REFLECTIONS
ON
Dr. *FLEETWOOD's*
Essay upon Miracles.

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Dr. *FLEETWOOD*'s

ESSAY

UPON

MIRACLES:

Shewing the

Abſurdity, Falſhood, and Danger of his NOTIONS.

With a SUPPLEMENT,

Wherein is repreſented the Extent and Strength of the *Evidence* which *Miracles* give to *Revealed Religion.*

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THE PREFACE.

AT my first Reading the Essay upon Miracles, *some time ago, I was much surprized at many Novelties, and such as I thought Errors in it, of dangerous Consequence to Religion. Insomuch, that although I could not allow my self to suspect a Person of that* Author's *Character of any Design to undermine the Foundations of Religion; whilst, pretending to write in its Defence, he laid aside, and indeed as much as lay in him removed the Old Sound Principles upon which it hath hitherto stood, supporting it with New but Weak Props: Howbeit, as I thought Religion to stand best settled upon the Ancient Foundations, I hoped, this being a Thing of Importance, some Person of Learning or other, zealous for Religion*

 and

and its Truth, would soon undertake to shew the World this Author's *Mistakes, and vindicate those solid Principles upon which the Christian Religion hath hitherto stood unshaken, notwithstanding the Attempts of* Atheists *and* Deists, *which shall never remove it from its Basis. And if this were not done by some Better and more Able Hand in some time, I purposed my self to do something towards it.*

Having this in Thought, a little while after I met with Mr. Jenkins's *Observations on the* Life *of* Apollonius Tyanæus; *wherein I found some notice taken of the Principles which the* Essay *goes upon, (tho' without naming the* Author, *or the* Book) *and several Arguments well urged to shew the Weakness of these* New Principles, *upon which the* Essay *would fix the Authority of Miracles; which stood much better (as is likewise there shewn) upon the Ancient Foundations. This made me lay aside my Purpose for that time. But afterwards considering, that perhaps* Those Observations *might not be taken to be a full Answer to the* Essay, *there not being*

therein

therein full Solutions given to all the Difficulties (which the New Hypothesis does pretend, can be no other way solved than by it self) concerning the Nature of Miracles, *and the Extent of their Proof; so that the* Author of the Essay *might be apt to think himself not much concerned, nor pressed with what therein was said against him: And happning likewise in Conversation, to hear these New Principles of the Essay much talked of by some such as I had but too much cause to look upon as no great Friends to Religion; (who made an Use thereof contrary, I presume, to any Intention of the* Author of the Essay, *but dangerous, as I conceived, to* Revealed Religion, *the Evidences whereof, 'twas hence argued, must be somewhat uncertain:) I hereupon began again to think 'twas necessary this* Essay *should have a full Answer, as well for our seeing in a clear Light the Strength and Certainty of that Proof which Miracles give to Revealed Religion; as to solve the Difficulties and Objections that occur, (or that 'tis pretended do occur between our View and*

it; so as to make this Proof appear to us dark and perplexed, while these remain to render it obscure and exceptionable.) And indeed, I could not be satisfied in my self, until I set upon this Design with Resolution; having bestowed no little Consideration on the Subject; and yet finding my self no wiser than one of those whom the Author of the Essay *is pleased to call* Unconsidering People, *who may suspect sooner than approve the Concessions he has made to the Adversaries of Revealed Religion; which I not only think to have been made by him without either Reason or Necessity, but also that if allowed, the Damage which Religion will receive thereby, is no less than the Shaking of its whole Foundation.*

For as to this Author's *undertaking from* Reason *and* Revelation, *as he pretends (though much of the Scripture that he useth, will appear, I doubt, to be used by him in a Sense different from what the Christian World hath hitherto understood it in) to introduce a New Doctrine amongst us concerning* Miracles, *(which are the*

great

great Proof upon which all Revealed Religion depends) contrary to what all Divines, whether Ancients or Moderns, have hitherto taught; I cannot but look on it as a very bold and surprizing Attempt: Tho' this self-presuming Conceit of his doing otherwise and better, *as he calls it, would have been excusable with me, notwithstanding the Novelty and Singularity of his Notions, had this* Author *been pleased to have allowed the old Arguments for the Truth of our Religion, to have stood good against its Adversaries, and added his own Thoughts as a further Help and Strength to its Cause. But his Free and Bold Censure of all Divines before him, (* "*Some, as he says,* "*for their downright begging* "*the Question in debate; others for Negligent and Slight Solutions of Considerable Difficulties; others for attributing* "*so great a Power to the Devil, as he* "*judgeth utterly inconsistent with the* "*maintenance of Christianity upon the Foot* "*of Miracles; and most of 'em for leaving* "*us Schemes very defective in some Parts,* "*and very indefensible in others):*" *And* Essay, Epist. Ded. pag. 2.

espe-

especially his Attempt to render a great deal of that which has been said in the Cause of Religion, weak and contemptible, I can by no means think to be excusable. For a Divine surely cannot be thought to go the right way to give satisfaction to the Unbelieving World *(which is this* Author's *Pretence) by rendring questionable the Proofs of Religion* generally used *to convince Gainsayers, in favour of* New Notions *before not thought of in the Christian World; of whose Truth and Strength, consequently, he could have no assurance. Such an one must be rather thought to go in dangerous By-Paths, not to be followed by any that are wise: And if he meet with no Censure for that which seems to signifie too great an Indifference in Religion, he will owe it to the Charity of those who hope or believe well of his Intentions.*

There will be somewhat the more Trouble in dealing with this Author *from his Way of Writing in* Dialogues; *wherein, as an* Author *may use a great deal of Foul Play,*

Play, if he has a mind either not candidly to propose the Opinions and Arguments of Adverse Parties in the Persons of the Dialogists, *or to represent Persons Opinions and Practices invidiously and contemptuously, or to conceal and shelter himself in Ill and Unworthy Suggestions, or to seduce his Unwary Readers; so he has some Advantage from the Perplexity and Trouble it creates to any one that shall go about to answer him; who must follow him throughout his* Dialogues, *and be at pains more than ordinary to pick out his Sense, and Meaning, and Arguments. But the latter I can excuse, if so be I find nothing of Craft and Design in this his Method: In case I should, he must allow me to use what Skill I have to detect it.*

There are some very Tedious Repetitions in which I am forced to follow this Author; *he says, the Nature of his Work led him to them; and I am concerned to follow him, that the Answer may not be excepted against, as imperfect.*

I hope

I hope neither the Reader *nor our* Author *will find, but that as I have taken upon me to Answer his Book, I shall do it* in a manner becoming him and me. *I shall spare him in all Cases but where I think Truth injured, or the World imposed upon, or him endeavouring to impose upon it.*

RE-

REFLECTIONS

ON AN

Essay upon Miracles.

THE *Author* of the *Essay upon Miracles* is pleased to tell us what a Miracle is, namely, " *An Extra-* Essay,
" *ordinary Operation of God, against* p. 2.
" *the known Course and settled Laws of Nature,*
" *appealing to the Senses:* Or he will be content that we should take Mr. *Hobbs*'s Definition, *viz. A Work of God beside his Operation by the Way of Nature ordained in the Creation.* Of which Definitions (or rather of Pag. 3.
the first of them, for the latter will not serve his Purpose so effectually) he thinks to serve himself thus far, namely, that he may conclude hence, that " nothing new, strange,
" prodigious and astonishing shall be ac- Pag. 4.
" counted *properly Miraculous*, unless it
" thwart the Common Course of Nature,
" and overthrow some settled Law of the
" Creation: So that although a Man won-

" der never so much at it, having never
" heard nor seen the like, nor, it may be,
" any one else, yet he is not to account it a
" Miracle, unless he know of some established
" ed Law of Nature that is subverted by it.
And of this he makes great Use to himself throughout his Book. But if it shall appear that his *Definition of a Miracle* is false, as well as without Authority, then as well the Inference which he here makes from it, as whatsoever else he builds upon it, must fall together with it.

Thus far I will agree with him, that a *Miracle* is an *Extraordinary Operation besides* and *out of the Way of Nature*, and that there is an *Appeal in it to the Senses*, or rather to the Reason and Sense of Mankind; as well in reference to the Truth of the Fact, of which our Bodily Senses are the Judge, as touching its being above all Human Power, and all Natural Causes known and visible to us, wherein our Reason judgeth of the kind of such Fact, taking into its help the Experience and Observation of others, together with our own. But I cannot allow him, that nothing should be thought a Miracle, but what is *against the Course of Nature, and absolutely contrary to the settled Laws thereof.* I will give him an Instance of a Thing that he shall not be able to deny its being a Miracle, because he shall find it appealed to by one of the Lord's Prophets, for the Proof of his

his being a *Man of God*, and even for a Proof of the *Lord's* being *the God*, that is, the only and the True God; which yet will not appear to be *against the Course of Nature, nor subverting of any Law thereof:* For that Things the same in *Kind*, though not in *Circumstances*, have hapned in Nature, and may be accounted for from Causes in Nature; namely, the *Fire from Heaven*, that *Elijah* called for to consume the Sacrifice, in his Contest with the *Prophets of Baal*; as also to destroy the *Captains with their Fifties*, sent by the King to seize him. This was undoubtedly a Miracle, being proposed by the Prophet in one Case, and assented to by the People as a Proof of that Nature; who could not refuse to agree, that he which *answered by Fire*, should be acknowledged to be *the God* whom only they ought to worship: And in the other Case, the Words of the Prophet are a plain and express Appeal to it as such; *If I am a Man of God, let Fire come down from Heaven and destroy thee and thy Fifty.* Yet surely it is not a Thing *against the Course of Nature*, for *Fire* or *Lightning* to fall from Heaven, and destroy Men sometimes, as well as at other times burn Things that are combustible. This Instance cannot but shew his Definition of a Miracle to be groundless and false. I am willing to observe here also, that the *Author of the Essay* does not think fit always to

1 Kings 18. v. 24.

2 Kings 1. v. 10.

judge of Miracles according to his own Definition, *viz. Its being a Thing contrary to the known*, constant, *settled Course of Nature:* For he says, touching an Instance mentioned by himself, *i. e. Habbakuk's being convey'd through the Air by the Angel*, "That he should "not have thought it to be a Miracle, be- "cause, for ought he knew, the *Natural* "*Powers* of the *Angel* might suffice for that, "or a greater Purpose; but that if a *Man* "indeed should bear up another Man, and "carry him through the Air, he should con- "clude this Action to be miraculous." Let him tell me whether a *Man's being conveyed through the Air*, without any thing to support or bear up his Body, be not a thing which from Experience and Observation, as well as from Reason, we must conclude not possible in Nature: If so, then it must be a Miracle according to his own Definition. By whom effected, is another Question: Let that Power be what it will, the Action is one and the same. That one Man cannot do this for another, I grant him; and more than this, namely, that a Man cannot convey himself through the Air: Therefore if I should see this last done, I account it a Miracle; and if I see the other done, it is still but a Miraculous Work; and the Reason why both the one and the other are accounted such, is only this, that I know some Invisible Power must assist in both. He says indeed, That sup-

Essay, 2d Part, p. 100.

ſuppoſing he knew it to be an Angel, he ſhould not think it to be a Miracle, becauſe for ought he knew, an Angel's *Natural Power* might effect it: He might with as much Reaſon have ſaid, he ſhould not think it to be a Miracle, if he knew that *God himſelf* wrought it, becauſe there can be no doubt but his *Eſſential Power* ſufficeth for it: Nothing can be ſaid to be a Miracle as to God, nor is any thing a Miracle as to that Power which is known able to do it: A Miracle is an Action that in it ſelf, or its Circumſtances, is a *Sign* to us of the Preſence or Operation of ſome Inviſible or Supernatural Power. To ſuppoſe or argue an Action of this nature not to be a Miracle, if the Power whoſe Preſence is ſignified to us by aſſiſting in it, can be thought able of it ſelf to do it, is meer Nonſenſe; for the Power that aſſiſteth to it, muſt be thought able to do it, otherwiſe how ſhould it be done? The Fallacy lies in the Word *Miracle*, which this *Author* fancies muſt be an Action always above the Power of the Agent, or how ſhould it be thought a *Miracle*? That is, in his Judgment, *a Work that one would wonder*, and ſhould have cauſe to wonder ſuch an Agent ſhould do: Whereas indeed a Miracle is a Wonder only in reference *to us* and the *Inſtrumental Agent*; in reference to the *Efficient Cauſe*, the Power working or aſſiſting to it, 'tis only a *Sign given us* of its Preſence and Operation;

which Power, however astonishing it may be to us, who understand not the way of its Operation, must be thought able to do what it does: And if its being supposed so able, would make the Thing no Miracle, then were a Miracle impossible. My Meaning, perhaps, may be better expressed by shewing the thing in the Instance we are upon, *viz.* A Man's being convey'd through the Air, would be to us the Spectators a Wonder: Should the Man himself be the Instrument of this his Conveyance, this would still be to us a Wonder: Suppose (as we know he must be assisted by some Power therein) we knew the Power assisting him to be that of God, it might be still wonderful to us in one sense, as a thing unusual, and beyond our apprehension, as to the way, and manner; but the Wonder would cease, in respect of the Power doing it, because we have all reason to think the Power of God able to effect it; Yet would it not still be a Miracle, even after we knew God's Power sufficient for it? (The Case is the same, let it be any other Power that assisteth to it:) If after 'tis known that the Power is sufficient for it, it be not still a Miracle, then there could be no such Thing. I have continued too long upon this, but with design to shew, that as this *Author*'s Definition of a Miracle cannot be true, so his Notions are not clear to himself, he knows not a Miracle that falls under his own Definition. There-

Therefore to set us right at the beginning, if we must find a Definition for a Miracle, it ought to be such as may comprehend all those Miraculous Works which have been wrought by Persons sent of God to prove *God's being with them of a truth.* And these seem to be of several kinds; (1.) Some there are which we have great reason to judge the Effects of an immediate Divine Power, as seeming to Human Judgment above all Natural Means and Causes; such is thought the *Raising of the Dead*, &c. (2.) Some again are such as might, we may think, possibly be done by Natural Means, but yet appear evidently, in the particular Case, not done by any such Means, but by some Superior Power; as the sudden and present Cure of dangerous, violent or inveterate Diseases, as a Violent *Fever* in its Paroxysm, the *Palsie*, *Leprosie*, or the like, cured with a Word or Touch. (3.) Some again, such as Natural Means seem to have been used about, but such Means as are no ways disposed in their Nature to produce such Effects; as our *Saviour*'s curing of the *Blind* with his *Spittle* and *Clay*; of the *Deaf* and *Dumb*, by putting his *Finger into the Ear*, and touching the *Tongue with his Spittle.* (4.) Others, such as were done by Natural Means, disposed for the Effect, but not immediately, or presently disposed for it; not at the command, nor under the Power of the Agent, working by them neverthe-

less at his Pleasure; as *Fire from Heaven*, falling and consuming the Sacrifice, or destroying Men, therefore miraculous, because falling *at the Word* of the Prophet: The *Storm at Sea* ceasing upon our *Saviour's rebuking the Wind*: The *Draught of Fishes* caught upon the *letting down the Net at his Word*, &c.

All these agree in this, that they are *out of the way of Nature*, and above the Power of it; Circumstances, or the nature of the Things considered: They are Works that neither Nature, nor the Powers of Nature concur to effect; which *in those Circumstances, at least*, Natural Causes could not have wrought, but as helped, or excited by some Power extraordinary.

Perhaps this *Author* will say, That only the first of these are *properly* Miracles: Let him then give a Reason why God or his Prophets should use the rest at all. Either they are Miracles, or to no purpose used, to no purpose pretended to.

Were I therefore to give a Definition of a Miracle, it should be this; "An Extraordi-
" nary Operation out of the way of Nature,
" and above the Powers of it, *the Circum-*
" *stances of the Act* considered, appealing to
" the Sense and Reason of Mankind.

Essay, p. 5. And now we come to some of our *Author's* Questions, *viz. Are we sure that all Miracles are the Operations of God? Can no Created*

ated Being work a Miracle? To which he gives this Answer, That "no Created Being "can work a Miracle by its own *Inherent* "Power and Virtue, (I suppose he means by its own *Natural* or *Essential* Power) "but by a *Delegated* Power (I presume he "means *communicated*) it may: And thus "the meanest of Created Beings may do it, "if God so please." Thus far I shall agree with him, That the *meanest of Created Beings* may do it by a *Communicated* Power; but that *no Created Being* hath *Natural* Powers for it, I doubt is but precariously said; it being a Thing that neither he nor I can speak absolutely nor positively of, unless we knew certainly what the Natural Powers of all Created Beings are. A *Man* indeed cannot work a Miracle, without some Power *communicated* to him; for the Work must be, and appear evidently to be *above Human Power*, at least in the Circumstances of its doing, or 'tis not to be accounted a Miracle. But whether Man be assisted always in doing that which is above Human Power, by *God himself alone*, or may not be assisted by some *Inferior Being* (having Natural Powers beyond those of Man) to do Things, which being done by Man, assisted by a Power invisible, are to be accounted miraculous; is the proper Question in this Case to be asked. And whether the Invisible Power that doth assist, doth thus assist

by

by its own Natural Power, or by a Communicated Power, is very little to the Matter in hand; that is to say, the Enquiry, whether in all Miracles, the *Hand* that assisteth Man to work them, be that of God. For if another Spirit does assist, unless I can find some other Expedient, to know that this Spirit hath not a Natural Power but Communicated, besides the Work that is before me, I may be deceived by the Miracle, so as to take it to be of God, when it is not; or not to take it to be of him, when it is. Therefore all that he observes of the "*Creature's being God's Instrument* in the Working of Miracles, so as "when the most Superior Angel works a "Miracle, it is no more his own Work, "than a Miracle wrought by the meanest "Man would be his"; (which yet I think is no Consequence, the Natural Powers of the one being undoubtedly much greater than the Natural Powers of the other;) is nothing at all to the Business. The Purpose being to enquire, Whether Man is always assisted *by God* in the Work of a Miracle; or whether he may not sometimes be assisted by some other *invisible Being*? If the latter may be, what is it to our purpose to know in the general, that when God works it, he does it by his Essential Power; but when another Spirit works it, this Spirit doth it, not by a Natural, but by a Communicated

municated Power; or if it does it by a Natural, even that Ability is derived from the Creator? All this was known to every one before the *Author*'s Pains about it; and after all he has ſaid, we are but as wiſe as we were before. Another Spirit may aſſiſt Man to work a Miracle, perhaps by its *Natural*, or perhaps by a *Communicated* Power; but whether by one or the other, we cannot diſtinguiſh from the Thing we ſee before us, and therefore 'tis to us the ſame Thing, let it be which it will; and we are left ſtill to ſeek the Means of knowing whether the Power aſſiſting be God, or ſome other.

The further Queſtions which our *Author* directs his *Scholar* to ask him; *viz.* "How "can you tell but Spiritual Beings (good "or bad) may by the Laws of their Cre- "ation, be Maſters of ſuch Force and Sub- "tilty, as to be able to work Miracles? "And if they be endued with ſuch a Pow- "er, how can we know whether or when "they exerciſe it? Or how can we diſtin- "guiſh their Operations from thoſe of God? Theſe Queſtions, with only adding to the Suppoſition of their being endued with ſuch a Power, *whether Natural or Communicated*, (which is indeed all the ſame Thing as to us, who ſee the Effect only of their Power, but are without the Means of knowing whether the Power it ſelf is Natural or

Eſſay, P. 5, & 6.

or Communicated) are material indeed, and truly to the purpose. And therefore, I should have been glad to have seen a direct Answer given by our *Author* to them: But this we must wait for, and take for the present what he is pleased to give us. Which is this: ——— "No Power less than that "of God, can unsettle that established "Course of Nature, which no Power less "than his, could settle and establish." Here I must say, (*1st.*) That his Answer goes upon a wrong Supposition; that is, that all Miracles are against the common Course of Nature, and a Subversion of its settled Laws; which therefore I left out in the first of these his Questions, as being not proved by him, and therefore a groundless Supposition. But (*2dly.*) admitting it for a while; To make himself understood, he should have first told us what the established Course of Nature is, that he means: However, be it what it will, to make good his Position, he must prove to us, That God intended so to establish the Course of Nature, as that it should never be altered nor changed. And then I would have him to remember, that such a Supposition is made use of by a certain Person (with whom I have some Suspicion he may be acquainted) to prove, That there never was, nor can be any such thing as a *Miracle*; for that it must imply *Mutability in God*; which is absurd, and

The Author of the *Tractatus Theologo-Politicus.*

and not to be ſuppoſed poſſible. On the other hand, allowing, as he muſt, that the Courſe of Nature may admit of Alterations, why muſt it neceſſarily be, that *no Power leſs than his who made it*, may alter it? I ſhould be apt to think, a leſs Power might unſettle or alter that, which would require a greater firſt to ſettle and put it in order. But, hear this *Author*'s Reaſons.

(1.) He ſays, "It would argue a Defect "of Power or Wiſdom in God, to leave "the Laws of his Creation at the Will and "Mercy of Created Beings: This would "not be to be the Supreme Director, Lord "and Governor; but to have Rivals, "Checks, nay, and Controllers of his Will "and Empire." Right; if God did not himſelf always govern and over-rule the Powers of all Created Beings, ſo as they ſhall only make ſuch and no other Alterations in the Courſe of Nature, than himſelf ſhall think fit to permit and ſuffer. Admit but this, (which is the Suppoſition which they will require of others, as well as that which they go on themſelves, who think Miracles are ſometimes wrought by other Powers than that of God;) and what becomes of our *Author*'s Argument? If theſe can do nothing, but what God will permit and ſuffer, the Laws of his Creation are not left to their *Will and Mercy*, tho' left ſubject to ſuch Alterations as God may per- Eſſay, Pag. 6.

permit and suffer them to make therein: Neither are these Supreme Directors in the World, nor Checks upon the Power of God, nor Controllers of his Empire; so long as God governs in the World as Supreme, over-ruling their Powers, restraining and controlling them at his pleasure; these going and acting nevertheless so far as he gives them Liberty and Permission, but no farther.

Ibid. (2.) He says, "There could be no use "made of Miracles, if any one but God "could work them." Add but his own Words, *independently on him*, and *at their pleasure*, and I might allow it him to be a Truth, but nothing at all to his purpose. The reason why I allow this that he says, (taking the whole together) is, Because if other Powers could work Miracles *at their pleasure*, I could not find, at the first, means to distinguish the Spirit and Power of God, from other Spirits and Powers doing the like Works: But when I see another that is not able to do them *at its pleasure*, I conclude it for this reason not to be the Power of God; because I see its Power limited, or restrained and controlled. And if so be, that there can be found a Way, by this means, or indeed by any other, to know when it is the *Spirit and Power of God* that worketh them; the Use of Miracles will remain the same, even supposing others beside him to work them.

But

But to this he further ſays, "That Mi-
"racles could not manifeſt a Divine Pow-
"er, if any leſs could work them; nor
"could they atteſt to any one's being ſent
"from God, if any other than God could
"exerciſe ſuch Power; becauſe they might
"proceed from one as well as the other.
As to the former part of his Argument, That *Miracles could not manifeſt a Divine Power, if any leſs could work them*; I grant it; putting in but theſe Words, *at all times, and in the ſame meaſure and manner*: But then it would be nothing to our *Author*'s Purpoſe; for the *Manner*, and *Meaſure*, and *Circumſtance of Time*, would manifeſt the *Divine Power*, and diſtinguiſh it from the *leſs*. For if the Power of God work *greater* Miracles than the other is able to do; or if the others are *limited* in their Power, and *controlled* at the Pleaſure of God, or his Agents; the *greater* Effects, and the Acts of an *unlimited Power*, ſhall manifeſt the *Divine* Omnipotent Power *of God*, and diſtinguiſh it from the Power of *Dæmons*, that may work Miracles when God does (or ſhall) think fit to permit them; but not *independently on him*, or at their *own pleaſure*. Therefore in the latter part of his Argument, there is juſt nothing at all; becauſe the Perſon ſent from God may poſſibly be diſcerned by ſuch Effects and Acts, as may appear to be the Works of an uncontrolled

controlled and unlimited Power: Neither have I need to mention as yet the other Marks that may be found to distinguish them. If there be any sure Mark, (as this Difference in the Powers, the one appearing limited and controlled, and thereby inferior; the other unlimited and unconfined it self, but able to restrain and controll others, to which it therefore must be Superior; I insist upon to be one certain Mark for our distinguishing them:) then all his Argument is at an end, and signifies just nothing. Neither is his Argument from the Similitude of a *Prince's Seal* any thing as yet to his purpose; for a *bare Power* to work a *Miracle*, and an *unlimited Power* of working them, are not the same; but differ as much as a Counterfeit Seal does from the True, and are distinguishable by a careful Inspection.

But after all this great ado, the Inference that this *Author* dares as yet make, is no more than this: "That none but God can "work Miracles of his own inherent Pow-"er and Virtue; or if Created Spirits had "that Power given them by God, yet that "they could not exercise it but by Permissi-"on and Appointment." Every Tittle of this shall be granted him; but not the least Use shall he be able to make of it to his purpose. "Whether any such Power as "this hath been, or may at some time, be "given

Essay, Pag. 7.

"given to *Created Spirits* by God; and "why; is a Matter that he will refer to "further Enquiry." And I am content it be so left; only let him not then as yet affirm, or let it be understood that it is without any reason hitherto given, that he does take upon him to affirm; "That *none but* "*God* doth, or can work Miracles." He indeed can always work them, and by what Agents and Instruments he sees fit; but this our *Author* has not yet made it appear, That *whatsoever Man* worketh any, is the immediate Instrument of God, and not the Agent (it may be) of some other Power.

But here it's thought seasonable to ask; "*Whether* it be proper to prove the *Being* "of a God by Miracles, to such as believe "there is no such Thing in the World? (Let me explain it by putting in, That is to say, to such as believe there is *no God* in the World; or else I am sure it must be a very improper Question.) And to this we have for answer; "Miracles do certainly "prove the *Being* of him who works them; "because nothing can act that does not "exist: But *properly speaking*, they rather "*suppose* than *prove* the Being of a God. I would not willingly entertain a causless Suspicion; but I cannot see how it could be in the least seasonable, nor how it should be serviceable at all to the Purpose this *Author* had in hand, to propose at all, much less Ibid.

to answer this Question after the manner he does. Surely he cannot have any Intention to favour herein any of those bold Writers, that have taken upon them to affirm, "That we cannot from Miracles apprehend either the Essence, Existence, or "Providence of God; which, if understood at all, are to be understood from "the fixed and settled Course and Order of "Nature." I will allow them and this our Author, that the *Being* of *God* is clearly proved from the Works of the Creation, formed by an infinite Wisdom and Power, and preserved in a constant Regularity and Order. But does not *this Author* know, there have been Men in the World that have pretended hence to argue quite the contrary: "That the *World* is *Eternal*; for that "the Course of Nature hath continued the "same without Interruption?" Doth he not also know, that there are even now perverse Disputers, that impute all Things to *Nature* and its fixed Course, and by this endeavour to exclude a Deity out of the World? And are not those left without excuse, and cut off from all pretence, when the Omnipotent Power of God shall appear in the Interruption of Nature's Course, as well as it doth in the Establishment thereof? Why is it then that this *Author* does tell us, that Miracles *suppose* rather than *prove*; and that by these we can *hardly* convince?

Essay, Pag. 8.

Let

Let us not thus loſe our Arguments, that muſt convince an Atheiſtical World. If that which *ſuppoſes* does not alſo *prove*, and that *properly ſpeaking* in the Caſe we are upon; how does the Courſe of Nature, that is conſtant, and the Works of the Creation *prove*? Theſe prove the Being of a God, only as an *Effect* proves its *Cauſe*; that is, the Effect ſuppoſing the Cauſe, in that this could not be without that, is a Proof of it; becauſe the Exiſtence of the one which we ſee, neceſſarily ſuppoſeth, that is, maketh us of neceſſity to ſuppoſe, the Exiſtence of the other, though we ſee it not. I wiſh this *Author* had expreſs'd himſelf more largely therefore and plainly, when he owns at the laſt, "That Miracles may "be properly produced, to prove the *Being* "of a God to *ſome ſort of People*, and in "ſome Caſes." I hope he would not go about to ſuggeſt, what is ſaid boldly and atheiſtically by ſome, who I think firſt gave the World the Hint of this; *i. e.* That Miracles are a Proof only to *ſome ſort of People*; that is, ſay they, to the *Superſtitious* and *Credulous* only. Our *Author* ſurely has conſidered, that the *Proof* is good *to all*, though *all* indeed may not have need of it, *many* being convinced without it.

At length we are come with our *Author* to the principal and undeniable Uſe of Miracles; which is ſaid to be, and which Ibid.

with him I agree to be " The Attesting to " the Mission of any Messenger of God, " to give him Credit with those to whom " he is sent." As for instance; The Power of Miracles which was given to *Moses*, to give him Credit with the *Jews* as well as with the *Ægyptians*. Of which the Scripture hath given us a very plain Account in the Places cited, *viz.* *Exod.* 4. *v.* 1. and *Cap.* 8. *v.* 9. where 'tis very plain and clear, " That the Power of Working Mi- " racles, which God entrusted *Moses* with, " was given him to testify his Mission; to " witness to the *Hebrews* that he came " from God, as well as to *Pharaoh*, that he " came to him with God's Message.

Essay, Pag. 10.

But here now comes the great Objection that will hardly be well answered, (thinks our *Author's Scholar*) namely, " That *Jan-* " *nes* and *Jambres*, *Ægyptian* Sorcerers " and Enchanters, when they were called " before the King and Court, to see what " they could do, threw down their *Rods*, " which were also turned to *Serpents*: They " also turned *Waters* into *Blood*; and like- " wise brought up *Frogs* upon the Land. " How could *Moses*'s Miracles then prove " his Mission from God; and why is he " more to be believed than the Magicians; " since they also wrought Miracles?

Pag. 11.

Pag. 12.

Ibid.

Here our *Author* promiseth the Answers that are generally thought best; but to deal freely,

freely, (he ſays) " they are not fully ſatiſ-
" factory." He might have ſpoken his Opinion plainly, and ſaid, they are not at all ſatisfactory; and the World would have ſooner excuſed his Attempt to ridicule them First then, he tells us, 'tis ſaid in anſwer " That the Rods of the *Ægyptian* Sorcer-
" ers were not turned into *real* but *appear-*
" *ing* Serpents; and that the Devil helped
" his Servants in this Caſe, to impoſe upon
" the Senſes of the Standers-by." And upon this, his Scholar muſt take upon him the Perſon of an *Ægyptian*, one of *Pharaoh's* Court, and reply; " That this An-
" ſwer *begs the Queſtion*; for you ſay, *Mo-*
" *ſes's* Rod being turned into a Serpent,
" gives a Teſtimony to his Miſſion, and
" ſhews that he came from God: But here
" are *Jannes* and *Jambres* that deny his Miſ-
" ſion, and have turned their Rods into Ser-
" pents as well as he. 'Tis ſaid, our Senſes
" are deceived and impoſed upon by Diabo-
" lical Illuſions in their Caſe; we may ſay
" the ſame in the Caſe of *Moſes*. You
" judge by your Senſes, that *Moſes's* Rod
" was turned into a *real* Serpent; the *Æ-*
" *gyptians* uſe their Senſes alſo, and to them
" their *Sorcerers* Rods are turned into Ser-
" pents. What can be anſwered in favour
" of *Moſes*, that might not be honeſtly ap-
" plied to *Jannes* and *Jambres* alſo?" Here-in, I doubt, there will appear a little more

Art than Sincerity, in this *Writer* of *Dialogues*. I suppose, he has not frequently met with this Answer, given by Men pretending to say and give the Reason, Why *Moses* should be believed rather than the *Magicians* of *Ægypt*. The Answer that would be given in that Case to the direct Question, is undoubtedly this; *viz.* That it appears in the whole Transaction, that *Moses* acted by a greater Power than they; That their Miracles could not stand in competition with his: They found the Power assisting them limited and restrained by the other, and so were forced to acknowledge him to act by a Power Superior to that which assisted them: And that the Opposition of these *Magicians* for a while, and their being at length forced to yield and give over, rendred the Miracles of *Moses* a more undeniable Testimony, and shewed therein the *Finger of God*. But that Answer which this *Author* is pleased to give us, is, I may almost say, a Reply of his *own making*, though he gives it us as the usual known Reply *of others*. His disingenuous Dealing therefore appears so much the more, when he quotes no Author for this Answer, but employs his *Scholar* to render it ridiculous: Whether it be without design of giving Advantage to the Adversaries of Religion, the World must judge.

The

The ſame I muſt ſay of his *Second* Anſwer, and what his Diſciple is inſtructed to ſay upon that, *viz.* "The Devil's ſteal-"ing away the Sorcerers Rods, and in their "ſtead ſecretly conveying true Serpents. I ſee no Author that he has quoted for this Anſwer, neither do I remember that I have met with it in my Reading: And therefore I am at a loſs as to the Deſign and End which our Author muſt have, in giving this out for an Anſwer, and in rendring it ridiculous. I would fain ſee, if I could, fair Dealing, and good Deſign in this. It ſhall not be enough for *this Author* to reply upon me, That ſeveral Writers in their giving account how thoſe Miracles wrought by the Magicians might be effected by the Help and Power of the Devil, (whoſe Power they conceived not ſufficient to do what the Magicians did to appearance) may have ſpoken to this purpoſe concerning the Deluſions of that ſubtile Spirit. Let ſuch Mens Conjecture be true or falſe, or even ridiculous, it's nothing to the Credit which *Moſes* ought to have beyond the *Magicians*: For whether the Works of the Magicians were Real or Deluſory, there was a ſudden Stop put to their Power, which forced them to acknowledge a Supreme Power with *Moſes*, over-ruling that by which they acted; and this gives Credit to *Moſes*. Thoſe Men beſides, that have offer'd at this Conjecture, Eſſay, Pag. 14.

are very ill used, in being brought in to say those Things for an Answer to the Question, *Why is* Moses *more to be believed than the Magicians*? Which may have been spoken by them only in a way of *Conjecture*, to give some account how the Devil might assist them to do such Things, and yet have no more Power than they think him, that is to say, not a Power to work real Miracles. I have not found any Writers that have put the Credit of *Moses* upon so weak an Issue, as the Truth of their own Conjectures of this kind: And though it might be said of some, that they virtually or consequentially have done it, by offering these Conjectures; it would be very hard to go about to charge them with, or fasten such a Consequence upon them. And even if that could be done, I should have no great Opinion of this our *Author*'s Sincerity, who has pretended to produce these among the Answers that are *thought the best* in this Case *generally*; whereas he cannot but himself know, these are so weak in the manner he has urged them, that any Man of Learning and Sense would be ashamed of them: I mean, of their being given as a Reason, *Why* Moses *should have more Credit than the Magicians*. 'Tis another thing to offer a Conjecture of this nature, in giving an Account, *how such Things might be done by the Devil's Power*. And this I cannot doubt but *this*

Author

Author must well know; and therefore I blush for him, whilst I take this notice thereof.

He need not have made so great a Wonder, "That Learned Men should take so "much pains to solve the Miracle of the "*Rods*, and say little to the Two others, "which are as hard to be accounted for. Doubtless, they that thought themselves to have accounted for *One*, supposed they had done it for all *Three*; and that what would *solve* the one, would solve the other also. And what (he says) the *Ægyptian Courtier* would reply upon them, in case they should have *said* the Water was not turned into true *Blood*, nor real and substantial Frogs brought up, *viz.* How came it to pass that his Countreymens Senses were only to be imposed upon, and those of the *Hebrews* remained clear, and not to be deceived? would be thought most ridiculous to any that may have offered this Solution, as to what might be done by the Devil's Power. I believe that never any one that offered at this Conjecture, ever thought or ever pretended, but that the Senses of the *Hebrews* might be, and were imposed on, as well as the Senses of the *Egyptians*, if those Things which the Magicians did, were only delusory. If *this Author* will pretend to argue against this Conjecture that some Men have offered, "That the Magicians Rods were "True

Essay, Pag. 15.

Pag. 14, & 15.

"True Serpents, and that our Senses are "not to be imposed upon; or if they may, "there is no Judgment to be made with "Certainty of any Miracles": Let him argue this as long as he pleaseth, I find my self not at all concerned therein. It is no matter to me, which Hypothesis is true; that which supposeth them to be *Real*, or that which will have them to be *Delusory*; let but the Power assisting *Moses* be acknowledged *Superior*, and it sufficeth. I have no farther to do with either, but that the one as well as the other be rightly represented, and that no Consequence be drawn from the Weakness of either, to prejudice that Evidence which will stand good, without our fixing upon either the one or the other.

Pag. 15. *Moses's Serpent* eating up the other Serpents, has not generally been urged, that I know of, to that purpose this *Author* intimates, in proof that his was a *Real* Serpent, the others not: Though I take it indeed to be some Evidence of a Superiority of Power in *Moses*, that he was able to overcome the *Magicians*. And this I take to be the Reason of the Mention which the Scripture makes thereof.

If any have offered this other as a difference between *Moses* and the *Magicians*, "That these turned Water into Blood, but "in a *less quantity*; and that these brought up "but

"but a *few Frogs*, whereas *Moses*'s Perfor-
"mances of this kind were marvellouſly
"great:" It is but the Opinion of ſome particular Men. I do not ſee that the Scripture gives any Intimation of this Difference, or takes notice in the leaſt thereof, to diſtinguiſh the one's Performance from the other's: And therefore I am no way concerned, if the Suppoſition do not hold good. However, admitting this Suppoſition true, that the *Magicians* could not do either of theſe Acts, to the degree, or after the manner that *Moſes* did them, I ſhould think it rational to conclude from thence, that the one acted by a *limited* Power inferior to that of the other, which appeared able to act in a more wonderful manner than they. And had this Suppoſition been abſolutely true, our *Author* need not have called for an Inſtance to be brought him of a Power that could act in a *leſs*, but could not act in a *greater* manner, or meaſure. And in this place, ſince he has called for an Inſtance "to be
"brought him of a Man or Spirit that can Eſſay, p. 16.
"make a Fly, and he will ſhew us that the
"ſame can make an Elephant; theſe Magicians ſhall be the Inſtance; who having done ſome Miracles, nevertheleſs could not do more; who even having done *great* Things, were not able to do *little*: Which is more ſtrange than not to be able to do *greater* of the kind. Theſe were unable to

turn

turn Dust into Lice, though there be no more, but rather less appearing difficulty, even in our *Author*'s Judgment, in this, than in some at least of the others they had done before. Therefore is there no arguing from what in our Apprehension is more easie or hard in Nature, so as to make a certain Conclusion thence, that the Power which can do one Thing out of the way of Nature, shall be able to do another. Let all Things out of the way of Nature seem to me *alike impossible*, or *alike possible*, How shall I by this be certain that they are so in themselves? Can any thing certainly be determined of that whereof we have no certain apprehension? This *Author* therefore might have spared his Pains and Argument about that which cannot by us be understood.

Pag. 30.

All this while our *Author* seems to have industriously concealed the Answer generally given, and which taken right, is indeed the best Answer, *viz.* That *Moses* wrought *more* and *greater* Miracles, and *did what the other could not*. And this he still endeavours to conceal; for instead of mentioning this directly, he proposes a Thing taken notice of, 'tis true, by some Writers, but of which no notice is taken in *Scripture*; which is, "That the Sorcerers *did not*, or, as he "will have it, *could not* remove the *Plagues* "which they brought upon the Land, as *Moses* did. And thence he under a colour in-

infers that *Moses* wrought the *greater* Miracles. To which his Disciple is taught to reply, " That he sees herein that *Moses* " wrought *more*, but he does not see how " he wrough *greater* ; for he does not see " but it requires as much Power to make a " Little Serpent, as a Great one that can eat " him up ; to turn six Spoonfuls of Water " into Blood, as six Quarts ; and to bring " up Ten Frogs, as Ten Thousand. And this is to pass for good Reason, though at the same time there is not one Word of Answer given to the Thing in particular, observed and proposed, which was the *Sorcerers not being able to remove the Plagues.* I own indeed all that can be said by those that made this Observation, to be precarious, because it does not appear to me in the Story, that the *Magicians* made any Attempt of this kind, and failed therein. But supposing they had attempted this, and failed in it, I cannot but be of Opinion, that a Reasonable Man must upon it have concluded; that *Moses* was assisted by a Power of *greater Force*, and likewise of *greater Goodness*. And not to leave any thing said (how little soever to the purpose) without an Answer, I will adventure to say, That whether he sees it, or not, a difference there is between an Act that shall remain, when others, pretended to be done in opposition, are no more, and are brought to nothing by that

Pag. 17.

which

which they would oppose: This, I say, as to *Moses's Serpent eating up the other Serpents*; of which the Scripture has taken a notice; and for that notice sake, I wish the *Author* had corrected his *Disciple*'s Boldness. And though he may think it requires as *great* a Power to turn Six *Spoonfulls* of Water into Blood, as Six *Quarts*, yet if it had appear'd that this had been attempted by the *Magicians*, and that they had done it in a less, but could not do it in a greater quantity; that which should do the Work in a greater, must, I should think, by a Man of Reason, be acknowledged a greater Power than that which attempted to do farther, but could not. For as our Reason can conclude nothing of the Way and Manner by which the least Thing is done out of the Way of Nature, nor indeed scarcely of many Things that are done in Nature, 'tis by the Success only that any Judgment can be made of the Power; and thence a Man must necessarily judge that which continues to work, greater than that which fails in its Attempt.

But conclude this *Author* will, it seems, between him and his Disciple, upon that which he has said to little purpose hitherto, that there is no difference betwixt *great* and *little* Miracles. I nevertheless must be of another Opinion, having shewn what he has said, to have no Reason in it. As to one of us,

Pag. 17.

us, indeed, we may hope as ſoon, and as eaſily to do a Great Miracle as a little, becauſe we can do neither; and know not but if any Power could aſſiſt us to do a little one, the ſame might aſſiſt us to do a great one: But yet we know not, again, on the other ſide, but we might find in Experience the contrary; that aſſiſting us to do the leſs, perhaps could not aſſiſt us to do a greater; if that might happen to us which has happened to others, (as to the *Magicians* of *Egypt*, for Inſtance, who turned their *Rods into Serpents*, but could not turn *Duſt* into *Lice*) there might be a Power permitted to aſſiſt us to do *great* Things, which much to our ſurprize ſhould be found unable to aſſiſt us in Things of far leſs difficulty. So much difference there is between a Finite and Infinite, between a Limited and an Unlimited Power; and yet even the Finite and Limited Power may be above our comprehenſion, able to do more than we know or underſtand.

This *Author* may ſay as often as he will, "He who can make an Eel, can make a "Dragon, if he pleaſe." This may be, for any thing I know; and with his leave, it may not be for any thing he knows: And if it be ſo, what is it to his Purpoſe? Put the Caſe, the Creator's Infinite Power be required to the one as well as to the other, ſhall it be impoſſible for the Creator to com- Eſſay, p. 18.

muni-

municate of his Power to a Created Being to do the one, but that this Created Being shall have Power to do the other also? But our *Author*, it will be said, is speaking of one that can by his *own Power* do the less, and means that such an one shall be able to do the greater. Truly 'tis well put in by *his own Power*, for he that acts by a Communicated Power, may, without doubt, be enabled to do the one, and not the other, and can do but as he is enabled. I may add to this also, that the Creator's Infinite Power can at any time limit such Natural Powers as he may have given to Created Beings; and consequently, that Power which is so limited, though able to do the greater of it self, if let alone; may not be able to do the less, if restrained within stricter Limits. And thus we say it was with the Devil, who assisted the *Magicians* to the utmost of his Power, or at least to the utmost of his Permission: But when the Almighty God thought fit to controll and put a stop to him, he could do no more: He could not do, nor assist them to do, that which was little, in comparison, to what by his Power and Help they had already done.

But I have passed over a Thing that is allowed and seen; which is, That *Moses* wrought *more* Miracles than the other. I
Pag. 17. must not insinuate that our *Author* would conceal this; which he thus puts home to his

his Disciple, "Sure *more* Miracles will ar-
"gue a greater Power than a *few* will.
"What say you to that?" Why truly the
Disciple, according to the Principles where-
in he has been instructed, is persuaded,
that "*More* Miracles do not argue a *greater* Pag. 18.
"Power than a *few*, but argue indeed a lar-
"ger use, and more frequent exercise of the
"*same Power*. He who works but one Mi-
"racle, has as great a Power as he who has
"wrought two; because he has the *same*,
"though not so long continued, or if you
"will, not so often renewed to him." There
has not as yet been one Word said to prove
that it was *one* and the *same* Power that as-
sisted *Moses*, and that assisted the *Magicians*;
and there is this Evident Reason to the con-
trary, That the *Magicians* wrought in oppo-
sition to *Moses*, and 'tis not to be supposed
that one and the same Power should act con-
trary to it self. Is the Disciple then to im-
pose upon the World first, to make way for
the Master's imposing upon it hereafter?
Let it be shewn first that Men are assisted
only by *One Power* in the working Miracles,
before this be presumed; and this given as
a Reason why *more* Miracles shall not argue
a *greater* Power than *few*, because it is the
same Power. If we could suppose it were
the *same* indeed, the doing *more* Miracles
would only argue a larger use, and more
frequent exercise of the Power; and another

that did only a *few*, might be said to have as great a Power, as having the same, tho' not so long continued, or not so often renewed; yet this would make some difference between the Men too; and it might be reasonable to acknowledge him that appear'd most favoured of this Power, which must be he that is most assisted by it, to have the best Credentials. However, this is not the Case, this is not to be presumed of *Moses* and the *Magicians*, at least not without any Reason given why it should; when there is so evident a Reason in the Case, (which is their opposition to one another) why this should not be presumed, nor in the least thought. Therefore to go on;

The working of *many* Miracles he allows to be "a thing that gives more opportunity for Men to be well assured that their "Senses are not imposed upon, and naturally gains greater Authority." I should have liked this very well, had he not put in —"Yet that is only because more People "are concerned, and come to the knowledge of them." (And further) "For if "they were certainly persuaded that one "was certainly wrought without Fraud, the "seeing more wrought by the same Person, "would give him no greater Authority with "them than he had before." Speak for your self, Sir, not for all the People in the World; some of these will be apt to ask

you

you otherwise, how they shall be so well persuaded that one was certainly wrought without Fraud, without their seeing further Acts wrought by the same Person. And 'tis likely they will say further, That you have spoken nothing to the Case they are upon. They are fully persuaded that *Moses* wrought Miracles without Fraud; they are in some doubt, perhaps, whether the *Magicians* did theirs without Fraud, but they are not able certainly to prove it was only a Delusion, and therefore they must take it as though it were not. And give them a Reason why they may not upon a view of the Contest which was between *Moses* and these *Magicians*, and the Things that came to pass in the Transaction, (namely, that *Moses* wrought *more* Miracles than these, and that these, in what they did attempt, found a stop put to their Power, whereas *Moses* went on with his Wonders) judge and determine from hence, that the Power assisting the one was limited, whilst the Power that assisted the other shew'd it self Omnipotent, and by that appeared to be; and must be deemed accordingly to be the *Finger* of *God*.

But here's a Case put, that 'tis thought must convince every Body: "If a Man "should see his Child raised from the Dead, "would he not as fully believe the Person "who did it, as if he should see the *same* Essay, p. 19.

" *Man* raise also five more Children from the " Dead? " This is a shrewd Case put, because the Instance perhaps, 'tis thought, may be very affecting: It will not, however, so strongly affect, but that *it* shall be seen the Case is not fairly put; whilst this Case, as here put, has reference only to the *same Man*, and whilst supposing him to have raised *one Child from the Dead*, it does not enter into the Supposition of his attempting to *raise more*, and fail in that Attempt. I might besides argue, that the Case is not fairly put in such a Supposition as this, which presumes concerning a Man whose Credit is doubtful, that he does one of the *greatest* Miracles; a Miracle of such a nature, that I do not know any Divine ever pretended it might be done by the Devil, or any of his Agents, and which I am apt to think will never be by good Testimony prov'd to have been done by any but the Lord's True Prophets. However, seeing this may admit of some Argument, I shall not lay any great stress upon this Exception that I might take at his Instance: But admit the Instance, only requiring the Case to be put fairly upon it; that is to say, That as *Moses* and the *Magicians* were several Men acting in opposition one against the other; and as these *Magicians* attempted to do after *Moses*, but failed therein at the last, and could go no further; so let the Case be here

put

put in this Instance, and two different Persons supposed acting in opposition one against the other, and one of them *raising a Child* from the Dead, and after that a second, and thus doing as often as he attempts, or is put upon attempting it; but the other doing it in one Case, and attempting to do the like again, but failing in that Attempt, and never able to do the Thing any more; and then let the *Question* be asked, *Whether a man would as fully believe him that was known thus to fail, as if he had been known to go on in his Power?* Let me moreover ask which of the Two he would rather think and believe to be of God? Him that he should see restrained in his Power, by the other that wrought in opposition to him, or him that appeared to act by a Power unlimited and infinite? Indeed where there was no Opposition, and where there had appeared no Failure, I should believe a Man readily that should raise *one Person from the Dead*, because I should think he might be able to do the like in any Time or Case, but my Opinion must alter, if I knew in Fact of his attempting the same thing, and failing; and if I saw a direct Opposition in so great a Work as this, I should not know what to think, unless I could see some difference in the Powers, in the progress of their Work, by which it might appear whether the one were able to restrain the other.

But why do I argue so long in this Case, as one Man may reason and argue with another? and not rather reprove all this bold Reasoning against God? Let a Scripture be considered, of which our *Author* has himself thought fit to take as much as he found was for his Purpose; whereas had he taken and considered the whole, it might have prevented all this vain and weak Argument, or left it at least to be seen in its proper Colour and Shape. See the Place, *Exod.* 4. 1. where when God was upon sending *Moses* to the *Israelites* in *Ægypt*, we find *Moses* scrupulous, and questioning how he should get to have Credit with this People, and saying, *But behold they will not believe me, but will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee:* And hereupon God bids him cast his *Rod upon the Ground*, and the *Rod* was turned into a *Serpent:* And bid him *put forth his hand* again, and *take it by the Tail*, and when *caught*, it became a *Rod* in his Hand again: And this that they *might believe that the Lord God of their Fathers had appeared unto him.* And the Lord said furthermore unto him, *Put now thine Hand into thy Bosom*; and he did so, and his Hand became *Leprous:* He bid him do it again, and it was *turned as his other Flesh.* Upon which *Moses* is told, that if the *Israelites* would not believe him upon the *first*, they would believe the *Voice of the latter Sign:* And if they should

Essay, p. 9, and 10.

Exod. 4. v. 3.

8.

ſhould not believe theſe *Two Signs*, then is he directed to take of the *Water of the River*, and pour it upon the dry Land, and this ſhould *become Blood*, that they might believe. Ver. 9. And we are further told, that *Moſes* did the *Signs* accordingly *in the ſight of the People*, and the People *believed*. Ver. 30, and 31. If this Scripture be a Proof that the Power of Miracles given to *Moſes*, was deſigned for the Teſtimony of his Miſſion, will it not alſo prove that his ſhewing a *Second* and a *Third Sign* made the Teſtimony the ſtronger, that God appointed his ſhewing one after the other for that very purpoſe, and that it gained him Authority accordingly. Let this Diſputant then conſider whether it be fit for him to argue after the manner he has; whether he better underſtands our Human Nature, than God that formed it; who himſelf ordered his Servant *Moſes* thus to proceed, in ſhewing Sign after Sign to gain him Authority with his People. It is not to be pretended that the Reaſon of this Order was, That the *more People* might come to the knowledge of this his Power; for the Order plainly refers to, and ſuppoſes the ſame Perſons, who ſeeing the *firſt Sign*, would not however *believe nor hearken to the Voice of the firſt Sign*, and who, perhaps, alſo might not believe the *Two Signs*, nor *hearken to his Voice* upon them, without a Third, which he was in that Caſe to ſhew. Ver. 8. Ver. 9. And when *Moſes* came

to make and shew the Signs that God had commanded him, it's said he *gathered together all the Elders of the Children of Israel*, and did the *Signs* in the sight of the People, and the People believed; *i. e.* the several Signs were done one after another, in the sight of the same Persons that saw the first; and so it could not be, that the Miracles might *come to the knowledge of more People*, but for the gaining *the more Authority and Belief* from the repeated Acts of Wonder and Power. And if there were occasion for this proceeding, whilst nothing was done in opposition to *Moses*, how much more afterwards, when he was withstood by the *Magicians*. Let not this Disputant then presume to ask, but let it be accounted Boldness that he has taken upon him to speak after this manner, saying, "What Credit could the "Miracles of *Moses* give him, when the *Ma-* "*gicians* wrought the same in opposition to "his Authority, if *Three* Miracles argue as "great a Power as *Thirty*, and those Three "were attested by the same Senses the Thir- "ty were? 'Tis evident that Supposition is false, and groundless, and prophane; *Three* do not, cannot, in Reason, argue as great a Power as *Thirty*; and the supposing this must imply God himself to have not understood the Human Nature in the Direction that he gave to *Moses*, and in the Power given for executing thereof: It's a Thing, more-

moreover that cannot but be evident to Sense and Reason, That a Power which may have wrought *Three*, and after that is stopt, that it can work *no more*, is not to be deemed as great as that which worketh *Thirty*, and is able to do as many more as it pleaseth, and which by so many Instances hath given us Cause to believe it *boundless* and *unlimited*: And much more in a Competition must this be esteemed the proper and certain means for our judging which is the *Greater*.

But there are "Difficulties in this Mat-"ter, which this our *Author* cannot get "over with so much Ease as other People "do, or rather think they do." He will endeavour therefore to shew us, that we are not got over them, and bring us and himself to a *Dilemma*. Before I consider his Syllogism; I will take the Liberty to say, that his Skill and Art are by no means well employed. 'Tis the best Employment of a Divine's Skill, to clear Difficulties, when others shall propose and object them: But to propose and object to the utmost, and at last say, he can *only promise to do his best to clear what he can of them*; is such a Thing, as hath an *Inuendo* with it, that only the Enemies of Religion can be pleased with. But he thinks to put us hard to it either way; whether we will say, that the Miracles which the Sorcerers did, were

Essay, p. 19, 20

True

True or False? "If True, they were "(says he) wrought by the *Power of God*, "or *of the Devil.*" This must be granted. "If by *the Power of God*, then God "wrought True Miracles to confront the "Authority of *Moses*; whose Authority "he at the same time established by other "True Miracles; and so will be found "acting in opposition to his own Designs. I allow this Argument to have so much strength in it, that because I cannot suppose the All-wise God acting in opposition to his own Designs, I freely take the other side, and believe them wrought by the *Power of the Devil.* But whether they were True or False, I see not that I am concerned to determine as yet; nor that any thing that he has said, will oblige me to determine any thing about it. He will say hereafter perhaps, They must be true or false; they are certainly one or the other. No doubt of it; but what then? If I am not concerned to know or determine which they were, (as I think no Man is); all that we can be concerned for, is, to know *those of God from those of the Devil.* But he goes on: "If by the Power of the Devil; "then can the Devil work *True* Miracles in "opposition to God; (let the word *True* be left out as yet, because he has not brought us to any necessity of allowing that Word to be put in;) "and then how shall

"we

" we come to know which are of God and " which are of the Devil; and consequent- " ly, how shall they attest to the Truth of " any Doctrines, (he should keep close to his Point, and say, how should they attest to the Truth of *Moses*, or *Moses's Doctrine*) " *if* Powers so opposite can work them? (I shall keep him close to the Point in this Expression also; and with his leave put it thus; *When Powers so opposite were seen to work them.*) One would think this should not be so hard a Question now after all, but that a Man of ordinary Capacity might be able to answer it, and say, That which overcame in the Competition, ought doubtless to be acknowledged the Divine Power; even the *Magicians* themselves here acknowledged, and were forced to it by the stop that was put unto them: (But they need not, it seems, had they been so good at Argument as this Gentleman.) " But " on the other hand, (saith our *Author*) if " the Miracles wrought by the Sorcerers " were only Cheats, and meer Illusions of " the Senses; how shall we do to distin- " guish betwixt *True* Miracles and *Appear-* " *ing* ones only; since the Senses, by which " alone we can judge, may be so easily im- " posed upon, as to take *Appearances* for " *true* and *real* Miracles?" I might say, that the more Works we see of this nature, the more Opportunity there is for our co-

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ming at some Certainty in this Case, But though we should not at all times be able to distinguish, so as to determine certainly of such Miracles, whether they are *Real* or *Delusory*; the Matter is not great, so as we can distinguish which *are of God*, and which not: Let the latter sort of Miracles be true, or be Illusions only; what is it to us? it is enough that we know them *not to be of God.* Thus in the Case of the Magicians of *Ægypt* therefore, seeing we know that, whether the Works which they did were *Real* or *Delusory*, a sudden Stop was put to their Power; and this forced them to acknowledge the *finger of God*, the Hand of a Supreme Power over-ruling that by which they acted: What signifies our knowing more therein? 'Tis enough, that as whilst the Contest was depending, there might be observed some Inequality; so that Inequality appeared in the Issue beyond all Contradiction, insomuch that even the *Magicians* themselves gave it on the side of *Moses*, that the Hand of God was with him. Therefore, as upon the whole Matter, I cannot see any Occasion of Suspense or Doubt, that can remain in any Man's mind, as to *Moses*'s having the better in the Contest; so neither do I see any great Difficulties, but what are in a manner already obviated.

Let

Let us now ſee the Things, which this *Author* ſays he will maintain; (for the removing of Difficulties, when none lye in the way.) The (*Firſt*) is, That the Devil himſelf cannot "work a True Miracle independently on "God, or by his own Innate Power; and "this for Reaſons before laid down, *pag.* 6. of his Book. I muſt to this ſay here (tho little concerned to meddle or make with the Poſition) that the Devil might work a Miracle by his *Innate Power*, and yet not be ſaid to do it *independently on God*; for being a Creature, in that reſpect he never can be independent of the Creator, neither can do any thing but by *Permiſſion*, whatſoever his *Natural* Powers are. As this Author therefore confounds theſe together, *independently on God*, and by his *own Innate Power*, I muſt ſay, that all his Reaſons before laid down, conclude nothing to his Purpoſe; for though they would conclude the Devil's Power unable to work Miracles without *God's Permiſſion*, and that the Power of God can at all times *controul his Power*; yet they conclude nothing as concerning the *Natural* Powers of that Evil Spirit: Theſe may be great enough to work Miracles, notwithſtanding his Reaſons; but let them be ever ſo great, this is ſure, the Power of God is above them, and can exert it ſelf above them. God's Creation there-

Eſſay, p. 20.

Eſſay, Pag. 5.

therefore is not left at the Will or Mercy of this Evil Spirit, how great soever his Natural Powers are; nor can this Wicked One controul God in his Will or Empire: And God may make his Use of Miracles, so long as no Power but his can work them *without Controul*, whensoever he shall think fit to put a stop to the Power of the Devil in his working of them. And further (*2dly*,) Whereas this *Author* says, "He is "assured the Devil can impose no *false* Mi-"racles on our Senses, if we exercise them "as we may and should; because it would "be the same thing for God to permit the "Devil to work False and Cheating Mira-"cles, as to let him work True ones. This is all Talk to no purpose, if there be no Absurdity in God's permitting the Devil to work True Miracles; and he has not as yet made it appear, that there is any Absurdity even in this. And be they True therefore or false, 'tis certain there can be no Absurdity, so the Power of God appear and shew it self above that of the Devil, as it did in the Contest between *Moses* and the *Ægyptian Magicians*. And whereas (*3dly*,) This *Author* says, "He believes that when the "Wickedest of Men work Miracles, they "never do it by a Power derived from the "Devil:" I believe otherwise, and for Two Reasons; namely, The evil End and Aim of these in working them, which may well incline

incline the World to attribute all ſuch Works to the Power of the Devil; for that God cannot be ſuppoſed to countenance, much leſs to be the Author of them: And again, Becauſe it is abſurd to think that God ſhould act againſt himſelf and his own Ends. And I have reaſon to think alſo, that ſuch wicked Perſons themſelves may beſt know whoſe Agents they are, and with whom they have a Communication. But whether theſe are apprehenſive or not, the reſt of the World (that hath no Concern in their dark Practices) hath ever been inclined to attribute ſuch ſort of Works to the Power of the Devil: And will think it ſelf to have no Reaſon to alter its Opinion, for fear of *erecting a Power equal and corrival with that of God Almighty*; becauſe it believes the Power of God ſuperior not only to that of all ſuch wicked Men, but alſo of whatſoever wicked Spirit may aſſiſt them. Nor doth the World forget, that *God hath his Ends to ſerve*, in *permitting* very wicked Men to work Miracles *even by the Devil's Power*, and in permitting that Evil Spirit to aſſiſt them with ſuch Power; but thinketh that as God in his Infinite Wiſdom knoweth how to effect, ſo by his Omnipotent Power he can accompliſh his own Ends and Deſigns, even at the ſame time that the Devil and his Inſtruments may endeavour to oppoſe them. This *Third* Propoſition then

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which he is upon, I may now say falls of it self, has not the least Reason to support it. Could he indeed have proved his first Proposition absolutely, *That the Devil himself cannot work Miracles*, this other would have followed unavoidably, That *others cannot by any Power derived from him.* As far as he has proved the *First*, this other I grant must follow. As his Arguments therefore against the Devil's own Power of working Miracles will conclude thus far, That the Devil, whatsoever Power he has, (be it Natural or otherwise) cannot use it when God will controul him, or any other ways than by his Permission ; so will it follow, That all who act by Power derived from him, are under the same Permission and Controul. But as nothing he hath said, concludeth any thing absolutely against the Devil's having a Power ; so neither can it at all follow, but that others may act by a Power derived from him. This Author therefore may well say, "That nothing "that he has said, does hinder him from be-"lieving that God may sometimes use both "wicked Spirits and wicked Men as his In-"struments, and work Miracles by them "both if he pleases." But why is it that we should at all think that God will please to use *wicked Spirits* as *his Instruments* in working Miracles, when his own Power is sufficient for it, and when there are good

Angels

Angels to execute his Will; or that *wicked* Men ſhould be *his Inſtruments* therein, when their Miracles are wrought for *wicked Ends*? Let me make an Inference from the whole, which will be a great deal more to the Purpoſe, namely, That there is nothing he has ſaid, can reaſonably hinder from believing that God may *permit wicked Spirits* to work Miracles, and to uſe *Men* as their *Inſtruments* in working them, himſelf having both the one and the other always under his Power and Controul. And inaſmuch as the Principles upon which this *Author* has gone hitherto, have been ſhewn to have no Reaſon in them, though he may pretend to think himſelf obliged to believe that the *Ægyptian* Sorcerers acted by the *Power of God*; I ſhall however believe, as all the *Jewiſh* and Chriſtian World hath with good reaſon hitherto believed, That they acted by the *Power of the Devil*; which themſelves did as good as acknowledge, when they owned the *Hand of God* to be with *Moſes*, and which the Scripture intimates very plainly, in telling us that they did thoſe Operations by *their Enchantments*. And I think likewiſe that I may endure any Conſequences that this *Author* can faſten upon me, and juſtly charge me with in that reſpect.

Eſſay, Pag. 22.

I need not be concerned with thoſe Queſtions which this *Author* puts to himſelf relating to his own *Hypotheſis*, that being

groundless and false. But lest he should triumph if any thing of his Book be passed over, I shall make some Remarks upon him here also. The (First) Question then that he puts to himself is this, "If these Sorcer-" ers did not believe they could work such " wondrous Changes, how came they to be "called by the King to do them, and how came " they to attempt it? One would be inclined " to think, that their former Successes in this " kind, had prepared the King to expect it, " and embolden'd them to attempt this " great Work." This is indeed a very great and strong Objection against his Hypothesis; for that if these Sorcerers be supposed to have had Communication with Dæmons before, and to have been assisted by them to do strange Works before, and that some knowledge of this must be supposed to have been the Reason of their King's sending for them, as well as of their attempting to act after *Moses*, and therein to oppose him; then all this *Author*'s fine Fancy must fall away to nothing; there will be no reason but to think, that the Dæmons with whom they were familiar, assisted them to the utmost of their Power, as long as till God restrained them; nor would there be any reason for the Sorcerers to think, but that what Works they had done, was by the help of their Familiars; and then their acknowledging the *Finger of God* with *Moses*, when they

they could do no more, would not be from this, that *they had done themselves beyond their Expectation*; (which must rather have increased their Opinion of their *Dæmons*, than otherwise; and could not with the least reason have given them cause to think that the God whom they opposed had assisted them; which is the idle Dream of this *Author*;) but must have been for this reason; That by that stop upon them, they saw the Power with *Moses* was *greater* than that *with them*. What has our Author now to say, to get clear of this? He tells us, "That the *Ægyptians* were, of all Mankind, the most addicted to *Enchantments*, "*Sorceries*, *Predictions*, and all that strange "and idle Trade, of dealing with the "World of *Spirits*, and *Powers invisible*. "And *Moses* being Learned in all the *Learning* of the *Ægyptians*, was, he believes, "accounted a *Magician* also among them. "That therefore *Pharaoh* might think the "Magicians of his Court equal to *Moses*, "and did therefore send for them, to see "what they could do; and that the *Magicians* might believe so too, and thereupon attempt to do as he did: They had "probably heard, that *Moses*'s Rod was "turned into a Serpent before the *Israelites*; "which was before he practised in the "sight of *Pharaoh*; and therefore, when "called by him, they came prepared with "Rods, and with their muttering Incanta-

Essay, p. 23, 24.

Pag. 25.

" tions threw them on the ground, in the " same manner as *Moses* did; and in their " other Performances exactly imitated him. I am apt to think, there is no body would have gone about to deny him any thing of this, and therefore he must hear me tell him, that I doubt it was not for any reason he could think he had to fear, that any body should deny him, that *Moses* might be thought and *accounted* a Magician, as being *bred in the Court of Ægypt*; that he has gone about to prove, that *Moses* in probability was likely to have been *such an one* as they might account him: Perverting what St. *Stephen* says, of his being *learned in all the Wisdom of the Ægyptians*, to a Meaning which the *Adversaries of Religion* would wrest it to; that is to say, that being brought up in the Learning and Sublime Sciences of the *Ægyptians*, he must therefore be supposed acquainted and instructed in those dark Practices which the *Magicians* among them dealt in, for the holding a Communication with Devils. Where this *Author*'s *Disciple* also must put in and suggest; That 'tis to be thought *Moses* differed very little from other *Ægyptian Students*; and the rather, for that it is not at all plain, what Notions *Moses* had of God himself, till God appeared to him at Forty Years of Age. There must be a great deal of Charity, to think this Argument and unworthy Suggestion to be for no other

other Cause, but only to shew it probable, That the *Magicians*, who knew *Moses*'s Education, Masters, Studies and Learning in all the *Ægyptian* Wisdom, might think him like one of themselves: Especially, when this *Author* can indeed make no Use of all this after all; for he allows, this must necessarily follow from it, "That the *Magicians* might think themselves hereupon in "all Points as great Men as *Moses* was, "and might hope to do all that he did. "But he does not see there is any necessity, "that their *antecedent great Performances* "should have disposed the King to expect "they should work Wonders; nor have emboldened them to attempt the doing the "like again, when called upon to do it. A more sensless Inference I never met with, nor ever an Argument made by a Man more directly against himself. For what must make these *Magicians* in this Case and Circumstances (for I agree, that the whole be as he has put it, excepting only the Scandal of *Moses*'s being *really a Magician*; and if that should be allowed him, it would but make still the more against him;) to *think themselves in all Points as great as Moses*, but this; That they believed themselves to have as great Skill in the Art Magick, as they thought 'twas possible for any one else to have? And what should make them *hope to do as he did*, but their attri-

Essay, Pag. 26.

ting what they might have heard of his doing to his Skill in this way, and their thinking that by their Skill they might do the same? So that their Knowledge of what *Moses* did among the *Israelites*, before he practised in the sight of *Pharaoh*; if it be supposed, as he will have it, that they heard thereof; does but the more confirm, that they had an Opinion of their Art, and that they trusted to it in their Attempt. For otherwise, had they known that by their Art nothing of that kind could be done, they could not have hoped to do, and so they would not have come prepared to go about doing Things like to what they had heard of *Moses*. And moreover, if *Pharaoh*'s thinking the *Magicians* of his Court were equal to *Moses*, was that which disposed him to send for them to act against him; what was it that must make him think so, but his Knowledge that Great Things might and had been done by Magick Art; in the which he looked upon these to have as great Skill as any other? It must be this, that must make him think *Moses* no other than a *Magician*, when he practised before him; and that must dispose him to send for those that he thought as great Men as him, which he could not have dreamt his Magicians to be, but from some Experience of their Art. And again, if it were so that the *Ægyptians* were addicted to Enchantments, and Sorceries, and

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Predictions, and the Trade of dealing with Spirits and Powers invisible; 'tis to be supposed that these Magicians, if any, were Men of Skill in that way; These therefore, of all others, could not be thought to have hope to do after *Moses*, if having Knowledge of the Art, they knew no such Works of Wonder could be done by it: These, therefore, were the most unlikely to have attempted it, but upon former Experiments that great Things might be done that way. And as for their Imitation of *Moses*, that can no way argue, that they only *hoped to do* like him, or all that he did; for imitate him they must in the Things he did, to shew *Pharaoh* that their Power was as great as his; but we find they had a peculiar Way of their own to which they *trusted* for the Performance; that is to say, their *Inchantments*. This Author therefore, I think, has sufficiently accounted for the Boldness of their Attempt, but the Issue turns not to the account of his own *Hypothesis*, but directly against it; as it shews that these *Magicians* trusted to their own Art, and to the Correspondence they had with *familiar Spirits*, and to what they had experienc'd of the Help and Power of these, and to their Imagination (though therein they found themselves at last mistaken) that *Moses* acted by the same

Power; and that *Pharaoh* upon what he had heard of this Art, and of Performances that might be done thereby, suspected *Moses* to be a Dealer therein; and therefore sent for others, such as were esteemed to have the greatest Skill in this Way, to oppose him. Which all concludes for this, that the Magicians in their Work were assisted by those *Dæmons* with whom they were familiar before, that these assisted them to their utmost Power, till God restrained and disabled them: The sense of which Restraint forced their Wicked Agents to acknowledge the *Finger of God* in what they could not follow. 'Tis therefore well said of our *Author* (and a good coming off for him it would be, if he could thereby amuse us, to think that he had spoken to his *own Purpose*, when not a Syllable that he has said upon this Point, as yet, tends to it, but to the contrary; as does that which he is going about to say, put upon its true Supposition) namely, "'Tis "no great matter for Men, of a forbidden "Curiosity, ignorant of the Ways of God, "and brought up in a dreadful Superstition "and Persuasion of the Power of Spirits "and Dæmons invisible, to believe they can "do great Things by their Invocation and "Abominable Rites used towards them." But what is the true Reason of this their believing they may do great Things by such Practices? It could not be that they should be

be easily persuaded to think this, if in experience it were found that they could do nothing; it must doubtless be for this, that those Evil Spirits are ready to assist them to their utmost, and that they find them ready in their Use of such Abominable Rites, and have experience of their help in the practice of their Art. " But now, says this *Author*, " how it comes to pass that God permits " them by such wonderful Events to conti- " nue in their *Delusion*, is a Thing not easie " to solve, but yet he will attempt in Answer " to his Second Question; which is, Why " God should work Three great Miracles by " the Hands of *Jannes* and *Jambres*, to con- " front the Authority of *Moses*, which he " established by Miracles, acting, as it were, " in opposition to himself, and his own De- " sign." Truly we are very cunningly drawn in here to a Supposition that the *Delusion* such Wretches are under, is this, Their thinking great Things may be done by the help of Spirits and Dæmons invisible, and that what they do in that Dark Way, is by their help. We own them to be under the *strongest Delusion*, in their forsaking God to go after these, in their Imagination that these help them out of kindness, or can give them any absolute help in time of need, which 'tis to be thought these Malicious Spirits would not, and which they cannot if they would, whenever God shall think fit

Essay, Pag. 27.

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to over-rule them. But nevertheless, surely their *dealing with these Spirits* is not all a Delusion, they are *Devils*, and not *God*, that have to do with them in these Impious and Abominable Rites; these are found by them in their Secret Practices, and Wicked Art, and these give them Assistances somewhat to their Expectation, or they would not continue in such their Ways. It lies upon this *Author* therefore first to prove this his Wild Notion, that it was indeed *God that wrought* those Three Miracles by the *Magicians* of *Ægypt*, before he take the Trouble upon him to account for his so doing. Let him first shew why so absurd a Thing should be thought, as that *God* should act in opposition to himself, and to his own Design; why this should not be an Argument to overthrow his false and utterly groundless *Hypothesis*. Had he done this, he had prepared his Way to account for a Difficulty which the World would have been then concerned with: Whereas now, all his Talk upon that Matter is nothing at all to the purpose; at least it can signifie nothing to *his Purpose*, whatever use it may be of to others, who may apply it *differently*, as he will find I shall the most of it. Now his Answer is this; " I must (says he) in the *first place* " premise, that if no sufficient Reason could " be alledged why God should permit these " Wicked Sorcerers to work Three great

Miracles,

"Miracles, it would not prejudice the Cause "in hand; it would not follow from our "Weakness, that he did not actually permit "them; the Matter of Fact is certain." Right, the Fact is certain; and that it could not be without God's Permission, is as certain; but 'tis no less certain, that *God's Permission*, and *God's Actual Assistance* are two different Things: And if this *Author* cannot give us a Reason why God should act against himself, in opposition to himself and his own Design, it must follow, that these wrought their Works by the Power of Satan, and his Assistance, though by the permission of God. Therefore I must now apply his Words to my Purpose, and say God's permission is plain; for the Fact was certainly done, which it could not have been, without he had permitted it, who doubtless had Power to have hinder'd it: So that if through Weakness I could not alledge a sufficient Reason for that his Permission, nevertheless I should not but think that he permitted it, and that his Ends were wise, and good, and just therein. But still I must hold our *Author* to it, that in reference to the Thing which he has in hand, that is, to his proving it to be God's own Work, if he fail of a Reason why God should be the Agent in it, and act against himself, it must follow, that these Magicians be thought to have acted by the Power of Satan, and by his Assistance, there appearing

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in the Fact, and in the Circumstances thereof, nothing to the contrary, but rather all Things that can be, to conclude this for certain to be the Power they trusted to, and that was on all hands taken to be their Assistance. And our *Author*'s presuming to take the contrary for granted, (by reason of his believing, "That if God had given the "Devil *that Power at large*, no Miracles "could be of use to testifie the Mission of "his Prophets),"must appear to be no other than a groundless Presumption of his own Wild Fancy: For that this very Instance shews, God did not give the Devil a *Power at large*, but the contrary; that is to say, that it was no farther than God's permission, it was under his Restraint and Controul, and it was stopt so soon as God was pleased to restrain it. And whereas this *Author* says (*Secondly*) "We may conjecture "that God might permit these Sorcerers to "work Three Miracles, the better to con-"vince them that there was a Power supe-"rior to all others, to that of Nature, and "whatever Spirits or Dæmons they had be-"fore trusted to, or thought themselves as-"sisted by." (I take hold of these his Words, and apply them to my Purpose, adding) —when they should find a stop given after this to all their Skill, Art and Power, and to the Power of these Spirits to which they trusted, and by which they thought

thought they might be assisted, and whose help they had formerly found, and had now met with in their way of Enchantments, but which they now saw so much under a Constraint, that it could no longer help them. And having thus taken hold of his Words for my purpose, I shall now utterly debar him from making any use of them to his own: For whereas he says farther, "We may well believe they never had "wrought such Miracles before, if any at "all; and this Power they might find to be "the same that assisted *Moses*, &c." I must say to him, that all this is *gratis Dictum* on his side, all the Reason is on ours: We may well believe they knew great Things might be done by their Art, and had had experience thereof, or else they never would have attempted it now; these of all Men would never have attempted it, who had Skill and Experience in the Art, if they had not known that Things of this nature might be done by it, or had found before, that nothing could be done by it. We may well likewise further think and believe that they never could find *this Power* that helped them, to be the same that assisted *Moses*; for that as they trusted to find it, so they met with it in their own Way of Inchantments, they found it helped them greatly to oppose him, they found it controuled by the Power assisting him: And if they had found that which

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was with them to be the same with his, they had found that which was for their own turn, and for *Pharaoh*'s, whom they endeavoured to serve in their Work; but perceiving by all these Reasons evident in the Fact and whole Transaction, that *Moses* was assisted by a Superior Power, which they found to be superior, they hereupon conclude, that this Power was able to deliver the *Hebrews* out of *Pharaoh*'s Hand, notwithstanding what he, or they for him could do, and tell him it was the *Finger of God*. Whereupon, though this *Author* is pleased to say, That "he does not find there is any thing "hard or absurd, in supposing these Magi-" cians convinced *by the Miracles they wrought* " *themselves*, of a Divine Power superior to " any they had tried or known before; and " that this Power was the same by whose " assistance *Moses* wrought his Miracles: He must give me leave to say that I find it most ridiculous and absurd, and hard to suppose any such thing. It is very ridiculous and monstruously absurd to suppose, they should think the Power with them to be the same with that of *Moses*, when as it helped them so greatly to oppose him; it's unlikely altogether they should think ever the better of the Power with *Moses* for their own doing Works beyond their expectation; they might hence think much the better of the Power which they ap-

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ply'd to for Assistance, but they could very hardly think the Power which they opposed, would help and assist them, when it rather should in reason be thought it would put them to confusion, for their insolent attempt against it, as well as for the promoting its own end and design. And if by the *Miracles they wrought themselves* they had had any conviction, on the account of their being above their own expectation, why were they not convinced at the First, which was as great and difficult a work to Reason, and consequently as much above their expectation in Reason as any of the following? (This is our *Author*'s own Argument, and if he considers, he will find it to hold strongly against himself, though very weak in *his use* of it, as will appear by and by.) Why had they neither Conviction in the Second at least, nor ever yet in the Third; that is to say, why had they not Conviction in any nor in all the Works which they wrought? but at last came to have Conviction in an Attempt wherein they failed. Surely the *Miracles which they wrought themselves*, and that which they could *not work*, are different things; and if they were not convinced by the one, but were convinced when they came to the other, then it was not by *what they did themselves*, but by what *they could not do*, that they came to be convinced of

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a *Divine Power superiour* to what they had known before: and this could not make them to think that the Power that had assisted them was the *same* by whose assistance *Moses* wrought his Miracles; but quite the contrary, that it was *not the same*, for that *his* was plainly *Superiour* to it. And hereupon when they came to turn the *Dust into Lice* as *Moses* had done, and found they were not able to do it, they cry'd out that this was the *Finger of God.* I need not say, what he would draw me in to say, *viz.* "That these *Magicians* did not 'till "now see or believe the Hand of God was "with *Moses*, but that what he did "came to pass by Art Magick, or they "knew not how." I think them wicked enough to have endeavour'd to withstand *Moses*, as well as the Spirits with which they were in Confederacy malicious enough to have helped them to oppose him to the uttermost, though both had known God's Power to have been with him; and that therefore 'twas *Constraint* only that made them acknowledge the *Finger of God*, when they could now do *no more*; and not any good Will in them to own it upon the first cause or ground they saw of Conviction. And therefore I must say, that whether they had not, or might not have had some Conviction before concerning the Power with *Moses*, is a thing needless to be either deter-

determined or examin'd. Here however, and this is enough, they were forced to acknowledge the *Hand of God*; and this from the stop put unto their Power, that when with their *Inchantments* they tried to *bring forth Lice*, they *could not* do it.

But against this, our *Author* brings a mighty Objection, Saying, "A little Reason and Observation might suffice to "shew that the Hand of God was full as "great in turning *Rods* into *Serpents*; "*Water* into *Blood*, and bringing up *Frogs* "upon the Land, as in turning *Dust* into "*Lice*, whose Matter may seem much "more prepared for such a Change, than "that of the other Bodies for the Changes "which they underwent: Can any one "imagine there is more appearing Difficul-"ty in turning Dust into Lice, than a "little Wand into a Serpent? Or can one "find, that the first should shew the Finger "of God visible, and the latter require "no such great Power to effect it?" Notably Argued; but that there is a mistake in a Supposition or two that he goes upon; which when rectified, it will appear that his whole Argument is nothing at all to the purpose. Where does he find, that the *Magicians* accounted it a Work of greater difficulty, to turn *Dust into Lice* than to do the other? This no where appears, but ra-

Essay, Pag. 29.

ther the contrary, in their attempting to do this as they did the former. But after they had attempted to do this with their Inchantments, but could not, then the Magicians say, This is the *Finger of God.* But how if they should not say it in respect of any Difficulty that they apprehended in *this Work*, more than in any of the other! but in respect of a *Stop* which they found put unto the *Power assisting*, which they thought might have done this Work as well as the other, but was so restrained as it could not. It is plain to any Man's Reason, that these Magicians must say what they did in acknowledgment of God's Power, upon one or other, or both of these accounts. Whether upon both or upon one of these accounts alone, or upon which of the two absolutely, I will not pretend to say. But if our *Author* thinks he has cut us off from thinking that they spake in reference to the one, let him consider that he has not said any thing to cut us off from thinking that it was in reference to the other. So that conceiving these *Magicians* to have Common Sense and Reason, if we suppose it could not be the *Difficulty* of this Work above the other, that must make them to say, *The Finger of God was therein*; we must and will believe it was from *the stop they found put unto their Power*: And if this were the Case, it would appear so much the more evidently

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in this, that the Magicians were restrained from doing that which to Reason might seem *less difficult* than what they had done before: This might more convince them that the Power by which *they had been assisted* was limited and restrained, whereas *Moses* appeared to act by a Superior Power able to controul theirs, but it self not controulable; which therefore could not be deny'd to be the Power of the *Great God.* I will therefore go on (in this *Author*'s Words) to say, That now was the Time they went to *Pharaoh* to tell him, That the God who wrought these Miracles (not *with themselves*, for it does not appear that they said to *Pharaoh* any thing of that nature, but) with *Moses*, was certainly the most powerful of all Beings; and therefore that his Servant *Moses* must be hearkened to, and the *Hebrews* suffered to depart. After they were sufficiently convinced themselves, that the Power by which these Miracles were wrought, was able to do what he pleased; (that is to say, the Power with *Moses*; for as to that with themselves, they had found it unable, and *Pharaoh* had seen it so to be, and it had been a vain Thing to tell him otherwise) they endeavoured to persuade the King, who yet hearkened not unto them. But we have Argument upon Argument from our *Author*, still more to puzzle us; "They found indeed (says he) that they

" could work no more Miracles; were they " thereby convinced that these they had al- "ready wrought, were not wrought by God? They might, I will adventure to say, if they knew it not before, in that they saw the Power that had assisted them, disabled; and yet, it may be, they knew before, what their own Help was; yet whether they did or no, is nothing, I am sure, to this *Author*'s Purpose, nor mine, as to the Point in hand. But he has a great Inference to make from it, namely, " Then must they also think (says he) " that *Moses*'s Miracles were no " better than their own, and consequently " were not *wrought by God*." Let us put this into a *Syllogism*; If the Magicians *by their not being able to work any more Miracles, were thereby* convinced that those they had already wrought, were not *wrought by God*; then must they think that those of *Moses* were no better than their own. I do not see the least appearance of a Reason in the *Supposition*, to infer the Consequence from, yet I do think he aims at something that is not exprest in his Words, and I take it to be this; — Then might the Magicians think, as to *the Works themselves*, theirs and his, they were all alike. And if this be his Meaning, I will own the Inference thus far to be good; but then I must still utterly deny his farther Consequence; that is to say, That hence they might conclude his to be *no more*

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wrought by God than theirs was; for their not being able to go on, and his ſtill going on, muſt have ſhewn them a Difference between the Powers that wrought them; that theirs were wrought by the Power that was ſtopped, his by the Power that went on: And therefore they could not poſſibly make the ſame Concluſion as to the *Power working*, wherein there appeared a manifeſt difference, as they might in reference to the *Works themſelves*; wherein, as to thoſe that had been done by both, a Difference might not ſo perfectly appear. But this Author goes on further, ſaying, "If they had ſeen any "great difference betwixt the Miracles of "*Moſes*, and their own, they would have "ſeen at firſt that *the Finger of God* was in "it." And how does this *Author* know, but that they might ſee it at the firſt? Has this *Author* ſo great an Opinion of their Honeſty, as to think that then they would have owned it? I muſt freely own, that I think they would conceal it as long as they could conceal it, as they did; like their Maſter, whoſe Agents they were, oppoſe till they could oppoſe no longer. However, ſhould we grant this *Author* that theſe Wicked Men had ſomething of Honeſty, and might ſee no difference at the firſt, ſince they do not tell us of any they obſerved; we muſt not be drawn in to allow, "that they might "well hereupon conclude they were both "wrought Eſſay, p. 31.

" wrought by the same Power, and came " to acquaint the King with it." For as to that which he calls their coming *to acquaint the King*, (which is a very improper Expression concerning Actions which were done in presence, and in the sight of the King; and I doubt is used only to amuse the Reader with something strange and uncouth); this was not done in the Time that he can pretend there was no Difference seen, but after the Difference appeared so plain, that it was no longer to be concealed: And had they took upon them to conclude that *Moses* wrought by the *same Power* as they, whilst their Works were the same, and no difference had appeared, the Thing had been to *Pharaoh's* Mind, it was what he would have had, and 'twould have answered the Expectation he had in them; and must have baffled the Design of *Moses*, had the Transaction here ended: But the Proceeding going on, and these being stopped in their Work, it is not to be pretended, that at their speaking as they did to the King, they saw no difference, and might thereupon conclude that *his Works* were wrought by the *same Power* as *theirs*; for there was a difference that was now seen by all the Spectators, as well as found by them; and therefore this could not be, neither was it so much as pretended that their Power and his were the same; but what they say is of his only,

only, *This is the Finger of God.* Ay, but (ſays our *Author*) " When they ſay —*This* " *is the Finger of God*, I would not under- " ſtand them to mean, this turning *Duſt in-* " *to Lice*, is the Finger of God, in *contra-* " *diction* to the other *foregoing* Miracles, as " if they ſhew'd no ſuch Finger or Power of " God. " Nor I neither truly; for that it muſt be concluded, that one and the ſame Power aſſiſted *Moſes* all along; as the *Magicians* there fore were now forced to own, that the Power with *Moſes* was that of God: I that think 'em to have little *Honeſty*, cannot but imagine 'em to have more *Senſe* however, than to go about to ſpeak that they did of this Action, as to the *Finger of God* appearing in it, in *contradiction* to the other *foregoing* Works of *Moſes*: Or, if they had gone about to ſay ſo fooliſh a Thing, it muſt have been confuted by the Reaſon of all Mankind, who would naturally believe that the ſame Power was with *Moſes* in one as in the other. Eſſay, Pag 31.

I will here again take this *Author*'s Words, and ſay; " I imagine then that God permit- " ted theſe Enchanters to work ſome Mira- " cles, in order to convince them of his Al- " mighty Power; and cannot tell how the " Evidence could be reſiſted, which this " Tranſaction gave of the Omnipotent " Power of God: And I think their Diſap- " pointment in attempting the *Fourth* Eſſay, Pag. 31.

"Miracle was that which convinced them." ——Of what? that the *foregoing* ones that they wrought could not be wrought by Art *Magick*? (as this *Author* thinks). No such matter, for as to what *themselves* had done, they knew by what Power they attempted it, and had no Reason but to think they did it by the same: But of this then it must be, ——That seeing they could not follow *Moses* in his *Doings*, *his Power* was not as *their Power*, but was different from, and superior to it. But this *Author* has more Stuff still; "If it might be supposed of "their own foregoing Works, that they "might have been done by Art *Magick*, "they might have still gone on." They did attempt to go on, says the *Scripture*, with their Inchantments, but could not. But he will say again, "There was nothing "to deter them more from undertaking this, "of *turning Dust into Lice*, than from any of "the former." 'Tis supposed so; for the *Magicians* were not deterred from undertaking it, they did try their Enchantments in this, as in former Cases, but yet could not do it. But our *Author* will still offer at something, tho' he knows not what, nor considers the Consequence. —"But the being stopped "(he says) might only convince them, that "the Power which had hitherto assisted "them, *would* no longer do it." Very fine; might it not also convince them, that

that it *could* no longer do it? The Scripture ſays, the Magicians attempted by their *Enchantments*, *and could not do it.* Will he dare to ſuggeſt, that this came to paſs only becauſe the Power aſſiſting them thought it ſelf to have done enough, and *would do no more*: Then the Concluſion might have been the quite contrary to what it was: The Magicians might have denied with pretence enough, what they were forced to confeſs. And that they were forced to the Confeſſion they did make, I take to be plain enough to the World, from this; that they *ſtood before Moſes* afterwards in his other Works, with *no good deſign* it muſt be thought, when the Plague of the *Boils* ſeized them, as well as the reſt of the *Ægyptians*, *Exod.* 9. 11. As alſo from their *Attempt* to do that, which they failed in. This doth neceſſarily ſhew, that there was *no Will* wanting in them to have continued the Oppoſition. And there is beſides all this, another Thing that may give us cauſe to think that there was no want of Will in the *Power aſſiſting them*; which is, its aſſiſting them at firſt in the Work. This even the *Magicians* themſelves muſt think to be done in their favour, and to give countenance to them and their Art; and if ſo, why might they not with reaſon think, it would have been continued? And as it failed them, they muſt think it was, be-

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cause it *could no* longer help them. And even according to their Principles as *Magicians*, they must think this; that Art pretending to a *Power* over, as well as to a *Communication* with the *Spirits*: (Not that in Reason, indeed, any Man can well think that there should be any thing in the Art to make these subject to it; but yet by the Devil's Subtilty, and feigning himself subject to their detestable Rites and Incantations, 'tis sufficiently known that the Men of Skill in that Wicked Art pretend, and are soon deluded to think, they have a Power over their Familiars by their Incantations; which is the cause of their constant use of them, when they have an occasion or desire for their Aid.) Here therefore, as their *Inchantments* were used, and they found not help to their Desire; they could not attribute it to any Defect in their Art, for they found it to prevail already in the beginning of this Transaction; nor to want of Will in the Powers they dealt with, for these they found to be present with them; it must therefore in all Reason be imputed to some want *of Power* in their Assistance; and if they could not give account to themselves why these should want Power from any Difficulty that they could see in the Work, they must ascribe it to some stop which must be thought to be given by the Power which they were then opposing. I forbear to urge upon our *Author*

thor here the Consequences of his Rash Suggestion; I content my self to have shewn sufficient Reason that there could be nothing of Truth in it: and shall only add, That whereas the Power had assisted them, if it *would not* have gone on, if it had not had a *Will* to go on, 'tis to be thought it would have suggested as much to its Agents, that these might not have been baffled in their Attempt; and as it did not this, 'tis to be thought these Powers not proceeding with them, was not that it *would* not, but that it *could* not. And whether it indeed would not, or whether it could not, all Men that should ever hear of the Competition, and have either Common Understanding, or Common Honesty, will say, and will have Reason to say, if the *Magicians* had not owned their Defect, and much more as they have themselves owned it, let the Power that prevailed be acknowledged to be the *Finger of God.*

Here is the Place for me to take notice and observe to this our *Author*, that as his *Hypothesis* hath appeared to be a Supposition for which there is no manner of ground, so that which he offers as Reason to account for it, is in it self an Absurdity: For how can it in Reason be thought that *God should himself work*, or help the *Magicians* to work Three Miracles, to *convince them* that there was a Power superior to that of Nature, or whatever

ever Spirits or Dæmons they had before trusted to? How is it possible, that this should be a *Means* of convincing them? Could their being *enabled* to do great Things in the *way of their Art*, convince them that their *Art* could do *nothing*? Could their *finding themselves* to have so great help, when they sought for it of the *Spirits* which they trusted to, and had communication with, be a Conviction to them that *these* had *no Power*? Or could it convince them of a Power *Superior* to these, whilst they found *themselves* assisted to do all that the *other* did? If he will say, there was a Superior Power found, when they were no farther assisted; 'tis granted; but then it was by the *Stop* upon *themselves*, and by their seeing no such Stop upon *Moses*: which is not our *Author's* Hypothesis; in which respect the Absurdity still remains. For Reason must think, that if there were no Power in Nature for any Works of this kind, the Works of *Moses* of *themselves* must have been the best Conviction, that a Power Superior to Nature was then acting: Much better, than if these, who endeavour'd by their Art and Skill to do like him, should find themselves to do it they knew not how. And if wicked Spirits had *no Power really* for Things of this kind, the best Confutation (so far as Reason can judge) had been, for *their A-*

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gents to have found *no Assistance.* And yet as the Case was otherwise in fact, as the *Magicians* had dealt with *Spirits* and *Powers* invisible, and had before *experienced* ('tis probable) their Help in many Cases, and found Success in *their Art* for obtaining this their Help; thus the most effectual Way of shewing, that the *Power* of *Moses* was not as *their Power*, and that there was a Power *Superior* to all those *Spirits*, with which the *Magicians* held a Correspondence, seems to be that Course which was taken; namely, That the *Magicians* should find their Art to prevail as usually, to make those Dæmons they dealt with, present to them as at other times; that those Spirits should be also permitted to shew and exert their Power in Assistance of their Agents, but that their Agents and they should be suddenly stopped together; by which, even those that dealt with them, should be forced to confess the *Power of God* with *Moses*, which had shewn it self thus Superior.

But it seems it must be remembred, that our *Author* calls *all this* but a Conjecture. If by *all this*, he means his singular Notion, and all that he has said upon it, concerning the Enchanters doing *their Works* by the *Power of God*, as well as *Moses* his: I would be glad, for our *Author*'s sake, it were offered as no other; because it is so exceeding weak, that I am ashamed for him, Essay, p. 33.

him, that it has been ever offered to the World; much more, that he should for the sake of so absurd a Notion, set himself as he has done to contradict the far better Opinions of others before him; even to the hazard of Revealed Religion, as he has attempted to render questionable the chief received Evidences thereof. But if he means *this* only to be Conjecture and Guess, which he had offered for the Reason of God's suffering these Enchanters to work Three Miracles; namely, That they might be convinced of his Almighty Power and Superiority over all the Laws of Nature, and over whatever Spirits or Dæmons these Enchanters had trusted to before: I think the Conjecture as to the main so well grounded, that he need not have made an Apology for his guessing so well, had he used it to account for a better *Hypothesis*. I shall allow him however to abide under the Shelter which he has made for himself, by his calling *all this but a Conjecture*; for he has need enough of it; and all the harm I wish him, is, that he may go off well.

As for his other *Conjecture*, That God might permit these Sorcerers to work Three Miracles, to harden *Pharaoh*'s Heart, and make him still more obstinate in his Resistance and Refusal to let the People go: I think it to be well grounded, if designed only to account for God's *Permission*; but can-

cannot think it would account for *God's being himself* actually an *Agent* in assisting the *Magicians*. However, I thank this *Author* for so explaining himself upon it, as to let us know that his meaning is, that these Miracles were the *Opportunities* of shewing *Pharaoh's* Heart intolerably hardened, who would not be moved by them. Which, if understood in reference to the whole Transaction, is a Thing that I readily agree in. That is to say, God did not permit the *Sorcerers to work Miracles*, that their so doing might *harden Pharaoh's* Heart; but he permitted them to do these Things in Opposition to *Moses*, that by the sudden Disabling of *their* Power, the Power of God with *Moses*, and the Superiority thereof might more evidently appear; which, as it carried the greater Convicton with it, the more inexcusable must *Pharaoh* thence be, in his hardening himself against it. This I take to be the Thing that the Scripture intimates in the notice it has taken, that even when the *Magicians* told him, *This was the finger of God*; nevertheless *Pharaoh's heart was hardened*, and *he hearkened not unto them*, *Exod.* 8. 19. The Descant of our *Author* upon this Text, is altogether trifling. "When, he says, *Pharaoh* was neither mo- "ved at the Miracles which these *Magici-* "*ans* wrought, nor at the Confession they "made, that they (*i. e.* their *own* Mira-

Essay, Pag. 38.

Essay, Pag. 39.

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" cles as well as *Moses*'s) were wrought by " the finger of God, and the Stop they " found to their working any more." For I cannot see truly, how he should be moved at all by their Miracles in opposition to *Moses*; which would rather cause him to suspend, than make him give credit to *Moses*: And had they pretended to tell *Pharaoh*, that their *own* Works as well as *Moses*'s were by the *Power of God*; it must have made the whole a Ridiculous Scene to him; for that he might have objected, their known Inchantments and Art Magick, and their Stop must have been in that case the greatest Reason for him not to have believed them, if they had gone about to pretend, that their Works and *Moses*'s were wrought by one and the same Power. But as the Powers were opposite, and engaged one against the other, *Pharaoh* knowing by what Art and Power his *Magicians* acted, and finding them put to the worst; wherein the Power of *Moses* appearing to be the finger of God, even his Opposers being Judges: These Things must indeed shew *Pharaoh*'s *Hardness* and Obstinacy to be very great.

But now we are brought back to this *Author*'s *First* and great Objection, which appears now in its full Force; namely, " *Pharaoh* could not be so much condemned for " not being convinced by the Miracles he

Essay, Pag. 40.

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"saw wrought, by reason he saw them "wrought in Opposition to each other. "Why is *Moses* to be believed more for his "Miracles, than the Magicians for theirs? To this our *Author* is pleased to give a slight Answer, leaving room for himself to make a Reply with something of Amusement. The Answer he gives, is,——"Because the "*Magicians* came themselves to the King, "and confessed that *Moses* did his Miracles "by the finger of God." Had another Man been to give the Answer, he would have put in—— And for that these *Magicians* were forced to this Confession, by being foiled in their utmost Attempts; and for that *Pharaoh* himself had seen the Competition, and the Issue thereof: So that there was more than the *Magicians* Saying in the Case; his own Eyes had seen these do their utmost to withstand and oppose the Power that vanquished them. But observe the Reply which this *Author*, in the Person of his *Scholar*, makes upon himself.—"Did "they at the same time confess, that they "themselves had but cozened and imposed "upon *Pharaoh* and his Court, and had in-"deed wrought no Miracles all the while "he thought they had? This Ingenuity "might have had some good Effect upon "him." Truly this *Author's Ingenuity* is very little, in his going about to inveigle us to believe his absurd Notion, of the *Ma-*

Pag. 41.

Essay, Pag. 41.

gicians Working by the *Power of God*, from hence, *That they did not tell* Pharaoh *that they had cozened him!* 'Tis possible, all might be a Delusion of the Devil's, and the *Magicians themselves* know no more of it than *Pharaoh*. On the other hand, if the Miracles be thought true, they could not say they had *cozened him*; they said all needful to be said, when they told him, that the *Hand of God* was with *Moses*; it was easy enough for him to think the rest: That is, That if *their* Works might seem equal to *Moses*'s, they were done by another Hand that was inferior to that with *Moses*, and that could not help him to withstand the Power of God.

This *Author* goes yet farther on with his Objection: "If there were true Miracles "on both sides, he must then believe nei-"ther. To which the best Answer he can think on, he says, is this; *viz.* "That the Magici-"ans did as good as confess, that the Mira-"cles they had *themselves* wrought, were "wrought by the Power of the same God, "and to the same Intent that *Moses*'s were. For which he gives this Reason: "That "though the *Magicians* came with wicked "Dispositions to set themselves against *Mo-"ses*, and used the utmost of their wicked "Art for that purpose, to do thereby Works "equal to those of *Moses*, and might at first "think they did them by the Assistance of

Essay, Pag. 42.

"Dæ-

"Dæmons; yet afterwards they might "come to ſee and know that it was not "ſo; but that they had acted by the ſame "Power that *Moſes* did." It is as eaſily ſaid, they might not know any thing of this nature; and with a great deal of Reaſon on this ſide may it be ſaid, that they did not apprehend any ſuch Thing in the leaſt; for they never applied themſelves to the God of *Moſes*, nor attempted any thing in his Name; but all they did was in oppoſition to him: How then, or for what reaſon ſhould they think he wrought with them?

This *Author* further obſerves, "The King "would now hearken no more to them "than to *Moſes*." And why ſhould he? ſays his *Scholar*: Methinks they deſerved *Equal Credit*. "*So they did*, ſays the *In-* "*ſtructor*: He ſhould have believed them "*both* atteſting the ſame Truth by Miracles "much alike; namely, That *Moſes* was "ſent of God, and wrought Miracles to "atteſt his Miſſion, and was to be hearkened to." And now the *Scholar* muſt applaud the *New Turn* given to this Affair, which has made the Magicians Miracles to atteſt the Truth of *Moſes*'s Miſſion, and the King more faulty for not *believing* what his own Enchanters ſaid to him. A Notable Turn it is; come but another Man of Skill after him, and he may bid fair to the Turn-

Eſſay, Pag. 43.

ing of Religion out of the World. These things, it seems, must be taken for granted; namely, The *Magicians* and *Moses* deserved *Equal Credit*; their Miracles were alike; they were wrought by one and the same Power. *Pharaoh* knew both one and the other to be True Miracles: But now he saw them wrought in Opposition one to the other; which then must he believe? Neither, it seems; had not the Magicians come over to *Moses*'s side, and said, they had found 'twas *Moses*'s *God* that helped *them* to work *their Miracles* also; and as they did this in effect, he must believe both. But, is not *Pharaoh*, and any one else for him, at liberty to ask the *Magicians* a Reason, Why he is to believe this their Story; and how themselves came to find this that they tell him? seeing that they never applied themselves to the *God* of *Moses*, nor attempted any thing in his Name; and what they did, was by him seen to be done by their Application to a contrary Power; and they did not tell him any thing of this, whilst they were assisted by the Power they now pretend to be helped by: They themselves tried to do more, as thinking themselves to have *another's help*; they likewise did what they did in *opposing* this Power, which they now would pretend favour'd them. And can they think so absurdly, or if they do, what reason can they shew him to be-

believe a Thing ſo abſurd, as that the Power which they went about to *oppoſe*, ſhould aſſiſt them againſt it ſelf? All theſe things muſt render that which they now ſay, incredible. When this *Author* ſhall ſatisfy the World as to theſe Objections, and effectually prevent others of the like kind, that may be made; (and would, he muſt think, be made on the behalf of Atheiſm and Infidelity; when it ſhould be once perceived, that his Notions had found footing, and were believed in the World:) then I ſhall think him free of that blame, which I muſt now lay him under, for his unaccountable Raſhneſs.

Surely 'tis a very ſtrange unaccountable thing, when Religion is at ſtake, for a Man to talk ſo weakly in its Defence, as to lay himſelf and that open, to be wounded by every Adverſary; and all this in fondneſs to a vain inſignificant Notion, that lyes at the *bottom of his Heart* forſooth: A Notion for which there is no ground, and in which there is no ſenſe; and which is ſo far from being a help to him to anſwer the grand Objection that he is ſcared at, that it infinitely more perplexes the Cauſe he would defend. How eaſily in the old way is that mighty Objection anſwered! *Both* wrought *Miracles*; (let any one that will, ſuppoſe them True.) Theſe Miracles were wrought in Competition: By the Competition it

was intended to find out, in which the *Great God* had an hand. The one Side was vanquished in the Trial, and could do no more; and being thus vanquished, acknowledgeth the Superior Power. The Question is, Whether the Stander-by is to believe neither of these, for that their Works that he saw at the first seem to be equal and alike: or, Whether he has reason to believe him that he saw to be Superior in the end, and which was so, even its Adversaries and Opposers being Judges? I believe, no man of common Sense would pretend to say, *Neither* is to be believed; for that to his Apprehension their first Actions seemed much alike: This might be a Reason to keep a Man in suspense a while indeed, till a Difference and Inequality should some way or other appear; but this Inequality appearing to his own Senses in the issue of the Transaction, and being yielded to by that which withstood as long as it could make Opposition; a Rational Man, I am perswaded, must presently acknowledge and give credit to that which he saw to be the Superior, and which he heard even its Adversaries own to be the *Power of God.*

But there are a few Questions which now our *Author* has to put to the World, which has hitherto been all along of Opinion, that the *Ægyptian* Magicians wrought their Miracles by the *Power of the Devil*; where-

by

by he is in hopes to *undeceive* it, or leave it in perplexity. And the Questions to be asked of the World are these: "(1.) Whether it does not think that the *finger of God* was as much seen, in *Moses*'s turning the *Rod* into a *Serpent*, the *Waters* into *Blood*, and bringing *Frogs* upon the Land; as in turning the *Dust* into *Lice*? A shrewd Question this, but that I do not think any Man in the World is concerned to answer it. And if a Man should answer to this *Author*'s Mind, that turning the Dust into Lice was in his Opinion the most easy of all the Four, there would be no Advantage to this *Author's Hypothesis* from it: As long as the same Man might say, that though to his thinking, the *finger of God* would least have appeared in that of all the Four, if they were to be considered single, and compared one with the other; yet considering the Magicians Power was *here stopped*, this made it so much the more visible to him, that the *Hand of God* was with *Moses* in the whole Action; and that the Power assisting the *Magicians* was under its Restraint and Controul; seeing it could not proceed to do a Thing to appearance more easy than what it had done, so soon as the opposite Power restrained it. The (2*d.*) Question to be asked of the World, is, "Whether the Enchanters did not think "that they themselves had turned their *Rods* "into

Essay, p. 46, 47.

" into Serpents, *&c.* as certainly as *Moses* " had done? And consequently, Whether " they did not see the *Finger* of God as " much in their own Works, as in those of *Moses*?" Truly 'tis hard to say what the *Enchanters* thought, neither do I know how the World should come at any certainty about their Thoughts; guess, however, we may; and for once, to oblige our *Author*, I will guess according as I know he would have me, That the *Enchanters* might think that they had turned the Rods into Serpents, *&c.* as certainly as *Moses* had done (though all the while the Magicians might be mistaken and deceived, as perhaps their Real Thoughts were not what I have guessed them.) What will I say then to the Question that's asked, with the "Whether they " did not consequently see the Finger of God " as much in their own Works as in those " of *Moses*?" I answer here, That I have several Reasons to make me think, notwithstanding, that they could see nothing of the *Finger of God* in their own, whatsoever they might see in *Moses's* Works; namely, that they had Reason to apprehend what Power assisted *themselves*, because they knew to whom they had applied; but of the Power of *Moses* they must remain in some doubt, because they knew not to whom he applied, and their Design was to judge of it by the Tryal of its Ability, whether it could do more

more than that with them. Whilst therefore the Works were alike, and the Transaction not yet ended, they could not determine that *Moses*'s Power was the same with theirs, because they had not yet seen the end of his Work; and give another Decision, we may be sure they would not, whatever they might think, because they were engaged in opposing him. It may be therefore they saw not the Finger of God in *Moses*'s Works, until a stop was put to their *own* Power: And when this stop was put to them, they had no manner of Reason to see it in their *own* Works: In *Moses*'s they must acknowledge it, because he proceeded; with themselves they could not pretend it was, because they could not proceed. In looking back and comparing the Works wherein they were equal, they could but think that from thence they might have imagined that *Moses* had been but like one of them, if he could have gone no farther than they could follow him; but now that they had seen him do what their Power could not assist them to do, they must acknowledge his to be the Power of God; but ground to think that *theirs* was the *same* Power, they could certainly have none.

A (*Third*) Question is now to be asked; namely, "Whether the Enchanters would "have attempted to *turn Dust into Lice* (as "it is plain they did attempt) if they had "thought

" thought the *Finger* of God more necessary " to perform that Miracle, than the Three " foregoing ones ? " A Wise Question to be asked of the World, that has hitherto thought the Enchanters to have done what they did by *the Power of the Devil.* No doubt the World will own that they made the Attempt, as thinking their own Power, or that at least which hitherto had assisted them, could have done this also. How then did the *Finger of God* appear to them in this, he'll say, if it was not thought that the Finger of God was more necessary to perform this than the other ? Even this would be no very puzzling Question, methinks, to the World. This is to be said to it, That *the Finger of God* might not appear to them in *Moses*'s doing this more than any other of his foregoing Works, until *after* they made an *Attempt* to do the like with their *Enchantments*, but *could not* ; and 'tis probable, if it had appeared before therein, they would not have made an Attempt to their own Shame ; In their Disappointment therefore it was that the *Finger* of God appeared, as this discovered plainly the *Power* by which *Moses*'s Works were done.

The (*Fourth*) and concluding Question is therefore a meer Trifle ; " Whether upon " the whole Matter, when they acknow- " ledge *the Finger of God* in the Works of

" *Moses*,

"*Moses*, they did not also effectually ac-
" knowledge, that the *same Power* had
" wrought by themselves these Three great
" Works, although they knew it not, nor
" owned it, 'till they were disappointed in
" their last Attempt?" The World does not yet understand that they in effect acknowledged, nor that they ever thought of any such Thing, or had any cause to imagine the Power with *Moses* to have assisted *them*. These Magicians began to act against *Moses* upon their own Strength and Skill in Magick Art; they made use of their *Enchantments* for what they did; they proceeded to attempt their last Act without hesitation, or the least distrust of their own Power, or the help which they expected: They were professed Magicians, who pretended to have Familiarity with, or probably, Power over Spirits and Dæmons invisible, for the doing of strange Works; they found themselves, and the Powers that assisted them stopped, in what a Man might have thought to have been an Act requiring less Power than some of their former Actions: 'Tis no way likely therefore that hence they should imagine the Power that had assisted *themselves* should be *that of God*; but that *Moses*'s was, they must hence be forced to acknowledge, because it controuled theirs.

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And thus, I think, we have well got over these Questions, but are not yet safe, for this *Author* is *coming upon us again*, and will ask us concerning the Power of the *Devil*, by which the World has hitherto supposed that these Enchanters wrought their Miracles: "Does the World (says he) under-
Essay, p. 48. "stand it, that the Devil has an Inherent "Power of his own to work Miracles inde-"pendently on God, and can commit that "Power to other Agents?" No, but it supposes the Devil to have a Power to work Miracles, and that he may empower his Agents also. Whether the Devil's Power in this Case be his Natural Power that he was created with, or some Power given him for this particular Purpose, the World perhaps does not think it self concerned to enquire, neither knows any certain means of being satisfied, if it would make the Enquiry; but whatsoever his Power is, 'tis not thought to be *independent* of God, nor that he can commit it to any of his Instruments *independently on him*; *i. e.* otherways than by his permission, and in such degree as God shall please to permit the same. And this the World thinks to be the difference between the Power of God, and the Power of the Devil in working Miracles; the one's Power is absolute and omnipotent, the other's finite, limited and restrained; and that consequently which appears restrained, the World

World ſuppoſes is not to be thought the Power of God.

But if the World will ſtill ſay, That the Devil has a Power under God's Permiſſion, and that God may permit the Devil to communicate his Power to Wicked Agents for their working Miracles, " This (our *Author* " ſays) is *going about* : It is much eaſier, " and much more reaſonable to ſay, that " God may ſee fit to make Wicked Men his " *own Inſtruments* in working Miracles, than " that he permits the Devil to make them " *his.*" It may, for ought I know, be as *eaſie* for ſome Men to ſay that which is falſe, as that which is true; that which has no Senſe nor Reaſon in it, as that which has the moſt : The *Eaſineſs of ſaying* therefore I ſhall not controvert, but the *Reaſonableneſs.* How when the *Scripture* hath told us of the Devil's oppoſing God and his Kingdom, and of his tempting and ſeducing Mankind from the Worſhip of the True God, and from his Righteouſneſs, (nothing of which could be, but that there muſt be God's Permiſſion in the Caſe) and likewiſe aſcribeth great Power to the Devil in his Operations, and ſpeaketh plainly of his *working* in the Children of Diſobedience, and of Mens coming according to the *working of Satan* : It ſhould be more reaſonable to ſay, when Wicked Men have ſet themſelves to oppoſe the Meſſengers and Servants of God, and

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in that Opposition done Things above Human Power; that *God himself* hath assisted them against *himself*, and made them his *own Instruments* in so wicked an Attempt; than that these were assisted by that *Wicked Spirit*, to do the Things done by them (which were above their own Power, as Men) and were *Satan*'s Instruments therein. I believe there can be no need of Argument in this Case on my side; the very Proposal of the Case doth carry Reason sufficient with it to keep the World to its old Opinion.

But this *Author* will affirm *positively* (he says) "That if the Devil has any Power to "work Miracles, he has it from God, and "can only exercise it when God permits "him. And moreover, that if at any time "the Devil can give Commission to Men to "work Miracles, (*Power*, with his leave, "let it be called, because a *Rebel* is seldom "understood to give a Commission) he can "never do it but when God permits him, "and for Purposes permitted by God." In all this I know not that any body will contradict him. "Pray then (says he) is it "not as fit, and as likely that God should "give the *Magicians* Power to work Miracles, as that he should give the same "Power to the Devil, and let the Devil "give it to the Magicians. He for his own "part thinks God's Honour, Justice and "Good-

Essay, p. 49.

" Goodneſs are all as ſafe when Men are his " Inſtruments, as when he uſes the *Devil.*" I cannot conceive, notwithſtanding, that it's either ſo likely, or ſo fit, that God ſhould give the Power to Wicked Men, for that which they do againſt him, as that they have it from the Devil : I dare not think it likely that Men ſhould be the Inſtruments of God, when they are doing the Works of the Devil ; nor fit for us to ſuppoſe that God ſhould be the Agent helping them againſt himſelf : 'Tis likely God's Honour, and Juſtice, and Goodneſs, are as ſafe when Men are his Inſtruments, as when he uſeth the *Devil*; but neither *Men* nor the *Devil* are *God's Inſtruments* in a wicked Attempt: In ſuch a caſe Men either act of themſelves, or are the Inſtruments of Satan. The Devil alſo acteth of his own Malice, himſelf employs the Power (which as a Creature he hath originally indeed from God, in the ſame manner as a Man hath his, when he *committeth Sin*, and doth wickedly ; the Wicked Work is the Man's own Work , though his Power for that, and every other Action, is originally from God.)

'Tis to little purpoſe that this *Author* pretends to argue, That God's helping Wicked Men to work Miracles for wicked Purpoſes, is not *quite ſo bad* as if he ſhould uſe the Devil, and allow him to uſe Men for that Purpoſe : For could he ſay ſomething to make this

this probable, it could be no Argument against what the Scripture speaketh plainly enough of the Devil's operating with wicked Men: Nevertheless there is nothing of moment in that which he says, *viz.* "The "World is not so apt to believe that wicked "Men act by their own Power, as that the "Devil does; nor consequently so liable to "be seduced by one of their own Fellow "Creatures, as by that powerful subtile Spi-"rit." As though the Snare would not be greater to Men in seeing Miracles wrought by wicked Men for Evil Purposes, if all Miracles be thought to be of God, than it can be as it's thought the Devil, who is an Evil Spirit, may work them: In the last of which Cases the Temptation is possible to be avoided; whereas in the former 'tis unavoidable: For that the Evidence of Miracles must be yielded to without exception: And as though the Devil were not as capable of making his advantage of Miracles wrought in opposition to God's Truth by Men, without his help as with it. Surely whatsoever advantage he or his Agents have ever made, or can be supposed to make in the World by Miracles, it cannot be from their being given out to be wrought by the *Devil's* Power, but from their being pretended *to be of God*; so that his Advantage must be much greater than it is, if the World should be of another Opinion than

that

that it now hath received concerning the subtile Operations of Dæmons.

We are now come to a Medly of Arguments, very confusedly put together, with little Coherence, and less Argument: "The "Devil's Power (says our *Author*) depends "entirely on God, how far he will restrain "or limit him: We do not know how great "his Natural Powers in which God created "him were, nor how much he lost by falling from his Innocence and Obedience, "nor consequently how much is since that "left to him." This, I believe, is all true, but not a jot therein to his Purpose. What then follows hence? "I am inclin'd "to think (says he) that the Supremest "Angel, even in his Native Innocence, "was not created with a Power of changing "the Course of Nature, &c." What should make him inclin'd to think what Powers an *Angel* was or was not created with, when he had just before said, we do not know how great the Natural Powers in which God created these Beings may be? If another be inclined to think otherways than he, by what means can he convince him? And what will his Thought or Conjecture do then towards the determination and end of the Dispute concerning the Facts that are thought to be Instances of the contrary? But let me not injure our *Author*, who has added these Words at the end of his Thought,

Pag. 50.

namely, *without the Purpose and Appointment of God.* Which Words, if understood in their large Sense, would make his Thought to be the same with the general Thought of the World: For God's *Permission* may be understood in some sense to be his Purpose and Appointment: And thus we should immediately agree in our Thoughts of this Matter. It would be forthwith allowed to this *Author*, that the *Supremest Angel*, whatsoever his Natural Powers may be, can do nothing towards the work of a Miracle without *God's Permission*; and consequently, that no *Evil Spirit*, how powerful soever, can do any thing but by *his Permission*. But I doubt this *Author* understands God's *Purpose* and *Appointment* in a strict and restrained Sense, so as that God's Purpose shall imply the Communication of a Power to do the Thing appointed; which there is no doubt indeed but God can give to the meanest Being that is, whether it has Natural Powers for the Work, or no. And thus, as he says, a *Fly* may work a Miracle with God's *Leave* and *Order* as soon as an *Angel*, (God's Order always supposing a Power for doing the Thing by him ordered.) But this *Author* confoundeth himself, or would impose upon the World, by his confounding the Words *Leave* and *Order*, as though these were the same; and *Permission* and *Appointment* as though these were also the same Thing; where-

whereas every one knows *Leave* or *Permission*, and *Order* or *Appointment* to be different Things: Both are indeed included in the *Purpose* of God, but they are nevertheless so different, that supposing only a *Leave* or *Permission* (which implies the Creature left at liberty by God to the use of its own Powers) he must be out of his Right Senses, that will pretend to say, a *Fly may do as much as as an Angel*, (God only permitting the one and the other alike to do their utmost, according to their Natural Powers); though all the while, were we to suppose God's *Appointment* and *Order* (in which, as being *God's Order*, which never can fail of its Effect, we must necessarily suppose a Power given with it sufficient for the Work) it must not be deny'd but that a *Fly* (as this *Author* says) may alter the Course of Nature, and work a Miracle: We must therefore think either this *Author* to have perplexed himself with a mistaken Sense of Words, or that he designs to impose upon the World by a meer Equivocation, when he argues in so weak a manner as this. That the Devil's *Power* is not increased by his *Apostacy* and *Rebellion*, I believe will be granted to this *Author*; yet that it is *less* than it was (when God shall think fit to take off the Restraint, under which we are informed in God's Word, that this Evil One is by him generally kept) is what neither

this *Author* nor I know: 'Tis not therefore for us to dispute concerning the Powers of this wicked Spirit, of which we know nothing otherways than by what Account we have thereof from *Revelation* and *Scripture*.

Pag. 51. Now the Scriptures (this *Author* here allows) attribute *great Matters to him*: These he is pleased indeed to say are made much greater than they are, by the Scriptures being ill understood; but he must shew that the Scriptures are not rightly understood, as to what they say of the Devil's Power and Operations; until then, the obvious and received

Ibid. Sense of Scripture shall be our Direction in this Matter. "Yet even the Scripture in-"forms us (says this our *Author*) that the "Devil is absolutely under God's Command; "and therefore let his Power be never so "great, it must be exercised as God per-"mits, and limited and determined to what "purposes God shall please." What then? Why, says our *Author*, "Will it not then "from hence follow, that the Devil can no "more work a True Miracle, than you or I, "*of his own accord?*". Let him leave out the four last Words, and then ask the Question. If he will say, I must not put out any of his Words, then he must give me leave to tell him, that 'tis all nothing but silly Equivocation. *Of his own accord*, in one sense, the Devil, how great soever his Power is, can do nothing more than one of us, being

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under limitation and restraint; nay, not so much as one of us, if God shall think fit to confine his Power to so strict Limits, that he shall not be able to exert it to do that which one of us may do, when not under any Limitation, as to the use of our Natural Powers. But suppose all Limitation taken off from one and from the other (which must be supposed in God's *Permission*, for that always taketh off, or suspendeth all *Limitation*, so far as the Permission extendeth) and the *Devil* left to the Powers he was created with, and this *Author* in like manner left at liberty to use his Natural Powers, and then let the Question be asked, Whether that the Devil and the Man being both under God's Command, so as that how great soever the Power of either of them be, it must be exercised as God permits only, and limited to what purpose God shall please; it will from hence follow, that supposing God to permit both of them alike to use the utmost of their Natural Powers, after *their own will and accord*, there being no limitation upon either, this subtile and powerful *Spirit* shall be able to do *no more* towards the Work of a Miracle, than this *Author*, or another Man? In vain therefore does our *Author* pretend to draw Consequences from *Scripture* in favour of his *Hypothesis*, which we shall by and by find directly to overthrow it.

For there is a Text of Scripture in our *Author*'s way, which he must do something with, or his *Hypothesis* must fall at once; and therefore his *Scholar* is taught to say, "That it sticks with him, and he can have "no quiet, unless he please to tell him what "he must do with it." But at the same time he is to make an Objection against the Text also, such as may make way for this *Author* to put his particular Sense upon the Scripture, under the amusement of this Objection: The Scripture is that of *Deut.* 13. v. 1. *If there arise among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder*, and the Sign or the Wonder come to pass, of which he spake unto thee, saying, ——*Let us go after other Gods which thou hast not known, and serve them; thou shalt not hearken to the Words of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of Dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your Heart, and with all your Soul.* "Should it not appear from hence (says the *Scholar*) "that God may some-"times permit a False Prophet to give a "Sign or a Wonder that may come to pass, "*in order to try whether his People would be* "*tempted to Idolatry?*" Let us keep this Objector only from puttting upon us his own Words instead of the Words and Sense of the Scripture; let no more be said or inferred as to God's End herein, than what the

Essay, Pag. 55.

the Scripture ſaith, That *the Lord hereby proveth his People, to know whether they love the Lord their God with all their Heart, and with all their Soul:* And it ſhall be allowed that the Scripture meaneth that God may ſometimes permit a Falſe Prophet to give a Sign or a Wonder that may come to paſs; yea, it ſhall be allowed further, that as it could not be *a Sign* or a *Wonder* in the Scripture Senſe, if the Thing could be done by ſuch a Prophet of himſelf, therefore this Scripture ſhall imply that God may permit the *Devil* to aſſiſt ſuch a Falſe Prophet for the bringing ſuch Sign or Wonder to paſs. "But if God does this (ſays he) how is it "that they muſt not hearken to him? "Shall a Miracle confirm the Belief of *One* "*God*, and not confirm the Belief of *more* "*Gods than one*, if wrought for that pur-"poſe? If this be ſo, a Miracle muſt go "for nothing, and I may believe one God, "or more Gods, according as my Reaſon "leads me; for a Miracle proves both alike. This Objection is for our *Author*'s Purpoſe, it ſhall help him to put a Falſe Interpretation upon the foregoing Text of Scripture, or 'twill amuſe us, he thinks, whilſt he does it; therefore he makes anſwer to his *Scholar*, and tells him, That "he hath objected "right, but ſuppoſed amiſs, in ſuppoſing "the Sign or the Wonder here ſpoken of "to be a Miracle." What will not this Pag. 56.

Man put to the venture for the sake of his Absurd *Hypothesis*? The Objection made against the Evidence which Miracles give to the True Religion, is allowed by him to be right and good, if this Scripture be taken in the received and common Sense wherein it hath been hitherto understood, and in the plain Meaning which the Words import; that is to say, That *God may permit sometimes a False Prophet to work a Miracle.* I shall shew the weakness of the Objection by and by, when this *Author* himself comes to improve it, and make the most of it; in the mean time let notice be taken of the
Ibid. New Interpretation of this Scripture: *To give a Sign or a Wonder*, is in this Place (says our *Author*) *to foretell some wonderful Thing to come to pass*: ——This must be further descanted upon, or else it will stand our *Author* in little stead, because indeed the *certain foretelling of Future Events*, is nothing less than a *Miraculous Work*: And yet it is too soon as yet for him to speak his Meaning plainly, and therefore he runs out into a long Talk upon a Supposition made out of his own Brain, and which he has not given us the least Reason to think at all relating to the Case this Scripture intended to speak of; that is to say, "of a Man pretending to a Vision or Dream from God, "who to gain himself Credit, might adventure to foretell some strange and unexpected

"expected Thing, and the Event coming to "paſs, might confirm his Prediction; as it "might come to paſs, for that God might "not ſee fit to prevent its coming to paſs "by altering any thing in the Courſe of his "Providence; and perhaps the Thing would "have come to paſs whether foretold or "no; which Thing there would be no Rea-"ſon to think that God permitted to come "to paſs only to fulfil the Prediction, but "that God would not put it by, the Thing "being by himſelf intended, though it hap-"ned to be foretold by a Falſe Pretender." Having run over this amuſing Tale, he ſays, "He takes this Viſionary Dreamer here "mentioned to be but a meer Gueſſer, and "to predict Events of his own Head, ſome "of which may poſſibly come to paſs." Which if ſpoken in reference to that Viſionary Dreamer his Fancy has dwelt ſo long upon, 'tis likely he may not be miſtaken in his Judgment: But if he thinks hence to inſinuate, that that Scripture which ſpeaks of the *ariſing of a Prophet, or Dreamer of Dreams, that may give a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or Wonder come to paſs of which he ſpake*; is to be underſtood to refer only to a *Bold Gueſſer that may take upon him to predict Events of his own Head, ſome of which may poſſibly come to paſs*: The World, I hope, is not ſo fooliſh yet, but will ask him to give ſome Reaſon for an Interpretation ſo abſurd:

absurd: For this must suppose God to give a very needless Caution to his People; and those scarce Rational Creatures to whom it was given. I believe the World was never so easie and credulous as to take every *Guesser* for a *Prophet*, but that Common Sense would have put Men upon making some Tryal, and upon considering whether there were any likelihood or probability of the Things being rather *Guess* than *Prophecy*. Had this been the Case, 'tis most probable they would have been directed to find it out by the same way that they were directed to find out *Prophets* by, *that spoke falsly in the Name of God*; speaking Things which he had not commanded them, *Deut.* 18. 22. viz. "*When a Prophet speaketh in the Name* "*of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor* "*come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord* "*hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath spo-* "*ken it presumptuously.*" This could have been no Rule, nor way of Tryal, according to our *Author's* wild Imagination of a bold Guesser's being able to foretel Things future with any certainty; but 'twas a good Rule to them that could be supposed upon it to make Examination and Observations as to the Things spoken by such Prophet; for he that speaketh presumptuously, and of his own Head, if he happen to speak of one Thing that comes to pass, will speak of more that do not; and if any one thing come not to

pass,

paſs, it appeareth that the *Lord hath not ſpoken* by him : If therefore it could not be diſtinguiſhed by the Appearances of Probability in the Thing foretold, ſo as thence to be known to be rather *Gueſs* than *Prophecy*, it might at leaſt by their Obſervation of the Event of ſuch an one's Predictions. 'Tis to be ſuppoſed likewiſe, that this Scripture which intends the preventing of God's People being ſeduced by a Sign or Wonder *given* and *coming to paſs*, muſt have reference to ſuch a *Sign* as would be thought a *Wonder*; and therefore if the foretelling a Thing to come to paſs, were the *Sign given*, it muſt be the foretelling of ſomething very *ſtrange* and *unuſual*, of which there could be no Appearance of Probability to make it likely to fall within any Man's Gueſs or Conjecture ; otherwiſe the Prediction could be no *Wonder*, and conſequently there could be no danger that ſuch a thing ſhould ſeduce to Idolatry : Eſpecially as the People here concerned, were ſuch as knew, and were acquainted with Miracles and Prophecies, and the Signs given by Prophets, and being converſant therein, could not eaſily be deceived to take *Gueſs* for *Prophecies*, and could not be themſelves in danger , but from ſuch Signs as were at leaſt wondrous, and in that reſpect not eaſily diſtinguiſhable from the Predictions or Works of them that were indeed the *Lord's Prophets*. I ſhall here

here say therefore, that as the Scripture, when it acknowledgeth the *coming to pass of a Thing foretold* to be the *Sign* and Evidence of a True Prophet, supposeth Mens *Reason* sufficient to distinguish *Guess* from *Prophecy*; and must not be understood to acknowledge *that* in this Case a *Sign*, which a Man's Reason might think might be foretold by *Guess* or *Conjecture*; but only, that such Predictions should be taken for *Signs*, as *were out of the way* of *Guess*, and above the reach of *Conjecture*; whereof the Event should be according to the Prediction: So here the *Sign* meant must be a *Wonder*; something not easily distinguishable from the Signs usually given by God's Prophets; otherwise the People could not well be supposed to be in danger of being seduced thereby. These things (I presume) in some measure foreseen by our *Author*, and therefore he will come at last to suppose him a *True Prophet* that's here spoken of, and the *Sign* or *Wonder*, to be the *working a Miracle*. I am one of them that suppose the *Sign* or *Wonder* here spoken of, to be the working a *Miracle*; but yet I am not for his turn, to suppose this Prophet a *True Prophet*: I allow him to be one that hath foretold a Thing that came to pass *truly*; but I account him a *false Prophet* notwithstanding, as having the *Devil*'s Help in effecting that Sign or Wonder, which he gi-

Essay, p. 57, 58.

veth

veth to perſwade to the Worſhip of a falſe God. This our *Author* therefore leads us wrong, when he would draw us into a Suppoſition, that *God inſpires this Prophet* with the Knowledge of future Events which he predicts, and which come to paſs accordingly. For the ſame Reaſon that will conclude, that ſuch an one is not to be *truſted* nor *believed*, will argue likewiſe that the *Spirit of God* cannot be with him; and that notwithſtanding the *Signs* he giveth of a Prophet, he is no True Prophet, he is *not of God.* His tempting to Idolatry, muſt deſtroy his Credit as a Prophet, and is a ſufficient Argument, that ſuch Prophet is neither to be followed nor hearkened to, nor yet to be taken to be of God. This is in it ſelf a ſufficient Reaſon, why he ſhould not be followed nor *hearkened* to; becauſe herein *he perſwadeth to a Thing plainly wicked.* This alſo is an Argument, why ſuch Prophet ſhould not be taken to *be of God*; becauſe he talks abſurdly, and cannot be believed, unleſs we ſhould ſuppoſe *God ſhould contradict himſelf*, and do a Wonder to perſwade Men to forſake him, and give his Worſhip to another. I ſhould in this place have expreſſed my ſelf much beholden to our *Author*, for this Solution of the Matter, (for I would have the Reader obſerve, that the Reaſons which I have given in the Solution, why ſuch Prophet ſhould

not

not be *hearkened* to, nor yet taken *to be of God*, notwithstanding his Sign, and the coming to pass thereof, are *his*: and so good they are, that I would pray the Reader, and this *Author himself* also well to remember these Reasons; of which we may very likely have further Use:) had he not involved this *Right Solution* of the Difficulty that is in the Case this Scripture refers to, with a *false Supposition* of his own, to which this Scripture hath no manner of reference. This makes me that I cannot thank him, for what otherwise I should have accounted my self beholden. His Cunning and Artifice to draw us into a false Supposition, by mixing some Truth with it, deserves little Thanks from those that discern it, and less from any that shall find themselves to have been led wrong by it. He may put the Case (as he does) of a Prophet that *God* might have *formerly* inspired with the Knowledge of future Events, who renouncing and apostatizing from him and his Truth, might go about to perswade the People to Idolatry; and every body will agree with him, that such an one is no longer to be trusted, because we may be sure the Spirit of God must then depart from him; for God cannot contradict himself, nor do any thing to perswade Men to forsake him and give his Worship to another: And though this Man had *formerly* wrought Miracles, yet he were

Essay, p. 57, 58.

not

not upon the Credit of them to be believed, now that he talked absurdly, nor followed now that he perswaded to a Thing plainly wicked. But he must not by this think to put upon us so far, as to bind us hereby to take his Supposition for the Case to which this Scripture referreth: For 'tis most plain from the Text it self that this is not the Case; for this Scripture ('tis clear) speaketh of the *coming to pass* of a *Sign* or *Wonder*, whereof the Prophet spake unto the People at his saying, or when he said, *Let us go after other gods*; and therein supposeth the Prophet at the time when he thus endeavoured to seduce, appealing in his Prediction to an Event that was *yet to come*: And this indeed was a Thing that might increase the Wonder, and therein the Credit of the Prophet, whereby there was the more danger of the People's being seduced. And if we should suppose the *Sign* or *Wonder given*, to be in an Instance of any other kind than this of *foretelling a Thing future*; yet this Scripture will oblige us to suppose it a *Present* Transaction, offered or done for a *present* Conviction; which the Prophet must *speak of*, and which must *come to pass* at the time of his *saying*, or forthwith upon his *saying*, *Let us go after other gods*. Therefore, this our Author's Case of a Man that might *formerly* have wrought Miracles, is plainly not the Case in the Text; which

suppo-

supposeth them at that *present time* actually wrought. This Scripture indeed will reach the Case that he puts, of a Prophet whom God might have *formerly* inspired with the Knowledge of future Events; should such an one apostatize and go about to perswade the People to Idolatry; who, if he should come and offer a Prediction for this purpose, even *at the time of his attempting* to seduce, were neither to be hearkened to, nor believed; nay, his present Prediction, though even then coming to pass, were not to be taken to *be of God*, though it were known that God formerly inspired him; because (as this *Author* rightly observes) *we may be sure the Spirit of God* must now be *departed from him.* And if no notice must be taken of such a one's *present* Miracles, much less of any that he might *formerly* have wrought. But this Scripture's reaching the Case by this our *Author* supposed, can be no reason for its being confined to this Case, when we evidently see it to reach much beyond it; even to the Case of any false Prophet's *actually* working Miracles, at the *present* time that he endeavoureth to seduce; and to the Case of whatsoever strange Prophet might appear with such a Power.

I shall yet give this *Author* and the World further Reasons, Why this *Prophet* here spoken of, is to be thought one that should

ſhould do that which might be looked on as *Miraculous*, and which the People ſhould not be able to diſtinguiſh from a Miracle: And why alſo we are not to ſuppoſe of ſuch a Prophet, that he ſhould be *inſpired by God*, but by ſome *Evil Spirit*. And they are ſuch Reaſons, as ought to convince, and will, I think, put the matter out of all doubt, for that they are grounded upon the Scripture.

The (Firſt) is this; That the True *Prediction* of *Things future*, is a *Miraculous* Work: If it were not ſuch, it would not have been in Scripture ſaid as it is, to be a *Sign* of a Prophet's being ſent of God, *Jer.* 28. v. 9. *When the word of the Prophet ſhall come to paſs, then ſhall the Prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly ſent him.* Nor would that Challenge have been made in *Iſa.* 41. v. 23. *Shew the Things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.* If the Prediction therefore of Things future, be the ſuppoſed Inſtance to which this Scripture in debate refers, and to which indeed the Words themſelves ſeem to have a plain reference; I will not doubt to conclude, that the *Sign* or *Wonder* here ſpoken of, as *coming to paſs* according to the Word of ſuch Prophet, muſt be underſtood to be a Miracle; or, which is the ſame thing in effect, what is not diſtinguiſhable from it. And again (*2dly.*) this may

be upon sure Grounds supposed, and therefore ought to be supposed; because the Devil hath pretended in this to imitate God. And as his Knowledge is great, as penetrating into the Springs, Causes, and Effects of Nature; and as his Experience throughout all Ages may have still more discovered to him the Connections and Dependance of these; hence it may be no difficult thing for him to foretel, or assist a wicked Prophet to foretel Things future, with some measure of Certainty; which the World may reasonably think to be above Human Power to find out and predict, and which coming to pass, it may be in danger of mistaking for a really Divine Operation. And that this Thing of the Devil's operating after such a manner, and the World's mistaking and being seduced by such his Operation, hath been in Fact True, the Holy Scriptures do suppose and plainly suggest; in that which is said therein, of *Men using Divination, Enchanters, Witches, Consulters with Familiar Spirits*, &c. *Deut.* 18. *v.* 10, 11. And in what is spoken of False Prophets among God's People, pretending to Dreams and Visions, *Having seen Vanity and Lying Divination, saying the Lord saith, and the Lord hath not sent them; and who made others to hope that they would confirm the word*, Ezek. 13. *v.* 7. And (3*dly.*) That those sort of Prophets also Prophesied to seduce

ſeduce the People to *Idolatry*, (the very Caſe we are upon) is plainly intimated, as I take it, *Jerem.* 23. *v.* 13. *I have ſeen folly in the Prophets of Samaria; They have Propheſied in Baal, and cauſed my People to err*; that is to ſay, Seduced them to the Worſhip of *Baal*: And moreover, that theſe ſort of Prophets had ſome aſſiſtance from *Evil Spirits* in their Divinations and Prophecies, I take to be alſo plainly ſuggeſted, *Zachar.* 13. 2. *It ſhall come to paſs*, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, that *I will cut off the Names of the Idols* out of the Land, and they ſhall no more be remembred; and alſo I will cauſe the *Prophets* and the *Unclean Spirit* to paſs out of the Land; (what is that, but the *unclean Spirit* that was with, and that aſſiſted thoſe *Prophets*?) And it's further ſaid there, "*It ſhall come to paſs*, that "when any ſhall *yet propheſie*, then his Fa-"ther and his Mother that begat him ſhall "ſay, Thou ſhalt not live, for thou ſpeak-"eſt Lyes in the Name of the Lord; and "his Father and his Mother that begat him "ſhall *thruſt him through when he propheſi-"eth*:" That is to ſay, his neareſt Relati-"ons ſhould kill him, as in this Place of *Deut.* 13. *v.* 5. they are commanded. To which Command of the Lord's, as the Prophet *Zachary* muſt be underſtood undoubtedly to refer; ſo that his Caſe and Reference to this Command, cannot but be an unde-

niable Argument that the *Prophet* spoken of here, *Deut.* 13. as giving a *Sign or a Wonder*, is one that might be assisted to the doing it by an *unclean Spirit*.

It may be this *Author*, or somebody for him, may be apt to think and object, that this is in effect to suppose the *Devil*'s Knowledge equal to the *Præscience of God*. But this I deny; for that it is in the Power of God at all times to hinder the Event to follow, which such a false Prophet by the Divil's assistance may predict, even though it would certainly follow in the usual Course of Nature. God can prevent the Effects of Natural Causes, and 'tis in his Power also to keep any thing himself will do, from the knowledge of this wicked One, because he is able to work out of the way of Nature; and probably also the Devil knoweth not the Deliberations of Free Agents, nor how these will determine themselves. And upon this it's said in the Prophet *Isai.* 41. *v.* 23. *Shew these things that are to come hereafter, and we shall know that ye are Gods.* For that the Devil, how great soever his Knowledge is, cannot foretel himself, nor consequently assist any false Prophet to predict *what things shall come hereafter*, with absolute certainty; God having always Power to put by the Event, if he shall think, and whenever he shall think fit so to do. Nevertheless, although the Devil cannot with *absolute certainty*

tainty know or assist to the foretelling things future, especially such as depend upon the Will of God, or perhaps on the Will of Men; nor indeed in one respect, even those things that are certain in their natural Causes, because in these and in all Cases God hath Power to disappoint and defeat the Prediction, and prevent the Thing from coming to pass: Yet, whenever God shall permit this Evil Spirit to do his utmost in this way, and to assist a False Prophet in any thing of this kind; it cannot be denied but that the Devil (who hath the advantages of knowing all Natural Causes, and their Powers and Strength, and consequently gathering what Effects will follow such and such Causes, either absolutely, or at least if so and so applied, and likewise of whatsoever things are done or likely to be done in remote and distant Places; and of knowing also much of the Temper and Inclinations, as well as the Manners and Studies, and Counsels, (so far at least as these are communicated even secretly to others) of Men; and even something probably of the Determination of the Will of Free Agents, so far as the Observation of Things and Objects, that may have wrought upon the Will of such Agents in like Cases, can help to guess towards that Determination; and of knowing likewise even something of God's Will, and of the Things depending

upon that, *i. e.* such as at any time, either in Scripture, or by any Prophet of his, may have been Revealed as coming to pass hereafter, or what he may have commanded any Ministring Spirits of his, or may have permitted *Satan*, or any of the Evil Spirits that are with him, to bring to pass) from his great Advantages of Knowledge and Subtilty, may be capable of assisting to the foretelling Things future in such a manner, that when his Agents shall pretend to give a Sign of that Nature, the Vulgar and indeed the most observing Men may not be able to judge any other from the *Sign it self*, and the Event following, according to it; but that they must come to the knowledge of it by some Divine Power. And thus the Devil and his Agents may be able to work a Miracle, or what is not distinguishable from a Miracle: Which upon good Grounds, you see, I have concluded to be the Case spoken of here, *Deut.* 13. *v.* 1. where I judge also that the *Sign* or *Wonder* spoken of, may have reference also to any *other Miraculous Sign* or *Wonder* that a False Prophet might pretend to, or promise to effect, as well as to this the *Prediction of things future*, which seems to be the Sign particularly nominated: Because the Reason of one, and of the other is the same; The Devil's Power may assist in other Cases as well as this; and if it

does,

does, and God does not think fit to prevent the Events coming to pass, the Prophet however is to be rejected, let his Miracle be of what kind it will; and may be rejected in any case upon the same grounds as in this.

And now is it time that I should take in hand the Objection that was for a while laid by; namely, If it be thus that God permits a Prophet to work a Miracle, that shall tempt to Idolatry by it, "*How is it that* his "People *must not hearken* unto him?" To this I would not desire to make a better Answer than may be made in the Words of our *Author* (who I hope will give me leave to put his Words together for the purpose, and say,) Such Prophet Tempting to Idolatry (*though working Miracles*) is not to be Trusted nor Believed; for that we may know the Spirit of God cannot be with him (never was with him, or at least is now departed from him); for God cannot contradict himself, nor do any thing to persuade Men to forsake him, and give his Worship to another: Such Prophet is not to be believed therefore, nor even for his Miracles to have any Credit with us, for that he talkes absurdly and persuades to a Thing plainly wicked. (This our *Author* I hope will not go about to overthrow his own Reasons; neither can he if he would, either deny the Reason, or hinder me from

Essay, p. 55.

Pag. 57. and 58.

making use of it to the purpose I have in hand). But hear how the Objection is carried on further! "Shall a Miracle confirm "the Belief of *One God*, and not confirm "the Belief of *more Gods than One*, if wrought "for that purpose? If this be so, a Miracle must go for Nothing; but I may believe *One God*, or *more Gods*, according as "my Reason leads; for a Miracle, I see, proves "both alike." This Objection that appears so formidable, would indeed be as nothing, if the Case were proposed aright and according to its True State; in order to which, a Man that would make an Objection to the purpose, (and consequently we that are concerned to see, whether this Objection be made to the purpose) must, (because he ought) consider as well the *Persons* to whom this Command was given, not to hearken to such a Prophet as should give a *Sign* or a *Wonder* to seduce them to Idolatry, as the *Miracles* God had wrought in the sight of this People to Confirm them in the Belief and Worship of the One True God; and then the Miracles thus wrought on God's part are to be brought into Comparison with the Miracles he may permit a false Prophet to work, to seduce to the Worship of other Gods. And whosoever will go about to make an Objection without considering this, disputes to no purpose, and really makes no Objection at all, because he

he ſpeaks not to the Caſe; he goes off from the real Matter and its Circumſtances. Obſerve we now that the Command given, not to hearken to this Falſe Prophet working a Sign or a Wonder, was to the *People of Iſrael*, a People whom God had delivered out of the *Ægyptian* Bondage with a *mighty hand*, who had not only ſeen, in the *Miracles* wrought before *Pharaoh* and themſelves, that the Lord was with *Moſes*, but likewiſe in the Conteſt that *Moſes* had with the *Magicians*, and the Iſſue thereof, that there was *none like unto the Lord their God*; who had alſo ſeen the great Work which the *Lord* did upon the *Ægyptians*, in drowning them in the *Red-Sea*, through which he had made for this his People a ſafe Paſſage, by dividing the Waters; who had ſeen *God* talking with them *from Heaven*, and the *Mount* that burnt with *Fire*, and the *blackneſs* and *darkneſs* and *Tempeſt* ſtriking Terror at the giving of his Law; who had ſeen his Miracles for *Forty Years*, that he led and fed them in the Wilderneſs. Might it not be reaſonable that this People that had thus ſeen the Power of the Lord their God, "his Greatneſs, his mighty Hand, his "ſtretched-out Arm, and his Miracles, and "his Acts which he did in the midſt of *Æ*-"*gypt*, unto *Pharaoh* the King of *Ægypt*, "and unto all his Land; and what he did "unto the Army of *Ægypt*; and what he "did

Deut. 11. v. 2.

"did unto *themselves in* the *Wilderness*, un-
"till they came unto *that Place*;" that is to say, the *Borders* of the *promised Land*, which they were now upon entring, when *Moses* spake to them of the Statutes of their God, which 'twas expected they should Observe: Might it not be reasonable, I say, that *this People* should, among others, have this Command; *viz. If there should arise a Prophet, and he should give them a Sign or a Wonder that might come to pass, to seduce them to go after other Gods*, not to *hearken* to the words of *that Prophet*? Might it not also be allowable for God to *prove* this People after all this done for their Conviction, by *this method*, whether they *loved the Lord their God* with all their Heart and all their Souls? Whosoever will object in this Case against the Lawgiver, or against the Reasonableness of his Command, must propose the Objection according to the Case and the true Circumstances thereof, otherwise the Objection made upon a wrong Supposition of the Case falls of it self. In this instance therefore the Objector's Question must run thus, — Shall a Series of Miracles, such as must have put out of all doubt the certainty of an Omnipotent Being, and have likewise shewn the *God* of *Israel* to be the *Lord*, the *Mighty God* and *Terrible*, and that there is none other *like him* that can do as he hath done; confirm the belief of the *One*

True

True God to a People to whom the Lord God had particularly ſhewn his Glory and Greatneſs? And to this I am perſuaded, our *Author's Scholar* as well as himſelf would be aſhamed to ſubjoin their Queſtion,— Shall not a *Sign* or a *Miracle* confirm this People as well in the Belief of *more Gods than One*, if wrought for that purpoſe? And ſtill more aſhamed muſt they be, I ſhould think, of having ſaid that *Miracles* prove *both alike*. They muſt bear with me therefore, when I take upon me to ſay, that the Objection goes upon a falſe Suppoſition, and the Objector is not a fair Adverſary. The Objection ſuppoſes a Miracle on one ſide and on the other, which is as wide from the Matter as the *Eaſt* is from the *Weſt*; for on the one hand, what this People had to Confirm them in the Belief of the One True God, was a *continued Series* of *Miracles*, ſo many and ſo great as muſt have confirmed them beyond doubt of the certainty of an Omnipotent Power; and likewiſe ſhewn them that the Lord their God was above all Gods: *This* therefore is that *againſt which* the Objector ſhould have ſet on the other hand, the Sign or Wonder which a falſe Prophet might work to perſwade to the Worſhip of *other Gods*. But if the *whole Antecedent Conviction*, which this People had of the Lord's being the only God, (before this Command was given them, not to hearken to any

falſe

false Prophet though shewing a Miracle, should he persuade them to the Worship of *strange Gods*) should have been taken notice of, the Objection would have looked Ridiculous, and given a Confutation to its self. Again, this Objection supposeth all Miracles to be wrought by *equal* Powers, and that they prove alike; which is a Supposition not to be taken for granted in this Case, where the People (before Confirmed by Miracles in the Belief of the One True God, and now commanded not to hearken to a false Prophet though giving a Sign or a Wonder, if he should persuade them to go with him after other Gods) had been given to understand, or were at least at the same time given to understand, that there were *Diviners, Consulters with familiar Spirits*, &c. in the World, to whom they are told, that *other Nations* hearkened (which they must suppose was on account of great Things done by them) but as for them the *Lord their God had not suffered them so to do. Moses* tells them, (probably referring to this Command, *Cap.* 13.) *Deut.* 18. *ver.* 10, 14. withal, this very People had seen Miracles wrought by the *Magicians* in opposition to *Moses*, and thence could not be ignorant that different Powers might possibly work Miracles; who, (as they had also seen from the Things which God wrought by *Moses*, and the stop that he put to the *Magicians* Power,

Power, that there was an *Inequality* nevertheleſs in theſe Powers; and that *among the Gods* there was none that could do as the *Lord their God* had done) ſhould have been conſidered in theſe Circumſtances, by him that would pretend to ſay what Effect the *Miracles* of a *falſe Prophet* ſhould in reaſon have, or be allowed to have, with them; with *them*, that is to ſay, who had an undeniably ſufficient Conviction in Reaſon of the Being and Power of the *One True God* before, and a Knowledge alſo that *other Powers* beſides that of the *Omnipotent God*, might work *Miracles*, but could not ſtand in Competition with *His*; a Thing which they had actually ſeen with their Eyes, as well as they had ſeen the Glory, Greatneſs, and Power of the *Lord their God* in all thoſe *great Acts* which he had done. Had this been taken into Conſideration, there could have been no pretence that the Miracle of a falſe Prophet might give them a reaſonable ground to believe *more Gods than One*; nor that the *Miracles* of the *True God* muſt go for nothing, becauſe of his forbidding his People to hearken to the Miracles of ſuch as he had ſhewn them to be *no Gods*, by the Things that had been done in their Sight, to make it appear that *His Power* was *above* them.

What

What will the World think here of that Concession which this our *Author* hath made to his Scholar's Objection above mentioned? saying, ——*You have objected right, but supposed amiss*; but pretending to shew his Supposition to be *False*, in the only Thing indeed where the Supposition was *Right*, without taking the least notice of the Falshood of his Supposition in those Things wherein he had evidently supposed wrong? The most *Considering*, I am apt to think, as well as *Unconsidering People*, will be likely to *suspect* sooner than *approve* it.

Vid. Epist. Dedicat. Pag. 7.

But I must now consider what our *Author* himself says in the Improvement of his Scholar's Objection: ——" You are by no " means to suppose that God should suffer " such a Prophet to work a True Miracle; for " this would be to tempt People from God " by the same Means he used to keep them " upright; and to confirm the Belief of " Idols by the same Course he took to per- " suade them of the Unity of the Godhead; " namely, by Miracles; which would be " building and pulling down with the same " Hand." But is there any Argument in all this, if it be neither the *same Method*, nor the *same Course*, nor the *same Hand*? A Sign or a Wonder, a single Miracle, or more than one, is not the same Method as Miracles upon Miracles. A Miracle where no Competition is, cannot be the *same Course* as a Com-

Essay, Pag. 59.

a Competition in Miracles, and an Evidence given of a Superiority of Power in that Competition: The *Finger of God*, and the Power of the Devil are not the *same Hand*; nor is it any wonder that the *Devil* should endeavour to pull down what *God* hath built up; nor yet that God should suffer him to attempt it by the utmost of his Power, though this might do even some such Things as God had shewn his own Power by; because God had before sufficiently made known the Superiority of his Power in these Works to the People here concerned, and shewn it in a fair Tryal to be above the Power of such as were Devils and no Gods.

But let us hear further; —— "You see "what a Monstrous Absurdity (says he) "there is in this, that the One and only "True God should let a Man work a Mi-"racle to persuade Men there were other "Gods." It might be an Absurdity indeed if God himself had *done no more*, or *could do no more* to shew, the One and only True God: But he had done *more a great deal* before this, than ever any such False Prophet was or will be permitted to do; and he has always the same Power to out-do and controul all that the Devil or his Agents shall be suffer'd to do for such a Purpose.

Yet

Yet this *Author* says further, "They who "think that God would ever so tempt his "People (let it rather be express'd accord-"ing to the truth of the Case, *suffer his* "*People to be so tempted*, that he might "*prove them*) will be at a loss to find how "it is possible for him to undeceive them." But is this so great an Absurdity? What if God should please never to go about to undeceive such as should be guilty of so great a Crime, as to be drawn off to the worship of Strange Gods, though by the pretence of a Miracle, after so great an Evidence as they had before of the Being and Power of the One True God? Or what if those who think that God may suffer his People to be thus tempted, to prove them; and are of this Opinion, because they think the Scripture speaks it in very plain Words; what, I say, if these should be at a loss to find what way might be taken to undeceive this People so deluded by a Miracle? Are they therefore to give up a Truth, because they cannot tell how to solve a Difficulty lying against it? Or is it not possible for God to undeceive his People in such a Case, because we cannot find a Method for it?

Essay, P. 59, and 60. "A Miracle (says our *Author*) cannot "do it, for 'twas a Miracle led them into "the Error, and unhinged them from the "true Belief of one God. He will therefore be *bold* to say, "That this is a Temp-

"tation

"tation from which there is *no way to* "*escape.*" If he means, *before* their being actually seduced there was *no way of escaping* such a Temptation, he must be told the contrary; a regard to the Charge and Warning God had given them, and their rejecting such a False Prophet according to it, had been the *way to escape.* And to this let there be no Reply, lest it be found to *strengthen the Hands of the Wicked.* If he intends only to say this; That on supposition of their being *once seduced*, there is *no way to escape* from this Temptation: Can he prove that it would not be just in God to leave such, as when they knew the only True God, would nevertheless forsake him, and go after other Gods, *to believe a Lye?* But if God should think fit at any time to go about to undeceive them, I would not have any Man say, that the Temptation he suffer'd them to fall by, is such as there is *no way to escape:* I will make no Question but God can find a way to recover Men from this Delusion; and I persuade my self that *this Author* would willingly be understood as arguing against *Men* only that are of an Opinion different from himself, and labouring to bring these under an Absurdity, in believing that of God which they cannot account for; and that 'twas an oversight in him that he had not made an Exception for what *God* might be able to do in such a Case. But

yet let him be understood only to hold an Argument with Men, he may perhaps find himself to have been too forward in saying what he has said with too much positiveness, and too little consideration. I will put a Case which this *Author* shall never be able to deny but that it's truly put, and parallel every way to that supposed in the *Scripture* that's now in dispute between us, and exactly corresponding in that Supposition which has brought the Sense of this Scripture into debate. The Case that I will suppose, is a Thing that was true in Fact, *viz.* That many in *Israel* were seduced from the *True God* to be Worshippers of *Baal*; I will allow it also to be here supposed, that the Prophets of *Baal* might work *some Miracles*, and that by these the People were seduced; for even this is also probable to be true. 'Tis most likely it was so, from that which is said, *Jer.* 23. v. 13. "*I have seen*
Jer. 23. v. 13. "*folly in the Prophets of Samaria, they pro-*
"*phesied in Baal, and caused my People Israel*
"*to err.*" Something of this kind might probably be when *Israel* was first seduced to the Worship of that Idol: For as the Prophets of *Baal* were many in the Days of *Elijah*, so they had the Confidence not to decline the Challenge of that Prophet; they took the Bullock that was given them for the Sacrifice, and dressed it, and called on the Name of *Baal* from Morning till Noon;

and

and even after the Prophet *Elijah* mocked them, they went on until the time of the Evening Sacrifice, crying aloud, and cutting themselves with Knives and Lancets *after their manner*, until the Blood gushed out upon them. This Proceeding and Attempt of theirs will give us ground to suppose that they had some hope of bringing it to pass, that their Idol God might make a Fire to come down from Heaven in the sight of the People, to consume their Sacrifice; and that they were used to prophesie after this manner; that is to say, to cut themselves with Knives and Lancets, for obtaining the special Assistance of their Idol God in other cases, which 'tis likely they found upon occasion, in the use of these Superstitious Rites; and this might encourage them to undertake what they did. 'Tis very probable therefore that I have not supposed amiss, in putting the Case, That the People of *Israel* were seduced by some Miracles to the Worship of *Baal*, seeing that his Prophets did not stick at making an Attempt towards a Thing strange and miraculous. Now as the Almighty God found a way by his Prophet *Elijah* in this Case to undeceive this People, whosoever has taken notice of that Transaction, methinks should not be at a loss to find a way for God to undeceive a People seduced to Idolatry by the Miracles of a False Prophet. 'Tis without all doubt, that

as in this Case the Challenge of *Elijah* to these Prophets of *Baal* to prepare their Sacrifice, and call on the Name of their Gods, as he on the Name of the Lord, and for the *God* that should answer by *Fire* to be God, was a Means to undeceive the deluded People, and cause them on sight of the Event to fall on their Faces, and say, *The Lord he is the God; the Lord he is the God:* So the confronting of such Miracle-workers at any time by a True Prophet assisted by the Power of God, such a one's Challenge of them to a *Competition*, and the *Stop* that he shall give to their Power, shall at any time whenfoever God pleaseth to send a Prophet for this purpose, prove the others to be *False Prophets*, and their *Idols* to be *no Gods*.

Let not now this our *Author* go about to give countenance to his False *Hypothesis*, by vindicating God's Justice in this Proceeding in a wrong way; I will make no Question but the Justice of the Almighty shall appear in Truth better a great deal than in that which is False: As there is no need of any one's talking *wickedly*, so neither is there any need of our supposing *falsly* for God. It shall be no impeachment of either God's Goodness or Justice that he *permit* that Sign or Wonder to come to pass, which might be foretold by a *False Prophet* (even though it were supposed a thing foreknown by him, and such as could not be foreknown by him

with-

without the assistance of some *Dæmon*) with design to persuade to Idolatry: Not even though God could prevent it if he saw fit, and by not preventing, suffers this Temptation to be laid for such as will be so foolish and so wicked as to fall into it: Justice will not constrain him to prevent it, although he see that a wicked People will be seduced by occasion of it; sufficient Proof having before been given of his Omnipotent Power, and therein of his being the only True God, and sufficient Caution against Idolatry, and against False Prophets that might attempt to seduce them to it: And the Infinite Goodness of God having employed that Power which had shewn it self infinite to them in its mighty Works, in doing these Miracles for their benefit, might be well allowed surely after this, to prove this People, that it may be known whether they love the Lord their God. "If this be a Temp-
"tation, God will venture it, as well he
"may; he will permit this Sign or Won-
"der to come to pass, and will not go out
"of the appointed Course of his Providence
"to hinder it, that he may see whether his
"People will remember and obey his Warn-
"ings and his Precepts." I have used here for the most part our *Author*'s own Words, that it may be seen that the very same things which he has said to vindicate God's Justice upon his False Supposition, will vindicate it

Essay, Pag. 61.

upon that which is the True one; that is to say, in the Case of God's permitting a Man to work a Real Miracle, who may go about to seduce to the Worship of other Gods; God cannot in this Case be said to *intend* the Seducing the People, it's the Devil and his Instruments and Agents that are the Tempters, and that form the Temptation: God indeed makes an use thereof to *prove* his People, and what he, properly speaking, can be said to intend, is the *Prevention* of the Effect of this Temptation, as to the *Devil's* Purpose, and the Evil Intent of his Agents; which is God's End in the Warning, and Caution, and Charge given to his People, not to *hearken to such a Prophet, even though the Sign he gave should come to pass.*

Let not our *Author* then pretend to say *for God* in this Case, "If God indeed, *after* "*this Prophet had endeavoured to entice the* "*People to Idolatry*, had given him the Pow-"er of working a Miracle, he had in some "sense tempted his People by that Miracle, "for then his Miracle had given him Cre-"dit in that he should afterwards deliver as "his Doctrine." As though he had found a way for God's Justice to be safe, if we would admit his Supposition, that in case this Scripture be understood to speak of Miracles, it should be thought to be only of a Prophet that had been *formerly* enabled by

Essay, Pag. 63.

God

God to work Miracles. Were it to be supposed indeed, that God gave this False Prophet the Power to work this Miracle, there would be need of this his Supposition; for if *God himself gave the Power*, he must be the Agent to give Credit to this False Prophet, and would by that have an actual hand in the Temptation: But as this is not the Case in this Scripture, which plainly supposeth the False Prophet to speak of, and promise to the People a Sign or a Wonder, *when he said to them*, Let us go after other Gods; and that this Sign or Wonder of which he spake to them then, came to pass according to his Word: I will not doubt but that God's Justice shall be safe in the very Case this Scripture speaketh of; that is to say, whilst God permitteth the False Prophet to work a Miracle at the time when he seeketh to seduce, and even though he suffer the Thing to come to pass foretold for this very purpose: It cannot with any Reason or Justice be said in this Case, so long as the Hand of God is not in the Miracle, that God *tempteth* his People to Evil: In one, which is the good Sense of the Word *tempteth*, that is to say, tryeth or *proveth*, it may; but in the ill Sense of the Word, as *tempting to Evil*, the Wicked Spirit, and the False Prophets his Agents, are only concerned; these are they that seek to seduce, and that act in this wicked Work: God on-

ly *permitteth* those, and suffereth their Work to come to pass, to *prove* indeed his People, but with an intention of preventing the Evil of the Temptation, by the Notice and Caution given them before. This *Author* therefore has not dealt fairly, as he seeks to insinuate, that those who are of a different Opinion from him, as to the Sense of this Scripture, do generally so understand it; as if God who permitted this False Prophet to work a Miracle, should permit *it in order to seduce them:* Whereas what we think, is, that the *whole purpose of seducing* is in the *Devil* and *his Agents* that labour to seduce: The *Use* which God makes of this their Evil Purpose, is to *prove* his People; and if the Means by which this is to be done, must be supposed to come within his Intent in the Permission, yet the *Evil* therein ought not to be supposed within that Intent; for that the Caution given to *prevent their being seduced thereby*, doth plainly shew it God's Intention to prevent the *Evil* of this Temptation. But he seems to press our Supposition further with this; That it does not assign some other Purpose for which this Miracle should be wrought, than to give the *false Prophet Credit:* As though we were concerned to find a good Purpose for the *Devil*, whom we suppose to be the worker of the Miracle, or his Agents for whom he would get Credit among Mankind. It's enough

for

for us, that what we apprehend to be the *Purpose of God* in this Case, cannot be charged with Evil, and that we are not at any loss for the Reasons of this Permission, nor under any Difficulties about the Event, knowing that God is able to produce *Good out of Evil*, and to controul the Power of *Satan* at his pleasure, whereby this Power of the Wicked One shall turn to his Praise, and the rest of it will he restrain.

There is one Thing which this *Author* has said, that I could not well take notice of until I had done with his Argument; to which I shall however look back, because I think there may be some use made of it. "He "can never think, he says, that *God should* "*enable* a Man to work a Miracle, and then "appoint him to be put to Death for doing "it, as we find it *Deut.* 13. 5. *i. e.* in the "Place and Case we are upon." I am altogether of his Mind in this, and do think the Answer given by his *Scholar* to him; namely, 'Tis not for *working a Miracle*, but for the *ill use he makes* of it, to be very insufficient. And this for the Reason given in our *Author*'s Reply, *viz.* "That he could not "have had such a Powerful Pretence to se-"duce to Idolatry, had not God enabled "him to work that Miracle. And this Scrip-"ture also seems to shew us, that God to "try his People, allowed of the Miracle, in "order to seduce them if they will be so se-

"duced."

" duced." It is very much to me that this *Author* should not see this was an Argument against himself, and find it necessary hereupon to think that which is generally thought, *viz.* That it is not *God*, but the *Devil* that *enableth* this False Prophet to work his Miracles, which God may permit, and yet justly punish this Wickedness.

The End of the First Part.

RE-

REFLECTIONS
ON THE
SECOND PART
OF THE
Essay upon Miracles.

WE are now led by the *Author* of the *Essay*, to consider the Works of our *Saviour Christ*; and must follow him in the Method he proposeth for it; which is (*First*) to consider, That it was expected that the *Messiah* should work Miracles. (*Secondly*) That the *Lord Jesus* did actually work them. (*Thirdly*) For what End he said himself he did them. In the Consideration of which, as his *Scholar* is allowed to make what Exceptions and Objections he can, it will be well if we do not find the *Author* himself designedly leaving room for that purpose.

In

In the first of these I readily agree with this *Author*, That it was expected the *Christ* should work Miracles; as the Prophet *Isaiah* had plainly prophesied of his time, saying; *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing*, &c. Which, though capable of being understood as Metaphorical Expressions, in a *Mystical* Sense, was nevertheless understood and expected by the *Jews*, *literally* to be fulfilled by the *Messiah*; whom the Lord should anoint to preach *glad Tidings to the meek*: (Which made our Saviour bid the Disciples of *John the Baptist*, who were sent to ask him, *whether he were the Christ or not*, to tell their Master what they heard and saw, of the *Blind* being made to *see*, and the *Deaf* to *hear*, and the *Dumb* to *speak*, &c. wherein the Prophecies of the *Messiah* were literally fulfilled.) *Moses* also had said, that God would raise up and send them a Prophet *like unto himself*; which must give the *Jews* good Reason to expect from that Prophet, whom they looked for to come, the *like* or *greater* Works than *Moses* had wrought in the Days of their Forefathers. Therefore the People say, upon their seeing the Works of Jesus; *When Christ cometh, will he do more Miracles* than these which this Man hath

hath done? *John* 7. 31. From which, with several other Scriptures recited by him, our *Author* makes the very Observation I would desire; that is to say, that "It was "foretold by the Prophets, and expected "by the People of the *Jews*, that whenever "the Messiah came into the World, he should "work *great* and *many* Miracles. I wish our *Author* may himself remember this Observation; then we shall not hear henceforth, I hope, that *many Miracles* are no more an Evidence of a Divine Power than *few*, nor that all Miracles are *alike*: For how should the *great* Prophet that was expected, *greater* much than any they had seen, be known and concluded to be *that Prophet that should come into the World*, but only from his working *many* and *great* Miracles; *more*, that is to say, and *greater* than any Prophet they had seen since *Moses*?

Essay, p. 70.

Pag. 66.

This Observation will do well to be reserved by our *Author*, for the *Jews*, against his meeting them, but I fear he will do little good with it; if, when the *Jew* shall come to object to him that Scripture, *Deut.* 13. v. 1. and say, That he ought not to acknowledge any one for a True Prophet, notwithstanding his Miracles, that shall contradict the Law of *Moses*; he give the *Jew* for Answer, That he mistakes the Sense of that Scripture; that what is there spoken, is only of a *bold Guesser* that shall pretend to fore-

Pag. 71.

tell

tell Things out of his own Head, and perhaps something of his saying may come to pass; but as to a Worker of a True Miracle, every such an one is to be believed, though his Doctrine should *contradict that of Moses.* He that would convince a *Jew*, and prevail for our Saviour's Miracles to have Credit with him, must, I dare say, not attempt to perswade him off from that Sense of this Scripture, in which his Nation always understood it; but go the way our Saviour himself did, to obtain his being believed by them for his Works sake: Who, besides the Miracles he wrought, not only press'd them with this, that *Moses wrote* of him; but likewise told them, that *He came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them.* When the *Jew* shall be convinced, that this was indeed the true Intent of our Saviour's Doctrine, effectually to introduce that Righteousness which the Law and the Prophets intended; then can the *Jew* have no Exception against the Miracles of *Jesus*, but must admit them to be a Testimony of his being the *Messiah*, the great *Prophet that was to come.*

As to what this *Author* observes upon the (Second) Point, That our Lord *Jesus* actually wrought Miracles: In this as I agree with him, so he has my Thanks for his Observation, That this appears not only from the Testimony of his *Followers* and

Disci-

Disciples, but also from the Testimony of those who were *neither*; (but who reaped the Advantage of his great Works, as they were cured of their Sicknesses, Diseases, &c.) And even of his *Enemies*, who could not deny (though they were grieved and angry that he had such Power) but that they knew he exercised such Power: As the *Priests* and *Pharisees*, when in Council against him, they said, *What do we? for this Man doth many Miracles.* Their saying that he did his Works by the Power of the *Devil*, by the Assistance of *Belzebub*, does prove the Matter of Fact, that Works of Wonder and Power were done by him; and is as good an Evidence of the same, as any that his own Disciples have given. To which I have only this to add, That what the *Jews* say at this day, the Stories they have invented to make the World believe that the Miracles of *Jesus* were not wrought by the Power of God, do thus far serve us to prove against them, that the Blessed *Jesus* did the Things which the Evangelists, and other his Disciples and Followers have testifyed to us concerning him. I must say, therefore, and acknowledge with our *Author's Scholar*, "That I know not how "any Matter of Fact can be better proved "than this, that our Saviour *wrought Mi-* "*racles.*

Essay, Pag. 73.

But

But a wise Question follows this, and it receives as wise an Answer.

Ibid. Pag. 73. "Would you have me believe (says the "Scholar) and if called upon, maintain, "that every great Work our Saviour "wrought was properly Miraculous?" "I "see no Reason (says the Instructor) to "Believe otherwise; but because we have "described a Miracle as a Work of God, "subverting, changing, or suspending the "known Course and settled Laws of Na-"ture, and appealing to the Senses;——— "and that some Works our Saviour wrought, "may not appear to us to come up fully to "this Description; it may be fit perhaps "not to maintain, that they were every one "of them properly Miraculous, though we "indeed believe they were. I can believe "that of Christ, which I cannot of ano-"ther Man, *&c.*

As to the Question thus asked, if I am obliged in Charity not to think Evil of the *Dialogue-Writer* for framing it, and the Answer to it; I must nevertheless not omit to take notice, that the Question and Answer come in a very improper place: Is a *Divine* to observe, that it was prophesied of the *Messiah* that he should work Miracles, and that the Blessed *Jesus* wrought so many and so great Works as proved him to be that *great Person* that should come, and that the matter of Fact; *i. e.* his having wrought such

Works

Works is undeniable, being Atteſted not only by the Diſciples and Followers of Chriſt, but by Perſons unconcerned with, and even by the Enemies of him and his Doctrine: And ſhall the ſame Perſon immediately make it a Queſtion after this, Whether he is to Believe and Maintain of thoſe *great Works* our Saviour wrought, that they were all properly Miraculous? Is not this to render queſtionable again, what might before have been thought to have been put out of all doubt? Pray what does the Teſtimony of our Lord's Diſciples and Followers; the Teſtimony of thoſe who were Cured of their Diſeaſes; the Teſtimony of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, who ſaid, this *Man doth many Miracles*; what does all this ſignify, if after all it cannot be maintained, that theſe his *great* Works were *Miraculous*? But it will be ſaid, the Queſtion maketh not a doubt of *all*, but ſome only. Right; but the Queſtion referreth to the *great Works* of our Saviour; that is to ſay, to ſome or other of thoſe Works which were taken and eſteemed, and teſtified to be Miraculous by our Lord's Diſciples and Followers, and ſo owned by the *Jews*: If underſtood only to refer to the common Actions of our Saviour's Life, it would be altogether Impertinent; but if it refer to any whatſoever of thoſe *great* Works of Power which our Saviour wrought, to ſhew that he was the

Messiah, and that *God was with him*; it does directly call in question all the Evidence we had before. For if the Disciples and Followers of our Lord, took any Works of his to be Evidences of a Divine Power with him, which were not really such, and which cannot be maintain'd so to be; what becomes of the Testimony of such as had not their Senses about them to know a Miracle, but mistook it in many Cases? (In *most* Cases, for ought I see by this our *Author*'s Account, whom we shall find to admit but a very small Number of Christ's Works to be properly Miraculous: *Four* Instances he gives us of that kind, and *some such like*, which reduces the *many* Miracles of our Saviour to a Number very small and inconsiderable.) An Infidel, I doubt, would be glad of this Advantage, to render their whole Testimony questionable, and such as cannot be relied on; for that they knew not how to distinguish a Miracle by their Senses, (a Thing so easily distinguishable, according to this our *Author*, as for a Man to know a *Cane* from an *Eel* in in his hand;) and therefore can be little depended on for the Accounts they have given us, even as to those Facts which upon their Relation might be thought by us to be *properly Miraculous*; but that their Mistakes in so many Things, must leave some doubt, whether they were proper and competent

Judges

Judges of Facts of this Nature. Nor will the Testimony of the Enemies of Christ stand us in much stead in this Case; for that they, it seems, took those Facts for Miracles, which a Christian cannot undertake to maintain to be so.

But do not I go too far? Our *Author* says, "He sees no reason but to *believe* the "Works of our Saviour to be Miracles; "though they need not be *maintained* to be "such." Why (give me leave to say) should we believe those Works of our Saviour to be Miracles, which cannot be maintained to be such? I do not see, that any thing can be a Ground or Reason for us to believe them such, but what will afford us sufficient ground and reason to maintain them to be such. Any thing less, I am sure, must render our Faith precarious.

But this *Author* has given us a Reason, such as it it is, for what he says, *viz.* "Be-"cause we have described a Miracle to be "a Work of God, subverting, changing, "or suspending the known Course and settled "Laws of Nature; ——and some of our "Saviour's Works may not appear to us to "come up fully to this Description, &c. Very well! Because this Author has of his own Head pretended to give us a Definition of a Miracle, and some of our Saviour's Works may not appear to us to come up to that Description, &c. One would have

thought the Foresight of this should have given our *Author* cause to think, that there would be a Mistake in this his Definition of a Miracle; or at least now finding our Saviour's Works not to come up many of them to it, this should have made him look back, and examine again the Definition he had given us of a Miracle; rather than say any thing that might render questionable any part of the Testimony left us upon record in Scripture, concerning the Works of Christ; or insinuate a Thing which would indeed be a Reflection upon our Saviour himself, that he should do any of his great Works, and offer them to the World as Signs of a Divine Power assisting him; which themselves carried no such Evidence along with them. O! but *our Author* says, "He can believe that of Christ, which he "cannot of another Man, although he see "the same Effect produced; because the "same Effect may proceed from different "Powers and Causes; and because another "Man may do without a Miracle, what Christ "really did by Miracle." But might not an Unbeliever think, that the first Disciples and Followers of our Lord could believe as much in his Favour as this *Author*; and if so, their Testimony amounts to no more than this, That Jesus Christ, as they believe, did that by Miracle, which another Man may do without a Miracle; and consequent-

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ly his Works are no Evidences of a Divine Power. This they cannot manifest according to our *Author*'s own way of Arguing, *Pag. 6th*, if any less than a Divine Power can work them; nor can they Attest to *Jesus Christ*'s being sent of God, if they are such Effects as may proceed from *different Powers* and Causes; if another Man can do without a Divine Power, what I think Christ did by it. All these Works of Christ which I believe only, and think Christ might do by a Divine Power, but which I cannot maintain to be Miracles, because another Man might have done them without it, must go for nothing, because they prove nothing with Certainty, of God's Power being with him.

But some there are of our Saviour's Works, which this *Author* will insist upon to be truly Miracles; namely, "His turning Water into Wine; His Walking on the Seas; His Feeding Five Thousand People with five Loaves and two small Fishes; and his raising up the Dead; and some such like." But will these *Four* only, with *some such like*, be a Number sufficient to prove *Jesus* to be the Prophet spoken of, that should be *like unto Moses*; which, as this our *Author* owns, should especially appear in his *working Miracles*? "For that he could be like him in nothing more, to the Honour and to the Purpose of a Prophet?" The *Jews* Com- Essay, P. 67.

putation of the Miracles of *Moses*, (that is to say, which were wrought by him, and on his account;) makes them upward of Seventy. I shall not examine the Exactness of their Account; let that be as it will; 'tis sure, *Four* and *some others*, are not a Number that can compare with *Moses's*. And that Saying of the common People among the *Jews*, *When Christ cometh, will he do more* Miracles *than this man hath done?* must go for little, if the greater part of the Works which *Jesus* did, and were thought to be Miracles by those who thus reasoned about him, were not really and truly such. Very little would be left us, if this were so, to prove, that *this* is He *who was for to come*; and the *Jews* have a great deal to say for themselves, why *they still look for another*; for that there hath not as yet arose a Prophet since in *Israel* like unto *Moses*; whom the Lord knew *face to face*, *in all the Signs and the Wonders* which the Lord sent him to do, and in all the *mighty hand* which *Moses* shewed in the sight of all *Israel*. How much more, if any of those *Four* which this *Author* has picked out to insist upon, should not appear to be more incontestable Proofs of a Divine Power, than others that he has given up, and yielded not to be so. It is my Belief and Profession, That all the *great* and *mighty* Works of our Saviour's doing, are such as do plainly speak a Super-

natural

natural and Divine Power; and (I think) they may, and ought to be maintained to be ſuch. But, from our *Author's Hypotheſis*, there might be found Occaſion and Advantage, to diſparage and conteſt ſome even of thoſe Works, which he has picked out, and undertaken to inſiſt upon as truly Miracles. The *Water turned into Wine* may be excepted againſt; becauſe 'tis poſſible to bring Water to have the Taſte of Wine, and to be ſo like it in all reſpects, that a nice and curious Palate ſhall ſcarcely diſtinguiſh it. This in reality, however, is no Objection againſt our Saviour's Miracle, when the Circumſtances of his Fact are conſidered; which will prove it not to be the Effect of Art or Skill, but a Work of Abſolute Power, changing the Nature of the Water at once, and not in any natural or artificial Way by gradual Alteration. Thus our Lord's *Walking upon the Sea*, might be conteſted, according to this *Author*'s Argument upon the Caſe of *Habakkuk*'s being conveyed through the Air by an *Angel*; which, he ſays, he ſhould not account to be a Miracle, becauſe he knows not but the Power of the Angel might ſuffice for the doing it. Thus walking on the Sea, which is as poſſible as paſſing through the Air, (or rather more, this being a Fluid that will bear ſome Bodies of Weight, which the other will not;) would be no

Miracle if a Spirit should assist in it; because the Power of a Spirit might suffice for it. And even according to the Opinion of those who saw our Lord walking upon the Sea, and thought it to *be a Spirit*, it might be, that a Spirit might help a Man to to walk upon the Sea. Whence this Miracle would be contestable from the Sentiments of them that saw it, and attest it to us, if our Author's Supposition were good, That a Thing can be no Miracle, which we do not know but the Powers of an Angel (or Spirit) may be sufficient for. Nevertheless, this does not at all lessen the Work of our Saviour, nor hinder me from maintaining the same to be a Miracle, and so plain a Proof of a Divine Power assisting him, that no Man shall be able with Reason to contest it. For I shall insist upon it, that 'tis a Work plainly above all Human Power, and consequently such as necessarily supposeth the Assistance of some other Power, and is therefore a Miracle, let that other Power invisible be what it will. The only doubt can be, Whether the Power assisting were that of God; the Proof of which will be made out otherways than from the Work it self: (as will be seen hereafter) but being once made out, will conclude this and all his other Works to be of God. Thus Two of the Miracles pitched upon to be maintain'd, tho' good in themselves, might be

be contested upon this *Author*'s Principles. There are Two more, however, incontestable Proofs remain; and I allow them so to be; and so likewise are the other; for that is incontestable, which cannot with Reason be contested or gainsayed: That cannot either of the other Two, nor indeed any of our Saviour's great and mighty Works, which are left us upon record as Works of Wonder and Power done by him; that is to say, any of *those Signs* which *Jesus* did in the presence of his Disciples, and which are written, *that we might believe* that *Jesus is the Christ the Son of God.* Otherwise the Two that remain good upon this *Author's* Principles, being no other in their kind, than what have been done by Prophets before; as by *Elijah*, in the Case of the Widow's *Cruise* of *Oyl*, and Handful of *Meal* in a *Barrel*; upon which the *Prophet*, and *She* and *her House* did *eat* many days; and in the Case of *her Son*, whom he *raised from the dead*: And likewise by *Elisha*, when he multiplied the *Widow's Oyl* for the Payment of her Debts; and when he satisfied an Hundred Men with a few Loaves of Barley, so that they eat and left; and in the raising of the *Shunamite's Son*; will hardly be sufficient to prove this to be the Prophet that should be raised up *like unto Moses.* Which must needs leave the unbelieving *Jews* a greater Advantage against Christianity,

John 20. v. 30.

1 Kings 17. v. 15. and 18.

2 Kings 4. v. 6, 32, 44.

stianity, than I can in Charity think this our Author designed to give them.

To prevent any such Advantage to the Adversaries of our Religion, I must therefore not only say with this our *Author's Scholar*, That I allow these which he has mentioned of our *Saviour*'s Miracles, to be *Incontestable Proofs* of a Divine Power; but further absolutely, that I cannot consent to part with any other of Christ's Miracles, though to me they may seem comparatively less. *Nor I neither* (says this our *Author*.) What then have we had this Question and this Answer for? "Let us part (says he) with "nothing but our Mistakes." This I like well, as I did his other Saying; but I hope we have had no Mistakes concerning our Saviour's Miracles. If we should have had any Mistakes concerning these, I fear lest we be forced to part with the Miracles also.

Essay, p. 74.

Yet this *Author* has something to propose that may convince us of a Mistake, and 'tis in one of our Lord's most stupendious Works, *viz.* His *rebuking the Winds*, when he was with his Disciples in a Ship on the Sea, in a Tempest.

Matth. 8. v. 23.

In reference to this, our *Author* says to his *Scholar*, "Were you ever at Sea, and "observed how suddenly the most Furious "Winds have been laid, and how almost in "an instant a Calm has succeeded to a great "Storm?

" Storm? The *Scholar* it ſeems had been at Sea, and made the Obſervation he deſired, and agrees with him in it: And "what (ſays " this *Author)* if ſome bold Paſſenger had " at that inſtant *rebuked the Winds*, and bid " them ceaſe, and they had ceaſed immedi- " ately? Would you have concluded pre- " ſently that ſuch an Event was miraculous, " or would you have thought the Man had " ſpoken audaciouſly and luckily?" Here truly the *Scholar* replies, " Audaciouſly and " luckily, ſince the Winds might have then " ceaſed, though he had held his Tongue." But (replies our *Author*) "If you had ſeen " our Saviour Chriſt do the ſame Thing in " the ſame manner, you would have con- " cluded *He* had exerciſed a Divine Power; " and yet the Event is alike in both Caſes; " but you know how different Perſons they " were?" Here this *Author* has ſhewn his Skill in writing *Dialogues* to the purpoſe; but ſo much of it, I doubt, as will ſhew him to have a greater ſhare of Cunning than Integrity: One of the greateſt of our Saviour's Miracles is here repreſented to be an Event that might have hapned by meer chance; by which the World is to be convinced of its great Miſtake in apprehending, or at leaſt inſiſting upon it as a Miracle. After this is done in a Fraudulent *Dialogue*, we have a *Salvo* that is to make all well again, only that our *Author* may ſecure him-

ſelf

self a safe Retreat, if it should be proved against him, that our *Saviour's* Work was *really miraculous*, and if he should find himself too much pressed on the account of his Attempt to render it otherwise. He would have us therefore after all, *believe* it to be a Miracle in our Saviour, though it cannot be maintained to be such; there might be no Reason to conclude it to be a Miracle in *another*, but we do well to believe it such in *him*, as knowing what sort of Person he was. Thus the Miracle is left wholly percarious; we do well to believe it such, in reference to our Saviour's Person, but there is no Reason to believe it such from the Thing it self.

I shall not go about to cut off our *Author* from his Retreat, but allow him to go back by his *Covered way*: Nevertheless I am concerned to oppose him in the Step and bold Attempt he has made against our Saviour's Work; which I do not question but to prove miraculous in its Nature as well as in its Circumstances, such as must have been acknowledged a Miracle in any Man that had done it, and must in any one that shall do the like; not doubting but to shew also this *Author's* Observation to be false, or not to the Matter; and likewise, that the Case put by him upon it, is so different from that of our Saviour's, that no one that will pretend to put it as a Parallel Case, shall be able

to

to clear himself from the suspicion of a wilful Misrepresentation.

And the first thing that I shall for this purpose consider, is our *Author's* Observation, and his way of bringing it in——"Were you ever at Sea, *&c.* This is to insinuate, that what might first lead into the Mistake of *this* being thought a Miracle, might be the Ignorance of the Persons present at, and Witnesses of it: These, 'tis likely, were *never at Sea*, and so were incompetent Judges of the Miracle, as being Strangers to the Things that Mariners observe to happen usually at Sea. But this Insinuation shall be no prejudice in our Lord's Case; for those who were with him in the Ship, were his Disciples; several of these, as *Peter*, *James*, and *Andrew*, and *John*, were Sea-faring Men, (they were Fishers by their Calling, accustomed to, and experienced in Sea Affairs, and the Dangers of the Sea): These therefore as they must be supposed Competent Judges of the *Jeopardy* and Danger the Ship was in, so must they be supposed as skilful in making Observations of the Winds and Weather at Sea, and of what Alterations happen therein, and thereby, as our Author, or his Scholar. Yet these seeing what our Saviour did, *marvelled*, saying, *What manner of man is this*? They *feared exceedingly* (says another Evangelist:) And another, These *being afraid*, *wondered*, saying one to another,

another, *What mannner of man is this?* Yet it seems this *Author* was not afraid to bring his Observation against their Testimony and Experience, and against the Miracle that made them to fear the Divine Power that wrought it. But that we may speak with more certainty to the Case, let us consider the Fact, and the Circumstances thereof, and put together the several, but well agreeing Relations that we have of it. All the Relations agree that the Persons in the Ship with *Jesus*, were his *Disciples*; (competent Judges, as I have before observed, as of the Jeopardy that they were in, so likewise of the Wind, and Weather, and Accidents at Sea.) And as for the Description of the Case and its Circumstances, *There arose a great Tempest in the Sea* (saith St. *Matthew*) σεισμὸς μέγας it is in the *Greek*, a great Commotion and Rage in the Sea there was, insomuch that the Ship was *covered by the Waves:* What occasioned this Commotion, he says not, but *Winds* there were, and these we may therefore suppose were probably the Cause of the Rage the Sea was in. St. *Mark* says, *There arose a great Storm of Wind, and the Waves beat into the Ship*, so that it was *now full of Water*. St. *Luke* says the same; *There came down a Storm of Wind, and they were filled with Water*, and were in *jeopardy*: Our Lord is all the while asleep, and in the Extremity of the Danger awakened (which Cir-

Matt. 8. 24.

Mark 4. 37.

Luke 8. 23.

Circumſtance ſhews it impoſſible for him to have made any obſervation by looking out after the Wind and Weather ;) and as he ariſes thus awakened, he asks his Diſciples *Where was their Faith?* Why did they doubt, and were fearful? (Which Circumſtance, as it ſhews him not to have had any Concern upon his being told of their immediate Danger; ſuch an Unconcernedneſs as could not be thought to be in any Man but him who knew his own Power; ſo it alſo ſhews that before there was any poſſibility of making any Obſervations as to the Danger they were in, or likelihood of the Storm's going over, he told them in effect what he would do): Being aroſe, he *rebukes the Winds and the Sea, and there was a Calm* (ſays St. *Matthew*). *He rebuked the Wind, and ſaid unto the Sea, Peace, be ſtill, and the Wind ceaſed, and there was a great Calm* (ſays St. *Mark*,) referring, as I conceive, to the ſtilneſs of the *Sea*, as well as of the *Wind*. (St. *Luke* ſays) He *rebuked the Wind, and the raging of the Water, and they* i. e. both *ceaſed*, and there was a Calm. Hereupon they who had ſeen this Work of his, *marvell and fear exceedingly; and being afraid*, wonder, and ſay one to another, What manner of Man is this, that he commandeth even the *Winds* and *Water*, that even the *Winds and the Sea obey him?* The Fact was therefore, 'tis plain, not only the *rebuking the Winds*, but the *Sea* alſo,

and

and the Event was, that the *raging of the Waters*, as well as *the Wind*, *ceased*; *both* ceased, and there was a Calm. Now as for this *Author*'s Observation at *Sea*, "that the "most Furious Winds are suddenly laid, "and almost in an instant a Calm succeeds "to a very great Storm; one would think by the ready assent which his Scholar gives to it, it were such as must be assented to by every body; and yet if the *Calm* he speaks of be understood to refer to the Calm which followed upon what our Saviour did, that is to say, a *Calm* of both *Wind* and *Sea*, it is notoriously false. And whatever Truth there may be in it, if understood only as to the sudden ceasing of the *Wind*, yet will it appear that no Conclusion can with Reason be made from it, that there might be any thing of *Chance* in our Saviour's Case. For (*First*) this is certain, as to Winds at Sea, they are of different kinds, and blow after a different manner; there are sudden Flaws of Wind, which sometimes endanger a Vessel, and perhaps overset it, which come unexpected, and the Blowing and Danger of which is presently over: And again, in uncertain Weather, there are often fierce Winds that come up with Clouds, which blow furiously, until the Cloud is passed over; of the ceasing of which Winds, Sailors perhaps may give some guess. There are strong blowing Winds, that blow without

out intermiſſion, or with very little intermiſſion, during the time of their continuance, which generally ceaſe and go off by degrees: And in Tempeſtuous Weather there are furious Storms of Wind that blow with a terrible fury, but yet with frequent Intermiſſions; and in theſe Intermiſſions perhaps the Wind is ſcarcely felt, and yet the Blaſts by and by return as fierce as ever, but generally the Blaſts are weaker and weaker before they give over. In this difference of Winds and their Blowing, there cannot from any General Obſervation whatever be much concluded for or againſt any particular Caſe. But thoſe of neceſſity muſt be allowed to be the beſt Judges of any Matter extraordinary in the blowing or ceaſing of the Wind, who are preſent at the time, eſpecially if any thing experienced in Accidents hapning at Sea, as theſe Perſons here were, who therefore muſt be allowed to be the moſt competent Judges of what they ſaw. And (*Secondly*) as it muſt not be pretended therefore that any thing can be concluded abſolutely, as to all Caſes, from the uncertainty of the Winds blowing; ſo if any thing could be concluded with any certainty, it would rather be, that no ſuch Thing as this of a Man's *rebuking the Winds*, and their ceaſing immediately, could happen by Chance or Accident: For that ever there was ſuch a Chance in the World, is more, I believe, than

this *Author*, or any one else will pretend to say. And even the uncertainty of the Wind it self, is so far an Argument against the probability of such a Chance, that the odds against such a Chance is more than a thousand to one. So that if I may not be allowed to say such a Chance is impossible, it's certainly the most improbable thing in nature. It is not therefore in Reason to be allowed that this *Author* should put a Case which never was, and which it may be presumed (from the great improbability of the Events following in the way of Chance) never will be attempted; and this barely upon the *possibility* that such a Thing might happen; which I will adventure to say never did happen as yet. And if our Saviour's Miracle stands good until such a Thing does happen in Fact, a Man might almost adventure then to give it up. But (*Thirdly*) if from a bare Possibility of Chance, in respect of the *Wind*'s uncertainty, some doubt might be, whether the *Rebuke of the Winds*, and their ceasing, might be a Miracle in *every Case*; yet could there be no doubt in Reason as to our Saviour's Case, the Circumstances of his doing it considered; that is to say, those that were *Seamen* in the Ship then believing themselves in the utmost Peril, and not observing the least likelihood of the Storms abating; the Ship full of Water, and ready to sink that Minute; him asleep

until

until the Extremity of the Danger, and awakened in that instant, and immediately, in effect, as good as telling what he would do (saying, Why are ye fearful, *O ye of little Faith*, to his Disciples that cried out *Master, Master we perish*); and then instantly *rebuking the Winds*, when as he had not a Minute's time to make any Observation of either the Wind or Weather, and doing this in the Extremity of Danger (such as must reasonably be thought to put any Man into too great a Concern for himself and his Life, ever once to think of, much less to venture on such an *Audacious* Attempt as the *rebuking of the Winds*, if he were conscious to himself, as every Man in the World must be, that he had no Power to controul them.) These Circumstances of the Action, and the Event, considered as coming instantly to pass, do plainly argue that the *ceasing of the Wind* could not be Chance or Accident, but the Effect of his Powerful *Commanding* Word, ought not in Reason to be accounted any other: And indeed if *Circumstances* were not a Reasonable Ground to infer from what Causes Effects we see proceed, there could be little certainty in our reasoning from one to the other: Not to meddle, however, with Instances out of our way: If the Circumstances of a *Fact* in the Case of Miracles, were to signifie nothing, I shall not say that many of our Saviour's Works

would be no Miracles; (for that is what is in dispute): But many of *Moses*'s, and other of the Lord's *Prophets*, which in Scripture are related as Miraculous Works, must no more be so accounted. Thus *Elijah*'s calling for *Fire* from Heaven would be none, because Lightning often happens, and possibly might happen when a Man might call for it. The *Rain* not falling for the space of Three Years and Six Months, and its raining at the end of that Term, might have so happened, whether the Prophet had *prayed* or no. Thus the *Hail*, *Rain* and *Thunder* might have hapned in *Ægypt*, had *Moses* never stretched forth his hand towards Heaven for it; and the same might have ceased when he was gone *out of the City*, though he had not *spread abroad his hands unto the Lord*: Yet *Moses* makes use of this Instance as an Argument to *Pharaoh*, that he should know by it *how that the Earth is the Lord's*. And the *Frogs* which *Moses* brought up out of the Rivers of *Ægypt*, by stretching forth his Hand with his Rod over the *Streams*, and over the *Rivers*, and over the *Ponds* (which in this our *Author*'s Opinion was an undoubted Miracle) might, as many as were in the Rivers, and Ponds, and Lakes, have come up upon the Land of themselves, as sometimes Frogs are known to do, and might likewise have so gone away again; and yet *Moses* tells *Pharaoh*, that by his destroying

Exod. 9. v. 29.

Exod. 8. v. 10.

ſtroying the *Frogs* from him and his Houſes, that they might remain in the River only at the time he ſhould appoint him to do it; *he ſhould know that there was none like unto the Lord God of Iſrael.* Doubtleſs as Frogs are frequently in Lakes and Ponds, and ſometimes come up upon the Land; it was their coming up ſo abundantly out of the Rivers, and their coming and going away at the *word of Moſes*; that is to ſay, the Circumſtances of the Caſe, that proved it to be a Miraculous Work: (For this *Author*, I dare ſay, will find but few Men in the World beſides himſelf of this Opinion, that 'tis as eaſy to bring up a *Million* of *Frogs* out of a River, as *Four and Twenty.*) So likewiſe the *Hail*, *Rain* and *Thunder* in *Ægypt*, notwithſtanding ſuch Things uſually happen in the Courſe of Nature, were miraculous, as coming at the Word of *Moſes*, and ceaſing according to his Word, at the time which he bid *Pharaoh* nominate for it; that is to ſay, from the Circumſtances of their *coming* and *ceaſing*, we muſt in reaſon account this a Miracle; and may not therefore account the *ceaſing of the Wind* inſtantly upon our Saviour's *rebuking* it, any thing leſs than a Miracle: For that this *blowing* where it liſteth, and no Man knowing whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth, and alſo *ceaſing* as it liſteth, and no Man knowing what maketh it to ceaſe, nor when it will ceaſe, 'tis not

Eſſay, Pag. 16.

to be supposed in Reason that it should cease at any Man's Word commanding it, unless that Man had some extraordinary Power to cause it so to do; much less when there are further Circumstances, such as those before mentioned in this Case, to put it beyond all probability of Chance or Accident.

And besides all this, if our *Author*'s Observation be understood to refer to the Calm of the *Sea*, as well as of the *Wind*, (to which if he be not willing it should be extended, 'tis plain that it's nothing to our Saviour's Case, whose Action was the *Rebuking the Winds* and the *Sea* also; and the Event that followed, the *Ceasing* of the Raging of the Waters, as well as of the Blowing of the Wind) that a Turbulent Boisterous *Raging Sea* has immediately subsided, and became still *almost in the Instant* that a Furious *Wind* has intermitted or ceased to blow, I dare adventure to say such a Thing was never known, nor is it possible in Nature: I shall therefore say, that as in this Action of our Saviour's, the Fact was, his rebuking not only the *Winds*, but the *Sea* also; and the Event, that the *Waters* as well as the *Wind* ceased: This was an Event where Chance could have no room. The Raging Fluctuation of the Waters immediately ceasing at the same instant with the Wind, was in it self a Thing preternatural; the Rage of those in the way of Nature always ceasing

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by degrees; for which there is a neceſſary Reaſon in Nature from the Rules of *Motion*; every Thing mov'd by Violence, moving more ſwiftly or ſlowly according to the Force or Strength impreſſed upon it, and every ſuch Motion ceaſing by degrees, not inſtantly, but continuing on proportionably to the greater or leſſer Force of the Impreſſion given it, till the Strength thereof is ſpent and worn away. This is viſibly and ſenſibly perceived in the Motion of a Solid Body, and much more in a Fluid, as in the Fluctuation of the Waters of the Sea, which when agitated, driven and forced by Violent Winds, run together to an extraordinary heighth, and when worked up into a Swell and Rage, never fall and ſubſide at once, but as their Motion abateth, and that by ſlow degrees (ſo ſlow, that I have ſometimes known in ſome Hours the Surface of the Waters has not been ſmooth as in a Calm; as I have likewiſe known the Waves to run high, and the Waters of the Sea to rage at other times, when no Wind has blown at all to put it into a Commotion.) In the preſent Caſe therefore, where there was ſo violent a Commotion of the Waters, that the Ship was *covered with the Waves*, it was eaſie to be ſeen whether the Sea, as well as the Wind were obedient to his *Commanding* Word: And therefore as we find in the Account given us of the Action, that both

the *Wind and the Sea obeyed him*; there can be no Dispute, but as the Work was above all Human Power, so there could be no Chance or Accident in it, it being indeed what could not come to pass in the way of Nature. Therefore I may put it to this our *Author*, that this great Work of our *Saviour*'s was a Miracle even in his own description of a Miracle; there was a Changing of the known Course of Nature, and the Alteration visible and apparent to the Senses and Reason of them that saw the Thing, that perceived both the *Wind and the Sea to obey him*. And 'tis plain to us in the Relation left us of it, that the Spectators accounted it nothing less; for they not only *marvelled* and *wondered* (the Scripture tells us); *i.e.* thought it strange and miraculous, but *feared exceedingly* (which Fear could not be now for the Danger that was over; at least the remains of that Fear could not have been so exceeding great); which probably therefore was a Fear in reference to the Greatness and Presence of the Power which they had seen do such a Work as this: They likewise *reasoned* with themselves ('tis said) saying one to another, *What manner of Man is this?* So that 'tis evident they hence conceived him to be not an Ordinary Man, but some *Great* One, One that had the *Power of God with him*.

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I need not now ſay any thing more to the Caſe which this *Author* has put of a *Bold Paſſenger's rebuking* the Wind; for that 'tis plain 'tis no way parallel with that which it refers to: It has not only leſt out all the Circumſtances of the Fact, but the greateſt and chiefeſt Thing in the Action it ſelf. The Caſe is put, as referring only to the *Rebuking the Winds*, and the Event conſidered likewiſe only in reference to that; not the leaſt notice taken of our Saviour's *commanding the Waters* at the ſame time, nor of the Event as to that; which made appear that the Waters and the Sea, as well as the Wind, obeyed him; which Things could not be ſuppoſed to have come to paſs either *accidentally*, nor even *naturally* together, at the ſame inſtant.

It is but a poor amends this *Author* makes for his diſingenuous dealing, by his ſaying, That he would have us conclude however, that *Chriſt* exerciſed a Divine Power in this Action, for his *Perſon's* ſake, and what we know concerning the difference between him and another Man; when as he intimates that we ought not to conclude ſo of *another* Man doing the *ſame Thing* in the *ſame manner*, though the Event were in all reſpects alike. As it has been ſhewn him (I hope to his Conviction, as well as Shame) that this Work of our Saviour's was in it ſelf not a Precarious, but an Inconteſtible Proof of a Divine

Divine Power, and may be maintained so to be, not only from the Circumstances, but from the Fact it self, and was evidently taken so to be by them that saw it; so he must be content to hear likewise, that from the Relation we have of the Matter, it appears the Spectators of this Action had Thoughts quite different from him of this Work: These, 'tis plain, did not think any thing the better of the Work, nor any otherways of it, for the sake of him that did it, nor on account of any knowledge or good Opinion that they had before of his *Person*; but rather directly the contrary: From the *Fact* they reason concerning the *Person*, saying, *What manner of Man is this?* And from the Nature as well as Circumstances of the Fact, they come to know how different a Person he was from other Men; for their Question implies their Thoughts concerning him; that inasmuch as they had seen him do what no Man ever did, and what they could not think it possible for Man to do, He must be something more than Man, who had shewn a Power that could *command the Winds* and *Sea*.

And this shall suffice here to shew that the *great* Works of *Christ* are not Precarious Proofs, but Proofs beyond all just Exception, of a Divine Power: And this I make no doubt may be maintained (the Nature and the Circumstances of the Actions consider-

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ed) as to all those Acts of Wonder and Power which *Christ* wrought for *Signs* in the presence of his Disciples and Followers, and which are *written of him*, that we may *believe that Jesus is the Christ*. John 20. 30.

I now come with this *Author* to the (*Third*) Thing he intended to shew, namely, The *End* and Purpose for which *Christ* said himself, that he wrought Miracles. And that the End for which *Christ* wrought Miracles was this, "That he might be believed "to come from God, and that what he should "deliver as God's Will, was certainly so," I agree. But as for what this *Author* says is at the *bottom* of this, 'tis more than I know, or than he has yet proved: He and I have gone upon different Bottoms hitherto; and in this I shall not go upon the same with him, yet think I am upon a sure Bottom too: And 'tis this, That the Man who shall by Miracles prove that the *Power of God* is with him, ought to be believed, and his Doctrine received; for that where God is, there is Truth, and God is doubtless with him who shall give us Demonstrations of his Power. But this *Author* will be apt to say, perhaps, If a Miracle be not a Work which none can do except God be with him, how can a Man prove by Miracles that he has the *Power of God?* I take my self to have already cut him off from this Reply: A Miracle indeed must be a Work above Human Power, that no Man

Essay, Pag. 76.

Man can do, unless some Invisible Power be with him, or else it could no ways prove a Power like to that of God: But as Opposite Powers have been known to assist Men to do Works of this kind, to find which is *of God*, I must find which is *superior*; the Power of God I know to be infinite, that must be above all other Powers, that must be unlimited and uncontrouled: Where therefore a Man shall give Evidence by Miracle or Miracles that the *Power of God* is with him; that is to say, can shew me a certain Sign that he acteth by a Power Supernatural, unlimited, uncontrouled, superior to all others, I conclude that God is with him, and that he is for that Reason to be believed in what he delivereth as his Will; for 'tis not to be believed that *God* will give or entrust *His Power* with one that shall deceive. And I do suppose the Power of *Christ* will appear to be the *Spirit and Power of God* from his Works (reserving always the further Light and Evidence, which the Tendency of his Doctrine, and of his Works, and which the Prophecies that were before of him and his Power may give us in the Matter;) which if taken together, very plainly shew the Power by which he acted, to be not only above Nature, but also in it self unlimited and uncontrouled; that is indeed no less nor other Power than that of God.

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The Miracles of Christ, therefore, I agree, "were wrought to testify he came "from God; and that the World might be-"lieve what he delivered from him; or "that God had sent him, which is the same "thing in effect." And that Christ himself appeals to his *doing the Works* that the Father gave him to finish, to the *Works* that he did in his Father's Name; to his doing the *Works of the Father*; as the Evidence and Witness that God the Father sent him; that he was the Christ; that he should be believed, and that it should be known thereby that the Father was in him. And he likewise says, that had he not done those his Works, the *Jews* might have had some excuse for their Infidelity. And I likewise farther assent, that the principal Use of Miracles may be observed, from the Use which our Saviour made of one of his great Works of Power in a particular Case; namely, the Cure he wrought on the *Paralytick*; that is to say, the Argument that he used to the *Jews*, That he being about in a Work which he was going to do before their Eyes, to shew a Power Divine; ought reasonably to be believed in what he had intimated, of his having a Power from God also to *forgive* Sins. That is as much as to say, inasmuch as he had shewn them by his Works that he was of God, it was reason they should believe him, in that which he intend-

Essay, p. 77.

John 5. 36. — 10. 24. — 25. 38.

John 15. v. 24.

Mark 2. v. 3.

intended by the Expression he let fall purposedly, to give them an intimation thereof, and now would plainly tell them, and convince them of by this Work which he was about to do by the Power of God; That he who sent him, had indeed given and sent him with a Commission and Power of *pardoning Sins.* So that from Christ's Appeal to the Miracle he wrought in this particular Case, as well as from his Appeal in general to his *Works that he did in his Father's name*; I agree, that he requires to be, and insists that he ought to be *believed* for his *Works sake.* But all this, I think, may imply too this Supposition; That as concerning his Works, he had made it manifest that they were *wrought in God.* This I take to be meant and implied in his saying, If I do not the *Works of my Father*, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the Works.

John 10. v. 37.

Essay, Pag. 82. John 20. v. 31.

I agree it to be for this Reason, as St. *John* tells us, That the *Signs* which *Jesus* did in the presence of his Disciples, were written and recorded, that we might thence *believe* him to be the Christ: And that St. *Peter* well argued against the *Jews*, That *Jesus* of *Nazareth* was a Man *approved of God*, by the Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which God did by him; as they themselves well knew. Nor is it in the least to be questioned, but that God intended to give

Acts 2. v. 22.

give Credit to the Doctrine of the Apostles of Christ, by the Miracles he enabled them to work; as he wrought with them, *confirming the word with Signs following*; as the Lord gave *testimony unto the word of his grace*, and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by their Hands; as God was pleased to *bear them witness*, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the *Holy Ghost*.

Mark 16. v. 20.

Acts 14. 3.

Heb. 2. 4.

But now having gladly concurred with our *Author* in his Observations thus far, I must here take notice of a Thing that should not be passed over, by any one that would render the Works of *Jesus* an undeniable Proof of his being the *Christ*, and remove all Exceptions that may lie against this Evidence: And that is the Appeal, and the Truth of that Appeal, which our Lord himself made to the *Scriptures*, as testifying and bearing witness to his Person, and his Works; to the *Nature* also and Kind of his Works, as evidencing by what Power they were done; to the *Drift* likewise, and main *Tendency of his Doctrine*; as well to shew whence this Power was, as to convince that his Gospel ought to be received upon the account of its Concurrence with the *former Revelation*, which was already understood *to be of God*.

This Appeal of our Lord's to the *Scriptures*, as testifying and bearing witness to his

his Person and his Works, is most plain; *John* 5. v. 39. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.* And v. 46. *Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.* Observe there the Bent of Christ's Discourse—— To clear that he was the *Messiah*, he produceth the witness of *John* the *Baptist*, v. 33. *Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the Truth*: His own Works; v. 36. *I have a greater witness than that of John*; the Works *which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* The Voice from Heaven; v. 37. *And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath born witness of me*; (whose Voice and Appearance they had not at any time regarded.) But he concludes in *Scripture*, and appeals to the former Revelation as the most undeniable Testimony; saying, *Search the Scriptures, they are they which testify of me.* And again, *Moses wrote of me; had ye believed him, ye would have believed me.* Thus again, from the *Nature* and Kind of his Works, he argueth, and taketh off the *Pharisees* Objection, that they were done by the Power of the Devil; saying, *If Satan cast out Satan, how can his Kingdom stand?* Matth. 12. v. 26. The Sense and Strength of which Argument is this; That his casting out Devils,

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was a certain Sign that the Works he did, were by the *Power of God*, and not by any Power of the Devil; for the Devil could not be thought to act, and (to be sure) would not against himself. And thus the Inference he further makes, is beyond exception; That if he cast out Devils, and did his other Works by the *Spirit* and *Power* of God, then *the Kingdom of God was come unto them*; then it was clear that he was the *Messiah* who was come amongst them, whose Mission God had testified by the Power he had given him to do those Things; which Power he should not have had from God, had he not been his *Christ*. And again, what other Meaning could our Saviour have in that Saying of his— *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil them?*—— but to take away all such Exception, as the *Jews* might have against the receiving of his Doctrine, as they were the Disciples of *Moses*, and *knew that God spake unto him*; and even to oblige them to receive it upon this account, that it was not opposite to, nor destructive of the Law or the Prophets; but sought in the main the fulfilling that *Righteousness* which the Law and the Prophets intended? Thus we find our Saviour also, even after his Resurrection, appealing to the Writings of *Moses*, and all the *other Prophets*; when he expounded

Mat. 5. 17

to his Disciples *the things concerning himself*, *Luke* 24. 27. And thus we find also the Apostles of our Lord, to prove his being the Christ, and to establish their Doctrine which was the same with his; though the Power of God was with them, to give Testimony to the Word of his Grace; arguing with the *Jews* nevertheless, from the *Scriptures*, from the Testimony of *Moses*, and the *Prophets*. Thus St. *Paul*, Acts 17. 2. *reasoned* with the *Jews* out of the *Scriptures*, *opening* and *alledging*, *&c.* that this *Jesus* whom he preached, *was Christ*. And *Acts* 18. 28. of *Apollos*, a Man *mighty* in the Scriptures, it is said, that he mightily *convinced the Jews*, and that publickly, shewing by the *Scriptures*, *that Jesus was Christ*. And, as to the Effect of this Appeal to the Scriptures, it is shewn us in the Instance of the *Beræans*, Acts 17. v. 11, 12. that these *searched the Scriptures daily*, *whether those things were so*; and *therefore many of them believed*. Furthermore, St. *Paul*, Acts 26. v. 22. after the Relation he had made to King *Agrippa* of his Miraculous Conversion, insists upon this as the chief Thing after all; that he had said *none other things*, than those which *Moses* and the *Prophets* did say *should come*. And *Acts* 28. 23. to the *Jews* at *Rome*, whilst he was Prisoner there, ('tis said) he expounded, and *testified the Kingdom of God*; perswading them concerning

Jesus,

Jesus, both out of the Law of *Moses*, and out of the *Prophets*. And *Rom.* 16. 26. he says, his *Gospel* and Preaching of Christ, was *made manifest by the Scriptures of the Prophets*. And 2 *Pet.* 1. v. 17, 18. the *Word* of *Prophecy* is insisted on, as a *more sure Word* than the *Voice from Heaven*; and consequently, as an Evidence and Testimony, greater and *more sure* than that of *Miracles*.

As it is most plain, therefore, that God purposed to give his *Son Jesus*, and his *Apostles* Credit with those to whom they were sent, by giving them the *Power of Miracles*; so it is no less evident, that *Christ* and *his Apostles*, on account of the Revelation that had been before, appeal to that Revelation as testifying of the *Spirit* and *Power* which God had given now to them, by the Prophecies that had been before of the Things that were to come to pass; as confirming, that the Power with them was of God; *Moses* and the *Prophets* having spoken thereof. They prove by this also, that the *Works* they did were by his Power; for that the *Doctrine* which they would have believed upon the Evidence of those Works, was such as tended principally to the fulfilling the Law and the Prophets; herein removing that Objection and Prejudice, which stuck most with the *Jews*, who professed themselves *Moses's* Disciples; shew-

ing the Intention of the Gospel to be, that the *Righteousness* of the Law might be fulfilled. And as the Issue was, that many believed, when they saw the Miracles which *Jesus* and the *Apostles* did, so there was the same Issue from the Appeal to the *Scriptures*, upon searching of which *many also believed*. These were Proofs that were *both* convincing; and as they were offered together by Christ and his Apostles, they may not be separated, the one having a visible and necessary dependance upon the other.

I must provide here, that I may not be understood to think, but that the Works of Christ were of themselves a sufficient Proof that he was a Teacher come from God, and that no Man could do those Miracles which he did, except God was with him: But when I think this, it is in reference to the *Greatness* and *Number* of his Works on the one hand, and the *Nature* of some of his Works on the other; that is to say, those done by him in opposition to the Devil and his Power; as the one of these shew not only that he could not act by the *Power of the Devil*, but likewise that his Power was *superior* to that of Devils, and as his *great* and *many* mighty Works also are an incontestible Proof of his acting by a Power Infinite, Unlimited, and Uncontrouled. Nevertheless, as to those who had received a former Revelation, the *Prophecies* of him

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and of his Works, and of the Things that came to paſs, were the *ſure Teſtimony* from which they might conclude his Works *to be of God*; and this having removed all doubts concerning the Power with him, thoſe Works that he wrought muſt be an allowed Witneſs to the Perſon and his Doctrine: And when the Appeal was carried yet further, that the Law and the Prophets were fulfilled in the Righteouſneſs of the Goſpel, there could no juſt Exceptions remain, but thoſe were left without excuſe, who rejected the Counſel of God againſt themſelves. And as to thoſe who before had not received, but may yet have heard of a former Revelation, it muſt be a great Confirmation to them in their belief of Chriſt and of his Truth, for the ſake of his Works; that a former Revelation, which was eſtabliſhed upon the like Works of Wonder and Power, hath teſtified of this, and giveth a Witneſs to it, not only by its Prophecies of the *ariſing of ſuch a Prophet*, but in the Command it hath given for this Prophet *to be heard*: And that what the *Latter* Revelation hath ſhewn to be the Will of God concerning us, is no other than what the *Former* chiefly intended; which becauſe the former was too weak to bring to paſs, the latter hath in God's time been made effectually to fulfill and accompliſh.

And now I am ready to go forward with our *Author*, who has appointed his *Scholar* to put it to him to account for the *Jewish* Infidelity, under the manifestation of so much Power as Christ exercised, and notwithstanding so many Miracles wrought amongst them. And a great many Reasons (he says) might be assigned, though none sufficient; but that which seems to him the strongest, and most to the Purpose in hand, was this, — "That the *Pharisees* and Leading Men among the *Jews*, had spread it abroad among the Common People, that he dispossessed *Demoniacs* by *Beelzebub* the Prince of the Devils. This indeed they did give out, and this might be one Cause; but I think that a greater which our Saviour assigned, *They hated the Light, because their Deeds were evil*; they were of their *Father the Devil*, and the *Lusts of their Father they would do*: This other was rather their Pretence, and no sufficient Pretence neither, there being no want of Conviction of the contrary. There was great Reasoning among them, that Christ's Works were not the *Works of one that had a Devil*: *Can the Devil* (say they) *open the Eyes of the Blind?* 'Twas the apprehension of many of the People, that the *great Works of Jesus* were too mighty for the Devil's Power. But whether this Reasoning of the People was good or not (as most probably it might hold good,

Essay, p. 85.

John 10. v. 21.

good, taking and considering the Works of *Christ* together ;) our Saviour, however, had said enough himself to take away this Objection which the *Pharisees* made, when he argued with them, *Matth.* 12. 22. That *Satan would not cast out Satan :* So that tho' the Miracles which *Jesus* wrought would turn upon himself, if there had been reason to believe them wrought by the Devil; yet as there was no manner of Reason to think them wrought by his Power, but the contrary, (his Acting in opposition to the Devil, and casting him out of those he had possessed, being a convincing Proof that what he did was by the *Spirit and Power of God*) this set aside their Objection, and proved that which our Lord pressed upon them in the Case, *viz.* That *the Kingdom of God was come unto them :* So that their continuing after this Conviction to impute the Works he wrought, to the Devil's Power, was the greatest of Sins. " But (says our *Author*) to be- " lieve the Devil could do such Works, was " the first Snare they fell into, and would " easily throw them into the other ; and " the People could never have been induced " to believe that *Jesus* wrought great Works " by the assistance of the Devil, unless they " had been first taught that the Devil could " work great Works himself, and also com- " municate such his Power to Men : This " was the Fundamental Error, *&c.* If so, why should not our Saviour then have taken

Essay, p. 87.

notice of this himself, and dispossessed them of that Fundamental Error, and dissipated this Prejudice of the *Jews*? Could he that was the Wisdom of God, and knew the Thoughts of these Men, that they first had within themselves when they were thus *reasoning* in their Minds against him, before they spake openly, be ignorant of the Error that misled them? Or would not he have discovered this Fundamental and Gross Mistake to the *Pepole* at least, if not to them that made the Objection against him? Doubtless he would have discover'd their Fundamental Error, and argued them out of it, so to have put away all Exceptions against himself and his Miracles at once, and prevented the falling of any into so great a Sin as that of *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, by one such Confutation? But instead of this our Lord gives an Answer that turns upon a quite contrary Supposition; it is an Answer indeed most convincing that his Works were not of the Devil; but it leaves, yea rather tacitly confirms the Thoughts they had of the Devil's Power being very great, and also of his communicating his Power unto Men: It leaves them in the same Ideas they had concerning the Power and Operations of the Devil, but proves the Works of *Christ* to be from another, and this a Superior Power. Therefore I am surprized to see this *Author* go so far out of his way to fetch in that by head and shoulders, with a Question that his

Matt. 12. v. 25.

Design

Design had little to do with; which is in its self as great an Argument as any Man would or need desire against his *Hypothesis*: Observe the Answer, *Matth.* 12. v. 25. "*Every Kingdom divided against it self is* "*brought to Desolation; and every City or* "*House divided against it self, shall not stand.* "*And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided* "*against himself, How shall then his Kingdom* "*stand?*" This Answer hitherto does not in the least deny what they had in their Thoughts of the Devil's Power to do great Things, but removes the Objection from himself and his Works, as being *contrary* to *Satan*, wrought in opposition to him, to turn him *out of those he had possessed.* After this he has another Argument, *viz.* "*If I* "*by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do* "*your Children cast them out? therefore they* "*shall be your Judges.*" On these Words Interpreters have put different Senses, but whatever Sense can be understood, will leave them to the same Thoughts they had of the Devil's Power. Some suppose the Question to imply, that their *Children could not do any such Thing*; and our Saviour as intending to say, If the Devil would assist in such a Case, and act against himself, why are not your Children (who are great enough with the Devil to have his Assistance) able to do it? Others think there *were Exorcists* among the *Jews*, who by the *Name* of the most *High God* did sometimes do Things of this nature;

and

and so our Saviour's Question is to be understood thus; Why may not I cast out Devils by the Name and Power of God, as well as your Children and Disciples (who being evil and wicked, are more to be suspected of having correspondence with Satan's Kingdom) do, or pretend to do? When they in the *Name* of God go about to do it, they affirm it to be by the *Power of God*, and so do I; and you allow it in them to be so, why should you not think of me as you do of your own? The Answer understood either way, owns the Supposition: The first plainly, that the Devil might, but would not assist to such a Work. The Second tacitly, whilst it's urged that they ought not to think other and worse of him than they did of their own Disciples, who were more to be suspected of a Correspondence of this nature, being wicked Persons. 'Twas a much like Argument of our Lord's, when he said, *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* They had no Fault nor Imposture to lay to his Charge, nothing to produce or prove against him, and why should they have suspicious Thoughts of him more than of others amongst themselves, that did, or might attempt to do what he had done? Upon these two Arguments our Lord makes the Inference I have taken notice of before, namely, *But if I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God*, then the *Kingdom of God is come unto you.*

John 8. 46.

you. But being willing wholly to remove an Objection ſo prejudicial to the Deſigns and End of his Miſſion, and ſo dangerous to the Souls of them that might be miſled by this Suggeſtion, he returns again to prove himſelf and his Works free from any Correſpondence or Communication with the Devil; ſaying thus, " Or elſe how can one " enter into a *Strong* Man's Houſe, and ſpoil " his Goods, except he firſt bind the Strong " Man; and *then* he will ſpoil his Houſe? " What does this Similitude and Argument but repreſent that *Satan* was ſtrong indeed and powerful? But he diſpoſſeſſing him of his Goods, turning him out of thoſe whom he *poſſeſſed*, had ſhewn that he had maſtered him, and conſequently that he did not for this make uſe of *Satan*'s Power, but a Power that was greater than his, which they ſaw employ'd to his Overthrow. And further our Lord ſays, " *He that is not with me, is* " *againſt me; and he that gathereth not with* " *me, ſcattereth abroad:* That is to ſay, They knew the Proverb, He that is not on one's ſide, is not for a Man's turn or aſſiſtance: He therefore plainly coming and acting againſt *Satan*, as appeared by his *caſting out Devils*, could not be ſuſpected to have Correſpondence with him, but had made it appear ſufficiently that he was an Enemy to the Devil and his Works. All this long Reaſoning might have been ſpared, and the

Thing

Thing answered at once, if it could have been answered with Truth in this *Author*'s way; and that must have at once removed all Objections, and left no room for Error, if this had been the *Jews Fundamental* Error, that they thought the Devil could do great Works, when indeed he could do none. Would Christ have argued with them so long, and not have restored them to a right Sense in this Matter? I for my part can never think that *Christ* instead of dissipating their Prejudices, would have left and confirmed them (as this his way of reasoning must confirm them) in their Error, had this been an Error. But he went another way, we see, to remove their Prejudices, and as the Scriptures had given them those Ideas they had of the Power and Operations of the Devil, necessarily must go the way he did: And *Jesus*, who was Truth it self, needed not to go about to clear himself and his Works from Suspicion by a Falshood, being able to clear himself and them by Truth irresistible.

Essay, p. 88. Here I must recapitulate with our *Author* what he has Proved, and what I Agree to; and as I do this, shall insert what additional Things are also Proved. As first, that it was foretold by the Prophets, that *He who was to come*, the *Christ*, or the *Messiah*, should work great Miracles; and that 'twas accordingly expected by the *Jews* he should

ſhould do ſo. (And here I muſt put this *Author* in Mind, that he had obſerved the *Meſſiah* ſhould work *many* and *great* Miracles ; and that the *Jews* expected him to work *many* and alſo *great.*) Next, that *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* did actually work Miracles, and by them proved himſelf the Chriſt, and was received as ſuch by thoſe who cloſely attended to his Works. And I have added to this, that *Jeſus* did actually work *many* Miracles ; and proved alſo, That the *many* great Signs which he ſhewed to the end we ſhould believe him to be the *Chriſt*, were not Precarious Miracles, but inconteſtible Proofs of a Divine Power acting and being with him ; and that 'tis not for his *Perſon*'s ſake that his great Works are to be believed Miraculous, but rather the Works themſelves being Miraculous , *ſhew us what manner of Man he was*, that this was in truth the *Chriſt*. And laſtly, that *Jeſus* himſelf told the *Jews*, that God had given him Power for theſe works, on purpoſe to convince the world that he came from God, and was the Chriſt, *&c.* and that Miracles were his Credentials. To this I have added, that Jeſus likewiſe told the *Jews* , that *Moſes wrote of him* ; and that if they believed *Moſes*, they would have believed him ; and bid them to *ſearch the Scriptures* and they ſhould there find his Credentials , that they *teſtified of him* ; and that Chriſt argued

with

with the *Jews* concerning the Power by which he did his Works; and shewed them from the Nature of his Works that they could not be of the *Devil*, but must be done by the *Spirit* and Power of God: And likewise from the purport of his Doctrine; *viz.* its *fulfilling the Law and the Prophets*, that they were obliged to receive it as being consistent with the former Revelation, which was with them out of all doubt.

I do not know therefore (to use this *Author*'s words) that any thing can be plainlier proved from the Scriptures, than these Points; and must hereupon make this Consequence which follows unavoidably; and therefore I should say rather, makes it self, *viz.* That the Doctrine of Jesus Christ is true, and his Gospel ought to be believed, because it was Prov'd, Establish'd and Confirmed by Miracles, (I add) and not only so, but consonant to and testified by the Scriptures and the former Revelation, which God had established and confirm'd by Miracles before, (this testifying of him and of his Works and Doctrine) and because it was also built upon such Works as for their kind, and nature, and number have put it beyond doubt or all just exception at least, that they were the Effects of a Divine Power.

Essay, Pag. 89. Well! but our *Author's Scholar*, who has always made this Consequence in his Mind, "has

" has ſo often ſeen it overthrown (he ſays) " by Writers of all ſorts, both Ancient and " Modern, very good Chriſtians all and " very Learned, that he knows not what to " think of it." That this ſhould be overthrown by good Chriſtians, is ſomething ſtrange: But I muſt gueſs at his meaning; it does to him ſeem to be overthrown in effect, by an Opinion commonly held among Chriſtians; namely, " That a Man muſt " not judge of the Truth of a Doctrine by " the Miracles that are wrought in Confir- " mation of it, but muſt judge of Miracles " by the Doctrine they would eſtabliſh." This the *Scholar* and the *Maſter* both conclude to be downright *begging the Queſtion*; and conſequently no ſolid Maxim; and 'tis directly contrary, they ſay, to that which is implied in *Jeſus Chriſt*'s eſtabliſhing his Doctrine upon Miracles.

Before I ſpeak directly to this Caſe, it is fit to be obſerved, that the Writers who have laid down this Maxim or Rule, are of Two ſorts; ſome for inſtance give this for a Rule, but it is with reſpect to a *former Revelation* only; Others lay it down for an *abſolute* Rule. Thoſe that go ſo far as this, laying it down for an abſolute Rule, have this to ſay for themſelves; namely, That Natural Religion and Human Reaſon teach us to diſtinguiſh things morally Good and Evil, and we certainly know one from the other; and like-

likewise that those things that are *morally good*, are certainly to be concluded agreeable to the Will of God, which we know from Right Reason: And by this they say we are to judge of Miracles whether *they be of God*; if Miracles are wrought to establish a Doctrine that is contrary to Right Reason, it must be concluded that they are *not of God*, who would not suffer the World to be deceived by any Power from him; and who cannot be supposed to contradict himself, to overthrow that Light of Reason and the Principles thereof, which he hath implanted in the Human Nature. And as the things which Natural Religion and Right Reason teacheth, are known by the Light of Nature antecedently to any Revelation; but these Doctrines which depend upon Miracles, such as we come to know only by Revelation, even this (they say) is not *begging the Question*, because the Miracles are not judged of by the Doctrines they are used to prove, but by Truths known before antecedently to Revelation; and the Miracles are for Proofs of such Truths as were not known before. How far this will hold good I shall not pretend to say or dispute; it not being my Opinion.

I hold this Rule only with respect to a *former Revelation*. For I dare not say that my Reason is to oppose any thing that Miracles shall be wrought to prove: But must acknow-

acknowledge in Reason that Miracles are a sign of the *Power*, and consequently a Proof to me of the *Will* of God. By my *Reason alone* I am not able to conceive that any one can work a Miracle, but he that has Power from God. As I take all that I see and know of Nature to be the work of God, that is invisible, so when I see Alterations therein, and Effects that are Signs of some great invisible Power, I think God's hand therein; and I cannot imagine that he should use or shew his Power to or for any evil End or Purpose. I cannot by my *Reason alone* be certain that there are any *Dæmons*, either good or bad Spirits; nor know I any thing of their Power. Neither can I by my Reason alone come at any great and certain Knowledge of God, beyond this, that there must be such a Being as is the Cause of all Things, and that he is *Wise*, *Good* and *Great*: And therefore where I see his Power I will not pretend to question his Will. But as I come to see and consider that there are Operations and Effects in the World (such Works of Power as I should have thought none but God could do) to be done nevertheless for different Ends, and in opposition to each other; which in Reason therefore I must think to be the Works of different and several Powers: Hereupon, as my Reason will not allow me to think there can be more Gods than one, I must fall in with the

Opinion of the World, that there are *Dæmons*; and therefore I should desire to see which of these Powers could give me greatest cause to believe it to be the Power of the *Great God*; and which of those Pretenders, acting by the help of such Powers, could give me greatest cause to believe him sent of God; and he that should shew and give the certain Signs of an Infinite Power, and prove himself *Superior*, I should have Reason to think was the Power of God indeed: And after a Revelation once established and received upon an undoubted Proof of *God's Power* and Authority, if any after this shall pretend to do Works of Wonder to have Credit with me, inasmuch as I have known Pretences to be made, and great Things done of this kind by Powers which could not stand in competition with that Power which I have acknowledged; and especially if that Revelation which I have owned, and is with me out of Question, shall have given me warning not to hearken to any such Signs, if wrought to seduce me from that Truth which I have received; I shall certainly think my self bound to examine into the Power working such Signs, to find whether it be of God, and into the Doctrines for which such Signs are wrought, whether they are consistent with that Truth which I have received already; and if found otherwise, conclude these Signs to be the Works

of

of ſome deluding Powers, and not the Works of God, whom I cannot ſuppoſe to contradict himſelf, and who has given me notice that ſuch Attempts would be made to ſeduce from him. Upon the ſuppoſition therefore of a former Revelation received upon undoubted Miracles, and a Notice therein that Pretenders would ariſe (which is the Caſe ſuppoſed as Chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed) I will adventure to ſay, It's *no begging the Queſtion*, to ſay, that we muſt not receive any New Doctrine upon Miracles, but muſt examine the Power working ſuch Miracles, and the Doctrine depending on this Proof, by the Revelation already received, and if that teſtifie of the Power, and the Doctrine be found conſiſtent with that, then are the Miracles to be acknowledged as the Works of God, and the Doctrine to be received; but otherwiſe the Miracles may, and ought to be rejected as not the Works of God; who, as he cannot contradict himſelf, cannot uſe his Power to overthrow what by his Power he has eſtabliſhed. Nor is this any way contrary to what is imply'd in Jeſus Chriſt's eſtabliſhing his Goſpel upon Miracles, but is the Thing he allowed and appealed to, that his own Perſon and Miracles might be received and acknowledged. *Search the Scriptures* (ſays he) *they teſtifie of me*, &c. And again, If I by the *Spirit of God caſt out Devils, then is the Kingdom of God*

come unto you : Implying, that they ought to know assuredly that they were to receive him, for that he had shewn them he did his *Works* by the *Finger of God.*

But there is another Trouble upon this Disputant's Spirits ; " He does not know " what to do with those People, who affirm " that the Devil can also work great Mira- " cles, and can assist wicked Men also in " working them." These are but the same Men that said, Miracles must be judged of by the Doctrine they would establish, and must be brought to, and examined by the former Revelation. This Opinion does not at all void the Purpose of our Saviour, nor the End for which he wrought his Miracles; that is, to gain Belief to his Doctrine. For he appeals to the Former Revelation , that it might be known that he and his Works were of God: He proves from the nature of his Works, that they could not be of the Devil ; and then argues, *If I by the Finger of God* cast out Devils, then is the *Kingdom of God* come unto you. But (says this Disputant) " If the *Devil* can work Miracles " as well as *Jesus Christ*, and Men assisted by " the Devil, as well as Christ's Disciples, " what Proof can Miracles make that a Do- " ctrine is from God ?" This *Novice* must be told, that he has not put his Question upon a right Supposition ; for as there was a precedent Revelation, *there* it must be suppo-

Essay, p. 90.

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ſed one part of his Queſtion muſt have had an Anſwer: For otherwiſe, ſuppoſing the Devil to work Miracles, no Revelation could be admitted upon Miracles wrought by the Power of God, but his Power muſt have been diſtinguiſhed from that of the Devil, and ſhewn *ſuperior* to it; as it appeared to be when God gave his Teſtimony to the Revelation of *Moſes*. And now let his Queſtion be put on the Suppoſition of a Precedent Revelation, and it is nothing; for if by that Precedent Revelation, or by any other way, I can diſtinguiſh that *Jeſus Chriſt* and his Diſciples acted by the *Finger of God*, and that the others *have not God's aſſiſtance*, but do their Works by the help of ſome other Power, then the Doctrine of Chriſt and his Diſciples ſhall be received, becauſe I know of a truth that God is with them; the others Doctrine ſhall not, becauſe I know them not to be of God: And as to the Devil's having a Power to work Miracles, and to aſſiſt Men to do them, the Scripture and that Revelation which was before *Chriſt*, did plainly ſuppoſe and ſay it; as his Revelation and Goſpel do likewiſe ſuppoſe and ſay no leſs of the Power of wicked Spirits, and wicked Men. The Thing has been already conſidered, and ſeen in the Scriptures of the *Old Teſtament*, and there are ſeveral Paſſages in the *New*, of which this *Diſputant* ſeems apprehenſive, which will

put our *Author* very hard to it, now we come with him to object them.

As that Passage, *Matth.* 24. v. 24.—*There shall arise False Christs, and False Prophets, and shall shew great Signs and Wonders, insomuch, that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very Elect.* " If this be so (says our *Author*) " unless Men can distinguish betwixt the " Miracles of those False Christs and those " of the True One, how shall they do to " discern the True Christ and his Doctrine " from the False Doctrine of the False " Christs?" To this the Answer is, That the True Christ hath already made himself to appear *not only by his working Miracles*, but likewise by making it to appear of himself, that the Power by which he wrought them was the *Spirit* and Power of God; and also proving his Miracles and Doctrine to be of God, from the Testimony which a *former Revelation* gave to both. The False Christs, though they may work Miracles, will not be able to shew their Power to be *of God*, nor produce a former Revelation giving Testimony either to their Works or their Doctrine. Nor is the Issue put so weakly (as this *Author* would insinuate) to depend upon this Point only of *Christ's giving us warning before hand* not to mind or believe such, though they should do great Miracles: His Warning is not the Means we have to distinguish them; nor is the Evidence our

Saviour

Saviour has given so precarious, as to depend upon our believing well of him, and not so well of others, for this Reason, that he hath foretold that others would pretend to be what he was: But his Warning is a Caution to us not to be over-credulous without Examination, but to make use of the Means we have to distinguish Pretenders from True Prophets; namely, by enquiring whether their *Power be of God*, and by bringing their Works and Doctrine to the Test of the *Former Revelation*, which we know *to be of God.*

This *Author* seems to press very much upon those that are of a different Opinion from himself about the Devil's Power in working Miracles, with the *Epithet True*, which he has added of himself to what our Saviour has here said of False Prophets shewing *great Signs and Wonders*; thereby thinking to get an advantage of those who hold this Opinion: For if they will not insist upon it, that the Works of such False Prophets are *True* Miracles, he thinks his Interpretation shall be admitted; that is to say, that by *Signs* and *great Wonders* in this place we are not to understand Miracles, but only Things *astonishing* and *amazing*, which are not miraculous: But if they insist upon it, that the Devil can work *True* Miracles, he then thinks to press them with this, that *Christ*'s were no more, nor other, and consequently there

being no difference in the Miracles, one must prove as much as the other. Yet all this is no more than Fallacy and Quibble upon the Words *Miracle* and *True*: For let it be noted here, that though in the common way of speaking, there is a difference made and understood between a *Miracle* and a *Sign*, yet in the Sense, and in the Original Language of the *Scripture* there is no difference at all. That which is said to be a Miracle of our *Saviour's* doing, is no other in the Language and in the Sense of the Scripture than σημεῖον, a *Sign*; that is to say, a Work wrought and given as a *Sign* of some Divine Power with him: And Works of *Wonder* and *Power* which are expressed in the Original by τέρατα, μεγάλα τέρατα, and δυνάμεις; *i. e. Wonders*, *great Wonders*, and *Powers*, or Powerful *Works*, are in the Sense of Scripture convertible Terms with σημεῖα, Miracles, that is, or *Signs* of a Divine Power, because Works of *Wonder* and *Power* are the only *Signs* or Tokens we can have of the Presence of such a Divine Power. But now it is not supposed indeed, that when our Saviour speaks of False Prophets shewing *great Signs*, that those *great Signs* shall be *True* Tokens of the *Presence* and *Power* of *God*; nor is it thought by them that hold the Opinion, that the Devil is able to work Miracles, that those shall be *True Signs* of the Power of God. The work-

workings of Satan with all *Power* and *Signs*, and with all Deceivableneſs of Unrighteouſneſs, are in this Senſe no more than *lying Wonders*; that is, they are not *True* Tokens of the Power of God all the while. Nevertheleſs, in another ſenſe, they are μεγάλα σημεῖα, great Miracles; they are τέρατα καὶ δυνάμεις, Works of great Wonder and Power, that are σημεῖα, *Signs* or Miracles, being Works of like Wonder and Power with thoſe that are offered and ſhewn by the *Lord's Prophets*: They are, ſo far as we can diſtinguiſh them by our *Senſes* and common Obſervation, σημεῖα, *properly Signs* of ſome Inviſible, Supernatural Power. So as let a Man take one of theſe Works, and one of thoſe which has been done by a True Prophet, and offered by him as a *Sign*, he ſhall not be able by his Senſes to diſtinguiſh the one from the other; ſo as to ſay, *this* is a Work of Supernatural *Power*, but *that* is not; this is a Miracle, the other not. Both are therefore *Signs* alike, being Signs of the Operation of ſome Power inviſible: Whether the Work be of God or of the Devil, that may not appear however from the Work it ſelf, but be left to further Enquiry and Scrutiny. There is nothing but Amuſement therefore in this *Author*'s Objection, "That if Miracles will "prove one Man to be the *Chriſt*, the *like* "*Miracles* will prove another Man to be "ſo;

"so; *i. e.* they will prove neither of them "the Christ." For the Scripture speaking of False Christs and False Prophets shewing *great Signs*, does not suppose the *like Miracles* shall be wrought by False Christs, as by our *Saviour*: For how much soever *alike* they may be as to *the Works* themselves, they will not be *alike* as to the *Power* by which they are wrought; and there being Means to distinguish and discern that Power, the one will prove *Jesus* the True Christ, as his Works were done by the *Spirit* of God; the other will prove of others the contrary, or at least no way prove what they would make the World believe.

Nor is it so little a matter, that of our Lord's *foretelling*, that False Christs and False Prophets would arise and shew great Signs and Wonders, but that this ought to keep us from regarding or believing them. It will not be insisted on however, that this should be a sufficient Reason of it self, why the Miracles of others should have no Credit. And therefore our *Author* might have spared his Reflections on this Prediction, as though it were a Thing easy to be foretold, "being indeed *a very reasonable and likely* "*Guess*, from the usual Fate of Philosophy, "that findeth Adversaries who go about to "supplant and overthrow that of another, "to substitute their own Opinions." 'Tis not worth while to dispute with him about what he

Essay, p. 93.

he ſays upon this Point; otherwiſe a Man might obſerve Abſurdity enough. For tho all Men offer at Reaſon, and pretend it for different Opinions; yet if there be any ſuch thing as *Reaſon*, that Man would be taken for a Fool, that ſhould pretend to foretell, that others ſhould come after him, and with *equal Reaſon* oppoſe the Principles which he had laid down with Reaſon: And, as I know of no Man that ever did, ſo I am apt to think, no Man ever will go about to continue to himſelf the Honour of a Sect, by a Thing ſo ridiculous. Beſides, there might be ſeveral things ſaid to ſhew, that whatſoever a Man might gueſs (or conjecture) of others coming after him, and oppoſing his *Philoſophy* with pretence of *Reaſon*; there can hardly be any ſuch thing as Gueſs, of others coming after a Man and working Miracles, by a Man that himſelf wrought any eſpecially: For as this Man muſt know, that the Works of this kind are above Human Power, he could not be able to gueſs, that the Power inviſible which aſſiſted *him*, would aſſiſt *others*; and without it, he muſt know, that no Man could do the like Works. Put the Caſe, that a Man having the Devil's Aſſiſtance for Works of this kind, might, from his Suggeſtion, take upon him to foretell, that others ſhould be aſſiſted to do the like Works, and that Evil Spirit intended to aſ-

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sist in like manner: yet the Prediction could not be made with certainty; because God might prevent, and lay a Restraint upon him and his Instruments. And, as our Saviour had the *Power of God* for his Works of that kind, he could not have foretold but by the *Spirit* of *God*, that any *after him* should arise and shew the *like Signs*; not even though he had known the Power of the Devil likewise sufficient for such Works; because, as he could not have known but by the *Spirit of God*, that God would give the like Power to another; so neither could he know, but from the *same Spirit*, what Permission God would give, or what Restraint he would lay upon *Satan's* Power. Nevertheless, I shall not argue, that *Christ's foretelling* the arising of false Prophets, and that such should shew *Signs* and *Wonders*, is in it self a Reason sufficient, for no Credit to be given to the *Signs* of any that might come after him: Because I do not find, that our Saviour made use of his Prediction for this Purpose; nor indeed, that it hath been commonly understood, that his Prediction was intended for any thing more than a necessary Caution in the Case; *viz.* That before Men gave credit, when they should hereafter see such Signs, they should find by what Power such Signs were wrought; they should bring and subject them, and the Workers of

of them, and the Doctrines of ſuch, to that Teſt; to which it was known that Chriſt offered his Works, and his Doctrine to be tried by; that is to ſay, the *Scriptures*, and the precedent Revelation; and thus examine all Pretenders and their Works. This Warning likewiſe, that our Saviour hath given, may well remove all that Suſpicion and evil Surmiſe which a Man might be apt to have; if barely by the Strength of his own Reaſon, without having recourſe to Revelation, he ſhould undertake to judge of ſuch a Matter, and ſuch a Caſe as this. It might be a Surprize to a Man's Reaſon at firſt, to ſee Miracles wrought for contrary Purpoſes, and in Oppoſition to each other: But the Power of God having manifeſted it ſelf, by putting a Stop and Check upon all oppoſing Powers, ſo as theſe could do nothing, when God thought fit to controul them; and coming to know by Revelation, that thoſe Powers, which work and aſſiſt to the working Signs oppoſite to God, and ſuch as act by his Spirit and Power; are *Devils*, and not Gods; are Evil Spirits, that have indeed great Force, and Subtilty, and Power, but are limited and controuled at all times by God, and can do nothing but by his Permiſſion: It ſhall be no Surprize, that Works above human Power are ſometimes done by wicked Men, aſſiſted by inviſible Powers;

Powers; nor shall it shake a Man's Faith or Belief of the Truth, which he hath received upon the Credit of those whom he knoweth to have wrought Signs and Wonders, in the *Name*, and by the *Power of God*. Neither can there be any Cause for any man to think evil of God, for what he permits of this kind for wise and just Ends; but rather the contrary, in respect of the Notice, Warning, and Caution given us before-hand, to take heed we be not seduced, nor deceived by such false Prophets; of whom we are fore-warned, that we might be fore-armed against them.

But our *Author* has still more to say, Why by *Signs* and *Wonders* here, we are not to understand *Miracles*. "There are (he says) abundance of things that come "to pass, that are extraordinary strange "and wonderful, which we can give no "manner of account of: Some of which "it may please God to permit Evil Men, "or Evil Spirits, to bring to pass; by "which they shall endeavour to seduce unwary People. But he values them not at "all, if he cannot understand them to be "*properly Miracles*." 'Tis very much, methinks, he should not understand them to be *Miracles*; if Evil Men, by the *Help* of *Evil Spirits*, bring them to pass. For in that Case, when Men do extraordinary, and strange, and wonderful Things, which we

Essay, P. 97, and 98.

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can give no manner of account of, how they ſhould be done, and which we cannot think poſſible to be done by Human Power; are they not σημεῖα μεγαλα, *great Signs*; δυνάμεις, *Works of Power*; and τέρατα, *Wonders*? He muſt not pretend to ſay, they are not Miracles, becauſe, for ought he knows, the Power of *Evil Spirits* may ſuffice for the doing them; that (I am ſure) is *begging the Queſtion* on his Part: That is to ſay, he believes that God will not permit Evil Spirits to work Miracles; and why? Becauſe he ſhall not think thoſe things to be Miracles, which, for ought he knows, they may have Power to do. I am perſwaded, we ſhall never be at any Certainty in diſcourſing on theſe Matters, until it be agreed, That the *great Works*, which the *Prophets of the Lord* have wrought, and offered, and given as σημεῖα, *Signs* of the Divine Power with them; are *Miracles* properly ſpeaking: And then the Way of deciding the Queſtion, that has given us ſo much perplexity about *Evil Men*, and *Evil Spirits* working them, will be by this other Queſtion; Whether Evil Men, by the Help of *Evil Spirits*, ever did, or can ever do, the *like Works*? And if ſo, it muſt be reſolved, that theſe doing the ſame Facts, theſe are alſo able to ſhew σημεῖα, *Signs* or Miracles. But ſtill it will be Matter of further Enquiry, by what Power ſuch Signs

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and Miracles are wrought. But now, perhaps, from the Instances which our *Author* has given us, of Things strange, that are not in his Opinion Miraculous; I may shew him, that in his way of talking, there can be no manner of Certainty; there is no distinguishing between a *Miracle*, and what he says is only a *Sign* or *Wonder*: There being not one of those Instances that he has given, but what I shall shew to be properly Miracles, when such Works are rightly considered according to the Case in hand; that is to say, a Man's doing them by the Assistance of some Power invisible. "A "*Centaur*, Hyppogryph, and a flying Dra- "gon, are things (he says) that were ne- "ver seen; but if he should chance to see "a Dozen of them together, he should rec- "kon it no Miracle; and yet no Man li- "ving, perhaps, could give an account of "their Generation." Truly I am apt to believe him, that if he should see such a Creature, or many such together, *by chance*, he should think it no Miracle: But what would he think, if this were not a *Chance*; but a Man should come to him, and tell —— *This Sign shalt thou have of the Lord*; that the *Lord will do the thing that he hath spoken by me*: Lo! a *Centaur*, Hyppogryph, and flying Dragon, are Creatures that thou hast never seen, nor known; and yet there shall not only be brought One, but many

Essay, Pag. 98.

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ſuch Creatures here in place before thee this Inſtant: Would he not own this for a *Miraculous Sign?* I affirm, that even if ſuch Creatures were known to be in Nature, but had never been ſeen in this Part of the World; the bringing a Number of them together in an Inſtant, would be a real Miracle; much more, as ſuch Creatures never have been ſeen nor known in any Part of the Earth. And I appeal to this our *Author* himſelf, whether he has not owned a leſs Thing than this to be a Miracle, in *Moſes's* and the Magicians bringing up *Frogs*, out of the Water, upon the Land of *Ægypt*. It is no Miracle, I ſuppoſe, to ſee *Frogs*, nor to ſee in the Waters great Numbers of them, nor to ſee them come up upon the Land; but that the Streams, Rivers, and Ponds throughout a whole Country, did bring forth *Frogs* in ſo abundant a manner, that they came up out of the Waters ſo thick and faſt, as to cover the Land, and fill the Houſes, and even Bedchambers of the People of the Country; and this at the *word of Moſes*, &c. was what made that Miraculous, which this *Author* has owned to be a Miracle. If he will ſay, that he has owned this for a Miracle, becauſe it never was known in Nature, that Frogs bred and came up in ſuch abundance; the ſame thing may be ſaid of his *Centaurs*, and more. There is

nothing that he can say, to make out the Miracle of *Moses* in this Action, but what shall make out the Thing we are now speaking of to be a Miracle, in any Man that shall be able to bring it to pass. Thus again, as to another of his Instances: "The "Sun, (he says) we know, journeys from "*East* to *West*; that is the Course that "God appointed him to run: this he "calls the settled Course of Nature. Now, "in it self, it is no greater a Thing, to "journey from *West* to *East*, than it is from "*East* to *West*; but we should account it a "Miraculous Thing, to see him step but "Six Paces backward, from *West* to *East*. I shall allow it a Miracle, for the Sun to go back; but I am able to offer him somewhat of a Reason, why it should be accounted a Miracle, for the Sun to go *forward* Ten Degrees, (that is to say) in an Instant: And that is, that if the Sun should move *forward* at the *word of a Man*, with that Swiftness, as to run its Course of *Ten Hours* in *One*; it would be a Change and Alteration in the Course of Nature, and consequently, according to this *Author*'s own Rule, a Miracle. Forasmuch, as according to the settled Course of Nature, it would have gone but that Space in *Ten* Hours, which now it would have gone in *One* at the *word of a Man*, who (we know) has no manner of Power to make

any

any Alteration in the Sun's Natural Motion, and can no more move it forward than backward. This *Author* will allow likewise, I hope, that when the Sun *stood still* at the word of *Joshua*, it was a Miracle; as well as when it *went back* in the *Dial of Ahaz*. But further I take notice, in reference to this Instance, of what *Isaiah* said to King *Hezekiah*, when he asked for a *Sign* that the Lord would heal him, and that he should recover of his Sickness. ——*This Sign shalt thou have of the Lord*, that the Lord will do the thing that he hath spoken: Shall the Shadow go *forward* Ten Degrees, or go *back* Ten Degrees? I think hereupon, that the one must be a *Sign* as well as the other: And though *Hezekiah* answers thereupon, *It is a light thing for the shadow to go down Ten Degrees*; this will prove no more, than that it was a *light thing comparatively*, to what it was for it to *go back*; yet I presume the one as well as the other to have been a Miraculous Sign, or the Prophet could not have proposed both; only *Hezekiah* desired the *greater*, as any man would, as that which would give him the greater Certainty.

2 Kings 20. 9.

And now for what this *Author* further says; *viz.* That "he will assure us, he "does account the Turning Water into "Wine, or a Wand into a Serpent, a great-"er Miracle, than the walking of a huge

"Mountain for Two Miles together: Be-
"cause he knows not what the Power of
"several Causes in Nature may be; and
"greater, than if he should know some
"Spirit threw that Mountain Two Miles
"at a Cast; because he knows not what
"the Force of Spirits may be." This *Author*, above all Men, should not talk of *greater* or *less* Miracles; who has pretended, that the same Power is necessary to work a *little*, as a *great* one: But be the one *greater*, and the other *less*, it's nothing to those that are of a different Opinion from him; so the less be a *Miracle*, it's enough for their purpose. And that this will be such, whenever it shall be wrought, I shall force him to acknowledge; provided I may be allowed to put his Argument into a consistent Form; (which is a Trouble I am too often put to; whether from the designedly, or accidentally confused Way of our *Author*'s expressing himself, I cannot say.) If he would have us to compare then, the *turning Water into Wine*, with the *walking of a Mountain*, so as to judge which is the *greater*, which the *less* Miracle; or rather, whether as the one is a confessed Miracle, the other (if it should come to pass) were to be esteemed such? He must not speak of the one, as *done by a Man*; and of the other, as happening, or coming to pass we know not how: But the

Case

Caſe muſt ſuppoſe, that *a Man* makes this Mountain to walk; and then it will be ſoon ſeen, whether there be any thing in the Reaſon he gives, why this latter ſhould not be thought a Miracle; namely, *becauſe he knows not what the Power of ſeveral Cauſes in Nature may be*: I would fain know, why this may not be ſaid againſt the other as well; and, at this rate, neither ſhall be Miraculous. And thus, when he ſays further, that he does account this *Turning Water into Wine*, a greater Miracle, than if he ſhould know a *Spirit* threw that *Mountain* Two Miles at a Caſt: His Expreſſion is fallacious, and ſo conſequently muſt his Argument be; if he puts the Caſe of a *Man*'s Turning Water into Wine, and a *Spirit*'s throwing a Mountain, as parallel; and himſelf will ſee it, when I invert his Argument, and ſay, That if I ſhould know a *Spirit* turn Water into Wine, and a *Man* toſs a Mountain; I ſhould account the latter the greateſt Miracle, and the other (perhaps) none at all: Becauſe I know, a *Man*'s Strength can never be ſufficient to move the Mountain; but as for the *Power of Spirits*, I know not what that may do. Let the Caſe, therefore, be put as it ought to be, and our *Author* compelled to leave his Æquivocations; and let it ſuppoſe a *Man* turning Water into Wine, and a *Man* bidding the Mountain re-

move, and the Event succeeding in the latter Case as well as the former; and I shall say that his Reason given, of his not knowing a *Spirit's* Power, is no more in one Case, than in the other: Neither, indeed, can be done by Man, without the Help of some Spirit and Power invisible; and consequently, either both must be Miraculous, or neither. And, as to the Dispute which would be the *greater*, which the *less* Miracle of the two, I am not concerned with it at all in this Question; which only demands, Whether *Evil Spirits* may not (God permitting) assist Men to do *miraculous works*? If both must be acknowledged such as I have proved, and this *Author* does not know but that the Force of a *Spirit* may be sufficient for the *tossing of a Mountain* several Miles at a cast; then I may affirm that he knows nothing to the contrary, but it may be sufficient to work a Miracle, and to assist a Man to do it: For I am sure if he can give no Reason but that a Spirit may be able to do it, he can give none why it should not be able to *assist a Man* to do it. And besides all this, our *Author* is very unlucky in giving this as an Instance for a *Wonder*, and no *Miracle*: For I shall prove it to be a Miracle beyond all contradiction, if our Saviour Christ, who himself wrought so many Miracles, may be allowed to know what is a Miracle. Let us observe his Words and

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Saying to his Disciples, *Mat.* 17. *v.* 18. in in the Case of the Man's Son who was *Lunatick, and sore vexed with an Evil Spirit*; whom Christ's Disciples could not cure: When they came to our *Lord* in private, and asked him *why they could not cast out that Devil?* He tells them, 'twas because of their Unbelief; and gives this Reason to convince them that was the Cause: "*For* verily I say unto you, if ye have Faith as a "Grain of Mustard-seed, ye shall say unto "this *Mountain*, remove hence into yonder "Place, and it shall remove, and *nothing* "shall be *unpossible* unto you." I would willingly know how our Saviour can be understood to have spoken Sense, if the Removal of a Mountain upon their bidding, were not indeed not only a Miracle, but more a Miracle, that is to say, a greater Miracle than that of which he was then speaking with his Disciples, which it seems for want of Faith they could not do; and if our Lord's Saying, — *and nothing shall be unpossible to you*, does not suppose this as great an Act of *Power* and *Wonder* as any whatsoever; I would fain know also why this should be given for an Instance of a thing impossible in Nature, but possible through *Faith in God*; if it be disputable whether it be a Miracle when done? To the same purpose is that which our Saviour said to his Disciples, when they marvelled that the *Fig-*

tree presently withered away upon his word, that no *Fruit should* grow on it thence-forward; *viz.* "Verily I say unto you, if ye "have *Faith*, and doubt not, ye shall not "only do this which is done to the Fig-"tree, but also if ye shall say unto this "*Mountain*, be thou removed, and be thou "cast into the Sea, it shall be done." The withering of the Fig-tree instantly, will not I suppose by this *Author*, or at least not by any body else, be denied to be a Miracle; and then let any one judge, whether our *Lord* does not give this of the Removal of a Mountain, as an Instance of an Act of greater Power and Wonder. And as our *Author* has been hitherto unlucky in his Instances to distinguish a Work of *Wonder* from a *Miracle*, so I would desire him to give me a Reason, why the Scripture should so often take notice, and say upon the mighty Works of our Saviour, that his Disciples *marvelled*, were *amazed*, and *astonished*, and that the People *wondered* and were *amazed*; and upon that said, *Is not this the Son of David*: If so be that Works of *Wonder* and *Power* were not Signs of the *Finger* of *God*, and proved our Lord to be the Christ indeed; and the more of Wonder and Power there was in any Work, the more certain *Sign* it was, that is the greater Miracle.

Mat. 21. v. 21.

Mat. 12. v. 23.

Nor is there any so great cause to fear the Inconvenience which this *Author* does pre-

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tend himself to be so much afraid of; *viz.* "The accounting for a world of strange "Relations of most marvellous Things." For as to all such things that a Man sees in the World by chance, or that happen accidentally, they are nothing to the Matter in hand; neither does it signifie whether a Man can assign or not the natural Causes thereof. Those things that are not wrought by any Man, nor given for a Sign of some Divine Power with him, I need not be sollicitous to know the Cause of in any such respect: But all Works of Wonder and Power; that is to say, all such Works as make us to wonder how they should be done by Man, (for that we have never known, nor any one else, that a Man ever did them; and which we cannot, according to the best of our Judgment, suppose possible to be done by Man;) all such Works, if done and wrought by any Man for a Sign of some Divine Power's being with him, must be acknowledged Miraculous Works; if so be that they do, as they seem, exceed all the Art aud Power of Man: And the Means are with us by which they may be accounted for, either as Works done by the *Power* of *God* or as they may be and are otherwise don[illegible] Power and Assistance o[illegible] some *D*[illegible]

Here is the Place wh[illegible] to shew this *Author* his [illegible] stake; which has given h[illegible]

the World so much Perplexity and Trouble: I gather it from what he has said all along to distinguish a *Sign* and a *Wonder* from a *Miracle*, and *great Signs* from great Miracles, and from what he says here, *if he should know some Spirit throw a Mountain*: And again, *pag.* 100. "If he had seen an "Angel convey *Habakkuk* through the Air, "*and had known him to be an Angel*, he should "have gazed and *wondered* mightily, but "should not have thought the Angel "wrought a Miracle; because, for ought "he knew, the Natural Powers of an Angel "might suffice to do this." Strictly observing what he has said in one Case, and what the Force of all his Argument is in the other, I conclude him never to have considered, that all those Works which were Miracles in our Saviour, or in *Moses*, or any of the Lord's Prophets, have no other Name in the Original Language of the Scripture, than *Signs*, or *Wonders*, or *Works of Power*; (the Words used both in the *Old* and *New Testament*, signifying no more than *Signs* or *Prodigies*, or *Works of Power* at large.) This I am apt to think our *Author* never considered, but finding sometimes the Word Miracle, and sometimes Sign in our Translation, he has run away with a Notion that there is some Distinction between these two, (though 'tis plain the Scripture never could intend any such Distinction, which

which hath the ſame Word to expreſs both) and taken the Word *Miracle* not in the Scripture Senſe, but in a Senſe which ſome Writers have appropriated the Word to; *i. e.* to ſignifie that only which nothing but the Infinite Power of God can do, and which no Beings elſe, nor Natural Cauſes can ever be able to perform: To which Senſe I grant the *Engliſh* Word *Miracle*, and the *Latin Miraculum* are capable to be appropriated; whence many well-meaning Perſons, and ſome Learned Men too, being willing to ſhew that ſome of our Saviour's Works were ſuch as no Power but that of God only could perform, have inſiſted, that ſuch as have been performed by other Powers, are what the Natural Powers of ſome or other *Created Beings* might perform; and upon this have diſtinguiſhed between *Miracles* in *general*, and *Miracles* properly ſo called; and nothing is by them allowed to be of the latter kind, which they can conceive the Natural Powers of any Created Being ſufficient for: Whereas the Original Words of the Scripture will have no Argument of this kind; nor will thoſe Paſſages therein, that refer to the great Power of Evil Spirits, admit it. The Words σημεῖα, τέρατα, δυνάμεις, are in the Senſe of Scripture the ſame; all Works of Wonder and Power are σημεῖα, *Signs* (which our Tranſlators call *Miracles*, not without Reaſon, becauſe *miraculous*; that

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is to say, *Wonderful* Works are Signs of a Divine Power.) It's true indeed the τέρατα and δυνάμεις are to be taken with such a Limitation, as is necessary for their being σημεῖα, *Signs* of some *Invisible Power*, and consequently must be understood to be such *Works* of *Wonder* and *Power*; as are above the *Power* of *Man* that shews them; otherwise they would not be *Signs* of some *Invisible Power* with him. But further the Scripture cannot intend they should be limited, because it speaks of *Satan*'s Instruments shewing *great Signs*, and doing *Wonders*. And withal, whoever will consider, will find that the Lord's *Prophets* have wrought for Signs of their *coming from God*, Things which we cannot conceive but they may be in the Power of *Evil Spirits*: as *Elijah* when he said, *If I am a Man of God, let Fire come down from Heaven*: For I believe whoever reads *Job*, cap. 1. 16. will think of the Fire that fell from Heaven, and consumed *Job*'s *Servants* and *Sheep*; that (although the Servant that escaped to tell him, says, The *Fire of God* had fallen from Heaven; as knowing no other) it was really a Fire from *Satan*, who had a permission to use his Power against *Job*: Nevertheless, it being in the Power of God always to controul the Power of Evil Spirits, he could at any time shew his Power above them in those Works and Signs, as he did when the *Magicians* contest-

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ed with *Moses*, restraining their Power in a Thing that was to our apprehension *less* than what they had done before; and in the Contest that *Elijah* had with the Prophets of *Baal*, where the Devil was not able to assist those Idolatrous Prophets, but was restrained from doing a Thing which I presume he did in *Job's* Case, and which I think scarce any Man will say is above his Power to do, supposing no Restraint upon him.

And what again more confirms me that this *Author* never considered these the Scripture-Expressions, nor the Meaning of the Scripture in them, is his Saying, That if a *Spirit should* throw a *Mountain* two Miles at a Cast, he should not account it a Miracle, because he does not know what the Force of Spirits may be. 'Tis much he should think any Man would dispute with him, that an Evil Spirit might work, or help to work Miracles, if nothing could be thought to be a Miracle which the *Force* of an Evil Spirit might do: Or that the Scriptures, when they speak of the Devil's Power to assist his Agents to shew great Signs, should mean therein that the Devil might do this; and that yet it were to be supposed, whatever Works the Devil's Power might be conceived sufficient for, could not be to us Signs or Miracles. 'Tis impossible the Scriptures should imply such a thing as this, which

which is an absolute contradiction to it self; *viz.* That the Power of an Evil Spirit should do that Thing, which if it were known that a Spirit could be able to do, were for that Reason not to be accounted that Thing, but something else. Therefore the other Instance that is given to shew that there may be Events which amaze and confound, but are not miraculous, I think needs no Answer. This *Author* in giving that Instance, and arguing from it, is as a Man that fights with his own Shadow. The *Angel's* conveying *Habakkuk* through the Air, will never be disputed against him to be a Miracle, if nothing is to be thought a Miracle which may be conceived in the Power of an Angel to do: But how does he prove this, that nothing is to be thought a Miracle, if it can be conceived within an Angel's Power? Indeed how could he know the Agent to be an Angel, but from the Miraculousness of the Work? I observe in the Case of the Angel that appeared to *Manoah*, *Judges* 13. v.19. it is said, the *Angel* did *wonderously*, *and Manoah and his Wife looked on*: For it came to pass when the *Flame went up towards Heaven*, from off the Altar, that the *Angel of the Lord ascended in the Flame* of the Altar, and then *Manoah* and his Wife fell on their Faces, then they knew that *he was an Angel of the Lord*: *i. e.* By that Sign and Wondrous

Action

Action they knew it. I ſuppoſe this *Author* will not deny but that the Powers of an Angel might be ſufficient for this Action; and I would wiſh him to conſider it, and tell us whether he thinks the Scripture relates it as a miraculous Work or not, and whether it were not really a Miracle; *i. e.* a real *Sign* of the *Divine Power* and *Preſence*. 'Tis certain from the Reaſoning that *Manoah* and his Wife had upon their *having* thus *ſeen God*, that he and ſhe took it for a *Sign* of God's Preſence and Power; that is, for a Miracle: And if this *Author*, or any one elſe will conteſt it, I would deſire to be informed how I ſhould know a Miracle, if wrought by God himſelf: I muſt not ſurely ſuppoſe of a Miracle, that it is a Work to our apprehenſion always above the *Power of the Agent*; if ſo, then I could not think God ever to work a Miracle, for to God I muſt needs think all Things are poſſible: If it muſt be thought a Work not poſſible for any but God to do, I muſt then deſire to know how I ſhall come to any certainty about it, when as I cannot pretend my ſelf able to judge what is in the Power of *God only* to do, and what may, or may not be in the Power of *other Spirits*, whoſe Force and Nature I underſtand very little of. I ſhould alſo further ask for the Reaſon why God ſhould give ſuch Things then at all for Signs of his Power and Preſence, which we cannot but think

think might be in the Power of *other Spirits* that are *not God*; as in this Instance, and several others. It must therefore be affirmed, that if the Work be above *Humane Power*, and all Means *known* to Man, or *possible to be attained* by him, the Work is then *miraculous*, capable of being a Sign of the Divine Power and Presence. Thus in the Case where the *Angel* appeared to *Manoah* in Human Shape, his *doing wondrously*, and *ascending in the Flame of the Altar*, and after that being seen no more; this being a thing not possible for a Man to do, was upon that account a *Miracle*, a *Sign* by which they knew him to be an Angel, a certain Token to them of God's Presence: And thus the Instance by this *Author* given of *Habakkuk*'s being convey'd *through the Air*, was in it self a Thing miraculous, as not possible to be done by Man of himself; which therefore must be a *Sign* of the Presence and Power of God, or some *Angel*, or *Spirit* of like Powers with an Angel. And thus if our *Author* will dispute, that none but God can assist to this Action; that is to say, the *Conveying a Man through the Air*; I agree the Case to be to his Purpose: and if he prove it, then he proves that the Devil cannot do this Miracle: But I doubt if he knows not but that the Powers of an *Angel*, *i. e.* a good Spirit may assist a Man in this; he never will be able to prove this absolute-

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ly above the *Power of an Evil Spirit* : And so all that he has said proves nothing against that which is said in the Scripture, of the *Working of Satan* to shew great *Signs* and *Wonders*, nor against what is commonly understood of the Sense and Meaning of the Scripture therein.

I do not at all admire therefore after all this, that our *Author*, who had so little to say for his Opinion, that was any thing natural, should find himself perplexed with the General Opinion of Divines and Learned Men against him, that he intreats of *all love not to have their Names and Authority* urged in the Case : I shall spare him, and give him only what of *Revelation*, and what of other Mens, and my own *Reason* I can. And doing this, I am not bound to defend the Opinion of those who may have said, that God permits this to *try our Faith* ; for I will by no means think that God layeth a Temptation or a Snare in the way of his People; but that as he knoweth the Adversary and the Enemy will attempt to seduce Mankind, he hath given us warning and notice of it, and cautioned us thereupon, that we may be upon our guard, and use the Means we have to find out the *working of Satan* : And 'tis to God's Goodness that we owe the advantage, that we are *not ignorant of his Devices*.

Essay, p. 161.

And whereas our *Author* presseth to have an "Instance brought him, where God did "ever permit a True Miracle to be wrought "by one that would seduce from Christia-"nity, on purpose to try *their Faith*:" If I could give him none, it were nothing to the matter. But let him leave out the Clause which refers to the Purpose of God's Permission (neither known to me nor him) and I shall say that himself has given us an Instance in *Apollonius Tyanæus*, as he has allowed his Story Credit. For notwithstanding all the Reasons that this *Author* has given, or may give, why we should not be seduced by his Works, yet this is certain, if he wrought any Miracles (which our *Author* does own he did) God must *permit* him to do it (though, I presume, not assist him:) And if it were true that *Apollonius himself* did not endeavour to seduce from Christianity (as this *Author* has pretended upon very little ground, as I think, to say) yet this is certain, that *Hierocles* and others, who compared him to *Jesus Christ*, and argued thereby against the Truth of Christianity, designed and endeavoured to seduce from Christianity, and confirm the Pagan Religion: So that the Thing is tantamount every way; and the Instance our *Author* himself has given, is the Case in Fact: But if we had it not in Fact, it must of necessity be supposed in our Lord's Prediction; which

saying

saying that *False Christs*, and *False Prophets* shall arise and shew *great Signs* to *deceive*, must imply God's permission of this, even though he knew these Instruments of Satan would therein *seek to deceive*. And let this Case be never *so hard*, he that will abide by the Truth, must stand by it. And I must therefore say thereupon, "That as the *Jews* "were to reject all Miracles, how great "soever, if the scope and intent of those "who wrought them were to carry them "from the Worship of the only True God "to Idolatry. ——So are the *Christians* "to reject all Miracles, how great soever, "if they who work them pretend to contra-"dict the Worship of God through Jesus "Christ, and the Gospel he preached among "Men." But this, our *Author* says, is but bringing us back to what was discoursed before: ——"We are then, it seems, to "judge of Miracles by the Doctrine they "would establish, and not of the Doctrine "by the Miracles that establish it; only "this goes a little farther, and will not let "us believe upon the account of Miracles, "although we allow them to be true." This last is his Mistake, it goes no further than the Case was before, than the Text of *Deut.* 13. which supposed the *Sign* of which the *False Prophet spake to come to pass*. And what is that, but to be true in Fact? And whereas this Author himself allows the Case

Essay, Pag. 102.

of the *Christians* the very same with that of the *Jews* in this Matter, inasmuch as I have shewn and proved that the *Jews* were to reject whatsoever Miracles might be at any time wrought and used to draw them to Idolatry, he must now allow me that *Christians* must reject any that may be wrought to draw them to Apostacy: And as I have proved against him, that the *Jews* had ground to take that Scripture, *Deut.* 13. 1. in the Sense they did, and thence to conclude as they did concerning God's permission of False Prophets to shew Signs that might come to pass, that nevertheless they must reject them, if used to draw them to Idolatry; so I take my self to have shewn, that there is nothing in what this Author has hitherto said, why this Passage of our *Saviour* concerning the arising of *False Prophets*, and shewing *great Signs*, should be otherwise understood than the Christian World hath hitherto apprehended.

And now as for the Answer which this *Author* gives in mockery to his Scholar's Question, *What* need was there of any Miracles at all? *viz.* "O take it right: Christi-
" anity was to be establish'd by true un-
" doubted Miracles at first, and so establish-
" ed, that nothing but the most perverse and
" wicked Creature living could hold out
" against it: And might not a Doctrine set-
" tled thus by Miracle, be again ventured to
" a Mi-

" a Miracle? Might not a Man be tried
" even with a Miracle, to ſee if he could
" depart from a Religion thus eſtabliſhed?"
I ſay, in earneſt, —Take it right: And as to ſet it right, I will pray nothing of him or others in behalf of the Truth, but what I will undertake at any time to oblige him and others to acknowledge, ſo I will not fear any thing that he has ſaid, or can ſay to charge this Truth with an Abſurdity. Now the Right of the Caſe is this; namely, The Law given by *Moſes* was eſtabliſh'd upon the Miracles which God wrought by the Hand of *Moſes*; which were wrought not only in the ſight of all *Iſrael*, but in the ſight of *Pharaoh* and all *Ægypt*, that it might be *known* that *there was none like unto the God of Iſrael* in all the Earth. And as *Pharaoh* with his *Magicians* withſtood the Power of God, this occaſioned not only *Moſes*'s ſhewing the more Signs of Power and Wonder, but a Competition likewiſe between him and the *Magicians*; by the Iſſue of which it appeared, that the *Lord was greater than all Gods; for that in the Thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them*; even in the Signs which thoſe *Magicians* pretended to give of a Divine Power before their King: So that even they that oppoſed *Moſes* in his Works of Power (having themſelves aſſiſtance from ſome Powers inviſible, to do Things beyond the Art, and Strength,

Exod. 9. v. 14, 16.

Exod. 18. v. 11.

and Power of Man (finding a sudden stop put to them in their Attempts, were forced to own and acknowledge the Power of *Moses* superior to theirs, and to say thereof, *This is the Finger of God.* *Moses's Revelation* being thus established upon the *great* and *terrible* Things which were done, to shew that the *Lord* was with *Moses*, and to *redeem his People form Ægypt, and from the Nations and their Gods*: A Command is given to this People whom God had thus *confirmed to himself*, that if they should see hereafter a *False Prophet* that should pretend to shew them a Sign of a Divine Power, saying, *Go with me after other Gods*, they should not hearken to that Prophet, nor his Sign, *Deut.* 13. 1. I am far from thinking that this is *begging the Question* on behalf of *Moses's* Revelation, for there is no allowance here prayed of us, that *Moses's* Revelation may be established upon *Miracles*, but there is a Proof in his *Miracles* that does establish it; a Proof that does not appear in the other Case where the *Miracle* is not to have Credit with us. For our certainty that the *Lord spake unto Moses*, does not depend barely upon his *shewing Signs*, but upon this, that it appeared in the Competition between *him* and the *Magicians*, that the Power with *him* was the *Finger of God*, as it was greater than all other Powers that pretended to give and do like Signs and Miracles with him.

2 Sam. c. 7. v. 23.

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Therefore it is, that a *Miracle* or *Sign* ſhew'd afterwards muſt not find Credit, if wrought to perſuade the *going after other Gods*; as well for that by this we know it cannot be of God, becauſe it would draw us from the Worſhip of the One True God (who never can contradict himſelf, and perſuade off from his own Worſhip;) as becauſe it was alſo known before, and appeared plainly in the Tryal, wherein the One True God demonſtrated and confirmed to his People the Superiority of his Power; that though other Powers might attempt, and likewiſe ſhew the World Signs and Wonders, like unto thoſe ſhown and wrought by the Power of God, yet there were none of thoſe Powers which could ſtand in competition with God, but were ſtopped and controuled by that Power and Hand which appeared to be with *Moſes*. And thus again *Chriſtianity* ſucceeding to the Precedent Revelation, and being built upon the Teſtimony of that *Revelation*, as well as upon the undoubted *Miracles* of *Jeſus Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, whoſe Power and Works appeared to be of God, as well from the *Word* of *Prophecy*, which ſpake thereof, as from the Intent of the Chriſtian Doctrine, which tended not to *deſtroy*, but to *fulfil* the Law and the *Prophets*; *i. e.* the Things of the *Former Revelation*; and from the Oppoſition which this Power gave to *Satan* in his *Kingdom* and *Works*;

wherein also the Power of God working with them, appeared to be above all Power of the Devil, and all those Evil Spirits which were turned out of their Possessions by it; the Divine Authority of the Gospel being thus established and proved by Proofs undeniable, and every way unexceptionable, wherein nothing hath been wanting that might confirm us, that this is the Truth of God. It may well be, as it is, required of us, that *no Gospel different* from that which hath been delivered, and which we have received, be admitted by us: That the *Signs and Wonders* of false Prophets, that may arise and attempt to set up themselves in Opposition to *Christ*, find no Credit with us: That our being *foretold* of the *working* of *Satan*, with all Power and Signs, and with all Deceivableness of Unrighteousness, be a Caution sufficient against all such Deceiving Powers finding any Admission with us. Neither does this pray any Credit to be given to *Christ* and *his Works*, which is not allowed to another that *cometh from God*, and maketh it so appear to us, as he hath done, that *God is with him*; that is to say, by the Nature as well as by the Power of his Works, and by the Testimony of those precedent Revelations, which we know to be of God: But it obligeth us to reject all those Powers, which are not known whence they are, or rather, which

Gal. 1. 8.

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we hence may know not to be of God, because opposite to him and his Doctrine, whom we know God hath sent. Nor is our Belief, as to the Power of Christ's *being of God*, at all precarious in this respect; that we believe him for *his Works sake*, and refuse to give Credit to the Works of others; because we believe him, not for the sake of his *Works alone*, but for the *Evidence* arising from, and concurring with his Works; that is to say, from their Opposition to, and Superiority over the Power of Satan; and the Testimony which both his Power and Doctrine had from a precedent Revelation, known before to be of God, and confirmed to us by a Power that made it self appear to be above all others.

I am therefore for speaking as *plainly* as this our *Author* can desire; knowing this, that the more *plainly* we speak in this Case, so we do but speak *truly*, the more evident will it be, that nothing which our *Author* has said (or can say) in this Matter, shall be sufficient to bring in question the Certainty we have of the Gospel-Truth, nor so much as to fasten upon it the Absurdity which he pretends to lye against it, on account of its requiring that we reject the *Signs* of false Prophets.

Let it then, since he will have it so, be possible " for a Man to lose his Certainty, " by the same means by which he got that Essa Pa

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" Certainty ;" yet shall it not follow, that a Man may *part with his Christianity*, upon the score of Miracles wrought to prove it false, *as fairly* as he took it up upon the score of Miracles wrought to prove it true. For, as Christianity supposeth, and as a Christian consequently must know, that false Prophets shall arise, and shall likewise work and shew *Signs* of Power and Wonder, that is, Miracles; and that the Devil, that will oppose, hath great Power to oppose the Truth of God, and to assist his Instruments to give and shew *Signs* of Power: And as it was thought when *Christ* was upon Earth, that the Power of the Devil was great, and might assist to such Works: Which thing made our *Saviour Christ* to insist and prove, that his Works were wrought by the *Spirit* and *Power of God*; and that they could not be of the Devil, because of their Opposition to him; and to appeal likewise to *Moses*'s precedent Revelation, as giving witness to his Person and his Power. And as the Revelation of *Moses* likewise supposed false *Prophets* to arise, and the *Signs* of such false *Prophets* to come to pass: And as, even before the first Revelation was received, there appeared in the World Powers different, because acting in Opposition one against the other; each shewing *Signs* alike, so that until it appeared in the Competition which was the Power of God, it

it could not be discerned with Certainty from the Works that seemed alike: And as the first Revelation was received upon the account of its appearing, that the *Lord was with Moses*, who had shewn himself *greater than all gods*, and in the thing wherein they *dealt most proudly*, *was above them*: And again, as the Revelation of *Jesus Christ* hath been received upon the witness of the *precedent Revelation*, as well as upon the witness which *his Power* carried with it, as exercised in *Opposition* to the Power of *Satan*, and proving it self *above* all his Power. As this is the Case of Christianity established upon Miracles, it can never be thought by any Man of common Sense and Honesty, that this may be parted with upon the score of Miracles wrought to prove it false, *as fairly* as it was taken up upon the score of *those Miracles*, that were wrought to prove it true: For that the Miracles wrought to prove it false, must lie under a manifest Suspicion, as being against the Truth known to be of God; and are indeed for that very Reason to be concluded the Work of some *other Power*; for that God cannot contradict, nor act in Opposition to himself. And even if this Inference were not presently made, there must remain a doubt by what Power the latter Miracles are brought to pass; (there being Powers different, pretending to, and shew-

shewing such Signs;) so that the Credit of the one will be questionable, when the Credit of the other is out of doubt. Neither shall it be said in this Case, that any thing is presumed on behalf of the Miracles of *Moses* and *Jesus Christ*: For 'tis not any *Presumption* of their being wrought by the *Power of God*; but 'tis the *Evidence* that they were so wrought, (which was undeniable, after *Moses* had in the Competition vanquished the *Magicians*;) that has obliged us to acknowledge their *being of God.* Which Evidence has been renewed to us in other Competitions, which the *Lord's Prophets* have had with those that have acted *in the Name of other gods*; and especially in the Power of Christ's overcoming the Power of Satan, and overthrowing his Kingdom.

But, "Two Miracles (says this *Author*) "can beget no more certainty of the Truth "of Christianity, than Two may beget Un-"certainty of it, if wrought in opposition "to it." If this be with him *plain speaking*, I will not doubt but to prove it speaking *plainly* false; I mean of the Case it refers to: And this not only as it supposeth that which never yet hath appeared to be, that is, an *Equality* as to *Number* and *Greatness*, between the Works of Christ, and whatsoever Power shall or may oppose him; but chiefly as it concealeth the Distinction between Miracles

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known to be wrought by the Power of God, (as those that have been wrought in Confirmation of the Christian Truth were known to be) and Miracles which may be wrought by Powers which are *not known whence they are*. He may not say, *I presume* on the one side, but not on the other; for I have shewn that there has been no *Presuming* without an absolute Proof, on behalf of *Christ*, and his Works, that he wrought them by the *Spirit* and *Power* of God. And therefore the other which has not made that Proof of it self, can never in Reason have so much Credit with any Man, as to render that uncertain with him, whereof he has received a former certainty, even beyond doubt and suspicion; having known the Power of God to have given Demonstration of its Superiority in several Competitions. I will, with this *Author*'s leave, use a plain Similitude in this Matter; and the rather, because thereby our Saviour has thought fit to represent and prove his Power above that of the Devil. Put case I had seen a strong Man armed, able as I thought to keep his House and his Goods, having shewn such Signs of Strength, that I should have thought none could be greater; and nevertheless, by and by a stronger than he came and entred his House, and spoiled his Goods: If after this I see him that was even now vanquished, appear again in his Strength, and shew

Signs

Signs of Power like to what he did at the first; should I by this lose the certainty I had from the issue of the Competition I had seen between him and the other, whereby I became certain that there is one stronger than he? But I abide too long in clearing a Case which hardly any thing but design to state it wrong, after a pretence to take it right, could have thus perplexed.

I am obliged however to say this farther in the Case; namely, that this *Author's Judgment* at least has extreamly failed, in that he thinks that "both the *Law* and *Gospel* at this rate, beg the Question in hand, and presuppose their own Truth. *Presuppose* indeed their own Truth they do in *one sense*, as they will not admit it to be questioned for after-Miracles wrought in opposition to them; but *presuppose* in the *ill sense* of the word, that is to say, beg what they presuppose and *presume* for their own Truth, they do not; for there is first an unexceptionable Proof for that, which is, after such Proof, supposed in their not admitting their Truth to be called in question. Doubtless that cannot be justly said to be presuming for their own Truth, and *begging* it, which is in reality no other than *supposing* it *after undeniable Proof*. The Proof of the *first Revelation* rests upon the Miracles which *Moses* shewed; the Proof of the *Power working* these Miracles, that it was the

Essay, p. 105.

the *Power* of *God*, rests not barely upon the Works themselves, but upon the *superiority* of that *Power* which appeared with *Moses*, and gave an undoubted Proof that the *Power of God* was with him, and that *God*'s Power was above all that pretended to *act proudly*, and shew Signs in opposition to it. After this Evidence, *the Law*, and after greater Evidences of this kind, (wherein God was pleased to give further Demonstrations of the Superiority of his Power in the Works of several of his Servants the Prophets, and especially in the Works of *Jesus Christ*, who was manifested to be the *Son of God with Power*, and who exercised his Power to the Destruction of the Power of Satan, and overthrow of his Kingdom and Works) the *Gospel* also supposeth its own Truth; that is to say, that it's so sufficiently confirmed by the *Power of God*, that its Truth thus confirmed should not become with us questionable upon any *Signs* or *Miracles* that may be wrought by opposing and deceiving Powers.

This is not like "telling a Man to Day "that such a Proposition is True, and To-"Morrow telling him it is False," as this *Author* would falsly as well as weakly insinuate: But if a Comparison of this nature were desired, I would say it is like the proving a thing true to Day from the most solid Reason, and against all the Art and Cun-

Cunning of the most subtle Sophister; and telling a simple honest-meaning Man the next, that he should hold to that Truth, which himself had heard so fully proved; though that Sophister whose Prevarication and Cunning he had seen discovered and confuted, should again set upon him with his Subtilty and Fallacies, to impose upon, and deceive him.

I say now with this *Author*, as to the words of Christ that follow——*Insomuch that if it were possible they should deceive the very Elect*; that I suppose our Lord spake this to his Disciples on purpose to make them cautious of being deceived by these False Christs and False Prophets, who shew great Signs and Wonders. And I agree with him thereupon, that these great Signs and Wonders may be discovered and distinguished from those true mighty Miracles, that were wrought by Christ in favour of the Gospel; so that if Care be used, Men will not be deceived by them. This is supposed in our Saviour's fore-warning his Disciples of these Signs and Wonders, and bidding them beware of those that wrought them. This Fore-warning had been to no purpose, if with Care they could not have distinguished these false Christs and their Miracles, from the True Christ and his Miracles. Nor will I lay much stress upon this, that they might have been deceived,

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had they not been the *Elect*; but think with this *Author* for the present, that the *Elect* here are Converted Christians, such as were now rooted and established in the Faith; and that the meaning is, that without all Care and Attention, the foundest Christians might be deceived by these false Prophets, who would shew great Signs and Wonders. But the Inference that I make from hence, will be quite contrary to his. He takes it, that these Words are in this respect a good Proof, that by *Signs* and *Wonders* we are not to understand *Miracles*; for that there is no way of guarding (he says) against them, they carry all before them. I take it otherways, that these Words are (on the contrary) a Proof, that by Signs and Wonders we are to understand Miracles: For that if by our Senses we could apprehend these not to be σημεῖα, *Signs* or *Miracles*, there would be no danger of their deceiving us; and that the danger from them is this, that to appearance, so far as we can judge of the things in fact by our Senses, they are like Signs to those which the Lord's Prophets have wrought: But as they are wrought by *another Power*, we are not to suffer them to carry any thing at all before them, being convinced that they cannot be of God, because of their Opposition to his known Truth.

Our *Author* now comes to make Riddance of another Scripture, which lies hard upon him, 2 *Thes.* 2. 9. ——*Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders.* He owns it to be a "Description of the co-
Essay, Pag. 108. "ming of *Antichrist*, and that *Satan* shall "at that time work as powerfully and sub-"tily as possibly he can, to withdraw Men "from Christianity, and make them be-"lieve a Lye." Thus far then we agree about this Scripture. Again; the Words *Lying Wonders* (he thinks) may signify either Tricks of Slight, and appearing Wonders, or Miracles that are to support a Lye and false Doctrine; the Words may import both these Senses; but he rather chuses to take them (after our Translation) *Lying Wonders*, that is to say, false and deceitful Tricks, Things that may make us wonder, till we examine and discover them. I am not apt to think, that our Translators meant no more than this; or, if they did not, I rather think the Words should be taken in the other Sense; *i. e.* to signify Miracles to support a Lye and false Doctrine. For Tricks of Deceit, are things which may be (and often are) used by Men like ourselves; which I take the *utmost* of *Satan's* Power to go much beyond; and the *working* of *Satan* with all Power and Signs, this *Author* himself thinks does here import,

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all that possibly he can do to deceive. The utmost of his Wonders, indeed, I esteem but as *Lying Signs*; because how great appearance soever they may carry with them of a Divine Power, they are not (in truth) the Effects of the Power of God: But that we by our Senses can distinguish these false Signs from the true, is what I doubt of, and can by no means depend on. To confirm me in this Opinion, I need set down only this *Author*'s Words; (who says) "He "will not deny, but that Spirits may fore- "see many Events in their Natural Causes, "which are concealed from us but not from "them; and from this Foresight they may "discover to Men a great many Secrets, "who may upon this intimation presage "strangely. Nor will he deny them to be "Creatures of great Force and Subtilty, "and able to do a world of astonishing "Things, and able also to assist Men to "the performing many great and marvel- "lous Works." But now, whereas he says further, that however, "since God has been "pleased to send his Son into the World, "to reveal his Will, and (in order to our "believing him, and being perswaded by "him) to give him the Power of working "Miracles; he cannot see how God should "gain his Point upon our hearts, if the "Power of working Miracles were com- "mon to any Being else with him, and he

Essay, P. 108, 109.

" should suffer Evil Spirits, and Evil Men, " to work True Miracles in Contradiction " to his Truth, which is built and establish- " ed upon Miracles." I give him for Answer, that God's Permission in this Case, does by no means suppose God's Power common to any Being else with him: His Power is above all their Power, and can controul it at any time, or in any Case that he pleaseth; and by this it is that he shall gain his Point upon our Hearts: By this it is that he has gained it upon the World, that hath become Christian hitherto, which never understood other than that Evil Spirits, and Evil Men by their Assistance, were sometimes, and might be permitted by God, to do great and strange Things; but that the Power of God was *above them.* This hath been to them a sufficient Ground of Faith, that *Power belongeth unto God;* that *among the gods*, there is none like unto *the Lord*, there is *not one that can do as he doth.*

But this *Author* " understands (he says) " the Scriptures that tell him, Christ did " really work Miracles, and that he wrought " them to gain Belief and Credit with Man- " kind: But he does not understand half so " well some Passages that seem to say, " that wicked Spirits, and wicked Men, " may also work great Miracles, in Con- " tradiction of Christ's Religion." Why does

does he not underſtand them; are not the Words as intelligible as the other? This cannot be pretended; becauſe they are the ſame Words which the Scripture uſes in both Caſes. But there's a Difficulty ariſes from it, he'll ſay, which he cannot well reconcile. He concludes upon ſuch certain Premiſes, that his Belief of Chriſt's Doctrine is reaſonable and good; but if ſo be he muſt underſtand thoſe Paſſages of Scripture, which ſay Wicked Spirits, *&c.* ſhall alſo work Miracles, according to the common acceptation thereof; he muſt take up an Opinion that deſtroys thoſe Premiſes. I anſwer; This ſhould not be a Reaſon for him to reject any Truth of Scripture, becauſe he cannot reconcile it to the Premiſes upon which he builds his Faith; but rather ſhould give him occaſion to examine his Premiſes, whether they are indeed the Scripture Premiſes; for be ſure the Scripture can have laid down no Grounds of Faith, which it ſelf ſhall contradict. And if this be looked into in his Caſe, it will be found, that though the Premiſes this *Author* has laid down, are ſome of them to be found in the Scripture, yet thoſe that he has taken thence, are not *all* the Grounds of Faith laid down therein. The Scripture indeed has told us, that Chriſt did really work Miracles, and wrought them to gain Credit and Belief with Mankind; but be-

sides this it has also told us, that the Works of *Jesus Christ* were wrought by the *Spirit* and *Power* of God; and from hence it requires Men to know and believe, that the *Kingdom of God* was come unto them. Let this, which is the chief Ground of Faith, be taken in together with the other, and there's no Contradiction in the Supposition, that Wicked Spirits may also work, and assist wicked Men to work Miracles, implied in the Scripture which saith—— *Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits* and Powers, *whether they be of God*; many *false Prophets* being gone out into the World.

1 John 4. v. 1.

I am not well pleased that this *Author* calls that an *unaccountable Easiness* in Christians, that they believe the Scriptures in this point, and hold an Opinion which was first received from them. He will allow however at length, that the Scriptures *seem to countenance* this Opinion; but they shall say it *downright* (says he) *before I believe it*. I conceive there is a Scripture which does say it *downright*, in words as plain as it is possible to express it; which I wish he may so consider, as not to be any longer *Faithless* but *Believing*. It is in St. *John's Revelation*, *Cap.* 13. *v.* 13. said of one to whom the *Dragon* should give *his Power*; some great Instrument of Satan, and Enemy to the Saints of God and his Truth; —— *He doth great wonders, so that he ma-*

Essay, Pag. 110.

maketh Fire to come down from Heaven on the Earth in the sight of men; and deceiveth them that dwell on the Earth, by the means of those Miracles which he had Power to do, &c. And again, *Cap.* 16. *v.* 14. it is said of the *unclean Spirits* which were with the *False Prophet*, ——— *They are the Spirits of Devils working Miracles.* I will not insist upon it, that the first of these Prophecies hath been fulfilled in *Apollonius Tyanæus*, (the Man of whom this our *Author* speaks well) though the Learned *Grotius* and *Hammond* are of that Opinion, upon the Account that this is one of the Facts in *Apollonius*'s Story, that he caused *Fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men*; and this another of his Actions (taken notice of by *Grotius*) That he pretended to bring the *Ghost* of *Achilles* into an Image or Statue that was made for him, and caused it to speak, and appointed upon it, that *Achilles* should be worshipped, and was a Cause at the same time that the Christians were Persecuted; which *Grotius* thinks may answer that in the 15*th* Verse, ——— *He had power to give Life unto the Image of the Beast, that the Image of the Beast should speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the Image of the Beast should be killed.* I leave this with our *Author* to consider, whether the Prophecy referred to and was fulfilled in him or not. This I will oblige him to own, that the

Prophecy relates to some False Prophet that should arise and have the *Power* of the *Dragon* to deceive; and that the Words are plain concerning this False Prophet's Power, and his doing his great Wonders and Miracles; and that the particular Instances and Acts wherein 'tis said his Power shall be shewn; that is to say, making *Fire to come down from heaven on the Earth* in the sight of Men, and *giving Life unto an Image*, and causing it to speak, are miraculous Works; and that this Scripture plainly saith, as does the other speaking of the Unclean Spirits with the False Prophet, that the Spirits of Devils have Power to work Miracles, and may give of their Power to wicked Instruments; and that these will be permitted to do and work Miracles by them to deceive what they can.

Essay, Pag. 111. And, after this, I need not answer him as to what he says; That "they do the "most Right and Honour to the Scriptures, "who clear them best from Absurdities and "Contradictions, and Consequences that "would overthrow their own Authority." At least, if I say any thing, it shall be only in his own Words. ——"That we are "not to reject Truth, for the sake of Con-"sequences that we think untoward: And "that 'tis not for him or me, to make what "Truths we like, but to make the best use "we can of what we find." That this being

Essay, Pag. 34.

ing so; most Right and Honour is done to the Scriptures, by those who believe its Truths, and do their utmost to clear and vindicate those Truth from Contradictions and Absurdities. They do it neither Right nor Honour who reject its Truths, and to justify their Rashness, pretend to draw Consequences to make one Truth overthrow the Authority of another. But Truth is no way contradictory to it self; and therefore I make no question but that whosoever shall go about to do a thing of this kind, shall fail and be ashamed of their Attempt.

But this *Author* has still a great Objection left; *viz.* That if by *Wonders* we are to understand *Miracles*, *&c.* "then shall Anti-
"christ do *as much* for the Support of a Pag. 111.
"Lye and Wickedness, as the True Christ
"did for Truth and Virtue; nay he shall
"do the *very same*. And to leave no room for a Reply to this Objection, he proposes an Answer which he thinks might be made to it; namely, "That the Miracles
"of false Christs, and false Prophets, shall
"not be so *great* nor *many*, as those of our
"Lord:" and takes it off, as he thinks, at once; by asking, "What Reason any Man
"has to think so?" and requiring that the Difference be assigned, "whether it shall be
"in *kind*, or in *degree* and *measure*." Yet by all this I do not think my self cut off from giving him an Answer; and the

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Answer I shall give him is this:——That *Antichrist* shall not be able to give us any Proof that his *Power* by which he doth his *Signs* and *Wonders*, *is of God*; which Proof we have as to the Works of *Christ*. I am not therefore obliged to insist on this, that the Miracles of *False Christs*, and *False Prophets* shall not be so great nor many as those of our Lord; yet will I take notice that no *False Prophet* has as yet appeared, that has wrought so great, or so many as those of our Lord: However, as I do not find the *Scripture* hath given this to us for a Rule to judge and try the Works of False Prophets by, I neither shall give, nor insist upon this Answer. The Rule I find given us, is, ——*Believe not every Spirit*, but try the *Spirits* whether they be *of God*: And again, Beware of *False Prophets*, *ye shall know them by their Fruits*. And again, If there come any unto you, and bring not *this Doctrine*, receive him not. By this Rule, if we try them that say, they *are Apostles*, and *are not*, we shall find them *Lyars*: Nevertheless, as to our *Author*'s Opinion, that much must not be built on this distinction of *greater* and *less*, *more* and *few*, in the Case of Miracles (for which he had given very little Reason before, and gives as little now) I will take upon me to say, that the *greater*, and the *more*, give Mankind the greater satisfaction; and God has been pleased to use *many*, and to give Power to his Pro-

John 4. v. 1.
Matt. 7. 15.
2 John 10.

Prophets to do *many*, and *great*, and especially to the Lord Christ. There is therefore some weight in the *many* and *great*, enough, I believe, to turn the Scale, if the Balance be held by an indifferent Hand. And as for that which this *Author* says against this, I take it to be of little moment: It really requires no less Power (he is pleased to say) to make a *Butterfly*, than an Army of *Eagles*: It may be so, for any thing I know; and it may not be so, for what he can know of the Matter; I suppose our Knowledge may be much alike in that case; that is, neither of us know any thing of it: He that has the Assurance first to assert, is so far safe, that the other cannot disprove him in a Thing that is above his reach. Nor does it require less (he says) to restore Sight to *Four* Blind than to *Fourscore*; I should think indeed that he who could restore Sight to *Four* Blind, might do it to *Fourscore*; but if I should see one that had done it to Four, attempt, but not able to do it to more, especially if he should fail of doing it in a Competition (which was the Case of those *Magicians* that opposed *Moses*, and wrought Three Miracles, but found their Power stopped even in Things seemingly requiring less Power than what they had done might be thought to require) I should conclude those whom I saw limited in their Power, not to have the Infinite Power of God; I should at least very much doubt as

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to their Power, whether it were of God; whereas I should have no doubt at all concerning that Power to which I saw all things *possible*. But here's a puzzling Case and Question at last put to us, ———Our Saviour wrought an *Hundred* Miracles, and *Moses Fifty*; is the Gospel therefore so much truer than the Law? No verily, But what's this to the purpose? Every one doubtless that comes from God, comes with Truth: If in Fifty, or in the fifth part of Fifty, it appeared that *Moses* did his Works by the *Finger of God*, there's no doubt but the Message he came with was true; and if it pleases God that another of his Prophets shall work an Hundred, to shew that he comes from him, it can only prove that he also comes with a True Message: And as the Message is not the Messenger's, but *his that sent him*, it is as impossible that the one Message should be more true than the other, as it is that God should be less true at one time than at another: However, this is nothing all the while to the Thing in hand; no Man ever questions whether one's Message was more true than another's, of those that are known to come from God; but as to the certainty of the Proof of a Man's coming from God, the Question is, Whether *many* Miracles, may not give a Proof of this, more undoubted and unexceptionable, than *few*? I think it may do this reasonably in any Case, but especially in a Contest

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and Competition, here it neceſſarily does it. This was the Thing that confuted and baffled the *Magicians* of *Ægypt*, to ſee their own Power ſtopp'd, and that of *Moſes* proceed.

But I have gone out of my way to follow this *Author* where I might have left him to himſelf, being not obliged to ſay how great, or how many Miracles God may think fit to permit a *Falſe Prophet* to work; nor how different in Number and Degree they ſhall be from, how far fall ſhort of thoſe of our Saviour; this being not the Rule by which I am to judge according to the Scripture Direction, whether ſuch Prophet be of God: We have for this purpoſe a more *ſure Word of Prophecy*, by which to try the *Spirits* and *Powers* whence they are.

This *Author* is now come to make an Objection to *himſelf* concerning *Simon Magus*, the firſt great Apoſtate from Chriſtianity, who practiſed *Magick* before his Converſion to the Chriſtian Religion; (inſomuch that all the People of *Samaria gave heed to him, from the leaſt to the greateſt, ſaying, this Man is the great Power of God*, Acts 8.10.) and after his Apoſtacy, is ſaid to have returned to his Sorceries again, and to have made uſe of them to deceive the World, giving out that himſelf was the *Chriſt*: As to this Man, and the Stories related of him, this *Author* ſays, "He verily believes he

Eſſay, p. 112.

"wrought

" wrought no True Miracles, because he " was himself converted and baptized, and " *continued with Philip, and wondered, be-* " *holding the Miracles and Signs which were* " *done :* And he thinks, if this Man could " have wrought Miracles himself, before he " became a Christian, Miracles would not " have converted him to Christianity, nor " would he have so wondered at *Philip* who " wrought them. " Truly this, to appearance, is great Argument, and would knock off all the Stories related of this *Magician* at once : For if he wrought no Miracles before, there might be some ground to suppose he could do none afterwards, he having Familiarity with that Power before, which must be supposed to assist him afterwards, if he did any; and that he could not before work Miracles, a Man would be apt to think, because of his wondring at Miracles, and becoming a Convert to Christianity upon them. But it happens there is somewhat in the Scripture Relation of this *Magician*'s Conversion, that will spoil all this fine Argument, and render it as nothing; namely, the Miracles which *Philip* did in *Samaria*, where this *Magician* was, which were these, *Acts* 8. *v.* 7. " *Unclean Spirits,* " crying with loud Voice, came out of *ma-* " *ny that were possessed with them,* and *many* " *taken with Palsie, and that were lame, were* " *healed.* " The *casting out Devils* might rea-

reasonably convince a *Magician*, though himself by the Power of the Devil had done great Works; for this must plainly convince him of a Power superior to that which himself had known, and that the Power which himself had acted by, was not the Power of God; which he might partly see also, perhaps, in the *many* Cures that *Philip* wrought. And besides, that this *Magician* did work Miracles, whilst he acted his Feats in *Samaria*, before *Philip*'s coming thither, I should think that the Scripture by this *Author* mentioned, should be a sufficient Proof; that is to say, That *all the People of Samaria gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great Power of God.* 'Tis not to be supposed that they took him to be the great Power of God, but from Signs by him shewed, which they thought *Signs* of some *Divine Power*: And as *all the People of Samaria* gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, 'tis not to be supposed but among some of them there must have been Skill, and Caution, and Attention to observe his Works, and that *heed* had not *been given* to him, but for something strange and miraculous done by him. If it shall be said, that he *bewitched them*, 'tis confess'd; but the Thing is the same in effect, whether the Works of a Sorcerer be real Works, or Delusion: So that if the Works of *Simon* were taken for Miracles among the *Samaritans*,

tans, and they by their Senses could not distinguish them from Miracles, they were the same to them, and gave them the same Reason to account him the *great Power of God*. And if this Sorcerer did such Acts before among the *Samaritans*, 'tis most likely he fell to the same Practices again, when he became an Apostate from Christianity, and set up himself for the *Christ*: And that he did so, is what all our Church History saith. Therefore 'tis somewhat strange that this *Author* should *take leave to suspend*, in reference to the Stories related of this Man's Feats, that all our *Church History* shall signifie nothing with this Author, when *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* have such Credit with him, that he will not allow their Relation to be called in question, as to *Vespasian*'s Miracles. I must here take leave to tell him, that the Relation given in our Church History of *Simon Magus*'s Heresy, and his setting himself up to be the *Christ*, and likewise his doing strange Things by the Devil's Power, to make himself believed so to be; even such Works by the help of Devils, that he was taken for a God, that almost all the *Samaritans*, and some of other Nations confessed him to be τὸν πρῶτον θεὸν, the *first* or *principal God*, and accordingly worshipped him with Sacrifices (his Pretensions rather increasing than lessening after his feigned reception of the Faith and Baptism) comes

to

to us. Attested by *Irenæus*, *Justin Martyr*, *Tertullian*, *Eusebius*, &c. The first and best Writers and Historians, and most to be depended on of any that we have; (whose great Names and Authority will I fear choak him, and yet I cannot forbear coming upon him with them in this Case, because a Matter of Fact cannot be otherwise Attested than by Names and Authority). And whereas this *Author* is pleased to add upon this, that the Stories of *Simon Magus* "would not prejudice the Cause he has "taken in hand, though allowed True, as "other Historical Narrations": Perhaps he may say hereafter, the Cause he has taken in hand is *Christ's Religion*; and I grant the *Signs*, which this Impostor shewed, do not at all Prejudice that, because his very *Opposing* it, obligeth that he be concluded *not to be of God*, and not to have *His* Power for the Acts he did. But I am sure it shall be a Prejudice to his *Author's Notion* which he has taken upon him to Maintain; *i. e.* that *False Christs* and *False Prophets* shall never work Miracles; and that no Impostor shall work them, that shall go about to prove that *Jesus* was not the *Christ*; for this Impostor, 'tis certain, set *himself up* to be the *Christ*; and if the Stories of him be True, did shew *Signs* to make himself believed the *Great One* he gave himself out to be.

I must say then now to our *Author's Scholar*, who comes to sum up what he has been taught, That his Instructor has indeed proved that Christ actually wrought Miracles (as was foretold he should) and that the End for which he wrought them, was to gain Belief and Credit with the World; but he has been now shewn also what his Tutor had omitted; namely, That Christ also proved *his Power* by which he did his Works, to be the *Spirit* and Power *of God*— And therefore it can be no necessary Consequence, that neither Men nor Devils shall be able to work Miracles in Opposition to the Gospel: The Scripture on the contrary has foretold they shall, but required that we reject them and their Works, as not having their Power *from God*. And inasmuch as his Tutor has taught him, that he must not deny that Spirits have great Sagacity, Force and Subtilty, nor say they cannot do most strange and astonishing Things, or even assist Men in the Performance of amazing Works; I do not see how he can be able to stand by it, that they can do no Miracles. It must be allowed, that Miracles are of the Foundation upon which God has built and established the Religion taught by his Son *Jesus Christ*; but however they are but part of the Foundation; the Scriptures, *Moses* and the Prophets must be taken in to make up the Foundation. So that not-

notwithſtanding what the Scripture ſaith of Evil Spirits, and Evil Men by their Aſſiſtance, ſhewing *great Signs*, thereby endeavouring to ſubvert the Truth of the Goſpel, that Truth however will ſtand Firm upon a good and ſure Foundation, as eſtabliſhed upon the Miracles of Chriſt, which have been ſhewn to have been wrought by the *Spirit* of God, and have the witneſs of a Precedent Revelation. And therefore he has been very ill Taught, when he has been told that he muſt not admit the received Senſe of theſe Paſſages of Scripture, (which the words moſt plainly require to be admitted, and upon which himſelf owns he cannot find how to put any certain nor determinate Senſe otherways) for the ſake of an inconſiſtency thought to be in the Suppoſition of Two contrary Powers working Miracles; there being indeed no real Inconſiſtency nor Contradiction therein; the Scriptures both of the Old and New Teſtament, which ſuppoſe this, ſuppoſing the *Power of God ſuperior* to all Power of the Devil in works of this kind, and *his Revelation* eſtabliſhed upon Evidence and Demonſtration of *his Power* in the works that give Witneſs to his Truth; which is ſuppoſed particularly in the Notice and Forewarning that Chriſt hath given us of the ariſing of Falſe Prophets, who hath required nothing unreaſonable, in obliging us to

reject them; that is to say, since he has proved himself *to be of God*, we should not hearken to False Pretenders that never will be able to prove themselves nor their Works to be *from him*. And as to the Things that are told of *Simon Magus*, he has seen that his Instructor's Argument to prove that he wrought no Miracles, is come to nothing, and consequently the Facts that are reported of him do absolutely overthrow his Notion, and prove the Prediction of Christ literally fulfilled; that according as he foretold there should, there did arise a False Christ and False Prophets, that shewed great *Signs and Wonders* to deceive.

I might now take my leave of this *Author*, as being not concerned on the Account of the Opinion I hold concerning Miracles, to go further with him. For the Objection of Miracles being wrought among the *Gentiles*, will not lye hard at all upon that Opinion which supposes they may be wrought by another Power than that of God. However, lest this Author should think his Book not fully Answered, if I should not keep on with him; but especially that Religion may not be left upon that Issue, upon which he has put the Merits of its Cause, I shall go on with him to the end of his Book.

In the next place then we meet with Two Questions; namely, (1*st.*) "How are "Miracles a Proper Way of Attesting to "the Truth of any Messenger or Prophet "of God, —— when Miracles have been "certainly wrought in all Ages by Men "that were no Prophets, nor pretended to "come from God? And (2*dly*,) What "must be done with all the Miracles that "were wrought by *Gentiles* before the com-"ing of *Christ*, and by *Gentiles* since his "coming? The first of these Questions this Author could have had little to do with, but that he designedly brought it in, to have an Opportunity to amuse his Reader in the Answer he gives to it; and make believe there must be some great Matter in the Inference he makes upon it, which is to help himself out, that he may seem to say something to the Second Question, which we shall find he has cut himself off from being able to give a sufficient Answer to, by his false *Hypothesis*, that supposes all Miracles to be wrought by the Power of God, and that no other Power can work them; (which Supposition does certainly lay him under the greatest Difficulty in accounting for the Miracles among the Heathen.) But to speak at present concerning the first of these Questions: 'Tis plain this Author could have little to do to ask it; for supposing *Miracles* to have been wrought by Men that

Essay, Pag. 115.

were no Prophets, nor pretended to come from God, yet this being certain that they could not be wrought by Men of themselves (without the assistance of some Invisible Power, and according to this Author, not without the assistance of God himself) there could not possibly be any thing in this to argue Miracles improper to attest the Truth of any Messenger or *Prophet of God*: For though there would be no Reason for those to be accounted *Prophets* upon the account of their having wrought Miracles, who pretended not to prophesie; nor those Messengers who should not pretend to come with any Message; yet there would be always Reason for those to be believed, who should say at any time they were Messengers and Prophets, if so be they wrought Miracles by the Power of God: For as 'tis certain from hence that God is with them, they must be believed when they speak to us from him, or in his Name; but when they do not bring us any Message, then 'tis to be supposed their Power of Miracles might be for some other end. In the Answer therefore that this Author gives, as to "God's "doing whatever he does for wise Ends and "Purposes, though he does not always dis-"cover them to Men; and his working Mi-"racles sometimes without declaring his "Purpose, and his Purpose being then ef-"fected, though we know it not; and some-"times

Essay, p. 116.

"times working them, and declaring the "End for which he works them, and their "then attaining their End, and we know it. "And again, of God's working ſome Mira- "cles, we know not why, but *he does*; and "other ſome, telling us it is to give Credit "to them by whom he works them, and "for theſe Works ſake we do give credit to "thoſe Meſſengers." In all this, I ſay, there is nothing but amuſement; for Common Senſe muſt tell all Mankind, that tho' a Man work Miracles, yet we are under *no obligation of neceſſity* of believing that Man to have a Meſſage from God, who does not declare to us, and tell us that he has any; but we ſhall have Reaſon to think that God intended this Power of Miracles for ſome other Purpoſe, if we are not told it was for this; but if ever we are told by him that wrought them, that it was to atteſt his coming from God, and we are ſure that God was with him in the Work, it ſhall oblige us to believe him whenever we are told thereof, let it be before his working theſe Miracles that he tells us his Meſſage, or after: So that after all that this Author has pretended to ſay here, there is not one jot of Reaſon for that which under colour of this Talk he ſeeks to bring in; that is to ſay, that it ſhould be "neceſſary that a Prophet "declare his Commiſſion before hand, and "then work his Miracle; ſhew the Seal, as

" he calls it, of his Commission." Which for a Purpose of his own this Author would advance into a Rule, (as we shall see by and by) and put the Cause of Religion upon *it*; whereas in truth there is no manner of Reason in any Thing that he has said, or can say to infer it; neither would there be any manner of certainty in the Rule, if there were any Grounds to lay it down. Yes, there is a plain Reason for it (says this Author) in that we hear of a world of Miracles that have been done by men in all Ages, who have pretended to no Commission from God, nor to be sent at all by him. This will be a Reason indeed why those that are Prophets should tell us they have a Message from God, or we are under no necessity of thinking them Prophets; but it can be no Reason that they must tell us what they are *before* they work their Miracles; if they do it *after*, their Miracles give them the same credit as if they had done it before, their Works shew them to be from God, and this must be to us a Reason at any time to believe them. But this (our *Author* says) " would prevent all Abuses that might be " made of accidental Miracles, which it " pleases God to work now and then, we " know not why, and by Agents or Instru- " ments that knew nothing of the matter " before the Miracle." Perhaps it might, if there were any danger of this kind; and

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I may let it for this purpose be kept till there be need of it; as yet I do not see, however, that this Author has shewn us any occasion for it: But much stress, I am afraid, cannot be laid upon it in any case; For how may any Miracles be said to be accidental, when they cannot be wrought without God, who has always wise Ends and Purposes therein? How can I pretend to say to any Agent of his, —"Had you first said to me, that you "came from God, and to convince me of "it, had told me God would work a Mira-"cle to witness your Commission, this Mi-"racle had been a Seal of it, and then I "must have believed it; but now I may as "well say (the Miracle being wrought be-"fore your telling the Message) you take "occasion from this Event to come upon "your own Errand, as you say it testifies "you came from God? Certainly this *Author* is not serious, and in earnest, when he pretends that a Speech of this kind would have been good in the Mouth of *Pharaoh* against *Moses*, had he not told his Errand first, before he wrought his Miracles: For if a Reasoning of this kind might hold, it would be an Objection against the Truth of *Moses*'s Revelation: It might be said he was indeed the Messenger of God for the *Delivery of this People out of Ægypt*, for this Errand he told before he wrought his Miracles, and they prove him sent for this purpose; but

but they prove him not to be sent *to the People of Israel as a Law-giver*, for that he did not at first speak of this Errand; it may be said therefore as well that he took occasion from the Event designed by God for another purpose, to get himself an Authority, which God never intended to give him, in and by those Works: There had consequently been no Authority in his Message to the People of *Israel*, *Exod.* 19. 4, and 7. when he *laid before their faces* these Words of the Lord; namely, *Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on Eagles Wings, and brought you unto my self; now therefore if ye will obey my Voice indeed, and keep my Covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar Treasure unto me, above all People*,&c. Upon which the People answered together, and said, — *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.* An Answer certainly reasonable in it self, and reasonably expected by God, and by his Prophet, upon the Miracles they had seen wrought; though before this time they had not been told of this Purpose therein. With what pretence can any Man presume to deny a *Prophet* the Liberty, if he thinks fit, to shew the Seal of his Commission first, and prove it Authentick, before he tells us the Contents of that Commission? What can be said, if a Messenger of God should reply, upon so weak and irreverent an Answer as that of this *Author* before-mentioned,

tioned; 'Tis not for you to pretend that I come on my own Errand, whenas you cannot deny but that God has been with me in the Works which I have ſhewn; Who is to tell you the Purpoſe of God in theſe Works, if I am not? From whom can you have a Knowledge of God's Purpoſe therein, but from him whom God has enabled to work them? And, as God muſt know before his enabling me to work them, to what purpoſe I would uſe them; you may be ſure that I ſhould not have had Power from him to work them, if I would abuſe them to contrary Purpoſes, to other Purpoſes than what he intended? I cannot in the leaſt apprehend, that there could be any Reaſon to ſtand out in ſuch a Caſe, againſt ſuch a Prophet and his Miracles. And therefore this can be no Rule for the Trial of a Prophet, nor for the Refuſal of his Meſſage. But this *Author* obſerves, it was our Lord's Method, who is ſaid *Mat.* 4. 23. "to have gone *about all Galilee*, teaching in their Synagogues, and *preaching the Goſpel of the Kingdom*, and healing all manner of Sickneſs, and all manner of Diſeaſes among the People. He firſt (ſays he) declared the Purpoſe of his coming, and laid down his Pretences in the general; and then convinced them by Miracles, *He was the Perſon he ſaid he was*, and was to be believed." I would willin-

willingly observe all that is remarkable in our Lord's Method, and make the best Use of all Things therein I could, to prove that our Lord's Miracles ought to have Credit with me and with the World: But whatever Help this might give me, together with other Arguments, that the strict Observation of his Method might give me for this purpose; I should be very unwilling to put the Cause of Religion, and the Credit of our Lord upon this Issue alone; because of some scurvy Objections that I foresee might be made, which would very much perplex me. Namely, (*1st.*) That Christ had not told what *Person he was*, not so much as to his own Disciples, in a great while after he begun his Preaching and shewing his Works. For we find, *Mat.* 16. v. 16. when *Peter* professed him to be the *Christ*, *the Son of the Living God*, he says, *Flesh and Blood had not revealed this to* him, *but his Father which was in Heaven*; that is to say, he spake it by the *Spirit of God*: And this must imply, that our Lord had not before plainly told what Person he was; and when he now owns who he was, he charges his Disciples that they should *tell no man*, that he was *Jesus the Christ*, v. 20. I find also, (*2dly.*) That our Lord himself first wrought a Miracle, without telling any thing of his Purpose therein, in the Cure of him that was *born blind*, *John* 9. and afterwards meets

meets the Man, and acquaints him *who he was*, and requires his Faith, *v.* 35. and the Man *believes* immediately. Now I can never think, that our Lord would have expected to be believed, for his Miracle that he had wrought, without telling his Purpose, in so great a Matter as this; i. e. *his being the Son of God*; or would ever have given himself an Instance that might be drawn into Consequence against himself; if it were necessary, as this *Author* would pretend, that he should first have told the Man who he was, before he had wrought his Miracle, if his Miracle were to have been the Ground of his Belief; or if this would be a Means of any Certainty, to find out a false Prophet by. I take notice also of St. *Peter's* Miracle, when *John* was with him, in his Curing the Man that lay *lame at the Temple-gate*, Acts 3. 2. that he first wrought the Miracle, and when the People ran together greatly wondring, he spake unto them, and insisted upon the Miracle, as wrought in the *Name*, *through faith in the name of Jesus*. I moreover, (*3dly.*) am aware of another Objection that would press me very hard, if I was to maintain the Truth of Christianity upon this Ground; namely, Christ's absolute Refusal at some times to work a Sign, when the *Jews* called upon him to do it; and his giving them Signs at other times which they understood

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not. Of the first kind was that, *Mark* 8. 12. when the *Pharisees* came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a Sign from Heaven; Verily, (says he) no Sign shall be given to this Generation; and he left them, *&c.* Of the Second Kind was his Reply to the *Jews*, *John* 2. v. 18. when they asked him, What Sign shewest thou? Destroy this Temple, (says he) and in three days I will build it up; which they understood of the Temple of *Jerusalem*, whereas he spake of the Temple of his Body. Which Sign of his, we are told, was not perfectly understood of his own Disciples, till they remembred his Words, after he *was risen from the dead.* And again, when he put off the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, when they desired to see a Sign from him, with this Answer, *Mat.* 12. 38. An evil and adulterous Generation seeketh after a Sign, and there shall no Sign be given it, but *that of the Prophet Jonas*; not explaining to them, or at least but very darkly, what he meant by that Sign. And when again, at another time, he put off both the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* with the like Answer, without any Explanation thereof at all; but left them, and departed from them, *Mat.* 16. 4. I take these things in themselves, to be no Objections of any moment against our Saviour Christ, or his Miracles; who has himself furnished us with

with an Argument, that will answer it wholly, *Luke* 4. v. 25. when he gives a Reason for his not working Miracles in *Galilee*, as he did at *Capernaum*, *viz. Many Widows* were in *Israel* in the days of *Elias*, when the great Famine was in the Land; but unto none of them was he sent, save unto the Widow at *Sarepta*: And many Lepers were in *Israel* in the days of *Eliseus*, and none of them was cleansed, saving *Naaman* the *Syrian*: That is to say, it is, and must be allowed to be wholly in the Pleasure of God, what *Signs* he will shew, and before whom, and also at what time he will please to do them. I durst not therefore pretend to lay down, neither can I think any Man ought to lay down, a Rule for God's doing his Miracles; to determine of the Credit which is to be given to his Miracles, or any Persons working them by his Power, from a Rule of my own framing; though it may seemingly appear never so fair and reasonable to my Apprehension; if I cannot be sure that it is a Rule given me by God, to distinguish his Works, and to know those that come from him. For tho' I may think it never so fair and reasonable, or necessary, it is not for me to confine God to any Method of ours: And if that were to be, it may be another Man shall not think this Method reasonable; he may therefore desire Satisfaction in the way that he thinks

thinks most proper. And a third Person (perhaps) may not dislike the Method which I think fair, but yet may think something else wanting, that to him seems altogether as reasonable: As a *Jew*, for Instance, may oppose and say, That he approves of this, that the Doctrine be laid down first, and then the Miracle to confirm it; but he likes also, that a Sign should be given him at his own time, when he pleases to call for it; which Christ thought not fit to do. Another might pretend, that he did indeed shew Signs before the Common People, but he did not do it before their Rulers, who were best capable of judging in such Matters; or, if he did any before some of these, he refused it when they were in Consult together, and desired to see it done for their Satisfaction, when they were prepared, and could best have consider'd it. And at this rate, a man might find Objections enough that would be made to him, of Things, as reasonable in human Judgment, that were omitted, as those can be, which we may insist upon to have been done. So hazardous a thing is it, to put the Cause of Religion upon a Ground and Foundation of our own, and not upon the Rule which God has given us to judge of his Works, and of the Power of those that pretend to come to us in his Name. Every thing of this kind of our own Invention, instead of preventing

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and excluding Abuſes, and undue Advantages, does indeed rather give them to crafty and pretending People. I have always thought and obſerved, that what the Wiſe Men of the World have been apt to look upon as Fooliſhneſs in the Proceedings of God, has been above all the Wiſdom of Men, and will appear always above it, will gain its Point againſt their Wiſdom: Whereas, if we go about to oppoſe our own Wiſdom, to the Wiſdom of the Scribe and Diſputer of this World, Religion and its Cauſe generally rather loſeth, than gaineth thereby.

I may therefore allow, in one Senſe, this *Author's* Diſtinction of Miracles, into *Providential* and *Evidential*; that is to ſay; *Providential*, ſuch as God himſelf worketh in the way of his Providence; and *Evidential*, ſuch as are wrought by Men, as the Inſtruments of God. For I think the Scripture does give us a Ground to think, that God of himſelf worketh Wonders ſometimes, as well as that he gives of his Power to Men for doing it. Of the firſt Kind I take to be the *Flood* in *Noah's* days, which drowned all the World; and the Deſtruction of the Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* with Fire and Brimſtone; and ſeveral more Inſtances, it's probable, there are to be found in Sacred, and (perhaps) in Prophane Story of the like kind. Theſe are

the Works of God only, and give no other Evidence than to his Providence, and the Justice and Righteousness thereof. *That* can only (or properly at least) be understood to give Evidence to a Man as God's Messenger, wherein God *hearkeneth to the voice of Man*: But for all those that have been at any time wrought by Men, I see nothing in the Scripture to conclude, but that they are all *Evidential* in a strict Sense; that is to say, they are always an *Evidence* of some invisible Power assisting those Men to do such Works, which (as Men) they could not otherwise do: And if such Men make it appear, that their Power is from God, it is an Evidence which may at any time be made use of, when they shall think fit to demand our Belief. We may ask, if you will, by what Power, or by what Name, such Miracles were done; and this any Man may be put upon making out; but when he has made out his Power, it can never be any Right of ours, to insist upon what we think the *fairest* way for our satisfaction.

And for the other thing that this *Author* here suggests, *viz.* the True Prophet's *knowing before-hand* what he should work: there may be some good Use made of it, I believe, if it be not carried too far; if it be used, that is to say, as one of the Arguments we have for the Truth of Christ's Miracles, that he *knew before-hand what he would*

would do; but (I doubt) it will not bear, that the whole Stress of the Cause of Religion be laid upon it. Let it be opposed to, and vanquish (as it certainly will) all false Prophets, whose Power has found a Stop, and has been put to that Stop in a Competition; but then the Argument in it carries a Supposition with it, which this *Author* has denied; namely, That other Powers beside God may work Miracles, whilst he permits them so to do; but can do nothing, when he shall controul them. But if you take away this Supposition, and were to conclude, as this *Author* has done, that all Miracles are wrought by the Power of God; there could be no ground in Reason hence, as (I am sure) there is none in Scripture, to void the Evidence of Miracles, in any Case, wherein the Workers of them may require to be believed. For what if a Worker of such Miracles (as this *Author* calls *accidental*) should say, he knew his Power, though he did not tell us that he knew it? What if he should take upon him to say, that the Power that assisted him, would not let him discover his Intention of doing it before-hand? What if he should say, that he did not know any thing of it when it was done indeed; but that the Spirit which came upon him at that time, to assist him to do this, which he did not know he should be able to do, had now revealed to him for

what Purpose it assisted him? What have we to say in any of these Cases? 'Tis plain, therefore, that this Rule leaves the Matter at such Uncertainty, that we could be never the better for it.

Let us see now, what this *Author* will do with the other "Question, concerning the "Miracles of the Heathens: Are we to be-"lieve they were wrought indeed; and if "so, what must we think they were "wrought for?" It should have been asked also, by what Power must we *think* them wrought? But that's a Question this *Author* did not care to meddle with; but would have it concluded to be the Power of God, without any Reason given. In his Answer, therefore, he tells us, "It is not "to be thought, that all their Histories "of strange Deliverances, and Cures report-"ed to be done among them, are meer Lies "and Fictions, though many of them may "be so: It must not be denied therefore, "however, that Miracles have been wrought "among the Heathens." And he thus accounts for them. "First, 'tis probable, "(he says) that God hath in all Ages "wrought some Miracles, without regard "to bearing Testimony to any particular "Truth or Messenger; but meerly to attest "his Providence, and Government of the "World. And, Secondly, (he says) it "may please God sometimes to work Mira-

Essay, p. 120.

Pag. 123.

Pag. 121.

Pag. 122.

"cles,

" cles, purely for the Benefit of ſome par-
" ticular Perſons, without any Reſpect had
" to the Confirmation of any Truth or Meſ-
" ſage; it being in his Nature to be good
" and merciful to all his Creatures; and
" there being many Caſes that may happen,
" that may call for a Miraculous and ſtrange
" Aſſiſtance at his hands, ſuch as he in pi-
" ty may think fit to relieve after a Mira-
" culous Manner." In all this there is not one Tittle of Argument, to prove the Miracles reported among the Heathen, to have been wrought by the *Power of God*. A Man, that believes that ſuch as were wrought among them, were wrought *by the Devil*, (who deluded them to the worſt of Idolatries) may ſay the very ſame things that he has done, to account for God's Permiſſion of the Devil to do ſuch Works among them: Namely, that as God permitted this, ſo he ſerved himſelf thereof, by keeping up amongſt all Mankind an Apprehenſion of a Divine Power, and the Belief of a Providence. And this ſhall be a Reaſon, for God's Permiſſion of Satan, by his Power, to do Miraculous Cures upon poor, miſerable, deluded Wretches; of whom it might pleaſe God to have ſome Compaſſion as to their Bodies as well as their Souls, *winking at their Ignorance*, until the time that he called all Men to Repentance, and the Acknowledgment of his Truth. And whe-

ther is most probable, that the Miracles among them were done by the Power of God, or by the Power of the Devil, I shall leave the World to judge from the Account we have in Scripture of the Devil's Power, and of his *ruling* and *working* in the *Gentile* World, and from the Idolatrous Worship that obtained throughout the same, and the Devil's dwelling in the Heathen Temples, and answering in their Oracles. But this *Author* says, "God, who is Lord and King "of all the World, hath not so tyed himself to either *Jew* or Christian, but that "he often hath, still does, and always will "dispense great Favours to the *Gentiles* also; "and, where he finds Occasion, work "great Wonders *for and with them.* That God has tyed himself up from shewing Favours, or even doing Wonders *for* the *Gentiles*, or *with* them, *where he finds occasion*, I suppose no one does pretend: But where is it that this *Author* shews us the Occasion; and whence is it that he presumes to tell us what God will do? How does he prove, that God has not served his Occasion, or may not serve his Occasion, by the Miracles that he worketh by and with his own Prophets and Servants? How is it that he taketh upon him to speak of himself, concerning the Mind and Will of God; and to assign him the Instruments he shall use? He may, without doubt, use what

Ephes. 2. 2.

what Instruments he pleaseth; but this does not prove, that he *will* use those as his Instruments in Works of Wonder and Power, who are Worshippers of false and Idol Gods, and pretend their Power from these. There can be no manner of Reason to think such the Instruments of the True God in any Works wrought by them: Much less Reason is there to think, as to those Works that are reported of their Deities and Idols, and to have been done in their Temples, that these should be otherwise done than by the Power of Satan. If any Miracles among them may reasonably be imputed to God, as *Lord and King of all the World*, it can be only those that come to pass in the way of God's general Providence; wherein are sometimes seen strange, unusual, and astonishing Events, extraordinary Things, and Alterations in the Course of Nature. These are rightly judged to be the Works of God all the World over, and are an Attestation of his Providence; and their End is rightly thought to be, the keeping up a Sense of God's Being, Power, and Goodness in Mens Hearts; and being *Providential* Works, are no Evidence of the Truth of one Religion more than another. But the Miraculous Works which the Heathens insist upon, as wrought by their *Idol Deities*, and for which they report Assistances to have been had and found in *their Superstition*, are

of another Nature, are *Special* Works, wherein it appeareth, that the Gods have hearkened to the Voice of Men, and given them, at their Desire, special Assistance and Help for the doing them: Wherein the Presence and Power of the Gods, appeareth to have been with such Men; which is reasonably esteem'd an Approbation of their Service and Way of Worship. To suppose, therefore God the Author of these kind of Works among the Heathen, is to suppose him an Approver of their Idolatrous Superstition, and must really destroy that Evidence which is given by the Presence of his *Spirit* and *Power* to his True Religion. Indeed, thus much is in effect confessed by this *Author*, when he tells us "what occasioned the cunninger Sort of *Gentiles* to "spread abroad among the Vulgar, that "other People wrought Miracles, as well "as Christ and Christians; that the Pretence of Miracles, which was made by "Christians, might not be sufficient to withdraw them from their Ancient Universal "Worship of many Gods. They could "not deny (he says) that Christ and Christians wrought great and many Miracles, "nor could they deny the Natural Force of "such an Argument; unless they could oppose Miracles wrought by their own People, to the Miracles of Christ and Christians; for then they must signify no-

Essay, Pag. 125.

"thing

"thing on either side, or as much on "theirs, as on the Christian side." If this were a Temptation to them to invent Stories more than were true (as this *Author* tells us) 'tis plain they thought it a Natural Argument, that if God assisted them to work Miracles, as he did the Christians, they could be under no necessity to leave their Superstition: And inasmuch as notwithstanding their telling many Stories that were false, it is not, however, to be denied that many of their Miracles were true, then I fear this *Author*'s own Argument will be good against himself; that Miracles being confessedly wrought on *either side, they must signifie nothing, or as much on theirs as on the Christian.* This will be no Objection of force however, to those that suppose two different Powers working Miracles, and can give a manifest Reason why that with Christians should be thought the Power of God, and why that with the other is to be accounted only the Power of the Devil. But what has this *Author*, who supposes both to be of God, to answer in the Case to his own Argument that he hath put into the Heathens Mouth? What he hath to say, is, that "all those *Miracles* of the Heathen were "*Providential Miracles*, and were not "wrought either in opposition *to*, or con-"firmation *of* any Doctrine or way of Wor-"ship, and therefore could be of no advan-

Essay, p. 124.

"tage

" tage to the Heathen Cause, nor disadvan-
" tage to the Christian." To this an Heathen might reply, That Miracles are as well *Evidential* with them as with Christians, they look upon them to be Confirmations of their Religion, as well as Christians think them so of theirs, and have as much Reason to account them Evidences of God's approving Men that worship him in their Fashion, as others can have to reckon them Evidences of his approving the Christian Worship. So precarious are our *Author*'s Deep Thoughts in this Point.

But he has an Answer at large to put into the Christian's Mouth, which might have been said and used to stop the Mouths of the Heathen formerly, and which he will now at least adventure to lay down as the surest and most reasonable way of defending Christianity against all Exceptions, as to the Evidence of its Miracles; namely, "He is not
" to say that the Doctrine of *Christ* is True,
" because it has pleased God to work Mira-
" cles by, and among *Christians*. For then he could not say, the *Gentile Worship* is false, since it must be allowed, that it hath pleased God to work Miracles also by and among the *Gentiles*: But he is to say, "That
" the Doctrine of *Christ* is true, because he
" said he came from God, and was to teach
" his Will; and in confirmation of the Truth
" of his coming from God, and of what he

should

"ſhould deliver, he ſaid he had Power to "work Miracles, and he did accordingly "work great and many Miracles." And he is to ſay moreover, "That the *Gentile* "Theology and Way of Worſhip are not "built on, nor ſupported by the Miracles "that have been wrought by, and among "the *Gentiles*, becauſe they who wrought "them, pretended not to be ſent from God, "nor came to ſet up any particular Way of "Worſhip, nor knew that they ſhould be "able to work any *Miracles*, nor affirmed "at any time, upon the Credit of thoſe *Mi-* "*racles*, that *Chriſtianity* was not the True "Religion." I think if a Man would have deſignedly, but covertly, and clandeſtinely given up the Cauſe of the Chriſtian Religion, he could not have talked at a more looſe or idle rate; A *Chriſtian*, according to him, "*may not ſay, that the Doctrine of Chriſt* "*is True, becauſe it has pleaſed God to work* "*Miracles by and among Chriſtians*: What is become then of the Witneſs which God gave thereto by *Signs* and *Wonders*, and divers *Miracles* and Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt? *Heb.* 2. 4. What becomes of our Saviour's Prediction, *Mark* 16. *v.* 17. And *theſe Signs ſhall follow them that believe, In my Name ſhall they caſt out Devils?* &c. and eſpecially of his Saying, *John* 14. v. 11, 12. when having required that himſelf might be *believed for his Works ſake*, he adds, *Verily, he that*

that believeth in me, the Works that I do shall he do also, and greater Works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father? &c. I thought our Lord had herein foretold as well that these Signs were to be Evidences of the Truth of his Religion, when they came to pass; as that they should come to pass through the Power of God, and Presence of his Spirit with his Church. But let us go on to this *Author*'s Reason; ——— "*For then he could not say the Gentile* "*Worship is false, since it must be allowed that* "*it hath pleased God to work Miracles also by* "*and among the Gentiles.*" I would fain know by what Authority this *Author* makes this Concession, as to *God's working Miracles by and among the Gentiles*; Does he find it made by any of the Apostles, or first Christians? Does he find the least Thing in Scripture to countenance what he thus boldly asserts? Sure I am, there is no Reason given by him, that should oblige any man to think otherwise than what the first Christians thought, as to the miraculous Works among the Idolatrous Heathen, that they were the Effects of the Devil's Cunning and Power. But an Heathen, I suppose, would gladly take him at his Word, and we shall see what work he may make of it anon. A Christian, however, has this to say, according to our *Author*, "the Doctrine of "Christ is True, because he *said* he came

"from

" from God, and was to teach his Will; and " in confirmation of the Truth of his com- " ing from him, and of what he ſhould de- " liver, he ſaid he had Power to work Mi- " racles, and did accordingly. So that the whole ſtreſs of the Matter, ſo far as I can find, is put upon this Point, that *Chriſt* told his Doctrine firſt, and then wrought his Miracles; ſo that the Iſſue depends not ſo much upon his Miracles, as upon his *firſt laying down his Doctrine*; (a ſlender and ſlight Foundation, I doubt, but ſhall ſuſpend 'till I ſee what is to be ſaid further.) On the other hand, a Chriſtian has to ſay, *That the Gentile Theology and Way of Worſhip are not built on, or ſupported by the Miracles that have been wrought by, and among the Gentiles.* Why ſo? Becauſe they who wrought them, *pretended not to be ſent of God*, nor came to ſet up any *particular Way of Worſhip, nor knew that they ſhould be able to work Miracles*, nor affirmed at any time upon the Credit of thoſe Miracles, that *Chriſtianity was not the True Religion.* This *Author* would have done well to have inſtructed the Unlearned Chriſtian how to make good all thoſe Particulars, which I find my ſelf as unable to undertake, as to undertake the Task of *diſproving all the Gentile Hiſtories and Accounts*, Pag. 135. which he would by no means have his Friend to adventure on: In the mean time I am utterly at a loſs, ſhould a Gentile or unbe-

lieving

lieving Heathen reply, and say, This is for the greatest part, if not all, Mistake, for we have had Oracles and Prophecies that have foretold Blessings to us, upon our fetching and worshipping this, and that, and the other God; we have had particular Sacrifices prescribed to us by them; we have had Cures wrought in the Temples of these Gods, and Visions likewise there: Our Priests of these high Gods, who have instructed us in their Worship, (which Worship we find accepted by the Power the Gods shew with us, in Miraculous Works therein) tell us, That your Religion is false, and setteth forth strange Gods, ours the Ancient and True. Your Answerers heretofore pretended, that the Works wrought among us, were wrought by Devils; but you now rightly confess them to be the *Power of God.* And what Reason is there, that God who has shewn us so much kindness as to do so many mighty Works among us, should not by some or other of those to whom he has given the Power of Miracles among our selves, instruct us in the True Way of his Worship? Would he do us so much kindness in reference to our Bodies, and withhold that wherein our Souls are concerned, and not send us a Prophet of our own to instruct us? Is it reasonable that we should forsake those Deities that have been so manifestly and miraculously kind to us, because others

pretend

pretend to have Miracle-Workers that tell them ours is a falſe Way, whenas we have thoſe alſo that work Miracles, who tell us no ſuch thing? Nor is it to be ſaid, that ours *knew not that they ſhould be able to work Miracles*; for we alſo have had thoſe that have *foretold* them, as the *Augur* (that gave this as a *Sign* to the *Roman* King, that what he had in his Thoughts was poſſible to be done; who thereupon propoſed a Thing to appearance moſt impoſſible, which was the dividing and cutting aſunder a *Whet-ſtone* with a *Razor* that lay by it, and the *Augur* immediately performed it) and ſeveral others. 'Tis endleſs to ſay, what might have been objected to this Defence of the Chriſtian Religion, had it been ſtood upon by Chriſtians of old, when the *Gentile* Idolatry prevailed in the World, and *Satan* by Permiſſion was doing his utmoſt to keep up that Idolatry and Superſtition: Or what might be objected even now by the Atheiſtical and Prophane, if Religion ſtood upon this Bottom: The Foundation at this rate being little other than a Nicety, and the Chriſtian World never underſtanding upon what Ground it ſtood before. It is therefore to me a moſt unaccountable thing, that this ſhould be laid down as *the ſureſt* and *moſt reaſonable way* of defending Chriſtianity from all Exceptions as to the Evidence of its Miracles.

But

But now our *Author*'s *Scholar* comes upon him with an Objection indeed; 'tis pity but he had been able to manage it to advantage; for then I am apt to think it must have put this *Author* very hard to it, and made him, perhaps, look after some better Answer than his distinction of Miracles into *Providential* and *Evidencial*. The Objection is, the Miracles wrought by *Vespasian* the Emperor, who cured the Blind and the Lame, as two Historians of Credit relate, *viz.* *Suetonius* and *Tacitus*: The Case is here not so fairly told, and I shall therefore put it in *Tacitus*'s Words, who says, A Man of *Alexandria* that had an Infirmity and Disease in his Eyes, came to the Emperor, and told him, the God *Serapis* (which in that Country was much worshipped and honoured above all other) had warned him to come to him for Cure, and prayed the Remedy of him which the God had advised, that he would vouchsafe to touch the Balls of his Eyes with his Spittle: The other being lame, came to him by the Direction of the *same God*, and prayed, that he would kick him with his Foot: *Vespasian* did not think he should do the Cure, and so was at first unwilling to try; but being encouraged by some about him, at length attempted it, and the Event answered, and so he had the Success that had been foretold. I agree with our *Author* in what he says, (*First*) to this

this Case, that it looks as if it had been in part transcribed from our Saviour's Action in curing the Blind: And likewise in his (*Second*) Observation concerning it, that it seems an Artifice of *Vespasian's* Friends and Followers, to raise his Credit with the World, now he put for the Empire; and it looks suspiciously that they should importune him to do what he was ashamed himself to attempt; it looks as if the Matter had been laid before-hand by them, that seem'd to warrant the Success: But in the (*Third*) I cannot go with him so far as to believe the Relation very readily upon the Credit of those Authors: For *Tacitus* says himself, that he had it but upon Credit and Report, he indeed gives something of a Reason why they should be believed from whom he had it, *viz. Those who saw the Action* do now affirm it, when nothing is to be *got by lying in the Case*: However, it is the Credit of *others*, and not *Tacitus*, that we must depend on for the Truth of the Fact. And which is worse, the Historians differ in their Relation thereof. *Suetonius* says the Lame Man was *debilis crure*, had a Weakness in his *Ankle*: *Tacitus* that he was *manu æger*, had a Lameness in his *Hand*: One says, upon the Event, the Man had the use of his Hand restored; and the other, the Man's Ankle became strong. This difference is some Argument to me, that there was no great Cer-

tainty in the Story. I say withal, that should we admit it however, it affects not the *Cause in hand*, (if by that be meant the Cause of Religion) upon the Grounds on which I think the Cause of that to depend; but I doubt it will very much affect this *Author's Principles*, and the Cause of *Religion* too, if that were to stand upon *those Principles*.

"*Vespasian* (says our *Author*) according "to the Forms prescribed, was instrumen- "tal in restoring a Blind and Lame Man: "He was so far from knowing himself endu- "ed with any such Power, that he did not "believe it, when told him from *Serapis*: "He durst not so much as try to follow "the Forms prescribed him for those Works. True, but still *Serapis* sent the Blind and Lame to him, directed the Means, the Thing was attempted, and the Event followed: "To whom consequently was the "Cure in Reason to be ascribed, but to the "Emperor, as the Instrument, and to the "Power of the God that directed it? And that which our Author says afterwards,——"He "pretended to nothing of Divine Worship "when he had actually performed them; he "made no Consequences, nor desired any "to be made, but that which would natu- "rally follow, that the People should hold "the Man in great Honour, who was so fa- "voured of the Gods:" is not altogether

so

ſo true; for *Tacitus* ſays, That the Emperor upon it had a greater deſire to go to the *Temple* of *Serapis*, and worſhip there, and conſult with *that God about his Empire*: And as the Emperor made that Inference, 'tis evident he thought himſelf aſſiſted by the Power of that God to do the Work; and no doubt, but as others muſt think the ſame, the Worſhip of this Idol was by this promoted amongſt the People. Tacit. Hiſt. Lib. 4.

I am ſo far therefore from perceiving that this was a "*Providential Miracle* that God "was pleaſed to work by *Veſpaſian*, without "any knowledge of, or Pretences to ſuch "Power before-hand, and without any *In-*"*ferences* drawn from it afterwards;" that I take it to be plainly the contrary. It's a Miracle that an Idol-God directed the Means for, and in effect foretold, and which conſequently it's reaſonable to think the Idol gave Power for, to the Inſtrument that wrought it: And it's unreaſonable to think the True God ſhould employ his Power to bring that Thing to paſs, to verifie the Prediction of an Idol God, or give the World at leaſt an Opinion of its Power from the Succeſs of the Means by that Idol directed and preſcribed: *Veſpaſian* himſelf underſtood he had the Power from *Serapis*; and as this was his Concluſion when the Event followed, ſo the *Conſequence* with him was the Honour and Worſhip of the

Idol; and therefore others, we may be sure made the *same Inference*.

Therefore I must say, that the *Scholar* does by no means drive home the Objection, but rather designedly let it fall, when he says after this ——But sure the Worship of *Serapis* would by such an Accidental Advantage be strangely encouraged, *&c.* and especially when he contents himself with this *Author*'s Answer, which puts it off as though it was only a false Application of the People, to *ascribe the Effect to Serapis.* 'Tis plain the Idol God directed, and therein as good as foretold it, and consequently it could be no other Power that fulfilled it, unless we can suppose the True God to act at the Will, and for the Reputation of an Idol Deity. And 'tis evident that *Vespasian* himself understood and attributed it to the Power of that God that directed the Means for it, and 'twas a Reasonable Consequence. This Author, however, has further to say, "That 'tis not an uncommon Thing to find "the *Gentiles* attributing these sort of Visi-"ons and Salutary Admonitions, to *Serapis*, "*Isis*, and others (according to the Country "and the Deity they Worshiped) which "yet might well proceed from the True "God, the Father of *Spirits*. At this rate all the Communication which the *Gentile* World had with Devils, might be guessed to be a Communication with the True God.

'Twas

'Twas, no doubt, possible for the True God to have Communication with them, and to give them Visions and Salutary Admonitions; but to think he had, and should not make known himself, but suffer them to attribute those Admonitions and Visions to their Idols which they had from him, is no way reasonable: This would be to suppose the True God the great Instrument of the Peoples Delusion; and if this Absurdity were to be let pass, this *Author*'s Argument is altogether precarious. If he thinks it *might be so* in this Case, another may think it *might not*; and an Heathen might with much more Reason insist upon it, that it was *Serapis* appeared in the Vision, and worked the Cure, than he can that it might be otherwise: The saying it *might*, or *might not*, will neither take off, nor answer in this Case the Objection.

There is more a great deal that this Author might have said, if he had pleased to remove this Objection from himself and his own Principles; but he was now to serve a Turn of his own another way: He must find some Instance by which he might make it seem as though his Distinction of Miracles into Providential and Evidential were of some use to the Defence of Christianity, against all Exceptions; and so this Fact done by an Heathen, must be allowed to be a Miracle, and the Credit of the Re-

lators good; whereas greater Works have been denied by him to be miraculous, when 'twas thought fit for his Purpose. That which I would put this Author in mind of, is *Tacitus*'s saying that the Emperor put it to the *Physicians*, whether the Cure of these Infirmities might be wrought by *Humane Power*, and that the Physicians reasoned variously upon it, at last affirming and giving this Judgment, "That the Blind Man's Eyes "were not perished, but if that which hin-"dred was drawn or taken off, his Sight "would return; and likewise that the other's "Lameness was from a Dislocation of the "Joint, which might with a convenient "Force be put right again: Which was to say, that it might be done by *Human Power*, and by *Natural Means*. This might have helped this Author, that according to his Principles he might have denied it to be a Miracle if he had pleased: But this, it seems, was not a Case wherein he desired to deny it.

I, for my own part, however, (if the Relation be admitted as true) should not go about to deny the Fact's being a Miracle, because though I judge by the Physicians Report, that both the Cures might have been wrought by Human Power, and Natural Means, yet I do not see that the Cure was wrought by such Means, not one of them at least; A great Stroke, or a Kick

might

might probably effect the Cure, as to the Dislocation of the Joint in him that was Lame, which was the Remedy desired, and very probably the Means used in that Case; but the Spittle to cure and take off the Film of the Eye, I do not apprehend to be a Probable Natural Means, and therefore think the Work above Human Power to effect, by those Means by which it was brought to pass; and therefore I must allow the one, if not both to be Miraculous: But then as the Idol God directed to the Means, and foretold the Cure, and consequently must be supposed to have given the Power for it, I repute it to be the Devil's Work, as being the Work of a Power seeking to set it self up for God by this Sign: And there is a Reason to conclude it a Work not above the Power of a *Dæmon*, for that the Physicians judged it possible to be done by Human Power, and Natural, so it were Proper Means. I do not think a *Spirit* stands in need of the same Means as we do in any such Case, but that it may do all that we can do, and more, in a Way peculiar to it self, as having greater Skill, Force and Subtilty.

There is also another thing in *Tacitus*'s Story of this Matter, which our *Author* would have done well to have taken notice of, and let us have seen whether his Distinction of Miracles into *Providential* and *Evi-*

dential, would have solved it. I mean, the Original Story of the God *Serapis*, which *Tacitus* thought fit to set down in his History upon this occasion; (whence I conclude that *Tacitus* himself also ascribed the Effect to the Power of this God.) The *Ægyptian* Priests, he says, report the Story thus——— "That *Ptolomee* King of "*Ægypt*, when he had walled the lately-"built City of *Alexandria*, erected Tem-"ples, and instituted Religious Rites, saw "in his Sleep a Fair Young Man, of more "than ordinary Stature, who warned him "to send to *Pontus*, and fetch thence his "Image, that it would bring great Prospe-"rity to his City and Kingdom, &c. and "straightway the Young Man seemed to "go up to Heaven out of his sight in a "great Flame of Fire. *Ptolomee*, moved "with so great a Miracle, consulted the "*Ægyptian* Priests; who being ignorant "of *Pontus* and Foreign Countries, he ask-"ed *Timotheus* an *Athenian* what God that "might be. *Timotheus* consulting with Tra-"vellers, understood that there was a City "called *Sinope*, and near to it a Temple de-"dicated to *Pluto*, and by it stood the I-"mage of *Proserpina*. But *Ptolomee*, more "addicted to his Pleasures than to Religi-"on, forgets or neglects the Matter, un-"til the same Vision appeared to him again "in a more terrible manner, greatly threat-

"ning

"ning him, if he did not perform its Com-
"mandment. Then *Ptolomee* sent an Em-
"bassy with Presents to the King of *Sinope*,
"willing those he sent, to go by *Delphos*,
"and ask Counsel of *Apollo*. Their Jour-
"ney by Sea was prosperous, and *Apollo*'s
"Answer without Ambiguity, that they
"should go forward, and bring with them
"the Image of his *Father*, but leave his *Si-*
"*ster*'s. They came to *Sinope*, and deliver-
"ed their Message and Presents: But the
"King of *Sinope* was doubtful, and feared
"the Displeasure of the Gods, and of his
"own People, and so was not willing to
"comply; but upon repeated Messages,
"and Presents of store of Gold, he at
"length was somewhat inclinable. At the
"last, a fearful threatning Vision appears
"to him, charging him no longer to hin-
"der that which the God had determined:
"And as he protracted notwithstanding,
"many Mischiefs befel him and his People,
"and divers Diseases, and the Wrath of the
"Gods vexed him more and more. The
"common People however still withstood
"their King's motion of sending away the
"God; and to prevent it, beset the Tem-
"ple; whereupon a strong Report goeth,
"that the *Image without hands* conveyed it
"self into the Ships which were sent for it;
"and which was wonderful, through so
"vast Seas they arrived at *Alexandria* the

"Third

"Third Day." *Our Author* cannot well question the Truth of this Story, because his Historian *Tacitus*, upon whose Credit he believes the other Story, does not seem but to believe it, or 'tis not likely he would have told it upon this occasion. These *Visions*, I suppose, he will never suggest might proceed from the True God; nor the *Answer* of *Apollo*, nor the *Miracle* of the Image's getting away from the People that beset the Temple, and conveying it self on board the Ships that were sent for it, and what followed, of the Ships reaching *Alexandria* through so vast Seas the Third Day. His Historian *Tacitus* seems to account these as much Miracles, as *Vespasian*'s Cure of the Blind and Lame by the help of this Power. Let *our Author* either give up the Credit of his Historian, or tell us how these may be reckoned only *Providential* Miracles. I for my part think the Credit of the Historian shakes in this Relation, as it seemed to me to do in the other: But if this Narrative were allowed True, it would not in the least prejudice the Cause of True Religion, on the Supposition which I take must be granted; namely, That if any Thing of this was true in Fact, it was all done by the Devil, was a Delusion of his to deceive Mankind to the Worship of himself. And if I make it appear, as I do not question but I have already, and shall

ſhall do more fully ſtill, That the *Power of God* hath been, and hath ſhewn it ſelf, *above* all the *Gods* of *the Heathen*; the Things done by their Power ſhall not in the leaſt render that Religion queſtionable, which is eſtabliſhed upon Evidences given to it by the Infinite, Unbounded, and Uncontroulable Power of God: Yea, it ſhall be a Conviction to the Heathen, that they ought to turn from thoſe their *Idols* and Superſtitions, to the *Living God, the God that made the Heavens*; and to the Worſhip of this the only True God, according to the Inſtruction which the Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath given us as to the Worſhip he requireth, that is to ſay, to the Worſhip of Him the *only God in Spirit and in Truth.*

Now comes the *Scholar* to ask his *Inſtructor* concerning *Apollonius Tyanæus*, what he ſhall do with him and his Works, which were ſo ſtrange and ſurprizing, that he has heard of his being compared to *Jeſus Chriſt*. True (ſays this *Author*) "Great Things are "ſaid of that Man; and *Hierocles*, who "was himſelf a conſiderable Man, compa-"red him to Chriſt, and wrote a Book to "that purpoſe, which *Euſebius* anſwered. "And he who reads *Philoſtratus*'s Life of "him, will find cauſe to believe that he "had read the New Teſtament, and in-"tended *Apollonius* ſhould be very like "*Chriſt*."——This methinks looks ſuſpicious, Eſſay, p. 130.

picious, and should have been suggested to be so; that 'tis to be thought the Writer of the Life made him to be as near as he could what he intended him, and consequently little Credit can be given to his Story. This would have been a good Reason to demand *Vouchers* of *Philostratus*, who (our *Author* tells us), "wants "them very much, his History being "so written, that he dares trust any Fair In-"genious Heathen with it, and make him "judge whether the Life and Miracles of "*Apollonius* be to be compared with the "Life and Miracles of *Christ*. But then this *Author* must not give him to understand that there is no difference between *great* and *small*, and *many* and *few* Miracles; if he does, I do not see what Judgment an Ingenious Heathen should make from his comparing the one and the other: Nor must this Author allow *Philostratus*, that wants Vouchers, to have the Credit he is about to give him. Let it be granted (he says) that "*Apollonius* wrought Miracles, what "will follow? That *Apollonius*'s Religion is "true? What was it? Where is it to be "found? Give us an Account of the *The-"ology* he taught, and designed to plant and "propagate, &c. There's nothing of Argument in all this and the rest that follows; 'tis meer Harangue, and inconsistent with it self. "Let it be granted that *Apollonius*

"wrought

" wrought Miracles, what will follow? That " *Apollonius*'s Religion is true? " Here methinks our Author ſhould have ſtopped, to ſay ſomething to the contrary, and give a Reaſon why it ſhould not follow; but inſtead of that ——What was it? he ſays. Has not this Author himſelf told us it, ſay I? " *Sacrificing* to *Jupiter*, to *Hercules*, to " the *Sun*, and other Deities, according to " the Places he came to; " that is to ſay, His Religion was all kind of Idolatrous Worſhip. ——" Where is it to be found? " Give us an Account of the Theology he " taught, *&c.* Thanks be to God, there is very little of the Pagan Idolatry now to be found, at leaſt in our part of the World; and as for *Apollonius* in particular, that is come to paſs of him which has been the Fate of other Deceivers, who have boaſted themſelves to be great ones, that *himſelf* and his *Works* being not of God, are come to nought; the Theology he deſigned to plant and propagate, is not remembred, and that Memory which remains of him in Story, is, that he was a *Magician* that did his Works by the Power of the Devil, and a great Idolater. This is what is remembred of him in the Chriſtian World: And what the Heathens have left us of him, is, That he was a Worker of Miracles, and yet a Worſhipper of their Gods in their Way of Superſtition; and his Works they oppoſe to the Miracles

Pag. 132.

of

of *Jesus Christ*. "But he was a strict Dis-
"ciple of *Pythagoras* (says our Author) yet
"did not tell the World, that they must all
"of them follow *Pythagoras*; that was not
"the way of the Ancient Philosophers, to
"tell the People they must change their O-
"pinions, or the Gods would not favour
"them; nor was it the way of *Apollonius*.
I have not heard, indeed, that it was the Way of any of the Ancient Philosophers to work Miracles, and therefore do not see how they could have any Pretensions to tell the World, that their Opinions were the Mind of the Gods, or that the Gods would not favour them, unless they acknowledged and believed their Philosophy. But what is this to the Way of *Apollonius*? If they did not make any such Pretensions, might not this Man? especially doing that which none of them ever pretended to. What he might, or might not do of this nature, is no better known to this Author than to the rest of the World: The World at present knows little of what he did; neither does our Author know what he did not of this kind: "He went up and down (he says) in a "Strange Habit, and corrected Peoples Er-
"rors, and blamed their Vicious Practices,
"and said many good and wise Things, and
"talked to Great Princes with a Freedom
"that became a True Philosopher, that va-
"lued not the World, nor all it could offer.

——This

———This is to represent, I presume, this Impostor as a Good Man, that he might be thought to be favoured of God, and so to be endued with Power from on high for the *Works* he did: But St. *Paul* I think hath told us, 2 *Cor.* 11. 15. that *Satan* himself hath sometimes been transform'd into an *Angel of Light*; therefore it is no great Thing if *his Ministers* also be transform'd as the *Ministers of Righteousness*: And our Saviour hath given us a Caution to beware of *False Prophets that come in Sheeps Cloathing*; which I take to be the *appearance of Virtue*; whom, nevertheless, we may know, he says, by their Fruits; as this Man, for Instance, by his *Idolatrous Practices*: If in other Things his Cunning concealed his Hypocrisie, by these we may be able to judge, and not with wrong Judgment, what Ends the Specious Pretext of Virtue was to cover. " But he set up for no Religion, says our " *Author*; he amended the Ceremonies of " several People, but he left them otherwise " in the way he found them. What does our Author mean by this that he says, —*He set up for no Religion*? Is it that he was an Atheist, and so all Religions were to him alike? Or is it that he set up no New Religion of his own? The first of these, as it would be a Reproach to this great Philosopher, so would it be an Objection against all Religion, and all the Evidence that any

Religion

Religion can have from Miracles, if an Atheist could work them. And what signifies his not setting up a New Religion, if he approved and practised the Heathen Superstition? His Miracles in this Case must be as great an Objection against Christianity, as if he had been the Author of a New Superstition. But does not our Author here also contradict himself, in saying, that *He amended the Ceremonies* of some People? What were those *Ceremonies*, I would fain know, but the Superstitious and Idolatrous *Rites of the Heathen Worship*? whose Rituals he in some respects amended, or pretended to amend, but left them otherwise in their old Vanities, to worship the Gods they did before, which were Idols, and no Gods. "He sacrificed "(says our Author) to *Jupiter*, to *Hercu-* "*les*, to the *Sun*, and other Deities, accord- "ing to the Places he came to." Then we know by this what his Religion was, though our Author is pleased to take notice, that he did not sacrifice with any *Living Creatures*, this being against his Master's Rule: I hope this is not to set forth the Virtue of the Man, nor the Excellency of the Sacrifices by him used: For I have heard say of this Man, that he approved of the Worship of *Diana* by the *Lacedemonians*, with *Human Blood*. But as for the Sacrificing of other Living Creatures, I shall never think, for all that can be suggested from *Apolloni-*

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us's Practice, or his Master *Pythagoras*'s Rule, but that the Sacrifices which God was pleased to require of that kind heretofore, were required with good Reason, and upon wise Grounds, for Ends neither unworthy the Divine Wisdom, nor inconsistent with a Divine Goodness.

And if now I should believe *Philostratus* as to the Miracles which he relates of this Man's doing, as well the Considerable, as the Poor ones reported of him; yet inasmuch as I know his Religion to be false and impious, I insist upon it, that his Works were *not of God.* "But he valued himself nothing "upon their account (says our *Author*) but "attributed them all to God. I have heard that he so much valued himself, that being questioned by *Domitian* for this, among other Things, thathe allowed himself to be *thought a God*, he insisted upon, and justified himself in it: And I desire this *Author* to tell us, to *what God* he ascribed his Works; methinks he should have ascribed his Works to some or other of the Gods he worshipped, as *Jupiter*, *&c.* I would willingly know to which of them; or if it were to the True God, that this might be shewn, and afterward a Reason given why this Man that said so many *wise* and *good* Things, should act so foolishly and wickedly, and give so wretched an Example, as having ascribed his Works o the True God, to worship those which

were Idols, and no Gods. But (says our *Author*) "He wrought none of his Works "to testifie that any God had sent him, and "he drew no Consequences from any thing "he had done. Our Author's Negative, I am sure cannot be proved, and I suppose he is so confident in it, because he will think it not fit to be put upon its Proof. This I can assert affirmatively of him, that his great Endeavour was to order and establish the Worship of the Heathen Gods wherever he came; and he wrote a Book, or Books concerning Sacrifices to be offered to them, setting forth which were proper for the several Gods. And what should give him Authority with the People for either of these but his Miracles, I cannot conceive. I would have our Author shew me that a Philosopher did ever by Reason or Argument so far prevail upon the Superstition of the Common People, as to be suffered to innovate in Matters of this nature. There is a particular Fact of this Man's also, which I would likewise have our Author to consider, which was his bringing of *Achilles*'s Ghost into the Image, and making it *to speak*, after which the Men of *Thessaly* were advised and directed by him to *worship Achilles*; and then inform me if I think amiss in supposing, that he drew this Work of his into consequence, for the setting up, or confirming the Worship of an Idol God. And

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if our Author does think *Apollonius* ill used, in its being supposed of him, that he acted in opposition to Christianity, that not appearing in *Philostratus*, who wrote his Life; I would desire him to consider, that the Christian Writers were not the Persons that raised this Report of him, but the Heathen, such as his *considerable Hierocles*, *&c.* that urged the Miracles and the Practice of this Man against the Christians, and against the Truth of their Religion, because this Man was a worker of Miracles, and yet a Practiser and Regulator of the *Gentile* Worship; and if the first Writers on behalf of Christianity, allow the Truth of the Matter of Fact in both Cases, it was doubtless because they who lived nearer the Time of those Transactions, saw no Reason to deny it; the latter at least; *i. e.* his Worship of the *Gentile* Gods, and Regulation of their Superstitions to no better a purpose, than leaving them in the Way of their former Vanities they never offered at any denial of, doubtless because 'twas known to be true; otherwise 'tis to be thought they would have brought that in question, as well as the Credit of the Historian, in reference to his Miracles, which is questioned in divers Particulars: But this, however, shall be sufficient for me, which was the chief Thing that the Ancient Christian Writers insisted upon, that whether the Story of the Miracles of

Apollonius was true or false, it shall be no prejudice to the Truth of the Christian Religion: If false, there's an end at once; if otherwise, his Miracles will neither establish his own Religion, nor subvert the Religion of *Jesus Christ*; not even though they were wrought for either, or both of these Purposes: Not the former, because it's believed that Devils may by their Cunning and Power enable Ill Men to amuse and raise the wonder of the World; wherefore Miracles shall not establish a Religion, but where there is an Evidence also that they are wrought by the *Finger of God*: Nor the latter, because the Christian Religion is established, not barely upon Miracles, but upon such Miracles as we know to be wrought by the *Spirit* and *Power of the Lord that made the Heavens.* I think fit, with our Author's good leave, to insert here a Passage out of *Lactantius*; not to choak our Author with *Lactantius*'s great Name, but to convince him with the Argument therein; at least, to have the World take notice, that the Argument upon which I have all along insisted, is no other than that which the Christians first insisted on, when this Comparison between *Christ* and *Apollonius* was first attempted and objected to the prejudice of Christianity. "Learn, or know (says "*Lactantius* to the *Heathen Writer* that "had made this Objection) if thou hast a

Lactant. Lib. 50.

"mind

"mind to understand the True Reason of "the Christian's Belief, *viz.* That *Christ* is "not only *therefore thought and believed by* "*us to be God*, because he did *wonderful* "Things, for the *Miracles* he wrought, but "because we see in him all those Things "*done and fulfilled* which were *before told us* "*of him in the Prophets.* He wrought Mi-"racles! we might have thought him a *Ma-*"*gician*, as you say of him, and as the *Jews* "now think, if all the *Prophets* had not with "one Mouth, and by the *same Spirit* fore-"told that *Christ* should *do those* very Things. "Therefore we believe him to be God, not "more for his Deeds and Wonderful Works, "than for that his very *Death upon the Cross* "(which you catch and snarl at) for that "this also was foretold of him: Not there-"fore upon his own Testimony (for who "giveth credit to a Man speaking of him-"self?) but upon the Testimony of the "Prophets, who long before spake of all "these Things which he did and suffered, "his Divinity is believed; which never "could, nor ever possibly can at any time "happen, in reference to *Apollonius* or *Apu-*"*leius*, or any *Magician* whatsoever." The Argument here is of like purport with that Conclusion which our Saviour Christ himself inferred from the Evidence he had given, that he *cast out Devils*, and did his other Works by the Spirit of God; namely,

that by this Men might know, and were obliged to acknowledge that the *Kingdom of God was come unto them.* This Conclusion there is no Reason to make upon every one that we see work Miracles; until there be satisfaction given concerning the *Power* by which such Miracles are wrought: Therefore whenever we see an use made of them to the Prejudice of that Kingdom which God by Christ intended to set up in the Hearts of Men (that they might acknowledge him the only True God, and his Son Christ whom he hath sent, and serve him in that Kingdom and Righteousness that he hath commanded) we may conclude such Miracles to be the Works of that wicked One who hath always endeavoured to set himself up against God, to erect to himself a Kingdom, having been a Lyar and a Deceiver of the Nations from the beginning.

This shall suffice to shew the weakness of our Author's Harangue to get himself clear of the Objection, as to *Apollonius*'s Miracles, who was an Approver of the Heathen Worship: In which, however, nothing gives me more offence than the last Thing he has said, when he takes his Leave, as he calls it, of *Apollonius*; namely, " That " nothing so ill becomes the Mouth of a " *Deist*, as reproaching to Christians the *Mi-* " *racles* of *Apollonius*; for if they are true,

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"it is not *Deism*, but *Polytheism* is eſtabliſh-
"ed, for he ſacrificed in his Way to the
"Gods all round, as their Temples occur-
"red to him" I am offended at this, becauſe I cannot think this *Author* ſo ignorant but that he muſt know that what the *Deiſt* would have, is, that *Apollonius* wrought Miracles for the eſtabliſhment of *Polytheiſm*: The *Deiſt* ſeeks no Miracles for his own Opinion; but if it be granted him, that *Apollonius*'s Miracles were true, and if true, were a Proof for *Polytheiſm*, he will allow the Miracles of *Jeſus Chriſt* to be as good a Proof for *Chriſtianity*, and will believe as much of one as of the other; that is, will believe neither. I doubt the Atheiſt alſo may laugh in his Sleeve at this, that after ſo much Argument, when the greateſt Objection, not againſt *Chriſtianity* only, but againſt all revealed Religion, cannot be well got over, an Abſurdity ſhould be retorted upon the Adverſary, which is ſo far from being an Abſurdity to him, that 'tis the main thing he has to deſire, to lay Religion and its Truth under the greateſt Abſurdity.

I will agree with this *Author* in the next thing he comes to, thus far, That the *Inſtruments* may not always be *Good* and *Holy* Perſons by whom God works Miracles: But will inſiſt upon it againſt him notwithſtanding, that the Religion muſt needs be

True, for the sake of which *God giveth the Power* to work them. And neither the Instances nor Argument of this *Author* shall prove any thing to the contrary. *Balaam* prophesied, I grant, but the Credit his Prophecy hath, is not because *Baladm* by his Divination had got himself so great a Name, that the King of *Moab* sent to him, saying, *I wot whom thou blessest is blessed, and whom thou curseſt is curſed*: and required him to curse *Israel*: But because it is known the God of *Israel* rebuked the Madness of the Prophet: Because the Scripture hath told us, that he who went out with design to curse, and used his Enchantments for that purpose, was met by the True God (when he waited, as we have reason to suppose, for his Dæmon) and forced against his Will to bless the People of God, and to confess and say, *There is no Inchantment against Jacob, nor Divination against Israel.* Which Instance is therefore rather against than for our *Author*'s purpose in any respect, as it sheweth us that the Power of God can over-rule when he pleaseth the Power of the Devil and his Instruments, and even turn them against their own Master, to the serving of God's Divine Will and Purpose. The Prophecy of *Caiaphas* serveth to the Truth of Christ, as referring to his Death, and the End for which he should dye; wherein the *Spirit of God* had

a Mean-

a Meaning which the *Prophet* never apprehended. And supposing that *Judas* being sent by Christ among the rest of the Apostles, to *preach the Gospel, cure Diseases*, and work Miracles, did accordingly *cure Diseases* and work *Miracles*; there is the same Reason to suppose that he also *preached the Gospel* as the rest did; and thus his Miracles tended to the Establishment and Confirmation of the True Religion only. And for those of whom our Saviour speaks, that in his Name and by his Power cast out Devils, and did many wonderful Works; to whom nevertheless he will say in the Last Day, *I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity*: it appears of the same Persons, that they should alledge their *Prophesying*, that is to say, their preaching the Gospel, in his Name also; and in this Case they might well be allowed to have their Power from God for the casting out Devils, *&c.* So that these Instances no way prove, but that the Religion must be of necessity True, for the sake of which *God* shall give the Power for working Miracles. For further, As to the Case of those, who being themselves Workers of Iniquity, are yet said to have *cast out Devils*, and done many *wonderful Works* in Christ's Name, *i. e.* through Faith in his Name, or by *his Power*; that their *prophesying in his Name* must be interpreted to be according to the Truth

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as it is in *Jesus*, that Doctrine which he appointed to be preached in his Name; there is Reason sufficient to think, from its being offered as a Plea; which it could not be supposed it should be, were it any other than *Christ*'s Doctrine. And to confirm, that otherwise the *Power* of *Christ* would not have wrought with them, though they had used his Name, the Instance of the Sons of *Sceva* the *Jew*, Acts 19. 15. goes a great way with me: Those *Exorcists* who took upon them to *call over them* which had *Evil Spirits*, the *Name* of the *Lord Jesus*, prevailing nothing by it, whilst they *adjured* by *Jesus* whom *Paul* preached, themselves not preaching his Doctrine as *Paul*.

Therefore I shall now say in this *Author*'s *Scholar*'s words, That though the *People* or Persons may not all be *good* and *holy* by whom God works Miracles, yet sure the Religion they profess, for the sake of which God giveth the Power, must needs be True. And whereas this *Author* gives him for Answer, —Then have we been talking all this while to *no purpose*; I cannot pass a Complement upon him, and say it has been *to very much purpose*, because I may not in Ceremony dissemble the Truth. Yet *I* do not absolutely dislike what follows, namely, "The Christian Religion it self is not "true *only* because Miracles have been, are, "and may be wrought by and among Chri-

Essay, p. 135.

"stians:

" ſtians : For by that Argument all the Re-
" ligions that ever were in the World may
" be true, unleſs we can diſprove all the
" Hiſtories and Accounts that have been gi-
" ven us, and ſay that no Relations but
" thoſe in the Scriptures are true ; a Task
" hard to be undertaken:" But yet I am concerned and troubled, not to find here, how I ſhall know then that the Chriſtian Religion is true, and that the others were falſe. Which Defect I ſhall thus ſupply, affirming, That the Chriſtian Religion is true, as the Truth thereof hath been confirmed by Miracles, and thoſe Miracles have appeared to have been wrought by the *Finger of God*: But that the Heathen Religion is not true, notwithſtanding the Miracles which their Story tells of, becauſe I am ſatisfied that the Power of the Devil can do and enable to do great things, to whoſe Power I impute the Things done among them ; for that the Gods whom they worſhipped, and to whom they aſcribed thoſe extraordinary Things, I have Reaſon to believe were Devils, and not the God that made Heaven and Earth.

Nevertheleſs, in all this I have no Drift nor Deſign upon our *Author*, neither I hope ſhall I involve my ſelf in any Difficulty more than what I may get well clear of, in reference to the Miracles pretended to in the Church of *Rome*. I cannot indeed run on

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so fiercely as this *Author* at the first onset, nor will I retreat, and leave them the Field at last, so great an Advantage as he seems to me to have done: Before I step forward against this Adversary, I must distinguish between the *Religion* the Church of *Rome* professeth, and the *Errors* in that Church. Their Religion I take to be the Christian Religion, were their Corruptions thereof set aside; and there is to my apprehension a great deal more Reason to think, that *Miracles* wrought in a *Christian Church* may be wrought by the *Finger of God*, than there can be to conceive the like of Miracles wrought among the Heathens, and by them ascribed to the Idol Gods they worshipped: And consequently, I do not think it may be said, as to Miracles in a Christian Church, that they no more conclude for the Truth of Religion, than such Works among the *Gentiles* conclude for their Superstition. I look upon all Instances wherein our Saviour's Prediction may be thought verified, that *such Signs should follow them who believe, &c. Mark* 16. 17. to be a Confirming Evidence of the Christian Truth: Neither, tho' I apprehend *Miracles* to be now ceased, as the great Reason of, and need for them has indeed worn off; can I think fit, however, to insist, that God will no more give any Power of that kind (he is able at all times to do it, and may do it at his Pleasure, will

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do it whenever he has any Ends of Wisdom or Goodness to serve thereby:) Nor do I see any Reason upon which I can infer that God will never shew his Power in Miracles even in the *Church* of *Rome*, though it be a Corrupt Church: It is known God sent his Prophets, and some of them with this *Power* to the *Jewish* Church, even though they were then so Corrupt a Church, that the generality of the People were fallen to Idolatry; and the like he may possibly do again: But as the Business of those Prophets which God sent to the *Jews* of old, was to testifie against them, *to turn them to the Lord*; so I persuade my self, that the *Spirit* of the Lord in any Prophets that he shall send, or raise up in the Church of *Christ*, will testifie against its Corruptions, and require that *She repent, and do her first Works*. But as on the other hand there were many False Prophets among the *Jews* in those Days, who prophesied Lyes and Deceits, and *strengthened the hands of Evil Doers*, that they *returned not from their Wickedness*, and pretending Visions and Dreams, *caused the Lord's People to err*, by their *Lies, and by their Lightness*, whenas God *sent them not*, nor commanded them. And whereas the Scripture of the New Testament hath said, — *Believe not every Spirit*, but try the Spirits whether they *be of God*, for *many False Prophets* are gone out into the World, 1 *John* 4. 1.

Jer. 23. v. 14, and 33.

4. 1. I therefore fear the arising of False Prophets in the *Christian Church* likewise; and conclude, that whatever Message cometh from the *Spirit of God* unto the Churches, it will be of this kind and purport, ——*Remember what has been received and heard, and hold fast, and Repent:* And consequently, that whosoever shall say of themselves, *they are Apostles*, we are to try before that we receive them; and if they come, and *bring not the Doctrine of Christ*, by this they shall be found *Lyars*, that they have not the Power of God, to which they may pretend.

And after this I cannot recede and leave the *Romanists* so much Advantage as this *Author* has done, when he says to these People, " Lay down the Doctrines before-hand, " and tell us, that God to testifie the Truth " of those Doctrines, hath given you Power " to work Miracles, and then work them in " the Presence of those who are to be con- " vinced of the Truth of what you say, ——For as I take this to be an Advantage that ought not to be granted them, so I cannot see that the Demand is justifiable in us: For as to the Argument herein suggested, that the Miracles, if any such are, should be done and wrought among us, in such Places and Times as we shall require, I doubt there will lie a great Objection against us, should it be insisted on against

Miracles

Miracles of any good Credit; namely, that the *Jews*, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* called upon our Saviour to shew his *Signs* and *Miracles* (such Signs as they pleased to call for, and in Places and Times of their own chusing) but were refused: And even we our selves must insist upon it, that they were justly refused; for that it must be left to the Will of God to shew and exert his Power, in what Place, or Time, or what Instances he shall himself think fit; which was our *Lord's* Answer in substance, to those that required or expected from him to do those Works in *Galilee* which he had done in *Capernaum*, Luke 4. 23. So that I question very much whether this Argument would bear, should any great stress be put upon it. It must therefore, I fear, give the Adversary an Advantage, at least among those in their own Communion, who are amused with Reports of Miracles on every hand. And again, there is a yet much greater Advantage than this left to them, in what our Author hath said as to their laying down their Doctrines *before-hand*, and then working their Miracles, and his seeming to concede and grant the Point, if this be done. For as the Scripture supposed of a *False Prophet* heretofore, that the *Sign* of which he spake to them, saying, or when he said, *Let us go after other Gods*, might come to pass; so I see nothing to make it be thought the

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Case would be otherwise now, but that if a *False Prophet* might work a *Miracle* to deceive the World to believe a Lye, he might before-hand speak his False Message, and tell of the *Sign* that he would give, and that such Sign might be permitted to come to pass. And inasmuch as it is said in Scripture of the *great Antichrist*, the *Man of Sin*, that he sitteth in the *Temple of God*; which I take to signifie, that he shall arise and set himself up in the Church of Christ; and as it is of him further said, that his *coming* is after the *working of Satan*, &c. 2 *Thes.* 2. 9. I can have no certainty that it will never please God to suffer, and permit this Deceiver to do his great Wonders even *in our Sight*, and to do them in confirmation even of those his very Sayings to us, wherein he endeavoureth to deceive. I apprehend therefore that I am absolutely obliged to insist, that the Errors and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, from which we have reformed, are contrary to, and destructive of the Truth of Christ; and as they are such, though the Miracles which they pretend were true in Fact (which, nevertheless, I cannot suppose they are, after the discovery of so many Cheats and Impostures as have been known and found); however, they ought not to obtain so much Credit with us, as to be received for Works of God's Power, or to oblige us to receive any other Doctrine

ctrine than that of Christ. This Scripture shall be opposed against them, *Gal.* 1. v. 8. *Though we or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which has been preached, let him be accursed*; and shall put to silence at once all their Delusion, and all their Arguments to support it. And this is the only Thing that can be of effect to deliver those who are deceived to believe a Lye, to put them upon the tryal of such as pretend the Power and Spirit of God, and have it not.

And thus, I hope, I have discharged my self of this *Author*'s Book: I wish it may be to his satisfaction; however, that nothing may be wanting in me towards it, I shall go through his Recapitulation also, though a needless Repetition, and say, that "How "remarkable soever the difference may be "betwixt such as work Miracles, that one "shall *know* and *declare before-hand* that he "shall be enabled to work them; it is not, however, to be insisted on as the *Criterion* to distinguish the Lord's Prophets. I grant our Lord *Christ* to have known, and in divers Cases foretold what he would do; but I do not find that he has given us this Rule, or any Thing like it, for the discerning of False Prophets; and I think he would have done it, had it been true or certain. I do not pretend that one acting by the Power of the Devil, is able to foretel with certain-

Essay, Pag. 137.

ty what he will do, because it's in God's Power always to hinder and over-rule; but this I insist upon, that as God permits Evil Spirits, and Evil Men by their help to work Miracles, so he has not assured us that he never will permit, and so is at liberty to permit if he shall think fit, the *Sign* which a *False Prophet* hath spoken of to come to pass, as 'tis supposed in the Case, *Deut.* 13. that this will be permitted. *Moses*, I allow, was *before-hand* instructed of God, that he should do several Miracles, which he also *foretold* he would do; the *Magicians*, I suppose, were also sent for by the King of *Ægypt*, to see what they could do; but I take it, that he had not sent for them, but upon Experience, or some Information at least, of their having done great Things, like those which *Moses* wrought. And as to the *Magicians* not knowing they should do any Thing, I say it must be supposed they thought they might do something, or they had not attempted to do any thing, but would have stood and looked on, as they seem to have done, without any further attempt, after they had seen, and came to know their own Weakness. And this I also suppose they knew, that they had Familiarity with, if not some Power, as they thought, over Spirits invisible by their Enchantments, which had heretofore, and which they might therefore now think might be able to assist them to

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do like *Moses*. It must be granted, however, that they who act by any other Power than that of God; *i. e.* by the Power of the Devil, knew not when to begin, nor when to make an end, because the Power which the Devil himself has, is a limited Power. They therefore which are assisted by him, if it might be supposed that they could know from him the Extent of his Power, how far he can assist them; yet in that they cannot possibly know how far he shall be permitted to assist them, know not consequently, with certainty, whether he can help them at the beginning, nor that he shall be permitted to help them to the End; because they know nothing as to what God will permit him, and them by him to do, nor what he will controul them in, nor when. Hence was it that the *Magicians* failed in the Competition that was between them and *Moses*; and by this their Failure, appeared the Difference and the Inequality of the Powers by which the one and the other acted; so that the *Magicians* could not do that which was to any Man's thinking full as easy, or rather more easy than what they had done before, when they attempted to turn *Dust into Lice*, and *could not*; this shewing, that though God thought fit to permit the Power of Satan to bring to pass greater Things, he could controul it even in the least. And thus indeed it appeared of

the *Magicians*, that they neither knew with certainty what they ſhould do, nor what they ſhould not do; but as this appeared only in the Event, when the *Magicians* Power failed, it could ſtand in no ſtead to diſtinguiſh the one's Miracles from the other, whilſt they wrought Works alike, nor would it where there ſhall be no Competition: There is, however, ſome uſe to be made of it, if the Thing were rightly conſidered, and that looked into which was indeed the true Reaſon why theſe *Magicians* did not, and will always be a Reaſon why *Falſe Prophets* never can know with *certainty* what they ſhall be able to do in Works of this nature; which is, that having their Power from the Devil, their Power muſt be under limitation, and the Controul of God always, becauſe *His* is ſo. Nevertheleſs, as God is not to be confined by us, neither in the Meaſure of Power that he ſhall think fit to give himſelf, nor in the Permiſſion that he may give, or Reſtraint that he ſhall think fit to lay on the Power of the Devil and his Agents; we have no ground to lay down this for a Rule, that every one that hath not ſucceſs to his Deſire in every Thing that he attempteth of a Miraculous Work, is a Falſe Prophet: Nor on the other hand, that every one that foretelleth that he ſhall do a Miracle, and the Event followeth, is immediately to be concluded

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to be a True Prophet, and to have the *Power of God.* This *Author* has not thought God obliged to go out of the Way of his Providence to controul a *Bold Guesser*; let him give aReason that shall oblige him more as to a bold Undertaker. The Truth is this; God may give of his *Spirit and Power* in what measure he pleaseth; and hence sometimes his own Prophets that have *their Power* from him, may possibly not have a certain knowledge of what God will assist them to do, and may not have success alike in all Attempts. God also may permit or restrain the Devil and his Agents at his pleasure, and so can at any time disappoint and defeat the Agents and Instruments of Satan in any of their Attempts, and likewise in any thing which shall be foretold by them; but yet as Satan doth attempt, notwithstanding the Power of God can baffle him in his Attempts, and often is permitted to perform what he attempteth, though God could hinder him; so may this subtile Spirit take upon him to foretel Things that he will do, notwithstanding God's Ability to prevent its coming to pass; and in like manner God may permit it to come to pass, though he might have hinder'd it. 'Tis not therefore for us to prescribe to God in one respect or other, nor consequently to make Rules for finding out and trying his Prophets, or determining concerning the Cre-

dit of such as appear to come with the Power of Miracles, other than those which his *Word* directeth us to, and warranteth: And whosoever is so bold as to go about doing it, must presently find himself at a loss; For *who knoweth the Mind of the Lord, or who hath been his Counsellor?*

As for the *Miracles* then done by and among the Heathen, as of this kind, no doubt, we have many Reports more than are true, a Wise Observing Man will well consider the Circumstances and Evidence of such Stories, before he believe or give Credit to them; but as for those to which Credit cannot be reasonably refused, they being well attested, I cannot think that they are to be put upon this Issue to disprove their Evidence or Authority, that they were not *foretold*; and so, though granted to be wrought by the Power of the True God, they should signifie nothing to us: For that it hath appeared that many of them were *foretold*, and yet *came to pass*. Some Instances I have given of this kind, and might more, but it shall suffice to say here, that it appears from what Christian Writers have argued in the Case of the Heathen Miracles of their Time, that this Answer would not have been good by any means, nor could not have been thought on by those that then saw the working *of Satan*. This appears from what was said by the Christians

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that were the most eminent and intelligent of those Days, as *Tertullian*, *Minucius Felix*, *Tacian* and others, to account for the Miracles that were then among the Heathen; namely, "That the Devil vexed and "tormented many, and himself caused their "Diseases, and then *gave out that he would* "*cure them*; and it came to pass that they "were cured accordingly; but this not so "much by any Power that he had to cure "them, as by his ceasing and giving over "to plague them." That this did sufficiently account for the Facts of this kind, I will not say; but this must be said, That the Facts of this kind were known and undeniable, or these Writers had never gone about to account for them: So that in those Days this *Author*'s Answer could not have been offered at. And again, those Works being many of them done in the Heathen Temples, and they ascribing them to the Power of those Gods at whose Altars and Shrines they were done, who in frequent Visions also gave Directions to and concerning the Means by which they were effected, it is the greatest Absurdity that can be, to impute them to the *Power* of the True God; who therein must contradict and act against himself and his own Worship; and it likewise, in effect, overthrows the Cause of the True Religion, to think God should give the Power of Miracles for that

which is false. We are therefore to impute these Miracles of the Heathens to their proper Author, *i. e.* to *Satan* who had deceived them, and by this kept up his Kingdom among them; and this shall not in the least affect the Grounds of the True Religion, nor be a Prejudice to that which hath been established upon Miracles wrought by the *Spirit* and Power of God; a Power superior in all respects, which hath in several Competitions vanquished and shewn it self above the Power of the Devil, able at any time to bind that *strong* Power, and *spoil* it, and *dispossess* it of its hold, whether in the Bodies or Souls of Men. This is the Answer to the Real Miracles among the Heathen; whereof I suppose that more might probably be wrought after *Christ*'s time for a while, as well as that a multitude more were then talked of, than ever did happen. *Satan*, I suppose, might then set himself with all his Power against the Kingdom of Christ, (and with Permission, for the Power of Christ to appear the greater in its overcoming him) to pull down that which God by Christ had set up, or to keep at least his own Possession in the Heathen World; as well as his Instruments in that respect, to obviate the Christian Pretences of the Divine Power with Christ, might speak a great deal more of the Power and Works of their Idol Deities, and the Worshippers

ſhippers of ſuch, than was true. There is no Reaſon therefore, I think, to deny that there were Miracles among the Heathen; but there is a manifeſt Reaſon why we ſhould deny them to be wrought by the *Power of God*, as well in reference to the Defence that muſt be made for the Chriſtian Religion, as in reſpect not only of the Evidence we have, that thoſe their Miracles were aſcribed by the Heathen themſelves, to the Deities by them worſhipped, but alſo of the Account which the Scriptures give us of the Devil's Power, and likewiſe of the Heathen Idols, that they were Devils, and not God.

That Scripture which this *Author* alledgeth, to have it thought that the Miracles wrought *among* and *by* the Heathen, were wrought by the *Power of God*, is nothing to his Purpoſe: The Pſalmiſt indeed ſaith of God, That he is a God that worketh *Wonders, and ſheweth his Power among the People*; but himſelf interprets his Meaning in the next Verſe, *Pſal.* 77. 14. ſaying, *Thou haſt with thine Arm redeemed thy People, the Sons of Jacob and Joſeph.* That Scripture therefore can never be drawn into conſequence for the Miracles in the *Gentile* World. And that there may be other Ends of God's working Miracles, than atteſting to the Miſſion of his Prophets, I ſee no Reaſon to deny. But there is no Reaſon at all in this,

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to infer that *God* should give the Power for the *Miracles* that were among the Heathen. Should it be supposed that God hath several Ends in those he worketh, this can never conclude him to be the Author of all that are wrought.

It may be true, that the Power of God hath sometimes wrought them by Ill Men; but if it has assisted such, it has been for the sake, and in the confirmation of his own Truth: And therefore the Consequence is good, that the Christian Religion is true, because God hath wrought Miracles on its behalf; but it does not follow that the Heathen Religion is true, because Miracles have been wrought *among* and *by* them, these being the Works of *another Power*: And even though this be true, that the Miracles among Christians are an Evidence of the Truth of their Religion, as being an Evidence of the Presence of God's Spirit with his Church; yet are Christians concerned, even among themselves, concerned to *try the Spirits whether they be of God*, and not to *believe every Spirit*, nor every Pretending *Power*, there being *False Prophets gone out into the World*.

But the Rule to try whether the Miracles are of God, and the Miracle-workers have their Power from him, is not their *foretelling* they should work it; (for which this *Author* thinks himself here to have given

ven something of a Reason, when he says, That in the Case of its being *foreseen* and *foretold*, the Instrument is by this also a *Prophet*, and therefore deserves the Belief he wants, and works the Miracle to obtain) the Scripture supposing of a *Prophet* that would tempt to Idolatry; (who therefore to be sure is not to be believed, neither can deserve the Credit he wants and seeks) that he might both work a *Sign*, and also tell and speak of that Sign, and yet it *might come to pass*, which is the Case in *Deut.* 13. And as there can be no Reason assigned for an Inference that God, who can restrain both the *Miracle-Worker*, and also defeat the *Prophecy*, if he permit the one, must be obliged to defeat the other; but both the one and the other must be left to the Pleasure of God, and to his Will solely, which may permit both, or restrain both: So is there nothing to be said, supposing a Man to have the Power of God for working Miracles, why those Miracles should not have Credit with us, though not *foretold*; why he that hath this Power, should not make his own use of it, and his own Inference; why God should not be believed, and his Messenger received upon the Evidence of his Power in a Miracle, without a Prophecy or Prediction of it, as well as upon and for a Prophecy and Prediction coming to pass, when the Thing foretold is not other-

Essay, p. 142.

ways

ways miraculous, but only as foretold, in which respect every True Prophecy is a Miracle it self.

Neither is there sufficient ground for such a Conclusion as this, from the Way of the Lord's Prophets, who sometimes have indeed foretold the Miracles they should work, and God's End therein, but at other times have wrought their Miracles, and required to be believed for their Works sake, though they never told before-hand of the Works they wrought; who also from several Circumstances in divers Cases, may seem not to have foreknown whether they should have Power from God for the Work they did, or not. As on the other hand, from several Stories of Miracles *wrought among* and *by* the Heathen (though by knowing them to be done by the Devil's Power, we are sure they could not be foreknown, nor foretold with certainty by his Agents, inasmuch as the Power assisting them is limited, and under the controul of God's Power): It appeareth, nevertheless, that they have sometimes adventured to *foretel*, as well as to attempt the doing them, and nevertheless the Event has followed in Miracles that have been by them *foretold*, as well as in such as they have attempted without pretending to fortel them.

This

This *Author* has at the last rightly observed that the *Foreknowledge* of *Christ* in this Matter differed very much from that of his *Apostles*, *Moses*, and all other Messengers of God: And our Lord himself has told us, I presume, the Reason, *John* 3.34. namely, *For that God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him.* He that was himself the Power of God, in whom the *Fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily*, could not but know he could at all times work what Miracles he pleased, even as he saith himself, *John* 11. 42. *He knew that the Father heard him always*: Insomuch that when he was at that time upon giving the Word for the *raising of Lazarus from the dead*, and being about to do it, lifted up his Eyes to Heaven, and said, *Father I thank thee that thou hast heard me*; He declares himself to have spoke it only *because of the People who stood by, that they might believe that God had sent him*: This giving them a very Reasonable Ground to believe that the Work they should see done, was wrought by the Spirit and Power of God, whenas they heard him refer it to God, and thank him, as being assured of his Power for the doing it, when they should see the Event follow accordingly: (Which is a Scripture that would have gone further than any Thing that this *Author* has alledged, towards a Proof that some stress might be laid upon a Miracle-Worker's *fore-*

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telling his Power for the Work; which yet I do not think can give sufficient ground for it to be absolutely concluded, that the Miracle must be *foretold*, or that Credit is not to be given to it; nor that Credit is to be immediately given to every Miracle that the Worker may foretell: Not the latter, because the Scripture hath no where told us that God will prevent all Miracles that a False Prophet shall take upon him to foretell: Nor the former, because God's Prophets, and even Christ himself, have wrought them, without *foretelling* their Power; and moreover have required to be believed for such their Works, when there has been nothing told before-hand, nor spoken of their Power.) But withal 'tis to be considered of all the Lord's Prophets (Jesus Christ excepted) that they had the Spirit only by measure; and therefore as they could do nothing of themselves, but what God gave them Power for; so they could know no more of what God's Power would assist them to do, than according to the measure of the Gift of God: And therefore as there is no ground for any one to say, that such shall always know what they shall be able to do, and never shall attempt any thing in vain; so neither do I believe that it can be made out from what has been done by the Lord's Prophets, that they always did know what they should be able to do; or that they

never

never attempted any Thing in vain. I take the Words of *Moses*, *Numb.* 20. *v.* 10. ——*Must we fetch you Water out of this Rock?* to be at least the Expression of one doubting, if not disbelieving his Power to effect the Miracle, though God had told him it should succeed: Otherwise I can give no Account of God's Displeasure with him and *Aaron*, v. 12. ——Because they *believed him not, to sanctifie him in the Children of Israel* upon that Occasion. And as to the Case of our *Lord's Disciples* that could not dispossess the Lunatick, *Matth.* 17. I see no Reason to think but that they *could not* really do it. So says the Father of him that was vexed with the Devil, —— *I brought him to thy Disciples, and they could not cure him*, καὶ ἠδυνήθησαν θεραπεῦσαι, καὶ ἴσχυσαν; they *were not able to do it*, says another Relation. And their own Question to *our Lord* in private, *Why could not we?* why had *not we Power to cast* him out, is a plain Acknowledgment that they were not able to do it, and plainly supposes their having attempted it: The Concourse of *People about them*, and the *Scribes questioning* with them at the time of our *Saviour's* coming by when this Act was in hand, and the running together of the Multitude (which most probably was to see whether *Jesus* himself had Power to do it) are Circumstances that confirm their attempting it:

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And had they not attemped it, how had they known but they might have done it? Our Lord's answer, that it was because of their *Unbelief*, let that mean their *distrust of the Event*, cannot argue that they did not attempt it: But what he further says, That *that kind would be made to go forth by nothing but Prayer and Fasting*, is a certain Argument that they did attempt it, and there was something wanting in themselves, or they had effected it. And his farther Reasoning upon that Occasion, that if they had *Faith* to any considerable degree, *they should say to hat Mountain, be removed, and be cast into the Sea, and it should be done; and nothing should be unpossible to them*; methinks should hardly be understood to mean no more than if they had but Faith enough to attempt the doing it, the Thing should be done. I might give a further Instance of some that had the Power of *working* Miracles given them by *Christ* himself, who also did work them by the Power given, to testifie to those to whom they preached, that the *Kingdom of God was come nigh unto them*; who yet by a very Remarkable Circumstance, seem not to have known before-hand *themselves* the Success of their *Power*, but to have been in a manner surprized themselves at the greatness of the Event that followed: Which I take to be the Case of the *Seventy* sent forth by him with the Power of Mi-

acles, into every Place and City whither e himself would come, *Luke* 10. v. 17. *re-urned again with joy to him*, saying, *Lord, ven the Devils are subject to us through thy Name.*

But I have said enough to warrant me, *to peak what I think*, that this *Author* had ve-y little Reason to say that which he very positively asserts, that " This, *i.e.* the *fore-'telling*, ought to make the Difference be-'tween Workers of Miracles above all 'other Things whatever. There might be some Reason to think well of him that shall foretell his Work, and speak before-hand of his Power, and the Event be found accord-ingly; because it seems to be a sort of an Appeal to God, and one would be apt to think his Power, if it were not God's, might be the rather controuled for this his Pre-sumption: But as God has not said, he will controul every such False Prophet for this Reason, he is at liberty to permit the Pow-er, and suffer the Presumption. And there-fore this is not a Rule that can be of any ab-solute Certainty to us, and there is a more ma-nifest Reason why it must not be depended upon from the several Cases that are against it. That which indeed makes the true Di-stinction, is the *Power by which they are wrought*, and the Evidences of that Power: When it appears that such *Works* are wrought by the *Spirit* and Power of God, they are

to have Credit with us; till this does appear, we may suspend; but whenever we see such Works, we are thus far concerned, to try *whether they be of God.* And upon this Bottom I make no question, but with God's Help, and the Assistance and *Power* of his *Spirit*, to maintain and defend the Truth of Christianity and Revealed Religion.

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SUPPLEMENT.

I Have now done with *our Author*; but whereas in his *Preface* he ſeems to have impoſed a Task upon him that ſhall conſider what he has written, to give Solutions of the Difficulties that occur in conſidering this Article of Miracles, ſo to give the Unbelieving World the Satisfaction that it thinks wanting in this Caſe; I ſhall endeavour further to repreſent, in ſubſtance at leaſt, the Nature and Strength of the Evidence which Miracles give to Revealed Religion, and the Weakneſs of thoſe Objections that are made to diminiſh the Certainty, and leſſen the Strength of this Evidence.

In order thereunto I ſhall lay down ſome *Poſtulata*, which ſhall be proved as I go, ſo far as that it ſhall appear I require nothing without good Reaſon.

And the (*First*) Thing then that I require to be granted me, is, that the Works of the Creation, and this VisibleWorld, do prove the *Being* of a God: To think the contrary, that the World could be made without a God, is so unreasonable, that I shall not spend time with him that will go about to deny it; or at least, that will not grant me,

(*Secondly*) That whatsoever is wanting in this Proof, will be made up, if God shall give *Visible Signs* of his Omnipotent Power either in the Alteration and Change of the Course of Nature, or in producing like Effects to those we see in Nature, by his immediate Power, without Natural Means or Causes. He that will say that neither the one nor the other of these are a sufficient Proof of God's Existence, doth make it impossible for God that made the World to give a certain Proof of his Existence to Mankind; if neither the Works of *Power* and *Wonder* in the *Creation* and in *Nature*, nor the Works of *Power* and *Wonder* in the *Alteration* of the Course of Nature, will be admitted for a certain Proof. As God is a *Spirit*, he can be only visible to us in the Effects of his Power; we by our *Senses* cannot discern nor apprehend his *Being*, otherwise than by such Effects of his Power as may be visible to us, and sensibly perceived by us: It is from these our Reason does con-

conclude the Being of a God, becauſe we do little leſs than ſee him in ſuch Senſible Effects as we conceive can have no other Cauſe but a God. I therefore require this to be granted me, that the Works of the Creation are a Proof of the Being of a God, or that at leaſt God may make up this a ſufficient Evidence to Mankind hereof, by *Viſible Signs* of his Omnipotent Power, either in the Alteration and Change of the Courſe of Nature, or in the Interruption of its Courſe, or in working without it. If there be any one ſo much an *Atheiſt* as to deny me either the one or the other of theſe, I ſhall have nothing to do with him; he makes it impoſſible for me to give him Conviction; and I do not ſee how it is poſſible for ſuch a Man to aſſign a Way by which he might have Conviction from God himſelf; which is an Abſurdity that I ſhould think the greateſt *Atheiſt* would be concerned to avoid: For no Man, I am ſure, muſt pretend to Reaſon, that ſhall ſay, if there be a God, he does not deſire to be ſatisfied of the Certainty of his Exiſtence.

But my chief Buſineſs at preſent is with the *Deiſt*, who pretends to own the Belief of a God, and to have Conviction of his Exiſtence from the Works of the Creation and this Viſible World, but would avoid the Proof of Miracles, and make as though theſe were never wrought by God for the

giving us a Proof of his Existence, and consequently that there is no such Certainty in this Proof for the Truth of Religion, as is commonly pretended and given out.

The greatest Objections in this Case that I know, are put together by a late Writer, in a Book Entituled, *Tractatus Theologico-Politici*, cap. 6. which if I can well answer, I believe it may be easie to solve all other Difficulties.

That Writer argues thus, ——— "God "and his Decrees are unchangeable, and "therefore the Laws of Nature are always "the same, and cannot be altered; and con-"sequently there is no such Thing in reali-"ty as a Miracle, but only Things so cal-"led, the Natural Causes of which we are "not able to explain." This Argument has nothing in it, if we suppose the Alterations in the Course of Nature contained in the Divine Decrees, as most surely they are; that is to say, that God, who from Eternity designed the fixing Nature in such a Course, designed those Alterations therein which he intended should in time be made, for Ends he intended to serve thereby. Besides, there are Miracles that are not Interruptions of the Course of Nature, but are Effects produced by the Power of God without the use of Natural Causes; and the Objection does not reach these. But then 'tis said, "This is to conceive God to have cre-

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"ated Nature ſo weak, and its Laws ſo im-
"perfect and uſeleſs, that himſelf muſt aſſiſt
"it *de novo*, to have Things ſucceed ac-
"cording to his Pleaſure; which is againſt
"Reaſon to ſuppoſe." To which I anſwer, that 'tis indeed abſurd to ſuppoſe that God hath created Nature ſo weak as that it ſhould not be able to ſerve all thoſe Ends which he intended to ſerve in and by it: But what if God has other Ends to ſerve, wherein he ſhall think fit to employ his own Power, and which he never intended the Courſe of Nature for? This is not againſt Reaſon that he ſhould uſe his own Power at his pleaſure: Nor is this to ſuppoſe a Defect in Nature, or in the Power that formed it: If Nature in its Courſe anſwer the Ends it was formed for, there is no defect in its Laws; and as the God that made it, might form it according to his Pleaſure, ſo may himſelf work with it, or work further without it, according to his Pleaſure. And even though ſome Miracles may have Natural Cauſes, nevertheleſs there may be ſtill Reaſon to account them Miracles as brought to paſs *by Man*, if it were above Human Power to employ thoſe Cauſes for working thoſe Effects: Notwithſtanding our conceiving it poſſible for ſuch Effects to be produced by ſuch Means, yet if it cannot be conceived poſſible that a Man ſhould have the command of thoſe Cauſes, and it be ſeen nevertheleſs

that they operate at his Will, there is a sufficient Reason to conclude the Work miraculous. Let *Moses*'s casting up *Ashes in the Air*, which became a *Boil* breaking out upon the *Ægyptians*; and the *Strong East-Wind* bringing up the *Locusts*, with the *Strong West-Wind* removing them; and *Elisha's stretching himself* upon the *Child* which he restored to Life; and our *Saviour's making Clay of his Spittle*, and anointing the *Blind Man's Eyes*, and bidding him go *wash*, upon which he was restored to Sight, *&c.* let these, with others of this kind, be the Instances, since they are insisted upon; yet inasmuch as it was not in Man's Power to employ these Causes in Nature for such Effects; as not in *Moses*, for Instance, to cause the *East-Wind* to blow for bringing up the Locusts, when he foretold their coming; nor in him to employ the *West-Wind* for their removal; therefore though the Cause it self might have been possibly sufficient for the Effect, the Work notwithstanding must be acknowledged miraculous: How much more in those Instances where the Means used were not such as could be conceived in Nature able to produce the Effects? as, for the *Ashes* cast up into the *Air*, to become immediately a *Boil breaking out with Blains* upon Man and upon Beast, throughout all the Land of *Ægypt*; and *Elisha*'s stretching himself upon the *Body* of the *Dead Child* to

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bring Life into it; and the *Clay* made of *Spittle* by our Lord, for restoring the *Blind to Sight:* If Natural Causes act out of their Course, or are made use of to produce Effects which in their Nature they neither would, nor could, there is the same Reason to think that the God of Nature worketh and employeth them, as there is to think, if we see Effects of his Power without any use at all of them, that such Things are of his immediate doing.

So that as for this Subtile Objector's Insinuation, "That all Miracles have Causes "in Nature, though not known to us; for "that some appear to have, although their "Circumstances and Causes are not related "in Scripture;" it's no Consequence; It must be said, that all Miracles have their Causes in Nature, because we may have ground to conjecture that some have; neither will it follow presently that those are no Miracles which may be found to have a Natural Cause; for if so be that Cause was not in its Nature proper for the Effect, or if such Causes are found to operate out of their Natural Way, at the Direction of a Man appointing them, who cannot be supposed to have them at his Command, without assistance from the Power of the God of Nature, the Work must be acknowledged miraculous, as being such as could not have been brought to pass in the Circumstances

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and Manner it was, without God. And as for the Reflection which herein is cast upon the Scripture, as though that should conceal the Causes in Nature which such Things had, to make them believed to be Miraculous Works, when really they were not, it's a meer Calumny; for the very Instance whence he endeavours to conclude this, *viz.* The *Return* of the *Waters of the Red Sea* upon the *Ægyptians*, which in *Exod.* c. 14. *v.* 17. is said to have come to pass upon *Moses's stretching out his hand*, without mention of the Wind, which caused the return of the Waters; of which we hear, c. 15. *v.* 10. —*Thou dist blow with thy Wind, and the Sea covered them*——— This very Instance is an Argument directly against himself, and must convince any Reasonable Man of the Maliciousness, as well as Falsehood of his Traducing Insinuation, "That "this Circumstance was concealed in the "Historical Relation, to make the Miracle "seem the greater." Can that Holy Writer be supposed to have a Design to conceal in one Place what himself relates in the other? Whom should he design to conceal it from? Not surely from those who saw the Action, and consequently knew the Circumstances of it; for if 'twere to be supposed that they might not observe them, 'tis nevertheless plain that the Holy Writer never intended to conceal any of those Circum-

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ſtances from them : For *Moſes* cauſed the Children of *Iſrael* to bear a part with him in that *Song*, which makes the mention of this Circumſtance, which this Caviller would pretend to have been deſignedly concealed : Neither could the Hiſtorian poſſibly deſign to conceal this Circumſtance from Poſterity, for that the *Song* is delivered together with, and is a part of the Hiſtory : So that the Scripture Writer muſt be ſuppoſed not to have had Common Senſe, if he can be ſuſpected to have had any Deſign to conceal that Circumſtance, as this Objector would pretend. And withal, the Miracle is the ſame for greatneſs, that *Moſes* ſhould have a Wind at his command to divide the Waters of the *Red-Sea* in Two Parts, for the Children of *Iſrael* to paſs through, and a Wind again upon the ſtretching forth his Hand, to cauſe them to return upon the *Ægyptians* ; as if the Waters had divided and returned again to their Current at his Word, and there had been no Wind : And therefore there could be no Deſign in the Hiſtorian to conceal this Circumſtance, that the *Miracle might ſeem the greater*; that being the ſame, whether it were a Wind that cauſed it, or otherwiſe ; that which did it, being not at the command of him that performed the Miracle by it, and this in it ſelf being not a ſufficient Cauſe for that Work which was done thereby.

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And what this Objector would further argue from the *Scripture* Way of speaking, namely, " That it often takes no notice of " the immediate Causes from whence Ef- " fects proceed, but ascribes to God Things " that are generally known to have Causes " in Nature," shall never serve his Purpose. For that the *Scripture* may with Reason ascribe all Natural Events and Effects to God, who ruleth all the whole Course of Nature, and directeth and governeth the same by a Wise and Good Providence, to Ends of his own appointment, and in this direct Men to look up to God as the Author of all; wherein, however, it does not speak fraudulently, nor suggest *any* False Notion; all the other Causes that are, being Instruments only in the Hand of his Providence. This therefore can never argue that the *Scripture* should conceal the Natural Causes of Things designedly, to have it thought that God should do Extraordinary Works of Wonder and Power.

Neither shall the *Scripture* Relation of Matters of this kind be invalidated, by what this Bold Writer has taken upon him to say further, *viz.* " That Men upon seeing or " hearing any New Thing, without special " care, are apt to give Relations thereof ac- " cording to their own Opinions, especially " in Things above their Capacity or Under- " standing; so that what they say is not al-

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" ways to be depended on : Of which we " have, he ſays, an Inſtance in Scripture, " which relates a *Miracle* without regard to " Truth, ſpeaking to the Apprehenſion of " the Vulgar, and to raiſe their Admirati- " on, ſaying, That the *Sun ſtood ſtill* on that " day when *Joſhua* fought the five Kings, " and purſued them, *&c.* *Joſh.* 10. v. 12. " whereas the thing only was, that Day " was longer than uſual : There could be no " ſaying with Truth, the *Sun ſtood ſtill* more " then than at other times, for that it *never* " *moveth* : But the *Hebrews*, he will have it, " adapted this Miracle to their own Concep- " tions, having an uſe to make thereof " againſt the *Gentiles*, who worſhipped the " Sun, whom they could by this means " better argue againſt, that the God of the " *Hebrews* was the greater, who could ſtay " that Sun in his Courſe, which the Nati- " ons round about them accounted to be " their God." For as to what other Philoſophers and Chronographers may have related, as he ſays, without regard to Truth, and agreeably to their own Opinions; if any ſuch Things were, the *Scripture* is not to be called in queſtion upon that Score, unleſs the like Falſhood and Weakneſs could be found and detected in this as in them : And that the Scripture hath ſpoken in the Inſtance mentioned, with more regard to the Opinions of the Vulgar, than to Truth,

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is more than he or any one else can certainly tell; for there has been no Demonstration as yet made that I know of, that the Sun never moves, nor that the Earth does. But even if this were granted, the Miracle would not be one jot the less; for those Philosophers who pretend to have found out that the Sun does not move, do nevertheless own that the Earth constantly does move round upon its own Axis, and that this its Motion causes the Day and Night; so that the Earth, at least, at that time must have stood still; which must have been an equal Evidence of the *Lord*'s hearkening to the *Voice of a Man* for the good of his People, and would have made the Miracle the same it was, *no day having been like it after or before.* And for the particular Use which the *Hebrews* might make of this Matter against the Nations about them, who worshipped the Sun, whence he seeks to raise a Suspicion of a designed Misrepresentation, Where does he find either that the Scripture makes any such Use of this Fact, or that the *Hebrews* themselves ever did? Neither is there any possible way of accounting for the Case, but that it must appear to be a Miracle: That Conceit of this Writer, that there might be a greater Refraction than ordinary from the *Hail* that had fallen that day, will never account for it, no more than his *Parhelion* will for the going back of the

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Sun in the days of *Hezekiah* at the Word of God's Prophet; which muſt be thought miraculous, whether we will have it to be the Sun or the Earth that moves. Why it ſhould be ſuppoſed that the Scripture Writers ſhould go about to impoſe upon the whole *Jewiſh* Nation in Things ſo eaſie to have been contradicted or diſcovered, if there had been no more therein than the Conjecture of this Writer ſuppoſeth; and why the *Jews* ſhould be thought ſo credulous above the reſt of Mankind, as to take Things altogether upon Truſt, and not make uſe of Common Senſe in the examination of Matters of this kind, will be hard to ſay; and till ſome Reaſon be given, the Conjecture is fooliſh and abſurd.

But the Scripture Style, he ſays, is in many places *Poetical*. That may be, but there is Truth always in its Narratives, and in this Caſe of Miracles the *Poetical* Relation helped that Objector to the knowledge of a Circumſtance which he would pretend the Hiſtorian intended to conceal: The Objection therefore is made with ſo much the leſs Reaſon in this Caſe. And whereas the Objector has taken upon him further to ſay, " That when the Scripture ſaith, *The* " *Lord would make the Earth barren for the* " *Iniquities of Men*, or that the *Blind* were " *cured by Faith*; we are to underſtand no " other, nor be no more concerned thereat,

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" than when it saith *God is angry, or grieved;* " *offended* at the Sins of Men, or that he " *repented him of his Word*, or of what he " had done, or that he *remembred* his *Pro-* " *mise, &c.* which are also spoken *Poetically*, " or according to the Opinions of the Wri- " ter, or of the Vulgar and Common Peo- " ple:" I absolutely deny him the Advantage of any such Inference; for that the Scripture it self hath given us a Description of the Divine Nature, that will oblige to the taking the latter Expressions as Metaphorical, and adapted to the Apprehensions of Men, who are not able to form True Conceptions of God's Actions, who is a *Spirit*, otherwise than by resembling them to the Actions of Men: But the *Scripture* hath nowhere left the least Intimation to us; nor is there any Reason that the Works of Wonder and Power done by God out of the Way of Nature, should not be accounted his doing; for even as to those of this kind, that Natural Causes may seem to have been used in, the Circumstances related thereof will force us to acknowledge, that such Things however could not have come to pass in Nature, the Time and Circumstances considered, and consequently are to be ascribed to the Special Operation of God; even that of the *Barrenness of the Earth* (which hath many times come to pass, no doubt, in the Way of Nature) had a Mira-

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cle in it, when caused by the Drought in the days of *Elijah*; not that indeed it was a Miracle that the Earth should be barren when there fell no Rain upon it; but this was a Miracle, That the Prophet should say *there should be no Dew nor Rain those years, but according to his word*, 1 Kings 17. 1. and the Event should answer.

What this Objector further says, of the Scripture's speaking of Things as real, which were only Representations to the People's Imagination, shall be little to his purpose also. For as to the Instance given, of its saying that God descended upon Mount *Sinai*, the Expression of the Lord's descending *upon the Mount in Fire*, is adapted, I grant, to Man's Capacity, who otherwise could not sensibly apprehend God's Presence; and the Scripture Account of the Nature of God giveth Reason for its being thus understood; this telling us, that *God filleth Heaven and Earth*; what is spoken consequently of his locally descending, is not to be literally understood. Nevertheless, the Things in that Representation were real, not imaginary; the Mountain, that is, to say, *burnt with Fire*; the Thunder and Lightnings, and the shaking of the Mount, were real, and the created Voice by its Sound really heard; those Things were not imaginary, which were so terrible to the People, and even to *Moses* himself. And

this Representation of God's Presence by these miraculous Appearances of Fire from Heaven, Thundrings, and a terrible Voice, and shaking of the Earth, coming to pass according to the Word of *Moses*, who told the People thereof, in what manner, and at what time and place the God of Heaven would talk with them, and give them a Law; is as clear an Evidence as can be desired, that the Operations were miraculous, and were the Effects of the Divine Power, and proceeded not from any Natural Causes. So likewise as to the *Chariot of* Fire in which *Elijah* was taken up to Heaven, it was an Apparition formed by God's Spirit, visible to the Senses of *Elisha*, and not a Representation only in his Fancy and Imagination: And as there was further a Real Operation of God's Spirit in taking *Elijah* away from the Earth, and carrying him up to Heaven, it was no delusory Act: And no doubt *Elisha* himself understood as much of it as any of the *Sons of the Prophets*, who came to meet him after his Master was taken from him; that is to say, that it was the *Spirit of the Lord* in that Apparition, that had taken him away; and 'tis a sign that he understood it better than they, when he refused to let them send after him; and afterwards, upon their importunity, did suffer them to send out to seek after him, to convince them rather than himself, that he

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was really taken away from the Earth. Therefore this Instance cannot be drawn into Consequence neither, to argue that the Scripture speaks of Things as Real Miracles, which were only Imaginary.

As to some Prophetical Expressions of the Prophets, the Observation is right, That those are not to be taken literally: For Instance, when *Isaiah* prophesying of the Destruction of *Babylon*, cap. 13. v. 10. describes the Wrath of God by these Expressions; —*The Stars of Heaven and the Constellations thereof shall not give their light; the Sun shall be darken'd in his going forth, and the Moon shall not cause her light to shine:* This is not to be understood literally, as if these strange Things should actually come to pass; but that there should be as great a Terror when God should punish this City for its Wickedness, as if such strange Sights were actually seen in the Heavens. The Phrase and Stile of the Prophets is known to be generally *Metaphorical* and *Allegorical*; so that their Meaning is not presently to be taken from the Literal Sense of their Words, but to be sought after in the Sense of the Prophet, and judged of from the Matter which the Prophet is describing. The Case is quite otherwise as to the Historical Narrations in Scripture, wherein we have Accounts of Matters of Fact done in the Sight and Presence of the People, and

attested by those who saw them done. To suppose here the Scripture-Writers might speak of things otherwise than they were, or use Phrases to make the Things thought other than they were, is most absurd, unless any thing of this nature could be detected in the Scripture, which hitherto there has not. And to draw such an Inference from this Metaphorical Expression in Scripture, *God's opening the Windows of Heaven*, whereof the Meaning is, that there was a great deal of *Rain*, is most ridiculous. For, according to the Letter, that Expression can have no meaning, there being no *Windows* that we know there; it must of necessity therefore be taken Metaphorically, to have any Meaning. And though the Flood of Waters were Miraculous, yet it cannot be pretended, that the Scripture seeks to have it so thought from this Expression, the *Windows of Heaven being opened*; but rather from the thing meant therein, *i. e.* the *Rain* that fell upon the Earth for forty Days and forty Nights, the abundant and long-continued Rain, and the *prevailing of the Waters* upon the Earth to that degree, that all the *high Hills that* were under the whole Heaven, and the *Mountains, were covered.* For the Scripture it self explains, that it meant, by the *Windows of Heaven being opened*, nothing more than the falling of abundance of Rain,

Gen.

Gen. 7. v. 11, 12. and more plainly, *Cap.* 8. v. 2. when the Flood abating, it ſaith, the *Windows of Heaven were ſtopped*, immediately thus explaining its Expreſſion, and the *Rain from Heaven was reſtrained.* Hence therefore to conclude that Credit is not to be given to the Scriptures in its Relation of Miracles, is as abſurd, as to ſay, that an *Author* is not to be believed in any thing he ſaith, if he hath ever uſed a Metaphor. Surely in the Writings of Scripture, as in all other Writings, Common Senſe will enable us to diſtinguiſh when an Expreſſion is Metaphorical, and when otherwiſe; when to be taken in the Literal, when in a Metaphorical Senſe.

And as for what is further Argued, that there can be no ſuch Things as Real Miracles, the Scripture it ſelf ſaying in effect, that God hath ſo fixed the Courſe of Nature, as that it is immovable and unchangeable: God hath indeed eſtabliſhed the *Heavens, the Sun and Moon*, and the whole Courſe of Nature, by *a Decree which ſhall not paſs away*, Pſal. 148. *v.* 6. *He hath given them a Law which ſhall not be broken*; which theſe ſhall not tranſgreſs, that is. But ſhall this hinder the Almighty from fulfilling his other Decrees, or from deſigning or making Alterations in theſe to fulfil them? He hath given to theſe, *Ordinances which ſhall not depart*, as the Prophet *Jere-*

miah speaks, *cap.* 31. *v.* 35. and it is by that Decree and Ordinance that the Heavens and the Earth remain as they were from the beginning: But shall this overthrow that which the same Prophet says, *cap.* 32. v. 20. of God's Extraordinary Works, his *Signs* and *Wonders* shewn in the Land of *Ægypt*, and in *Israel*, and amongst Men, for the *making himself a Name*? The *Preacher* hath said, ——*There is no new Thing under the Sun*: Shall this argue that God can do no *New Thing* by his Extraordinary Power? Or what if it be said, it is no *New Thing* for the Power of God to alter or change the Course of Nature, or to work without, or another way than Nature does? He saith also, that God hath ordained *all Things their Time*; and if there be a Time for all Things, why should there not be thought a Time appointed by God for his Miraculous Works, the occasions of which must be supposed by him foreseen? He says also of God's doing, *That it shall be for ever, and nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it, and he doth it that Men should fear before him.* Doubtless this doth not limit the Power of God, but that he may do his *great Works* and *Wonders*, that his People may fear him. This, that the *World is stable, and shall not be moved*, is a Reason indeed for all *the Earth to fear him*: But this, that the *Lord is great, and hath done Marvellous Works*, is a Rea-

Eccles. 1. 10.

Cap. 3. 1.

Ver. 14.

1 Chron. 16. v. 30.

a Reason why he is to be *feared above all Gods.* 'Tis plain there is no Contradiction in these Scriptures; and therefore what is spoken concerning God's *establishing the Heavens*, &c. by a *perpetual Decree*, cannot be drawn into Consequence against the Truth of what is said of his *Miracles* and his *Acts*, wherein he hath shewn his *Greatness, his mighty Hand, and his stretched-out Arm.* Ibid. v. 25. Deut. 11. v. 2 and 3.

There is a greater Objection, I confess, had it been made out, in what that Writer took upon him to say and shew, namely, "That from Miracles we can neither know "the Essence, nor Existence, nor Provi-"dence of God; but on the contrary, "these are far better known from the fixed "and unchangeable Order of Nature." This indeed is true, that the Invisible Things of God from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his *Eternal Power* and *Godhead*: This is what God's Revelation it self hath told us, whose Truth is built upon Miracles. Nevertheless, Miracles are an additional Proof and Conviction, which diminish nothing of the Evidence that is in the other, but add thereto, and give a further Evidence; as from what we see in such Works, of a Power able to work beyond Nature, we have Reason to conclude this Almighty Power to have

been the Cause of the Things that are in Nature, and that these were not the Effect of a *Fate* and *strong Necessity*, but the Works of an infinitely Wise and Almighty Power, which still worketh in the World according to its Pleasure; and consequently, that as on this we are continually dependent, *this* ought to be our *Praise*, and also our *Fear*. This can no way shake, but rather fix *Mens* Notions concerning God's Existence, when besides the Effects in Nature, that lead us to believe an Omnipotent Power, there are known to be other Effects that could not be from Chance, or Accident, or any Visible Cause, but must be from some Power Invisible and Supernatural; whence it cannot but be concluded, that there is a God, and that his Power is Infinite.

But 'tis said a "Miracle is a *limited* "*Work*, and so can never shew any Power "but what is particular and limited; and "therefore we cannot thence conclude *the* "Existence of a Cause whose Power *is In*-"finite: Whereas from Nature, which pro-"ceeds on to an Infinity, and sort of Eter-"nity, Men might in some measure con-"clude the Infinity, Eternity, and Immu-"tability of God." To this I answer, that there is so little Certainty in what the Reason of Man, being left to it self, might conclude concerning the Divine Nature, from the Infinity, and sort of Eternity of

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the Things in Nature, that ſome have from a Suppoſition of the *World's being Eternal*, concluded againſt the *Being* of a God: But ſuch may have Conviction that their Notion muſt needs be falſe, from the working of God's Power beyond and out of the Way of Nature; from whence likewiſe the Infinity of God's Power, and the Eternity thereof may be as well and better argued, as theſe Works ſhew his Power able to act beyond Nature, and without it at his Pleaſure: His working Wonders as he pleaſeth, muſt ſhew a more Infinite, as well as a greater Power than is ſhewn in Nature; and that which ſheweth the Infinity will alſo argue the Eternity of his Power; for that which is above all other, can never be deſtroyed by any other. This, however, is a needleſs Argument, for we are not left from Miracles to conclude or judge of the Divine Nature, but Miracles are an Atteſtation that thoſe Prophets who have come in the *Lord's* Name, have come from him, to make a Revelation of his Will and of his Nature to us: And it has pleaſed God ſo to diſcover his Nature, and his Providence to us in his *Word*, that I am ſure it never can be pretended that Men from Reaſon and Natural Light ever attained ſuch right and juſt Conceptions of the Eternal Being before, nor that they ever underſtood any thing near ſo much of the Way of his Providence,

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or of the Goodness and Justice thereof.

But this Objector goes about further to insinuate, that "even the Scripture its "self does in effect say, that from Miracles we cannot come to the knowledge of "God; this we must not expect it to say "plainly, but 'tis easie to conclude so much "from what it does say: For *Moses* commandeth, *Deut.* 13. that they should put "to death a seducing False Prophet, though "he should work Miracles to persuade "them to go after other Gods. Whence, "says he, it follows that Miracles may be "wrought by False Prophets, and that Men, "unless well confirm'd in the True Knowledge and Love of God, may as soon "from Miracles follow False Gods as the "True." 'Tis not unlikely indeed, that if Men do not enquire into the Power that worketh them, they may be seduced to go after False Gods, by the Miracles which False Prophets may work. Nevertheless, as all Miracles give a Proof of some Invisible Power, which is the first Step towards the Belief of a God; and as God hath shewed his Miracles with a purpose that his People should *know that he was the Lord*, Exod. 10. 2. I cannot conceive how, or upon what grounds it should be imagined, that those *Signs* should be no certain Evidence by which they might *know the Lord*. The

Truth

Truth of the Case is this, there had been a Proof already made by Miracles, and by God's Superiority of Power shewn in a Competition of Miracles, by which this People knew that *God was the Lord*, and that there was *none like him among the Gods, doing Wonders*, Exod. 15. 11. and that there was *none else besides him*, Deut. 4. 35. It was this made it reasonable that they should put to death the False Prophet that should seek to seduce them by Miracles to the Worship of *other Gods*. And that Way which *Satan* had taken to deceive the World into an Opinion of his Divinity, had made it necessary that the *True God* should shew his Power *above him* in doing Wonders, that Mankind might not be deceived by the Operations of that Evil and Wicked Spirit, and seduced from the True God that made the Heavens and the Earth. And this People who had seen that there were different Powers that wrought Wonders, but that the *Power* of their God was above all other, could and did controul the other, had Reason not to hearken to any other *Power* but that which had given them a sensible Demonstration of its being the Superior; and therefore had it given them in charge, not to hearken to any Prophet, though shewing *Signs* and *Wonders*, if he sought to draw them after other Gods; they having been made to know by the Miracles and mighty Acts of Wonder and Pow-

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er which had been done among them, that there could be none so great a God as their God. This therefore can never justly impeach the Evidence of Miracles, from which this People had the advantage of seeing the *Power* of God, and of knowing his *Power* greater than any other, and thereby knowing for certain that their God was the only True God. Of which that Objector seems to have been aware, and therefore durst not absolutely say, that from Miracles Men might as soon be brought to the belief of a False God, as of the True; but puts in his *unless well confirmed in the true knowledge and love of God.* But what was it that did or could confirm them in the *knowledge* of the *True God*, and in the *Love of him*, but the Evidences they had seen in his Miraculous Works, of the greatness of his *Power above* all others, and the great Things he had done for them thereby?

His Observation, That "the *Israelites*, "after so many Miracles, could not there-"by form any just Conceptions of God; "but that when *Moses* was gone from them "but a little while, they required of *Aaron* "to make them Gods to go before them, "and worshipped the *Molten Calf*"; is rather an Argument of the greater necessity of Miracles, and of a Revelation built thereon, to reduce Mankind to the Worship of the One True God; since even a

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People that had seen his Miracles, was thus apt to fall into the Idolatrous Way of the rest of the World. Had the rest of Mankind had other and better Notions of a Deity than this People, there might have been something in the Argument; but the Nations all about them, were much more stupid than these. Withal, this People had not yet seen *all the Works of the Lord*, nor known the *Marvels*, such as had not been done in *all the Earth*, nor *in any Nation*; which yet remained to be done, *Exod.* 34. 10. neither had they full Instructions in the Divine Law as yet. And besides, what was it that gave *Moses* the Authority with them, that they suffered his breaking their Calf in pieces, and stamping it to Powder, &c. and submitted to all that he thought fit to do and require of them in that matter; but the Miracles which he had before wrought to shew that God was with him? And by his further Works, and the Instruction of his Law built upon his Miracles, was it that this People was made to know the Lord, and brought off from their Idolatrous Way; by this were they *redeemed* from *Egypt*, from the Nations and *their gods*, and *confirmed* to the True God, to be a *People unto him for ever*, 2. Sam. 7. 24.

The Evasion, by which that Writer seeks to avoid the Evidence which the Scripture supposeth in Miracles, when it relates God's

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declaring his Purpose of using them, that his People might *know that he was the Lord*, *Exod.* 10. 2. namely, "That they might "be proper to convince the *Hebrews*, who "had particular Notions; but not the rest "of Mankind, as not having any ground "in the common and universally received "Notions of Mankind; will not serve his "Turn." For the Scripture saith, that God designed to make *Pharaoh know* hereby, that he was God, and that *there was none like him in all the earth*, Exod. 9. 14. and saith moreover of God's raising up *Pharaoh*, to oppose and obstinately withstand the Power of God in Miracles, which gave the greater Opportunity for shewing the Divine Power; that he did this—— that his *Name might be declared throughout all the earth*, v. 16. And that Miracles are a fitted Proof to the general and common Notions of Mankind, there needs no greater an Argument than the Behaviour of the Heathenish People at *Lystra*, *Acts* 14. 11. who when they saw the great Miracle that St. *Paul* had wrought in the Cure of the Man that had been a *Cripple from his Mother's womb*, presently cried out, that the *Gods were come down to them in the likeness of Men*, and ran immediately with their Priest *to do Sacrifice*.

What is said further, of "*Solomon* and "some others not having a right Notion of "God's

'God's Providence, tho' they had known 'his Miracles, is very little to the purpose. He indeed, and others, found Difficulties in the Methods of Providence, which they knew not how well to account for; particularly in this, that in the ordinary Dispensations of Providence there appeared no Distinction made between the *Righteous* and the *Sinner*, *all things came alike to all, and there was one Event* (so far as his Observation reached) *to the Righteous and to the Wicked:* But their Notions of a Providence nevertheless were more certain than any the Heathens had; who knew so little of it, that several of their Philosophers deny'd it absolutely, as a Work that must make God uneasy, and take off from his Felicity; others thought it not consistent with his Leisure or Greatness: And those that were more right in their Conjectures, could however come at but little Certainty. Whereas the Revelation of *Moses* had so far assisted the *Hebrews*, that they knew it should *be well with them that feared God*, Eccles. 8. 12. and that it should not *be well with the wicked*, though his Days were prolonged, and Sentence was not presently executed against every Evil Work. What Understanding they had in this Matter, they ascribe to Revelation, they understood it in the *Sanctuary of God.* 'Tis confessed however, that so full a Revelation of God's

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Providence was not made under the *Jewish* Dispensation, as has been now made in the Gospel; wherein the Particular Providence of God, extending to the least of his Creatures, is discovered to us, and the Goodness and Justice of that Providence made more manifest. The *Jews* also, some of them, had mistaken Notions of Providence, as they thought it concerned for them particularly as *Abraham's Seed*; not considering that the Regard which God had to *Abraham* in the Promise made to his Seed, was joined with an Expectation, that the Seed of *Abraham*, who was himself faithful, would *keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment*, that the Lord might accordingly bring upon *Abraham* that which he had spoken of him, *Gen.* 18. 19. Wherein they degenerating, were not truly *Abraham's* Children, and therefore misapplied the Promise to his Seed, in crying up themselves for the People for which God's Providence must be concerned. Thus far however they were right in their Notions, as they conceived God's *Providence* to have a *special* Regard to those that *fear God, and work Righteousness*: Which indeed is the ground of all Religious Worship and Service, the End of our Prayers, the Promise of God in his Word, the Expectation of all that hope in him, and *fear before him*: Not so much indeed as to the *Things of this Life*, now under

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the Gospel, where we are made Partakers of a *better Hope*; but even now, though the Providence of God be so fully manifested, as that 'tis certain there is no respect of Persons with him, but in *every Nation he that feareth him is accepted of him*; and likewise certain that he is kind to the *Unthankful* and the *Evil*, yet is his Providence more particularly concerned for them that *fear before him*. This Notice of a Providence, and the Way of it, is owing to the Revelation depending upon, and confirmed by Miracles, and therefore 'tis unjustly pretended that these should give Men Perplexed and False Notions of God and his Providence.

What this Objector says as to Miracles having their Origine and first Rise from the *Jews*, " who that they might persuade the " Nations about them, who worshipped the " Sun, Moon, Earth, Water, Air, and " other Visible Gods, that these their Gods " were weak, inconstant and mutable; and " under the Power of a *God Invisible*, which " they pretended to be their God, gave out " Stories of Miracles, by which they en- " deavoured also to shew, that all Nature " (being at the command of the God they " worshipped) was ordered and directed to " their particular good and benefit; which " was a Fancy so pleasing to that People, " that to this Day they have not left off

"pretending to Miracles, that themselves "might be thought the only People of God, "and the final Cause for the sake of which "God must be believed to have created the "World, and to order the Course thereof." All this is no more than Talk without any manner of Reason: The particular Folly of the *Jews* we are not concerned with, but that they feigned Miracles with such Designs, has no manner of Proof: That the *Nations* about them worshipped the Sun, Moon, *&c.* is true, and the People of *Israel* were inclinable to the same Way, or something worse, as appears from their setting up their *Molten Calf*, they themselves were for having *Gods made to go before them*; and therefore 'twas not likely they should devise and invent Stories of Miracles, to persuade the Nations of the Power of a *God Invisible*. The Truth is, the rest of the Nations and they also were fallen to Idolatry, and this made it necessary for the God of Heaven to give a Revelation of himself, and to shew his Power in Miracles; which that he really did, we have a Testimony unquestionable, derived to us through several Ages, from that People whom he took from amidst the other Nations, by Signs, and Wonders, and Miracles, that they might be called after his Name.

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There is yet another Thing ſaid againſt the Evidence of Miracles, which is, that theſe are above our Underſtanding; and from that which exceeds our Underſtanding and Apprehenſion, we can conclude nothing certain. To which this is a ſufficient Anſwer, that 'tis not above our Underſtanding, to conclude, that every Effect has a Cauſe; therefore when we ſee an Effect which has no Viſible Cauſe, we conclude it the Work of ſome Power inviſible, and are at as much Certainty in making the Inference, as we can be in the way of reaſoning from the Effect to its Cauſe. We do not underſtand indeed the Way and Manner of God's working in Miracles, neither do we underſtand as to many Things whoſe Cauſes we ſee in Nature, the Way and Manner of their Operation; yet we account our ſelves to be at a Certainty in our Reaſonings concerning them.

'Tis further objected, That he that believes upon the Score of Miracles, will be liable to ſuſpect Inchantment, or ſome other Fraud. This might indeed be an Objection, if there were not a Way and Means to diſtinguiſh the Power of God from the Power of the Devil. But as God has ſhewn his Power ſuperior to all other Powers, and is ſuppoſed to have given (in the Revelation eſtabliſhed upon a Demonſtration of his Power) Rules, whereby his Power may be

known from others, the Force of this Objection is taken off; at least it will be taken off when the Supposition shall be made good.

And now if by all this Argument I have so far removed Mens Prejudices, that these *Postulata* be granted me, which any Rational unprejudic'd Man would have granted at the first,——*viz.* That the Works of the Creation and this Visible World are a sufficient Proof of the Being of a God: Or (*Secondly*) that should we suppose any thing wanting in that Proof, *Miracles* which are Visible *Signs* of an Invisible Omnipotent Power, will make it up, and put God's Existence beyond question with us: I desire no more at present, only providing that these Proofs be not inverted, so as to be turned one against the other (for that will run us to a manifest Absurdity; that is to say, that it shall not be possible for God himself to give Conviction of his Existence to Men that are so weak, or foolish, or blinded with Prejudice, as not to conclude his Existence from the Works of Nature): If thus much be gained, it is all I desire as yet; and I hope all Objections and Prejudices may be thus far removed.

I (*Thirdly*) will suppose upon our having admitted God to be, that it's possible for God to *reveal* himself and his Will to Mankind otherwise than he has done in the Works

Works of Nature: No Man, I imagine, will in this oppose me, but that God may find Means and Ways for this, and that the Ways by which the Scripture tells us this has been done, are such as God might possibly do this by. The *Prophetical Influence* cannot be thought impossible, there being no Reason, I will be confident, to be given, but that the Souls of Men are as capable of conversing with Truth made known to us by an Influx of the Divine Mind upon our Understandings, as they are with any gathered from sensible and external Objects, and the Notions thereof brought into us by our Senses. For as our Sensations carry the Notions of Material Things to our Understandings, which before were unacquainted with them, so there can be no Reason given why there should not be some Analogical Way whereby the knowledge of Divine Truth may also be revealed to us. And why it should not be thought there might be as certain a Way of our being acquainted with the one as with the other, I cannot see; at least why it should not be thought that God, who contrived the Nature of our Souls so as that we may converse with one another, and inform one another of things we knew not before, should have left a Way also for himself to communicate yet more Truth to the Souls of Men, if he pleaseth, than he hath engraven upon their Under-

standings at the first. It shall never therefore be pretended impossible for God to give our Minds Impressions from himself of Things which naturally they are unacquainted with: And if the Weakness of Man's Mind be such as that in the Thoughts of us who are Strangers to the Prophetical Influence, the strongest Impression within is not to be depended on with so much certainty as a Reasonable Man would desire; it shall not be thought impossible for God to give of himself such *Signs*, together with the Influence, or such other *Signs* in condescension to our Weakness, as we our selves may desire, sufficient to convince, and satisfie, and give assurance to the Mind blessed with such a Revelation: Both which Ways the Scripture has given us Instances of, *viz.* of Apparitions and Representations at the time of the Prophetical Influx, which awakened and quickened the *Prophet* into a lively Sense of the Divine Majesty appearing to him: (Thus it was when God first appear'd to *Moses* in the *Bush* that burnt with Fire): And again, of God's making mention of *Signs* himself, and giving *Signs* at the desire of the *Prophet*, when the Weakness of his Nature required, or perhaps desired a *Sign*, (as in the Vision that *Abraham* had, *Gen.* 15. 8. when he said to God, *Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit this Land?*)

I will

I will now *(Fourthly)* assume, That a Divine Inspiration convey'd to any one Man, primarily benefits none but himself, must rest in his Private Use, no one else having advantage from it. The Reason is manifest, which is this; A bare Inspiration can only satisfie the Mind of him who has it of its Authority and Authenticalness: 'Tis possible indeed there may be so much Reasonableness in the Thing it self, as that by Moral Arguments it may be sufficient to beget a Belief (or an Assent rather I should call it) in the Minds of sober and good Men; but all this while it cannot certainly be known to be a Revelation, because what seems reasonable to us, when proposed and told us, we may well judge another Man of greater Thought may come to think of himself, as being reasonable by the working of his Rational Faculties. And therefore that one Man may know that another hath that Truth *revealed* to him by a Prophetical Spirit, which he delivers as such, it is reasonable that there should be some Sign whereby it may appear that God hath committed his Truth to such an one: And as it hath appeared possible for God to give Signs of his Power to convince Men of his own Existence, it must be allowed possible likewise for him to give of his Power to such a Man to evidence that God is with him. And again, it is no other than a Reasonable Ex-

pectation, as well in the Person sent to reveal any Truth of God's to others, that God work on his behalf, or gives him Power to work some *Sign*, by or upon which he may be believed, and gain himself Credit with Mankind; as in those to whom such Prophet cometh to *ask a Sign* whereby they may know that God hath sent him. This *Moses* did in the one Case, *Exod.* 4. 1. This the *Jews* did expect in the other Case, *John* 6. 30. And by all that God himself provided, and ordered to be done, in case *Pharaoh* should speak after this manner to *Moses*, saying, *Shew a Miracle for you*, Exod. 7. 9. it's plain by that, and by what is universally seen, that the generality of Mankind have the same Sentiments about this Matter, and would desire and expect that God should on the behalf of his Messengers, shew the same Signs to convince us of their Veracity, as we should desire and expect for conviction and proof of his own Existence; that is to say, we expect from those that come to us in his Name, that they give us *Signs* of the Power of God, that we may have some Reason to think, and thereupon believe that God is with them.

I will now propose (*Fifthly*,) this thing further to be considered, namely, Which is most probable, which is most agreeable to those Notions we have of God and of his Goodness, that he should, or should not, make

make a *Revelation* of his Will to Mankind? There is on the one side this that may be thought, *viz.* That the Invisible Things of God from the Creation of the World, are clearly to be seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead; so that God has not left himself without Witness, but Men if they will seek the Lord, may haply *feel after him and find him*; as he is not indeed far from any one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our Being. And as touching God's Will concerning us, it may be insisted on, That the Reason and Understanding of Man carrieth with it all *Natural Truth* necessary for Practice in any sort, engraven upon it self, and folded up in its own Essence: Man has Truth written in his Heart, his Conscience bears witness of it, and while his Thoughts accuse or else excuse one another, he is a *Law unto himself*. These Things may perhaps seem to make it unnecessary, that God should, and consequently improbable that he would make any further Revelation of himself, than what is done in Nature. On the other side, the Divine Goodness being considered more maturely, we cannot but think That always inclined not only to have Compassion of the Ignorance, Infirmity, and Weakness of the Creature, but likewise to have Commiseration of Mankind, even when in-

Acts 17. 27.

Rom. 2. 14.

inconsiderate, negligent and faulty: And consequently, in reference to the State of Mankind (the generality whereof have little Thought or Consideration, and less Foresight; some uncapable of any depth of Thought, others involved in and taken with only sensible Objects; the former not capable of searching out, the other careless of looking back after the Efficient Cause of those Things that are seen and present with us; neither looking forward to foresee the Consequences of their own Actions;) it may well be thought that God's Goodness should incline him to awaken and quicken the Minds and Thoughts of Men to a Sense, and to the Consideration of his *Being*, and of those Things which they might in Reason see (were they attentive to the Dictates of their own Minds and Understandings) to be the Purpose and Will of the Great Author of their Natures, and the Things wherein their Happiness consisted. And especially considering that which can in no wise be denied, *viz.* That the Passions and Inclinations of the Human Nature are so violent and irregular, as not to be always under the Government of Reason, and that all Flesh hath corrupted its way; and that the Nature of Man is so perverse, that having once done Evil, he rather employs his Reason to find out some Excuses for it, than to see his Fault, and find how to a-

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mend it; and that the Custom and Habits of Sin growing strong, make it difficult even for a Man when he does see and know *better* Things, not to follow the *worse*; as well as that these very often create Prejudices in the Mind, that obscure the Light of Reason to so great a degree, that the Understanding cannot see clearly the Reasonableness of Things: In these respects we may well think agreeably to the Notions we have of God's Infinite Goodness, that God should some way or other make known himself and his Providence to Mankind in some sensible manner, and not leave Men to themselves wholly, to collect and gather this knowledge of him: That he should give them Precepts of those Things wherein their Good consisteth, and not leave them wholly to find this out by their own Reason, and sad Experience where their Reason may have failed them: That there should Light and Truth be set before Mens Eyes to direct their way, that *within them* being but weak and glimmering, and obscured with Prejudice and Passion: That there should some Assurances of the Divine Mercy be given Men, to encourage them to break off a sinful Course: That there should be Denunciations of the miserable and mischievous Consequences of Evil and Sin, to deter Men from it, that those who have but little Foresight, might not be left

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wholly to themselves to make Observations of those Consequences, lest they fall under irretrievable Evils, before they have considered to know the Consequences of Good and Evil. Therefore is it reasonable to judge according to what the general Sense of Mankind hath judged as to this Case in all Ages: Who, wheresoever a God has been believed, have generally believed also some Communication between God and Men. This was the Foundation of all those Religious Rites and Ceremonies which every Nation pretended to receive from their Gods. This was the Original of all their Superstitious Arts and Ways of Divination, by which they sought of their Gods Notice of Things to come, what would be the Events and Issues of such and such their Undertakings, and whether they were agreeable or not agreeable to the Mind of the Gods. Wherein appeared the general Sense of Mankind, That supposing there was a God, there must be a Communication between Him and Men, and some Way of holding, some Method for maintaining this Communication. Which is sufficient to conclude for that which I desire to infer from hence; that is to say, That supposing there be a God, 'tis reasonable to suppose and believe there should be a *Revelation* made of himself and his Will to Mankind, over and above what we have in the Works of Nature.

I will

I will further (*Sixthly*,) require, That if it be reasonable to think this, considering the Condition of the Human Nature, the Ignorance, Weakness, and Pravity thereof rendring it unable to attend, and averse from attending to the Things that must put a Restraint upon sensual Desires, and vicious Inclinations; it must be much more reasonable to think and believe this of God's Goodness, considering the actual state and Circumstances of Mankind, at the Time when these *Revelations* we have (which are said to be of God) were made. If we admit the Scripture Account, in a very few Generations the Wickedness of Man was great in the Earth: The whole *Earth was corrupt before God, and filled with Violence*, *Gen.* 6. v. 5, and 11. before God brought in the *Floud upon the World of the Ungodly*: And notwithstanding this Terrible Judgment, no sooner did Men begin to multiply again on the *Earth*, but Wickedness *overspread* it also. The Men of *Sodom* were wicked, and *Sinners before the Lord exceedingly*, Gen. 13. 13. their Sin was very grievous, *cap.* 18. 20. and therefore God thought fit to destroy their Cities with *Fire* and *Brimstone, making them an Example unto those that after should live ungodly.* In the Places where *Abraham* and his Posterity sojourned, there was little of the *fear of God*: The Iniquity of the *Amorites* was now full, when the

the People of *Israel* were to be brought into the Land of *Canaan*; the Inhabitants thereof had *defiled themselves with all Abominations and Uncleanness, that the Land it self was ready to spew them out*; *i. e.* their Wickedness was unsufferable, and no longer to be endured. The Devil, that Tempter which first seduced Man to Wickedness, had got to be familiar with Mankind, and assisted them in their Ways of *Divination*, was an Agent in their *Sorceries* and *Enchantments*. These were the Circumstances of Mankind at the time of the first Revelation by *Moses*, according to the Scripture Account, which no one can well go about to deny; for that from the eldest Prophane Histories, and the most Ancient Pagan Writers it appears that Mankind in general had corrupted their Way, knew so little of God, that they worshipped a multiplicity of Gods, any thing in a manner for God, with Barbarous Rites, and Gross Superstition, and were strangely addicted to *Enchantments*, *Sorceries*, *Divinations*, and Abominable Practices, with Evil *Dæmons*, with *Spirits* and *Powers* invisible. This Ignorance, Blindness and Corruption grew upon the *Gentile* World more and more; who according to what is told of them in Scripture, *Seeing that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, were by the just Judgment of God left to themselves, and so became vain in their Ima-*

Rom. 1. 29.

Imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, insomuch that they changed the Glory of God into an Image made like to Corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and Creeping Things: Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, to vile Affections, to a Reprobate Mind, to do things the most *inconvenient* and unbecoming the Human Nature, *being filled with all Unrighteousness*, &c. And in these Dark Times of Paganism, the Devil and Evil *Spirits* had every where their Temples, and Altars, and Priests, and Sacrifices, themselves frequently appearing to their Votaries in Visible Shapes, instituting their Abominable Rites of Worship, and giving forth Oracles and Responses, and encouraging the wicked Arts of Divination and Sorcery. As these Things are intimated and referred to in the Scriptures we have, so they are every where spoken of in the Heathen Writers. There might be some Cheats and Impostures in these Things, but a great deal was real Fact, wherein the Priests did not impose upon the People, but Evil Spirits deluded both Priests and People, and brought the World to have an Opinion of their Divinity. This must be confessed, unless we will question the Credit of all History: In this Degenerate and Wretched State of Mankind (which Reason and Philosophy were experienced too weak to remedy, that prevailing little

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or nothing to the Reformation of Mens Manners, and less against their Superstitions and Idolatrous Practices; which when the Wisest of the Philosophers, *Socrates* himself, began but to speak against, he was put to death as an *Atheist* and Contemner of the Gods) it is not to be thought that God should leave himself always without any further Witness than that of the Light of Nature, but rather that he should give Mankind some sensible Evidences of his own Being, and Presence, and Power, and likewise more perfect Instructions in his own Nature and Will, and that he should moreover give some Demonstrations of his Power being superior to all those wicked *Spirits* that had deluded and deceived Mankind into an Opinion of their Divinity, and pretended to come down to them as Gods, and to supply them with those Things, and in those Cases which they should have sought to the True God for, and applied to him in; and wherein, and wherewith indeed he only could effectually and infallibly help them.

I will now further assume (*Seventhly*,) That supposing God to intend a *Revelation*, to preserve or restore his own Glory and Worship, and to save the Souls of Men, in redeeming them from their vain Conversation, and delivering them from the Evil of the World, and from the Power of Satan; this

this must either be done by the immediate *Spirit of Prophecy*, that is to say, by some strong and immediate Impression and Influence of his Divine Spirit upon Mens Minds; or if this be not made upon every Soul, (as it may not be God's Pleasure, or may not be very likely, considering the difference of Mens Natural Capacities; which may not be alike capable of judging of such Impressions,) then will Men that have not this Inspiration themselves, expect some Sign from those that come in the Name of God, and would be believed to be his Prophets: And in this Case, *Miracles*, that is to say, Acts and Works of *Wonder* and *Power*, that may give some Evidence of God's Presence with him that comes as a Prophet in his Name, must be allowed and admitted as a Reasonable Evidence of the Prophet's Veracity. For we know where God is, there is Truth; so that if there be reason to think that God is with such a Man, it is a good and reasonable Presumption, that Truth is with him, and that he cannot deceive. And further, as the greater part of Mankind was under a Delusion, and being abused by certain Powers giving themselves out to be Gods, was deceived to take them for, and to worship them as Gods, and drawn into this Idolatrous Practice and Worship by the Apparitions of these Spirits, by their Ora-

cles, Responses, and Predictions of Things future, by the Helps they found in their Arts of Divination and Sorceries from these; and by sundry other Acts of Power and Wonder, which these wanton Spirits either wrought, or pretended to work and shew: In this Case, what might be reasonably expected of the True God, is, that he should give Demonstrations of his Power *being above* all these. And this in Reason must be allowed to be a sufficient Distinction, whereby to know a Prophet of the Lord's from False Prophets and Magicians, namely, his being able to shew himself assisted by the *Superior*, Unlimited Power, either in the Greatness of his Works, or in putting a Stop to the Power of the other. This must be admitted as a Reasonable and Sufficient Proof, because we can assign no other way for the True God in such Circumstances to give a Revelation of himself to the World: And this indeed must necessarily be admitted in Reason, according to the common Sense of Mankind. For we find, as it has been well observed by a Learned Divine, out of *Cicero de Naturâ Deorum*, from the Argument of *Balbus* the *Stoick*, "That "the Reason of Mankind hath resolved the "Firmness and Stability of our Persuasion "of the Truth of God's Existence, into "those visible Signs which their Gods gave "of their own Power and Presence, *Quòd* "*præ-*

Dr. *Sherlock*'s Sermon of the Folly of Deism.

" *præsentiam suam sæpe Divi declarant:* The " Argument is good and Rational. The same " Philosopher, he observes, thought, that " the Being of God (being supposed) must " necessarily infer Divination, as Divination " did prove the Being of a God: *Ego sic* " *existimo, si sint ea genera Divinationis vera* " *quæ accepimus, quæq; colimus esse Deos, vi-* " *cissimq; se Dei sunt, esse qui divinent.*" If this be Reason, then according to the Principles of Reason, Miracles and Signs of a Divine Power are not to be rejected, nor the Revelation which they are offered in proof for, by reason that several Powers pretend to work them; but Search, Examination and Trial are to be made, Evidences looked after, which of these are of God, which True Signs of his Power, which shall oblige us to receive the Prophet that cometh in his Name. It is not to be supposed, that a Man finding himself here in some Uncertainty, must presently reject that of which he was before in Reason certain; that is to say, having concluded of God's Existence, because he hath seen Effects of a Divine Power; and likewise having reasonably concluded from the Supposition that there is a God, that his Help may be found, and there is some way for a Communication to be had with him; he is not to let go this Certainty, because he finds several Powers (it may be) offering and pre-

tending to give him help in Cases where he may want it; or pretending severally to do Works of Wonder and Power, to beget an Opinion of their Divinity. He indeed cannot let it go upon this, but must admit their Works to be a Proof of the Existence of such Powers; he may, 'tis likely, be apt to think that they are Gods alike, but cannot take upon him to say or think, that there are no such Powers, when he sees sensible Effects of their Power. But inasmuch as his Reason doth not easily admit, that there should be more Gods than One, he must not rest satisfied in this neither, to think them Gods alike, if there be any possible way of finding out which is the True God. And inasmuch as that Satisfaction he hath received in this Case, is chiefly from the Signs and Tokens of the Power and Presence of some Divinity, he cannot but desire to see some Demonstration given of a *Power superior* to the rest, in Signs and Works of this kind, either in the greatness of one's Works above the other, or in the one's controuling of the other, and doing Things beyond the Power of the other's. This is what a Man in Reason would desire to see, and from seeing a Competition and Contest in a Case of this nature, would conclude that Power which should prove it self superior, unlimited in its own Acts, and able to controul all Competitors, to be the *Power* of the

the only True God, who is infinite in Power and Might. I take it to be in one respect a very Natural Thought and Speech of the Men of *Lystra*, who when they saw the Miracle which *Paul* had wrought in healing the Cripple, cry'd out, *The Gods are come down to us in the likeness of Men:* Their calling *Barnabas Jupiter*, and *Paul Mercurius*, was according to the Superstition they had liv'd and been brought up in; but that the Gods were come amongst them, or at least that Men assisted by the Gods were come unto them, was rational and natural for them to think as Men. I judge that also to be no other than reasonable, which was admitted by the *Jews*, (and which they did not refuse even in the midst of their Idolatries) for a decisive Proof in the Controversie which the Prophet *Elijah* had with them for their forsaking the Worship of the True God: They could not answer the Prophet a Word, when he argued with them, saying, *How long halt ye between two Opinions? If the Lord be God, then follow him; if Baal, then follow him:* Their Reason would not admit the Thought of more Gods than one; neither could they judge it otherwise than reasonable, to come to some Resolution in the Case, which to acknowledge, and then to stick to that Power which they should have found most Reason to acknowledge to be God: And

Acts 14. v. 11.

1 Kings 18. 20.

therefore when the Prophet made a further Proposal, saying, *Let the Prophets of Baal erect an Altar, and prepare their Sacrifice, but put no Fire under, and I who am the Lord's Prophet will do the like; and the God that answereth by Fire, let him be God;* they could not do otherwise but answer immediately, and say ———*It is well spoken.* I do think I may from these Instances infer what Inference the Reason of Mankind must make upon seeing *Signs* of an Invisible Power, and also what Evidence the same must admit as a Reasonable Evidence to distinguish between such *Powers*, and resolve which is the True God; which may with Right challenge and claim, and to which they may with most Reason give their Homage and Worship.

(*Eighthly*) There is yet another Assumption that I would make, or which at least I shall offer to be considered, and which I persuade my self will appear reasonable when considered: It is this, ———That whatever Signs may be wrought by Inferior *Powers*, they neither shall in Reason weaken our Faith in the True God, nor lessen our Belief of his Omnipotent and Infinite *Power*, nor be granted sufficient to seduce a Rational Creature from his Dependance on the one True God, nor from his Service and Worship, after this that Men have once seen Demonstrations of the *Infinite Power* of the

the Supreme God, and have had Conviction in a Competition between his Prophets, and those that have pretended to be assisted by other *Powers* against him (and who have been known to have been assisted by such *Powers* to the doing of Wonderful Works, when they acted of themselves, and appeared not in competition against the Prophets of the Lord), that the Power of the God of Heaven is beyond all those other Powers able to controul in any Instance as well as to go beyond, in every Thing which they may, or possibly can do. This must be allowed me necessarily as to Signs which such Powers might have shewn *before the Competition*, and also as to all Endeavours or Works of this kind appearing great *at the beginning*, but rendred vain and weak, or controuled and check'd *before the end of such Competition*: Otherwise, supposing that there be a God, and supposing also that there be *Evil Spirits*, and supposing further that these *Evil Spirits* may have shewn *Signs* to deceive and delude Mankind (which Thing in Fact is not to be denied, unless we will deny the Credit of all History, which consequently makes it absurd for any Man to go about to deny either of these Suppositions), if this Assumption be not granted as to *Signs* wrought *before*, and *even in such* a Competition by these deluding Spirits, that these shall be all as nothing

thing, after once the True God has given us Demonstration that his Power is superior to theirs; I cannot see what way can be assigned as possible for God to undeceive the World by any Evidence that he can give of his Power: Therefore the Reason of Mankind necessarily admitteth, that the Works of such Powers shall signifie nothing, when the Power of God hath shewn it self above them: And for the same Reason, that the *Signs* wrought *before and in such a Competition* by those Deceiving Powers, shall go for nothing, after Demonstration once given of the Supreme Power of Almighty God: doubtless whatever Signs such Powers may work *afterwards*, and at another time, ought to be of no more significancy with us, either to prove their Divinity, or to seduce from our Dependance on, and Worship of the Omnipotent God: Forasmuch as a Rational Creature cannot think that to be a Divine Power which he hath seen limited and controuled, inferior, and forced to yield to another. There is but one Difficulty that can any thing perplex in such a Case as this, namely, if the Signs which these Invisible Powers may give of their Presence and Divinity, or as a Testimony to any Prophets, should be to all appearance the same, and so far above the reach and apprehension of the Human Understanding, that the one as well as the other might be

taken

taken by it for the *Power of God*; which is a Case that nothing can decide but a *Competition*; which *Competition* likewise is not to be seen at our Pleasure, but must be left to the Pleasure and Will of the God of Heaven, whether we shall see or be shewn any such or not: In these Circumstances there will be difficulty how to know the *Lord's Prophets* to whom we must hearken, from *False Prophets*, to whom we are not to give ear: But if in this Case a *Rule* be given by a Prophet of the Lord's, of whose Power and Truth there remains no manner of Question at all with us, but that we know *the Lord hath spoken to him*, and that what he hath spoken to us in the Name of the Lord, is Truth; this, I should think, might take off that Difficulty; for Reason must admit that Regard is to be had to that Rule, which the *Prophet* that is acknowledged to be of God may have given us to help out our Weakness, or to prevent Seducers from getting advantage upon us thereby; and likewise that such a Rule may be depended on, because we are sure of the Prophet from whom we have it, we know him to be a *Prophet* of the *Lord's*, beside whom there is no other God.

There is something further still which I shall require to be admitted, as depending upon good grounds in Reason; which is this, ——That supposing Inspiration, and the

the Witness of Miracles to confirm the Word of the *Prophet*, the Inspiration may reveal to such *Prophet*, and the *Prophet* also work a Miracle to confirm that Revealed Truth, which may have so much Reasonableness in it self, as that by Moral Arguments it might be sufficient to beget a belief in the Minds of Sober and Good Men; which being a Thing reasonable, might have been judged to have been thought of by Man, and gathered in and from the Reason of his own Mind, and which consequently would not have been thought a Prophetical Revelation, but for the *Signs* which the *Prophet* should give of his having it from God: But which, nevertheless, being delivered by the *Prophet* as an Inspiration of God, and confirmed with *Signs* of a Divine Power, is to be looked upon and accounted as a Revelation, and as a Divine Truth, such as God thought fit to give notice of anew, over and above that Notice which the Notions of Truth implanted in the Human Nature may have given us thereof. And the one of these Evidences shall not be supposed to destroy the other, but it rather shall be imputed to the Goodness of God, that he has given Mankind a Revelation of Reasonable Truth, not leaving them wholly to themselves to find what is reasonable, but shewing them what is so, and convincing them by the Word in the

Mouth

Mouth of his Prophets, that ſuch and ſuch Things are the Will of him our good and great Creator, which our own Reaſon cannot but aſſent unto, as moſt reaſonable and fit for the great and good God to require, and for Man, as a Rational Creature, to practiſe and obſerve; for this Reaſon eſpecially, that it cannot be otherwiſe judged by us, but that the Happineſs and Well-being of Mankind conſiſteth in the Things which God the Creator willeth us to obſerve and practice: The Reaſonableneſs of the Truth ſhall not by any means be drawn into conſequence, to make the Revelation thought unneceſſary, becauſe this is to be ſuppoſed deſigned to help out and aſſiſt the Weakneſs of Human Nature: And the Truth of the Revelation, though ſufficiently confirmed by the Evidences and Signs of God's Preſence and Power with his Prophet, ſhall nevertheleſs receive a further and additional Confirmation from the Reaſon and Underſtanding in the Mind of Man, which muſt reaſonably believe and aſſent to the Truth revealed as a Truth worthy of God, and moſt likely to be his Will concerning Man, whom he hath made a Rational Creature, and endued with a Capacity of judging and apprehending the difference of Good and Evil, and thereby of knowing in ſome meaſure, and approving the Things that are *honourable* and becoming his Nature,

ture, that are *virtuous* and *praise-worthy.*

These Things being premised, which are not presumed without good Reason, I do not doubt but effectually to prove and make out the Truth of *Revealed Religion*, and particularly that the *Christian Religion* standeth upon the most just and unexceptionable Proof, having unquestionable Evidence for its being the Truth of God: The Evidence it carries with it being such, that it stands in need of only so much Probity in Man's Mind, as to be *willing to do the Will of God* when he shall come to know it, to make way for that Conviction which it gives concerning the Doctrine of *Christ*, that *it is of God.*

The Case and Circumstances of the Scripture-Revelation are these, *viz.*

Man was created by God a Rational Creature, and was by him made upright, tho' he hath since sought out many Inventions: When thus created, he was not left to himself to seek after God, but God was pleased to appear and converse with him; (this cannot be thought incredible, for if we believe that God made Man, we must believe that he made him holy, and that he endued him with his Rational Faculties: And again, in his State of Holiness, it is not incredible that God should shew him his Glory, and make him fully and perfectly acquainted with

with his Will, which he might do by Revelation, as well as by Impreſſions on his Mind): But nevertheleſs Man fell from his Innocence, and the generality of Mankind being depraved in their Reaſon, became vain in their Imaginations, and walked not with God, but fell to Superſtition and the Worſhip of Idols that were no Gods, and grew familiar with *Dæmons*, *Inviſible Powers*, that pretended to aſſiſt them as Gods, but were indeed no other than Devils: (This cannot be gainſaid as a thing incredible, for that the Corruption of Mankind, and their Superſtition and wicked Arts of Divination, are as old as Story.) In theſe Circumſtances, in this Miſerable and Degenerate State of Mankind, when the Ever-living God ſhould think fit to take out of the World a *People for his Name*, it would be expected that he ſhould give the moſt ſenſible Demonſtrations of his Power, and ſhew the ſame *ſuperior* to all thoſe Powers which the World dealt with as Divine, but which were indeed Devils, and not God. Leſs than this would not be expected; and more than this could not in Reaſon be deſired.

Now this is that which we ſhall find done by God, when he *aſſayed to go and take him a Nation from the midſt of other Nations*, by *Signs*, and by *Wonders*, *by a mighty Hand*, *and by a ſtretched-out Arm*, and by great Terrors, according to all that the Lord God did Deut. 4. 34.

did for *Israel* in *Ægypt*, before the Eyes of that People, and in the sight of the Nations round about. *Unto this People was it shewed, that they might know that the Lord he is God, and that there is none else beside him:* And in the sight of the Nations was it shewed, that they might hear the *Fame* of the Lord among his People, and that it might be known there was *none like unto the God of Israel in all the Earth.* And for this Cause (as the Scripture hath told us) *God raised up Pharaoh, to shew in him his Power*, and that the *Name of God might be declared in all the Earth:* That by this King, who was a Person haughty, refractory and obstinate, by his *exalting himself* against the Power of God, which wrought for the deliverance of his People; by his proud Question, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?* and resolute Obstinacy in saying, *I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go*; there might be occasion for God to shew and exercise his Power in the greatest Acts of Wonder and Might, and to multiply his Signs and Wonders in the sight of his People, and of the *Egyptians*, by which the Fame thereof must the more increase and spread. And as *Pharaoh* was harden'd in Obstinacy to the last degree, and *set not his heart* to consider and take notice of the Miracles of *Moses*, even though himself had called for a Sign of him, and seen

Ver. 35.

Exod. 9. v. 15, 16.

ſeen it wrought, but ſought for the Magicians to oppoſe and withſtand the Power of God in his Servant, and to work with their Enchantments; herein was there an opportunity for it to be ſhewn, that the Devil and his Agents with their Enchantments might do great Things; and yet for it to be ſeen nevertheleſs, that the Power of God was *above* them. And for this Cauſe it ſeemeth as though the *Magicians* were permitted to do in like manner as *Moſes*, in ſeveral Inſtances, *with their Enchantments*, to ſhew that *Moſes* the Servant of God was engaged with thoſe that had the Aſſiſtance of Powers inviſible, (that is to ſay, thoſe *Dæmons* that had deluded and deceived Mankind, by Pretences of Power and Acts above all the Power of Man, or it may be above the Power of Nature,) and that nevertheleſs it ſhould be ſeen the Hand of God with *Moſes* was beyond them, by the ſudden Stop which God would put to that Power of theirs which had done great Things, and by his working on with *Moſes* in Signs and Wonders, ſo as to bring the Magicians themſelves to acknowledge the Finger of God; and this Proud King, that was more wicked and obſtinate than they, to humble and ſubmit to his Almighty Hand, and to know, *That there was none like the Lord God in all the Earth.* When *Iſrael* had thus the Opportunity of ſeeing the

the great Works which the Lord did among the *Ægyptians*, as well as the last great Miraculous Work whereby they were drowned in the *Red Sea*, when as this People had a Way made for them to pass through, it was but reasonable that should follow which the Scripture hath told us, namely, That the *People feared the Lord*, and *believed the Lord, and his Servant Moses*, Exod. 14. 31. And likewise the Inference which *Jethro* the Priest of *Midian*, *Moses Father-in-Law* made, when he heard and was informed *of all that God had done* by *Moses* for *Israel* his People, and that the *Lord* had brought *Israel* out of *Ægypt*, was Rational and necessary, and what every Rational Considerate Man must make, that shall hear thereof, even this, —*Now know I that the Lord is greater than all Gods; for in the things wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them.* In this whole Transaction, as the Power of God evidently appeared, so the Superiority of his Power above all other Power, was also therein manifested beyond all Doubt or Controversy.

Exod. 18. v. 1.

V. 11.

Now when the Power of God was thus shewn to the World, and especially to his People *Israel*, in the Competition between *Moses* and the Magicians, and in the further great Acts of Power shewn on their behalf, that they might know that the *Lord he is God*, and that there is *none else* besides him, which

which gave them full opportunity of considering, that no other Power in Heaven or in Earth could do according to his Works, and according to his Might; and therein an undeniable Evidence, that the *Lord he is God* in Heaven above, and in the Earth beneath there is *none else*. This being sufficient to oblige this People, that they might *fear the Lord their God for ever*, and likewise for all the People of the Earth, herein to know the hand of the Lord, *that it was mighty*. The Law is after this given to this People, consisting in Statutes and Judgments so righteous, that no Nation had the like: That all the Nations which heard of those Statutes, must say of the People having and keeping this Divine Law, — *Surely this great Nation* is a wise and understanding People: For what Nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, or that hath Statutes and Judgments so righteous, as the Law set before this People? *Deut.* 4. 8. And the Thing which the Lord now required of this People, after having shewn them his *Glory* and his *Greatness*, was, That they *fear the Lord their God, and serve him*, and diligently keep his Commandments, and Testimonies, and Statutes; and that they should *not go after other Gods, of the Gods of the People which were round about them*; nor learn to do after the *Abominations* of those Nations, who

Josh. 4. 24.

hearken'd unto *Observers of Times*, and *Diviners*, and consulted with *familiar Spirits*, and gave themselves to the Use of *Charms* and *Enchantments*, and did unto their Gods every Abomination which the Lord hateth. And more particularly, if there should arise among them a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and he should give them a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto them, saying, Let us go after other Gods (which they had not known) and let us serve them; they should not hearken unto the Words of that Prophet, but put him to Death, (because he spake to turn them away from the Lord their God, to *thrust* them out of the Way which the Lord their God had commanded them to walk in,) whosoever he were that should entice them to go and serve other Gods, (*i. e.* of the Gods of the People which were round about them, nigh unto them, or far off from them, from the one End of the Earth unto the other End of the Earth, that is to say, any God or Gods of any other Nation whatsoever), *Deut.* 13. *v.* 1, *and* 7. A Precept surely not unreasonable, when the Lord God had done so great Things, to make this People *know him*, and know that there was none like him, nor any God beside him; and to *establish* them for *a People to himself*, according to all that they had heard

and

and seen: This People having seen likewise the *Abominations* of the *Nations*, *their Idols*, *wood and stone*, *silver and gold*, *which were among them*; having likewise seen the Power of the Lord their God in the Land of *Ægypt*, and in his bringing them from thence; and that upon the *Gods of Ægypt the Lord executed judgment*, shewing himself and his Power above them, superior to all those invisible Powers that opposed him. For even allowing that a false Prophet might shew Signs and Wonders, it could not be a sufficient Reason for this People to go after other Gods, who had seen and known that there were other Powers that set themselves up for Gods, and that wrought Signs and Wonders, but were indeed no Gods, could do nothing when the Lord their God would shew himself *above them*, by a Restraint of their Power. Which therefore they had reason to account, notwithstanding their Signs of Power, to be no other than what their Lawgiver had intimated them to be; that is to say, *Devils*, and *not God*, *Deut.* 32. 17. After this, it pleased God still to do Wonders amongst this People, to the end that they might know, that the *Living God was among them*. And yet this People, whom the Lord had redeemed to himself from the Nations and their Gods, (though the *Lord alone had led them*; and there was *no strange God with him*

Deut. 29. 16.

Josh. 3. 10.

in any of those Works of Wonder and Power which he wrought for them, from their Deliverance out of *Ægypt*, to their being settled in the Land of *Canaan*;) were so foolish and unwise as to forsake God, and lightly esteem the Rock of their Salvation; (according to that which *Moses* fore-
Deut. 33. 15. told,) to provoke him to *jealousy with strange Gods*, and with the *Abominations* used in the Worship of *Devils*: and still it pleased God to testify against them, by his *Spirit in the Prophets*, though they dealt proudly, and hardened their Necks, and were unmindful of the Wonders that he had done among them. Sometimes their Iniquities constrained him to deliver them into the hand of their Enemies, that he might expostulate with them on the account of their going after Gods whom they knew not; to new Gods, that came newly up, whom their Fathers feared not, saying, *Where are their Gods, their Rock in whom they trusted?* but when he saw their Power was gone, and these must have found that there was none to rise up and help them, and be their Protection; then would he lift up his hand to Heaven, and exert his Power on their behalf in Revenges upon the Enemy; that his People might see that *he*, even *he was God*, and there *was no other with him*, to *kill*, and to *make alive*, to *wound and heal*. At other times, by the hands of his Prophets

phets would he give them such Demonstrations of His Power, in Signs and wonderful Operations, as might shew it to be above all Gods, and even constrain them to acknowledge that the *Lord he is the God*, and make them therein ashamed of the Idols they had chosen; as in the Contest that *Elijah* had with the Prophets of *Baal*. In all which it appears, supposing Truth in the Matters of Fact which are received from the most unexceptionable and certain Tradition, (the *Jews* that lived in the time of those Facts, delivering them down to their Posterity, and that whole Nation in all Ages receiving and acknowledging those Books for genuine, wherein those Acts are recorded; which makes it the Tradition of a whole Nation, and consequently most worthy of belief;) that the One True God so clearly revealed himself to the World, and to the *Jews* more particularly, that there could be no doubt of his Existence; and likewise proved the *Superiority* of his Power *above all others*. And again; that by the same means by which God render'd his own Existence unquestionable, and proved himself to be the God of Heaven and Earth, and that there was none else; he render'd the Truth of the Prophecy and Revelation of *Moses* indubitable and unexceptionable; whence the *Jews* were obliged to *believe in God, and to believe his Servant*

Moses: The same Things must oblige them to have *no other God* but him, and not to hearken to any Prophet, though working Signs that should perswade them to go after *other Gods whom they knew not*, after *new Gods*, whom their Fathers feared not. And this must put it beyond question also with the World, supposing it to have Conviction of the Facts; that as for *Moses*, to be sure *the Lord spake unto him*; and as for the *Lord* the God of *Israel*, he must be *greater* than all Gods, there being none that can do like him.

And now as to the Lord *Jesus Christ*, and his Doctrine; the God of Heaven did not only (in the Works of Christ) give an undoubted Testimony of his Existence, by such Operations as Men must necessarily look upon to be the Signs of a Divine Power; but also shew his Power to be *above* that of Devils; and as therein and thereby also he hath conformed to the Divine Mission of *Jesus Christ*, the World must be obliged to receive, and believe, and hearken to his Gospel. The *Jews* could have no just Reason to refuse, but on the contrary, had sufficient Evidence to believe, and all reasonable Grounds to acknowledge him for their *Messiah*. Their Lawgiver *Moses* (of whom they say, *we are sure the Lord spake unto him*) wrote of him, saying, *That the Lord their God would raise them up a Prophet like*

Deut. 18. v. 15.

like unto himself; and unto him they should hearken in all things: Now there was not a Prophet in *Israel like unto Moses*, (whom the Lord knew face to face) among all the succeeding Prophets of *Israel*, until *Jesus Christ*; doing like him in the *Signs and the Wonders* which the Lord sent him to do, and which he shewed in the sight of *Israel*. Yea, all their Prophets, as it were with one Mouth, spake of the Times of the *Messiah*; spake more or less of the Things that were fulfilled in him, and fell out in his Time. The great Works which they expected to be wrought by their Messiah, upon the Prediction of their Prophets, were wrought by *Jesus Christ*; insomuch that the *Jews* say, and reason among themselves, *When Christ cometh, will he do more Works than this man hath done?* And *Jesus* resolves the Question of *John* the Baptist's Disciples, Whether he were the Christ, or not? by bidding them tell their Master what they heard and saw; *viz.* the *Blind* receive *their sight*, the *Deaf hear*, the *Lame walk*, and to the *Poor* the *Gospel is preached*; that is to say, he did those very Works which the *Messias* was to do according to the Predictions of him; which he must therefore be supposed to have the Power of God to do, and therefore also must be believed to be the Messiah, from his doing them. The *Jews* had indeed a Rule, not to receive a

Deut. 34. 10.

Prophet that should invite them to Idolatry, or seek to turn them away from the God who brought them out of the Land of *Ægypt*; though that Prophet should shew Signs. But this, *Jesus* was so far from doing, or any thing like it, that he owns the Law of *Moses* was from God; himself observes that Law, and declares that he came not to *destroy the Law* or the *Prophets*, but to *fulfil them*: He always pressed the Worship of the God of *Israel*, and of him only. He appeals to *Moses* and his Law, and to the Interpretation thereof given by their own Prophets, to shew the Conformity of his Doctrine to the Divine Will: Whatever *Moses* commanded, as to the *Love*, and *Fear*, and *Spiritual Worship of God*, the Gospel of Christ requires the same from greater Motives and Considerations, than were before understood: In Kindness to our *Neighbour*, and Acts of Beneficence, the Gospel does far exceed the Law of *Moses*. As to the Ritual Observations of that Law, their own Prophets (before Christ) had given them to understand, that those were not the weighty Matters, nor the principal in God's Intention; that they were Typical of Things to come, and designed to be subservient to those that were the principal; and were to give way to them, according to the Intention of God, who would have *Mercy* rather than *Sacrifice*.

To

To which Spiritual Sense of their Law discovered in the Interpretations their own Prophets put upon it, *Christ* appeals when he insists upon, and seeks to introduce a greater Righteousness than that of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, pressing the *weightier matters* of the Law, the Spiritual Worship of God, the *loving him with all the Heart, &c.* and our *Neighbour as our selves*; on which two Commandments, as he says, *hang all the Law and the Prophets*, as the *Jews* themselves must own, that this is more than all *Burnt-Offerings* and *Sacrifices*. As in this respect therefore the *Jews* had no Reason to question the Power by which *Christ* wrought his Miracles, (he being an Observer of *Moses*'s Law, and acknowledging *Moses* for a True Prophet, and pursuing the Ends of his Law, which was the ground upon which themselves acknowledged all their other Prophets which have spoken to them, and believe their Power and Prophecy to be *of* and *from the same God* that was with *Moses*) so on another account likewise they had reason to look upon the Objection of the *Pharisees* against him and his Works, as though they were done by the *Power of the Devil*, to be unjust and false; forasmuch as they saw it confuted by Christ's Appeal to the nature and kind of his Works, which appeared to be wrought in opposition to *Satan*'s *Power*, by his *casting*,

ing out Devils, wherein also his Power appeared *superior* to that of the Devil; this also being evident, that his Doctrine tended altogether to the Overthrow and Destruction of the Works of the Devil, of that Kingdom which he had set up among Men in opposition to the Worship of the True God and his Righteousness; as this introduced and pressed the Worship of the one True God in Spirit and in Truth, and persuaded all Men to seek his Kingdom and Righteousness. That difference which there is between the Law and Gospel, that New Doctrine which the latter teacheth, could not be a reasonable Ground for their rejecting *Christ* and his Truth. For his Miracles that he wrought, coming to them in the Name of the *God of Israel*, must oblige them to acknowledge him as a Prophet; at the least, the Predictions of their own Prophets must oblige them to this, as this is a Rule with them, that the Prophet of whom another Prophet hath testified, is to be presumed a Prophet, and needs not to be examined. Hereupon the Works which *Christ* did, according to the Predictions of their Prophets concerning him, must testify him to be the Prophet, who they looked should come: And besides, their Prophets had foretold that God would make a *New Covenant* with his People, and themselves own that Great Prophet whom they expected,

d, was to instruct them more perfectly in God's Will: The Woman of *Samaria*'s Saying was no other than the general Expectation, —— *I know, when* that *Messias cometh, he will tell us all Things:* Consequently the Instructions which he gave (being only the Interpreting their Law to a Spiritual Sense, which their own acknowledged Prophets had before in some measure attempted) could not be a just ground of Offence, but was rather a Truth which upon the Testimony of so many Miracles they might well have received, were indeed obliged to receive upon that Evidence: For as the Miracles could not be denied, and as the Power which wrought them (by the Nature and Kind of the Works, as well as by the Predictions that were made of the coming of such a Prophet, and of his doing such Works) appeared to be the *Finger of God*; the Argument of our *Saviour Jesus Christ* must needs stand good against them, *viz.* That if he by the *Spirit of God cast out Devils*, and did his other mighty Works, then of a surety the *Kingdom of God was come unto them.* Thus are the Miracles of *Christ* a Conviction to the *Jews* beyond all just Exception, of the Truth and Divinity of his Gospel, there being no just ground to deny, but on the contrary, all Reason to admit them to be wrought by the *Spirit and Power of God.*

And

And it being now the Will of God to take also from *among the Gentiles a People for his Name*; it was the Divine Pleasure, that in the *Name of Christ*, *Miracles* and *Wonders* should be wrought among these. Thus at *Iconium* the Lord gave Testimony unto the Word of his Grace, and granted *Signs* and *Wonders* to be done by the hands of *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Acts* 15. 12. And at *Lystra* a wonderful Cure is wrought by St. *Paul* upon a Man that was a Cripple from his Mother's Womb; which the People accounted so sure a Testimony of the Power and Presence of God, that they cried, *The Gods were come down to them in the likeness of Men*, and ran with the Priest of *Jupiter* to do Sacrifice; upon which the Apostles blaming their Error and Superstition, preach unto them, that they should turn from their Vanities unto the Living God, *Acts* 14.8. In presence of the *Roman* Deputy, *Sergius Paulus* at *Paphos* in *Cyprus*, these Apostles had a Contest with a *Sorcerer* and *False Prophet*, who withstood them, seeking to *turn away the Deputy from the Faith*: Him *Paul* sharply rebukes, as being full of *Subtilty* and *Mischief*, a Child of the Devil, and an Enemy of all Righteousness, and strikes him with *Blindness* by the Hand of the Lord, that he immediately was forced to seek some one to lead him; which when the *Deputy* saw, he *believed*, 'tis said, being *astonished at the Doctrine*

Acts 14. v. 3.

Acts 13. 8.

ctrine of the Lord, at the Power of God, that is to ſay, accompanying this Doctrine, which in this Inſtance appeared abſolutely ſuperior to the Power of the Devil, which 'tis moſt probable that Sorcerer had ſhewn before the *Deputy*, to turn him away from the Faith, and that this occaſioned St. *Paul* to give him the Name of *one full of Subtilty and Fraud*, for his cunning fraudulent Works and Sorcery. Again at *Philippi*, when a certain Damſel poſſeſt with a *Spirit of Divination* followed *Paul* and his Companions for ſeveral days, crying, *Theſe Men are the Servants of the moſt high God, which ſhew us the way of Salvation*; (a moſt cunning Artifice of the Devil, that his Agents might be accounted to be like theſe, by this Teſtimony pretended in favour of thoſe that were indeed the Servants of the moſt high God, and ſhewed his Way in *Truth*); St. *Paul* being grieved thereat, commands that Evil Spirit, *in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt*, that he ſhould come out of her, and the *Unclean Spirit* leaves her forthwith: Which (tho' it enraged her Maſters to whom ſhe had brought much Gain by her *Soothſaying*, that theſe, ſeeing the hope of their Gains was gone, accuſed them to the Magiſtracy, and theſe cauſed them to be ſcourged and put in Priſon, as Troublers of their City, and Teachers of a Religion contrary to their Laws) was nevertheleſs an Inſtance of the

Power

Power of the *True God above* the Devil, and of the Knowledge his Servants had to discern the Fraud and Artifice of that Evil Spirit: And this Miracle, very probably, had some share with the Earthquake in the Conversion of the Gaoler, *Acts* 16. 18. And
Acts 19. 11. again in *Asia* God wrought *special Miracles* by the hands of *Paul*, so that from his Body were brought unto the Sick Handkerchiefs and Aprons, and the Diseases departed from them, and *Evil Spirits* went out of them: The Sick and the possessed with Devils were immediately cured: In which, as the Power of God appeared, so it appeared superior to that of the Devil; and by being opposite thereto, appeared to be indeed the Power of God. Where likewise a most remarkable Thing happened in the Attempt of certain Vagabond *Jews*, who went about pretending to cure Diseases, and cast out Devils: These had a mind to try to cast them out by the Name of *Jesus*, and took upon them to call over them which had *Evil*
Acts 19. 13. *Spirits*, his Name, saying, *We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth*; but the Evil Spirit would not obey them, knowing them not to have any of the Authority from Christ which *Paul* had, and made the Man which was possess'd to fall violently upon them, that they went out of the House naked and wounded. This Accident being known, wrought much upon both the *Jews* and

and *Greeks*, so that *Fear fell on them, and the Name of the Lord Jesus was magnified:* Forasmuch as from this it appeared that the Devils could not be cast out but by the Power of God; and as they were cast out by them that preached the Gospel of Christ, it was an Evidence that these were indeed of God, were assisted by a Power above that of the Devil, and contrary thereunto. And this had an Effect accordingly, for upon it *many of those that used Curious Arts*, that had studied and practised *Magick* and *Sorcery*, *brought and publickly burnt the Books of their Black Art*, in Testimony of their renouncing the same, that they would have no more to do with the Devil, nor the wicked Arts of Divination. Now what was chiefly argued by St. *Paul* from those Acts and Instances of Divine Power which he shewed among the *Gentiles*, may be observed in that which *Demetrius* lays to his charge, that he *persuaded and turned away much People from the Worship of their Gods*, saying, *That they be no Gods which are made with hands*; by which the Temple of the great Goddess *Diana* was like to be despised, and her Magnificence destroy'd: And 'tis certain that those Works of Power were such as in their Nature must give a Conviction of the Presence of the Omnipotent God with those Men that persuaded the World to the Belief and Worship of him, and was the most ef-

fectual

fectual way of convincing them also that the Gods which the *Gentile* World worshipped were not Gods, as being made with Hands, and that the Powers which shewed themselves among them in their Idols, were Devils, and not Gods: And that the *Gentile* World might have a full and lasting Conviction, as well of the Being and Power of the Omnipotent God, as of the *Superiority* of his *Power*, above all others that set themselves up as Gods, and were by them vainly reputed and worshipped as such; it was the Divine Pleasure, according to Christ's Prediction, *Mark* 16. 17. that *Signs* should follow them that believed, that these should in *the Name of Christ, heal the Sick, cast out Devils*, &c. Which Power of Miracles continued in the Church for Ages for the Conviction of the unbelieving World, who might therein see God bearing Witness to his Truth with *Signs* and *Miracles*, &c. and also that the Power of the True God was *above* the Power of all those which by them were accounted Gods; this appearing as well in the *casting out Devils*, as in the healing of all Sicknesses and Diseases. For the Truth of which, *Tertullian* in his time appeals even to the Heathens themselves; hence persuading them, μὴ θεομαχεῖν, not to *fight against God*, as they did in their Persecution of the Christians. That Father from this Topick well argues against the

Tertul. Apolog. adversus gentes.

Gen-

Gentiles, That their Gods were no Gods, but Devils only, " seeing Christians had " Power to cast them out, and to compel " them to confess and own themselves to " be *Dæmons*, and not the True God. And so confidently he asserts the Power of Christians over these *Unclean Spirits*, that he is content, if the Heathen Persecutors would put their Case upon this Issue, " they should " put to Death that Christian who should " fail in the Attempt of forcing these Spi- " rits, and compelling them to a Subjecti- " on, and to this Confession of themselves " to be Devils and not God." And whereas the *Gentiles* pretended to distinguish at the last, when they saw the Christians to have such Power of *casting out Devils*, between those *Dæmons* which possessed particular Persons, and afflicted them with Diseases, or which spake in those that were the *Common Diviners*; and them that were *possessed by their Gods in their Temples*, and at their Altars: *Tertullian* " makes the " Challenge as to these, as well as the other, " that a Christian should force and compel " those that were possessed with these Spi- " rits, which they owned to be their Gods, " and that did Cures by their Power, to " own themselves to be what they truly " were, Devils; this they should be forced " to do in the presence of a Christian, tho " elsewhere, and among their own superstitious

" tious Worshippers, they falsly gave them-
" selves out to be God." Upon which, as a Thing certainly known and true in Fact, he thus farther argues, and overthrows therein the Divinity of the Heathen Gods; saying, " If these Gods of yours are in-
" deed Gods, why will they own them-
" selves to be *Dæmons?* Is it done in obe-
" dience to us? Then that which is your
" Divinity is subject to a Christian's Power,
" and therefore may not be thought to
" have any Divinity: Besides, their yield-
" ing to us who oppose their Power and
" Divinity, must be to their own shame,
" and to the Confusion of their Worship-
" pers. If on the other hand they confess
" themselves Devils, or at least subordinate
" Spirits, why do they elsewhere and in o-
" ther places give out themselves for God?
" Surely as those which are accounted a-
" mongst you for Gods, would not say of
" themselves that they were not so, if they
" truly were Gods, because that would be
" to destroy and to divest themselves of
" their own Majesty; so those which you
" know to be *Dæmons*, would not give
" themselves out to be Gods, if there were
" at all any such Gods as them whose
" Names they use and take upon them;
" for they would fear in such Case the abu-
" sing of the Majesty of those that are su-
" perior to them, of which they must ne-
" cessarily

" cessarily be afraid. That therefore can
" be no *Divinity* which ye hold and account
" such; for if it were, it would not be af-
" fected by those *Dæmons* which confess
" themselves not to be it, nor would they
" deny themselves if they were Gods. See-
" ing therefore either way this forced Con-
" fession of theirs shews them not to be
" God, you may understand that they are
" all of one kind, that is to say, *Evill Dæ-*
" *mons* or Devils. And therefore as you
" are either way to seek for *God*, (for those
" whom you presumed to be so, you see
" herein to be only *Dæmons*, especially as
" by that Confession which a Christian will
" force from them, they shall tell you that
" neither themselves, nor any other that
" you so account, are Gods,) by this you
" may apprehend incontinently who is the
" True God; whether it be not He, and
" whether it be not only He, whom we
" Christians profess; and whether He be
" not to be believed and worshipped, ac-
" cording to the Faith and Discipline of
" Christians." This Argument of *Tertul-lian*'s I have not set down for any thing, but the Strength of the Reason in it, which confutes the Heathen Idolatry, and shews us upon what account chiefly they were obliged to turn from those Vanities, to serve the Living God: Namely, for that God had given the World an undoubted Evidence of

his Existence, and withal no less an undoubted Evidence of the *Superiority* of his Power *above* all the Gods that the *Gentile* World vainly worshipped; whence they could not but see sufficient Reason not to be led nor deceived any longer by the false Pretences to a Divine Power, which the Devil or Devils had made among them, giving themselves out as Gods, and by Signs and Wonders seducing the Ignorant to esteem them as such.

And thus I take the Evidence given by Miracles to Revealed Religion, and to the Christian Religion in particular, to be indubitable and unexceptionable. In that (*First*,) it appeareth beyond all question, by the Power of God with *Moses*, that there was an Evidence given to the World, as of God's Existence, so of the *Superiority* of *his Power*; and by the same means also the Truth of *Moses*'s Revelation must be put beyond Exception. And though it does not appear that this Evidence prevailed on the *Heathen World* any further, than that the *Nations* round about became afraid *of the God of Israel*, still continuing to apply themselves to their own Gods, and vainly seeking Help from those which could not help; yet this is plain, that these Evidences which God gave of his Power and Presence, and of the Superiority of his Power *above the Gods of the Nations*, were the Grounds

Grounds of Conviction to the *Jews*, that wrought and prevailed on them to *believe in God and his Servant Moses*, that redeemed them from the *Nations and their Gods*, 2 Sam. 7. 23. *and confirmed them* to be a People unto the Lord for ever: As he the Lord upon this *became their God*, and wrought on still with his Power on their behalf, and sent his Prophets from time to time to speak unto them. Which thing might have been, and was at the same time a Reasonable Conviction to the rest of the World; but their Blindness and Wickedness render'd it ineffectual. I insist upon this, from the Instance we have in *Jethro* the Priest of *Midian*, (of whom I spake before) and the Ground upon which he concluded, that the Lord was *greater than all Gods*, Exod. 18. 9, and 11. for that *wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them*: and from a remarkable Passage in *Solomon*'s Prayer at the Dedication of his Temple, when he had prayed that God would then vouchsafe to hear the Prayers of his *own People Israel*, and moreover also of the *Stranger* that was not of that People, but should come from a far Country for his Name's sake;—— *For they* (says he) *shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm.* This would be the Motive, he supposes, of their coming from far Countries, to the

Temple of God at *Hierusalem*. And, as it was in his Opinion thought that this would be a Motive, and would bring *Strangers* to worship the *God of Israel*; so it must, and will ever be acknowledged, by all that are sensible of the *great Name* of the *God of Israel, and of his mighty hand, and stretched-out arm*, to be a Reasonable Motive for all Men to seek and address themselves to this the ever-living God. This was a Reasonable Ground for *all People of the earth*, who should *know his Name*, to *fear* him as did his *People Israel*.

And again, (*2dly.*) The Christian Revelation more especially hath an undoubted Confirmation from the Miracles wrought in Attestation of its Truth, by the Power and *Spirit of God* with *Christ Jesus*, and by those Acts of Wonder and Power, done in his Name by his Apostles and Followers. Him the *Jews* were obliged to receive as a Prophet, and to believe for his Works sake; for that he came to them in the *Name of the God of Israel*, and their own Revelation testifyed of him, and of the Power of God with him, to the doing of such Works, whereof themselves were Eye-Witnesses. It was this that made divers of 'em say, *This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the World*, John 6. 14. Their own Revelation foretold God's sending them such a Prophet, to instruct and

teach

teach them all things; and they could upon no account justly refuse *Jesus Christ*; because his Doctrine tended to the *fulfilling the Law and the Prophets*, and the introducing a Spiritual Righteousness, which their own acknowledged Prophets before had in some measure hinted and aimed at. The Calumny which the *Pharisees* cast upon him, being refuted likewise from the Nature and Kind of his Works, which appeared opposite to the Devil's Works, as well as superior to his Power. Their own Scriptures in every thing giving witness to his Person, to his Works and to his Doctrine, to the Circumstances of his Life and Death, and to the Manner and End thereof, and to his Resurrection that followed, and to the *Pouring out of the Spirit of God upon all flesh*, and to the *Calling of the Gentiles*, (to whom his Name was also preached.) As the Testimony of *Moses* and the Prophets, therefore, gave a Confirmation to *Jesus*, and to his Works and Doctrine; so the Works of Christ, and the Power of God in him, gave a witness again to the first Revelation, that *it was of God*, who now sent his Son to *bless his People*, *in turning every one of them from their Iniquities*; to fulfil the Promise that he had made unto their Forefathers, and in Remembrance of his Holy Covenant with them; That *they being delivered out of the hands of their Enemies*,

(that is to say, their Spiritual Enemies, Sin and Satan) might serve him without fear, in Holiness and Righteousness before him all the days of their life. Him, again, the *Gentiles* have all Reason gladly to receive, and on that account to glorify God, who hath visited the *Nations*, to take out of them a *People also for his Name*: Who when he suffered the Nations to walk in their own ways, left not himself without witness among them; by which they might have sought and found the Lord God: But as they did not, he hath been pleased to make himself to be found of those that sought him not, and to give Evidence to the *Gentiles* of his Power and Presence, granting them likewise Repentance unto Life. This might well make the *Gentiles gladly* to receive that Truth for their Salvation, which the exceeding and unsearchable Goodness of God was pleased to grant them, and to confirm the same to them in such a manner, that there could be no doubt but that it was of God; who shewed his Existence and Power to them, in the Miracles and Wonders which were done among them; and also shewed his Power to be *Superior* and above all those Powers which they before had been deceived and deluded to take for Gods, and to worship with abominable Superstition. This could not but be a reasonable and sufficient Evidence,

dence, that they ought then to turn from those Vanities, and to serve the Living God, who made Heaven and Earth. The Force and Strength of this Argument is the same even now, and will be to the World's End; supposing the Truth of the Matters of Fact, which come to us by an unexceptionable Tradition, by the Writings of Men that were Eye-Witnesses to the most part of them; which Writings were soon in the hands of many Nations and People, and have been acknowledged the Writings of those whose Names they bear, and esteemed as True Records by all Christians, in all Ages. The Testimony both of *Jews* and Heathens also, (unconcerned as to the Truth of the Facts, or rather concerned not to have them true, as not believing upon them,) confirming nevertheless in a great measure the Christian Tradition as to the *Works* of Wonder and Power done by *Jesus Christ*, and by his Followers in his Name. As we have also the Assent of all *Jews* and *Gentiles* that have believed in the Name of Christ before us, to the Sufficiency of those Matters, which are the great Motives of Credibility, upon which the Truth of our Holy Religion is built.

And thus it appears, that the Divine Revelation we have, is most worthy of Credit, as it standeth upon the Evidence and

Wit-

Witness that God hath given to it, by the undoubted Signs of his Power and Presence, and by the Proof given of the Superiority of his Power *above* all that have been called Gods. Yet will its Authority be still further confirmed in our Minds, when we find Right Reason directing us to those Things, which Revelation hath informed us to be the Will of God concerning us: When both these are found agreeing, who can with-hold his Faith from them, but he that would be accounted not only to have little Religion, but wholly destitute of Reason? That Reason it self, which acknowledges the Things as righteous and good, worthy of God, and most becoming us, must allow them to be the most probable Subject of a Revelation. Whereby the Testimony of such a Revelation, must in Reason have the easier Admittance, and the greater Credit with us. Nevertheless, I do not think that a Revelation is to be believed without its proper Testimonies, barely for that its Subject is such as Reason might judge proper and worthy of a Divine Revelation: Nor that Human Reason, on the other hand, may so far depend upon it self, as to reject the Evidences of a *Revelation*, if in their kind good and sufficient, upon this account, that the Subject of it is not understood to be agreeable to the Notions of a Man's own Mind, or may be thought disagreeable to

Prin-

Principles which a Man may heretofore have thought rational: For all Mankind must allow that the Reason of Man is weak, and of a short view, and may have Prejudices from Education, Custom, and the Passions of Human Nature, as well as from Vicious Habits, and Perverse Inclinations: Not to mention the great difference that is in Mens Knowledge, and in their Natural Capacity of knowing and enquiring after Truth; and the further difference which their own Will, or Temper, or Circumstances may make in their use or neglect of the proper means of Knowledge: Which things, as they are Arguments for the needfulness of a Revelation, and in that respect for its being thought probable to be according to the Notions we have of God's Goodness, so I take them to be Arguments likewise that strongly conclude that a Man should not take upon himself from his own Reason to affirm, that this or that Thing cannot be a *Revelation* from God (though coming to us upon the unexceptionable Testimonies of a *Revelation*) because it seems to him not consistent with his Reason; for then every Man must be allowed and left to himself to believe as much, or as little as he thinks fit and proper in his own Mind, of any *Revelation* whatever (though built upon Testimonies never so unexceptionable); and it had been in vain for God's Prophets to say, as we

ever

ever find them, *The Lord saith* thus or thus, until they had first shewn Men, that Reason saith thus and thus. But their way of speaking was with a Decisive and Infallible Authority, and 'twere to be wished all spake thereof accordingly, as declaring unto Men the *Testimony of God*, whereby the Truth would have *his Authority*, which would give it a Force and Efficacy beyond the *Excellency of Speech and of Wisdom*.

This now being the Evidence that Miracles have given to *Revealed Religion*, and to *Christianity* in particular, I take it to be a Proof that depends upon so much Truth and solid Reason as will surmount all the Objections and Cavils of the Unbelieving World.

For (*First*) if it shall be pretended that *Miracles* are not a certain Proof of God's Existence, but that the Visible Works of the Creation are a greater. It shall be answered, that the Visible Works of the Creation are indeed a sufficient Proof thereof; and if all men had used, and would use their Reason aright, there might have been no need of any other: But inasmuch as the greater part of men, left with this Witness, have not, however, found out God, and most of those that have thence acknowledged him, have been careless, however, as to the finding out his Will concerning us, and negligent of practising even what they

could

could not but know to be his Will; hence must there be confessed a necessity for some other Proof to be made of God's Existence, and some *Revelation* likewise to be made of his Will: And no other or better Proof can be made or given of the one, than that which is given in God's Miraclous Works, nor is there any Certainty to be had of the other, but in and by these Signs of God's Power and Presence.

And (*Secondly*) if it be objected, That there is not a Certainty in this Proof, by reason that several and different Powers pretend, and perhaps have been known to work them. It shall be answered, *First*, That this does no way infer what some would pretend; that is to say, that all Miracles are Illusion and Imposture, but rather the contrary, that these Effects must have some real, though latent Cause: And as the Mind of Man conceives but two sorts of Beings, that is to say, Spirits and Bodies, and we can reason but according to our Idea's, we must consequently ascribe to Spirits what we cannot apprehend can be produced by Bodies; and thus Miracles will necessarily prove the Existence of Spirits and Powers Invisible. Whether indeed the Miracle be the Work of God, there being Reason to think that there may be other Spirits and Powers invisible besides him, will, it must be confessed, be still a Question

stion that will remain to be resolved. But then (*Secondly*) though several and different Powers may have wrought *Signs* of this kind, yet as the God of Heaven hath shewn us his Power, and ascertain'd his *Revelation* by making his Power appear *above* and *beyond* all other Powers pretending to Works of Wonder, in his controuling, stopping, and acting beyond the others at his pleasure: Hereby we may know that the *Lord is God*, and that there is *none else*, as *among the Gods there is none that can do as he doth*: And herein will there be always a good and sufficient Reason for the Supreme God to be feared, and his *Revelation* to be acknowledged and received, as herein it may be known that he whose Name alone is *Jehovah*, is the most high over all the Earth; he is great, and doth wondrous Things, he is therefore God alone: This will be a perpetual Reason for all the Nations whom he hath made, to come and worship before him, and glorifie his Name; For that *among the Gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any Works like unto thy Works*, Psalm 86. *v.* 8, 9.

If (*Thirdly*) it be objected, that the *Revelation* of *Moses* having its own Authority from Miracles, begs the *Question* for it self, when it requires that a Prophet, though shewing a *Sign* or a *Wonder*, that is to say,

even

even working Miracles, ſhould not be hearkened to, if he perſuaded to the *worſhip of ſtrange Gods*, Deut. 13. 1. We are to anſwer, that this is no way *begging the Queſtion*; for that this *Revelation* required not their Belief that the *Lord* was the only God, but upon Proof firſt given, that he is God, and none elſe. It ſays indeed in effect, that the Subſequent Actions or Signs of other Powers ought not to delude, neither ſhould God's People ſuffer themſelves to be deluded thereby to acknowledge or to worſhip any other Gods: But why this? It is not upon this account only, that the True God had wrought Miracles among them, and therefore they ſhould give no Credit to others that might work them; but becauſe they had ſeen in Fact that other Powers did by Pretences of this nature ſet up themſelves for God, and that Vain Men had entred into a Familiarity with thoſe Powers, which were only Devils, and not God; but had ſeen nevertheleſs that the Power of their God *was above them*, that his Omnipotent Power could controul and overcome the other at his Pleaſure. Hence, whatever Works might be wrought by other Powers ſeemingly great, they might be certain the Hand of God was not therein, if they were found to intend the ſeducing to the Worſhip of *ſtrange Gods*; for they might be ſure the only True God would not give away his

Glory

Glory to another, would not act in contradiction to himself; and they need not to fear any other Gods, whatsoever their Works might be, as knowing their Power was nothing in competition with the Power of the *God of Israel.*

So that (*Fourthly*) if the same Objection should be made against the *Christian Revelation*, that it *begs the Question* for it self, when it forbids the hearkening to *False Christs*, and *False Prophets*, and yet supposes their *shewing Signs*, and doing Works of Wonder. The same Answer will take it off, that is to say, that it presumeth nothing as concerning Jesus's being the Christ, but upon Proof given thereof by his Miracles, upon Evidence also that these were wrought by the Power and Spirit of God, upon concurrent and unquestionable Testimonies likewise from the precedent Revelation: And after this Evidence it may well require that we admit not of another Gospel, nor of any other Doctrine different from the Truth as it is in Jesus, though False Christs, or False Prophets should shew Signs and Wonders: acting according to the Power of Satan: For as that Enemy of God and of Mankind, and of all Righteousness has always withstood God's Truth, and sought to seduce Mankind, so will he still make his utmost Efforts to advance his own Kingdom and Works. But we are not now *ignorant of his*

Devices,

Devices, nor of the Power of God's being above him, nor of *Christ's* being able to controul and overcome him, who *for this purpose was made manifest, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil*; who hath indeed destroy'd the Kingdom of Satan, and proved his Power to be above all the Powers of Devils, by his casting out Satan, and driving him from Persons and Places wherein he once had Rule and Power: It is a Truth of our Faith, nevertheless, that God hath still left some Power to Devils, and that he permits them on some occasions to act with Power; but this, how great soever, shall not seduce a Confirmed Christian, because it's known to be the *working of the Power of Satan*; whose Power though great in it self, is known to be inferior to that of God and Christ, and under the Controul of theirs. And for our knowing whether such Works be *of the Power of God*, or of the working of *Satan*, the Christian Revelation hath given us a Rule, *viz. Every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is the Christ, is not of God*: And again, *If any preach another Gospel, let him be accursed*: And again, *If any Man bring not this Doctrine, receive him not.*

If (*Fifthly*) it be an Objection, That the *Revelation* of *Moses* is believed and stuck to by the *Jews*, as established upon Miracles, and that these receive not the *Christian Re-*

velation, pretending to Miracles alike, not even though this maketh a fair pretence to *greater* and *more* than were wrought by *Moses*; we have an Answer, That there is in truth no Opposition between the *Christian Revelation* and that of *Moses*; that the *Jews* have no just Exception against either the *Miracles* of our Saviour, or his Doctrine; that their Suggestion of his doing them by the Power of the Devil, was confuted by the Inconsistency therein, and likewise by the Testimony which their own Prophets gave of God's sending a Prophet among them, with *his Power* to do the Things which *Jesus* did, and for the purpose for which he wrought them, to confirm *the* Truth of the Gospel which he should *preach unto the Poor*: That the Gospel of *Christ* cast no Contempt upon the Law of *Moses*, but rather confirmed its being *of God*, and that it designed not the *destroying*, but the *fulfilling thereof*, and the introducing that Spiritual *Righteousness* which their own *Prophets* had hinted to be the thing chiefly aimed at by God, and the most acceptable in his sight, to be more than all the *Rituals* of his External Worship, even more than all *Burnt-offerings* and *Sacrifices*: So that as *Christianity* will stand good against the *Jews*, if this be its Case, and if these Things be made out concerning it; so no one else shall have this to urge against either the Truth of the

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Revelation of *Moses*, or that of *Christ*; that the one of these are opposite to the other, and yet both lay claim to the proof of Miracles: For the Supposition in this Objection is false, the one of these is not opposite to the other, neither is the *Revelation* of *Moses* opposite to the *Christian*, nor the *Christian* opposite to that; but the former gives Testimony unto the latter, and the latter supports and builds its self upon the former: Therefore the present *Jews* opposing the *Christian Revelation*, cannot be made an Argument against its Truth, tho' their Pretence for this be the *Revelation* of *Moses*, this Pretence of theirs being no ways just, even the Law of *Moses*, and their own *Prophets* testifying of the *Kingdom of God*, and of the *New Covenant* which he would make with his People, which must suppose the *ceasing of the old*: And this is also certain, that divers *Jews* have admitted *Jesus* to be their *Messiah*, and believed his Word, who were chiefly they which searched the Scriptures whether those Things were so, which were alledged out of their Scriptures concerning *Jesus* being the *Christ*: And the Question is, which of these were in the right; which must be first determined, before the Mira-cles wrought on behalf of *Moses*'s *Revelation* can be objected against the Truth of the *Christian*: And if it appear, as it surely will, that the Law of *Mo-*

ses and the *Prophets* have been rightly expounded in the Things which concern the *Lord Jesus Christ*, the Miracles of *Moses* fall in together with those wrought by *Christ* himself, to confirm the Truth of his Gospel. And thus, on the other hand, the *Christians* opposing of the *Jews*, can never be drawn into consequence, to prove an Opposition between the one *Revelation* and the other; for these will tell you, that they oppose only the Prejudices and the Passions, and the unreasonable Incredulity of the *Jews*, that have not admitted the *Revelation* of *Jesus Christ*, though testified by, and consistent with their *own Law* and *Prophets*; they do not deny the *Revelation* of *Moses* to be *of God*, but on the contrary, insist upon it to have been *from him*, and appeal to it, as giving the most undeniable Proof that *Jesus* was the *Messiah*, in whom have been fulfill'd the Prophecies that were *of him that was to come*: They appeal to the *Spiritual Sense of the Law*, which the *Prophets* chiefly drove at, and insist that the *Gospel* hath effectually introduced that *Righteousness* into the World; what the Law could not do in *that it was weak*, that the *Gospel of Christ* hath done in them that *walk after the Spirit*. The Miracles therefore wrought here in the one, or in the other Case, cannot be supposed the *Works* of different *Powers*, and consequently not opposite in any respect

one

one to the other, but Operations of one and the ſame Almighty Power, purſuing the ſame End of Holineſs; that is to ſay, that Men might be *holy*, for that the *Lord their God is holy*.

If (*6thly*) it be objected, that the *Gentile* Religions were oppoſite both to *Moſes's Revelation*, and likewiſe to the *Chriſtian*, and yet theſe have their pretence to Miracles, ſuch as cannot well be diſproved: We have to anſwer, that this Objection is invalid, both as to one and the other *Revelation* notwithſtanding. For as to *Moſes's Revelation*, that owns the Being of other Powers, that ſeducing Spirits were helping and aſſiſting to Men in the Arts of Divination; that theſe by making Things ſucceed which Men wiſhed for, had deceived Mankind into an unlawful Commerce with them; but inſiſts, that the *Power of God* is *above* all the Power of theſe *Dæmons*; and that this was ſhewn in that which the *Magicians* of *Ægypt* did in their withſtanding *Moſes*, and in the Stop which was put to their Power, (which ſhewed the Hand of God to be with *Moſes*) and in the many other mighty Acts which *Moſes* wrought to give the *Jews* Conviction of the unlimited Power of the God of Heaven, and of the Certainty of that Truth which he delivered in the Name of that *mighty and Terrible God*. And as this obliged the *Jews* to have no

other God but him, so it was a Proof to all the World that should hear the *Fame thereof*, that the *Lord is greater than all Gods*, that there was *none like unto the God of Israel*. Therefore notwithstanding after this the *Gods of the Gentiles*, which were *Devils*, and not *God*, might, as we will allow they did, continue to delude the Heathen World, to use the wicked Arts of Divination and Enchantment, to consult with Familiar Spirits, and to worship some of those *Spirits* as *Gods*: This could not shake the Faith of the *Jew* who had seen the *Power of God* with his *People*, *whom the Lord alone did lead, and there was no strange God with him*; who had seen that the *Gods of the Nations were no Gods, but the Work of mens hands, Wood and Stone*; who had been informed by their Law-giver, that the Powers to which the Nations sacrificed were *Devils*, and *not God*; who knew *that the Lord their God was God alone*, and that there is *no God with him*; that the Gods in which the Nations trusted, were not like their *God and Rock*, even *their Enemies themselves being Judges*. Nor could this be sufficient ground for the rest of the World to continue in their Worship of those deluding Powers that had deceived Mankind: For supposing indeed Men to have no knowledge of any other Powers invisible than the Omnipotent God, they would be excusable in ascribing Effects that cannot be account-

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ed for as naturally coming to paſs, to the Power of God as their Cauſe; and as herein they might through Ignorance be deceived, ſhould Evil Powers be permitted to work Miracles among them, ſo it muſt be thought that Ignorance would be their Excuſe: But whether this were ever the Caſe or not, is a Queſtion, there being probably good Reaſon to think that the Devil never was permitted to ſhew much of his Power in this way, before Men uſed unlawful Means in ſeeking after it. But be this as it will, however it being once known, or there being any apparent Cauſe for Men to think that there are more *Spirits* and *Powers* inviſible than *God*, and that of theſe there are bad as well as good (of which perhaps Mankind were never wholly ignorant, the Heathen themſelves having ſome Notions of it) this muſt make Men concerned to find who was God indeed: And inaſmuch as it would appear to any one that heard what the *Lord God* did in *Ægypt*, and for his People *Iſrael*, *that the Lord God of Iſrael is God in Heaven above, and in the Earth beneath*, there was hence a way for all People of the Earth to *know his Name*, and a Reaſon alſo for them to *fear him* as did *his People Iſrael*. And much more now ſince the *Chriſtian Revelation*, as this is built and grounded upon the former, and hath given yet a further Demonſtration of the Omnipotent Power of

the *God of Israel*; who now designing to take from among the *Gentiles* also a *People for his Name*, hath shewn unto these his Power, and *manifested* his Truth by that his Power, convincing them, that they ought not to think that the *Godhead is like unto Gold or Silver, or Stone, graven by Art or Man's Device*; That they are no Gods which are made with Hands; that the Powers which they took to be Helpers of them, and to *come down to them* in this or that *likeness*, were not the *Living God who made Heaven and Earth, and the Sea, and all things therein*; that therefore they should turn from *those Vanities*, from their Superstitions and their Idol Deities unto the *Living God*: That although there were Powers by them call'd Gods, and many of that sort, yet in Truth there is but *one God, by whom are all things, and we by him*; who made all things, that is, and whose Creatures we are. This Conviction was given to the *Gentile World*, by that Testimony which God gave unto the Word of his Grace, granting *Signs and Wonders* to be done by the Hands of his Apostles, and by the *Miracles* and *Wonders* which God wrought among the *Gentiles* by them: That the *Residue of Men might seek after the Lord*, and the *Gentiles* come to *know his name*, even the Name of the Lord God who *did all these things*. Now though

Acts 14. 3.

Cap. 15. 12, & 17.

though after all this the Devil was permitted to do his utmost to the Deceiving of the *Gentile World*, and might or did do the things among them by which they were before deluded, I do not see that this does at all abate or take off from the Conviction given the World, of the Truth of the Christian Revelation, and of the Power of the One True God. The Works which their Idol Deities had wrought before, must go for nothing, when it appeard that these were *Devils* and not *God*, and that there was a *Power above them* (which is the same thing, for if those pretended to be God and were not, as they were not 'tis most certain, their Power being found inferior, they must be Wicked, and False and Lying Spirits, seducing *Dæmons*, that had deceived Mankind.) And the Works therefore which these might do afterwards among their Votaries, to retain them in their old Superstitions, could not be a sufficient Reason for Men to think them to be Gods which had been shewn to be inferior and subject to the Power of the True God. The new converted Christians therefore in the Primitive Times, who being disabused of the Follies of Paganism, were watchful over the Practices of the *Gentiles*, to discover all impostures in things of this nature, do not stick to own however, that Prodigies and miraculous Works were wrought

wrought by their *Dæmons*: (*Justin Martyr*, *Minucius Felix*, and *Tertullian* have left us what the Sense of the Christians of those times was concerning the Nature and Operations of those *Dæmons* which the *Gentiles* Worshipped.) But they looked upon this as no Objection of any strength against the Truth of Christianity, for that the Power of God appeared above these in every thing, in all Contests which the Christians had with the Heathen Idolaters, with those among them that pretended to Works of Power. Therefore the *Gentile* Religion cannot possibly maintain it self against the Revelation of *Moses*, and much less against the *Christian Revelation*, upon the score of its Miracles; for that the Powers feared by the *Gentile* World, how great soever, are nothing in comparison to that Power which was the *Fear of Israel*, or unto that God who in times past suffered the Nations to walk in their own ways, and winked at the times of that ignorance, but now commandeth all Men every where to Repent; having given assurance unto all Men, that *He is the God that made the World, that is Lord of Heaven and Earth.*

If (*7thly.*) it be objected, that the Professors of Christianity differ among themselves concerning the Christian Revelation, and are not agreed about its Truths; and that Miracles are pretended even on that side

ſide which to Reaſon ſeems to have corrupted the Chriſtian Truth: We have to Anſwer that this Difference ought not to render the Revelation queſtionable, becauſe both ſides agree in that, and on the Certainty of the Evidence upon which it ſtands. And the one ſide's rejecting the Proof of Miracles, as to Doctrines which are no part of, and which are inconſiſtent with the Truth of *Chriſt*, and the Doctrine of his Apoſtles, cannot be drawn into conſequence againſt the Proofs which Miracles have given to the Revelation it ſelf; becauſe in that Caſe, as the Miracles appear'd, ſo it appear'd alſo that the *Hand of God* was in them, that they were wrought by his *Spirit*, there being a Teſtimony from a former Revelation to the Perſon and to his Works, and to the Doctrine alſo, which tended to fulfil the Law and the Profits which teſtified unto it. Whereas the contrary of this appears in the other caſe, for that 'tis manifeſt the Doctrine which theſe pretend to prove, is *another*, and a *different Doctrine* from that of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, and ſo far inconſiſtent with, that it's even deſtructive of the Truth of Chriſt. Since therefore this Revelation hath forbidden the admitting of another Doctrine, or another Goſpel, and given a Charge, that we *believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they be of God*, becauſe *many falſe*

Prophets

Prophets are gone out into the World; and hath told us that even in the Church of Christ, there have been those who *said they were Apostles and were not*, but have been found *Liars*: Therefore with good reason and sufficient ground, those are put upon the proof that their Doctrines are the same with the Gospel: which they being by us known not to be, we reject the Testimony of their Miracles; for that, if they were not Impostures, as most probably they are, nevertheless we should have reason to conclude that they are of the working of *Satan*, who acteth with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, to seduce from the way of Truth.

If (*7thly.*) it be objected, That almost all Religions that have been in the World, have pretended to Miracles; and likewise that it has been found amongst (perhaps all) Religionists, that there have been Impostures, Things pretended for Miracles, which have been found to be Delusion and Cheat: And likewise, that there is some Uncertainty as to our Knowledge of what Things are miraculous; some Things, it may be, having been thought to be so, when as really they were not; but only strange and unaccountable to them that reported them for Miracles, whereof the Causes have been discerned by Men of more Judgment: It being likewise possible

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for a Number of ill Men to agree together, ſome to pretend Sickneſs, or Diſeaſe, or Infirmity; and another to pretend to Cure them; and others to give Teſtimony of this as a Truth to the World, when, it may be, the Thing is abſolutely falſe; or Men, it may be, ignorant, tho' innocent, may give the Teſtimony according to their own Conjecture, when they themſelves, it may be, are impoſed on in the Fact, or when there is nothing really Miraculous in the Action, and it's only ſo thought from their Miſtake and Ignorance. And further, that there is no Certainty even in real Miracles, the Revelation of *Moſes* ſuppoſing that wicked Powers can work them, and the Revelation of *Chriſt* ſuppoſing likewiſe the ſame: That therefore if any Miracles are believed, it muſt be thoſe which the *Supream Powers* in every Nation acknowledge, and command to be received: (Which Things are put together and argued by our Mr. *Hobbs*.) We do not want an Anſwer to every one of theſe Objections, whatſoever Atheiſtical or Irreligious Principles they are deſigned to ſerve. And the Anſwer is this,——That in the ſeveral Religions that pretend to Miracles, we are concerned to enquire, which of theſe pretending Powers is the Power of the Omnipotent God? And that will be found by the Competitions that have been in the ſight

Hobbs's Leviath. cap. 37.

sight of the World, to be the Power of the *God of Israel*, which has shewn it self *above all others*, in Confirmation of the Revelation of *Moses*, and likewise in Confirmation of the Truth of *Christ*. And tho' there have been, it may be, false Pretences to Miracles among the *Jews*, perhaps, and among some foolish and wicked *Christians* too, as well as among the *Heathens*; yet this is no Reason for the Facts that are well testified by Men of Truth and Sobernes, to be denied among either the one or the other of these. If such a Reason were good, then all the Testimony of Men whatever must be rejected; because there always have been, now are, and, *'tis likely*) ever will be Lyars in the World. And though it be a thing possible, for ill Men to combine and agree together, to amuse others, and raise Reports false and incredible; yet the World is not so imprudent as to suspect Falshood in every Case, or not at least so foolish as to reject the Testimony of Men, whom they have no particular Reason to suspect. The Possibility of Imposture and Fraud, can only argue in Reason, that Caution is to be used, that we be not imposed on either in Fact, or by Relations liable to any just Suspicion. And the strictest Caution and Examination of this kind, is, what the Miracles that confirm the Divine Revelation, and the Tradition

also

alſo by which they came to us, will bear, and appear from it ſo much the more credible. The ſame is to be ſaid in reference to ſome Mens Ignorance, who may have been themſelves impoſed on, and whoſe Narratives might have impoſed upon the World, had Things been taken altogether upon truſt. This is a good Argument for an Examination and Enquiry whence the Teſtimony is; Whether the Perſons from whom we have it, did uſe the proper Means to have a right Information, and were in a Capacity of making a right Judgment concerning the Facts which they atteſt. And the more ſtrictly we examine the Teſtimony we have of the Miracles upon which the True Revelation depends, according to all Prudent Meaſures of this kind, the more certain and clear will the Teſtimony be. And if the Caſe were otherwiſe, the Declaration of *Supreme Powers* could give us nothing of Satisfaction: For as in ſeveral Countries and Nations there have been worſhipped ſeveral Gods, the *Supreme Powers* of the ſeveral Nations that have approved the Worſhip of theſe Gods, have in effect approved the Miracles which have been given out and reported, that the Greatneſs and Magnificence of ſuch Gods might be believed, who were ſo worſhipped. Neither could their Declaration in Reaſon give any Satisfaction, whether

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the Works of the Setters forth of *strange Worship*, or the Works pretended on the behalf of their *own Superstition*, are True Miracles or False. For these must judge hereof as the rest of Mankind does, that is to say, by their Senses and Reason of Facts which they see, and from the Credibility of the Testimony, as to such as come to us by Tradition. Nor can they know any thing more in another respect proper to be considered in this Case than others; that is to say, whether the Miracles pretended are the *Finger of God*, or the Work of *Satan*. And 'tis most falsly supposed by Mr. *Hobbs*, that *Moses* should intend the referring the Judgment of Miracles to the Higher Powers in a Nation, in his Caution to the People concerning False Prophets; that in this it should be intended that no Prophets should be received, nor their Miracles allowed Credit, who should teach another Religion or Worship, than that which the Laws of the Supreme Power in every Countrey should permit. He says indeed, that if any *Prophet* should speak to them in the Name of *other Gods*, though he might give them a Sign or a Wonder, and it should come to pass, that Prophet should not be hearken'd to, and that they should not be afraid of him, but put him to Death, *Deut.* 13. But nothing appears therein, of his referring the Judgment of this Question, Whether

ther he ſpake to them of *going after other Gods which they had not known, and ſerving them*, to any *Supreme Authority*: He rather ſuppoſes every Man that knew the *Lord God of Iſrael*, a Judge in this Caſe: Or if this Matter had been to be brought before the Magiſtrate, it could never argue for the Magiſtrate's having the like Authority in every Country, but only where it was known and made appear, as it had been in *Iſrael*, that the *True God* was worſhipped. But what muſt plainly prove, that this cannot be a Rule to be regarded, for thoſe Miracles to be good which the Higher Powers ſhall approve, and thoſe to be rejected which they ſhall refuſe to allow Credit to, is this, That then neither the Miracles of *Moſes*, nor even of our *Saviour*, nor of his *Apoſtles*, could claim admittance in the World. Thoſe of *Moſes*, that *Author* ſays, were not acknowledged by *Pharaoh*, whoſe Heart was harden'd againſt them; and as for his letting the People go, he did it not (he ſays) upon what he *believed of the Miracles*, but upon what he *ſuffer'd by the Plagues*. Whether this was ſo or not, I ſhall not examine; this is certain, that the Things that were done by *Moſes* at the firſt, were done alſo by the *Magicians* of *Ægypt*; and if the Power of *Pharaoh* could have decided which of theſe were True Miracles, which of them was the *Finger of God*, we have

the King's Decision contrary to what the Magicians themselves confessed; for even after these had owned it to be with *Moses*, *Pharaoh*'s Heart was harden'd, and he *hearken'd not unto them*. Thus in our Saviour's Case, the Arguments of him that was *born blind*, and had by him received his Sight, must have signified nothing when he was convened before the *Pharisees*, and told by them that he must give the *Praise to God*, for that *they knew* the Man that had healed him, to be a *Sinner*. And what the *Pharisees* spake against the Miracles of Christ, upon which the common People believed on him (saying, When *Christ cometh*, will he do moe Miracles than this Man hath done?) namely, *Have any of the Rulers believed on him*? but this People which knoweth not the Law, are cursed, *Joh.* 7.48. must have been a good Argument to set all that Proof aside which his Miracles had given to the World. And thus when the *Apostles* came among the *Gentiles*, and were to them as Setters forth of *strange Gods*, persuading Men *every where to worship God contrary to their* National *Laws*, the Rage and Uproar of the Idolaters against them must have been justifiable, and they, notwithstanding the Miracles, punishable by the Magistrates, as *troubling their City*, and teaching Customs which 'twas not *lawful for them to receive nor to observe*, having

Laws

Laws for other Worship. And thus the Sorceries of *Simon Magus*, when Time was, would have deserved more Credit than the Miracles and Signs which were done by the *Apostles*, the *Roman* Powers admitting him to be *some Great One*, as he gave himself out for, but rejecting the Apostles and their Miracles, which *Justin Martyr* finds fault with, as a Thing most unreasonable in them. 'Tis evident therefore, that the Truth of Revealed Religion never can admit this *Hypothesis*, nor will its Truth become in the least questionable, for that it cannot admit it; because the Rule is in itself most absurd, and has not the least Ground or Foundation in Reason; it being impossible that any Authority should make a Fact other than it is in itself, or a Relation more or less true and credible than in itself it is; or assign another Cause to any thing, than that which was the Cause of it; or make, that is to say, this or that Work to be of God, or not to be of him: The Work will certainly be what it was, and have the same Cause it had, whatsoever the Determination of Supreme Powers may be concerning it. It hath pleased God to remove for us all the real Difficulty that might have perplexed Mankind in this Case, by making his Power appear *Superior* to all other Powers; whereby we know that the *Lord He is the God*; and then

by giving in the several Revelations of his Truth, a Rule (which cannot deceive, nor lead us into any Mistake, because it is a Rule we have from God;) for the rejecting all *False* Prophets, that should perswade to the Worship of *other Gods*; though they should shew Signs and Wonders; and again, for the rejecting all that shall *preach another Gospel*, or *bring not the Doctrine of Christ*, notwithstanding whatever Miracles they may have Power to do.

And (lastly,) if it be possible for Men to make *that* an Objection *in earnest* against the Truth of *Revelation*, which is in it self an Argument to confirm us in a Belief, that such Revelation comes from God; that is to say, the *Reasonableness of those Truths* which it giveth us as from God; of which, without doubt, any man must have the firmer Perswasion, when Moral Arguments convince him of the Reasonableness of that Truth, which the Revelation presseth upon the Divine Authority: If any nevertheless shall make this a pretence of Cavil, and say, that the Light of Reason convinceth of these Truths, and that therefore such Truths might have been found out by its own Principles, from which it even now would acknowledge them, setting aside all the Authority of Revelation; and that a Revelation therefore was needless; and that the different Pre-

tences

tences to Revelations different, do rather confound than help our Reason; which therefore may reject them, and consult its own Principles concerning God's Existence, and his Will concerning us: We have an Answer that will shew all this to be unreasonable Cavil, namely, that in Experience it was never found that any Men by the Light of Reason discovered these Truths which God's *Revelation* hath brought to light, before the Discovery made thereby: It is certain also in Fact that the great Reformation which has been made in the World in Mens Faith, and Worship, and Manners also, is owing to the *Jewish* and *Christian Revelation*; 'twas this that put a stop to the Absurd Idolatries and Superstitions of the *Gentile* World, and restored the Worship of the One Supream God; it was this that brought Men by the Fear of the Lord to depart from Evil, to *approve* the Things that are *excellent, to follow after whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are honourable and praise-worthy:* 'Tis *Revelation* that even now giveth stronger Motives to persuade unto these Things, than all the Arguments of Reason, which are of little prevalency against the Prejudices and Passions, and Unruly Affections of Man's Nature, if the other might be set aside: Neither are there any Arguments of Reason for God's Existence, and Mens being under

an Obligation to walk according to the Light of Nature, and for a real difference between Good and Evil, but what Men of Atheistical Principles may oppose and object against with much more pretence, and colour, and shew at least of Reason, than they do, or can oppose and object with against the Certainty of a Divine Revelation. This is also certain, that all Men have not Faculties nor Capacities alike, nor Opportunities for the searching after and finding Truth, nor for the finding and understanding their Obligations in that respect: Therefore it must be acknowledged an Act of Goodness in God to give us a Revelation with clear and certain Notices of his Will, *even tho'* that could not be said which upon account of the Weakness and Ignorance of Mankind, and their depraved State and Condition, must be said, namely, that there was an absolute necessity for it: And if Man had been left to his Reason only, supposing the Existence of Subordinate Spirits as well as the Being of the one True God (which as it must be supposed would have been the same, whether a Divine Revelation had ever been or not, and their Operations also 'tis to be supposed would have been the same; for neither can it be thought that those Beings were created with respect to us, nor that the Powers were given them for such Operations, in reference only to the Divine Revelation

velation which hath told us of them and theirWorks); in this Caſe there would have been the ſame *Phœnomena* in the World to be accounted for by Human Reaſon only, which now we have a Divine Revelation to aſſiſt us in; and the ſame Perplexity would there have been about Truth, from the different Opinions and Religions of the *Gentile* World, had there been no Revelation indeed Divine: *Satan*, it muſt be ſuppoſed, would have uſed the ſame Devices to deceive and delude Mankind, had there been no Truth of God's Revealed from Heaven, to ſhew us who this Deceiver is, and give us notice of his Devices. And therefore as upon this account a Revelation from the True God, with ſufficient Evidence and Demonſtration of his *Superiority of Power*, muſt be ſaid to be abſolutely neceſſary, ſo it ought to be acknowledged as the greateſt Inſtance of God's Goodneſs and Love to Mankind, and received it will ſurely be with the utmoſt Thankfulneſs, by all that are diſpoſed in Heart to ſeek God, and have a deſire to the knowledge of his Ways: For in this Caſe there can be nothing more abſurd, than to make this an Objection againſt God and his Truth, that the Pretences to different Revelations, perplex our Reaſon in reſolving our ſelves of Truth: For the Revelation which hath beſt proved it ſelf to be of God, hath indeed cleared us of all Perplexity, ha-

ving given our Understandings a clear Light, much brighter than the glimmering Light of our own Reason, and dispersed the Clouds and Mists arising from our Prejudices and Passions, and having likewise discovered to us the Delusions of *Satan*, a Deceiving Power, of which, as Man by his Reason alone has no notice, so neither does his Reason pretend to give or direct a Way to escape. And further, inasmuch as with respect to the Condition and State of the World (the Human Nature being depraved, and the Light of Reason obscured, if not extinguished with Corrupt Opinions, and Evil Practices, with Extreme Follies and Prejudices) it cannot be thought *that our* Reason ever would have found those Truths, which being shewn us, it does now approve; nor indeed that it would even now see or approve them, but for the Light that is come into the World, which hath caused us to open our Eyes, so that now we see the Wondrous Things of the Divine Law: Upon this account it can be no other than unreasonable Cavil to urge this as an Objection against the Necessity, and consequently against the Truth of Revelation; which would be a Blessing to Mankind, if there had been no absolute necessity for it, that they might not be left altogether to themselves to seek out God, and find what his Will is concerning them, but be informed thereof

thereof with certainty from himſelf; much more, as there was and is an abſolute neceſſity for this, as the generality of Men would have been otherwiſe utterly at a loſs, as well to find and know the True God, as to find and be ſatisfied of his Will concerning them. The former of which hath been now ſhewn us beyond all doubt or controverſy, in the Evidence that God hath given of the *Superiority of his Power above all other*; as the latter is likewiſe plainly ſet before us in the Revelation that cometh to us, atteſted by the Works of that Power which hath made it ſelf appear Omnipotent, unlimited, and *above all others*. And therefore as the Truths of this Revelation are moreover approved by our own Reaſon, as moſt worthy of the righteous and good God to command, and moſt fit and becoming Man as a Rational Creature to practiſe; and as the Things of God's Service muſt be acknowledged ſuch as tend to the Perfection and Happineſs of Mankind, which will ſtill give more Reaſon for them to be thought the Laws of our great and good Creator, I cannot ſee but this ſhould more and more confirm our Belief, and give us all aſſurance, if any were before wanting, that ſuch a *Revelation* comes from God; that the Truth thereof is his Truth, and the Law thereof is undoubtedly the Will of God concerning us.

And

And as this is in every Respect and Particular the Case of the Christian Revelation, I think it to be abundantly evident, that Men are not called upon to believe *Revealed Religion*, without very reasonable and sufficient Proof that the God of Heaven hath given us all the Proofs of the Truth and Divine Authority of the *Christian Revelation*, that the Nature of the Thing can require, or that were reasonable either for God to give, or Men to expect.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

JUst as I had finish'd these *Reflections*, there came another *Book* to my Hands, which has something in it relating to the *Hypothesis* of this *Essay* concerning Miracles (though without mention of the *Book*, or its *Author* :) And I cannot but think my self obliged to take some notice of what is in it relating to this Matter.

Mr. *Clark's* Discourse of the *Evidences* of *Natural* and *Revealed Religion*.

This *Author* proposing to consider the Questions, and Disputes, and different Opinions concerning the *Power of working Miracles*, and concerning the *Extent of the Evidence* which these give to any Doctrine, takes notice that it has been much controverted, whether *True Miracles* can be worked by any *less Power* than the *Immediate Power of God*; and whether to *compleat the Evidence* of a Miracle, the *Nature of the Doctrine* pretended to be proved thereby, is to be taken into consideration or no; which Matter he proposeth to set in its true Light.

Pag. 350.

It

It was a Satisfaction to me, 'twill be easily supposed, to find this *Author* saying with me, or to the same purpose with me, (1*st.*) " That in respect of the *Power of God* all " Things are equally and alike easie; 'tis " not therefore a right Distinction of a Miracle, to define it or distinguish it by any " absolute difficulty in the Nature of the " Thing it self to be done, as if the things " which we call *Natural* were absolutely, " and in their own Nature easier to be effected than those that we look upon as
Pag. 352. " *Miraculous.* And (2*dly.*) that 'tis by no " means possible for us to determine *what* " *Degrees of Power* God may have communicated to *Created Intelligences* or *Spirits*, " whether *Good* or *Evil*: Some Things not " possible for *Men* to effect, may easily be " supposed within the Power of *Angels*, and " some Things beyond the Power of *Inferior* " *Spirits*, may as easily be supposed within " the Power of others *Superior* to them: So " that excepting only the Power of *creating* " *out of nothing*, which seems to be absolutely incommunicable, it can hardly be affirmed with any certainty, that any particular Effect, how great or miraculous soever it may seem to us, is beyond the " Power of all Created Beings in the Universe: 'Tis not therefore a Right Distinction to define a Miracle to be such an " *Effect as could not have been produced by any*

" *less*

" *less Power than the Divine Omnipotence.*" For this he gives a Reason like to that which I have given from the *Instances* of Miracles in Scripture, concerning which, or the most of 'em at least, *no Spectator* could be certain that the Miraculous Effect was *beyond the Power of all Created Beings* in the Universe to produce. " There is but one " Supposition (he thinks) upon which the " Opinion of all Miracles being necessarily " the immediate Effects of the Divine Om- " nipotence, can be defended: And that is, " if God, together with the Natural Pow- " ers wherewith he hath endued Subordi- " nate Intelligent Beings, has likewise gi- " ven them a Law or Restraint to hinder " them from interposing in this Lower " World, to produce any of those Effects " which we call miraculous or supernatural. And how great Reason soever there may be to suppose them under some *particular Laws* or Restraint in this Case (as some, and among others this one Reason I do think there may be for it, namely, that otherwise no doubt the Devil's Subtilty and Malice would be always working Confusion and Disorder): " Yet it can never be proved that they are " under such Restraints *universally*, perpetu- " ally, and without exception: And with- " out this, a Spectator that sees a *Miracle*, " can never be certain that it was not done " by some Created Intelligence." Again he

Pag. 353.

he says further with me, and to the purpose which I have argued for, "That supposing "(though this be unreasonable to suppose) "that the Natural Powers of an Angel were "no greater than the Natural Powers of "Men, yet since thereby an Angel could do "all that *invisibly* which a Man can do *visibly*, he would even in this Supposition be "naturally able to do numberless Things "which we should esteem the greatest of "*Miracles*. And (*3dly.*) this also pleaseth me, that he saith, "'Tis not a Right Di-
Pag. 354. "stinction to define a *Miracle* to be that "which is against *the Course of Nature*." Whether the Philosophical Reason that he gives for it will hold good in all respects, I am not concerned to say, *viz.* "That properly speaking, there is no such thing as "what men commonly call the *Course of* "*Nature*, or the *Power of Nature*, for Matter is not capable (he thinks) of any "Laws or Powers whatsoever; so that all "those Things which we commonly say are "the *Effects of Nature*, are indeed, to speak "properly, the *Effects of God's acting* upon "Matter continually, and every Moment, "either immediately by himself, or mediately by some Created Intelligent *Being*." This depending upon a meerly Philosophical *Hypothesis*, of the Truth whereof I cannot be certain, inasmuch as the other *Hypothesis* in Philosophy, which supposeth *Mat-*

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ter and *Form*, may, for any thing I know, be the more true, and then the Force of this Argument is at an end. Thus much will serve my turn in one respect, that the *Instances* of *Miracles* in Scripture are not all such, as that a Spectator can judge them to be absolutely *against the Course of Nature*, nor yet to be such Things as *might not have been effected by Powers in Nature*: Which Things are nevertheless justly accounted miraculous, their Circumstances considered, as being seen and known to have come to pass from such Causes, and by such Means as could not be thought in the Course of Nature able or sufficient to produce them. And in another respect, if so be that as God can without all doubt alter Nature and its Course, (that is to say, alter *Matter* and *Form*, if we should suppose Matter always endued, and never without some Powers, having always some Form or other) so it be supposed that he may (as no Reason, I dare say, can be given to the contrary) make this Alteration in Nature either immediately by himself, or mediately by some Intelligent Created Beings, and may (as for any thing we know, he certainly may) have given Natural Powers to these Intelligences or Spirits, sufficient for any of those Alterations in Nature that he supposeth to make by them, but under such Law and Restraint as that these shall not be able to use their Power but by

his

his Permission: For then it will be within the Natural Power of these (by the Permission of God) to alter the Course of Nature at any time, and consequently to work Miracles, even such wherein the Course of Nature may be altered as well as others:
Pag. 360. That will also follow for my Purpose which he asserts after this, *viz.* That it can hardly be distinguished certainly, meerly by the *Work* or *Miracle it self* (supposing it to be to our thinking *against the Course of Nature)* whether such an extraordinary Interposition of Power, that maketh the Alteration, be the Immediate Interposition of God himself, or of some Good Angel, or of some Evil Angel (except there be a plain Creation of something out of nothing; which, as he says, there does not certainly appear to be in any of the Miracles mentioned in Scripture;) because it is impossible for us to know with any *Certainty*, either that the Natural Power of Good Angels, or of Evil ones extend not beyond such or such a certain Limit; or that God always restrains them from exercising their Natural Powers in producing such or such Particular Effects.

And (*Fourthly*) I cannot but be also pleased with what this *Author* has further
Pag. 358. said, *viz.* "That these Effects which are "produced in the World regularly and "con-

"constantly, which we call the *Works of* "*Nature*, prove to us in general the Being, "the Power and the other Attributes of "God: And again as to those Effects "which upon any rare or *Extraordinary* "occasions are produced in such manner "that 'tis manifest they could neither have "been done by any *Power* or *Art of Man*, "nor by what we call Chance, that is by "any composition or result (be it either "of Matter and Form acting in their "constant and uniform way), or of those "Laws which are God's *constant and uniform* "actings upon Matter; that these unde-"niably prove to us the immediate and occa-"sional Interposition either of *God himself*, or "of some *Intelligent* Agent superior to *Men*, "at that particular time, or on that particu-"lar account." This serving to my purpose as well to shew that Miracles are a Rational Proof to me of God's Presence and Power, there being always some Power invisible that acteth in such works; as to shew Men that they are concerned to take notice thereof, and obliged to enquire, whether such a Work be not of God, and for what end, in case it be from him. "For "that on every such occasion there is an "*Extraordinary* Interposition either of *God* "*himself*, in order to signify his Pleasure "upon that occasion; or at least of some "Intelligent Agent far superior to Man, in

" order to bring about some particular De-
" ngn.

I shall also say further with him, *pag.* 361. " That 'tis not a right Distinction " (there being, so far as I apprehend, nei-
" ther Reason nor any Necessity for the
" Supposition,) to suppose the Wonders
" which the Scripture attributes to Evil
" Spitits, to be mere *Prestigiæ*, *Sleights* or
" *Delusions* : For that if the Devil has any
" Natural Power of doing any thing at all,
" even but so much as a Man, and be not
" restrained by God from exercising that
" Natural Power, 'tis evident he will be
" able, by reason of his *Invisibility*, to
" work *True* and *Real Miracles*. Nor is it
" a right Distinction, to suppose the Mira-
" cles of Evil Spirits not to be *Real Effects*
" in the Things where they appear, but
" *Impositions upon the Senses* of the Specta-
" tors : For that to impose in such a man-
" ner upon the Senses of Men, (not by
" Sleights and Delusions, but by really so
" affecting the Organs of Sense, as to
" make Things appear what they are not)
" is to all Intents and Purposes as *True* a
" Miracle, and as *Great* an one, as making
" real Changes in the Things themselves.
And hereof I have made my Use against the *Author of the Essay*, and his false *Hypothesis*, and have prevented him likewise (if I am not mistaken) of his intended Advantages.

But

But now being obliged to follow that which I think to be the Path of Truth, I muſt leave the Way of this *Author*, who takes a Way and Method of his own Invention, for our *certainly* and *infallibly* knowing, in the Caſe of a Man's working Miracles, and pretending to come from God, whether thoſe Miracles be indeed the Work either immediately of *God himſelf*, (or which is the very ſame thing, of *ſome Angel* employed by him,) and conſequently the Doctrine witneſſed by the Miracles be infallibly true and divinely atteſted; or whether on the contrary the Miracles be the Works of *Evil Spirits*, and conſequently the Doctrine a Fraud and Impoſition upon Men. He does not at all expreſs himſelf clearly, methinks, when he comes to tell us *the only poſſible ways* of diſtinguiſhing this Matter *certainly* and *infallibly*. But the Sum of what he means, as given us by himſelf, is this, "That if the Doctrine be Pag. 367.
"not *contradictory* in it ſelf, or *vicious* in
"its Conſequences (a Doctrine of which
"kind he thinks no Miracles in the World
"can be ſufficient to prove) and it be at-
"teſted by Miracles; the Doctrine ſo at-
"teſted muſt neceſſarily be look'd upon as
"Divine, and the Worker of the Miracle
"received as coming from God, if the Mi-
"racles ſo work'd be not oppoſed by ſome
"*plainly Superior Power*. The *Poſſibility*,

"and the *good Tendency*, or at least the *In-*
"*difference*y of the Doctrine, *i. e.* its not be-
"ing known to have an Evil Tendency,
"are a necessary Condition or Circum-
p. 369. "stance, without which (he thinks) the
"*Doctrine* is not capable of being proved
"by *any Miracles*. The Doctrine must be
"in it self *possible* and *capable to be proved*,
"and then Miracles will prove it to be
"*actually* and *certainly* true. They are the
"Miracles that prove the Doctrine, but in
"order to this end, that the Miracles may
"prove it, it is always necessarily to be
"first supposed, that the Doctrine be such
"as is in its nature *capable* of being proved
"by Miracles." The Nature of the Doctrine designed to be proved, is therefore requisite, he must think, to be taken into Consideration, to compleat the Evidence of the Miracles. I shall also allow and insist upon this as necessary now *at this time*; but that it *always* was so, and that the Reason of Man was always capable of judging, and always might and ought to judge, and had Means of knowing certainly, so as to determine from it self and its own Light this or that Thing, not *capable of being proved by Miracles*, such as no Miracles can possibly prove True; is more than I can adventure to say, and is more than I need to say in the present Case: For I do not in the least doubt, but that the Christian Revelation

velation will be eſtabliſhed upon ſufficient Evidence without this; and that we have a more *ſure* way to find when Miracles are not of God. I inſiſt, therefore, that *at this time* the *Nature of the Doctrine* deſigned to be proved, muſt be taken into Conſideration, to compleat the Evidence of the Miracles: But the Ground upon which I ſay it, is what *that Author* has not taken notice of; namely, the Precedent Revelations that we have of God's Will, and the Rules which *God* has given us in thoſe Revelations, whereby to know thoſe that come from him; (having firſt proved, and given Demonſtration of his Power *Superior* to all others, whereby we have aſſurance that thoſe Revelations which we have, and which have given us theſe Rules, are from God.) And therefore, I judge differently from this *Author*, both as to what muſt have given us the firſt Certainty of a Divine Revelation, and likewiſe as to thoſe Means and Meaſures whereby we may have Aſſurance of the Power working the Miracles, and of the Doctrine they would prove, whether the one be of God, and the other a Truth of his. This *Author* has well ſpoken, in what he ſaid, *Pag.* 193. of the Careleſsneſs, Inconſiderateneſs, and Want of Attention in the greater Part of Mankind; and likewiſe of the falſe Notions and Prejudices taken up among them by evil Edu-

cation; and of the strong, and violent, and unreasonable Lusts in the Human Nature; and of the great Blindness introduced by Superstitious Opinions, Vicious Customs, and debauched Practices, *&c.* and has hence well argued for the Probability and Necessity of a Revelation. I cannot but think for the same Reasons, that Man is not to make himself so far the Judge of what is Truth, as to take upon him to determine with absolute Certainty, that this or that cannot be Truth, though attested never so much by Miracles; because he thinks it *Contradictory* in it self, or *not good* in its Consequences. The Notions we have of a Thing's *Possibility*, or *Non-possibility*, I think not sufficient for a Conclusion of this kind; because our Reason is weak, and we (it may be) have not made the best Improvements in Knowledge; and especially, because that is undoubtedly true, which our Saviour upon a certain Occasion hath said; *viz. The things that are impossible with men, are possible with God.* There may be Things possible with God, and also possible in their own Nature, which to us probably may seem otherwise; and therefore we cannot determine with Certainty, that a Doctrine is not capable of being proved by Miracles for its Impossibility, so as to reject it for that Reason, if it be attested by them. The natural Notions we have of

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Good and *Evil*, might perhaps give us ſome general Directions, were they clear and uncorrupt, and free from Prejudice: But when was it that Mankind were in this ſtate? How, therefore, ſhall we have an abſolute Certainty from theſe in every Caſe? How ſhort-ſighted is Man likewiſe as to the Conſequences of Things; and conſequently, how unfit to take upon him to judge by his Reaſon alone of the Tendency of all Doctrines, ſo as thence to determine a Thing *uncapable* of being proved by Miracles, for the ſake of Conſequences which he may think it to have that are untoward?

I therefore think, that what muſt have given us the firſt Certainty of a Divine Revelation, is a thing which this *Author* in one Caſe had obſerved, *Pag.* 364. (and 'tis pity he went off from it again, and left it) namely, the *Superiority* of that Power which appeared to act with *Moſes*, in his working Miracles; which reſtrained the Power by which the *Magicians* worked theirs, and ſtopped them that they could work no further, but found themſelves unable to do Things (to human Apprehenſion) more eaſy than what they had been permitted to do before: Wherein God's Power appeared evidently the *Superior*, far above thoſe Powers which had deluded Men to uſe the wicked Arts of *Divination*.

Whence, as this Power was necessarily to be *feared* before the other, and concluded to be the *Power of God*, being it self unlimited, and uncontrolled, and able to limit and stop the other; so it was necessarily to be believed, that *Moses* had a Commission from the *Supream God*, who wrought with him: And this would give an unquestionable and unexceptionable Authority, to all that he should teach or command in the Name of God. I judge now, that *from after this first Revelation*, the *Doctrine* of a Prophet was to be taken into Consideration, to compleat the Evidence of his Miracles, and to be judged of according to the Rule given in this Revelation, for the receiving of a Prophet. And accordingly, I think my self to have shewn in the foregoing Treatise, that *Jesus Christ* appealed to the Testimony of that Revelation, concerning himself, his Works, and the Power of God in them, and the Consistency of his Doctrine with it; and thereby, as well as from the Nature of his Works, made it appear, that he did them by the *Power* and *Spirit* of God; and thence argued, *that the Kingdom of God was come unto them*; that is to say, that they were obliged to receive and believe his Truth, as for his Works sake, so because he pursued only that which was manifestly the principal Intent of God in *that the Law of Moses*, according

according to the Interpretation and Sense of their own Prophets.

And, if this were not sufficient to give Authority to the Truth of *Christ* among the *Gentiles*, (who had not admitted that first Revelation) there was in the Miracles wrought *in our* Saviour's *Name*, when God sent the Apostles of *Christ* among them, to take out of these *a People for his Name*; such an Evidence given of the *Superiority of the Power* that wrought with these, beyond all the Power of those *Dæmons*, that had seduced the *Gentile* World to take them for Gods; that now they could have no Reason to conclude those whom they once thought were Gods, to be other than Devils, as seeing them apparently subject to that *Greater Power* that now appeared in the *Apostles of Christ*, to give them a Demonstration of its Existence, and to shew them likewise by those who shewed them these Signs of its Power and Presence, that the Will of Heaven now was, that they should turn from their Vanities, to serve the living God.

And now after this *Second Revelation*, (which they that acknowledged the former Revelation were bound to receive, in pursuance of the Testimony which that First gave by its Prophecies of the Second, and its witnessing to its Doctrine and to the Power working Miracles in attestation thereof; and

and which they that had not acknowledg'd the former, had good Reason however to receive, upon the superiority of the Power, attesting it above all those Powers which they before took for Gods; and had greater Reason still to receive and believe, when they came to consider the Demonstration that the same God had before given of his superior Power, in Proof of a former Divine Revelation, and how exactly answerable this latter Revelation was to the Will and principal Intent of God in the former, and to the Prophecies which were therein concerning it), I find cause to think still, that the *Doctrine* of all that shall pretend themselves *Apostles* or Prophets must be taken into consideration, now as before in the former Case, to compleat the Evidence which any Miracles they shall work may give; and that we are to judge of the Power working them, and of the Proofs in them, according to the *Rule* given us in this Revelation, for *trying the Spirits*, and those *that say they are Apostles* or Prophets, and Divine Messengers. But then this Tryal thus to be made, does not now depend upon our *Reason* or *natural Knowledge* and Light, but upon our *Reason* as *assisted* in this Case by the *Revelation* we have and acknowledge, and upon the use of our Reason in the tryal thereof, by and with this Revelation and its Rules: which in effect gives

gives us the ſame certainty as if we ſaw a Competition of Miracles in every caſe, and a *Superiority of Power* atteſting on the ſide of Truth; the Rule by which we judge being given us in a Revelation, whoſe Truth hath been atteſted to us by ſuch certain Evidences of a *ſuperior Power*, that we cannot doubt its being of God.

Wherein I do not leave Men at that liberty (which the Principle this *Author* has gone upon muſt leave them) to bring and ſubject the *Revelation of God* to the Examination and Concluſions which their own Reaſon may make at this time of Day, concerning the *Poſſibility* or *Reaſonableneſs* of its Truths, and thereupon to gainſay, or miſrepreſent, or traduce, or quit them, or any part of them, according to their vain, weak and overbold, if not corrupt Judgments.

Nor do I leave men under ſo much uncertainty, neither under ſo much hazard of being deluded and deceived in another reſpect, by truſting to their own Reaſon alone for the Judgment of the *Indifferency* or not evil tendency of a Doctrine: all of which kind this *Author* ſays; they are bound to receive on the Evidence of Miracles, if there be no pretence of *more* or *greater* Miracles on the *oppoſite ſide* to contradict it. His Argument would hold probably for ſuch Doctrines as a Man can *be* Pag. 365.

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sure in Reason that they are *absolutely good*, and have an *apparent* and *certain* tendency to Goodness: for that it cannot be supposed that Evil *Spirits* would overthrow their own Power and Kingdom (which is a Reason by him given;) but as *Satan* has sometimes transformed himself into an Angel of Light, so it is no great thing for his Ministers also to be transform'd as the *Ministers of Righteousness*; and in such a case as this, if a Work of Miracles should under a colour perswade to some things *apparently* good, to obtain belief in other things of which by his Reason alone a Man can make no judgment, what Certainty would there be in this Rule? Could a Man from *his* Reason take upon him to contradict the whole Evidence of the Miracles, or to reject one part of the Doctrine, when he must admit another? It would be a Case I doubt too hard for Reason to make any certain determination in. Again, more especially as to the case of *Doctrines*, which in Reason may be thought *indifferent*, which may not be known to be of any *ill Tendency* or Consequence, which yet we cannot be sure to be either good or of good Tendency, but which cannot be proved however to be evil or of evil consequence; how can we be sure concerning these, that God will in every such Case (wherein the subtile Enemy of Mankind might design to serve himself

himself of things that may not seem to Human Reason evil) work miracles on the opposite side to contradict it, if so be that *Satan* should design to deceive therein.

This *Author*'s Argument, "That should "God in such Cases as these permit Evil "Spirits to work Miracles to impose upon "Men, the Error would be absolutely in-"vincible;" I take to be a meer Mistake. Not that I think him to be mistaken in what he says, "That as in Fact 'tis evident that "God restrains Evil Spirits from using their "Power to destroy *Mens Bodies* and *Lives*, "and bringing Calamities upon them, "(which they, 'tis to be supposed, other-"wise would) by his having set them Laws "and Bounds which they cannot pass; so for "that very same Reason it is infinitely cer-"tain that God restrains them likewise from "imposing upon Mens *Minds* and *Under-"standings* in all such cases, wherein Virtu-"ous, and Wise, and Honest Men would "have *no possible Way* left by which they "could discover the Imposition." But I think him to be mistaken in what he supposes as to the *Invincibility of the Error*, and of there being *no possible Way* by which the *Imposition* may be discovered: For I take it that God has left us such a Rule in the *Christian Revelation*, as that a Wise and Good Man hath a sure way to escape, and discover

Pag. 365.

ver the Works, and Attempts, and Delusions of *Satan*; and that if any such should happen to be deceived at any time, as possibly they may be through over-sight, and probably they will be, if they trust too far, and depend too much upon the Strength and Judgment of their own Reason, that Error is not to be said to be invincible, for that there was a way to have escaped it, and there is a way also for their being recovered from it, which is by recourse to the *Rule* and *Revelation* which we have already, and which has been acknowledged upon sure Evidence: And this shall do as much as a New Competition of *Miracles*, and a *Superiority of Miracles* on the side of Truth could do, should we see it in such a particular Case; the Revelation we have already, being establish'd upon as great a Superiority of Miracles as any that we can desire to see; and the Will of God in this *Revelation* as plainly set before us, and the Rule as certain to us consequently (because we have it from a sure *Revelation*) as it would be after a New Competition of Miracles, and a Superiority of God's Power shewn therein.

I shall allow this *Author* to have spoken right in an Instance which he has given, as he thinks, for his Purpose, *viz.* "That supposing a Man, pretending to be a Prophet, should work any Miracle, or give any

Pag. 363.

"Sign

"Sign or Wonder whatsoever in order to "draw Men from the Worship of the *True* "*God*, such Miracles ought at first sight to "be rejected as Diabolical." But I shall "desire him to put himself in the Case and Circumstances which he supposes, *pag.* 220. the *Heathen Philosophers* to have been under; that is to say, as knowing by his Reason, in the general, that God ought to be worshipped; a Thing plain and evident in the Light of Nature, as any thing can be, yet ignorant in what particular Manner, and with what kind of Worship he will be worshipped (which by bare Reason, himself says, cannot be discerned): And let the Case be put, that Signs were shewed him by some *Dæmon*, which was not God, and Miracles wrought to shew this *Dæmon*'s Approbation of a Superstitious Worship; even of a Worship so absurd as that by *Images*, in which this Power might yet present it self to him, to induce and persuade to it: And let him sincerely say, whether he thinks that he should certainly by his Reason better extricate himself from this Difficulty than those *Philosophers* he speaks of did, who fell themselves into, as well as left the World in the most Foolish Idolatry, taking probably those that were Devils to be God, as well as worshipping them in a senseless Way of Superstition. I may with some confidence, therefore, (inasmuch as the

the Philosophers fell into the same Error, in a manner, with the Vulgar in this Case) say, that it was not from the Light and Strength of Reason only that a False Prophet working Miracles could be rejected, persuading to the worship of other than the True God, or to a foolish and absurd Way of Worshp; but from Reason assisted by the Rule given in God's Revelation, which had first appeared to be the Revelation of the True God, by that Superiority and *Greatness* of Power which had been shewn to render it unquestionable, and had given a certain assurance *which was the True God*, and how he would be worshipped. By this Men *knowing certainly the True God*, might boldly reject even Miracles that should be wrought to persuade to the Worship of *other Gods*, or to that Way of Worship which this *Revelation* had shewn the True God had in abomination.

I have read with no little Satisfaction the Things exceedingly well urged by this *Author*, to evince —That the *Christian Religion* is in all things and respects highly reasonable; its Practical Duties such as are most ageeeable to our Natural Notions of God, and most perfective of the Nature, and conducive to the Happiness and Well-being of Men; the Motives by which the Practice of these Duties is inforced, most suitable to the Excellent Wisdom of God, and most

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anſwerable to the Natural Expectations of Men; the peculiar Manner and Circumſtances with which this Religion enjoins the Duties, and urges the Motives forementioned, conſonant to the Dictates of ſound Reaſon, and the unprejudiced Light of Nature; all the *Credenda* or Doctrines which it requires our particular aſſent to, agreeable to unprejudiced Reaſon, and having a natural Tendency, and direct Influence to reform Mens Manners, and do together make up the moſt conſiſtent and Rational Scheme of Belief in the World. But this *Author* himſelf ſays after all this, when he ſpeaks of the Marks of a Religion coming from God, *pag.* 266. that no degree of Excellency or Goodneſs in a Doctrine it ſelf can make it *certain* to us, but only highly probable that it comes from God, unleſs it has moreover ſome *poſitive* and direct Evidence of its being revealed actually: In which, as I agree with him, ſo I cannot but conclude for this Reaſon, that that Poſitive Evidence is the *Firſt*, as well as the *Certain* Proof of a *Divine Revelation*: The other I look upon to be ſubſequent and *Collateral*: I find it ſo in Fact in the *Revelations* we have had: *Moſes* had gained his Authority with the People of *Iſrael* by his Miracles before ever he gave his Law: When *Iſrael* ſaw that great Work which the Lord did upon the *Ægypti-*

ans, the People feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his Servant Moses, *Exod.* 14. 31. Insomuch that when *Moses* laid this before them at the time of the giving the Law, saying by God's Order to them, *Ye have seen what the Lord did unto the Ægyptians, and how he bare you on Eagles Wings, and brought you unto himself: Now therefore if ye will obey my Voice indeed, ye shall be a peculiar Treasure unto me above all People*, Exod. 19. 4. All the People answer together, and say, *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.* Indeed after the Law given upon the Sanction of the Divine Authority, *Moses* when he rehearseth the Story of God's Works, and was about to repeat to them again, and make some Additions to the Precepts and Statutes that had been given them, that he might the more persuade them to *keep and do them*, reasons thus, *Deut.* 4. 6. *This is your Wisdom and your Understanding in the Sight of the Nations, &c.* And what Nation is there so great, that hath Statutes and Judgments so righteous as all this Law which I set before you this Day?

The *Gospel* of *Christ* to have belief of the *Jews*, does not indeed seem to have depended *absolutely* upon the Authority of its Miracles, because there was a necessity for its making it self appear approved by the *Former Revelation*, and consequently for its appeal to the Sense to which their own Prophets

phets interpreted the *Law*, to shew that it intended the fulfilling the Righteousness of the Law, and effecting better than before the Practice of the weightier Matters of it: But when it comes to the *Gentiles*, it seems to be with an Absolute Authority: It no where, that I know of, makes them the Judges of *God's Wisdom*, nor of the Measures of the Gospel Righteousness; but affirms the World *by all its Wisdom* not to have *known God*, and that even the *Greeks* (who were the most Intelligent part of the Heathen World) seeking after that they thought *Wisdom*, were so wretchedly mistaken, as to account the Gospel *Foolishness*; tho that the *Foolishness of God*, those Dispositions of the Divine Counsels, which in their Opinions had the least Wisdom, were infinitely to be preferr'd before all that they deemed wise. It also requires the *Gentile* Converts, that as they had received *Jesus Christ the Lord, so they should walk in him*: *i.e.* as they had received his Precepts and Truth for the regulating their Lives, they should keep and hold his Truth, and walk after it, and not let any Man spoil them *through Philosophy*, which might pretend to advance other Truths, or to give other Precepts of Piety and Virtue *after the Rudiments of the World*; that is to say, according to what the World thought wise and good. Nevertheless it is most certain that in the Christian Doctrine,

1 Cor. i. 22.

Colos. 2. v. 6, 7.

Whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are of good report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Thing praise-worthy, all these, and these only are the Things that are earnestly recommended to Mens Practice. Howbeit, as the World had not Wisdom sufficient to be Judges of the Wisdom of the Gospel-Dispensation, so neither does it seem by the State which the Gospel represents the World in, at the time of its Revelation, that the World had so much Honesty, or so much Knowledge of Honesty, as that it might be supposed left at liberty to approve as it thought in Reason fit, of what came to them with the Divine Authority, and with Evidences of that Authority.

I therefore can apprehend no Grounds, neither in the Revelation we have, or way of its Delivery, nor in Reason it self, why it should be thought that Man by his Reason alone has Ability to judge, or Capacity to determine with any certainty, that this Thing is not capable of being proved by any Miracles, because it is not possible in it self, or is contradictory in it self, or that thing is not to be believed, though attested by ever so many Miracles; because in the Judgment of Reason, it seems to be of *Evil Tendency* and Consequence: 'Tis a quite different Thing to determine of the Power that

that worketh Miracles, and of the Doctrine attested by them, from a *Precedent Revelation*, and from Reason assisted with the Truths and Rules of that Revelation, and to determine of either the one or the other of these from our own Judgment, and the Light of *Natural Reason* only.

Moreover, if the *Illumination* of our Minds be the Work of God's *Spirit*, a Grace that is the effect not of bare Instruction in the Gospel Truth, but of the Habitual Presence of the *Divine Spirit* in us, which I think to be what the Scripture clearly informeth, then it may be supposed, they whose Minds are illuminated, do approve the *Things that are excellent*, as they see clearly the Wondrous Things of the Divine Law; whereas others whose Minds may be blinded, may not see the Reasonableness thereof, though it be in every thing most Reasonable and excellent.

As by this time the Ordinary *Reader*, as well as *this Author* cannot be ignorant what I drive at in these Arguments against his last *Hypothesis*, so I hope I cannot be so far misapprehended as if I went about to suggest any thing against the reasonableness of Christianity, or to weaken the Strength of that Argument for its Truth: I ever thought with my self before, and am now more fully persuaded, by what this *Author* has learnedly argued concerning the Excel-

lency and Reasonableness of the Truths and Precepts of the Christian Religion; that they are such as Right Reason may well judge becoming the Infinite Wisdom and Goodness of the All-wise and Good God, excellent and perfective of the Human Nature, consonant to the Dictates of a Rational Mind and Conscience, and conducive to the Happiness and Well-being of Mankind. But nevertheless, fearing to be *wise above what is written* (a Fault which in this *Author*'s Judgment is blame-worthy) I cannot think that the Foundations on which the Scripture hath intimated the Truth of Revelation to lye, are to be left for any Hopes that we may have to settle it upon Proofs and Arguments of our own. Therefore I cannot subject the Evidences of Revelation to the Judgment that Reason *of it self* may make of the Doctrine they prove.

My present Purpose, I think, does not oblige me to enter into a Dispute at large with this *Author*, so far upon this Point, as to shew that his Arguments concerning the Reasonableness of the Christian Doctrine, though serviceable to the Interest of Christianity, and to the maintenance of its Truth in their *Proper Use*; that is to say, when used in the way of a Motive to persuade to its Belief and Practice, or in the way of a Subsequent and *Collateral* Proof, to evince it highly probable to be the Truth of the good

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and just God, would not be sufficient to be insisted upon as an *Antecedent Proof*, if it were to be supposed at the same time, that Men might reject the Evidence of its Miracles, if so be their own Reason should think any of these Truths absurd or contradictory, or not possible; or if they should apprehend any thing therein to have Evil Consequences: I shall only therefore give some few Hints to this *Author*, wherein I think him deficient in his Proof as he goes upon this *Hypothesis*, "That a Man may re-"ject the Proof of Miracles, how true or "great soever, if *in his Reason* he thinks the "Doctrine they would prove to be an Ab-"surdity, or to imply a *Contradiction*, or to "be of *Evil Tendency* or Consequence.

I say then, that if it were allowed he had so far cleared the Truths of Christianity and its Precepts, as to have shewn that according to unprejudiced Reason, there is nothing therein but what is highly probable to be the Will or Truth of God, and consequently in all Respects *capable of being proved* by Miracles; yet I do not see, that the Revelation of *Moses* is cleared in like manner. And if this cannot be done, we have then a Revelation from God, which Reason would in several Respects oppose; and then not only that Revelation which is not consistent in all Respects with Reason, but that also which alloweth that as true

which hath such Inconsistency, must be doubted of; or, which to be sure shall rather be thought, this Hypothesis cannot be good, but is weak and false. Some Particulars, which I think cannot be accounted for in *Moses*'s Revelation upon this Ground, are, *First*, A certain Thing, which *Moses* saith *Abraham* was commanded of God; which was, the *Sacrificing* of his Son. And again in *Moses*'s Revelation it self, his bidding the *Israelites*, in the Name of their God, at their going out of *Ægypt*, to *borrow* of the *Ægyptians* their Jewels of Silver and Gold, with the design to *spoil them*, and without so much as a Purpose of Repayment. His bidding the *Sons* of *Levi*, to *slay every man his brother*, and consecrate themselves to the Lord thereby, for a Thing, wherein it seems as though they themselves had sinned with the rest of the People, their Brethren. His Wrath with the Officers of the Children of *Israel*, who when they had overcome the *Midianites*, slew all the Males, for their shewing an Act of Mercy, and *sparing the women and children*; and the Order he gave them upon it, to *kill every male* among the Little Ones, *&c.* There are none of these Things but may be accounted for, and shewn to be neither inhuman, cruel, nor unjust, when *God* shall authorize, or particularly command; who having the Disposal of all

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Mens Lives, and an absolute Power of all that's theirs, may appoint what Instruments he will, to execute his Pleasure: But how his Command should be known, how Men could be certain of its being his Command, if no Signs nor Miracles whatsoever could prove to them his Authority and Command in the Case, I can no ways apprehend. I observe further, that this *Author* in proving the Reasonableness of Christian Truth, and vindicating it from being absurd and contradictory to Reason, does in a certain Case think it a good Argument to say; "The wisest and learned'st of the "Ancient Philosophers (who were cer- "tainly as good Judges of Right Reason, "and of what was contrary to it, and in- "consistent with it, as any of the Mo- "derns;) received and taught some Things, "as in their Opinion not only consistent and "reconcileable with Reason, but also as "most consonant to it, and deducible from "it; which yet were as difficult to com- "prehend, as any thing in the Christian "Faith." If this were an Argument, an Objector might say, there is nothing so absurd or contradictory to Reason, but what a Man must admit: Things the most contradictory to Right Reason, having ('tis likely) been received and taught as reasonable by *some Philosopher* or *other*, at some time or other; at least Things not at all more

Pag. 293.

more difficult and shocking to Reason, *than* the most unreasonable and contradictory thing that can be named with any thing of a Pretence or Colour to set it off. Every one must use his own Reason, therefore, will such an one say, in judging of Things reasonable; or else all our Reason must go for nothing: Nor must a Thing be at all the sooner or easier admitted as reasonable, for the pretence it may have of a Divine Authority; if so be that *no Miracles* in the World, can be a Proof to us of a Thing, that Reason shall judge *Contradictory*. And thus for the Reason that *this Author* has given up all such Explicati-
Pag. 295. ons of Christian Writers about the Doctrine of the *Eternal Generation of the Son of God*, &c. as can be reduced to imply or involve any Contradiction; I fear, lest he be forced to give up the Truth of Scripture it self, to those that *think* they have by just and necessary Consequences, reduced its Doctrine in this or any other Case, or the Sense wherein the Church hath understood it, to imply or involve a Contradiction. For whether there be a *Real Contradiction* in it, or not, to him that verily *thinketh* there is, it must be given up, for that his Reason thinketh it contradictory; and no Miracles in the World being to be admitted as a Proof of that which is so, there can be nothing that can oblige him that is

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of an Opinion that there is a Contradiction therein, to admit it. Whether, at this rate, the *Socinians* may not form for us another Gospel, and the *Deists* reject the whole, is a thing to be considered. (For if the Revelation which Miracles prove, requireth our Belief of any such Things as no Miracles whatsoever can prove; which, in the Sense of the Church thereof, a *Socinian* will say it does; then has he a sufficient Argument, (at least to himself, and all of his Opinion) that the Sense of the Church must not be admitted. And the *Deist* will hereupon say, that the Miracles can go for no more in proving the reasonable, than the unreasonable; that is to say, they go for nothing at all, and every man is left to his Reason, to believe as little or as much as that shall see fit.)

Thus dangerous is it on every hand, to go beyond *what is written*; to lay other Foundations than have been laid; to account, as the *Author of the Essay* does, that the Scripture-Proof of God's Revelation, *i. e.* the Proof of Miracles, is weak, if that be true, which the Scripture is commonly understood to have told us of the *working of Satan*; because he finds his Reason at a loss to account for Difficulties therein: Or to make Men Judges, on the other hand, *by their Reason only*, of the Will and Truth of God; so as to determine

mine by it, if they think they have Reason on their side, against those Evidences which the Almighty hath used, to give us Notices of his Power, and Presence, and Will. Whereas in truth, if we consider *the Proofs of Religion* as recorded in Scripture, and take them as they lye there; we shall find them a *strong* and *sure* Foundation: And if we go the way of Scripture, that will lead us in a sure Path, and deliver us safely from the Delusions and Amusements of the Deceiver; without our going into *By-Paths* of our own, wherein there is always danger of our being lost and bewildred.

F I N I S.

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