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A N
EXAMINATION
O F
Mr. *C H U B B*'s
DISCOURSE on **MIRACLES.**

[Price One Shilling.]

WORLDWIDE

A N
 E X A M I N A T I O N
 O F
 M^r. C H U B B 's
 D I S C O U R S E O N M I R A C L E S.

C O N T A I N I N G,

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| <p>SECT. I. An Enquiry into his Definitions.</p> <p>SECT. II. His first <i>Principle</i> in his VIIth SECT. demonstrated to be false, and beside the Question.</p> <p>SECT. III. His 2d, 3d, and 4th <i>Principles</i> in the same SECT. proved subversive of sound Theism, and to lay a Foundation for every kind of Superstition.</p> <p>SECT. IV. His 5th <i>Principle</i> proved inconsistent with the moral Character of GOD —both false and impious.</p> <p>SECT. V. His 8th SECT. examined, and something offered to moderate and allay the Triumphs of some Gen-</p> | <p>tlemen, upon this his wonderful Performance.</p> <p>SECT. VI. His Demand of UNIVERSALITY, in favour of a Revelation vouched for by Miracles, shewn to be absurd and unreasonable.</p> <p>SECT. VII. The <i>grand Objection</i> to a Revelation, from its not being <i>universally</i> made known, considered.</p> <p>SECT. VIII. Remarks upon Mr. Chubb's Reasonings; in which an Answer to the above Objection is given upon his <i>own Principles</i>, and from which the <i>Receiver</i> of the <i>Christian Revelation</i> is fully justified, and the <i>Rejecter</i> thereof absolutely condemn'd.</p> |
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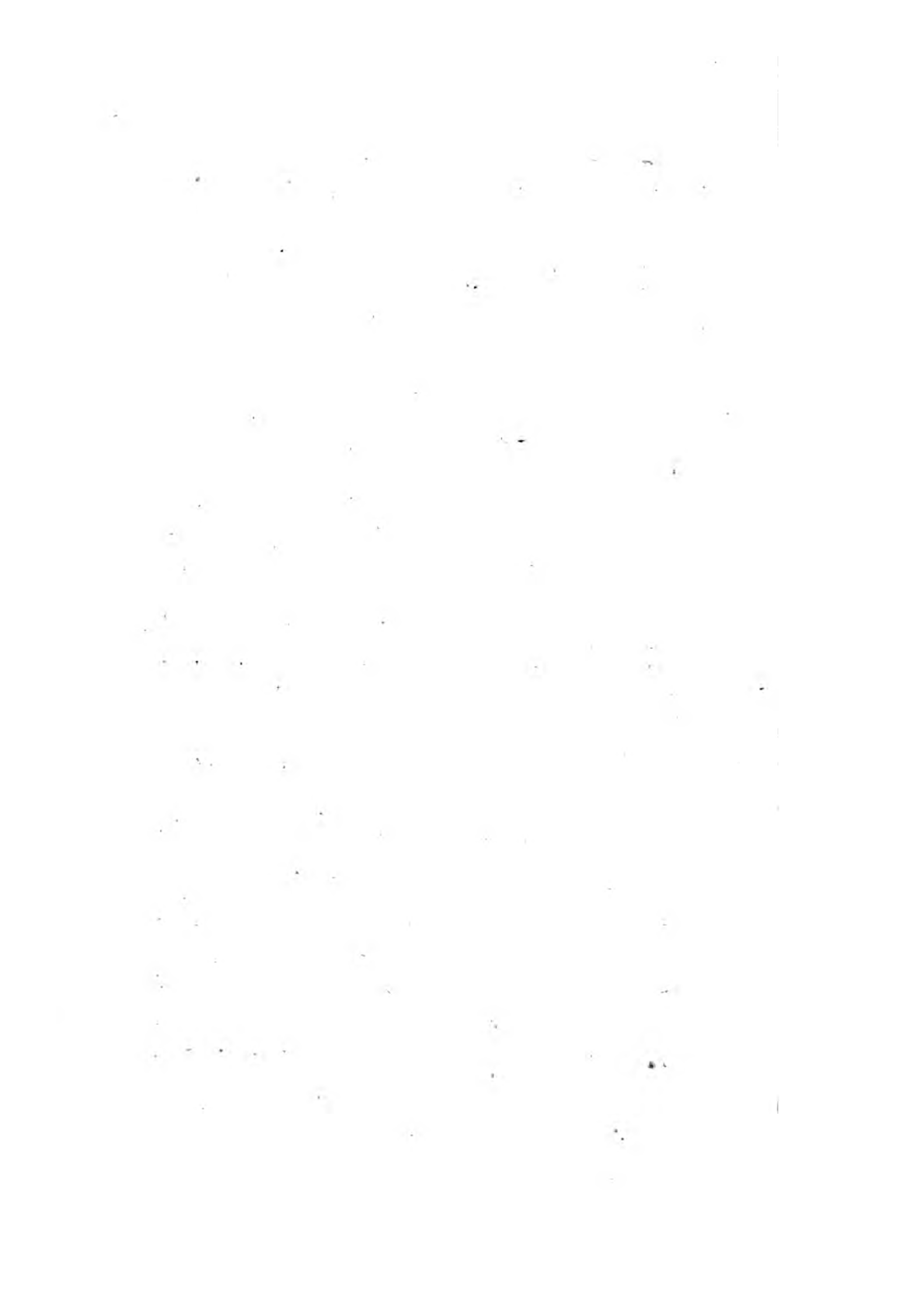
Address'd to Mr. THOMAS CHUBB.

By a LAYMAN.

L O N D O N,

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(i)

T O T H E
R E A D E R.

THE author having, in several places, thro' inadvertency, used the term AGENT instead of the term BEING, which he did not perceive till it was too late to alter the press, he therefore desires the *Reader* would (before he begins to read) be pleased to change the word *a-gent* for *being*, in the following places. Page 14th, l. 12, and l. 13, for *upon such agent's attempting*, read *should such being attempt*. Page 36, l. 10, and l. 21. P. 37, l. 7. P. 48, l. 7.

HE is also desired to correct the following inaccuracies.

PAGE 4th, l. 11, &c. instead of, *which, according to the ordinary course of nature, could not be brought about, but in the use of such means*, read, *which, according to the ordinary course of nature, were absolutely necessary to its production*.

PAGE 11th, l. 25, dele *or non-exertion*.

PAGE 17th, l. 18, &c. for, *and consequently we can determine negatively how far the natural ability or inherent power of man may, or can go*, read, *and consequently we can fix a terminus, or bound, which the natural ability, or inherent power of man cannot attain or extend unto, much less surpass*.

PAGE

PAGE 20th, reference (°) add, *compared with pages 53, 54, and other parts of his book.*

PAGE 35, l. 10, &c. instead of, *which in the case before us is absurd*, read, *which by the sense in which you have used the term agent, and the stress you have laid thereupon, is rendered absurd*: and l. 30, for *with a power of controuling*, read, *with a discretionary power of controuling*.

PAGE 36, l. 21, for, *in such sense*, read, *in a moral sense*.

PAGE 37, l. 6, for, *and yet be a free agent*, read, *tho' a free agent*.

ERRORS of the PRESS.

PAGE 9, bottom l. instead of, *because all demonstrative*, read, *because tho' all demonstrative*. Page 11th, l. 28, dele *is*. Page 12th, l. 27, 28. for *is* read *in*. Page 16, l. 12, for *forbids* read *forbid*. Line 20, for *nature* read *natural*. Bottom line, for *impression* read *expression*. Page 21, l. 10, for *needness* read *needless*. Line 17th, for *6th Sect.* read *5th Sect.* Line 22d, for *there* read *here*. Page 35, l. 4, for *I think*, read *and think*. Page 40, l. 13, for *of man*, read *of the man*. Page 41, l. 8, for *an invisible* read *a visible*. Page 42, l. 6, dele *farther*. Page 54, l. 22, for *immediately* read *mediately*. Page 71, l. 7, for *principle* read *principles*.



A N
E X A M I N A T I O N

O F

Mr. CHUBB'S *Discourse on* MIRACLES.

S I R,



HAVING perused and considered (with great care and impartiality) *your Discourse on Miracles*, I must own, that it gave me no small surprize to find it fall so greatly short of many of your former performances, in point of forcible and candid reasoning: nor only so, but also such strong symptoms of disingenuity, false reasoning and sophistry appear, that was not your name prefix'd to it, I could never have thought Mr. CHUBB capable of such a production.

You have, in my humble opinion, darkened and perplexed the subject with difficulties not

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belonging to it;—you have frequently departed from your subject, and introduced arguments not pertinent to the question which you was attempting to resolve;—you have endeavoured to establish certain points which strike at the foundations of sound THEISM, as it stands opposed to DEMONISM; and consequently, your performance tends to subvert all *true Religion*.

MY reason for so judging you will find in the following sheets.

As you have always professed yourself to be a *Lover of Truth*, and of impartial enquiries after it, you cannot take it amiss of any one who should endeavour to find it, tho' perhaps you yourself may have missed of it: and as an impartial Lover of Truth, will rejoice in every discovery of it, by whomsoever it may be made; so he will submit to conviction where the reasoning demands it, and gladly retract even his own opinions, when they are proved inconsistent with Truth; *more especially*, if he has advanced such opinions *publickly* which have a tendency greatly to mislead men in their sentiments and conduct.

THE Question sought I take to be this, viz. how far Miracles do, or can prove the divine mission and doctrine of any person attended with such miracle-working power? that is, whether they are demonstrative, certain, probable, or no evidences at all; to the divinity of such person's mission and doctrine?

SECTION I.

I BEGIN, *Sir*, where you began, with the definition of those *terms* which are of importance in the debate.

First, By a *Miracle*, I mean, a *sensible effect produced by a mean, or cause independent of, or opposed to, the ordinary course of nature, or those general laws by which the natural world is governed, in the course of GOD's general Providence.*

THE difference is not very great between your definition and mine: for I think we agree, that a *Miracle* is produced by ways and means *above* or *besides* the ordinary course of nature. The only difference is, that in your definition, the *effect* itself, as well as the *manner* of it's *production*, is supposed to be above the natural or inherent power of man; and above or besides the ordinary course of nature. In my definition, the *MANNER* of the production *alone* constitutes the *Miracle*. That it does so, will, I think, appear by the two following instances.

SUPPOSE a person, by the *Palsy* or some other disease or accident, had a withered and useless hand, which, in the judgment of the most skilful Physicians and Surgeons, was thought *incurable*, and by all their former experience, in like cases, found to be so; at last, a person arises, who, by his greater skill in the use of *natural means*, and of well applying or adapting them to the case, restores such withered hand

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to its former usefulness; this *effect*, however astonishing it might be, would not be miraculous, for all that could be reasonably inferred, would be, the *great superiority* of the person's knowledge in the nature, powers, and application of medicine.—But, should *another*, by a *word speaking*, produce the very same effect; this would not only be more astonishing, but it would be truly miraculous: because the effect was produced *independant* on those means, which according to the ordinary course of nature, could not be brought about, but in the use of such means.

Again, SHOULD I by the strength of my *arm* be able to apply such a *projectile force*, as to cause a much greater weight to ascend, to a given height in the air, than ever had before been thought *possible* for any man to do; how great soever the astonishment and surprize of the spectators might be, yet it would not be miraculous; because all that could be reasonably inferred from it would be this, *viz.* that God had given me very uncommon strength in my Arm: but if upon *my word speaking*, the same weight should ascend to the same given height, such effect would be truly miraculous: because *speaking* only, is not applying a *projectile* or *centrifugal* force in any degree; therefore the *cause* producing an *effect* of this kind, must oppose and supersede the general law of *gravitation*; which, in the ordinary course of nature, cannot be done (in the manner supposed) without applying a *projectile* force.

• I CHUSE

I CHUSE to make the MANNER of the production, rather than the effect itself, the CRITERION of a Miracle; because hereby a Miracle is clearly distinguished from every surprising or astonishing effect (be it more or less so) brought about in a *subordination* to the general laws by which the natural world is governed in the course of God's general providence. The non-attending to which distinction has so *greatly perplexed* those who have attempted to define a Miracle.—That such distinction is just, I hope appears from the *two* instances above given, where the *sensible effect* is the *same*; and the MANNER of the production, alone determines it to be miraculous or not.

I PROCEED to consider your other definitions——

I HAVE no objection to your definition of the term *Revelation*, or the term *divine Revelation*; and only object to one assertion of yours under the definition of *evidence*, which is this, *viz.* “that Miracles are *direct evidences*, and give a “*sensible proof*, not of the *veracity*, but only “of the *power* which attends the actor.”

FOR suppose the *actor* should affirm he had power to raise a man from the dead; and in proof of it, should actually raise a man from the dead; would not the *evidence* thereby given of his veracity, be commensurate with the *evidence* given of his power? Supposing (with your leave) that raising the dead is a Miracle.

Again, SUPPOSING a man labouring under a confirm'd leprosy, or other inveterate disease,
upon

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upon a word speaking, of such actor, should find an immediate cure; would he have any more reason to doubt the *good-will* of such an agent towards him, than he had to doubt his *power*? or, *at least*, would not such an act be a more *direct evidence* and *sensible proof* of the benignity and compassion of such an actor, than mere verbal or written expressions of pity, condolence, and the like? still supposing, that to give him relief in such a *way* and *manner*, is really working a Miracle. Of this I am certain, that we *of the vulgar* think a man's actions are more *direct evidences* and *sensible proofs* of his honesty, truth, or benignity, than his mere professions by speech, writing, or otherwise; tho' the *Noble author of the Characteristics* and *Mr. Chubb* may happen to think otherwise.

IF you mean by *direct evidence* and *sensible proof*, that Miracles afford evidence, by way of *testimony*, to the power of the actor, I am tempted to think, in the instances just mentioned, that they afford equal evidence, by way of testimony, to the *veracity* and *goodness* of the actor.—Tho' might I give my opinion, it is this, *viz.* that Miracles afford evidence to the *power* as well as *truth* and *goodness* of the actor only by way of *deduction*: because the language or meaning of actions, seems to me, only deducible from their own nature; for I do not know, that they bear testimony by *speech*, *writing*, or any otherwise.

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I AM likewise so unhappy as to differ greatly from you in your definition of *proof*; when considered by itself, and not as to the effects it may have in convincing or not convincing the judgment. For,

Page 9, you say, "*Proof* is likewise of two kinds, *viz.* probable and certain. By *probable* is meant, when the evidence shews, that it is more likely for the truth to be on one side of the question than on the other, but does not shew it absolutely to be so; that is, it does not shew, that it implies a contradiction, or an impossibility in the nature of things to suppose the contrary."

HERE I must interrupt you, by asking, whether all proof which falls short of shewing, that it is impossible or absurd to suppose the contrary point to that in question, is only probable, or presumptive proof? If you say that it is no more; then I say no matter of fact is *certain*: that the evidence of our senses or consciousness, do not *alone* afford any *certainty*: for all matters of fact, all the objects of our senses, and even we our selves may be supposed not to exist, without any absurdity, or impossibility in the nature and reason of things.—But what *certainty* can I have of any thing, if I cannot be certain of my own existence, which all my perceptions, whether *rational* or *sensitive*, do necessarily presuppose, and on which they do depend? yet the proof I have of my own existence, does not shew the supposition of my non-existence to be absurd and impossible in
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the nature of things ; for if it did, it would evince me to exist *necessarily*, and consequently to be eternal and immense. In short, *Sir*, you have confounded *sensible* or *experimental* proof with *demonstrative* proof ; which in so great a master of reasoning as *Mr. Chubb*, has more the appearance of art and cunning, than of ignorance or oversight.

I SHALL therefore venture to tell you, *Sir*, that proof is of three kinds, *viz.* *probable*, *certain*, and *demonstrative*.

By *probable* or *presumptive* proof, is meant, when the evidence on one side of a question is superiour in number or weight, or both, to the evidence on the other side of the question : and in proportion to such superiority, is such side of a question probable, in a higher or lower degree.

By *certain* or *positive* proof, is meant, when the evidence not only is entirely on one side of a question, but is also so clear and strong, that we must suppose the reports of all our senses, and consciousness, never to be depended upon, before we can suppose the contrary to be true. This is the highest proof we can obtain as to matters of fact, experiments in philosophy or mechanicks, or of any thing that is *merely* the object of our senses or consciousness—we have no other proof than this of our own existence, or of the existence of any of the things around us ; what if I should say, of the existence of God himself ? for supposing my own existence, and the existence of all around
me

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me to be but *probable*; how can I from an *effect* whose existence is but *probable*, infer a *cause certain*? indeed, if I really do exist, who once did not exist, to suppose such my existence, without some superiour extrinſick cause of it, is demonſtrably abſurd. But if my existence is not *certain*, I never can infer from it that there is ſome certain cause of it: for this would be the ſame as to ſay, that a thing which is *certainly* cauſed to exiſt, *poſſibly* does not exiſt; — an expreſs contradiction!

BUT, *Sir*, I can ſuppoſe the non-exiſtence of any matter of fact, of any experiment, of my ſelf, and of all around me, without any abſurdity or impoſſibility in the nature of things: does it therefore follow that we have no *certain-ty* in theſe reſpects? if you ſay we have not; I then ſay, we have no *certain-ty* of the truth of any mathematical demonſtration: for if I cannot depend upon my conſciouſneſs for the truth of my exiſtence, how can I depend upon the reports of it, as to the agreement or diſagreement of the ideas made uſe of in ſuch demonſtration? neither have we any *certain-ty* as to the exiſtence of God: for if we are not certain that ſomething does now exiſt, we never can be certain that ſomething has always exiſted. Therefore unleſs you will run into downright *pyrrhonism*, and deſtroy all *certain-ty*, you muſt allow the *proof* I am contending for to be *certain*, tho' it may not be *demonſtrative*. And that *certain proof* is diſtinguiſhable from *demonſtrative proof*, is very plain, becauſe all demonſtrative

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strative proof is *certain proof*, yet all *certain proof* is not *demonstrative proof*: For as some truths are discoverable by our senses or conscioufness alone, as in the instances above, and our *certainly* concerning these truths may therefore be called *sensible* or *experimental certainty*; so other truths are only discernable by our reason, or the power we have of abstracting and comparing our ideas together, perceiving their agreement or disagreement, and thence deducing the truth or falshood of the point in question; and our *certainly* concerning these truths may be called *demonstrative certainty*. But as certainty admits of no degrees, the former kind of truths are no less *certain* than the latter; all that they differ in, is the medium of proof, by which their *certainly* is evinced: one kind of them being *proveable* by *reason*, the other by *sense* or *experience*, and no objection will lie against the one, but what will equally affect the other: for should it be said, that our senses or conscious perceptions may deceive us, the same may be said of our reason. Or how comes it to pass, that such contrary and opposite opinions prevail in the world, whilst every man is perswaded he has truth and reason on his side? In a word, it is as absurd to reason against *incontestible facts*, as against *demonstration*: and those points are as *certainly* true, in which the *senses* and *experience* of all men do agree, as those to which the reason of every man doth assent; nor is it less unreasonable to require *demonstrative evidence* to a matter of fact, than to require *ocular proof* of a point in metaphysics.

By

By demonstrative proof is meant, *when the nature of the evidence in favour of one side of a question is such, that the contrary supposition is absurd in itself, and impossible to be true in the nature and reason of things.* For instance, that the whole of any thing is *equal* to all its parts, is demonstrably true, because the contrary supposition of its being *unequal*, is to suppose a thing *greater* or *less* than itself, which is absurd. That space is *indiscerpible*, is demonstratively true, because the contrary supposition of its being *separable* or *moveable*, would be to suppose it separated or removed from it self, which is absurd.

It may be proper likewise to define what is meant by *active power*, or the power of an agent, and what is meant by the *ordinary course of nature*; these being terms which do frequently occur, and are of great importance to be understood in the debate.

POWER, *when ascribed to an agent, necessarily supposes that such agent is by virtue thereof able to overcome all the resistance to be met with, in bringing to pass any effect within the compass of his power; and that the exertion or non-exertion of such power to produce such effect, must depend on his will and choice, otherwise he cannot be considered as an agent, but is as a mere patient, and to ascribe active power to him would be absurd.*—To ask therefore, *whether visible or invisible agents are at liberty to exert their powers as they please?* is to ask, whether they can be agents, and no agents at the same time—

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nevertheless, it is no absurdity to say, that a visible or invisible being may at one time have power to do, what at another time he has no power to do, or, that he may at one time be an *agent*, and not so at another; for this is daily the case of our own species.

HERE *Sir*, I would remark, that had you as carefully attended to the idea convey'd by the term *agent*, at the beginning of your *5th Section* as you did in the same *Section* p. 24. and all thro' your *6th Section*, you could never have propos'd as a Matter of enquiry, *Section 5th* at the beginning, "supposing that there are such invisible *agents* as aforesaid, whether God will suffer them to exert such power as *they have*, when it is to be exercised for the delusion of his creatures?"---*Dear Sir*, is not this to ask whether God can give and restrain the use of *power* at one and the same time? This, in *Sect. 6*, you allow to be absurd, and yet you appear to have run into such absurdity. It would grieve one much to observe what pains you have been at, *Sect. 5*, in drawing an argument from ANALOGY to prove, *that agents are agents!*---Your own words are (*viz.*) "and here, if we argue by analogy, that is, if we infer from his (*i. e.* God's) conduct is *one* case, how he will act is *another*; then it is plain, that God will suffer *invisible agents* to exert their power in serving what purposes they *please*. Men we see are at *liberty*, and do *actually* delude one another, in *every* kind of delusion, tho' it be in points of the *utmost* importance, and for
" each

“ each other's hurt, and sometimes when they
“ have no other advantage from it, but the bare
“ pleasure of deluding; and thus they deal with
“ the *creatures* below them; and thus in like
“ manner *those creatures* deal with one another.
“ From whence arises a *strong probability*, that
“ all *invisible agents* (if there are any such) are
“ at liberty to exert their power in serving what
“ purposes they please.” That is to say, be-
cause God does not do an *impossibility* in regard
to man, *viz. to give and restrain the use of his*
powers at the same time; it arises to a *strong pro-*
probability, that he will not work an *impossibility* in
regard to invisible agents, *viz. by giving and re-*
straining the use of their powers at the same time.^a—

I SHALL conclude this *Section* by enquiring
into what is meant by the expression, THE OR-
DINARY COURSE OF NATURE? And I think
it must mean, either those *general and perma-*
nent laws, impressed by the great God upon the
natural world, at the time of its creation, and
which, (according to some philosophers)
have by virtue of the same original impress, con-
tinued the same from the creation, without in-
crease or diminution; even so as to need no re-
pairs, nor recruits; nor any immediate interpo-
sition of the deity from that time to this. Or else,
it must mean (according to other philosophers^b,
esteemed the greatest and best of the moderns)
the constant exertion of the *divine power and*
energy sustaining, invigorating, enlivening and
regu-

^a See *Chubb's Discourse*, p. 29, 30.

^b Vid. *Clark's Letters to Leibnitz*.

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regulating the natural world. Or lastly, it must
mean, (according to the *Atheists* opinion) matter
and motion acting, or rather acted upon by *blind*
fate or *chance*. Concerning which, we have no
manner of idea.

S E C T. II.

HAVING in the foregoing *Section* settled the
sense of those terms, which are of the greatest
importance in the argument: I shall begin this
Section with the following postulate, viz. That
supposing Miracles can only be performed by the im-
mediate power of God, or by a power communicated
from God to some other agent, always liable to be
withdrawn upon such agents attempting to make
it subservient to ends and purposes contrary, or
opposed to the will and design of God in communi-
cating such power. They are (upon this supposi-
tion) certain and indisputable proofs of the di-
vine authority of that person's mission and doctrine
on whom they do attend.

(BUT here, Sir, the points, laid down by you
in *Sect. 7th.* as *first principles* in your enquiry,
occur in the nature of objections to the *postula-*
tum just mentioned. It is therefore my business
to examine what truth and solidity there may
be in them: for if they can be fairly disproved,
the postulate just supposed will be fully proved
to be true, at least for any thing contained in
your principles.

I begin with that first principle of yours, viz.
“ that we cannot possibly know the utmost ex-
“ tent, nor fix the bounds of human power ”

vid.

vid. Mr. Clubb's 7th Sect. 1st paragraph. I suppose by *humane power*, you mean the *natural ability of man*; because your *fifth* principle treats of his *supernatural* power or ability.—You tells us, p. 2. “ that by the *natural* ability of man, is meant, that ability which arises from our *whole* composition, with all its improvements, acting *in*, or *upon* matter, considered as under the direction of those laws which the God of nature hath subjected it unto.”— I take it for granted, that the term *inherent* cannot here signify *supernatural*, because you say, in your definition of a Miracle, “ that it is a sensible effect which is *above* the natural or *inherent* power of man to cause or produce.”

I cannot agree with you, that we are unable to determine the utmost extent of the natural power or ability of man as explained above; for tho' neither you nor I can determine *affirmatively* to what it may attain or extend, yet surely, we may with great ease and certainty determine *negatively* to what it cannot attain or extend. This, I think, we can do with as much certainty as we can determine any point in experimental philosophy, or any matter of fact; and if an argument founded on a merely supposed *possibility* of the contrary to any philosophical experiment that has never yet failed, or to any matter of fact which no body doubts of, would be rejected as a mere whim and *chimera* in either of these cases, why not in the case before us? May we not with absolute *certainty* determine, that it never

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never was, nor ever will be in the *natural* ^c *power* of man to stop or invert the rotation of the earth upon its own axis, or to annihilate the matter of which it is composed? or to use your own instance of a man's being raised up, and carried thro' the air, to the height, and with the swiftness of an eagle! when all the knowledge we can yet attain of man's powers, and all his improvements acting *in* or *upon* matter, considered as under the direction of those laws, which the God of nature hath subjected it to, absolutely forbids any such suppositions.

It will not serve your purpose, *Sir*, to say, we cannot *affirmatively* determine what man's natural, or inherent power can or may perform; if we can determine *negatively* what it cannot perform. Which I think in either of the above instances we may do. Unless you will say, that you are not *certain*, "it never was, nor ever will be in any man's nature or inherent power, acting in or upon matter, considered as under the direction of those laws which the God of nature hath subjected it to, to stop or invert the motion of the earth, or to annihilate the *matter* of which it is composed," — you yourself, seem to think, that the effects you instance in, would be so far *certainly* above the natural power of man to produce, as that there could only be a *bare possibility, if that*, of such effects being produced by such a cause. *A bare possibility, if that*, is an impression, I confess myself not very
well

^c I use the term *natural power*, all along in the utmost extent of it, and according to your definition, p. 2.

well to understand; I only conjecture that it means, *a bare possibility of a bare possibility*.— And if that is what you intend by it, this first difficulty is, (even in your own opinion) *only a bare possibility of a bare possibility*. — If this should not be your meaning, I hope you will in the next REVELATION^a you favour us withal, give us the sense of the expression. But, Sir, in my definition of *proof*, you will find that *certainty* does not necessarily infer an *impossibility* in the nature and reason of things, of the contrary's being true, in the various instances there given. However, if *experimental* certainty will not satisfy you, you shall have *demonstration*, that according to your own definition of a *Miracle*, it never was, nor ever will be in the natural or inherent power of man, to produce one. And consequently, that we can determine *negatively*, how far the natural ability or inherent power of man may, or can go. I say, we can do it even with *demonstrative certainty*: for in *p. 2.* of your Discourse, you thus define a *Miracle*, “ this term, say you, I think “ is used to express a *sensible effect*, which is a “ bove the *natural ability*, or *inherent power* of “ man to produce; which is likewise *above*, or “ *besides* the ordinary course of nature, or of those “ laws by which the natural world is governed “ in the course of God's general providence; “ and which also is produced by the agency or “ co-operation of an invisible Being.”

^a Mr. Chubb's Disc. p. 6. l. 1, &c.

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Now to suppose, 1st, man's natural ability or inherent power, may be able to cause or produce a *Miracle*, is to suppose it able to cause or produce, what by your definition, is *above* the *natural ability* or *inherent power* of man to cause or produce. This is a contradiction in terms; consequently it is absurd and impossible in the nature of things. 2. To suppose that man's natural ability, acting in or upon matter, considered as under the direction of those laws, which the God of nature hath subjected it unto, may be capable of producing a *Miracle*, or a *sensible effect*; which by your own definition, is *above* or *besides* the ordinary course of nature, or of those laws by which the natural world is governed, in the course of God's general providence, is another contradiction in terms; and consequently absurd, and impossible in the nature of things. 3. To suppose a man's *natural ability* or *inherent power* alone and by itself able to cause or produce a *Miracle* or *sensible effect*, which by your own definition, cannot be caused or produced without the *agency* or co-operation of an *invisible Being*, is a *third* contradiction in terms; and consequently absurd and impossible in the nature of things.

I HOPE, *Sir*, you are now convinced, that your *first principle* is fairly disproved; since you have not only *certainty* but *demonstration*, that to suppose a man's *natural ability* or *inherent power* able to cause or produce a *Miracle*, is to suppose an absurdity, and what is impossible in the nature of things: consequently, you see we may absolutely determine the bounds of human power;

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power; because we have demonstrated, that to work a *Miracle* is beyond the extent of human power; and that too upon your own definition of a *Miracle*.

THE business of your 2d *Section* is to enquire *how far the natural ability of man extends?* And this, in order to keep as clear as possible from every difficulty that is liable to perplex the subject, (which subject I think, is an enquiry concerning Miracles.) But, *Dear Sir*, how can man's natural and inherent power (supposing him to be perfectly acquainted with all those laws, by which the natural world is governed, in the course of God's general providence) perplex our enquiries concerning a *sensible effect*, which is *above* the natural ability or inherent power of man to cause or produce! which is likewise *above* or *besides* the ordinary course of nature, or of those laws by which the world is governed in the course of God's general providence: and which is also produced by the agency or co-operation of an invisible Being?— I am mightily afraid, *Sir*, that to avoid *perplexity*, you have plunged into the utmost depths of absurdity! and in this instance, have been so far from gaining your point, that you have both perplexed your self, and the subject, with what is demonstrably impertinent and foreign to your enquiry, — I shall therefore conclude, that for any thing contained in the *first* of your *principles* laid down, *Sect. 7.* our *postulatum* is certainly true.

S E C T. III.

I PROCEED to examine your 2d, 3d, and 4th principles. And to do you exact justice, I will take them and the chief arguments which you have offered in support of them for granted; and setting them in the form of AXIOMS, shall only draw some *Corollaries* or *Inferences*, which seem to me, to be fairly deducible from them.

I TAKE for granted, therefore,

AXIOM I. *That it is possible some other invisible agents, virtuous or vitious, or both, besides God, do, or may act in or upon this globe^b.*

AX. II. *That we do not know what kind or degree of power they are capable of exercising^c.*

AX. III. *It being as easy for God to communicate one kind or degree of power as another, it follows, that no kind or degree of power exerted, is sufficient to prove the immediate agent exerting such power to be divine^d.*

AX. IV. *That God will permit and suffer such invisible agents to use their powers in serving what purposes they please, at least, he will permit them thus to act, for any thing we know, or for any grounds we have, from which we may fairly conclude the contrary^e.*

AX. V. *If we argue by way of analogy from God's permitting men to delude, injure, and oppress one another, as well as the creatures below them,*

^b *Vid. Mr. Chubb's 2d principle, Sect. 7.*

^c *Ibid. 3d principle, Sect. 7.*

^d *Vid. 1st parag. Sect. 4th and 2d parag. of his 8th Sect.*

^e *Vid. his 4th principle, Sect. 7.*

them, and those creatures again to do the same by each other; we have probable reason to conclude, that God will no more restrain invisible agents than he does visible agents in the use of their powers^f.

HERE, Sir, I would previously remark, That if your 2d principle, (which I have called *Ax. I.*) be true, your 4th principle (here called *Ax. IV.*) is necessarily presupposed, and all arguments offered in support of it are needless, if not ridiculous. Your 2d principle supposeth, that other invisible agents besides God, may, or do act upon this globe. Now, Sir, as far as any Being is an *Agent*, he must necessarily (by the term) be at liberty to exert his powers to serve what purposes he pleaseth. And to enquire, as you have done, in your 6th *Seçt.* *Whether God will permit and suffer such invisible agents to use their powers, in serving what purposes they please?* is to enquire, whether God will permit and suffer agents to be agents.—From hence your *analogical* argument (there called *Ax. V.*) most evidently appears to be needless, if not ridiculous.

THE truth is, you have sometimes used the term *agent*, very loosely and improperly, which I should not have taken so much notice of, if you had not grounded your whole argument in your 6th *Seçt.* as well as the argument in your 24th *p.* upon the exact definition of the term *agent*. For in both these places of your book, where

^f *Vid.* pag. 18, 19, 20, 21, &c. of Mr. Chubb.

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where it makes for your argument, you can as closely attend to the ideas, conveyed by the terms *agency* and *power* as any one can do. So that I cannot think the word *agent* was slipped in thro' oversight, but with a crafty design to get any one who should oppose you into a circle, and then buffet him at pleasure.—

I now proceed to draw some *Corollaries* from the foregoing *Axioms*. As,

Coroll. I. From *Ax. I, II, III, IV*, I infer that we, and all around us may *possibly* owe our existence not to the will of God, but to the will of some other invisible agent. For if there may be other invisible agents, who may or do act upon this globe, the *kind* and *degrees* of whose power we are ignorant of, and the exhibitions whereof may not be distinguishable from those of the divine power, because it is as easy for God to communicate one kind or degree of power as another: and if God will not, or rather *cannot* restrain *agents*, whilst such, in the use of their powers; therefore such agents must be at liberty to exert their powers in serving what purposes they please. I say, it follows, that we, and all the inhabitants of this globe, at least, may be indebted for *existence* and preservation to some other invisible agent than God—but as there is no more reason to limit the power of such *invisible agent* as to *extent*, than as to *kind* or *degree*; therefore the production and *conservation* of the whole visible universe may depend upon the power and will of such
invisible

invisible agent: from whence *may* arise our *interests* and *obligations* to make such a *Being* the object of our supreme fear, reverence, love, and service, even to the exclusion of the great God from our *religious regards*.——

IT may be objected, *That supposing the universe to owe its existence and preservation to the will and power of some other invisible agent than God; yet as such agent's powers and capacities are derived from God, therefore God alone is the supreme and ultimate object of our religious regards.* To this it may be replied, that tho' the will of God was concerned in giving *Being* and *Power* to such invisible agent, yet as the *exercise* of such power was to depend upon the will of such *agent*; the will of God may be no farther concerned with the production and conservation of the universe, than to render such an event merely *possible*. And thus far the will of God is concerned even with *vice* itself; for if God had not willed the existence of intelligent and free beings, *vice* could never have taken place; but if it is unreasonable, upon such *remote* grounds, to suppose the will of God concerned so far with the vices of other free beings as to make him the author of *sin*; it is equally unreasonable, upon the very same grounds, to acknowledge the divine will so far concerned with the creation and preservation of the universe, as to pay religious homage to God, upon those accounts. The truth in both these cases is, that the will of God is only to be considered as a mere *sine qua non*, or as that by which the existence

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stence of any thing is rendered *possible* ; but that such a thing should actually exist, rather than not exist, depends upon the *will* of some other intelligent agent. *It may perhaps be urged, that as it is supposed that God originally communicated such power to such invisible being, so it may be reasonably supposed, that God did this as fore-knowing to what valuable ends and purposes this invisible being would employ his powers ; therefore God is ultimately to be adored, feared, loved and served.*— This objection can have no manner of force, till the objector has fully and clearly reconciled the idea of *absolute prescience* with that of *free agency*. — If this *Coroll.* is fairly drawn, your principles and arguments, *Sir*, have rendered the very *first principles of sound theism* but only *probable*. Nay, if the argument be carried on, I am afraid they will be found but *probable* in a *very low degree*. For, perhaps, you may be hard put to it to prove, upon your *principles*, that a vicious invisible agent may not have given being to us and all around us. For,

THE argument stands thus,

To communicate *good* is reasonable and eligible, and infinitely preferable to its contrary : therefore to communicate a *greater good*, must in its own nature be more eligible and reasonable than to communicate a *less* ; supposing it equally in the power of the agent. Now, it is as easy for God to communicate the *greatest degree* of good and happiness as the *least* ; and if it is most reasonable and eligible so to do, be sure the all-perfect mind would have so done. But,

as

as many evils do take place, and the good that is in the world is *unsatisfying* and *perishing*, it may be presumed, *that this constitution of things is not the product of infinite power, wisdom and goodness acting in conjunction.*

Perhaps, Sir, you will reply, that tho' many and great evils do take place, yet a greater general good is carried on thereby: and that the system is as perfect as the nature of things will admit.

IT is answered to the first part of the objection, that till you can prove that no kind or degree of *natural evil* can be spared out of the world, without diminishing the general good, this part of the objection can have no force. And here, your own rule will turn against you^a; for we are not to judge from *secret, remote, and possible* consequences, but from the present and obvious state of things:—and when you have offered clear and conclusive arguments to prove, that no one kind or degree of *natural evil* can be spared out of the present and obvious system, without impairing and diminishing the more general and universal good; then I promise to shew you how a revelation given to a part of mankind only, is more conducive to the general and universal good, than when given to every individual.

To the second part of the objection, it may be replied, that to talk of a system being as perfect as the nature of things will admit, is to say nothing; for the very nature of things is supposed

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^a Page 41, &c.

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posed to be absolutely derived from God; and if so, how happens it that it is no more perfect? Was it not equally easy to the all-perfect, to do the greater as to do the less? And was it not more eligible so to do? Besides, unless we were better acquainted with *the nature of things* than we really are, it is presuming, without sufficient ground and reason, that the nature of things forbid a more perfect and agreeable system. Moreover, to say things cannot be better than they are, because God, who always does what is wisest and best, has made them to be what they are, is begging the point in dispute.

TAKING therefore the present and obvious state of things, and the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th *Axioms* together, we perhaps may find a solution to that difficulty, which has so long perplexed mankind, *viz. the existence of evil in the natural world*: for supposing it to be the production of a Being below the *all-perfect*, it is not to be wondered at, that there should appear defects of goodness, wisdom, or power. Such a Being, tho' greatly superior to us in all these perfections, may be liable to mistake and error; and it may not be in his power to restrain other Beings *evilly* disposed from introducing confusion and disorder into his Works. And if it should be in his *power* to suspend or deprive them of their *agency*, it may not be in his *will* so to do: For if we can suppose by *Axiom* the 4th, the all-perfect mind capable of such conduct, without impeaching his wisdom and good-

goodness, *much more* may we suppose any other agent capable of so doing, without any reflexion on his moral character; so that we need not be perplexed to account for the introduction of *evil*: which, upon the supposition of God's being the creator and governor of the universe, can never be rationally accounted for upon the *present* and *obvious* state of things. This argument (upon your definition of *certainty*) renders the first principles of *sound Theism* uncertain; because if you are not able to shew it to be *absurd*, it is *possible*, yea, it is *probable*, that our part of the universe, or this system to which we belong, is rather the workmanship of some *virtuous Demon*, than of the great God.—

BUT, I think, we may from *Axioms* 1, 2, 3, 4, and from the present and obvious state of things, and from some of your other arguments taken together, without absurdity, suppose, that some *vitious invisible agent*, may have given Being to us, and all around us. For no Being is *necessarily vitious*, therefore such Being or Beings may have their good and virtuous moods, as well as vitious men: and how long they may continue in them we cannot tell.—Perhaps, finding us to be vitious and unreasonable, like themselves, they may be the more readily disposed to heap and continue their favours upon us: and if we can suppose them capable of giving an important and valuable revelation to mankind, and of vouching for it with Miracles, or with *sensible effects*, which are *above* and *besides* the ordinary course of nature, why may we not

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suppose them capable of giving existence to us, and to all around us? Since the producing a *sensible effect*, independent of, or in opposition to the course of nature, requires an *equal*, if not a *superior* power, to that by which the course of nature is settled or established. — And, by *Axiom* the 3d, it is as easy for God to communicate one kind or degree of power as another.

IT may be objected, *That the manifest traces of wisdom and goodness which do appear in the visible creation, forbid such a supposition as this.*

IT is answered, That as we are ignorant of the degrees of power, so we are ignorant of what degrees of knowledge such Beings may be possessed. And as to their *goodness*, it must be remembered, that any such *invisible* Being is supposed to be in one of his kindest and best moods; and therefore, may not have mixed so much evil in his works, as otherwise he would have done.—If there is no absurdity in drawing this inference from your principles and arguments, it will appear, that you have reduced the first principles of *Theism*, as it stands opposed to *Demonism*, in the worst sense of the word, to a *bare probability*. For if this inference cannot be proved to be unjust, you never can prove the first principles of *Theism*, as it stands opposed to *Diabolism*, to be *certain*: especially upon your
own

own definition of *proof certain* ^b. Nay, it will follow, that as we are certain that God cannot do *evil*, and yet such a mixture of evil is in the world, as that upon your principles and arguments, we may without absurdity suppose a *vitious Being* to have given existence to us and all around us.—I say, there remains but a *low degree of probability*, or perhaps only a *bare possibility* that God is the author of our Being, and of that part of the world, at least, with which we are concerned.

I infer, from *Axioms* 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5,

Coroll. 2. That man is in a very dreadful and deplorable condition! For if the foregoing inference be justly drawn, he must be very uncertain what Being he stands related to, as his creator and preserver. It is impossible for him to judge with any certainty what may be the right method of pursuing his true interests and happiness, what course of sentiment and conduct may be most acceptable to the Being on whose will he depends for his existence and all its modes. For, supposing it to be a *virtuous agent*, yet if it is not God himself, such agent may be liable to mistake, partiality, or mutability; so that it can be but *probable* that a constant series of virtuous sentiments and actions will be always acceptable to him.—And if it should be a *vitious agent*, tho' it is most likely a vitious course may be most acceptable to him;
yet

^b *Vid.* Mr. Chubb's defin. of *certain proofs*, pag. 9th, 10th, compared with pag. 33d, where he confounds *certain proof* with *demonstrative proof*.

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yet if this Being should happen to be got into one of his *virtuous moods*, he may punish him for *that* at one time, which at another time he would reward him. And he might resent and punish that in one man, which (thro' *whim* and *humour*) he might be pleased with and reward in another.— Or, even supposing he owes his existence to God alone, and therefore may be *certain* what course of sentiment and action will be pleasing and acceptable to him; yet as he is *uncertain* of what extent or degree, or of what duration the powers of other invisible agents may be, and alike uncertain as to their moral characters; so by *Ax. 5th*, he may reasonably presume, that as his piety and virtue were not sufficient to protect him from the delusions, injuries and oppressions of his fellow-creatures here, so they may afford him no better protection, in any future possible state of existence, from the delusions and injuries of invisible Beings: since by *Ax. 4th*, *God will permit invisible Beings to use their powers in serving what purposes they please, at least, for any thing we can shew to the contrary.* Upon these considerations, I say, what avails the favour of God to such an exposed and forlorn wretch?—May he not argue thus, by way of *analogy*? “ I here
“ find myself continually exposed to deceits
“ and injuries, which all my care, innocence,
“ diligence and fortitude cannot prevent. Nay,
“ by my virtue and piety I am the more exposed
“ to injuries and violence from impious and
“ prophane persecutors and bigots! I find all
“ my

“ my prayers, tears, conscious innocence, and
“ secret appeals to God cannot prevail upon him
“ to deliver me, by restraining my *fellow*
“ creatures in the most outrageous abuse
“ of their powers. And what reason have I
“ to think, that God will for my sake restrain
“ other Beings, if any such there are, from de-
“ ceiving, injuring or oppressing me in any
“ future state of existence, if they are disposed
“ to make such an abuse of their powers?
“ *What can I, what shall I do?* Gladly would
“ I make God my refuge and my trust: fain
“ would I hope his favour will make me hap-
“ py; but alas!—I have no room to con-
“ clude that this will ever be my case; since,
“ for ought I know, there may be innumera-
“ ble *invisible* Beings, of whose power I am
“ no judge, to whom my piety and virtue may
“ be as obnoxious as to the most impious and
“ vitious of my fellow creatures; and who may
“ possibly persecute me for it thro’ all the pe-
“ riods of my existence.” Miserable wretch
indeed! if God can be supposed thus to treat
thee.—But, O *Theist*, is this the character of
thy God? Is this the conduct of that all-perfect
mind on whom thou acknowledgest thyself to
depend; on whom thou reliefst for all future as
well as present happiness? Of that almighty
Being whom thou esteemest to be the common
parent of the universe? No, surely, such a sen-
timent of God must be dreadful and abhorrent
to every *sound Theist*; and such a character can
only suit the *supra-mundane* intelligence of *Epi-
curus*

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curus and his followers, who esteem it beneath the dignity of such a Being, to interest himself in the conduct or behaviour of inferior intelligences ; and to whom, the virtue and vice, the happiness and misery of such are intirely indifferent.

BUT what a door is here opened to the most dark and horrible superstition, that the trembling and astonished imagination of man may suggest ! or the most cunning and artful priests contrive !— Pray what absurdity or folly are those nations chargeable with, who neglect the worship of God, as having nothing to fear from him who is *goodness* itself, and make their intire homage and court to *evil* and *vitious* Beings, of whom they may have great reason to be afraid upon these principles ? — May not those accounts be very credible which travellers have reported of the *poor Americans*, namely, that they worship the devil thro' fear ; and that if they neglect their superstitious observances, he tortures and punishes them for so doing ? Suppose a *vitious invisible agent* should make a revelation, requiring and commanding human sacrifices to be offered him, threatning also the most dreadful punishments to the neglect thereof, and vouching for such revelation by *Miracles*, what must our condition be, by *Ax.* 4th, and 5th ? This supposition is (I think) much more reasonable, than that a *vitious Being* should give a revelation quite opposite to his genius and character, and vouch for it by *Miracles*.

Coroll.

Coroll. 3. FROM the *Axioms* laid down, it is evident, that this age is run into too great a degree of Scepticism and Infidelity, in rejecting those well-attested accounts of apparitions, possessions, witchcraft and faries; which *Tradition* had handed down to us from father to son, thro' periods of time immemorial. And what aggravates the case, is, our Legislature have lately suffered a law to grow obsolete, which was calculated to preserve us from the fatal effects of forcery and witchcraft. For as to the common objection, *viz.* "that it cannot be supposed, that God will permit or suffer invisible Beings to play such pranks upon this globe; and that it is even ridiculous to suppose them capable of so much folly and weakness, as to take pleasure in turning pies and custards topsy-turvey in the oven, in order to vex and molest hungry mortals,—or using their arts to plague dairymaids, when churning butter—their conveying old women thro' the air on broomsticks; constantly attending upon them in the familiar shape of a cat; and contracting with them for the *reversion* of their souls and bodies—their tormenting little children, by making them vomit up rusty nails and crooked pins—their dancing in rings or circles by moonlight, and a thousand other pranks."

IT is answered, That the first part of the objection, is only a popular argument taken from the moral perfections of God^a; and it is superseded by *Axioms* IV and V.

^a *Chubb's disc. p. 20.*

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AND as to the other part of the objection, it has little or no weight, because we know nothing of the wisdom or goodness, virtues or vices, powers or impotencies of invisible agents. They may, for aught we can shew to the contrary, have their *gay* and *frolicksome*, *beneficial* or *hurtful* humours and flights as well as we;—and if we argue by *analogy*, it is *probable* that they have: For why should we only, of all intelligent Beings, be subject to caprices? Upon your *principles*, we have no reason to reject so many well-attested *stories*, as are to be met with in various writers on these subjects:—Nor only so, but we have upon *record* some scores, if not hundreds, who have been legally convicted and put to death for *witchcraft* and *sorcery* in our own country, and that within these 80 or 90 years past; many of whom confessed themselves guilty of such practices, at the time of their execution. And surely, from so many vouchers, and so many facts entered upon *record*, at the *time* and *place* where they were performed, we have as much or more reason to give credit to such accounts, than we have to give credit to that *single* Miracle, which you have related concerning *brother Clary*.—It may here be worth observing, how the *heights* of *Scepticism*, and the *depths* of credulity, tho' extremities like to those of the *east* and *west*, meet in a point!—

BUT it is time to bring the debate to an issue. You see, *Sir*, what deductions I have made from your *principles*. You are at liberty
to

to shew, *if you can*, that they do not follow from the premises; or you may avow and defend these *Corollaries*. But if you cannot do the former, I think the latter too absurd and impious to be done, you must be content to give up those *principles* as false and absurd, from which such inferences may fairly be drawn.—*Particularly*, you must resign the second, third and fourth of your *principles* in your 7th *Seçt.* and your *analogical* argument, which in the case before us is absurd. Nay, perhaps, you may be hard put to it to preserve the argument advanced in *Axiom* the 3d, *viz.* *That it is as easy for God to communicate one degree of power as another: and consequently, no degree of power exerted is sufficient to prove the agent to be divine.* It may be questioned, *Whether God can communicate MIRACLE-WORKING power?* For if a Miracle is a *sensible effect*, above or besides the ordinary course of nature; and if the ordinary course of nature be the product of his own will and power, then an ability of *Miracle-working* will appear to be the result of a communicated power, equal if not superior to the power of God^b. — But after all, should it be as easy for God to communicate one kind or degree of power as another, it does not thence follow *that he will do so*. On the contrary, we may justly presume, that he will not trust any *finite, imperfect* Being, with a power of *controuling* or *superseding* that order of things, which

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^b See definition of *active power*, and definition of the ordinary course of nature, *Seçt.* 1.

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in infinite wisdom and goodness he has established; especially, as so doing, would leave others of his intelligent creatures at a *loss* to know, to whose *will* and *power* they are indebted for their existence, and all its modes; as well as *what Being* they should make their refuge and trust; and also what *course* may render them the suitable objects of favour^c.

“ To suppose that there may be other *invi-*
“ *sible agents* besides God; of whose powers
“ and capacities we may be entirely ignorant;
“ and that such Beings may act *in* or *upon* this
“ globe, in immediate subjection and conform-
“ mity to the will of God, employing their
“ powers to execute his wise designs, no way
“ interferes with, or militates against our *Pos-*
“ *tulatum*. Nay, moreover, that these Beings
“ may be *free* or *agents* whilst so doing.” Un-
less *agency* or *freedom*, only consists in *oppo-*
sing or *counteracting* the will of God.—For to
suppose *invisible agents* restrained, in this sense,
is no more destroying their *agency*, than it is
destroying God's *agency*, to assert it to be im-
possible for God to *lie*, or to do *iniquity*; which
incapacity does not arise from any physical ne-
cessity, but from the rectitude of the divine will.
And surely, it is no hard matter to allow so much
honesty, truth and virtue to any agent *visible* or
invisible, as to render it *morally impossible* for such
an agent to *betray* or *abuse* his Trust; especi-
ally if such agent is thoroughly apprized and in-
wardly convinced, that the *almighty* and *tremendous*

^c See *Coroll.* 1st and 2d.

dous God will certainly never suffer such an Act to go unpunished.—Pray, *Sir*, do you think, that there is a truly virtuous and honest man upon earth? If there is, it is morally impossible for such man to *betray* or *abuse* a trust reposed in him, and yet *be a free agent*.

BUT he who says, that such invisible agents may or do act *in* or *upon* this globe, and exert instances of power, not to be distinguished from divine power, at least by us; and this at their own discretion, such person will, I think, be obliged to avow and defend the *Corollaries* which I have drawn; and consequently subvert all true religion. The *Premises* therefore, from which such inferences are fairly deducible, are false and absurd.

IT will signify nothing to object and say, *that men are at liberty to exert, and do exert their powers to serve purposes contrary to the will of God*: Because, men have no power to *interfere* with or *disturb* any System of which they do not make a part, or to deceive and impose upon *any other* intelligent Beings, besides those of their own species; who may, by *care, vigilance* and *fortitude* be pretty well secured from their assaults. *Besides*, if this System, to which we belong, has any meaning in it, and is the product of the *God of order*, men are most certainly *here* upon trial, and are rewardable and punishable *hereafter* for their conduct towards one another *here*: And consequently, it must be left to their choice what use they will make of their powers. Yet even here, God has done all that
could

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could be done, (leaving them *free agents*) to secure the good and happiness of the *whole*, by implanting tender and social affections and sympathies in their breasts; and likewise has annexed a pleasurable and painful consciousness to virtue and vice. Nay, the very delusions and injuries which men offer to each other, give occasion to the exercise of the greatest moral virtues; such as *diligence, circumspection, prudence, patience, forgiveness of injuries*, and the most *heroic fortitude*, in parting with all enjoyments, and even life itself, when *truth* and *reason* demand. *Besides*, They tend to inspire *ardent wishings* and *aspirings* after some *better* state and *better* company; some kingdom of reason and truth to come, and so are adapted to render the wise and virtuous *more valuable in themselves, and to all other virtuous Beings*, especially to *God the judge of all*; who can, and will *more than make them amends*, for all their present trials and sufferings from their fellow-creatures.—They likewise have a natural tendency to answer valuable purposes, *even* upon unthoughtful and unreasonable men, by shewing them the absurdity and wickedness of their conduct towards others, when such treatment becomes their own lot. *These evils* are fitted to arouse them out of their wretched stupidity; to convince them, that if *all their happiness* is bound up in present enjoyments, they are, at best, but unhappy! and thereby are they prompted and excited to seek happiness where it *only* can be found, *viz. in the favour and approbation of their Maker*; which

which nothing *in nature* can secure to them, but true and solid piety and virtue.

BUT as to *invisible Beings*, we know nothing whether they are in a state of trial, or in a state of recompence or retribution.—They are likewise supposed capable of interfering with a system, of which they are no part, (at least, as far as we know,) which man neither does nor can do. And what valuable ends can be answered by God's permitting them to exercise their powers *ad libitum*, *in* or *upon* this globe, I cannot conceive, unless it be to awaken our care and attention to no manner of purpose; seeing upon your *principles*, we have no *criterion* to distinguish between the exertions of their power, and the exertion of divine power. Which must render us dubious and uncertain, to whom we are obliged for existence and preservation, what Being we ought to make the supreme object of our hope and trust, and by what methods to pursue our true happiness: consequently, we are exposed *naked* and *defenceless*, to the attacks of the most diabolical impostures and superstitions. I cannot therefore perceive how the *analogy* lies from the former case to the latter.

S E C T. IV.

I PROCEED to examine your fifth and last principle, *viz.* *A man who may be said to work a Miracle, (as explained above) is at liberty to use such MIRACLE-WORKING power,*
well

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well or ill, by annexing it either to the truth or
to a lie^c.

UNDER your definition of a Miracle, pag. 2, 3, 4, you have endeavoured to shew what it is which constitutes a man a *worker of Miracles*, or proves a Miracle to be related to one man and his message, and not to another. And this (I suppose) is the explanation referred to in the parenthesis, in this your 5th *principle*—in the forecited pages, you tell us, a man may be said to work a Miracle,

First, When the *Miracle-working* power, is subject to the will of man, as to the exertion or non-exertion of it, Or,

Secondly, When the exertion of the *Miracle-working* power is revealed to, and foretold by the man—in either of these ways (you say) a Miracle may be related to one man and his message and to no other.

Now, *Sir*, under the first of them, you have supposed two cases, which appear to me to be inconsistent with what you say in pag. 24th, and with your whole 6th *Seçt*.

FOR you suppose a man to be lifted up, and carried thro' the air, to the height, and with the swiftness of an eagle, by the immediate *interposition* or *power* of some invisible agent; yet the interposition or power of such invisible agent, to be so far subject to the man's will, as that he might, or might not be raised up, &c.—just as he should choose.—You have likewise supposed the same, as to removing a mountain, and say, for tho' this operation was performed not by
the

^c *Vid.* Mr. Chubb's 5th *prin.* *Seçt.* 7.

the power of the man, but by the power of some invisible agent; yet as the power which was exercised in this case, was subject to the man's will as to the exercise of it, &c. But, — Upon these two suppositions, pray, Sir, what is become of your invisible agent? Can an invisible Being be free, or an agent, whose powers are subject to the will of an invisible Being, any more than a visible Being be free, or an agent, whose powers are subject to the will of an invisible Being?— Your own authority, in pag. 24th determines this question in the negative, where you say,—

“ Men will be at liberty whilst they are agents,
 “ to exercise their natural abilities, in serving
 “ what purposes they please, take away that li-
 “ berty and their agency ceases or is destroyed;
 “ and this must be the case of all intelligent free
 “ Beings, whether visible or invisible.”

Should you reply, that the will of the man, and the will of the invisible agent may agree and be co-incident, and so both of them continue free or agents^e. It is answered,— That we have proved it absurd, to suppose invisible Beings interfering *ad libitum* upon this globe, and that if they do or may act in or upon this globe, it can only be, as under the immediate direction

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^e It is somewhat difficult to conceive the will of the man, and the will of the invisible agent always co-incident; unless we suppose a constant intercourse between them, or that the invisible agent attends upon the man, in the nature of a familiar spirit, always ready to perform his commands; and this supposes a sort of compact between them; somewhat like that, which a reverend Archdeacon reports to have been made, between the D—l and O. Cromwell.

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of God; and so the will of God, the will of the invisible agent, and the will of the man, who may be said to work the Miracle, must all be co-incident; consequently the power exerted cannot be made subservient to any ends and purposes but what God approves.—*Farther*, I suppose, *Sir*, you will hardly affirm, that *vice* and *virtue* are indifferent to God, “whatever truth and
“ falshood may be in themselves considered, and
“ separated from the ends they are made sub-
“ servient to ^b.”—But suppose the will of your invisible agent, and the will of the man, who may be said to work the Miracle should happen to be opposite, I ask, whose will must take place? Certainly the man's will must, because the exertion or non-exertion of the *Miracle-working* power is supposed in this case, to depend upon the man's will; and if so, your invisible being is an *agent* and no *agent* at the same time, which is absurd.—Therefore if a man should be so related to a Miracle, as that the exercise of the *Miracle-working* power should depend upon the man's will, it does not follow that it is liable to be made subservient to whatever ends and purposes he shall think fit.—In short, to talk of an *invisible agent's* powers, being subject to the will of a *visible agent*, is downright nonsense; because, when the *powers* of any Being, are subject to the will of another Being, as to the exercise of them, his *agency* ceases or is destroyed, and that by your own authority last quoted ^c?—

I SHALL

^b See *Mr. Chubb*, p. 56, 57. ^c *Vid.* defin. of active power.

I SHALL now advert to the other way in which a man may (according to you) be related to a Miracle, so as he may be said, in a less proper sense to be the *Miracle-worker*, viz. *Secondly*, when the exercise of the *Miracle-working* power is revealed to, and foretold by such man,—and shall enquire whether a man's being thus related to a Miracle, necessarily infers, that such exercise of power, is therefore liable to be made subservient to whatever ends and purposes such man shall think fit? In *Sect.* 6, you take the affirmative side of the question, and say it must be so in *the very nature of the thing*.—I shall take the liberty of dissenting from you, for the following Reasons —

First, A man may not only be fore-appriized of, but also foretel the *miraculous event*, whether he will or no, supposing an *omnipotent God*, able to over-rule his absolute dependants; and it may be no more in the power of such man to forbear foretelling the event, than it is in the power of a person whose hand is convulsed to hold it still.—Pray, *Sir*, can you shew any absurdity, in supposing that God may suspend the *freedom*, or *agency* of his creatures, when such *liberty* might or would counter-act his own most wise and gracious schemes of providence? Your argument from analogy is very weak and inconclusive in this case; because, you infer from God's conduct in *common* and *ordinary* cases, the measures of his conduct in *uncommon* and *extraordinary* cases: And I humbly conceive, your analogical argument all thro' your book, is from

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the *less* to the *greater*, which I never knew to be conclusive, whatever an argument from the *greater* to the *less* may be. — It may be urged, that upon this supposition, the man's *agency* is destroyed, how then can he be said to be the Miracle-worker? I answer, his fore-knowing and foretelling the effect, proves the Miracle to be related to him, and not to another, and whether he does this *voluntarily* or *involuntarily*, he can only in a secondary and improper sense be said to be the *Miracle-worker*: for in truth, and strictly speaking, *God*, or some other *invisible agent*, is the real Miracle-worker, and that upon your own supposition.

Secondly, There is no absurdity in supposing an omnipotent and omnipresent mind, capable of such an address, to the hopes and fears of any of his creatures, by presenting things in such an objective light to their minds, as to secure effectually their obedience, and render it *morally* impossible for them to frustrate his wise and gracious designs: and this may be done, without destroying their *agency*.—We can, with the greatest certainty affirm, that it is impossible for God to do iniquity; but not surely because he is under any physical restraint: and what degrees of discernment, either of *rectitude*, or *interest*, or both, he may confer upon creatures in such extraordinary cases, who can tell? What amazing power has conscience (God's vicegerent) over the actions of man! What racks, or tortures, equal to the lashes thereof! Has it not compelled men to disclose secrets, when they

they have known the consequences of so doing to be infamy and death? How much more power then has God, who is greater than our hearts?

Thirdly, GOD, who is the searcher of hearts, certainly knows how to choose proper instruments, to carry on his wise and gracious purposes.—One, perhaps, as a *servant* faithful in all his house, another as a *son* over his own house. Surely, there have been some of the human species in all ages, whom no allurements could draw, no terrors affright, from their steady regards to piety and virtue.—I hope, *Sir*, it would be no complement, to suppose it morally impossible for *you* to betray or pervert any trust reposed in you, either by God or by man.—

Lastly, IT is no absurdity to suppose a man fore-apprized of an event's coming to pass, upon some *certain conditions* to be performed on his part. For instance, if God should graciously condescend to impart a revelation (calculated to promote the common good of mankind) to one or more of our species, and should command him or them to go and publish it to their fellow-creatures, and for their comfort and encouragement should fore-apprize them, that whilst they faithfully discharged their trust, in communicating such revelation, entire, pure, and unmixed to mankind; so long God would attend them, and vouch for them upon all proper occasions, (of which they should also be apprized by some impressions upon their own minds) with signs and wonders, not expressive of
of

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of mere power only, but also of the greatest goodness and compassion; thereby to gain the easier access for them and their message, to give a sample of the kind and beneficial design, both of the revelation and its dispensers, and to conciliate the minds of men both to it and them— Does there appear any thing unworthy of the *divine conduct* in this supposition? — Is it repugnant to the wisdom or goodness of God? — Unless, *Sir*, you can shew the foregoing arguments to be absurd; your assertion in *Seet. 6th* is not true, *viz. That because a man is fore-appriized of the exercise of a Miracle-working power, it must in the very nature of the thing, be at his option to direct it this way or that way, to attend the truth or a lie.* — But as contraries do many times throw light upon each other, when put in contrast, let us make the supposition which you have so much laboured to establish, *viz. that God should graciously condescend, to impart a revelation (calculated to promote the virtue and happiness of mankind) to one or more of our species, and should command him or them to go and publish it to their fellow-creatures, and for their comfort and encouragement should fore-appriize them, that God would attend them and their message with signs and wonders, as vouchers for the divine authority of their mission and doctrine.* But whether they publish this salutary doctrine to mankind, or take this opportunity of publishing a doctrine diametrically opposite thereto, and calculated to promote their own power and grandeur,

deur, at the expence of their fellow-creatures; yet the *Miracle-working* power is supposed to go blindly working on, in conformity to their predictions.—Is not this supposition big with absurdity and impiety? Can any reasonable man think, that the divine being should design the rectitude and happiness of his creatures, as the sole end of his supernatural dispensations, and yet make use of such means as are liable to subserve to ends the very reverse? What would be thought of any prince or state, whose embassador should oppose and frustrate the very end and design of his Embassy, yet such prince or state (tho' thoroughly certified of, and displeas'd with his conduct) should, instead of recalling and punishing him for his treachery, continue to send him fresh credentials? Would not such conduct be monstrous, and argue the greatest defect of *wisdom*, or *power*, or both, in such prince or state? The application is easy.—Can, you, *Sir*, shew any thing in God's works of creation and providence analogous to this? Or can you reconcile it with the three following *principles*, contained in the last paragraph of your 7th *Sect.* (*viz.*) 1. That there is a natural and essential difference in things. 2. That a rule of action thence arises, which every moral agent ought in reason to govern his actions by. 3. That God, as the governour of the intelligent and moral world, makes the reason of things, the rule and measure of his actions, in all his dealings with such creatures.—If you
can

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can do neither the one nor the other, your 5th
principle is both *false* and *impious*.

IF it should be objected, that I have all along supposed God alone fore-apprizing a man of the exercise of *Miracle-working* power, and have not considered the case of other invisible agents. — I answer, That Mr. *Chubb* has not excluded *God* from being the immediate agent in producing the miraculous effect, nor from being the immediate revealer of such a future event: however, if any other *invisible agent* should do the one or the other, as under the immediate direction and authority of God, God's wisdom and goodness are *as much* concerned, as if himself had been the immediate actor: and we have proved, that no invisible Being can be supposed to act in or upon this globe, but under such circumstance and restriction.

To sum up the whole, I hope we have fairly demonstrated your first *principle* to be entirely out of the question, and have proved *ex absurdo* the second, third, fourth, and fifth to be false; it therefore follows, that for any solid objection arising from those *principles*, or any reasoning founded on such your *principles*, our postulate, at first only supposed, is certainly true, *viz.* *That Miracles can only be performed by the immediate power of God, or by a power communicated from God to some other Being, always liable to be withdrawn upon such Being's attempt to make it subservient to ends and purposes, contrary to the will and design of God, in*
com-

communicating such power.—And if this be true, the solution of the question sought is this, *viz.* *That Miracles are certain and indisputable proofs of the divine authority, both of the mission and doctrine of the person on whom they do attend.* Consequently your inference is false in *Sect.* 7th, *viz.* “*That supposing all other circumstances concur-*”
“*red in favour of such evidence, yet as the two*”
“*forementioned points of uncertainty attend the*”
“*case, therefore the proof arising from that e-*”
“*vidence at most cannot be certain, but only pro-*”
“*bable, seeing it does not imply a contradiction,*”
“*nor an impossibility in nature to suppose the*”
“*contrary.*” — Pray observe, how Mr. Chubb has confounded *certainty* with *demonstration* in this passage—According to this, we are certain of nothing, the contrary whereto, it is not an absurdity to suppose, and consequently we are not certain of our own *existence*.

Now, *Sir*, the two points of uncertainty only arise from supposing your five first *principles* laid down as such in your 7th *Sect.* to be true.—But one of them is demonstrated to be out of the question, and the rest proved to be absurd; therefore these two points of uncertainty do not attend the case—and your last cited inference is drawn from false premises.

S E C T. V.

I MIGHT perhaps be reasonably excused from following you any further, because the arguments of your remaining *Sections*, to *Sect.* 13th,
H are

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are plainly founded upon the *supposed truth* of your conclusion just mentioned ; which has, I think, been proved to be wrong and groundless ; as being drawn from false premises. But as there appears to me some inconsistencies, and disingenuous reasonings, in the *Sections* subsequent to the 7th, as well as in those going before it, you will forgive me if I take the liberty of making some remarks upon them, in order the more fully to justify my charge against you in my *Introduction* ; likewise to prevent the mistakes, which unwary or inconsiderate readers may be led into by your reasonings ; and to abate and moderate those *triumphs*, which some gentlemen have thought themselves intitled to, from the strength of your arguments, which they imagine to have carried entire victory to their side of the question.—I hope, it will appear what superficial *readers* and *reasoners* such gentlemen are ; and that instead of giving themselves airs of insult and triumph, they may more reasonably suspect your having plaid booty with them, to give them an occasion of exposing themselves to just ridicule.

As you concluded, (tho' upon mistaken grounds) that the proof of the divinity of a revelation from *Miracles* could only arise to *probability*, supposing all other circumstances to concur in its favour ; so as there are degrees of *probability*, it was very natural to enquire whether they are in a higher or lower degree *probable* proofs of the divinity of the revelation on which they do attend, or, to use your own words,

words, “ *That they are rather annexed to truth than to a lie, and that God is rather the agent in such an operation than any other invisible Being.*”

AND supposing your conclusion true, an answer to this enquiry, can only be collected from the circumstances which may attend such *miraculous operation*: and (as you have rightly observed in your 8th *Sect.*) must regard either the fact itself, or the revelation itself, which the fact is brought to vouch for.

As to the fact itself; if the arguments on which the truth of my postulate is founded are just, then the *fact* is its own voucher: for it is of no consequence to enquire what *kinds* or *degrees* of power God may or can communicate; if we have proved, that *Miracles can only be performed either by the immediate agency of God, or if by any other Being, yet only in conformity to the will of God.* Therefore all I remark upon your *first* head, is this, *viz.* That it is not limiting the power of God, to suppose him not capable of communicating what may possibly in its own nature be incommunicable, or which his infinite wisdom may see not fit to be communicated.—But I think your *second* head in this 8th *Sect.* wants a little clearing. You are there considering the *good* or *evil*, that the fact itself is inductive of, as heightening or weakning the evidence, to its being of divine original.—If you mean by it, that no Miracle can be of God, which may have any thing hurtful to any part of the human species in the *fact* itself,

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whatever beneficial effects it may have upon the generality : if this, *Sir*, be your meaning, I must differ from you ; for if God, for *wise* and *good ends*, should execute judgment in a miraculous manner, upon *one* or *more* incorrigible offenders, leaving them for an example to others of the human family throughout all generations, we should, I think, have no more reason to conclude the Miracle not to be of *divine* original, than we have to *conclude* that the world is not under the government of his all-wise and gracious Providence : because we perceive famines, pestilence, earthquakes, inundations, and innumerable diseases and calamities taking place therein. Besides, if a greater and more general good may be hereby promoted, it is no more inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of God to punish incorrigible offenders, on some extraordinary occasions, in a way by which his hand may plainly be discerned, than it is inconsistent with the good constitution of any state to make a public example of notorious offenders ; for true wisdom and goodness, lie at the bottom of both, *viz.* to deter others from outrageously violating that order and decorum, by which the whole is preserved and made happy.

S E C T. VI,

INOW attend you, *Sir*, whilst you are considering in your 9th, and 10th *Seet.* *those circumstances which relate to the revelation itself;*
out

out of which, a *likelihood* and *probability* must arise, that the Miracles wrought in favour of the divinity of such revelation, are wrought by God, rather than by any other invisible agent.

I DO agree with you, that those circumstances must be such, in which God's *moral* character is concerned, taking for certain truth the points laid down by you in the last paragraph of your 7th *Seçt.* I likewise agree with you in the first circumstance laid down in your 10th *Seçt.* (*viz.*) *That the wisdom and goodness, which is shewn in and by a revelation, must run thro' all its parts; or at least, that nothing contained therein, must interfere with the known rules of wisdom and goodness.*

BUT as to your second circumstance, (*viz.*) *That it must be universally made known to all who alike stand in need of it; I cannot (with the utmost skill I am master of) reconcile the demand of such a circumstance in favour of a revelation vouched for by Miracles, with some passages in your book. In pag. 6, 7, you say,—“ Again, “ By publick revelations, are not meant a divine “ application to the mind of each individual of “ our species, by which are revealed to each individual, the truths intended to be made known. “ For tho' this may be called a publick revelation, as it is given universally to all, yet strictly speaking, it would be a particular private “ revelation, because it is given particularly to “ each individual. And such a revelation, whether it be considered as publick or private, is “ FOREIGN TO THE PRESENT ENQUIRY; “ because*

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“ *because the case of Miracles, in our present*
“ *view of them, would NOT COME INTO THE*
“ *QUESTION: For in that case, as every one*
“ *would have the revelation at first-hand, and*
“ *no one would receive it from another, so no*
“ *credit would be required by one from another*
“ *with respect to it; and consequently no Miracle*
“ *would be wanted to back or support any one's*
“ *credit on that account.*” Here we see, that
a revelation given to *all* by a divine applica-
tion to the mind of each individual, is fo-
reign to your enquiry concerning a revelation
attended with Miracles as its vouchers, for this
very good reason, *because a revelation thus given*
needs no vouchers, no credit being required by one
from another. Your enquiry is concerning Mi-
racles, considered as vouchers to the divinity of
a revelation; which consequently must be given
in such a *manner* as to require *credit* from one
to another; that is, it must be given immedi-
ately to some one or more of the species, and
immediately by *him* or *them* to others, and so
on, till that revelation is communicated to all:
But a revelation given in this manner must (by
your own authority, pag. 67, 68) “ *in the na-*
“ *ture of the thing lie under all the difficulties*
“ *and disadvantages before taken notice of (viz.)*
“ *it must be then in the power of one man to pre-*
“ *vent or hinder many others from sharing in*
“ *the benefits intended by that revelation, and*
“ *the like.*”—Now, Sir, by comparing your
second circumstance, and these passages of your
book together, we may form this proposition, *viz*
That

That Miracles are very probable vouchers for the divinity of a revelation, when such revelation on which they do attend, is infallibly made known to all who alike stand in need of it; yet communicated in such a manner, that by the very nature of its communication, it may possibly be not universally made known to all who alike stand in need of it. Which is the same as to require
“ an event *certainly* to exist by ways and means
“ which in their *own nature* render its existence
“ *uncertain.*” What profundity of thought is here discovered! *Deep calleth unto deep!*^a

To proceed :

You say, *pag. 66*, there are but *two* ways of making a revelation universally known : the first of which infallibly doth so ; but then it needs no Miracles to vouch for it, because no *credit* is required by one from another.

THE other is indeed capable of receiving *testimony*, or of being *vouched* for by Miracles, but then it will not *infallibly* make the revelation universal.—From whence arises this question, (*viz.*) in which of these two ways, it is most *likely* and *probable*, God (acting a part the most worthy of the universal parent of mankind) should communicate a revelation to us his creatures? Now if one of these ways can
be

^a Something like to this, we meet with in a Poet of our own nation ; who was in his day a great master of the *pro-fund*, of which the two following lines are a remarkable specimen ;

*A painted vest, prince Voltiger had on,
Which from a naked Piët his grandfire won,*

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be proved not to be the *wisest* and *best*; it necessarily follows, that the *other* is the only way in which infinite wisdom and goodness can be supposed to make known a revelation to mankind. Let the question be put—Is it most agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of God, to make known a revelation universally to all who alike stand in need of it, by a *divine application* to the mind of each individual? I answer, *No*; because if it had been *wisest* and *best*, such a *divine application* to the mind of each individual, would have taken place from the first creation of the human species, and have been continued down ever since to every individual of the species: but as no such application has been *hitherto* made to the mind of each individual, and it is somewhat of the latest to begin now, because it would be *defective* in point of *universality*; it is therefore evident (to me, at least) that such a method of imparting a revelation was not agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of God. And upon the strength of *this* argument, I venture to conclude, that (supposing God disposed to give any revelation at all to us, his creatures) the latter way of communicating a revelation is *wisest* and *best*. Now, *Sir*, if (as you say, *pag.* 68th) the *point* turns upon the foregoing question, I fear it will turn against you; because (I think) it is fairly answered, in favour of the contrary side to that which you seem to espouse. I own myself at a great loss to discover what *point* it is that turns upon this very question; it never
surely

surely can be the *point* which is the subject of your enquiry; for your Title-page is this (*viz.*) *A discourse on Miracles, considered as evidences to prove the divine original of a revelation; wherein is shewn, what kind and degree of evidence arises from them, &c.* — Pray, Sir, is it any objection to a *witness* or *evidence*, that it is given only in such *cases*, or upon such *occasions*, as require *evidences* or *vouchers*? Of the two ways of communicating a revelation, one only is capable of receiving *testimony* from *Miracles*; and you truly object to the *validity* of their *testimony*, because they attend a revelation communicated in such a manner, as to require *vouchers*! Had your inquiry been concerning a revelation made known, by an immediate divine application to the minds of individuals, your demand of *universality* would have been reasonable; but in the case before us, it is but a wretched cavil.

MIGHT I take the liberty of offering my sentiment, I humbly conceive the point turns upon the following question, (*viz.*) Whether it may be reasonably supposed, that God will rather not favour mankind with any revelation at all; than give a revelation in such a *way* and *manner* that it may *possibly* not be made known to a great part of the species? And here your grand objection to a revelation vouched for by Miracles naturally occurs: which objection I shall endeavour fairly to *state* and *consider* in my next *Section*.

S E C T. VII.

THE grand objection to the *divinity* of a revelation vouched for by Miracles, I take to be as follows, *That as Miracles can only attend a revelation, (as vouchers for its divine original) which is given immediately to one or more of our species, and mediately by him or them to the rest; and as by the nature of the communication, such revelation may possibly never be made known to a great part of the species; it may be questioned, Whether this way of communicating a revelation, does not carry in it such appearances, at least, of defective, and partial benevolence, and wisdom, as to overbalance the evidence arising from Miracles in favour of its divine original? or, in other words, That as true goodness disposes the Being in whom it resides, equally to pity and relieve every object equally pitiable; surely God, who is goodness itself, and the common parent and guardian of the human family, cannot be supposed so defective in wisdom or goodness, or both, or to be such a stranger to mankind, as to communicate a revelation in such a manner, as to put it in the power of a few to hinder many others from sharing in the benefits intended thereby; for want whereof, such persons so deprived, are in great danger, not only of falling short of happiness, but also of bringing great and lasting misery upon themselves.*

As it has been shewn in the foregoing *Section*, that to give a revelation to all, by a divine application immediately made to the mind of each

each individual is not *wisest* and *best*; because, if such a conduct had been most agreeable to God (who always does what is *wisest* and *best*) such a divine application must have been made to every individual, beginning with the first of the species, and continuing it down thro' every successive generation; but as no such application has been made to the mind of each individual, we cannot suppose it to be fit and agreeable, without implying a defect of *wisdom* or *goodness*, or both, in God himself, — which is absurd and blasphemous. This objection, is therefore directly levelled at God's giving any supernatural revelation at all, and in that light I shall consider it: and in answer to this grand objection, would humbly offer the three following *Observations*.

Obs. I. THAT no man can in the nature of things, be in danger of falling short of virtue and happiness, much less of bringing great and lasting misery upon himself, from the mere want of a divine revelation: because no man can be obliged to attain any kind or degree of virtue, above or beyond the extent of his abilities and opportunities; it being impossible for any being to be accountable for what he hath not. What *alone* can endanger any man, is his not choosing to make a right use and improvement of the powers and opportunities he doth enjoy. And if any professed defenders of revelation have asserted the contrary, such have *weakly* or designedly betrayed the cause they undertook to defend; it being impossible to re-

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concile the contrary with our natural notions of *equity, goodness or truth.*

Obs. II. THAT a revelation can only be considered as a moral *aid* or *mean* of promoting the virtue and happiness of mankind. It has no physical effects, nor does it operate in the nature of a *charm* or *fascination*, but leaves it to the free choice of men, what *use* or *abuse* they will make of the favour. Virtue and happiness, vice and misery are fairly set before them, and it is left to themselves to determine in favour of one side or the other. It must be owned, that a *revelation*, as it increases men's opportunities and advantages, it likewise increases their accountableness; and so in proportion does every distinguishing favour, whether it be an uncommon degree of intellectual capacity, power, or riches; yet in these instances men are greedy enough of swelling their account; they discover no scruples or queasiness, in accepting these sort of favours however distinguishing, and never think of charging God with *partiality* in their favour, or want of goodness to their necessitous fellow-creatures; but on the contrary, are rather apt to censure the rest of mankind, as defective in skill, industry, or merit: and thus they would behave towards a divine revelation, if their hearts were as much inflamed with the love of virtue, its enjoyments and rewards, as they are with the love of esteem, power and wealth. If a revelation ought only to be considered as a *moral* mean of promoting the virtue and happiness of mankind; a question
will

will arise, which ought previously to be discussed, before this *grand* objection can have any weight with considerate minds; which is this, (*viz.*) *Whether it is consistent with impartial benevolence for God to afford more or greater moral aids or helps, either in kind or degree, to one man than to another?* If you say it is consistent with *impartial* benevolence, your grand objection is answered: if you say it is not, I say, the world is not governed by the providence of a *Being* absolutely wise and good; because in the general course of providence hardly any two men are equally favoured in this respect. And the objection lies as strong against *natural* religion as against a revelation; unless you will say, an *African* or *American* savage hath equal advantages for discovering the extent and obligations of *natural religion*, to those enjoyed by a student in the schools of *Greece* or *Rome*. Let us only advert to the different education of Men, as descended from pious and virtuous, or from impious and vicious parents.

ONE Man, by the providence of God, is born of wise and good parents, who from his infancy have inculcated on his tender mind the greatest reverence of God, the absolute necessity of restraining and governing his appetites and passions, and the most exact regard to *justice*, *mercy*, and *truth* in his conduct towards others; apprising him of the odious *nature*, of the sad and dreadful consequences of vice; and strengthening these principles by their own example and authority.

ANOTHER

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ANOTHER man, by the same providence, is born of vile and profligate parents, who not only neglect all culture of his mind, all regards to his moral temper, but by their own wicked examples, lead him into every vice. And is not such a poor creature (even by his birth) in the utmost danger of missing of virtue and happiness, and of falling into great and lasting misery? Let us draw the parallel between the case of revelation and that of education.

THUS,

DO TH every individual stand in very great need of divine revelation? And does not each individual stand in very great need of a wise and virtuous education? In how sad and deplorable a condition is the human mind, when lying waste for want of care and culture, and overrun with every vicious weed!

AGAIN,

Is it the lesser part of mankind that is favoured with a divine revelation? Why how few comparatively are favoured with a wise and virtuous education?

AGAIN,

Is it in the power of a *few*, to whom a revelation is first made known, either to neglect communicating it to others, and so preventing their enjoyment of the designed benefit; or by perverting the revelation, make it subserve to purposes the contrary to those it was originally intended to promote? It is equally in the power of the *many* parents or instructors of youth, not only to neglect the improvement of the human mind, but
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to pervert it from the very end and design for which it was made rational, by causing it to embrace falsehood for truth, both in speculation and practice.

AGAIN,

DoTH God leave it to the free choice of men, as to what *use* or *abuse* they will make of a *divine revelation*, either to their own hurt, or to the detriment of others? Thus he acts towards those to whom (in the course of his providence) he commits the important charge of youth, whether parents or others.

AGAIN,

Do many who are favoured with the best education, nevertheless prove as vile and profligate, or perhaps *more so* than those who never enjoyed so great a blessing; whereby their guilt and condemnation is the more aggravated? — The case must and will be the same as to divine revelation, considered only as a moral *mean* or *aid*.

ONCE more,

Do many attain the virtuous character, who have laboured under the greatest disadvantages in point of education, and thereby condemn others for not attaining the same character, who were subjected to no greater difficulties than *these* were; and much more so, *those* that had all the contrary advantages in their favour? — Why thus it *must* and *will* be, in the case of a *divine revelation*, or any other merely moral *aid*.

THESE two cases appear to me, at least, so nearly parallel, that was it to be put to my choice, whether I would rather have been born at *China*, or the *Cape of Good-hope*, of virtuous

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parents, and educated by them, as such ; or to have been born in *Great-Britain*, of wicked parents, and educated by them, as such (supposing, for argument's sake, that *Great-Britain* is favoured with a *divine revelation*) I profess I should be at a great loss to determine which to prefer in point of *moral* advantage.

I THINK, *Sir*, you cannot deny the truth of the fact, in regard to the different *moral advantages* and *helps* which men are even born to ; nor that it is a distinguishing happiness for any one to have had a wise and virtuous education, by being born of good parents ; neither can you say this was *not* owing to the providence of God, and that he doth *not* fix the bounds of our habitation : it therefore follows, that the affording to different men different and unequal *moral aids* or *helps*, is consistent with perfect *wisdom* and *benevolence*.

IF it should be objected, that the giving a revelation to one part of mankind only, makes a greater *disparity* than any other *moral advantage* or *disadvantage* doth :

IT may be answered, That *partiality* in every degree of it, is inconsistent with perfect rectitude : and if an objection lies against a *revelation* not universally made known, by reason of the superior advantages thence arising to those to whom such revelation is made known, above what others of the same species do enjoy, I don't know how *natural religion* and God's general providence can be shown to stand clear of the same objection. For the different countries men
are

are born in, the various customs and manners of each, their different occupations, friendships, stations in life, natural genius's, and perhaps the different animal constitutions of men; besides the important article before insisted on, do *all* conspire to render men's *opportunities* and *advantages* for attaining virtue and happiness greatly unequal and disproportionate.

Obs. III. OUR postulate in *Seēt.* 2d; having been proved to be *true*, at least for any objections arising from your *first principles* in your 7th *Seēt.* because *those principles* have been shewn to be *absurd*, or out of the question. I therefore take it for granted, *that miracles can only be performed by the immediate power of God, or by a power communicated from God; always liable to be suspended or withdrawn; if attempted to be made subservient to ends and purposes contrary to the will of God.* And if so, we may be assured, that the *ends* and *designs* of a revelation thus attested, as well as the manner of its *communication*, are perfectly consistent with infinite *wisdom* and *goodness*; and whether you, or I, or any other man, can account for some seeming appearances of *partiality* in the dispensations of God, or no; there is no reasoning against *facts*. I am aware that it may be objected, *that at this rate miracles alone are sufficient vouchers for the divinity of a revelation, nay, will prove a revelation to be divine; whatever the internal nature of the revelation may be.* To this it may be answered, that to an eye-witness of *Miracles* they are as immediate vouchers

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to the concern God hath in their production, as the works of creation are to the being and perfections of God: and as to the latter part of the objection, it is incumbent upon the objector to give an instance of a revelation vouched for by *Miracles*, whose internal nature and constitution is unworthy of God, before this part of the objection can have any weight, and till then it may be presumed that this is supposing an impossible case. This would lead me to consider the 13th *Sect.* of your book; but as there are some extraordinary suppositions of yours, which demand our previous consideration, so the discussing of these points will, I believe, evince that your 13th *Sect.* if not the whole of your discourse, is wrote to a very *idle* and *insignificant*, if not to a very *mischievous* purpose.

S E C T. VIII.

IN page 52 of your book, you have proposed this dilemma, *viz.* “ *That when a revelation which wholly tends to the good of mankind, and which lays claim to a heavenly character, is backed with Miracles, that revelation must be divine, tho’ partially delivered as aforesaid, because as an evil or vicious invisible agent, would not be the author of so much good to others, as the recommending such a revelation might be subservient to: so a good or virtuous invisible agent could not recommend such a revelation as divine, and preserve his character, if it were not so; and therefore he would not* “ *do*

“do it.” To get rid of this difficulty, you have laboured from page 53, to page 60, *inclusively*, and have taken no small pains (in favour of one side of the question) to establish the following *points* or *principles*.

First, “THAT we have no assurance, that a vicious invisible agent will not exercise his power in recommending revelation as *aforesaid*^a.”

Secondly, “THAT truth and falshood are neither good nor evil, abstracted from the ends and purposes they are made subservient to^b.”

THEREFORE,

Thirdly, “WE can have no assurance that a virtuous, invisible agent will not exercise his power in recommending a revelation as divine, which in reality is not so, when that revelation is circumstanced as *aforesaid*^c.”

Fourthly, “THAT as the great director of the universe is not governed by capricious humour, but by the reason of things, so in the present case there could not be any just ground of displeasure to him, because in reality there would no dishonour be done nor intended to be done to him, and his name would only be used to promote an end which he could not but approve of, viz. the good of his creatures^d.”

I BEG leave, Sir, to observe, that these four points, or, if you please, *cardinal* points, necessarily presuppose, 1st, That your *first principles*

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principles

^a *i. e.* The revelation wholly tends to the good of mankind, but is partially delivered.

^b See Mr. C. p. 54. ^c Ibid. p. 54 to p. 60. ^d Ibid. p. 60. ^e Ibid. p. 55, 56.

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principles in your 7th *Seét.* are true, which I hope are fairly proved to be false. 2dly, That a virtuous, or even a *vicious* invisible agent, may have either a clearer discernment of, or a greater readiness to *relieve* the wants and necessities of mankind than God himself. And, 3dly, That it is the common sense of mankind, that Miracles can only be wrought by the immediate power of God, otherwise your *invisible agent* would never attempt to recommend a revelation as divine, by such *vouchers* for its divinity.

BUT to reckon up all the consequences which follow from these *profound discoveries*, is a work worthy of their *great discoverer*. I shall only venture to point out a few, the most easy and obvious. Taking therefore these propositions for granted, it follows,

First, THAT we are so far from having any *certainty*, that we have hardly any *probability*, that it is impossible for God to lie or deceive; *the probability* lying on the other side of the question. For if truth and falsehood are in their own nature indifferent, when separated from the ends and purposes they are made subservient to, insomuch that *falsehood* may be good, and *truth* be evil, according to what ends and purposes they subserve; if God may approve *fraud* and *imposture* in his creatures, when designed to promote valuable purposes; and if God, as the common parent of the universe, may be supposed only to have an equal concern for the common good of us his creatures, to what any other intelligent Being may have: I say, it is highly

highly probable that God himself, to serve purposes of equal or superior value, *will do*, what he cannot be justly displeas'd with in his creatures, but on the contrary doth approve. Indeed God cannot (without an absurdity) be suppos'd to give a revelation and vouch for it with Miracles, and such revelation not be truly divine; because it is God's being the author and giver of any revelation which constitutes the *divinity* thereof: but it does not therefore follow, that every thing contained therein is *true*. For if truth and falshood considered as actions and apart from the ends and purposes which they may subserve, are in their own nature *indifferent*, and so a virtuous invisible agent is justified in the promiscuous use of one or the other, as it may best promote his benevolent designs; Why may we not suppose God himself as much at liberty in this respect as any other *virtuous* invisible agent? since vice and virtue are essentially the same in every intelligent agent. Thus, for instance, if to promote virtue amongst mankind, and to restrain that greater degree of vice, which might otherwise prevail in this world, God should give a revelation, and enforce its authority with promises and threatnings, greater in their own nature than those which our abstract reasonings may suggest, may we not have some reason to doubt of the accomplishment of *one* or the *other*, supposing your *principles* to be true?

Secondly, It follows, that every man who is inwardly convinc'd and perswaded that he has discovered opinions tending to the common and
general

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general good, will act a very just and benevolent part in using any kind of imposture (innocent in itself) to make them go down with mankind for things of a divine and sacred original: he may very innocently (tho' falsely) pretend to have immediate communications from the Deity: and if he has more knowledge in the secrets of nature than others, may very honestly and commendably *palm* the effects of such his skill upon the rest of mankind for Miracles wrought by the immediate power of God; for if invisible agents may be approved of God in their voluntary undertakings of this nature, why may not man, who is more nearly related to, and so more *immediately* obliged to do all in his power to promote the good of the species? If it should be objected, *That man is a weak and fallible creature, and it would be too great presumption in him to go thus far, because he may be mistaken as to the means of promoting the common good, and may esteem such means productive thereof, which really are not so, but may have the contrary tendency:* It may be answered, That (God excepted) so may any *invisible agent* (especially a vicious one) be frail and weak, and, for any thing we know, be as liable to mistake the *ways* and *means* of promoting the general good of the human species as man^f. And why should beings of another system

^f Should this happen to be the case, yet upon Mr. C—'s 5th *principle* in his 7th *Sect.* and his argument drawn from analogy in support of it, God will not interpose to restrain such *invisible agent* in the use of his powers, however fatal his blunders and Mistakes might prove to the human species.

system be supposed better judges of our affairs and interests, than we ourselves are? Besides, if man is not qualified (in the use of care and diligence) to discover what may promote or impair the general good, he is not properly qualified for the pursuit of virtue.

Thirdly, FROM the foregoing *principle* we may infer, that giving a *revelation vouched for by Miracles*, to a part of mankind only, is not *wrong* or *partial*, or *unworthy* of God himself; for if it was, how could God approve such a conduct in any of his creatures? But, *Sir*, you have supposed such an *end*, even as this, so valuable in itself, as to consecrate the *means* (tho' of the *false* and *deceptious* kind) made use of to attain such *end*, insomuch that God himself cannot but approve the cheat.

IF it should be objected, *That every agent below God is limited, therefore it may not be in such agent's power to make the revelation universal, and the partial delivery of it may not arise from a defect of benevolence in such agent:*

I WOULD answer, That however God might approve that benevolent disposition, which might be the ground or reason of action to such invisible agent, yet he could not approve the action itself, because the consequence might be the same, as if God himself had given a revelation to a part of mankind only, *i. e.* it might destroy that *equality* in regard to moral *aids* or *helps*, which you (*Sir*) seem to think essential to God's *impartial* government of the humane family; and which is supposed (in the
grand

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grand objection before considered) to be a sufficient reason for God's not giving any revelation at all, rather than one only made known to a part of the species. And if we may but suppose such invisible agent to have as clear a discernment of *partiality* and *impartiality*, and the *fitness* and *unfitness* of one or the other in the divine conduct, as Mr. *Chubb* himself; and likewise that such agent is of the virtuous character; it may be somewhat hard to account for his officiousness. But by *Prop. 3.* he may be supposed acting such a part as this; and by *Prop. 4.* such a conduct cannot be displeasing to God, but on the contrary is approved of him. Therefore giving a revelation which wholly tends to the good of mankind, tho' *partially* delivered, is *right* and *fit*, and if so, not *wrong* or *unfit*.

IF it should be further objected, *That such conduct in an invisible agent may be owing to temptation, misguided affections, and the like:*

IT may be replied, that then it cannot be approved of God, but must be displeasing to him. But by your 4th *Prop.* such his conduct is approved of God; therefore it cannot spring from temptation, misguided affection, and the like. Thus, *Sir*, the grand objection is answered upon your own principles. This suggests a material and comfortable remark, (*viz.*) That by comparing the 53d and 54th *pages* with *page* 64th of your book, we have two chances for an important and valuable revelation. *First*, If a
virtuous

virtuous invisible agent should happen to be under the power of temptation, misguided affection, and the like ; or *Secondly*, If a vicious invisible agent should chance to be in a devilish good humour.

Lastly, IF a virtuous invisible agent may be supposed to give a revelation wholly tending to the good of mankind, and in order to lead men into a *mistaken* opinion of its divine authority, should vouch for it with miracles, and this without any impeachment of his moral character, or without giving any just ground of displeasure to God in so doing ; but on the contrary, such his conduct must be approved of God, as tending to promote the common good of his creatures : it follows, that every man to whom such a revelation is made known, will find himself obliged to believe and obey it, and to do all in his power to propagate it amongst his fellow-creatures. For surely that man must act a part very displeasing to God, as being greatly injurious to mankind, who should disbelieve and reject it, and endeavour to draw others into his sentiments and conduct ; nay, should he happen to discover the *innocent imposture* made use of by your invisible agent, yet he ought not to impart such discovery to others, lest it should take off their serious regards to the revelation, when they found it not to be of divine original ; and so the very end and design of the Miracles wrought by such invisible agent be frustrated. I cannot therefore perceive, *Sir*, to what end and purpose you wrote your *Discourse on Miracles*, if it

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was to guard us against mistaking a revelation circumstanced as aforesaid, for a revelation truly divine. Alas, *Sir!* you do not know how mischievous and fatal your *Discourse on Miracles* may prove. You may have been counter-acting a most benevolent scheme, approved of God, as tending to promote the common good of his creatures. Suppose, *Sir*, for argument sake, that the Miracles said to be wrought, as testimonials to the divine mission and doctrine of Jesus Christ, could be proved to be wrought by some other *invisible agent* than God; yet, as this revelation is so admirably calculated to promote the common good of God's creatures; and since the belief and persuasion that the Miracles wrought in favour of it were produced by God himself, as a seal to the truth and authority thereof, has always had great weight and influence upon the minds of men, towards their believing and obeying it; surely doing any thing, by which men may be led to doubt of its divine authority, as witnessed to by Miracles, must be greatly displeasing to God, because it weakens the authority of the revelation upon the minds of men, and so subverts the end and design of your benevolent invisible agent, in working Miracles as evidences to its divine original.

AGAIN: Suppose it could be proved, that the writers of the history of the life and transactions of Jesus Christ, should have knowingly made a false report, as to the Miracles said to be wrought

^s See Mr. *Chubb's* True Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted. Page 53, compared with p. 108, 109, 110.

wrought by him, and no such Miracles were ever really performed; yet, as the doctrine or revelation is so thoroughly adapted to promote the common good of God's creatures, and as so valuable an end will consecrate *imposture* in an invisible agent, why should it not do the same as to the christian historians? They appear, through all their writings, to have as kind and benevolent affections for the human species, as your invisible agent can be supposed to have; and if they have devised cunning fables, they have wrought them up with such appearances of truth and simplicity, and blended them with such wholesome and salutary doctrines, that multitudes of the *best* and *wisest* of the humane family have been deceived by them, to their own unspeakable advantage, as to their personal virtue, and inward serenity and joy; and consequently to the no small benefit of all others with whom they have had to do. So that, if any *imposture* bids fair for the approbation of God, the christian *imposture* (supposing it for argument sake to be such) has as good a title to it, as any we can possibly imagine—and if so, all attempts to decry the Miracles said to be wrought in its favour, as not performed by God, supposing them to be really wrought; and every endeavour to detect the fallacy of the historians, supposing them not to have been really wrought, must, upon your *principles*, be highly displeasing to God, because it is opposing the common good of his creatures, which is an end so valuable,

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that (according to you) it will consecrate even *deceit* and *imposture*, when used as *means* to such an end. Thus, *Sir*, upon your *principles* the obedient believer of the christian revelation approves himself a servant of God, and a friend of mankind. But the despiser and rejecter thereof must by them be absolutely condemned as an enemy both to God and man.

I HOPE it appears by this time how little reason the anti-revelationists have to boast themselves, so much as they are reported to have done, upon this performance of yours upon Miracles, when even upon your principles the most credulous enthusiast is more *justifiable* than they can possibly be. What has been said likewise shews how needless it is for me to take any notice of your last *Sect.* as it was but lost labour in you to write it.

IF for reasons best known to myself, I decline setting my name to this address, I hope it will give no offence: for should it proceed from timidity, or self-diffidence, it is a fault that may be excused, as not being often to be found in us of the moderns, nor likely to be an example much followed. But perhaps the fear of a defeat may not be the true reason of concealing my name; for if I should have but a small tincture of that vanity and self-sufficiency so incident to the author-character, I may have flattered myself so far, as to think my arguments invincible; therefore it may be no trifling instance of self-denial, to forego the triumph of having
gained

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gained a *real* or even *seeming* advantage, in point of argument against so great a master of reason as Mr. *Chubb*; for *such* I must allow you to be, tho' I think you have fallen much below yourself in your discourse on Miracles.

I am

S I R,

Your humble Servant,

A. X.



P O S T-

P O S T S C R I P T.

UPON perusing the foregoing sheets, I perceived that an exception might lie against a paragraph in page 36, where I say, *Nay, moreover, that such beings may be free, or agents, whilst so doing.* — It may be objected, *that I have here allow'd that invisible agents do, or may act in or upon this globe, which is allowing Mr. C—'s second principle to be true, tho' I had before endeavoured to prove it to be false.* All I intend by that *paragraph* is this, *viz.* That an invisible being may be an *agent*, tho' he should only act *in or upon* this globe, as under the *immediate* direction of God, or in perfect conformity to the will of God: for if he doth so from choice and preference, I think his agency cannot be disputed. Suppose an invisible being should, in several instances, chuse to act in conformity to the will of God; but afterwards, thro' *mistake* or *design*, should chuse to oppose and counteract the will of God, and should *ipso facto*, be deprived of a power he once had of acting in or upon this globe; it would not follow, that he was not heretofore an agent in or upon this globe, because his *agency* in this respect now ceaseth, or is destroy'd. All that follows is this, *viz.* That such an invisible Being was an *agent* in or upon this globe at one time, and not so at another. *Vid. p. 12, l. 1, 2, &c.*

IF Mr. C—'s 2d *principle* means no more than this, I have no objection to it; but if we
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consider how it stands connected with his *design*, and what *notable use* he has made of the term *agent* contain'd therein ; we cannot but perceive the meaning of his 2d *principle* to be, — *That for ought we know, or can shew to the contrary, invisible beings do, or may exercise their powers in or upon this globe, in serving what purposes they please, however delusive or injurious.* All this he has artfully couched under the term *agent*, which will appear very plainly, by consulting his 24th page. His 2d *proposition* thus explained appears to be *false*, and *destructive* of all rational trust and confidence in God ; and whoever asserts it will find himself obliged to avow and defend the *Corollaries* which I have drawn from it in my *third Sect.* But it is not for nothing that Mr. C— is so fond of the term *agent* ; for the use of this term, sometimes in a *more strict*, at other times in a *more relaxed* sense, is the grand sophism by which he has perplexed the argument. *For instance*, he begins his 5th *Sect.* with an enquiry, whether God will permit and suffer invisible *agents* to exercise their powers in serving what purposes they please ; and draws an argument from analogy, to prove, that God *will* permit and suffer invisible *agents* to exercise their powers in serving what purposes they please. But in page 24 he tells us, that God *must* permit and suffer *agents* to use their powers, in serving what purposes they please. Now he must either have used the term *agent* in a more relaxed sense, at the beginning of his
5th

5th *Seēt.* than he does in page 24, and in *Seēt.* 6th, or have been guilty of writing the most egregious nonsense; for would any man in his senses set himself to enquire whether God *will* permit and suffer, what he *must* of necessity permit and suffer? Or gravely urge an argument drawn from *analogy* to prove, that God will permit and suffer *agents* to be *agents*, or a thing to be what it is?

If Mr. C— had used the term *being*, instead of *agent*, the enquiry would have been rational, *viz. whether God will permit and suffer invisible BEINGS to exercise their powers in serving what purposes they please in or upon this globe?* And his analogical argument, if it had not been conclusive, would have involved no absurdity in it. But alas! the term *being* would not have stood him in such stead as the term *agent* does, in page 24, and in *Seēt.* 6th; and here lies his artifice.—Thus is he fallen into his own snare, and must stand convicted either of *sophistry* or *nonsense*.

THAT Mr. C— has been guilty of a great impropriety, in preferring the term *agent* to the term *being*, will evidently appear, if we only suppose *his invisible being should voluntarily cease to act*: for in this case, if Mr. C— will yet have him to be an *agent*, he must be a *non-act-ing agent*, which I humbly conceive is a contradiction in terms.—Whilst any being acts *spontaneously*, he is justly termed an *agent*; when he voluntarily ceases to act, his *agency* ceases, tho' his
his