the last chapter of St. *Mark's* gospel has suffered many alterations: This shews how our gospels have been moulded; but it cannot be shewn, how they were first cast. *Aaron's* calf was, no doubt, a type of this lamb.

#### §. 44. On St. *Luke's* gospel.

St. *Luke* is supposed to be the person mentioned in St. *Paul's* epistles. The accounts which we have from antiquity concerning this evangelist, are very short and imperfect: 'tis supposed he was no Jew: the place where, and time when this gospel was wrote, is very uncertain: 'tis supposed to be originally written in *Greek*, because 'tis the purest *Greek* of all the evangelists.

*Marcion* and his followers had a different gospel of St. *Luke*, than what we now receive: That heretic (as the heretical orthodox say) inserted and left out what he thought convenient, to serve his own purposes. Alas! 'tis too common for people to accuse others of the crime they are guilty of themselves; and sects that differ in their sentiments have equal honesty.

What was called the gospel of *Marcion*, was no other than that of St. *Luke's* altered and interpolated: He left out the two first chapters, and many other parts, and inserted many things of his own,

say *Ireneus*, *Tertullian* and *Epiphanius*. Or perhaps others have added what they are accused of leaving out, and *Marcion* might never find in; and also interpolated what they thought a gospel benefit. Nothing is more certain, than that the truth of these things is most uncertain.

§. 45. *Of St. John's gospel.*

'Tis said, *St. John* wrote his gospel to supply the defects of the other gospels: 'tis certain, the other writers were very defective or negligent, and his supply weakens the force of his allies. 'Tis also said, that it was written to confute the *Ebionites*, *Nicolaitans*, *Marcionites*, and others, who denied the divinity of *Christ*; by which it appears, the primitive Christians were not idolaters, nor worshippers of a compound deity.

This gospel is confess'd to have been written almost an hundred years after the birth of *Christ*, or between 60 and 70 years after his death. *Epiphanius* says, *St. John* wrote it in the 90th year of his age: and this gospel is said to be written in *Greek* originally; tho' *St. John* was an unlearned *Hebrew*, into which tongue it is said to be afterwards translated. With these incredible circumstances it passes with the church for *St. John's* gospel: whoever wrote it, 'tis certain it has suffered alterations; for the chapter of the adulterous woman is not in the old *Syriac* copy, nor ancient *Greek* manuscript.

§. 46. *Of the Acts of the apostles.*

The authority we have, that *St. Luke* is the author of the *Acts*, is from a conjecture of *Ireneus*, tho' 'tis not known, who this *Luke* was, a disciple of *Jesus* or not; for he calls him the disciple and follower of the apostles: this conjecture of *Ireneus*

is founded on 2 *Tim.* iv. 11. applied to *Acts* xvi. 10, 11, 12. 16, 17. where the writer speaks not in the name of *Paul* in the first person singular, but as a companion of *Paul* in the first person plural. But in my opinion, this gives more reason to believe it was *Silas* than *Luke*; for the plural person *we* is us'd by the writer after *Paul* had chose *Silas* for his companion, and not before. Besides, the *Acts* of the apostles could not be wrote by St. *Luke*, because of the disagreement in the time of Christ's abode on earth after his resurrection, which, according to St. *Luke* was but one day, but according to the *Acts* is forty days.

All the succeeding fathers of the church ascribe the *Acts* of the apostles to St. *Luke*, being so directed by *Irenæus*; for they follow one another in a tract: what one says or conjectures, which makes for the good of the cause, the others take for granted, and affirm. St. *Chrysostom* confesses, that it was not known by whom this book was written.

It is also confessed, that some of the first Christians, the Cerinthians, Manicheans and Marcionites rejected this book as false and spurious.

That the transcribers made alterations in this book is evident from the confession of *Erasmus*, who said he found more curious readings in the manuscripts of this, than any other of the sacred books.

There was another *Acts* of the apostles receiv'd by the Manicheans: the different sects of Christians could never agree in receiving the same gospels, and therefore each forg'd or alter'd a gospel to their own minds, according to the principles they had imbib'd. Those whose faith did not correspond with the gospel, made gospels to correspond with their faith, as every believer now does, in explaining those they have. The prevailing sect were always orthodox, and accused the others of being ignorant heretics, of adding and taking away from the gospels

pels according to their own fancies; and were the accused to answer for themselves, they would say the same of their accusers.

§. 47. *Of Christian heresies.*

'Tis certain, that no sooner did Christianity appear, but factions, parties and heresies immediately sprung up, and have ever remained, and are ever likely to do so, as long as it exists. What's the meaning of this? Truth is clear and plain, uniform and harmonious; but error is obscure and intricate, everlastingly dividing and subdividing itself, an inexhaustible fund of disagreement and contention. When truth is expressed to look like error, that is not to be understood; it may be productive of the same ill consequences as error is, but then error is the occasion of it, that is, the error of expression; and if truth puts on the garb and appearances of error, no wonder if it be mistaken for it, and have the same influence. One would think, that the truth of God would appear like him, good, bright and lovely; for truth delights not to put on the garb of error, nor does wisdom love to wear the mask of folly, nor is it the property of real goodness to sculk in the shades of darkness, and hide itself in obscurity. It is not the nature of love and piety to produce contentions, envyings, heresies and persecutions; its nature is to send peace on earth, not fire and sword; nor is it disposed to kindle the one, nor does it advise to sell one's garment to buy the other.

A religion founded on bare authority, not conducted by the choice of reason, will admit of innumerable pretensions and impostures. Hence arises the exceeding difficulties of distinguishing right from wrong, truth from falshood: But if we take reason

and nature for our guide the distinction will be clear and easy.

Ever since the revelation of Christianity, different sects have risen up among them : the weeds of heresies have plentifully sprouted out of this ground, but the true plant among christians is hard to be found ; they had ever more credulity than wisdom, and more zeal than virtue. Each sect have always thought it right to do wrong, *i. e.* to advance the gospel or their party, by forging falsehoods or concealing truth.

Nothing is plainer than that the new testament books receiv'd their sanction from the authority of the church only, for none but the church ever received them at all. And what makes any doctrines be called orthodox, but the success the maintainers have had, who call themselves the catholic church, by suppressing all other. And why are others deem'd or damn'd for heretics by the triumphant party, but because the suffering party cannot help themselves. The armour of faith, without the carnal sword, does not compleat the wedding garment of the church militant. Nothing but success can distinguish orthodoxy from heresy ; for where both sides are positive they are right, and the proof is on no side, power only can determine the controversy. There can be no other right to orthodoxy where there is none in the reason and nature of things, and neither side can find a proof there : they cannot submit to be tried by that court, whose authority is condemned by them all, because it favours none : for positive precepts and doctrines pretended to be given by that court above, *i. e.* a supernatural court, refuse all trial by the inferior court of nature. This is the presumptive authority of all heresy. That party which rises as by the fortune of war, and vanquishes the rest, calls itself orthodox, which is but another word for conqueror,  
and

and the vanquish'd party is consequently declared heretical. Orthodoxy therefore is only triumphant heresy; and the authority of the fathers which are on their side, are no more right, than the usurpation of mother church is, so that nothing can be proved true from that quarter. Had the vanquish'd heretics prevailed, their ancient teachers had been fathers of the church, their doctrines had been orthodox, and their gospels, epistles, acts, and revelations would have had the sanction of the inspiration of the spirit; since the defenders of every ancient heresy espoused some books peculiar to themselves, that were so called. Every sect received such books for canonical, as were for their purpose, or made them so; and the victorious party burnt and destroyed, as far as they were able, all that they disliked. *Cyril of Jerusalem* advises his catechumen to reject all sacred books not contained in his catalogue, and not to read them. The same the council of *Laodicea*, in the middle of the fourth century. The earliest Christians, *viz.* the Nazarines, Ebionites, Cerinthians, Nicolaitans, Valentinians, Menandrians, Carpocratians, Montanists, Gnostics, Manicheans, Cerdonites, Marcionites, Tatianites, &c. are all condemn'd for heretics by the other sects, and those that lived after them, and so were almost all of the first century, except Christ and the apostles, by the rising orthodox of succeeding centuries. The fathers of the church from whose credit the canonical books are received lived about the beginning of the third century; a dark time to depend upon for light; and darker followed, which clouded that, and all that went before it.

If books are to be received as God's word by his positive command, we ought to be positively sure of them, or no imposition and deceit is more easy. If the canon of the scripture depends upon tradition, then it depends upon human authority; but that

that of its divine, must rest upon its own intrinsic worth : this is the only rule of judging its truth and purity, for doing which the learned Mr. *Jeremiah Jones* gives us the following rules.

§. 48. *Mr. Jones's rules to judge of canonical books.*

Mr. *Jeremiah Jones* lays down these rules, among others, to judge of the canonical authority of any book, by which the impartial may try if ours will bear the test.

1. That book is certainly apocryphal in which are found any contradictions ; for as both sides of a contrary proposition cannot be true, such book must necessarily contain somewhat that is false, and consequently cannot have God for its author, nor be to us a rule of doctrine and manners.

2. That book is certainly apocryphal which either contains any histories, or proposes any doctrines contrary to those which are certainly known to be true. To impute such a book to the Holy Ghost, is to make God the author of a lie ; and 'tis not fit to take that for our guide in matters of the last consequence, which we know to be not only fallible but false.

3. That book is apocryphal in which are contained things ludicrous or trifling, fabulous or silly relations. God, a Being of infinite wisdom and knowledge, cannot give us such books as argue him guilty of weakness and folly, and imposing on his creatures things to be believed contrary to their most improved reason ; nor can men of honesty and wisdom be the authors of such sort of books ; for if they wrote what they did not believe, they were notorious impostors ; if they did believe, they were persons of shallow capacities and foolish credulity ; the former deserve our hatred, and the last our pity. These are no fit guides to mankind.

“ This observation (says he) is not only evidently true, but of the greatest necessity in the business we are now about; for 'tis certain, that a very great number of the apocryphal books of the new testament are filled with the most idle and trifling stories, the most ridiculous and extravagant fooleries imaginable. The romantic accounts of *the virgin Mary's nativity, being bred by angels, and fed by them in her infancy, &c.* the childish relations of *our Saviour's infancy and education, his learning the alphabet, his stature, appearing some times as a child, sometimes as a man, sometimes so tall that his head would reach the clouds, the length of his hair, beard, &c.* *the spirit's taking him up to mount Thabor by one of his hairs, &c.* the silly miracles attributed to the apostles, with all the ridiculous circumstances that attended their several martyrdoms, &c. are each, with all the other stories like them, unquestionable arguments to prove the books which contain them apocryphal; and to be no other than either the works of the weakest of men, who were fondly credulous of every report, and had not discretion enough to distinguish between sense and nonsense, between that which was credible and that which was not so; or else the artful contrivance of some who were more zealous than honest, who thought by these strange stories to gain credit to their new religion.”

Mr. Jones very justly argues, vol. 1. p. 11. that the receiving books for inspired, which are not so, the consequences are evidently very bad.

1. We thereby offer a notorious affront to our Maker, by imposing forgeries, &c. to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

2. We thereby assent to the most gross and notorious errors as indubitable truths, and so very often shall be like to oblige ourselves to many burdensome

densome imaginary duties, not only not required of God, but contrary to his will. p. 13.

How careful then, Sir, should men be to enquire and assure themselves indubitably what the inspired books are. And how can we give our assent, where we have not full and clear evidence? and how can less evidence be satisfactory? for our assent to any proposition can only be in proportion to its evidences.

§. 49. *Conclusive queries.*

I purpose to conclude with proposing a few queries resulting from the preceding enquiry.

Though each interpreter of scripture and gospel-preacher conceits himself (if he is honest) to be right in his judgment, and therefore requires the assent of others to his own notions as the truth of the gospel; yet as they cannot agree among themselves what the truth of the gospel is, to whom, or upon what score should we give our assent? If to him that has the greatest reason and probability on his side, whether it be not just and necessary to enquire into, and judge of things by their reason and probability?

How is the gospel the revelation of God, if men cannot understand it who honestly endeavour to do it?

Why should men be so bitter (as these gentlemen are) in vindicating what is out of their power to understand, explain, or defend?

Whether 'tis not an evident mark of great weakness and folly in men, (to say no worse) not to agree in the circumstances of an extraordinary fact, or not to be able to tell an important story (which 'tis said, was well known to the relaters) in a consistent and intelligent manner?

Whether 'tis fit, that the ill-connected tales of credulous and ignorant men should be attributed to the direction of a divine, unerring spirit, or be called gospel, or God's word?

Whether credulous and ignorant men are proper judges of truth; that we should receive it arbitrarily from them? How is it agreeable to the wisdom of God, to chuse the most ignorant and unlearned (if not foolish and wicked men) for the messengers of his will, and the disclosers of his council and wisdom?

Whether the Holy Ghost is not given to believers now, as well as in the apostles time? if not, what reason have we, but that of the blind authority of uncertain tradition, that it was ever given?

If the Holy Ghost be given to believers now, what are the evident proofs of it, (besides believing) whereby it may be distinguish'd from nature? And whether that can be known to be an infallible spirit, which cannot be infallibly known?

Whether 'tis consistent with the goodness and infallibility of God, that the salvation of mens souls should in any measure depend upon their believing the precarious and uncertain accounts of weak and fallible men?

And whether any authority not founded in the nature and reason of things, is to be received as the sacred injunctions of divine truth?

Where is the goodness or virtue of taking things upon trust, believing without evidence, and the reasonable means of conviction, as the credulous, unthinking herd do, whose creed, like clock-work, goes as it is directed by others, without being themselves sensible, whether they are right or wrong? Since mankind have been grossly imposed on in such cases, to their very great injury and destruction, and a right judgment of things has a manifest advantage

advantage to their benefit, where is the crime of making an honest enquiry? Or rather, is not a reasonable inspection and scrutiny convenient and necessary?

Be pleased, Sir, to bear in mind, that the design of this enquiry is to shew, that *the evidence given is not sufficient to support the credit of so extraordinary an event*, and to demonstrate, that true religion or righteousness is not founded on an historical faith, and the credit of mighty actions that have weak proofs; but on plain philosophy, on the constant and certain difference, nature and reason of things, in which consists the knowledge of whatever is necessary to discover and promote human happiness; and that *Christianity as old as the creation* is the only true religion in it.

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