

NEWMAN'S
LIFE
OF
APOLLONIUS
TYANEUS, &c.

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THE LIFE
OF
APOLLONIUS TYANÆUS:

WITH A COMPARISON
BETWEEN
THE MIRACLES OF SCRIPTURE
AND THOSE ELSEWHERE RELATED,
AS REGARDS
THEIR RESPECTIVE OBJECT, NATURE, AND EVIDENCE.

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REPRINTED FROM THE ORIGINAL EDITION.



CONTENTS.

LIFE OF APOLLONIUS TYANÆUS.

	PAGE
His Life written by Philostratus, with the object of bringing him forward as a rival to the Author of the Christian Religion,	341
His Birth and Education,	342
He adopts the Pythagorean Philosophy,	342
His travels in Asia, Greece, Rome, Spain, Egypt, Æthiopia, &c.	342
His Death,	347
Miraculous Pretensions not made by himself,	349
Enumeration of his Pretended Miracles,	349
Real Nature of his Pretensions,	351
His Story an Imitation of Scripture,	354

THE MIRACLES OF SCRIPTURE COMPARED WITH THOSE RELATED ELSEWHERE, AS REGARDS THEIR RESPECTIVE OBJECT, NATURE, AND EVIDENCE.

I.—ON THE NATURE AND GENERAL USES OF MIRACLES,	356
II.—ON THE ANTECEDENT CREDIBILITY OF A MIRACLE, CONSIDERED AS A DIVINE INTERPOSITION,	330
Tests derived from our Knowledge of the Divine Attributes, by which all but Scripture Miracles are excluded,	367
1. Those which are not even referred by the workers of them to Divine Agency,	367
2. Those which are unworthy of an All-wise Author,	368
3. Those which have no professed object,	370
4. Those which are exceptionable as regards their object,	372
Conclusion of the Antecedent question,	376
III.—ON THE CRITERION OF A MIRACLE, CONSIDERED AS A DIVINE INTERPOSITION,	377
Tests between Real and Apparent Miracles, deduced from the Definition of the Term,	380
The Term MIRACLE defined,	380

The Facts which have no title to the name *Miracle*, are :—

1. Those which may be referred to Misstatement in the Narration,	380
2. Those which from suspicious circumstances attending them may not unfairly be referred to an unknown Physical cause,	381
3. Those which may be referred to the supposed operation of a Cause known to exist,	383
Observations on the foregoing Tests,	385

IV.—ON THE DIRECT EVIDENCE FOR THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLES, 386

The Scripture Miracles have far stronger evidence in their favour than other Professed Miracles, though they do not <i>require</i> evidence equally strong,	387
What kind of Testimony is to be required for a Miracle,	387
1. The Testimony must be <i>honest</i> ,	389
2. And <i>competent</i> ,	390
Tests relative to these Qualities,	391
Observations on the foregoing Tests,	396
View of the Complete Evidence for the Scripture Miracles,	396
Union of Testimony with Antecedent Probability,	397

THE LIFE OF APOLLONIUS TYANÆUS.

From A.C. 4, to A.D. 96.

APOLLONIUS, the Pythagorean philosopher, was born at Tyana, in Cappadocia, in the year of Rome 750, four years before the common Christian era.¹ His reputation has been raised far above his personal merits, by the attempt made in the early ages of the Church, and since revived,² to bring him forward as a rival to the Author of our Religion. His life was written with this object, about a century after his death, by Philostratus of Lemnos, when Ammonius was systematizing the Eclectic tenets to meet the increasing influence of the Christian doctrines. Philostratus engaged in this work at the instance of his patroness Julia Domna, wife of the Emperor Severus, a princess celebrated for her zeal in the cause of Heathen Philosophy; who put into his hands a journal of the travels of Apollonius rudely written by one Damis, an Assyrian, his companion.³ This manuscript, an account of his residence at Ægæ, prior to his acquaintance with Damis, by Maximus of that city, a collection of his letters, some private memoranda relative to his opinions and conduct, and lastly the public records of the cities he frequented, were the principal documents from which Philostratus compiled his elaborate narrative, which is still extant.⁴ It is written with considerable elegance, but with more ornament and attention to the composition than is consistent with correct taste. Though it is not a professed imitation of the Scripture history of Christ, it contains quite enough to show that it was written with a view of rivalling it; and accordingly, in the following age, it was made use of in a direct attack upon Christianity by Hierocles,⁵ Præfect of Bithynia, a disciple of the Eclectic School, to whom a reply was written by Eusebius of Cæsarea. The selection of a Pythagorean Philosopher for the purpose of a comparison with Christ was judicious. The attachment of the Pythagorean Sect to the discipline of the established religion, which most

Apollonius
born A.C. 4

His life
written by
Philostratus.

¹ Olear. ad Philostr. I. 12.

² By Lord Herbert and Mr. Blount.

³ Philostr. I. 3.

⁴ Ibid. I. 2, 3.

⁵ His work was called *Δόγμα Φιλαλήθους πρὸς Χριστιανούς* on this subject see Mosheim, *Dissertat. de turbata per recentiores Platonicos Ecclesiâ*, Sec. 25.

other Philosophies neglected; its austerity, its pretended intercourse with heaven, its profession of extraordinary power over nature, and the authoritative tone of teaching which this profession countenanced,⁶ were all in favour of the proposed object. But with the plans of the Eclectics in their attack upon Christianity we have no immediate concern.

Birth and
education.

Philostratus begins his work with an account of the prodigies attending the Philosopher's birth, which with all circumstances of a like nature, we shall for the present pass over, intending to make some observations on them in the sequel. At the age of fourteen he was placed by his father under the care of Euthydemus, a distinguished rhetorician of Tarsus; but being displeased with the dissipation of that city, he removed with his master to Ægæ, a neighbouring town, frequented as a retreat for students in philosophy.⁷ Here he made himself master of the Platonic, Stoic, Epicurean, and Peripatetic systems; giving, however, an exclusive preference to the Pythagorean, which he studied with Euxenus of Heraclea, a man whose life ill accorded with the ascetic principles of his Sect. At the early age of sixteen years, according to his Biographer, he resolved on strictly conforming himself to the precepts of Pythagoras, and, if possible, rivalling the fame of his master. He renounced animal food and wine; restricted himself to the use of linen garments, and sandals made of the bark of trees; suffered his hair to grow; and betook himself to the temple of Æsculapius, who is said to have regarded him with peculiar favour.⁸

He adopts
the
Pythagorean
Philosophy.

On the news of his father's death, which took place not long afterwards, he left Ægæ for his native place, where he gave up half his inheritance to his elder brother, whom he is said to have reclaimed from a dissolute course of life, and the greater part of the remainder to his poorer relatives.⁹

Prior to composing any Philosophical work, he thought it necessary to observe the silence of five years, which was the appointed initiation into the esoteric doctrines of his Sect. During this time he exercised his mind in storing up materials for future reflection. We are told, that on several occasions he hindered insurrections in the cities in which he resided, by the mute eloquence of his look and gestures;¹⁰—a fact, however, which we are able to trace to the invention of his Biographer, who, in his zeal to compare him to his master, forgot that the disciples of the Pythagorean school denied themselves during their silence the intercourse of mixed society.¹¹

Travels.

The period of silence being expired, Apollonius passed through the principal cities of Asia Minor, disputing in the Temples in imitation of Pythagoras, unfolding the mysteries of his Sect to such as were observing their probationary silence, discoursing with the

⁶ Philostr. I. 17, VI. 11.

⁹ Ibid. I. 13.

⁷ Ibid. I. 7.

¹⁰ Ibid. I. 14, 15.

⁸ Ibid. I. 8. Apollon. Epist. 50.

¹¹ Brucker, Vol. II. p. 104.

Greek Priests about divine rites, and reforming the worship of Barbarian cities.¹² This must have been his employment for many years; the next incident in his life being his Eastern journey, which was not undertaken till he was between forty and fifty years of age.¹³

His object in this expedition was to consult the Magi and Brachmans on philosophical subjects; in which he but followed the example of Pythagoras, who is said to have travelled as far as India for the same purpose. At Nineveh, where he arrived with two companions, he was joined by Damis, already mentioned as his journalist.¹⁴ Proceeding thence to Babylon, he had some interviews with the Magi, who rather disappointed his expectations; and was well received by Bardanes the Parthian King, who, after detaining him at his Court for the greater part of two years, dismissed him with marks of peculiar honour.¹⁵ From Babylon he proceeded to Taxila, the seat of Phraotes, King of the Indians, who is represented as an adept in the Pythagorean Philosophy;¹⁶ and passing on, at length accomplished the object of his expedition by visiting Iarchas, Chief of the Brachmans, from whom he is said to have learned many valuable theurgic secrets.¹⁷

Travels in
India.

On his return to Asia Minor, after an absence of about five years, he stationed himself for a time in Ionia; where the fame of his travels and his austere mode of life procured considerable attention to his philosophical harangues. The cities sent embassies to him, decreeing him public honours; while the oracles pronounced him more than mortal, and referred the sick to him for relief.¹⁸

From Ionia he passed over to Greece, and made his first tour through its principal cities;¹⁹ visiting the temples and oracles, reforming the divine rites, and sometimes exercising his theurgic skill. Except at Sparta, however, he seems to have attracted little attention. At Eleusis his application for admittance to the Mysteries was unsuccessful; as was, at a later period of his life, a

Travels in
Greece.

¹² Philostr. I. 16.

¹³ See Olear. *præfat. ad vitam*. As he died, u.c. 849, he is usually considered to have lived to a hundred. Since, however, here is an interval of almost twenty years in which nothing important happens, in a part of his life too unconnected with any public events to fix its chronology, it is highly probable that the date of his birth is put too early. Philostratus says, that accounts varied, making him live eighty, ninety, or one hundred years; see VIII. 29. See also II. 12, where, by some inaccuracy, he makes him to have been in India twenty years before he was at Babylon. Olear. *ad locum et præfat. ad vit.* The common date of his birth is fixed by his Biographer's merely accidental mention of the revolt of Archelaus against the Romans, as taking place before Apollonius was twenty years old; see I. 12.

¹⁴ Philostr. I. 19.

¹⁵ Ibid. I. 26, *ad fin.*

¹⁶ Ibid. II. 1—40. Brucker, Vol. II. p. 110.

¹⁷ Ibid. III. 51.]

¹⁸ Ibid. IV. 1. It is observable that this is the first distinct mention which his Biographer furnishes of his pretending to extraordinary power. The history of Lucian's Alexander leads us to suspect a secret understanding between him and the Priests, who might not be unwilling to avail themselves of his alliance in opposition to the exertions and miracles of St. Paul about that time in the same parts. That the Apostles were opposed by counter pretensions to miraculous power, we learn from Acts xiii. 8; see also Acts vii. and xix.

¹⁹ Ibid. IV. 11, *et seq.*

similar attempt at the Cave of Trophonius.²⁰ In both places his reputation for Magic was the cause of his exclusion.

Hitherto our memoir has given the unvaried life of a mere Pythagorean, which may be comprehended in three words, mysticism, travel, and disputation. From the date of his journey to Rome, which succeeded his Grecian tour, it is in some degree connected with the history of the times; and though much may be owing to the invention of Philostratus, there is neither reason nor necessity for supposing the narrative to be in substance untrue.

Brought
before Nero.

Nero had at this time prohibited the study of philosophy, alleging that it was made the pretence for Magical practices;²¹—and the report of his excesses so alarmed the followers of Apollonius as they approached Rome, that out of thirty-four who had accompanied him thus far, eight only could be prevailed on to proceed. On his arrival, the strangeness of his proceedings caused him to be brought successively before the consul Telesinus and Tigellinus the Minister of Nero;²² both of whom however dismissed him after examination; the former from a secret leaning towards Philosophy, the latter from fear (as we are told) of his extraordinary powers. He was in consequence allowed to go about at his pleasure from Temple to Temple, haranguing the people, and prosecuting his reforms in the worship paid to the Gods. But here, as before, we discover marks of incorrectness in the Biographer. Had the edict against Philosophers been as severe as he represents, neither Apollonius, nor Demetrius the Cynic, who joined him after his arrival, would have been permitted to remain; certainly not Apollonius, after his acknowledgment of his own Magical powers in the presence of Tigellinus.²³

Visits Spain,

Denied by Philostratus all insight into the circumstances which influenced the movements of Apollonius, we must attend whither he thinks fit to conduct him. We find him next in Spain, taking part in the conspiracy forming against Nero by Vindex and others.²⁴ The political partisans of that day seem to have made use of professed jugglers and Magicians to gain over the body of the people to their interests. To this may be attributed Nero's banishing such characters from Rome;²⁵ and Apollonius had probably been already serviceable in this way at the Capital, as he was now in Spain, and immediately after to Vespasianus; and at a later period to Nerva.

²⁰ When denied at the latter place, he forced his way in. Philostr. VIII. 19.

²¹ Ibid. IV. 35. Brucker (Vol. II. p. 118) with reason thinks this prohibition extended only to the profession of magic.

²² Ibid. IV. 40, &c.

²³ Brucker, Vol. II. p. 120.

²⁴ Philostr. V. 10.

²⁵ Astrologers were concerned in Libo's conspiracy against Tiberius, and punished. Vespasianus, as we shall have occasion to notice presently, made

use of them in furthering his political plans. Tacit. Hist. II. 78. We read of their predicting Nero's accession, the deaths of Vitellius and Domitianus, &c. They were sent into banishment by Tiberius, Claudius, Vitellius, and Domitianus. Philostratus describes Nero as issuing his edict on leaving the Capital for Greece, IV. 47. These circumstances seem to imply that astrology, magic, &c., were at that time of considerable service in political intrigues.

His next expeditions were to Africa, to Sicily, and so to Greece,²⁶ but as they do not supply any thing of importance to the elucidation of his character, it may be sufficient thus to have noticed them. At Athens he obtained the initiation in the Mysteries, for which he had on his former visit unsuccessfully applied.

The following spring, the seventy-third of his life according to the common calculation, he proceeded to Alexandria:²⁷ where he attracted the notice of Vespasianus, who had just assumed the purple, and seemed desirous of countenancing his proceedings by the sanction of Religion. Apollonius might be recommended to him for this purpose by the fame of his travels, his reputation for theurgic knowledge, and his late acts in Spain against Nero. It is satisfactory to be able to bring two individuals into contact, each of whom has in his turn been made to rival Christ and his Apostles in pretensions to miraculous power. Thus, claims which appeared to be advanced on distinct grounds are found to coalesce, and by the union of their separate inconsistencies contribute to expose each other. The celebrated cures by Vespasianus are connected with the ordinary juggles of the Pythagorean School; and Apollonius is found here, as in many other instances, to be the mere tool of political factions. But on the character of the latter we shall have more to say presently.

His Biographer's account of his first meeting with the Emperor, which is perhaps substantially correct, is amusing from the regard which both parties paid to *effect* in their behaviour.²⁸ The latter, on entering Alexandria was met by the great body of the Magistrates, Præfects, and Philosophers of the city; but not discovering Apollonius in the number, he hastily asked, "whether the Tyanæan was in Alexandria," and when told he was philosophizing in the Serapeum, proceeding thither he suppliantly entreated him to make him Emperor; and, on the Philosopher's answering he had already done so in praying for a just and venerable Sovereign,²⁹ he avowed his determination of putting himself entirely into his hands, and of declining the supreme power unless he could obtain his countenance in assuming it.³⁰ A formal consultation was in consequence held, at which, besides Apollonius, Dio and Euphrates, Stoics in the Emperor's train, were allowed to deliver their sentiments; when

²⁶ Philostr. V. 11, &c.

²⁷ Ibid. V. 20, &c.

²⁸ Ibid. V. 27.

²⁹ Tacitus relates, that when Vespasianus was going to the *Serapeum*, *ut super rebus imperii consuleret*, Basilides, an Egyptian, who was at the time eighty miles distant, suddenly appeared to him; from his name the emperor drew an omen, that the God sanctioned his assumption of the Imperial power. Hist. IV. 82. This sufficiently agrees in substance with the narrative of Philostratus to give the latter

some probability. It was on this occasion that the famous cures are said to have been wrought.

³⁰ As Egypt supplied Rome with corn, Vespasianus by taking possession of that country almost secured to himself the Empire. Tacit. Hist. II. 82, III. 8. Philostratus however insinuates that he was *already* in possession of supreme power, and came to Egypt for the sanction of Apollonius. *Τὸν μὲν ἀρχὴν κεκτημένος, διαλεξόμενος δὲ τῷ ἀνδρὶ*. V. 27.

the latter Philosopher entered an honest protest against the sanction Apollonius was giving to the ambition of Vespasianus, and advocated the restoration of the Roman State to its ancient republican form.³¹ This difference of opinion laid the foundation of a lasting quarrel between the rival advisers, to which Philostratus makes frequent allusion in the course of his history. Euphrates is mentioned by the ancients in terms of high commendation; by Pliny especially, who knew him well.³² He seems to have seen through his opponent's character, as we gather even from Philostratus;³³ and when so plain a reason exists for the dislike which Apollonius, in his Letters, and Philostratus, manifest towards him, their censure must not be allowed to weigh against the testimony of unbiassed writers.

Visits
Ethiopia.

After parting from Vespasianus, Apollonius undertook an expedition into Æthiopia, where he held discussions with the Gymnosophists, and visited the cataracts of the Nile.³⁴ On his return he received the news of the destruction of Jerusalem; and being pleased with the modesty of the conqueror, wrote to him in commendation of it. Titus is said to have invited him to Argos in Cilicia, for the sake of his advice on various subjects, and obtained from him a promise that at some future time he would visit him at Rome.³⁵

On the succession of Domitianus, he became once more engaged in the political commotions of the day, exerting himself to excite the countries of Asia Minor against the Emperor.³⁶ These proceedings at length occasioned an order from the Government to bring him to Rome; which, however, according to his Biographer's account, he anticipated by voluntarily surrendering himself, under the idea that by his prompt appearance he might remove the Emperor's jealousy, and save Nerva and others whose political interests he had been promoting. On arriving at Rome he was brought before Domitianus; and when, very inconsistently with his wish to shield his friends from suspicion, he launched out into praise of Nerva, he was forced away into prison to the company of the worst criminals, his hair and beard were cut short, and his limbs loaded with chains. After some days he was brought to trial; the charges against him being the singularity of his dress and appearance, his being called a God, his foretelling a pestilence at Ephesus, and his sacrificing a child with Nerva for the purpose of augury.³⁷ Philostratus supplies us with an ample defence, which he *was to have* delivered,³⁸ had he

Imprisoned
by
Domitianus.
His trial.

³¹ Philostr. V. 31.

³² Brucker, Vol. II. p. 566, &c.

³³ Philostr. V. 37, he makes Euphrates say to Vespasianus, Φιλοσοφίαν, ὡ βασιλεῦ, τὴν μὲν κατὰ φύσιν εἰσάγει καὶ κατὰ φύσιν δὲ θεολογίαν φέρονται παρὰ τὴν κατὰ φύσιν ἀποδοῦναι γὰρ τὴν θεὸν πολλὰ καὶ ἀνόητα, ἡμῶς εἰσάγει. See Brucker; and Apollon. Epist. 8.

³⁴ Ibid. VI. 1, &c.

³⁵ Ibid. VI. 29, &c.

³⁶ Philostr. VII. I, &c. see Brucker, Vol. II. p. 128.

³⁷ Ibid. VIII. 5, 6, &c. On account of his foretelling the pestilence he was honoured as a God by the Ephesians, VII. 21. Hence this prediction appeared in the indictment.

³⁸ Εἶτα καὶ λόγον ἀπολογίας ἡ θείωτατος μάλα γε συντάττει πρὸς οὐκ ἀποδοῦναι, ἀλλὰ ὅτι δῆτα ἐς μάτην αὐτῷ σταθευθήσεται ἡ γενομένη. Euseb. in Hier. 41.

not in the course of the proceedings suddenly vanished from the Court, and transported himself to Puteoli, whither he had before sent on Damis.

This is the only miraculous occurrence which forces itself into the history as a component part of the narrative; the rest being of easy omission without any detriment to its entireness.³⁹ And strictly speaking, even here it is not the miracle of transportation which interferes with its continuity, but his mere liberation from confinement: which, though we should admit the arbitrary assertions of Philostratus, seems very clearly to have taken place in the regular course of business. He allows that just before the Philosopher's pretended disappearance, Domitianus had publicly acquitted him, and that after the miracle he proceeded to hear the cause next in order, as if nothing had happened;⁴⁰ and tells us, moreover, that Apollonius on his return from Greece gave out that he had pleaded his own cause and so escaped, no allusion being made to a miraculous preservation.⁴¹ His pretended miraculous disappearance.

After spending two years in the latter country in his usual Philosophical disputations, he passed into Ionia. According to his Biographer's chronology, he was now approaching the completion of his hundredth year. We may easily understand, therefore, that when invited to Rome by Nerva, who had just succeeded to the Empire, he declined the proposed honour with an intimation that their meeting must be deferred to another state of being.⁴² His death took place shortly after; and Ephesus, Rhodes, and Crete are variously mentioned as the spot at which it occurred.⁴³ His Death. A Temple was dedicated to him at Tyana,⁴⁴ which was in consequence accounted one of the sacred cities, and permitted the privilege of electing its own Magistrates.⁴⁵

He is said to have written⁴⁶ a treatise upon Judicial Astrology, a work on Sacrifices, another on Oracles, a Life of Pythagoras, and an account of the answers he received from Trophonius, besides the memoranda noticed in the opening of our memoir. A collection of Letters ascribed to him is still extant.⁴⁷ His Works.

It may be regretted that so copious a history, as that which we

³⁹ Perhaps his causing the writing of the indictment to vanish from the paper, when he was brought before Tigellinus, may be an exception, as being the alleged cause of his acquittal. In general, however, no consequence follows from his marvellous actions: e.g. when imprisoned by Domitianus, in order to show Damis his power, he is described as drawing his leg out of the fetters, and then—as putting it back again. *Εναεχρόσαντα αὐτὸ τὸ σκέλος, τὸ τῷ δεδεμένῳ, πρῶτα τιν, VII. 38.* A great exertion of power with apparently a small object.

⁴⁰ Philostr. VIII. 8, 9. *Ἐπει δὲ ἀπῆλθε τῷ δικαστηρίῳ, δαμιονιόντε καὶ τῷ ῥαδίῳ ἐκείνῳ*

τέλειον, καὶ ἐπαθεν ὁ βραχύνος, ὅπερ οἱ πολλοὶ φωνοῦσι—ἡγερούτο μὲν γὰρ ἐτέρας ἐπ' ἐκείνῃ δίκῃς.

⁴¹ Philostr. VIII. 15.

⁴² Ibid. VIII. 27.

⁴³ Ibid. VIII. 30.

⁴⁴ Ibid. I. 5, VIII. 29.

⁴⁵ A coin of Hadrian's reign is extant with the inscription, *Τύαννα ἱερὰ, ἄστυλος, αὐτονομίος.* Olear. ad Philostr. VIII. 31.

⁴⁶ See Bayle, Art. *Apollonius*; and Brucker.

⁴⁷ Bishop Lloyd considers them spurious, but Olearius and Brucker show that there is good reason from internal evidence to suppose them genuine. See Olear. Addend. ad prefat. Epistol.; and Brucker, Vol. II. p. 147.

His
character
examined.

have abridged, should not contain more authentic and valuable matter. Both the secular transactions of the times and the history of Christianity might have been illustrated by the life of one, who, while an instrument of the partisans of Vindex, Vespasianus, and Nerva, was a contemporary and in some respects a rival of the Apostles; and who, probably, was with St. Paul at Ephesus and Rome.⁴⁸ As far as his personal character is concerned, there is nothing to be lamented in these omissions. Both his Biographer's panegyric and his own Letters convict him of pedantry, self-conceit, and affectation incompatible with the feelings of an enlarged, cultivated, or amiable mind. His virtues, as we have already seen, were temperance and a disregard of wealth; and without them it would have been hardly possible for him to have gained the popularity which he enjoyed. The great object of his ambition was to emulate the fame of his master; and his efforts seem to have been fully rewarded by the general admiration he attracted, the honours paid him by the Oracles, and the attentions shown him by men in power.

Admissions
of the
Fathers.

We might have been inclined, indeed, to suspect that his reputation existed principally in his Biographer's panegyric, were it not mentioned by other writers. The celebrity which he has enjoyed since the writings of the Eclectics, by itself affords but a faint presumption of his notoriety before they appeared. Yet after all allowances, there remains enough to show that, however fabulous the details of his history may be, there was something extraordinary in his life and character. Some foundation there must have been for statements which his eulogists were able to maintain in the face of those who would have spoken out had they been altogether novel. Pretensions never before advanced must have excited the surprise and contempt of the advocates of Christianity.⁴⁹ Yet Eusebius styles him a wise man, and seems to admit the correctness of Philostratus, except in the miraculous parts of the narrative.⁵⁰ Lactantius does not deny that a statue was erected to him at Ephesus;⁵¹ and Sidonius Apollinaris, who even wrote his life, speaks of him as the admiration of the countries he traversed, and the favourite of monarchs.⁵² One of his works was deposited in the palace at Antium by the Emperor Hadrian, who also formed a collection of his letters;⁵³ statues were erected to him in the temples, divine honours paid him by Caracalla, Alexander Severus, and Aurelianus, and magical virtue attributed to his name.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Apollonius continued at Ephesus, Smyrna, &c. from A.D. 50 to about 59, and was at Rome from A.D. 63 to 66. St. Paul passed through Ionia into Greece A.D. 53, and was at Ephesus A.D. 54, and again from A.D. 56 to 58; he was at Rome in A.D. 65 and 66, when he was martyred.

⁴⁹ Lucian and Apuleius speak of him

as if his name were familiar to them. Olear. præf. ad Vit.

⁵⁰ In Hierocl. 5.

⁵¹ Inst. V. 3.

⁵² See Bayle, Art. *Apollonius*; and Cudworth, Intell. Syst. IV. 14.

⁵³ Philostr. VIII. 19, 20.

⁵⁴ See Eusebius, Vopiscus, Lampridius, &c. as quoted by Bayle.

It has in consequence been made a subject of dispute, how far his reputation was built upon that supposed claim to extraordinary power which, as was noticed in the opening of our memoir, has led to his comparison with sacred names. If it could be shown that he did advance such pretensions, and upon the strength of them was admitted as an object of divine honour, a case would be made out, not indeed so strong as that on which Christianity is founded, yet remarkable enough to demand our serious examination. Assuming, then, or overlooking this necessary condition, sceptical writers have been forward to urge the history and character of Apollonius as creating a difficulty in the argument for Christianity derived from Miracles; while their opponents have sometimes attempted to account for a phenomenon of which they had not yet ascertained the existence, and most gratuitously have ascribed his supposed power to the influence of the Evil principle.⁵⁵ On examination, we shall find not a shadow of a reason for supposing that Apollonius worked Miracles, in any proper sense of the word; or that he professed to work them; or that he rested his authority on extraordinary works of any kind; and it is strange indeed that Christians, with victory in their hands, should have so mismanaged their cause as to establish an objection where none existed, and in their haste to extricate themselves from an imaginary difficulty, to overturn one of the main arguments for revealed Religion.

Miraculous pretensions

not made by himself.

To state these pretended prodigies is in most cases a refutation of their claim upon our notice,⁵⁶ and even those which are not in themselves exceptionable, become so from the circumstances or manner in which they took place. Apollonius is said to have been an incarnation of the God Proteus; his birth was announced by the falling of a thunderbolt and a chorus of swans; his death signalized by a wonderful voice calling him up to Heaven; and after death he appeared to a youth to convince him of the immortality of the soul.⁵⁷ He is reported to have known the language of birds; to have evoked the Spirit of Achilles; to have dislodged a demon from a boy; to have detected an Empusa who was seducing a youth into marriage; when brought before Tigellinus, to have caused the writing of the indictment to vanish from the paper; when imprisoned by Domitianus, to have miraculously released himself from his fetters; to have discovered the soul of Amasis in the body of a lion; to have cured a youth attacked by hydrophobia, whom he pronounced to be Telephus the Mysian.⁵⁸ In declaring men's thoughts and distant events he indulged most liber-

Enumeration of these Miracles.

⁵⁵ See Brucker on this point, Vol. II. p. 141, who refers to various authors. Eusebius takes a more sober view of the question, allowing the substance of the history, but disputing the extraordinary parts. See in Hierocl. 5 and 12.

⁵⁶ Most of them are imitations of the miracles attributed to Pythagoras.

⁵⁷ See Philostr. I. 4, 5, VIII. 30, 31. He insinuates (Cf. VIII. 29 with 31,) that Apollonius was taken up alive. See Euseb. 8.

⁵⁸ Ibid. IV. 3, 16, 20, 25, 44, V. 42, VI. 43, VII. 38.

ally; adopting a brevity, which seemed becoming the dignity of his character, while it secured his prediction from the possibility of an entire failure. For instance: he gave previous intimation of Nero's narrow escape from lightning; foretold the short reigns of his successors; informed Vespasianus at Alexandria of the burning of the Capitol; predicted the violent death of Titus by a relative; discovered a knowledge of the private history of his Egyptian guide; foresaw the wreck of a ship he had embarked in, and the execution of a Cilician Proprætor.⁶⁰ We must not omit his first predicting and then removing a pestilence at Ephesus; the best authenticated of his professed Miracles, being attested by the erecting of a statue to him in consequence. He is said to have put an end to the malady by commanding an aged man to be stoned, whom he pointed out as its author, and who when the stones were removed was found changed into the shape of a dog.⁶⁰

Their
insipidity.

On the insipidity and inconclusiveness of most of these legends, considered as evidences of extraordinary power, it is unnecessary to enlarge; yet these are the prodigies which some writers have put in competition with the Christian Miracles, and which others have thought necessary to ascribe to Satanic influence. Two indeed there are which must be mentioned by themselves, as being more worthy our attention than the rest: his raising a young maid at Rome, who was being carried to burial, and his proclaiming at Ephesus the assassination of Domitianus at the very time in which it took place.⁶¹ But, not to speak at present of the want of all satisfactory evidence for either fact, the account of the former, we may observe, bears in its language and detail evident marks of being written in imitation of Scripture Miracles,⁶² and the latter has all the appearance of a political artifice employed to excite the people against the tyrant, and exaggerated by the Biographer.⁶³

⁶⁰ Philostr. I. 12, IV. 24, 43, V. 11—13, 18, 30, VI. 3, 32. His prediction of the ruin of the Proprætor is conveyed in the mere exclamation,—ὦ ἡ δεινὰ ἡμέρα, meaning the day of his execution; of the short reigns of Nero's successors, in his saying, that many *Thebans* would succeed him; οἱ χρόνοι ποικιλῇ βραχυῖν, adds Philostratus, ἤχησαν ἐς τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων πάγχυατα. A like ambiguity attends, more or less, all his predictions.

⁶⁰ Ibid IV. 10.

⁶¹ Ibid. IV. 45, and VIII. 26.

⁶² This is manifest from the passage: Κόρη ἐν ὕρῳ γάρ μοι πεθόναται εὐδοκίᾳ, καὶ ὁ νομ-
φίος πολυῖται τῇ κλίνῃ, βοῶν ὅπως ἐστ' ἀτελεῖ
γάμου. Ξυναιποφύετο δὲ καὶ ἡ Ῥώμη, καὶ
γὰρ ἐνὶ γυναικὸν οἰκίας ἡ κόρη τελευτῶν ἐς ὑπάτους.
Παρατυχῶν ἔν ὃ Ἀπολλόνιος τῷ παθεῖ,
κατάθεσθε, ἔφη, τὴν κλίνην. Εἰ γὰρ γὰρ
ἡμῶς τὸν ἐπὶ τῇ κόρῃ διακρύβων, παύσω. Καὶ
ἄμα ἤρπτο ὅτι ἐνόημα αὐτῇ εἶναι; οἱ μὲν δὲ πολλοὶ
φόντο λόγον αἰροῦσιν αὐτὸν, οἳ τοὺς λόγους οἱ
ἐπιχθύνιοι τε καὶ τὰς οὐφύρσεις ἐγγέζοντες. Ο

δὲ, ἐδὲν ἄλλ' ἢ προσψάμενος αὐτῆς,
καὶ τι καὶ αὐανῶς ἐπειτὼν, ἀφύπνισε τὴν
κόρην τῷ δοκούντος θανάτῳ. Καὶ Φανὴν τε
ἡ παῖς ἀφῆκεν, ἐπανῆλθέ τε ἐς τὴν
οἰκίαν τῷ πατρὸς ὥσπερ ἡ Ἀλκίπτις ἐπὶ
τῷ Ῥεαυλίῳ ἀναβιβασίᾳ. Cf. Mark v. 39,
&c. Luke vii. 11. See also John xi. 41—
43; Acts iii. 4—6. In the sequel, the
parents offer him money, which he gives
as a portion to the damsel. See 2 Kings
v. 15, 16, and other similar passages of
Scripture.

⁶³ As Apollonius was before this busily
engaged in promoting Nerva's interests
among the Ionians, it seems probable that
the words in question were uttered with
a similar view. Dion (Lib. 67,) mentions
a person in Germany who predicted the
death of Domitianus; and says that the
astrologers, (among whom Tzetzes num-
bers Apollonius,) had foretold Nerva's
advancement. There is little doubt all

But the trifling character of most of these prodigies is easily accounted for, when we consider the means by which the author professed to work them, and the cause to which he referred them. Of Miracles, indeed, which are asserted to proceed from the Author of nature, sobriety, dignity and conclusiveness may fairly be required; but when an individual ascribes his extraordinary power to his knowledge of some merely human secret, impropriety does but evidence his own want of taste, and ambiguity his want of skill. We have no longer a right to expect a great end, worthy means, or a frugal and judicious application of the Miraculous gift. Now, Apollonius claimed nothing beyond a fuller insight into nature than others had; a knowledge of the fated and immutable laws to which it is conformed, of the hidden springs on which it moves.⁶⁴ He brought a secret from the East and used it; and though he professed to be favoured, and in a manner taught by good Spirits,⁶⁵ yet he certainly referred no part of his power to a Supreme intelligence. Theurgic virtues, or those which consisted in communion with the Powers and Principles of nature, were high in the scale of Pythagorean excellence, and to them it was that he ascribed his extraordinary gift. By temperate living, it was said, the mind was endued with ampler and more exalted faculties than it otherwise possessed; partook more fully of the nature of the One universal Soul, was gifted with Prophetic inspiration, and a kind of intuitive perception of secret things.⁶⁶ This power, derived from the favour of the celestial Deities, who were led to distinguish the virtuous and high-minded, was quite distinct from Magic, an infamous, uncertain, and deceitful art, consisting in a compulsory power over infernal Spirits, operating by means of Astrology, Auguries and Sacrifices, and directed

Real nature of his pretensions.

these predictions were intended to compass their own accomplishment. Dion confirms Philostratus's account of the occurrence in question; but merely says, that Apollonius *αναβὰς ἐπὶ τινὰ λίθον ὑψηλόν ἐν Εφέσῳ ἢ καὶ ἐτέρῳθι, καὶ συγκαλέσας τὸ πλῆθος*, cried out *καλῶς Σπέρωνες*, &c. Lib. 67. He then adds, *τῦτο μὲν ὅτως ἐγένετο, καὶ μυρίακις τις ἀπιστήσῃ*—an assurance truly satisfactory in testimony given 130 years after the event. Allowing, however, for some exaggeration, his account is perfectly consistent with the supposition that the exclamation of Apollonius was intended to subserve a political purpose. Let us now see how Philostratus has embellished the story. *Διαλεγόμενος περὶ τὰ τῶν ἐσθίων ἄλση κατὰ μεσημβρίαν, ὅτε δὴ καὶ τῶ ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἐγγύς, πρῶτον μὲν ὤψατο τῆς φωνῆς, οἷον δέισας· εἴτ' ἐλλείπετο τὸν ἡ κατὰ τὴν αὐτῆ δύναμιν, ἡμερηνύσεν, ἴσα τοῖς μεταξὺ λόγων διοῦσι τι ἕτερον. Εἶτα ἐσιώπησεν, ὥσπερ οἱ τῶν λόγων ἐμπέοντες· βλέψας τε δεινὸν ἐς τὴν γῆν, καὶ προβάς τερεῖς ἢ πέτρωμα τῶν βασιλέων, καί τι τὸν τύραννον, καί τι, ἐβόη· ἤχ' ὥσπερ ἐκ κατὰστῆς τινὸς εἰδωλὸν ἀληθείας ἔλκων, ἀλλ' αὐτὰ ὁρῶν καὶ ὑλλαμβάνειν δοκίων*

τὰ δρώμενα· *Εκπετηγμένης δὲ τῆς Εφέσῳ, παρὴν γὰρ διαλεγόμενῳ πᾶσα,* (here he differs from Dion in an essential point,) *ἐπισχόν, ὅσον οἱ διοῦντες εἰσ' ἄν γένηται τι τῶν ἀμφιβάλλων τέλος, θαρσύνει, εἰπὺν, ὡ ἀνδρες, ὁ γὰρ τύραννος ἀπισφαιναται τήμαρον,* &c. VIII. 26.

⁶⁴ Philostr. V. 12; in I. 2, he associates Democritus, a *natural philosopher*, with Pythagoras and Empedocles. See VIII. 7, Sec. 8, and Brucker, Vol. I. p. 1108, &c. and p. 1184.

⁶⁵ In his apology before Domitianus, he expressly attributes his removal of the Ephesian pestilence to Hercules, and makes this ascription the test of a divine Philosopher as distinguished from a Magician, VIII. 7, Sec 9, *ubi vid.* Olear.

⁶⁶ *Δ' ὅν τὸ ἔτα διατᾶσθαι λιστότητα μόνον ἐργάζεταιται τὸν αἰσθητικόν, ἡ ἰσχὺν ἐπὶ τὰ μέγιστα τε καὶ θαυμασιώτατα.* τὸτό μοι, ὡ βασιλεῦ, τὰς αἰσθήσεις ἐν αὐτῷ τινὶ παρορῆται φυλάττει, καὶ εἰ ὁλερὸν περὶ αὐτὰς εἶδεν εἶναι, διοῦν τε, ὥσπερ ἐν κατὰστῃ αὐγῇ, πάντα γιγνώμεναι τε καὶ ἐσώμεναι, VIII. 7, Sec. 9. See also II. 37, VI. 11, VIII. 5.

to the personal emolument of those who cultivated it.⁶⁷ To our present question, however, this distinction is unimportant. To whichever principle the Miracles of Apollonius he referred, Theurgy or Magic, in either case they are independent of the First Cause, and not granted with a view to the particular purpose to which they are to be applied.⁶⁸

We have also incidentally shown that they did not profess to be Miracles in the proper meaning of the word, that is, *evident exceptions* to the laws of nature. At the utmost they do but exemplify the aphorism "knowledge is power."⁶⁹ Such as are within the range of human knowledge are no *Miracles*. Those of them, on the contrary, which are beyond it, will be found on inspection to be unintelligible, and to convey no *evidence*. The prediction of an earthquake (for instance) is not necessarily superhuman. An interpretation of the discourse of birds can never be verified. In understanding languages, knowing future events, discovering the purposes of others, recognising human souls when enclosed in new bodies, Apollonius merely professes extreme penetration and extraordinary acquaintance with nature. The spell by which he evokes Spirits and exorcises Demons, implies the mere possession of a secret;⁷⁰ and so perfectly is his Biographer aware of this, as almost to doubt the resuscitation of the Roman damsel, the only decisive Miracle of them all, *on the ground of its being supernatural*, insinuating, that perhaps she was dead only in appearance.⁷¹ Hence, moreover, may be understood the meaning of the charge of Magic, as brought against the early Christians by their Heathen adversaries; the Miracles of the Gospels being strictly interruptions of physical order, and incompatible with Theurgic knowledge.⁷²

When Christ and his Apostles declare themselves to be sent from God, this claim to a divine mission illustrates and gives dignity to their profession of extraordinary power. Whereas the divinity,⁷³ no less than the gift of miracles to which Apollonius laid claim, must be understood in its Pythagorean sense, as referring not to any inti-

⁶⁷ Philostr. I. 2, and Olear. *ad loc.* note 3, IV. 44, V. 12, VII. 39, VIII. 7; Apollon. Epist. 8 and 52; Philostr. Proem. vit. Sophist.; Euseb. in Hier. 2; Mosheim, de Simone Mago, Sec. 13. Yet it must be confessed that the views both of the Pythagoreans and Eclectics were very inconsistent on this subject. Eusebius notices several instances of γοητεία in Apollonius's miracles; in Hierocl. 10, 28, 29 and 31. See Brucker, Vol. II. p. 447. At Eleusis and the Cave of Triphonius, Apollonius was, as we have seen, accounted a Magician, and so also by Euphrates, Mæragenes, Apuleius, &c. See Olear. Pref. *ad vit.* p. xxxiii; and Brucker, Vol. II. p. 136, note k.

⁶⁸ See Mosheim, Dissertat. de turbatâ Ecclesiâ, &c. Sec. 27.

⁶⁹ See Quæst. ad Orthodox xxiv. as

quoted by Olearius, in his Preface, p. xxxiv.

⁷⁰ Eusebius calls it *θεία τις καὶ ἀερόφτος σοφία* in Hierocl. 2. In III. 41, Philostratus speaks of the *κλήσεις αἰς θεοὺς χαίρεισσι*, the spells for evoking them, which Apollonius brought from India; Cf. IV. 16, and in IV. 20 of the *τεκμήριον* used for casting out an Evil Spirit.

⁷¹ Εἰ τε σπινθήρ τῆς ψυχῆς εὗρεν ἐν αὐτῇ, ὅς ἐλεγχθεὶ τῆς θεοαπειθονίας, (λέγεται γὰρ ὡς νεκροῖσι μὲν ὁ Ζεὺς, ἡ δὲ ἀντρίξ ἀπὸ τῶ προσώπου) εἴτ' ἀπασθενεῖαν τὴν ψυχὴν ἀνιβαλὼν τε καὶ ἀνέλαβεν, ἀερόφτος ἢ κατὰληψις, &c.

⁷² Douglas, (Criterion, p. 387, note) observes that some heretics affirmed that our Lord rose from the dead *φαντασίως*, only in appearance, *from an idea of the impossibility of a resurrection*.

⁷³ Apollon. Epist. 17.

mate connexion with a Supreme agent, but to his partaking, through his Theurgic skill, more largely than others in the perfections of the animating principle of nature.

Yet, whatever is understood by his Miraculous gift and his divine nature, certainly his works were not adduced as *vouchers* for his divinity, nor were they, in fact, the principal cause of his reputation. *We meet with no claim to extraordinary power in his Letters*; nor when returning thanks to a city for public honours bestowed on him, nor when complaining to his brother of the neglect of his townsmen, nor when writing to his opponent Euphrates.⁷⁴ To the Milesians, indeed, he speaks of earthquakes which he had predicted; but without appealing to the prediction in proof of his authority.⁷⁵ As, then, he is so far from insisting on his pretended extraordinary powers, and himself connects the acquisition of them with his Eastern expedition,⁷⁶ we may conclude that credit for possessing a Magical secret was a *part* of the reputation which that expedition conferred. A foreign appearance, singularity of manners, a life of travel, and pretences to superior knowledge, excite the imagination of beholders;⁷⁷ and, as in the case of a wandering people among ourselves, appear to invite the individuals thus distinguished to fraudulent practices. Apollonius is represented as making converts *as soon as seen*.⁷⁸ It was not, then, his display of wonders, but his Pythagorean dress and mysterious deportment which arrested attention, and made him thought superior to other men, because he was different from them. Like Lucian's Alexander,⁷⁹ (who was all but his disciple,) he was skilled in Medicine, professed to be favoured by Æsculapius, pretended to foreknowledge, and was supported by the Oracles; and being more strict in conduct than the Paphlagonian,⁸⁰ he established a more lasting celebrity. His usefulness to political aspirants contributed to his success; perhaps also the real and contemporary Miracles of the Christian teachers would dispose many minds easily to acquiesce in any claims of a similar character.

⁷⁴ See Epist. 1, 2, &c. 11, 44, the last-mentioned addressed to his brother begins *τί θαυμαστόν, εἰ με τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων ἰσόθεον ἡγεμένον, τινῶν δὲ καὶ θεόν, μόνῃ μέχρι νῦν ἡ πατρίς αγνοεῖ, δι' ἣν ἐξαιρέτως ἐσαύδασα λαμπροὺς εἶναι; τοῦτι γὰρ ἂν ὦν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς, ὡς ὅσῳ, γέγονε φανερόν, ὡς εἶναι πολλῶν ἀμείνων λόγους τε καὶ ἥθος*; that is, he complains that *whereas* he so excels in life and moral teaching, *yet* he is not considered by them as divine.

⁷⁵ Epist. 68. Claudius, in a message to the Tyaneans, Epist. 53, praises him merely as a benefactor to youth.

⁷⁶ Philostr. VI. 11. See Euseb. in Hierocl. 26, 27, *καὶ δῆτα ὡς ἐξ Ἀράβων καὶ Μάγων καὶ Ἰνδῶν παραδόξον τινα καὶ θεῖον αὐτὸν ἡμῖν ἀγαγόν, παραδόξων ἐντεῦθεν ἀφηγημάτων κατέχευται*.

⁷⁷ Hence the first of the charges brought against him by Domitianus was the *strangeness of his dress*. Philostr. VIII.

5. By way of contrast, Cf. 1 Cor. ii. 3, 4; 2 Cor. x. 10.

⁷⁸ Philostr. IV. 1, *Ἐπειδὴ δὲ εἶδον τὸν ἄνδρα ἐν Ἰαυρία, παρελθόντα ἐς τὴν Ἐφέσον, οὐδὲ οἱ βάνανσοι ἐτι πρὸς ταῖς ἑαυτῶν τέχναις ἦσαν, ἀλλ' ἠκολούθουν, ὁ μὲν σοφίας, ὁ δὲ εἰδούς, ὁ δὲ διαιτήτης, ὁ δὲ σχήματος, οἱ δὲ πάντων ὁμοῦ θαυμάστοι ὄντες*. See also I. 19, 21, IV. 17, 20, 39, VII. 31, &c., and I. 10, 12, &c.

⁷⁹ Brucker, Vol. II. p. 144.

⁸⁰ Brucker supposes that, as in the case of Alexander, gain was his object; but we seem to have no proof of this, nor is it necessary thus to account for his conduct. We discover, indeed, in his character, no marks of that high enthusiasm which would support him in his whimsical career without any definite worldly object; yet the veneration he inspired, and the notice taken of him by great men, might be quite a sufficient recompence to a conceited and narrow mind.

His story an
imitation of
scripture.

In the foregoing remarks we have admitted the general fidelity of the history, because ancient authors allow it, and there was no necessity to dispute it. Tried however on its own merits, it is quite unworthy of serious attention. Not only in the Miraculous accounts, (as we have already seen,) but in the relation of a multitude of ordinary facts, an effort to rival our Saviour's history is distinctly visible. The favour in which Apollonius from a child was held by Gods and men; his conversations when a youth in the Temple of Æsculapius; his determination in spite of danger to go up to Rome;⁸¹ the cowardice of his disciples in deserting him; the charge brought against him of disaffection to Cæsar; the Minister's acknowledging, on his private examination, that he was more than man; the ignominious treatment of him by Domitianus on his second appearance at Rome; his imprisonment with criminals; his vanishing from Court and sudden reappearance to his mourning disciples at Puteoli;⁸² these, with other particulars of a similar cast, evidence a history modelled after the narrative of the Evangelists. Expressions, moreover, and descriptions occur, clearly imitated from the sacred volume. To this we must add⁸³ the Rhetorical colouring of the whole composition, so contrary to the sobriety of truth;⁸⁴ the fabulous accounts of things and places interspersed through the history;⁸⁵ lastly we must bear in mind the principle, recognised by

⁸¹ Cf. also Acts xx. 22, 23; xxi. 4, 11—14.

⁸² Philostr. I. 8, 11, IV. 36, 38, 44, VII. 34, VIII. 5, 11.

⁸³ See the description of his raising the Roman maid as above given. Take again the following account of his appearance to Damis and Demetrius at Puteoli, after vanishing from Court, VIII. 12. *Ανολοφωρεῖται δὲ τοῦ Δάμιδος, καὶ τι καὶ ταῦτον εἰπόντος, ὥς· οὐ μὲν βάρβαροι, ὡ θεοί, τὸν καλὸν τε καὶ αγαθὸν ἰσχυροῦν; ἀπορίας ὁ Ἀπολλώνιος· ὡ φέρεθε, εἶπε, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐρωτάεσθε. Ἰδόντα, ἔφη ὁ Δημήτριος, εἰ δὲ τεθνεῖστα οὕτω πεπαισμένθα ἐστὶ σοὶ κληθόντες· προτίνας οὖν ὁ Ἀπολλώνιος τὴν χεῖρα, λαβού μόν ἔφη, μὴ μὲν διαφύγω σε, εἰδωλὸν εἰμὶ σοι ἐν Πελοποννήτῳ ἦκον. . . . εἰ δὲ υπομείναιμι ἀπτόμενον, πεθε καὶ Δάμιον ἔξῃ τέ με καὶ μὴ ἀποβεβληκέναι τὸ σῶμα. Οὐκ ἔθ' οἷοι αἰσιτεῖν ἦσαν, ἀλλ' ἀναστάντες, &c. . . . And presently Apollonius says, Τὰ δ' ὑπὲρ τῆς δικῆς πύσσεσθε μὲν, οὐ μὴν ἐνταῦθα· δέλην τε γὰρ ἰκανῶς ἔδην, καὶ βαδίζειν ἄρα ἐς ἄστυ· ἥδιος δ' αἰ καὶ ὅδον λόγῳ παραπέμψαι βαδίζοντας· ἰαμὸν σὺν διαλαλόντες, ὑπὲρ ὧν ἐρωτάτε. . . . δ' οὕτω ἴσθι δίσαιμι, δεικνὼν ἀπὸ τῆς περὶ ῥήσεως, &c. here is much incautious agreement with Luke xxiv. 14—17, 27, 29, 32, 36—40. Also more or less in the following: VII. 30, init. and 34, fin. with Luke xii. 11, 12: III. 38, with Matt. xvii. 14, &c. where observe the contrast of the two narratives: VIII. 30, fin. with Acts xii. 7—10: IV. 44, with John xviii. 33, &c.: VII. 34, init. with Mark xiv. 65: IV. 34, init. with Acts xvi. 8—10: I. 19, fin. with Mark*

vii. 27, 28. Brucker and Douglas notice the following in the detection of the Empusa: *Δαμνέοντι ἔρκει· τὸ φῶμα, καὶ εδεῖτο μὴ βασιανίζειν αὐτὸ, μηδὲ ἀναγνάζειν ὁμολογεῖν ὅτι εἴη*, IV. 25. Cf. Mark v. 7—9. Olearius compares an expression in VII. 30, with I Cor. ix. 9.

⁸⁴ E.G. his ambitious descriptions of countries, &c. In IV. 30, 32, V. 22, VI. 24, he ascribes to Apollonius regular Socratic disputations, and in VI. 11, a long and flowery speech in the presence of the Gymnosophists,—modes of Philosophical instruction totally at variance with the genius of the Pythagorean school, the Philosopher's Letters still extant, and the writer's own description of his manner of teaching, I. 17. Some of his exaggerations and mis-statements have been noticed in the course of the narrative. As a specimen of the Rhetorical style in which the work is written, we notice a form of expression in his account of the recovery of the Roman damsel, O δὲ οὐδὲν ἄλλ' ἢ προσελόμενος αὐτῇς ἀφύπνιστε,—contrast this with the simplicity of the Scripture narrative. See also the last sentence of V. 17, and indeed *passim*.

⁸⁵ E.G. his accounts of Indian and Æthiopian monsters; of serpents whose eyes were jewels of magical virtue; of pygmies; of golden water; of the speaking tree; of a woman half white and half black, &c.: he incorporates in his narrative the fables of Ctesias, Agatharchidas, and other writers. His blunders in geo-

the Pythagorean and Eclectic schools, of permitting exaggeration and deceit in the cause of Philosophy.⁸⁶

After all, it must be remembered, that were the pretended Miracles as unexceptionable as we have shown them to be absurd and useless,—were they plain interruptions of established laws, were they grave and dignified in their nature, and important in their object, and were there nothing to excite suspicion in the design, manner, or character of the narrator,—still the testimony on which they rest is the bare word of an author writing one hundred years after the death of the person panegyricized, and far distant from the places in which most of the Miracles were wrought; and who can give no better account of his information than that he gained it from an unpublished work,⁸⁷ professedly indeed composed by a witness of the extraordinary transactions, but passing into his hands through two intermediate possessors. These are circumstances which almost, without positive objections, are sufficient by their own negative force to justify a summary rejection of the whole account. Unless indeed the history had been perverted to a mischievous purpose, we should esteem it impertinent to direct argument against a mere romance, and to subject a work of imagination to a grave discussion.

Inadequate
testimony of
Philostratus.

graphy and natural philosophy may be added, as far as they arise from the desire of describing wonders, &c. See also his pompous description of the wonders of Babylon, which were not then in existence. Prideaux, Connection, Part I. Book VIII. For his inconsistencies, see Eusebius and Brucker. It must be remembered, that in the age of Philostratus the composition of romantic histories was in fashion.

⁸⁶ See Brucker, Vol. I. p. 992, Vol. II. p. 378. Apollonius was only one out of several who were set up by the Eclectics

as rivals to Christ. Brucker, Vol. II. p. 372. Mosheim, de turbatâ Ecclesiâ, &c. Sec. 25, 26.

⁸⁷ Philostr. I. 2, 3. He professes that his account contains much *news*. As to the sources, besides the Journal of Damis, from which he pretends to derive his information, he neither tells us how he met with them, nor what they contained; nor does he refer to them in the course of his history. On the other hand, much (as we have above noticed) of the detail of Apollonius's journey is derived from the writings of Ctesias, &c. &c.

~~EX. LIB.~~
REV. C. W. SULLIVAN
BRAMPTON

THE
MIRACLES OF SCRIPTURE

COMPARED WITH

THOSE RELATED ELSEWHERE,

AS REGARDS THEIR RESPECTIVE OBJECT, NATURE, AND EVIDENCE.

WE are naturally led to pursue the subject which the life of Apollonius has thus introduced, by drawing an extended comparison between the Miracles of Scripture and those elsewhere related, as regards their respective object, nature, and evidence. We shall divide our observations under the following heads:—

- I. On the Nature and general Uses of Miracles.
- II. On the antecedent Credibility of a Miracle, considered as a Divine Interposition.
- III. On the Criterion of a Miracle, considered as a Divine Interposition.
- IV. On the direct Evidence for the Christian Miracles.

I.

ON THE NATURE AND GENERAL USES OF MIRACLES.

Definition of
a Miracle.

A Miracle may be considered as an event inconsistent with the constitution of nature, *i.e.* the established course of things in which it is found. Or, again, an event in a given system which cannot be referred to any law, or accounted for by the operation of any principle in that system. It does not necessarily imply a *violation* of nature, as some have supposed,—merely the *interposition* of an external cause, which, as we shall hereafter show, can be no other than the agency of the Deity. And the effect produced is that of unusual or increased action in the parts of the system.

A Miracle
a relative
term,

It is then a relative term, not only as it presupposes an assemblage of laws from which it is a deviation, but also as it has reference to *some one particular system*; for the same event which is anomalous in one, may be quite regular when observed in connexion with another. The Miracles of Scripture, for instance, are irregularities in the economy of nature, but with a moral end; and forming one

instance out of many, of the *providence* of God, *i.e.* an instance of occurrences in the natural world with a final cause. Thus, while they are exceptions to the laws of one system, they may coincide with those of another. They profess to be the *evidence of a Revelation*, the criterion of a divine message. To consider them as mere exceptions to physical order, is to take a very incomplete view of them. It is to degrade them from the station which they hold in the plans and provisions of the divine mind, and to strip them of their real use and dignity; for as naked and isolated facts they do but deform an harmonious system.

From this account of a Miracle, it is evident that it may often be difficult exactly to draw the line between uncommon and strictly Miraculous events. The production of ice, *e.g.* might have seemed *at first sight* Miraculous to the Siamese; for it was a phenomenon referable to none of those laws of nature which are in ordinary action in tropical climates. Such, again, might magnetic attraction appear, in ages familiar only with the attraction of gravity.¹ On the other hand, the extraordinary works of Moses or Paul appear such, even when referred to those simple and elementary principles of nature which the widest experience has confirmed. As far as this affects the *discrimination* of supernatural facts, it will be considered in its proper place; meanwhile let it suffice to state, that those events only are connected with our present subject *which have no assignable second cause or antecedent*, and which, on that account, are from the nature of the case referred to the immediate agency of the Deity.

A Revelation, *i.e.* a direct message from God to man, itself bears in some degree a Miraculous character; inasmuch as it supposes the Deity actually to present himself before his creatures, and to interpose in the affairs of life in a way above the reach of those settled arrangements of nature to the existence of which universal experience bears witness. And as a Revelation itself, so again the evidences of a Revelation may all more or less be considered miraculous. Prophecy is an evidence only so far as foreseeing future events is above the known powers of the human mind, or Miraculous. In like manner, if the rapid extension of Christianity be urged in favour of its divine origin, it is because such extension, under such circumstances, is supposed to be inconsistent with the known principles and capacity of human nature. And the pure morality of the Gospel, as taught by illiterate fishermen of Galilee, is an evidence, in proportion as the phenomenon disagrees with the conclusions of general experience, which leads us to believe that a high state of mental cultivation is ordinarily requisite for the production of such moral teachers. It might even be said that, strictly speaking, no evidence of a Revelation is conceivable which does not

A Miracle distinguished from a merely extraordinary event.

Revelation and all its evidences more or less Miraculous.

¹ Campbell, On Miracles, Part I. Sec. 2.

partake of the character of a Miracle; since nothing but a display of power over the existing system of things can attest the immediate presence of Him by whom it was originally established; or, again, because no event which results entirely from the ordinary operation of nature can be the criterion of one that is extraordinary.²

Miracles commonly so called,
In the present argument we confine ourselves to the consideration of Miracles commonly so called; such events, *i.e.* for the most part as are inconsistent with the constitution of the physical world.

Contrasted with the other branches of evidence for Revelation.

Miracles, thus defined, hold a very prominent place in the evidence of the Jewish and Christian Revelations. They are the most striking and conclusive evidence; because the laws of matter being better understood than those to which mind is conformed, the transgression of them is more easily recognised. They are the most simple and obvious; because, whereas the freedom of the human will resists the imposition of undeviating laws, the material creation, on the contrary, being strictly subjected to the regulation of its Maker, looks to him alone for a change in its constitution. Yet Miracles are but a branch of the evidences, and other branches have their respective advantages. Prophecy, as has been often observed, is a growing evidence, and appeals more forcibly to those who are acquainted with the Miracles only through testimony. A Philosophical mind will perhaps be most strongly affected by the fact of the very existence of the Jewish polity, or of the revolution effected by Christianity. While the beautiful moral teaching and evident honesty of the New Testament writers is the most persuasive argument to the unlearned but single-hearted inquirer. Nor must it be forgotten that the evidences for Revelation are *cumulative*, that they gain strength from each other; and that, in consequence, the argument from Miracles is immensely stronger when viewed *in conjunction with the rest*, than when considered separately as in an inquiry of the present nature.

Cogency of separate Miracles, as proofs of supernatural agency, varies.

As the relative force of the separate evidences is different under different circumstances, so again has one class of Miracle more or less weight than another, according to the accidental change of times, places, and persons addressed. As our knowledge of the system of nature, and of the circumstances of the particular case varies, so of course varies our conviction. Walking on the sea, for instance, or giving sight to one born blind, would to us perhaps be a Miracle even more astonishing than it was to the Jews; the laws of nature being at the present day better understood than formerly, and the fables concerning Magical power being no longer credited. On the other hand, stilling the wind and waves with a word may by all but eye-witnesses be set down to accident or exaggeration without

² Hence it is that in the Scripture accounts of Revelations to the prophets, &c. a *sensible* Miracle is so often asked and given; as if the vision itself, which was the *medium* of the Revelation, was

not a sufficient evidence of it, as being perhaps resolvable into the *ordinary* powers of an excited imagination, *e.g.* Judg. vi. 36—40, &c.

the possibility of a full confutation; yet to eye-witnesses it would carry with it an overpowering evidence of supernatural agency by the voice and manner that accompanied the command, the violence of the wind at the moment, the instantaneous effect produced, and other circumstances, the force of which a narration cannot fully convey. The same remark applies to the Miracle of changing water into wine, to the cure of demoniacal possessions, and of diseases generally. From a variety of causes, then, it happens that Miracles which produced a rational conviction at the time when they took place, have ever since proved rather an objection to Revelation than an evidence for it, and have depended on the rest for support; while others, which once were of a dubious and perplexing character, have in succeeding Ages come forward in its defence. It is by a process similar to this that the anomalous nature of the Mosaic polity, which might once be an obstacle to its reception, is now justly alleged in proof of the very Miracles by which it was then supported.³ It is important to keep this remark in view, as it is no uncommon practice with those who are ill-affected to the cause of revealed Religion, to dwell upon such Miracles as at *the present day* rather require than contribute evidence, as if they formed a part of the *present* proof on which it rests its pretensions.⁴

In the foregoing remarks, the being of an intelligent Maker has been throughout assumed; and, indeed, if the *peculiar* object of a Miracle be to *evidence a message from God*, it is plain that it implies the admission of the fundamental truth, and demands assent to another beyond it. His *particular interference* it directly proves, while it only *reminds* of his *existence*. It professes to be the signature of God to a message delivered by human instruments; and therefore supposes that signature in some degree already known, from his ordinary works. It appeals to that moral sense and that experience of human affairs which already bear witness to his ordinary presence. Considered *by itself*, it is at most but the token of a superhuman being. Hence, though an *additional instance*, it is not a *distinct species* of evidence for a Creator from that contained in the general marks of order and design in the universe. A proof drawn from an *interruption* in the course of nature is in the same *line of argument* as one deduced from the *existence* of that course, and in point of cogency is inferior to it. Were a being who had experience only of a chaotic world suddenly introduced into this orderly system of things, he would have an infinitely more powerful argument for the existence of a designing Mind, than a mere interruption of that

Miracles do not of themselves prove the being of a Creator:

³ See Sumner's "Records of Creation," Vol. I.

⁴ See Hume, On Miracles: "let us examine those Miracles related in Scripture, and, *not to lose ourselves in too wide a field*, let us confine ourselves to such as

we find in the *Pentateuch*, &c. It gives an account of the state of the world and of human nature entirely different from the present; of our fall from that state; of the age of man extended to near a thousand years," &c. See Berkeley's "Minute Philosopher," Dial. VI. § 30.

system can afford. A Miracle is no argument to one who is deliberately, and on principle, an atheist.

Yet lead to
belief in that
doctrine.

Yet, though not abstractedly the more convincing, it is often so in effect, as being of a more striking and imposing character. The mind, habituated to the regularity of nature, is blunted to the overwhelming evidence it conveys; whereas by a Miracle it may be roused to reflection, till mere conviction of a superhuman being becomes the first step towards the acknowledgment of a Supreme power. While, moreover, it surveys nature *as a whole*, it is not capacious enough to embrace its bearings, and to comprehend what it implies. In Miraculous displays of power the field of view is narrowed; a detached portion of the divine operations is taken as an instance, and the Final Cause is distinctly pointed out. A Miracle, besides, is more striking, inasmuch as it displays the Deity in action; evidence of which is not supplied in the system of nature. It may then *accidentally* bring conviction of an intelligent Creator; for it voluntarily proffers a testimony which we have ourselves to extort from the ordinary course of things, and forces upon the attention a truth which otherwise is not discovered, except upon examination.

They may
prove the
moral
government
of God.

And as it affords a more *striking* evidence of a Creator than that conveyed in the order and established laws of the Universe, still more so does it of a Moral Governor. For, while *nature* attests the being of God more distinctly than it does his moral government, a *Miraculous event*, on the contrary, bears more directly on the fact of his moral government, of which it is an immediate instance, while it only implies his existence. Hence, besides banishing ideas of Fate and Necessity, Miracles have a tendency to rouse conscience, to awaken to a sense of responsibility, to remind of duty, and to direct the attention to those marks of divine government already contained in the ordinary course of events.⁶

Hitherto, however, we have spoken of solitary Miracles; a *system* of Miraculous interpositions, conducted with reference to a Final Cause, supplies a still more beautiful and convincing argument for the moral government of God.

II.

ON THE ANTECEDENT CREDIBILITY OF A MIRACLE, CONSIDERED AS A DIVINE INTERPOSITION.

Miracles,
being facts,
can be
proved only
by means of
Testimony.

In proof of Miraculous occurrences, we must have recourse to the same *kind* of evidence as that by which we determine the truth of Historical accounts in general. For though Miracles, in consequence of their extraordinary nature, challenge a fuller and more accurate

⁶ Farmer, On Miracles, Ch. 7. Sec. 2.

investigation, still they do not admit an investigation conducted on different principles,—Testimony being the only assignable medium of proof for past events of any kind. And this being indisputable, it is almost equally so that the Christian Miracles are attested by evidence even stronger than can be produced for any of those Historical facts which we most firmly believe. This has been felt by unbelievers; who have been, in consequence, led to deny the *admissibility* of even the strongest Testimony, if offered in behalf of Miraculous events, and thus to get rid of the only means by which they can be proved to have taken place. It has accordingly been asserted, that all events inconsistent with the course of nature bear in their very front, such strong and decisive marks of falsehood and absurdity, that it is needless to examine the evidence adduced for them.⁶ “Where men are heated by zeal and enthusiasm,” says Hume, with a distant but evident allusion to the Christian Miracles, “there is no degree of human Testimony so strong as may not be procured for the greatest absurdity; and those who will be so silly as to examine the affair *by that medium*, and seek particular flaws in the Testimony, are almost sure to be confounded.”⁷ Of these antecedent objections, which are supposed to decide the question, the most popular is founded on the frequent occurrence of wonderful tales in every Age and country, generally too connected with Religion; and since the more we are in a situation to examine these accounts, the more fabulous they are proved to be, there would certainly be hence a fair presumption against the Scripture narrative, did it resemble them in its circumstances and proposed object. A more refined argument is that advanced by Hume, in the first part of his *Essay on Miracles*, in which it is maintained against the credibility of a Miracle, that it is more improbable that the Miracle should be true than that the Testimony should be false.

Objections
against the
admissibility
of
Testimony.

This latter objection has been so ably met by various writers, that, though prior in the order of the argument to the other, it need not be considered here. It derives its force from the *assumption*, that a Miracle is strictly a *causeless phenomenon*, a *self-originating violation of nature*; and is solved by referring the event to *divine agency*, a principle which (it cannot be denied) has originated works indicative of power at least as great as any Miracle requires. An adequate cause being thus found for the production of a Miracle, the objection vanishes, as far as the mere question of power is concerned; and it remains to be considered whether the anomalous fact be of such a character as to *admit* of being referred to the Supreme Being. For if it cannot with propriety be referred to him, it remains as improbable as if no such agent were known to exist. At

Divine
agency the
cause of
Miracles.

⁶ *I.E.* it is pretended to try *past* events on the principles used in conjecturing *future*; viz. on antecedent probability and examples. (Treatise on Rhe-

toric, Ch. I. Sec. 3.) See Leland's “Supplement to View of Deistical Writers,” Let. 3.

⁷ *Essays*, Vol. II. Note L.

this point, then, we propose taking up the argument; and by examining *what* Miracles are in their nature and circumstances referable to divine agency, we shall be providing a reply to the former of the objections just noticed, in which the alleged *similarity* of *all* Miraculous narratives one to another, was made a reason for a common rejection of all. And it is to an inquiry of this nature, that a memoir of Apollonius properly gives rise.

All Miracles
not referable
to divine
agency.

In examining *what* Miracles may properly be ascribed to the Deity, Hume supplies us with an observation so just, when taken in its full extent, that we shall make it the groundwork of the inquiry on which we are entering. As the Deity, he says, discovers himself to us by his works, we have no rational grounds for ascribing to him attributes or actions dissimilar from those which his works convey. It follows then, that in discriminating between those Miracles which can and those which cannot be ascribed to God, we must be guided by the information with which *experience* furnishes us concerning his wisdom, goodness, and other attributes. Since a Miracle is an act out of the known track of divine agency, as regards the *physical* system, it is almost indispensable to show its consistency with the divine agency, at least, in some *other* point of view; if (*i.e.*) it is to be recognised as the work of the same power. Now, we contend that this reasonable demand *is* satisfied in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, in which we find a narrative of Miracles altogether answering in their character and circumstances to those general ideas which the ordinary course of divine providence enables us to form concerning the attributes and actions of God.

The
Scripture
Miracles
profess to be
the result of
the Moral
system :

While writers expatiate so largely on the laws of nature, they altogether forget the existence of a *Moral* system; a system, which though but partially understood, and but general in its appointments as acting upon free agents, is as intelligible in its laws and provisions as the material world. Connected with this Moral government, we find certain instincts of mind; such as conscience, a sense of responsibility, and an approbation of virtue; an innate desire of knowledge, and an almost universal feeling of the necessity of Religious observances: while, in fact, Virtue is on the whole rewarded and Vice punished. And though we meet with many and striking anomalies, yet it is evident they are but anomalies, and possibly but in appearance so, and with reference to our partial information.⁸

Interfering
with the
Physical :

These two systems, the Physical and the Moral, sometimes act in unison, and sometimes in opposition to each other; and as the order of nature certainly does in many cases interfere with the operation of Moral laws, (as *e.g.* when good men die prematurely, or the gifts of nature are continued to the bad,) there is nothing to shock probability in the idea that a great Moral object should be effected by

⁸ See Butler's "Analogy," Part I. Ch. III.

an interruption of Physical order. But, further than this, however Physical laws may embarrass the operation of the Moral system, still on the whole they are subservient to it; contributing, as is evident, to the welfare and convenience of Man, providing for his mental gratification as well as animal enjoyment, sometimes even supplying correctives to his Moral disorders. If then the economy of nature has so constant a reference to an ulterior plan, a Miracle is a deviation from the subordinate for the sake of the superior system, and is very far indeed from improbable, when a great Moral end cannot be effected except at the expense of Physical regularity. Nor can it be fairly said to argue an imperfection in the divine plans, that this interference should be necessary. For we must view the system of Providence *as a whole*; which is not more imperfect because of the mutual action of its parts, than a machine the separate wheels of which affect each other's movements.

Now the Miracles of the Jewish and Christian Religions must be considered as immediate effects of divine power beyond the action of nature, for an important Moral end; and are in consequence accounted for by producing not a *physical* but a *final* cause.⁹ We are not left to contemplate the bare anomalies, and from the mere necessity of the case to refer them to the supposed agency of the Deity. The power of displaying them is, according to the Scripture narrative, intrusted to certain individuals, who stand forward as their interpreters, giving them a voice and language, and a dignity demanding our regard; who set them forth as evidences of the greatest of Moral ends, a Revelation from God,—as instruments in his hand of effecting a direct intercourse between himself and his creatures, *which otherwise could not have been effected*,—as vouchers for the truth of a message which they deliver.¹⁰ This is plain and intelligible; there is an easy connexion between the Miraculous nature of their works and the truth of their words; the *fact* of their superhuman power is a reasonable ground for *belief* in their superhuman knowledge. Considering, then, our instinctive sense of duty and moral obligation, yet the weak sanction which reason gives to the practice of Virtue, and withal the uncertainty of the mind when advancing beyond the first elements of right and wrong; considering, moreover, the feeling which wise men have entertained of the need of some heavenly guide to instruct and confirm them in goodness, and that unextinguishable desire for a divine message which

That is to be the criterion and evidence of a Revelation.

⁹ Divine Legation, Book IX. Ch. V. Vince, On Miracles, Sermon I.

¹⁰ As, for instance, Exod. iv. 1—9, 29—31; vii. 9, 17; Numb. xvi. 3, 28, 29; Deut. iv. 36—40; xviii. 21, 22; Josh. iii. 7—13; 1 Sam. x. 1—7; xii. 16—19; 1 Kings xiii. 3; xvii. 24; xviii. 36—39; 2 Kings i. 6, 10; v. 15; xx. 8—11; Jer. xxviii. 15—17; Ezek. xxxiii. 33; Matt. x. 1—20; xi. 3—

5, 20—24; Mark xvi. 15—20; Luke i. 18—20; ii. 11, 12; v. 24; vii. 15, 16; ix. 2; x. 9; John ii. 22; iii. 2; v. 36, 37; ix. 33; x. 24—38; xi. 15, 41, 42; xiii. 19; xiv. 10, 11, 29; xvi. 4; xx. 30, 31; Acts i. 8; ii. 22, 33; iii. 15, 16; iv. 33; v. 32; viii. 6; x. 38; xiii. 8—12; xiv. 3; Rom. xv. 18, 19; 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5; 2 Cor. xii. 12; Heb. ii. 3, 4; Rev. xix. 10.

has led men in all ages to acquiesce even in pretended Revelations, rather than forego the consolation thus afforded them; and again, the possibility (to say the least) of our being destined for a future state of being, the nature and circumstances of which it may concern us much to know, though from nature we know nothing; considering, lastly, our experience of a watchful and merciful Providence, and the impracticability already noticed of a Revelation without a Miracle—it is hardly too much to affirm, that the Moral system points to an interference with the course of nature, and that Miracles wrought in evidence of a divine communication, instead of being antecedently improbable, are, when directly attested, entitled to a respectful and impartial consideration.

Objections
to the
Scripture
Miracles are
founded on
a forgetful-
ness of the
Moral
system.

When the various antecedent objections which ingenious men have urged against Miracles are brought together, they will be found nearly all to arise from forgetfulness of the existence of Moral laws.¹¹ In their zeal to perfect the laws of matter they most unphilosophically overlook a more sublime system, which contains disclosures not only of the *Being* but of the *Will* of God. Thus Hume, in a passage above alluded to, observes, “Though the Being to whom the Miracle is ascribed be Almighty, it does not, upon that account, become a whit more probable; since it is impossible for us to know the attributes or actions of such a Being, otherwise than from the experience which we have of his productions *in the usual course of nature*. This still reduces us to past observation, and obliges us to compare the instances of the violation of truth in the testimony of men with those of the violation of the *laws of nature* by Miracles, in order to judge which of them is most likely and probable.” Here the Moral government of God, *with the course of which the Miracle entirely accords*, is altogether kept out of sight. With a like heedlessness of the Moral character of a Miracle, another writer, notorious for his irreligion,¹² objects that it argues mutability in the Deity, and implies that the Physical system was not created good, as needing improvement. And a recent author adopts a similarly partial and inconclusive mode of reasoning, when he confuses the Christian Miracles with fables of apparitions and witches, and would examine them on the strict principle of those legal forms which from their secular object go far to exclude all *Religious* discussion of the question.¹³ Such reasoners seem to suppose, that when the agency of the Deity is introduced to account for Miracles, it is the illogical introduction of an unknown cause, a reference to a mere name, the offspring perhaps of popular superstition; or, if more than a name, to a cause that can be known only by means of the Physical creation; and hence they consider Religion as founded in the mere weakness or eccentricity of the intellect, not in actual intimations of a divine government as contained in the moral world.

¹¹ Vince, On Miracles, Sermon I.

¹² Voltaire.

¹³ Bentham, Preuves Judiciaires, Liv. VIII.

From an apparent impatience of investigating a system which is but partially revealed, they esteem the laws of the material system alone worthy the notice of a scientific mind; and rid themselves of the annoyance which the importunity of a claim to Miraculous power occasions them, by discarding all the circumstances which fix its antecedent probability, all in which one Miracle differs from another, the professed author, object, design, character, and human instruments.

When this partial procedure is resisted, the *à priori* objections of sceptical writers at once lose their force. Facts are only so far improbable as they fall under no general rule; whereas it is as parts of an existing system that the Miracles of Scripture demand our attention, as resulting from known attributes of God, and corresponding to the ordinary arrangements of his providence. Even as detached events they might excite a rational awe towards the mysterious Author of nature. But they are presented to us, not as unconnected and unmeaning occurrences, but as holding a place in an extensive plan of divine government, completing the Moral system, connecting Man with his Maker, and introducing him to the means of securing his happiness in another and eternal state of being. That such is the professed object of the body of Christian Miracles, can hardly be denied. In the earlier Religion it was substantially the same, though from the preparatory nature of the dispensation, a less enlarged view was given of the divine counsels. The express purpose of the Jewish Miracles is to confirm the natural evidence of one God, the Creator of all things, to display his attributes and will with distinctness and authority, and to enforce the obligation of Religious observances, and show the sin of idolatrous worship.¹⁴ Whether we turn to the earlier or latter Ages of Judaism, in the plagues of Egypt; in the parting of Jordan, and the arresting of the Sun's course by Joshua; in the harvest thunder at the prayer of Samuel; in the rending of the altar at Bethel; in Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel; and in the cure of Naaman by Elisha; we recognise this one grand object throughout. Not even in the earliest ages of the Scripture history are Miracles wrought at random, or causelessly, or to amuse the fancy, or for the sake of mere display: nor prodigally, for the mere conviction of individuals, but for the most part on a grand scale, in the face of the world, to supply whole nations with evidence concerning the Deity. Nor are they strewn confusedly over the face of the history, being with few exceptions reducible to three eras; the formation of the Hebrew Church and Polity, the reformation in the times of the idolatrous Kings of Israel, and the promulgation of the Gospel. Let it be observed, moreover, that the power of working them, instead of

Enumeration of circumstances in which the Scripture Miracles fall in with the known attributes of God.

¹⁴ Exod. iii.—xiv.; xx. 22, 23; xxxiv. 6—17; Deut. iv. 32—40; Josh. ii. 10, 11; iv. 23, 24; 1 Sam. v. 3, 4; xii. 18; 2 Sam. vii. 23; 1 Kings viii. 59, 60; xviii. 36, 37; xx. 28; 2 Kings xix. 15—19, 35; 2 Chron. xx. 29; Isa. vi. 1—5; xix. 1; xliii. 10—12.

being assumed by any classes of men indiscriminately, is described as a prerogative of the occasional Prophets to the exclusion of the Priests and Kings; a circumstance which, not to mention its remarkable contrast to the natural course of an imposture, is deserving attention from its consistency with the leading design of Miracles already specified. For the respective claims of the Kings and Priests were already ascertained, when once the sacred office was limited to the family of Aaron, and the regal power to David and his descendants; whereas extraordinary messengers, as Moses, Samuel, and Elijah, needed some supernatural display of power to authenticate their pretensions. In corroboration of this remark we may observe the unembarrassed manner of the Prophets in the exercise of their professed gift; their disdain of argument or persuasion, and the confidence with which they appeal to those before whom they are said to have worked their Miracles.

These and similar observations do more than invest the *separate* Miracles with a dignity worthy of the Supreme Being; they show the *coincidence* of them *all* in one common and consistent object. As parts of a system, the Miracles recommend and attest each other, evidencing not only general *wisdom*, but a digested and extended *plan*. And while this appearance of design connects them with the acknowledged works of a Creator, who is in the natural world chiefly known to us by the presence of final causes, so, again, a plan conducted as this was, through a series of ages, evinces not the varying will of successive individuals, but the steady and sustained purpose of one Sovereign Mind. And this remark especially applies to the coincidence of views observable between the Old and New Testament; the latter of which, though written after a long interval of silence, the breaking up of the former system, a revolution in Religious discipline, and the introduction of Oriental tenets into the popular Theology, still unhesitatingly takes up and maintains the ancient principles of Miraculous interposition.

An additional recommendation of the Scripture Miracles is their appositeness to the times and places in which they were wrought; as, *e.g.* in the case of the plagues of Egypt, which, it has been shown,¹⁵ were directed against the prevalent superstitions of that country. Their originality, beauty, and immediate utility, are further properties falling in with our conceptions of divine agency. In their general character we discover nothing indecorous, light, or ridiculous; they are grave, simple, unambiguous, majestic. Many of them, especially those of the later dispensation, are remarkable for their benevolent and merciful character; others are useful for a variety of subordinate purposes, as a pledge of the certainty of particular promises, or as comforting good men, or as edifying the Church. Nor must we overlook the moral instruction conveyed in

¹⁵ See Bryant.

many, particularly in those ascribed to Christ, the Spiritual interpretation which they will often bear, and the exemplification which they afford of particular doctrines.¹⁶

Accepting then what may be called Hume's canon, that *no work can be reasonably ascribed to the agency of God, which is altogether different from those ordinary works from which our knowledge of him is originally obtained*, we have shown that the Miracles of Scripture, far from being exceptionable on that account, are strongly recommended by their coincidence with what we know from nature of his Providence and Moral attributes. That there are some few among them in which this coincidence cannot be traced, it is not necessary to deny. As a whole they bear a determinate and consistent character, being great and extraordinary means for attaining a great, momentous, and extraordinary object.

We shall not however dismiss this criterion of the antecedent probability of a Miracle with which Hume has furnished us, without showing that it is more or less detrimental to the pretensions of *all* professed Miracles *but* those of the Jewish and Christian Revelations:—in other words, that none else are likely to have occurred, because none else can with any probability be referred to the agency of the Deity, the only known cause of miraculous interposition. We exclude then

Tests, derived from our knowledge of the divine attributes, by which all but Scripture Miracles are excluded.

1. THOSE WHICH ARE NOT EVEN REFERRED BY THE WORKERS OF THEM TO DIVINE AGENCY.

Such are the extraordinary works attributed by some to Zoroaster; and, again, to Pythagoras, Empedocles, Apollonius, and others of their School; which only claim to be the result of their superior wisdom, and were quite independent of a Supreme Being.¹⁷ Such are the supposed effects of witchcraft or of magical charms, which profess to originate with Spirits and Demons; for, as these agents, supposing them to exist, did not make the world, there is every reason for thinking they cannot of themselves alter its arrangements.¹⁸ And those, as in some accounts of apparitions, which are silent respecting their origin, and are referred to God from the mere necessity of the case.

Miracles not from God.

¹⁶ Jones, On the Figurative Language of Scripture, Lect. 10. Farmer, On Miracles, Ch. III. Sec. 6, 2.

¹⁷ See, in contrast, Gen. xl. 8; xli. 16; Dan. ii. 27—30, 47; Acts iii. 12—16; xiv. 11—18; a contrast sustained, as these passages show, for 1500 years.

¹⁸ Sometimes charms are represented as having an inherent virtue, independent of invisible agents, as in the account given by Josephus of Eleazar's drawing out a devil through the nostrils of a patient by means of a ring, which contained in it a drug prescribed by Solomon. Joseph. Antiq. VIII. 2, Sec. 5. See Acts viii. 19.

2. THOSE WHICH ARE UNWORTHY OF AN ALL-WISE AUTHOR.

Miracles
unworthy
of God.

As, for example, the Miracles of Simon Magus, who pretended he could assume the appearance of a serpent, exhibit himself with two faces, and transform himself into whatever shape he pleased.¹⁹ Such are most of the Miracles recorded in the apocryphal accounts of Christ:²⁰ *e.g.* the sudden ceasing of all kinds of motion at his birth, birds stopping in the midst of their flight, men at table with their hands to their mouths yet unable to eat, &c.; his changing, when a child, his playmates into kids, and animating clay figures of beasts and birds; the practice attributed to him of appearing to his disciples sometimes as a youth, sometimes as an old man, sometimes as a child, sometimes large, sometimes less, sometimes so tall as to reach the Heavens; and the obeisance paid him by the military standards when he was brought before Pilate. Of the same cast is the story of his picture presented by Nicodemus to Gamaliel, which when pierced by the Jews gave forth blood and water. Under this head of exception fall many of the Miracles related by the fathers:²¹ *e.g.* that of the consecrated bread changing into a live coal in the hands of a woman, who came to the Lord's supper after offering incense to an idol; of the dove issuing from the body of Polycarp at his martyrdom; of the petrification of a fowl dressed by a person under a vow of abstinence; of the exorcism of the demoniac camel; of the stones shedding tears at the barbarity of the persecutions; of inundations rising up to the roofs of churches without entering the open doors; and of pieces of gold, as fresh as from the mint, dropt from heaven into the laps of the Italian Monks. Of the same character are the Miracles of the Romish Breviary; as the prostration of wild beasts before the martyrs they were about to devour; the Miraculous uniting of two chains with which St. Peter had been at different times bound; and the burial of Paul the Hermit by lions. Such again are the Rabbinical Miracles, as that of the flies killed by lightning for settling on a Rabbi's paper. And the Miracles ascribed by some to Mohammed, as that the trees went out to meet him, the stones saluted him, and a camel complained to him.²² The exorcism in the Book of Tobit must here be mentioned, in which the Evil Spirit who is in love with Sara is driven away by the smell of certain perfumes.²³ Hence the Scripture accounts of Eve's temptation by the serpent; of the speaking of Balaam's ass; of Jonah and the whale; and of the Devils sent into the herd of swine, are *by themselves* more or less improbable, being unequal in dignity

¹⁹ Lavington, Enthusiasm of Meth. and Papists comp. Part III. Sec. 43.

²⁰ Jones, On the Canon, Part III.

²¹ Middleton, Free Inquiry.

²² The offensiveness of these, and many others above instanced, consists in attributing *moral* feelings to inanimate or irrational beings.

²³ It seems to have been a common notion that possessed persons were beloved by the Spirit that distressed them. See Philostr. IV. 25.—Gospel of the Infancy, XIV.—XVI. XXXIII. Justin Martyr, Apol. p. 113, Ed. Thirlb. We find nothing of this kind in the account of the Scripture demoniacs.

to the rest. They are then supported by the system in which they are found, as being a few out of a multitude, and therefore but exceptions (and, as we suppose, but *apparent* exceptions) to the general rule. In some of them, too, a further purpose is discernible, which of itself reconciles us to the strangeness of their first appearance, and suggests the possibility of similar reasons, though unknown, being assigned in explanation of the rest. As the Miracle of the swine, the object of which may have been to prove to us the reality of demoniacal possessions.²⁴

Miracles of mere power, even when connected with some ultimate object, are often improbable for the same general reason, viz. as unworthy of an All-wise Author. Such as that ascribed to Zoroaster,²⁵ of suffering melted brass to be poured upon his breast without injury to himself. Unless indeed their immediate design be to exemplify the greatness of God, as in the descent of fire from heaven upon Elijah's sacrifice, and in Christ's walking on the sea,²⁶ which evidently possess a dignity fitting them to be works of the Supreme Being. The propriety indeed of the Christian Miracles, contrasted with the want of decorum observable in those elsewhere related, forms a most striking evidence of their divinity.

Here, too, *ambiguous* Miracles find a place, it being antecedently improbable that the Almighty should rest the credit of his Revelation upon events which but obscurely implied his immediate presence.

And, for the same reason, those are in some measure improbable *which are professed by different Religions*; because from a divine agent may be expected distinct and peculiar specimens of divine agency. Hence the claims to supernatural power in the primitive Church are in general questionable, as *resting* upon the exorcism of Evil Spirits, and the cure of diseases; works, not only less satisfactory than others, as evidence of a Miraculous interposition, but suspicious from the circumstance, that they were exhibited also by Jews and Gentiles of the same age.²⁷ In the plagues of Egypt and Elijah's sacrifice, which seem to be of this class, there is a direct contest between two parties; and the object of the divine messenger is to show his own superiority in the very point in which his adversaries try their powers. Our Saviour's use of the clay in restoring

²⁴ Divine Legation, Book IX. Ch. V.

²⁵ Brucker, Vol. I. p. 147.

²⁶ Power over the elements conveyed the most striking proof of Christ's mission from the God of nature, who in the Old Testament is frequently characterised as ruling the sea, winds, &c. Ps. lxxv. 7; lxxvii. 19; Job xxxviii. 11, &c. It is said, that a drawing of feet upon the water was the hieroglyphic for impossibility. Christ moreover designed, it appears, to make trial of his disciples' faith by this Miracle. See Matt. xiv. 28

—31; Mark vi. 52. We read of the power to "move mountains," but evidently as a proverbial expression. The transfiguration, if it need be mentioned, has a *doctrinal* sense, and seems besides to have been intended to lead the minds of the Apostles to the consideration of the Spiritual Kingdom. One of Satan's temptations was to induce our Lord to work a Miracle of mere power. Matt. iv. 6, 7. See Acts x. 38, for the general character of the Miracles.

²⁷ Middleton. Stillingfleet, Orig. Sacr. II. 9, Sec. I.

sight has been accounted for on a similar principle, such external means being in repute among the Heathen in their pretended cures.

3. THOSE WHICH HAVE NO PROFESSED OBJECT.

Miracles
without
object.

Hence a suspicion is thrown on all miracles ascribed by the Apocryphal Gospels to Christ in his *infancy*; for, being prior to his preaching, they seem to attest no doctrine, and are but distantly connected with any object.—Those again on which an object seems to be *forced*. Hence many harmonizing in one plan arrest the attention more powerfully than a detached and solitary Miracle, as converging to one point, and pressing upon our notice the end for which they are wrought. This remark, as far as it goes, is prejudicial to the Miracle wrought (as it is said) in Hunneric's persecution, long after the real age of Miracles was past; when the Athanasian confessors are reported to have retained the power of speech after the loss of their tongues.

Those, too, must be viewed with suspicion *which are disjoined from human instruments, and are made the vehicle of no message*; ²⁸ since, according to our foregoing view, Miracles are only then divested of their *à priori* improbability when furthering some great Moral end, such as authenticating a divine communication. It is an objection then to those ascribed to relics generally, and in particular to those attributed to the tomb of the Abbé Paris, that they are left to tell their own story, and are but distantly connected with any object whatever. As it is, again, to many tales of apparitions, that they do not admit of a meaning, and consequently demand at most only an *otiose* assent, as Paley terms it. Hence there is a difficulty in the narrative contained in the first verses of John v.; because we cannot reduce the account of the descent of the angel into the water to give it a healing power under any known arrangement of the divine economy. We receive it, then, on the general credit of the Revelation of which it forms part.²⁹

For the same reason, *viz.* the want of a declared object, a prejudice is excited *when the professed worker is silent, or diffident as to his own power*; since our general experience of Providence leads us to suppose that Miraculous powers will not be committed to an individual who is not also prepared for his office by secret inspiration. This speaks strongly against the cures ascribed by Tacitus to Vespasianus, and would be an objection to our crediting the prediction uttered by Caiaphas, if separated from its context, or prominently brought forward to rest an argument upon. It is in general a characteristic of the Scripture system, that Miracles and inspiration go together.³⁰—With a view to specify the object distinctly, some have required that the Miracle should be wrought

²⁸ Farmer, On Miracles, Ch. V.

²⁹ The verse containing the account of the Angel is wanting in many MSS. of authority, and is marked as suspicious

by Griesbach. The mineral spring of Bethesda is mentioned by Eusebius as celebrated even in his day.

³⁰ Douglas's Criterion. Warburton, Sermon on Resurrection.

after the delivery of the message.³¹ A message delivered an indefinite time after the Miracle, while it cannot but excite attention from the general reputation of the messenger for an extraordinary gift, is not so expressly stamped with divine authority, as when it is ushered in by his claiming, and followed by his displaying, supernatural powers. For if a Miracle, once wrought, ever after sanctions the doctrines taught by the person exhibiting it, it must be attended by the gift of infallibility; a sustained Miracle is inconsistent with that frugality in the application of power which is observable in the general course of Providence.³² On the other hand, when an unambiguous Miracle, having been first distinctly announced, is wrought with the professed object of sanctioning a message from God, it conveys an irresistible evidence of its divine origin. Accident is thus excluded, and the final cause indissolubly connected with the supernatural event. We may remark that the Miracles of Scripture were generally wrought on this plan.³³ In conformity to which, we find moreover that the Apostles, &c. could not work Miracles *when they pleased*; ³⁴ a circumstance more consistent with our ideas of the divine government, and connecting the extraordinary acts more clearly with specific objects than if the supernatural gifts were unlimited and irrevocable.

Lastly, under this head we may notice Miraculous accounts, *which*, as those concerning Apollonius, *may be separated from a narrative without detriment to it*. The prodigies of Livy, *e.g.* form no part in the action of the history, which is equally intelligible without them.³⁵ The Miraculous events of the Pentateuch, on the contrary, or of the Gospels and Acts, though of course they may be rejected *together with* the rest of the narrative, can be rejected in no other way; since they form its substance and groundwork, and, like the figure of Phidias on Minerva's shield, cannot be erased without spoiling the entire composition.³⁶

³¹ Fleetwood, Farmer, and others.

³² The idea is accordingly discountenanced, Matt. vii. 22, 23; Heb. vi. 4-6; Gal. ii. 11-14.

³³ St. Mark ends his Gospel by saying, that the Apostles "went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs FOLLOWING," ch. xvi. 20. See also Exod. iv. 29, 30; 1 Kings xiii. 2, 3; 2 Kings xx. 8-11; Acts xiv. 3, &c.

³⁴ *E.G.* Acts xx. 22, 23; Phil. ii. 27; 2 Tim. iv. 20. In the Book of Acts we have not a few instances of the Apostles acting under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit. The gift of tongues is an exception to the general remark, as we know it was abused; but this from its nature was, when once given, possessed as an ordinary talent, and needed no fresh divine influence for subsequent exercise of it. It may besides be viewed as a *medium* of conveying the message, as well

as being the seal of its divinity, and as such needed not in every instance to be marked out as a supernatural gift. Miracles in Scripture are *not* done by *wholesale*, *i.e.* indiscriminately, and at once, without the particular will and act of the gifted individual; the contrary was the case with the cures at the tomb of the Abbé Paris. Acts xix. 11, 12, perhaps forms an exception; but the Miracles there mentioned are expressly said to be *special*, and were intended to put particular honour on the Apostle; Cf. Luke vi. 19; viii. 46, which seem to illustrate John iii. 34.

³⁵ *E.G.* he says "ADJICIUNT miracula huic pugna," II. 7.

³⁶ Whereas other extraordinary accounts are like the statue of the Goddess herself, which could readily be taken to pieces, and resolved into its constituent parts, the precious metal and the stone. For the Jewish Miracles, see Graves, On the Pentateuch, Part I. It has been

4. THOSE WHICH ARE EXCEPTIONABLE AS REGARDS THEIR OBJECT.

Miracles
with
insufficient
object.

If the professed object be *trifling and unimportant*; as in many related by the Fathers, *e.g.* Tertullian's account of the vision of an Angel to prescribe to a female the exact length and measure of her veil, or the divine admonition which Cyprian professes to have received to mix water with wine in the Eucharist, in order to render it efficacious.³⁷ Among these would be reckoned the directions given to Moses relative to the furnishing of the Tabernacle, and other regulations of the ceremonial law, were not further and important objects thereby affected; such as, separating the Israelites from the surrounding nations, impressing upon them the doctrine of a particular Providence, prefiguring future events, &c.

Miracles wrought for the gratification of mere *curiosity* are referable to this head of objection. Hence the triumphant invitations which some of the Fathers make to their heathen opponents to attend their exorcisms excite an unpleasant feeling in the mind, as degrading a solemn spectacle into a mere popular exhibition.

Those, again, which have a *political or party object*; as the cures ascribed to Vespasianus, or as those attributed to the tomb of the Abbé Paris, and the Eclectic prodigies—all which, viewed in their best light, tend to the mere aggrandizement of a particular Sect, and have little or no reference to the good of Mankind at large. It tells in favour of the Christian Miracles, that the Apostles, generally speaking, were not enabled to work them for their own personal convenience, to avoid danger, escape suffering, or save life. St Paul's preservation from the effects of the viper's bite on the Isle of Melita is a solitary exception to this remark, no mention being made of his availing himself of this Miracle to proselyte the natives to the Christian faith.³⁸

For a similar reason, those bear a less appearance of probability which are wrought *for the conviction of individuals*. We have already noticed the contrary character of the Scripture Miracles in this respect: *e.g.* St. Paul's Miraculous conversion did not end with itself, but was followed by momentous and inestimable consequences.³⁹ Again, Miracles attended the conversions of the Æthiopian Eunuch, Cornelius, and Sergius Paulus; but these were heads and first fruits of different classes of men who were in time to be brought into the Church.⁴⁰

Miracles *with a bad or vicious object* are laden with an extreme antecedent improbability; for they cannot at all be referred to the

observed, that the *discourses* of Christ so constantly grow out of his *Miracles*, that we can hardly admit the former without admitting the latter also. But his *discourses* form his *character*, which is by no means an obvious or easy one to imagine, had it never existed.

³⁷ Middleton, *Free Inquiry*.

³⁸ Rev. J. Blanco White, *Against Catholicism*, Let. 6. The Breviary Miracles form a striking contrast to the Christian in this point.

³⁹ Acts xxvi. 16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* viii. 26, 39; x. 3, &c.; xiii. 12. These three classes are mentioned together in prophecy. Isa. lvi. 4—8.

only known cause of supernatural power, the agency of God. Such are most of the fables concerning the heathen Deities; not a few of the professed Miracles of the primitive Church, which are wrought to sanction doctrines opposed not only to Scriptural truth but to the light of nature;⁴¹ and some related in the Apocryphal Gospels, especially Christ's inflicting death upon a schoolmaster who threatened to strike him, and on a boy who happened to run violently against him.⁴² Here must be noticed several passages in Scripture, in which a Miraculous gift seems at first sight to be exercised to gratify revengeful feelings, and which are, therefore, received on the credit of the system.⁴³

Unnecessary Miracles are improbable; as, those wrought for an object attainable without an exertion, or with less exertion, of extraordinary power.⁴⁴ Of this kind, we contend, would be the writing of the Gospel on the skies, which some unbelievers have proposed as but an adequate attestation to a Revelation; for, *supposing* the recorded fact of their once occurring be sufficient for a rational conviction, a perpetual Miracle becomes superfluous.⁴⁵—Such, again, would be the preservation of the text of Scripture in its verbal correctness, which many have supposed necessary for its infallibility as a standard of Truth.—The same antecedent objection presses on Miracles wrought *in attestation of truths already known*. We do not, *e.g.* require a Miracle to convince us that the Sun shines, or that Vice is blameable. The Socinian scheme is in a great measure chargeable with bringing the Miracles of the Gospel under this censure; for it prunes away the Christian system till little is left for the Miracles to attest. On this ground an objection has been taken to the Miracle wrought in favour of the Athanasians in Hunneric's persecution, as above mentioned; inasmuch as it merely professes to authorize a comment on the sacred text, *i.e.* to sanction a truth which is not *new*, unless Scripture be *obscure*.⁴⁶—Here, too, may be noticed Miracles wrought *in evidence of doctrines already established*; such as those of the Papists, who seem desirous of answering the unbeliever's demand for a perpetual Miracle. Popish Miracles, as has often been observed, occur in Popish countries, where they are least wanted; whereas, if real, they would be invaluable among Protestants. Hence the primitive Miracles become

⁴¹ *E.g.* to establish Monachism, &c.

⁴² Jones, On the Canon, Part III.

⁴³ Gen. ix. 24—27; Judges xvi. 28—30; 2 Kings ii. 24; 2 Chron. xxiv. 22.

⁴⁴ It does not follow, because all Miracles are equally *easy* to an Almighty author that all are equally *probable*; for, as has been often remarked, a frugality in the application of power is observable throughout his works.

⁴⁵ Dr. Graves observes, of the Miraculous agency in the Age of Moses and Joshua, that "God continued it *only so*

long as was indispensably necessary to introduce and settle the Jewish nation in the land of their inheritance, and establish this dispensation so as to answer the purposes of the divine economy. After this, he gradually withdrew his supernatural assistance; he left the nation collectively and individually to act according to their own choice," &c. Lectures on the Pentateuch, Part III. Lect. 2.

⁴⁶ See Maclaine's Note on the subject, Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. Cent. V. Part II. Ch. V.

suspicious, in proportion as we find Christianity established, not only from the increasing facility of fraud, but moreover from the apparent needlessness of the extraordinary display. And hence, admitting the Miracles of Christ and his followers, future Miracles with the same end are somewhat improbable. For enough have been wrought to *attest* the doctrine; and *attention*, when once excited by supernatural means, may be kept alive by a standing Ministry, just as inspiration is supplied by human learning.

We proceed to notice *inconsistency in the objects proposed*, as creating a just prejudice against the validity of Miraculous pretensions. This applies to the claims of the Romish Church, in which Miracles are wrought by hostile Sects in support of discordant tenets.⁴⁷ It constitutes some objection to the bulk of the Miracles of the primitive Church, when viewed as a *continuation* of the original gift, that they differ so much in manner, design, and attendant circumstances, from those recorded in Scripture. "We see," says Middleton, (in the ages subsequent to the Christian era) "a dispensation of things ascribed to God, quite different from that which we meet with in the New Testament. For in those days, the power of working Miracles was committed to none but the Apostles, and to a few of the most eminent of the other disciples, who were particularly commissioned to propagate the Gospel and preside in the Church of Christ. But upon the pretended revival of the same powers in the following Ages, we find the administration of them committed, not to those who were intrusted with the government of the Church, not to the successors of the Apostles, to the Bishops, the Martyrs, nor to the principal champions of the Christian cause; but to *boys*, to *women*, and, above all, to *private and obscure laymen*, not only of an inferior but sometimes also of a *bad character*."⁴⁸—Hence, to avoid the charge of inconsistency in the respective objects of the Jewish and Christian Miracles, it is incumbent upon believers in them to show that the difference between the two systems is a difference in appearance only, and that Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil the Law. Here, *as far as its antecedent appearance is concerned*, the Miracle said to have occurred on Julian's attempt to rebuild the Jewish Temple is seen to great advantage. The object was great, the time critical, its consequences harmonize very happily with the economy of the Mosaic dispensa-

⁴⁷ Douglas, Criterion, p. 105, Note, (8vo edit. 1807.)

⁴⁸ Scripture sometimes attributes Miraculous gifts to men of bad character; but we have no reason for supposing such could work Miracles at pleasure, (see Numb. xxii. 18; xxiii. 3, 8, 12, 20; xxiv. 10—13,) or attest any doctrine but that which Christ and his Apostles taught; nor is our faith grounded upon their preaching. Moreover, their power may have been given them for some further

purpose; for though to attest a divine message be the *primary* object of Miracles, it need not be the only object. "It would be highly ridiculous," says Mr. Penrose in his recent work on Miracles, "to erect a steam engine for the mere purpose of opening and shutting a valve; but the engine being erected is very wisely employed both for this and for many other purposes, which, comparatively speaking, are of very little significance."

tion, and the general spirit of the Prophetical writings, and the fact itself has some correspondence with the prodigies which preceded the final destruction of Jerusalem.⁴⁹

Again, Miracles *which do not tend to the accomplishment of their proposed end* are open to objection; and those *which have not effected what they had in view*. Hence some kind of argument might be derived against the Christian Miracles, were they not accompanied by a prediction of their *temporary* failure in effecting their object; or, to speak more correctly, were it not their proposed object *gradually* to spread the doctrines which they authenticate.⁵⁰ There is nothing, however, to break the force of this objection when directed against the Miracles ascribed to the Abbé Paris; since the Jansenist interest, instead of being advanced in consequence of them, soon after lost ground, and was ultimately ruined.⁵¹

These Miracles are also suspicious, *as having been stopped by human authority*; it being improbable that a divine agent should permit any such interference with his plan. The same objection applies to the professed gift of exorcising demoniacs in the primitive Church; which was gradually lost after the decree of the Council of Laodicea confined the exercise of it to such as were licensed by the Bishop.⁵² And lastly, to the supernatural character of Prince Hohenlohe's cures, which were stopped at Bamberg by an order from authority, that none should be wrought except in the presence of Magistrates and Medical practitioners.⁵³

These are the most obvious objections which may be fairly made to the antecedent probability of miraculous narratives. It will be observed, however, that none of them go so far as to deprive testimony for them of the privilege of being heard. Even where the nature of the facts related forbids us to refer the Miracle to divine agency, as when it is wrought to establish some immoral principle, still it is not more than extremely improbable and to be viewed with strong suspicion. Christians at least must acknowledge that the *à priori* view which Reason takes would in some cases lead to an erroneous conclusion. A Miracle, *e.g.* ascribed to an Evil Spirit is, prior to the information of Scripture, improbable; and if it stood on its own merits would require very strong testimony to establish it, as being referred to an unknown cause. Yet, on the authority of Scripture, we admit the occasional interference of agents short of divine with the course of nature. This, however, only shows that these *à priori* tests are not decisive. Yet if we cannot always

The foregoing tests neither disprove,

⁴⁹ See Warburton's Julian.

⁵⁰ See Parables in Matt. xiii. 3, 24, 31, 33, 47; xxiv. 12; Acts xx. 29, 30; 2 Thess. ii. 3; 2 Tim. iii. 1-5, &c.

⁵¹ Paley, Evidences, Part I. Prop. 2.

⁵² It had hitherto been in the hands of the meaner sort of the Christian laity. After that time, "few or none of the

clergy, nor indeed of the laity, were any longer able to cast out devils; so that the old Christian exorcism or prayer for the energumens in the church began soon after to be omitted as useless." Whiston, in Middleton.

⁵³ Bentham, Preuves Judiciaires, Liv. VIII. Ch. X.

ascertain what Miracles are improbable, at least we can determine what are not so; moreover, it will still be true that the *more* objections lie against any professed Miracle, the greater suspicion justly attaches to it, and the less important is the fact even if proved.

Nor prove,
any
professed
Miracles
to have
occurred.

On the other hand, even when the external appearance is altogether in favour of the Miracle, it must be recollected, nothing is thereby *proved* concerning the fact of its occurrence. We have done no more than recommend to notice the evidence, whatever it may be, which is offered in its behalf. Even, then, could Miracles be found with as strong an antecedent case as those of Scripture, still direct testimony must be produced to substantiate their claims on our belief. At the same time, since there are none such, a fair prepossession is indirectly created in favour of the latter, over and above their intrinsic claims on our attention.

They are
injurious to
some few
of the
Scripture
Miracles.

Some few indeed of the Scripture Miracles are open to exception; and have accordingly been noticed in the course of our remarks as *by themselves* improbable. These, however, are seldom such in more than *one* respect; whereas the other Miracles which came before us were open to *several or all of the specified objections at the same time*. And, further, as they are but a few in the midst of an overpowering majority pointing consistently to one grand object, they must not be torn from their Moral context, but, on the credit of the rest, they must be considered but apparent exceptions to the rule. It is obvious that a large system must consist of various parts of unequal utility and excellence; and to expect each particular occurrence to be complete in itself, is as unreasonable as to require the parts of some complicated machine, separately taken, to be all equally finished and fit for display.⁵⁴

Conclusion
of the
antecedent
question.

Let these remarks suffice on the question of the antecedent probability or improbability of a Miraculous narrative. Enough, it may be hoped, has been said, to separate the Miracles of Scripture from those elsewhere related, and to invest them with an importance exciting in an unprejudiced mind a just interest in their behalf, and a candid attention to the historical testimony on which they rest; inasmuch as they are ascribed to an adequate cause, recommended by an intrinsic dignity, and connected with an important object, while all others are more or less unaccountable, unmeaning, extravagant, and useless. And thus, *viz.* on the ground of this

⁵⁴ In thus refusing to admit the existence of *real* exceptions to the general rule, in spite of *appearances*, we are not exposing ourselves to that charge of excessive systematizing which may justly be brought against those who, with Hume, reject the very notion of a Miracle, as implying an interruption of physical regularity. For the *Revelation* which we admit, on the authority of the

general system of Miracles, imparts such accurate and extended information concerning the attributes of God, over and above the partial and imperfect view of them which the world affords, as precludes the supposition of *any* work of his being evil or useless. Whereas there is no *voice* in the mere analogy of nature which expressly denies the possibility of real exceptions to its general course.

utter dissimilarity between the Miracles of Scripture and other prodigies, we are enabled to account for the incredulity with which believers in Revelation listen to any extraordinary account at the present day; and which sometimes is urged against them as inconsistent with their assent to the former. It is *because* they admit the Scripture Miracles. Belief in these has pre-occupied their minds, and created a fair presumption against those of a different class;—the prospect of a recurrence of supernatural agency being in some measure discountenanced by the Revelation already given; and, again, the weakness and insipidity, the want of system and connexion, the deficiency in the evidence, and the transient repute of marvellous stories ever since, creating a strong and just prejudice against those similar accounts which from time to time are noised abroad.

III.

ON THE CRITERION OF A MIRACLE, CONSIDERED AS A DIVINE INTERPOSITION.

It has sometimes been asked, whether miracles are a *sufficient evidence* of the interposition of the Deity? under the idea that *other* causes, besides divine agency, might be assigned for their production. This is obviously the converse objection to that we have as yet considered, which was founded on the assumption that they could be referred to *no* known cause whatever. After showing, then, that the Scripture Miracles *may* be ascribed to the Supreme Being, we proceed to show that they *cannot* reasonably be ascribed to those other causes which have been sometimes assigned, *e.g.* to unknown laws of nature, or to the secret agency of Spirits.

1. Now it is evidently unphilosophical to attribute them to the power of invisible Beings, short of God; because, independently of Scripture, (the truth of which, of course, must not be assumed in this question,) we have no evidence of the existence of such beings. Nature attests, indeed, the being of a God, but not of a race of intelligent creatures between Him and Man. In assigning a Miracle, therefore, to the influence of Spirits, an hypotheticalal cause is introduced merely to remove a difficulty. And even did analogy lead us to admit their possible existence, yet it would tend rather to disprove than to prove their power over the visible creation. They may be confined to their own province, and though superior to Man, still may be unable to do many things which he can effect; just as Man in turn is superior to Birds and Fishes, without having, in consequence, the power of flying or of inhabiting the water.⁶⁵

Miracles
cannot
reasonably
be referred
to the
power of
Spirits,

Still it may be necessary to show, that *on our own principles* we are not open to any charge of inconsistency. For it has been ques-

Even though
Scripture
informs us
of their
power.

tioned, whether, in admitting the existence and power of Spirits on the authority of Revelation, we are not in danger of invalidating the evidence upon which that authority rests. For the cogency of the argument from Miracles depends on the assumption, that interruptions in the course of nature must ultimately proceed from God; which is not true, if they may be effected by other Beings without his sanction. And it must be conceded, that explicit as Scripture is in considering Miracles as signs of divine agency, it still does seem to give created Spirits some power of working them; and even, in its most literal sense, intimates the possibility of their working them in opposition to the true doctrine.⁵⁶ With a view of meeting this difficulty, some writers have attempted to make a distinction between *great* and *small*, *many* and *few* Miracles; and have thus inadvertently destroyed the intelligibility of any, as the *criterion* of a divine interposition.⁵⁷ Others, by referring to the nature of the *doctrine* attested, for determining the author of the Miracle, have exposed themselves to the plausible charge of adducing, first, the Miracle to attest the divinity of the doctrine, and then, the doctrine to prove the divinity of the Miracle.⁵⁸ Others, on the contrary, have thought themselves obliged to *deny* the power of Spirits altogether, and to explain away the Scripture accounts of Demoniacal possessions, and the narrative of our Lord's Temptation.⁵⁹ Without, however, having recourse to any of these dangerous modes of answering the objection, it may be sufficient to reply, that, *since*, agreeably to the antecedent sentiment of reason, God has adopted Miracles as the seal of a divine message, we believe he will never suffer

⁵⁶ Deut. xiii. 1—3; Matt. xxiv. 24; 2 Thess. ii. 9—11.

⁵⁷ More or less, Sherlock, Clarke, Locke, and others.

⁵⁸ Prideaux, Clarke, Chandler, &c., seem hardly to have guarded sufficiently against the charge here noticed. There is an appearance of doing honour to the Christian doctrines in representing them as *intrinsically* credible, which leads many into supporting opinions which, carried to their full extent, (as they were by Middleton,) supersede the need of Miracles altogether. It must be recollected, too, that they who are allowed to *praise* have the privilege of *finding fault*, and may reject, according to their *à priori* notions, as well as receive. Doubtless the divinity of a clearly immoral doctrine could not be evidenced by Miracles; for our belief in the Moral attributes of God is much stronger than our conviction of the negative proposition, that *none but He* can interfere with the system of nature. But there is always the danger of extending this admission beyond its proper limits, of supposing ourselves adequate judges of the *tendency* of doctrines, and, because unassisted Reason informs us what is Moral and

immoral *in our own case*, of attempting to decide on the *abstract* Morality of actions: *e.g.* many have rejected the Miraculous narrative of the Pentateuch, from an unfounded and unwarrantable opinion, that the means employed in settling the Jews in Canaan were in themselves *immoral*. These remarks are in nowise inconsistent with using (as was done in a former section) our *actual knowledge* of God's attributes, obtained from a survey of nature and human affairs, in determining the probability of certain professed Miracles having proceeded from Him. It is one thing to *infer* from the *experience* of life, another to *imagine* the character of God from the *gratuitous conceptions* of our own minds. From *experience* we gain but general and imperfect ideas of wisdom, goodness, &c. enough (that is) to bear witness to a Revelation when given, not enough to supersede it. On the contrary, our *speculations* concerning the divine attributes and designs, professing as they do to decide on the truth of Revealed doctrines, in fact go to supersede the necessity of a Revelation altogether.

⁵⁹ Especially Farmer.

them to be so counterfeited as to deceive the humble inquirer. Thus the information given by Scripture in nowise undoes the original conclusions of Reason; for it anticipates the objection which itself furnishes, and by revealing the express *intention* of God in Miraculous displays, guarantees to us that he will allow no interference of created power to embarrass the proof thence resulting, of his special interposition.⁶⁰ It is unnecessary to say more on this subject; and questions concerning the existence, nature, and limits of Spiritual agency will find their place when Christians are engaged in settling among themselves the doctrines of Scripture. We take it, therefore, for granted, as an obvious and almost undeniable principle, that real Miracles, *i.e.* interruptions in the course of nature, cannot reasonably be referred to any power but divine: because it is natural to refer an alteration in the system to its original author, and because Reason does not inform us of any other Being but God exterior to nature; and lastly, because in the particular case of the Scripture Miracles, the workers of them confirm our previous judgment by expressly attributing them to Him.

2. A more subtle question remains, respecting the possible existence of causes in nature, to us unknown, by the supposed operation of which the apparent anomalies may be reconciled to the ordinary laws of the system. It has already been admitted, that some difficulty will at times attend the discrimination of Miraculous from merely uncommon events; and it must be borne in mind, that in this, as in all questions from which demonstration is excluded, it is impossible, from the nature of the case, absolutely to *disprove* any, even the wildest, hypothesis which may be framed. It may freely be granted, moreover, that some of the Scripture Miracles, if they stood alone, might reasonably be referred to natural principles of which we were ignorant, or resolved into some happy combination of accidental circumstances. For our purpose, it is quite sufficient if there be a *considerable number* which no sober judgment would attempt to deprive of their supernatural character, by any supposition of our ignorance of natural laws, or of exaggeration in the narrative. Raising the dead and giving sight to the blind by a word, feeding a multitude with the casual provisions which an individual among them had with him, healing persons at a distance, and walking on the water, are facts, even separately taken, far beyond the conceivable effects of artifice or accident; and much more so, when they meet together in one and the same history. And here Hume's argument from general experience is in point, which at least proves that the *ordinary* powers of nature are unequal to the production of works of this kind. It becomes, then, a balance of opposite probabilities, whether gratuitously to suppose a *multitude* of perfectly *unknown* causes, and these, moreover, *meeting* in one and the same

Nor to
unknown
laws of
nature.

⁶⁰ Fleetwood, On Miracles, Disc. 2, p. 201. Van Mildert's Boyle Lectures, Serm. 21.

history, or to have recourse to *one*, and that a *known* power, then Miraculously exerted for an extraordinary and worthy object. We may safely say no sound reasoner will hesitate on which alternative to decide. While, then, a fair proportion of the Scripture Miracles are indisputably deserving of their name, but a weak objection can be derived from the case of the few which, owing to accidental circumstances, bear, at the present day, less decisive marks of supernatural agency. For, be it remembered, (and it is a strong confirmatory proof that the Jewish and Christian Miracles are really what they profess to be,) that though the Miraculous character of *some* of them is more doubtful in one Age than in another, yet the progress of Science has made no approximation to a *general* explication of them on natural principles. While discoveries in Optics and Chemistry have accounted for a host of apparent Miracles, they hardly touch upon those of the Jewish and Christian systems. Here is no phantasmagoria to be detected, no analysis or synthesis of substances, ignitions, explosions, and other customary resources of the juggler's art.⁶¹—But, as before, we shall best be able to estimate their character in this respect, by contrasting them with other occurrences which have sometimes been considered Miraculous. Thus, too, a second line of difference will be drawn between them and the mass of rival prodigies, whether Religious or otherwise, to which they are often compared.

A Miracle, then, as far as it is an evidence of divine interposition, being an ascertained anomaly in an established system, or an event without assignable physical cause, those facts of course have no title to the name—

1. WHICH MAY BE REFERRED TO MISSTATEMENT IN THE NARRATION.

Such are many of the prodigies of the Heathen Mythology and History, which have been satisfactorily traced to an *exaggeration of natural events*: e.g. the fables of the Cyclops, Centaurs, of the annual transformation of a Scythian nation into wolves, as related by Herodotus, &c. Or *natural facts allegorized*, as in the fable of Scylla and Charybdis.—Or where the fact may be explained by *supplying a probable omission*; as we should account for a story of a man sailing in the air, by supposing a balloon described.⁶²—Or where the Miracle is but *verbal*, as the poetical prodigy of thunder without clouds; which is little better than a play upon words, for, supposing it to occur, it would not be called thunder.—Or as when Herodotus speaks of wool growing on trees; for, even were it in substance the same as wool, it could not be called so without a contradiction in terms.—Or where the Miracle is one simply of *degree*, for then exaggeration is more easily conceivable;—thus many supposed visions may have been but natural dreams.—Or

⁶¹ See Farmer, Ch. I. Sec. 3.

⁶² Bentham, Preuves Judiciaires, Liv. VIII. Ch. X.

Tests
between real
and
apparent
Miracles
deduced
from the
definition of
the term.

Natural
events
mis-stated.

where it depends on the combination of a multitude of distinct circumstances, each of which is necessary for the proof of its supernatural character, and where, as in fine experiments, a small mistake is of vast consequence. As those which depend on a *coincidence of time*, which it is difficult for any persons to have ascertained; e.g. the exclamation which Apollonius is said to have uttered concerning the assassination of Domitianus at the time of its taking place; and again, the alleged fact of his appearing at Puteoli on the same morning in which he was tried at Rome. Such, too, in some degree is the professed revelation made to St. Basil, who is said to have been Miraculously informed of the death of the Emperor Julian at the *very moment* that it took place.⁶³ Here we may instance many stories of apparitions; as the popular one concerning the appearance of an individual to the club he used to frequent *at the moment after his death*, who was afterwards discovered to have escaped from his nurses in a fit of delirium *shortly before* it took place, and actually to have joined his friends. We may add the case related to M. Bonnet, of a woman who pretended to know what was passing at a given time at any part of the globe; and who was detected by the simple expedient of accurately marking the time, and comparing her account with the fact.⁶⁴ In the same class must be reckoned not a few of the answers of the Heathen Oracles, if it be worth while to allude to them; as that which informed Croesus of his occupation at a certain time agreed upon. In the Gospel, the nobleman's son begins to amend at the very time that Christ speaks the word; but this circumstance does not constitute, it merely increases the Miracle.—The argument from Prophecy is in this point of view somewhat deficient in simplicity and clearness; as implying the decision of many previous questions, e.g. as to the existence of the professed prediction before the event, the interval between the Prophecy and its accomplishment, the completeness of its accomplishment, &c. Hence Prophecy affords a more learned and less popular proof of divine interposition than Physical Miracles, and, except in cases where it contributes a very strong evidence, is commonly of inferior cogency.

2. THOSE WHICH FROM SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING THEM MAY NOT UNFAIRLY BE REFERRED TO AN UNKNOWN PHYSICAL CAUSE.

As those which take place in departments of nature little understood, e.g. Miracles of Electricity.—Again, an assemblage of Miracles confined to *one* line of extraordinary exertion in some measure suggests the idea of a cause short of divine. For while their number evinces a wish to display, their similarity argues a defect in, power. This remark is prejudicial to the Miracles of the primitive Church, which consisted almost entirely of exorcisms and

Events
referable to
an unknown
cause.

⁶³ Middleton, Free Inquiry.

⁶⁴ Bentham, Preuves Judiciaires, Liv. VIII. Ch. X.

cures; to the Pythagorean, which were principally Miracles of sagacity; and again, to the wonders of the tomb of the Abbé Paris, which were limited to cures, and cures too of particular diseases. While the Miracles of Scripture are frugally dispensed as regards *their object and seasons*, they are endlessly varied in their *nature*; like the work of one who is not wasteful of his riches, yet can be munificent when occasion calls for it.

Here we may notice *tentative* Miracles, as Paley terms them, *i.e.* where out of many trials only some succeed; for inequality of success seems to imply *accident*, in other words, the combination of *unknown Physical causes*. Such are the cures of scrofula by the King's touch, and those effected in the Heathen Temples;⁶⁵ and again, those of the tomb of the Abbé Paris, there being but eight or nine well authenticated cures out of the multitude of trials that were made.⁶⁶ One of the peculiarities of the cures ascribed to Christ is his invariable success.⁶⁷

Here, for a second reason, *diffidence in the agent* casts suspicion on the reality of professed Miracles; for at least we have the sanction of his own opinion for supposing them to be the effect of accident or unknown causes.

Temporary Miracles also, as many of the Jansenists and other extraordinary cures,⁶⁸ may be similarly accounted for; for if ordinary causes can *undo*, it is not improbable they may be able originally to *effect*. The restoration of Lazarus and the rest were restorations to *their former condition*, which was mortal; their subsequent dissolution, then, in the course of nature, does not interfere with the completeness of the previous Miracle.

The Jansenist cures are also unsatisfactory, as being *gradual*, and, for the same reason, the professed liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood; a *progressive* effect being a characteristic, as it seems, of the operations of nature. Hence, those Miracles are most perspicuous which are wrought *at the word of command*; as those of Christ and his Apostles. For this as well as other reasons, *incomplete* Miracles, as imperfect cures, are no evidence of supernatural agency; and here, again, we have to instance the cures effected at the tomb of the Abbé Paris.

Again, the *use of means* is suspicious; for a Miracle may almost be defined to be an event *without means*. Hence, however miraculous the production of ice might appear to the Siamese considered *abstractedly*, they would hardly so account it in an actual *experiment*, when they saw the preparation of nitre, &c., which in that climate must have been used for the purpose. In the case of the Steam-vessel or the Balloon, which, it has been sometimes said, would

⁶⁵ Stillingfleet, Orig. Sacr. Book II. Ch. X. Sec. 9.

⁶⁶ Douglas, Criterion, p. 133.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 260, cites the following texts:

Matt. iv. 23, 24; viii. 16; ix. 35; xii. 15; xiv. 12; Luke iv. 40; vi. 19.

⁶⁸ Douglas, Criterion, p. 190. Mid-delton, Free Inquiry, IV. Sec. 3.

appear Miraculous to persons unacquainted with Science, the Chemical and Mechanical apparatus employed could not fail to rouse suspicion in intelligent minds.—Hence professed Miracles are open to suspicion, if *confined to one spot*; as were the Jansenist cures. For they then become connected with *a necessary condition*, which is all we understand by a *means*: e.g. such may often be imputed to a *confederacy*, which (as is evident) can from its nature seldom shift the scene of action. “The Cock-lane ghost could only knock and scratch in one place;”⁶⁹ the Apostles, on the contrary, are represented as dispersed about, and working Miracles in various parts of the world.⁷⁰ These remarks are of course inapplicable in a case where the apparent means are known to be inadequate, and are not constantly used; as our Lord’s *occasional* application of clay to the eyes, which, while it proves that he did not need its instrumentality, convey also an intimation, that all the efficacy of means is derived from his appointment.

3. THOSE WHICH MAY BE REFERRED TO THE SUPPOSED OPERATION OF A CAUSE KNOWN TO EXIST.

Professed Miracles of *knowledge* or *mental ability* are often unsatisfactory for this reason; being in many cases referable to the ordinary powers of the intellect. Of this kind is the boasted elegance of the style of the Koran, alleged by Mohammed in evidence of his divine mission. Hence most of the Miracles of Apollonius, consisting, as they do, in knowing the thoughts of others, and predicting the common events of life, are no criterion of a supernatural gift; it being only under certain circumstances that such power can clearly be discriminated from the natural exercise of acuteness and sagacity. Accordingly, though a knowledge of the hearts of men is claimed by Christ, it seems to be claimed rather with a view to prove to *Christians* the *doctrine* of his divine nature, than to *attest* to the *world* his authority as a messenger from God. Again, St. Paul’s prediction of shipwreck on his voyage to Rome was intended to *prevent* it; and so was the prediction of Agabus concerning the same Apostle’s approaching perils at Jerusalem.⁷¹ For a second reason, then, the argument from Prophecy is a less *simple* and *striking* proof of divine agency than a display of Miracles; it being impossible *in all cases* to show that the things foretold were certainly beyond the ordinary faculties of the mind to have discovered. Yet *when this is shown*, Prophecy is one of the most powerful of conceivable evidences; strict foreknowledge being a faculty not only above the powers but even above the comprehension of the human mind.

And much more fairly may apparent Miracles be attributed to the supposed operation of an existing Physical cause, when they

Events referable to the supposed operation of a known cause.

⁶⁹ Hey’s Lectures, Book I. Ch. XVI. Sec. 10.

⁷⁰ Douglas, Criterion, p. 337.

⁷¹ Acts xxi. 10–14; xxvii. 10, 21.

are *parallel to its known effects*; as Chemical, Meteorological, &c., phenomena. For though the cause may not perhaps appear in the particular case, yet it is known to have acted in others similar to it. For this reason, no stress can be laid on accounts of luminous crosses in the air, human shadows in the clouds, appearances of men and horses on hills, and spectres when they are speechless, as is commonly the case, ordinary causes being assignable in all of these; or, again, on the pretended liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, or on the exorcism of demoniacs, which is the most frequent Miracle in the primitive Church.—The remark applies moreover to cases of healing, *so far as they are not instantaneous, complete, &c.*; conditions which exclude the supposition of natural means being employed, and which are strictly fulfilled in the Gospel narrative.—Again, some cures are known as possible effects of an *excited imagination*; particularly when the disease arises from obstruction and other disorders of the blood and spirits, as the cures which took place at the tomb of the Abbé Paris.⁷² We should be required to add those cases of healing in Scripture, where the *faith* of the petitioners was a necessary condition of the cure, were not these comparatively few, and some of them such as no imagination could have effected, (*e.g.* the restoration of sight,) and some wrought on persons *absent*; and were not faith often required, *not* of the patient, but of the relative or friend who brought him to be healed.⁷³ The force of imagination may also be alleged to account for the supposed visions and voices which some enthusiasts have believed they saw and heard: *e.g.* the trances of Montanus and his followers, the visions related by some of the Fathers, and those of the Romish Saints; lastly, Mahomet's pretended night-journey to Heaven: all which, granting the sincerity of the reporters, may not unreasonably be referred to the effects of disease or of an excited imagination. Such, it is obvious, *might* be some of the Scripture Miracles, *e.g.* the various appearances of Angels to individuals, the vision of St. Paul when he was transported to the third Heaven, &c., which accordingly were wrought, as Scripture professes, for purposes distinct from that of *evidencing* the doctrine, *viz.* in order to become the medium of a Revelation, or to confirm faith, &c. In other cases, however, the supposition of imagination is excluded by the vision having been witnessed by more than one person, as the Transfiguration; or by its correspondence with distinct visions seen by others, as in the circumstances which attended the conversion of Cornelius; or by its connexion with a permanent Miracle, as the appearance of Christ

⁷² Douglas, Criterion, p. 172.

⁷³ Mark, x. 51, 52. Matt. viii. 5—13. See Douglas, Criterion, p. 258. "Where persons petitioned themselves for a cure, a declaration of their faith was often re-

quired, that none might be encouraged to try experiments out of curiosity, in a manner which would have been very indecent, and have tended to many bad consequences." Doddridge on Acts ix. 34.

to St. Paul on his conversion, with the blindness in consequence, which remained three days.⁷⁴

Much more inconclusive are those which are actually *attended by a Physical cause known or suspected to be adequate to their production*. Some of those who were cured at the tomb of the Abbé Paris were at the time making use of the usual remedies; the person whose inflamed eye was relieved was, during his attendance at the sepulchre, under the care of an eminent oculist; another was cured of a lameness in the knee by the mere effort to kneel at the tomb.⁷⁵ Arnobius challenges the Heathens to produce one of the pretended Miracles of their Gods performed without the application of some prescription.⁷⁶ Again, Hilarion's cures of wounds, as mentioned by Jerome, were accompanied by the application of consecrated oil.⁷⁷ The Apostles indeed made use of oil in some of their cures, but they more frequently healed without a medium of any kind.⁷⁸ A similar objection might be urged against the narrative of Hezekiah's recovery from sickness, both on account of the application of the figs and the slowness of the cure, were it anywhere stated to have been Miraculous.⁷⁹ Again, the dividing of the Red Sea, accompanied as it was by a strong east wind, would not have been clearly Miraculous, had it not been effected at the word of Moses. Much suspicion, too, is (as some think) cast upon the *miraculous* nature of the fire, &c., which put a stop to Julian's attempt to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, by the possibility of referring it to the operation of Chemical principles.—Lastly, answers to prayer, however *providential* are not *Miraculous*; for in granting them, God acts *by means of*, not *out of*, his usual system, making the ordinary course of things *subservient* to a gracious purpose. Such events, then, instead of *evidencing* the divine approbation to a certain cause, must be *proved* from the goodness of the cause to be what they are interpreted to be. Yet by supposed answers to prayer, appeals to Heaven, pretended judgments, &c., enthusiasts in most ages have wished to sanction their claims to divine inspiration. By similar means the pretensions of the Romish hierarchy have been supported.

Here we close our remarks on the *criterion* of a Miracle; which, it has been seen, is no one definite peculiarity, applicable to all cases, but the combined force of a number of varying circumstances determining our judgment in each particular instance. It might even be said, that a determinate criterion is almost inconceivable. For when once settled, it might appear, as was above remarked, to be merely the Physical antecedent of the extraordinary fact; while on the other hand, from the direction thus given to the ingenuity of impostors, it would soon itself need a criterion to distinguish it from

Observations on the foregoing tests.

⁷⁴ Paley's Evidences, Part I. Prop. 2.

⁷⁵ Douglas, Criterion, p. 143, 184, Note.

⁷⁶ Stillingfleet, Book II. Ch. X. Sec. 9.

⁷⁷ Middleton, Free Inquiry, IV. Sec. 2.

⁷⁸ Mark vi. 13.

⁷⁹ 2 Kings xx. 4-7.

its imitations. Certain it is, that the great *variety* of circumstances under which the Christian Miracles were wrought, furnishes an evidence for their divine origin, in addition to that derived from their publicity, clearness, number, instantaneous production, and completeness. The exorcism of demoniacs, however, has already been noticed as being, perhaps, in every case deficient in the proof of its Miraculous nature. Accordingly, this class of Miracles seems not to have been intended as a *primary* evidence of a divine mission, but to be addressed to those who *already* admitted the existence of Evil Spirits, in proof of the power of Christ and his followers over them.⁸⁰ To us, then, it is rather a *doctrine* than an *evidence*, manifesting our Lord's *power*, as other doctrines instance his *mercy*.—With regard to the argument from Prophecy, which some have been disposed to abandon on account of the number of conditions necessary for the proof of its supernatural character, it should be remembered, that inability to fix the exact boundary of natural sagacity is no objection to such Prophecies as are undeniably beyond it; and that the mere inconclusiveness of some in Scripture, as proofs of divine prescience, has no positive force against others contained in it, which furnish a full, lasting, and in many cases, growing evidence of its divinity.⁸¹

IV.

ON THE DIRECT EVIDENCE FOR THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLES.

Important as are the inquiries which we have hitherto prosecuted, it is obvious that they do not lead to any positive conclusion, whether certain Miraculous accounts are true or not. However necessary a direct anomaly in the course of nature may be to rouse *attention*, and an important final cause to excite *interest* and *reverence*, still the quality of the testimony on which the accounts rest can alone determine our *belief* in them. The preliminary points, however, have been principally dwelt upon, because objections founded on

⁸⁰ See Div. Leg. Book IX. Ch. V. Hence the exercise of this gift seems almost to have been confined to Palestine. At Philippi St. Paul casts out a spirit of divination *in self-defence*. Acts xvi. 16—18. In the transaction related Acts xix. 11—17, Jews are principally concerned.

⁸¹ Some unbelievers have urged the irrelevancy of St. Matthew's citations from the Old Testament Prophecies in illustration of the events of Christ's life, e.g. Ch. ii. 15. It must be recollected, however, that what is evidence in one age is often not so in another. That certain of the texts adduced by the Evangelist furnish *at the present day* no

proof of divine prescience, is very true; but, unless some kind of argument could have been drawn from them *at the time* the Gospel was written, from traditional interpretations of their sense, we can scarcely account for St. Matthew's introducing them. The question is, has there been a *loss* of what was evidence formerly, (as is often the case,) or did St. Matthew bring forward as a Prophetic evidence what was manifestly *not* so, as if to hurt the effect of those other passages, as Ch. xxvii. 35, which have every appearance of being real predictions?—It has been observed, that Prophecy in general *must* be obscure, in order that the events spoken of may not be understood before their accomplishment.

them form the strong ground of unbelievers, who seem in some degree to allow the strength of the direct evidence for the Scripture Miracles. Again, an examination of the direct evidence is less necessary here, because, though antecedent questions have not been neglected by Christian writers,⁸² yet the evidence itself, as might be expected, has chiefly engaged their attention.⁸³ Without entering, then, into a minute consideration of the facts and arguments on which the credibility of the Sacred History rests, we proceed to contrast the *evidence* generally with that produced for other Miraculous narratives; and thus to complete a comparison which has been already instituted, as regards the *antecedent probability* and the *criterion* of Miracles.

For the present, then, we forego the advantage which the Scripture Miracles have gained in the preceding sections over all professed facts of a similar nature. In reality, indeed, the very same evidence which would suffice to prove the former, might be inadequate when offered in behalf of those of the Eclectic School or the Romish Church. For the Miracles of Scripture, and no other, are unexceptionable and worthy of a divine agent; and Bishop Butler has clearly shown, that, in a practical question, as the divinity of a professed Revelation must be considered, even the weakest reasons are decisive when not counteracted by any opposite arguments.⁸⁴ Whatever evidence, then, is offered for them is *entirely* available to the proof of their actual occurrence; whereas evidence for the truth of other similar accounts, supposing it to exist, would be *first* employed in overcoming the objections which attach to them all from their very character, circumstances, or object. If, however, we show that the Miracles of Scripture as far surpass all others in their *direct evidence*, as they excel them in their *à priori probability*, a much stronger case will be made out in their favour, and an additional line of distinction drawn between them and others.

The credibility of Testimony arises from the belief we entertain of the character and competency of the witnesses; and this is true, not only in the case of Miracles, but when facts of any kind are examined into. It is obvious, that we should be induced to distrust the most natural and plausible statement when made by an individual whom we suspected of a wish to deceive, or of relating facts which he had no sufficient means of knowing. Or if we credited his narrative, we should do so, not from dependence on the reporter, but from its intrinsic likelihood, or from circumstantial evidence.

The Scripture Miracles have far stronger evidence in their favour than other Professed Miracles, though they do not require evidence equally strong.

What kind of testimony is to be required for a Miracle.

⁸² Especially by Vince, in his valuable Treatise On the Christian Miracles; and Hey, in his Lectures.

⁸³ As Paley, Lyttleton, Leslie, &c.

⁸⁴ The only fair objection that can be made to this statement is, that it is antecedently *improbable* that the Almighty should work Miracles with a view to *general conviction*, without furnishing

strong evidence that they really occurred. This was noticed above, when the antecedent probability of Miracles was discussed. That it is *unsatisfactory* to decide on scanty evidence is no objection, as in other most important practical questions we are constantly obliged to make up our minds and determine our course of action on insufficient evidence.

In the case of *ordinary* facts, therefore, we think it needless, as indeed it would be endless, to inquire rigidly into the credibility of the Testimony by which they are conveyed to us, because they in a manner speak for themselves. When, however, the information is *unexpected*, or *extraordinary*, or *improbable*, our only means of determining its truth is by considering the credit due to the witnesses; and then, of course, we exercise that right of scrutiny which we before indeed possessed, but did not think it worth while to claim. A Miracle, then, calls for no *distinct species* of Testimony from that offered for other events, but for a Testimony strong in proportion to the improbability of the particular fact attested; and it is as impossible to draw any line, or to determine *how much* is required, as to define the quantity and quality of evidence necessary to prove the occurrence of an earthquake, or the appearance of any meteoric phenomenon. Every thing depends on those attendant circumstances, of which we have already spoken, the object of the Miracle, the occasion, manner, and human agent employed. If, *e.g.* a Miracle were said to be wrought for an immoral object, then of course the fact would rest on the credibility of the Testimony alone, and would challenge the most rigid examination. Again, if the object be highly interesting to us, as that professed by the Scripture Miracles, we shall naturally be careful in our inquiry, from an anxious fear of being deceived. But in any case the Testimony cannot turn out to be *more* than that of competent and honest men; and an inquiry must not be prosecuted under the idea of finding something beyond this, but to obtain proofs of this. And since the existence of competency and honesty may be established in various ways, it follows that the credibility of a given story may be proved by distinct considerations, each of which, separately taken, might be sufficient for the purpose. It is obvious, moreover, as indeed is implied by the very nature of Moral evidence, that the proof of its credibility may be weaker or stronger, and yet in both cases be a *proof*; and, hence, that no limit can be put to the conceivable accumulation of evidence in its behalf. Provided, then, the existing evidence be sufficient to produce a rational conviction, it is nothing to the purpose to urge, as has sometimes been alleged against the Scripture Miracles, that the extraordinary facts might have been proved by different or more overpowering evidence. It has been said, for instance, that no Testimony can fairly be trusted which has not passed the ordeal of a legal examination. Yet, calculated as that mode of examination undoubtedly is to elicit truth, surely Truth may be elicited by *other* ways also. Independent and circumstantial writers may confirm a fact as satisfactorily as witnesses in Court. They may be questioned and cross-questioned, and, moreover, brought up for re-examination in any succeeding Age; whereas, however great may be the talents and experience of the individuals who conducted the legal investigation, yet when they

have once closed it and given in their verdict, we believe upon *their credit*, and we have no means of examining for ourselves. To say, however, that this kind of evidence might have been *added* to the other, in the case of the Christian Miracles,⁸⁵ is merely to assert that the proof of the credibility of Scripture might have been *stronger than it is*; which we have already allowed it might have been, without assignable limit.

The credibility, then, of a Testimony depending on the evidence of *honesty* and *competency* in those who give it, it is prejudicial to their character for *honesty*,—

1. If desire of *gain, power*, or other *temporal advantage* may be imputed to them. This would detract materially from the authority of Philostratus, even supposing him to have been in a *situation* for ascertaining the truth of his own narrative; as he professes to write his account of Apollonius at the instance of his patroness, the Empress Julia, who is known to have favoured the Eclectic cause. Again, the account of the Miracle performed on the door-keeper at the cathedral at Saragossa, on which Hume insists, rests principally upon the credit of the Canons, whose interest was concerned in its establishment. This remark, indeed, obviously applies to the Romish Miracles generally. The Christian Miracles, on the contrary, were attested by the Apostles, not only without the prospect of assignable worldly advantage, but with the certainty and after the experience of actual suffering.

Tests relative to the honesty of witnesses. Gain, &c.

2. When there is room for suspecting *party spirit* or *rivalry*; as in the Miraculous biographies of the Eclectic philosophers; in those of Loyola and other Saints of the rival orders in the Romish Church; and in the present Mohammedan accounts of the Miracles of Mohammed, which, not to mention other objections to them, are composed with an evident design of rivalling those of Christ.⁸⁶

Party spirit.

3. Again, a tale once told may be persisted in from *shame of retracting*, after the motives which first gave rise to it have ceased to act, even at the risk of suffering. This remark cannot apply to the case of the Apostles, until some reason is assigned for their getting up their Miraculous story in the first instance. If necessary, however, it could be brought with force against any argument drawn from the perseverance of the witnesses for the cures professedly wrought by Vespasianus, "*postquam nullum mendacior pretium*;" for, as they did not suffer for persisting in their story, had they retracted they would have gratuitously confessed their own want of principle.

Shame.

4. A *previous character for falsehood* is almost fatal to the credibility of a witness of an extraordinary narrative, *e.g.* the notorious

Character for falsehood.

⁸⁵ Some of our Saviour's Miracles, however, *were* subjected to judicial examination. See John v. and ix. In v. 16 the measures of the Pharisees are described by the technical word *ἵδιονος*.

⁸⁶ See Professor Lee's Persian Tracts, p. 446, 447.

insincerity and frauds of the Church of Rome in other things, are in themselves enough to throw a strong suspicion on its Testimony to its own Miracles. The primitive Church is in some degree open to a charge of a similar nature.⁸⁷ Or *an intimacy with suspicious characters, e.g.* Prince Hohenlohe's connexion with the Romish Church, and that of Philostratus with the Eclectics, since both the Eclectic and Romish Schools have countenanced the practice of what are called pious frauds.

Marks of
unfairness.

5. *Inconsistencies or prevarications in the Testimony, marks of unfairness, exaggeration, suppression of particulars, &c.* Of all these we convicted Philostratus, whose memoir forms a remarkable contrast to the artless and candid narratives of the Evangelists. The Books of the New Testament, containing as they do separate accounts of the same transactions, admit of a minute cross-examination, which terminates so decidedly in favour of their fidelity, as to recommend them highly on the score of honesty, even independently of the known sufferings of the writers.

Facilities
for
dishonesty.

6. Lastly, witnesses may be objected to who have the *opportunity* of being dishonest; as those who write at a distance from the time and place of the professed Miracle, or without mentioning particulars, &c. But on these points we shall speak immediately in a different connexion.

Tests of
competency
of
witnesses,—
from the cir-
cumstances
of the
case :

Secondly, witnesses must be, not only *honest*, but *competent* also, *i.e.* such as have *ascertained* the facts which they attest, or who report *after examination*. Here then we notice,

1. Deficiency of examination implied in the *circumstances of the case*. As when it is first published in an *age or country remote from the professed time and scene of action*; for in that case room is given to suspect failure of memory, imperfect information, &c.; whereas to write in the presence of those who know the circumstances of the transactions, is an appeal which increases the force of the Testimony by associating them in it. Accounts, however, whether Miraculous or otherwise, possess very little *intrinsic* authority, when written so far from the time or place of the transactions recorded, as the Biographies of Pythagoras, Apollonius, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Mohammed, Loyola, or Xavier.⁸⁸ The opposite circumstances of the Christian Testimony have often been pointed out. Here we may particularly notice the providential dispersion of the Jews over the Roman Empire before the Age of Christ; by which means the Apostle's Testimony was given in Heathen countries, as well as in Palestine, in the face of those who had both the will and the power to contradict it if incorrect.

While the Testimony of contemporaries is necessary to guarantee the truth of ordinary History, Miracles require the Testimony of *eye-witnesses*. For ordinary events are believed in part *from their*

⁸⁷ Hey, Lectures, Book I. Ch. XII. Sec. 15.

⁸⁸ Paley, Evidences, Part I. Prop. 2.

being natural, but *Testimony* being the main support of a Miraculous narrative must in that case be the best of its kind. Again, we may require the Testimony to be *circumstantial* in reference to dates, places, persons, &c.; for the absence of these seems to imply an imperfect knowledge, and at least gives less opportunity of inquiry to those who wish to ascertain its fidelity.⁸⁹

Miracles which are *not lasting* do not admit of adequate examination; as visions, extraordinary voices, &c. The cure of diseases, on the other hand, is a *permanent* evidence of a divine interposition; particularly such cures of bodily imperfections as are undeniably Miraculous in their nature, as well as permanent; to these, then, our Lord especially appeals in evidence of his divine mission.⁹⁰ Lastly, statements are unsatisfactory in which the Miracle is described as wrought before a very few; for room is allowed for suspecting mistake, or an understanding between the witnesses. Or, on the other hand, those wrought *in a confused crowd*; such are many standing Miracles of the Romanists, which are exhibited with the accompaniment of imposing pageants, or on a stage, or at a distance, or in the midst of candles and incense. Our Saviour, on the contrary, bids the lepers he had cleansed *show themselves* to the Priests, and make the customary offering as a *memorial* of their cures.⁹¹ And when he appeared to the Apostles after his Resurrection, he allowed them to *examine* his hands and feet.⁹² Those of the Scripture Miracles which were wrought before few, or in a crowd, were *permanent*; as cures,⁹³ and the raising of Jairus's daughter; or were of so *vast a nature*, that a crowd could not prevent the witnesses from ascertaining the fact, as the standing still of the Sun at the word of Joshua.

2. Deficiency of examination implied in the *character, &c., of the witnesses*: e.g. if there be any suspicion of their *derangement*, or if there be an evident *defect in bodily or mental faculties* which are necessary for examining the Miracle, as when the intellect or senses are impaired. *Number* in the witnesses refutes charges of this nature; for it is not conceivable that many should be deranged or mistaken at once, and in the same way.

Enthusiasm, ignorance, or habitual credulity, are defects which no number of witnesses removes. The Jansenist Miracles took place in the most ignorant and superstitious district of Paris.⁹⁴ Alexander Pseudomantis practised his arts among the Paphlagonians, a barbarous people. Popish Miracles and the juggles of the Heathen Priests have been most successful in times of ignorance.

Yet while we reasonably object to gross ignorance or besotted credulity in witnesses for a Miraculous story, we must guard against

⁸⁹ The vagueness of the accounts of Miraculous interpositions related by the Fathers is pointed out by Middleton. (Free Inquiry, II. p. 22.)

⁹⁰ Matt. xi. 5.

⁹¹ Luke v. 14; xvii. 14.

⁹² Luke xxiv. 39, 40.

⁹³ Mark viii. 22—26.

⁹⁴ The Fauxbourg St. Marcel. Less.

From the character of the witnesses.

Derangement.

Enthusiasm, or credulity.

Whether the
Testimony
of educated
men is ne-
cessary.

the opposite extreme of requiring the Testimony of men of Science and general knowledge. Men of Philosophical minds are often too fond of inquiring into the causes and mutual dependence of events, of arranging, theorizing, and refining, to be accurate and straightforward in their account of extraordinary occurrences. Instead of giving a plain statement of facts, they are insensibly led to *correct* the evidence of their senses with a view to account for the phenomenon; as Chinese painters, who, instead of drawing in perspective, give lights and shadows their supposed meaning, and depict the prospect as they think it *should be*, not as it *is*.⁹⁵ As Miracles differ from other events only when considered *relatively* to a general system, it is obvious that the same persons are competent to attest Miraculous facts who are suitable witnesses of corresponding natural ones. If a peasant's Testimony be admitted to the phenomenon of meteoric stones, he may evidence the fact of an unusual and unaccountable darkness. A Physician's certificate is not needed to assure us of the illness of a friend; nor is it necessary to attest the simple fact that he has instantaneously recovered. It is important to bear this in mind, for some writers argue as if there were something intrinsically defective in the Testimony given by ignorant persons to Miraculous occurrences.⁹⁶ To say, that unlearned persons are not judges of the fact of a Miraculous event, is only so far true as all Testimony is fallible and liable to be distorted by prejudice. Every one, not only superstitious persons, is apt to interpret facts his own way. If the superstitious see too many prodigies, men of Science may see too few. The facility with which the Japanese ascribed the ascent of a balloon, which they witnessed at St. Petersburg, to the powers of Magic, (a circumstance which has been sometimes urged against the admission of unlearned Testimony,⁹⁷) is only the conduct of theorists accounting for a novel phenomenon on the principles of their own system.

It may be said, that ignorance prevents a witness from *discriminating* between natural and supernatural events, and thus weakens the authority of his *judgment* concerning the Miraculous nature of a fact. It is true; but if the fact be recorded, *we* may judge for *ourselves* on that point. Yet it may be safely said, that not even before persons in the lowest state of ignorance could any great variety of professed Miracles be displayed without their distinguishing rightly *on the whole* between the effects of nature and those of a power exterior to it; though in particular instances they doubtless might be mistaken. Much more would this be the case with the lower ranks of a *civilized* people. Practical intelligence is insensibly diffused from class to class; if the upper ranks are educated,

⁹⁵ It is well known, that those persons are accounted the best transcribers of MSS. who are ignorant of the language transcribed; the habit of *correcting* being almost involuntary in men of letters.

⁹⁶ Hume on Miracles. Part II. Reason I.

⁹⁷ Bentham, Preuves Judiciaires, Liv. VIII. Ch. II.

numbers besides them, without any formal and systematic knowledge, almost instinctively discriminate between natural and supernatural events. Here Science has little advantage over common sense; a peasant is quite as certain that a resurrection from the dead is Miraculous as the most able physiologist.⁹⁸

The original witnesses of our Saviour's Miracles were very far from a dull or ignorant race. The inhabitants of a maritime and border country, as Galilee was, engaged, moreover, in commerce, composed of natives of various countries, and, therefore, from the nature of the case acquainted with more than one language, have necessarily their intellects sharpened and their minds considerably enlarged, and are of all men least disposed to acquiesce in marvellous tales.⁹⁹ Such a people must have *examined* before they suffered themselves to be excited in the degree the Evangelists describe.¹⁰⁰ But even supposing that those among them who were in consequence *convinced* of the divine mission of Christ, were of a more superstitious turn of mind than the rest, still this is not sufficient to account for their conviction. For superstition, while it might facilitate the bare *admission* of Miraculous events, would at the same time weaken their *practical influence*. Miracles ceasing to be accounted *strange*, would cease to be *striking* also. Whereas the conviction wrought in the minds of these men was no bare and indolent *assent* to facts which they might have thought antecedently probable or not improbable, but a *conversion* in principles and mode of life, and a consequent sacrifice of all that nature holds dear, to which none would submit except after the fullest examination of the authority enjoining it. If additional evidence be required, appeal may be made to the multitude of Gentiles in Greece and Asia, in whose principles and mode of living, belief in the Miracles made a change even more striking and complete than was effected in the case of the Jews. In a word, then, the *conversion* which Christ and his Apostles *effected* invalidates the charge of blind *credulity* in the witnesses; the *practical* nature of the belief produced proving that it was founded on an *examination* of the Miracles.

Character of
the original
witnesses of
the
Christian
Miracles.

Again, it weakens the authority of the witnesses, if their belief can be shown to have been promoted by the *influence of superiors*; for then they virtually cease to be themselves witnesses, and report

Influence of
superiors.

⁹⁸ It has been observed, that more suitable witnesses could not be selected of the fact of a Miraculous draught of fishes than the fishermen of the lake wherein it took place.

⁹⁹ See Less, Opuscul.

¹⁰⁰ If, on the other hand, we would see with how unmoved an unconcern men receive accounts of Miracles, when they believe them to be events of every-day occurrence, we may turn to the conduct of the African Christians in the Age of Austin, whom that Father in vain en-

deavoured to interest in Miraculous stories of relics, &c., by formal accounts and certificates of the cures wrought by them. See Middleton, p. 138. The *stir*, then, which the Miracles of Christ made in Galilee implies, that they were not received with an *indolent* belief. It must be noticed, moreover, in opposition to the statement of some unbelievers, that great numbers of the Jews were *converted*. Acts ii. 41; iv. 4; v. 13, 14; vi. 7; ix. 35; xv. 5; xxi. 20. On this subject, see Jenkin, On the Christian Religion, Vol. II. Ch. XXXII.

the facts on the authority (as it were) of their patrons. It is observable, that the national conversions of the middle Ages generally *began* with the Princes and *descended* to their subjects; those of the Apostolic Age obviously proceeded in the reverse order.¹⁰¹

Miracles
wrought in
support
of an
established
Religion.

It is almost fatal to the validity of the Testimony, if the Miracle attested coincides with a *previous system*, or supports a *cause already embraced* by the witnesses. Men are always ready to believe what flatters their own opinions, and of all prepossessions those of Religion are the strongest. There is so much in the *principle* of all Religion that is true and good, so much conformable to the best feelings of our nature, which perceives itself to be weak and guilty, and looks out for an unseen and superior being for guidance and support; and the particular worship in which each individual is brought up, is so familiarized to him by habit, so endeared to his affections by the associations of place and the recollections of past years, so connected too with the ordinary transactions and most interesting events of life, that even should that form be irrational and degrading, still it will in most cases preserve a strong influence over his mind, and dispose him to credit upon slight examination any arguments adduced in its defence. Hence an account of Miracles in confirmation of their own Religion will always be favourably received by men whose creed has already led them to expect such interpositions of superior beings. This consideration invalidates at once the testimony commonly offered for Pagan and Popish Miracles, and in no small degree that for the Miracles of the primitive Church. The professed cures of Vespasianus were performed in honour of Serapis in the midst of his worshippers; and the people of Saragossa, who attested the miracle wrought in the case of the door-keeper of the Cathedral, had previous faith in the virtues of holy oil.¹⁰²

No Miracles
but those
recorded in
Scripture
have intro-
duced a
Religion.

Here the evidence for the Scripture Miracles is unique. In other cases the previous system has supported the Miracles, but here the Miracles introduced and upheld the system. The Christian Miracles in particular¹⁰³ were received on their own merits; and the admission of them became the turning point in the creed and life of the witnesses, which thenceforth took a new and altogether different direction. But, moreover, as if their own belief in them were not enough, the Apostles went out of their way to debar any one from the Christian Church who did not believe them as well as them-

¹⁰¹ Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. Cent. VI. VIII. IX.

¹⁰² It has been noticed as a suspicious circumstance in the testimony to the reported Miracle wrought in the case of the Confessors in the persecution of the Arian Hunneric, that Victor Vitensis, one of the principal witnesses, though writing in Africa when it professedly took place, and where the individuals thus distinguished were then living, *yet* refers only to *one* of them, who was then

living at the *Athanasian* Court at *Constantinople*, and held in particular honour by Zeno and the Empress—"If any one doubt the fact, let him go to *Constantinople*." See the whole evidence in Milner's Church History, Cent. V. Ch. XI.; who, however, strongly defends the Miracle. Gibbon pretends to do the same, with a view to provide a rival to the Gospel Miracles.

¹⁰³ Not to mention those of Moses and Elijah.

selves.¹⁰⁴ Not content that men should be converted on any ground, they fearlessly challenged refutation, by excluding from their fellowship of suffering any who did not formally assent as a necessary condition of admittance and first article of faith, to one of the most stupendous of all the Miracles, their Master's Resurrection from the dead;—a procedure this, which at once evinces their own unqualified conviction of the fact, and associates, too, all their converts with them as believers in a Miracle contemporary with themselves. Nor is this all—a Religious creed necessarily *prejudices* the mind *against* admitting the Miracles of hostile Sects, in the very same proportion in which it leads it to *acquiesce* in such as support its own dogmas.¹⁰⁵ The Christian Miracles, then, have the strongest of conceivable attestations, in the conversion of many who at first were prejudiced against them, and in the extorted confession of enemies, who, by the embarrassment which the admission occasioned them, showed at least that they had not made it till after a full and accurate investigation of the extraordinary facts.

It has been sometimes objected, that the minds of the first converts might be wrought upon by the doctrine of a future state which the Apostles preached, and be thus persuaded to admit the Miracles without a rigorous examination.¹⁰⁶ But, as Paley well replies, evidence of the *truth* of the promise would still be necessary; especially as men rather demand than dispense with proof when some great and unexpected good is reported to them. Yet it is more than doubtful, whether the promise of a future life would excite this interest: for the desire of immortality, though a natural, is no permanent or powerful feeling, and furnishes no principle of action. Most men, even in a Christian country, are too well satisfied with this world to look forward to another with any great and settled anxiety. Supposing immortality to be a good, it is one too distant to warm or influence. Much less are they disposed to sacrifice present comfort, and strip themselves of former opinions and habits, for the mere contingency of future happiness. The hope of another life, grateful as it is *under* affliction, will not induce a man to *rush into* affliction for the sake of it. The inconvenience of a severe complaint is not outbalanced by the pleasure of a remedy. On the other hand, though we know gratuitous declarations of coming judgments and divine wrath may, for a time, frighten weak minds, they will neither have effect upon strong ones, nor produce a *permanent* and *consistent* effect upon any. Persons who are thus wrought upon in the *present* day, believe the denunciations *because* they are in Scripture, not Christianity *because* it contains them. The authority of Revealed Religion is taken for granted both by the preacher and his hearers. On the whole, then, it seems inconceivable, that the promise or threat of a future life should have supplied the place of previous

Whether the doctrine of a future life, and not the Miracles, induced the first converts to embrace Christianity

¹⁰⁴ Campbell on Miracles, Part II. Sec. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Campbell on Miracles, Part I. Sec. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Gibbon particularly, Ch. XV.

belief in Christianity, or have led the witnesses to admit the Miracles on a slight examination.

Love of the
marvellous.

Lastly, *love of the marvellous, of novelty, &c.*, may be mentioned as a principle influencing the mind to acquiesce in professed Miracles without full examination. Yet such feelings are more adapted to exaggerate and circulate a story than to invent it. We can trace their influence very clearly in the instances of Apollonius and the Abbé Paris, both of whom had excited attention by their eccentricities *before* they gained reputation for extraordinary power.¹⁰⁷ Such principles, moreover, are not in general practical, and have little power to sustain the mind under continued opposition and suffering.¹⁰⁸

Observa-
tions on the
foregoing
tests

These are some of the obvious points which will come into consideration in deciding upon the authority of Testimony offered for Miracles; and they enable us at once to discriminate the Christian story from all others which have been set up against it. With a view of simplifying the argument, the evidence for the Jewish Miracles has been left out of the question;¹⁰⁹ because, though strong and satisfactory, it is not at the present day so *directly* conclusive as that on which the Christian rest. Nor is it necessary, we conceive, to bring evidence for more than a fair proportion of the Miracles; supposing, that is, those which remain unproved are shown to be similar to them, and indissolubly connected with the same system. It may be even said, that if the single fact of the Resurrection be established, quite enough will have been proved for believing all the Miracles of Scripture.

View of the
complete
evidence
for the
Scripture
Miracles.

Of course, however, the argument becomes far stronger when it is shown that there *is* evidence for the great bulk of the Miracles, though not equally strong for some as for others; and that the Jewish, sanctioned as they are by the New Testament, may also be established on distinct and peculiar grounds. Nor let it be forgotten, that the Christian story itself is supported, over and above the evidence that might fairly be required for it, by several bodies of Testimony quite independent of each other.¹¹⁰ By *separate* pro-

¹⁰⁷ See above, the memoir of Apollonius.—Of the Abbe, Mosheim says, “*Diem viæ obierat, voluntariis cruciatibus et pœnis exhaustus, mirabilis iste homo, quem immensa hominum multitudo ad ejus corpus conflueret; quorum alii pedes ejus osculabantur, alii partem capillorum abscedebant, quam sancti loco pignoris ad mala quævis averruncanda servarent, alii libros et lintea quæ attulerant, cadaveri admovebant quod virtute quadam divina plenum esse putabant. Et statim vis illa mirifica, quæ omne, quod in terrâ hæc reliquit, præditum esse fertur, apparebat.*” &c. Inquisit. in verit. Miraculor. F. de Paris, Sec. 1.

¹⁰⁸ Paley, Evidences, Part I. Prop. 2.

¹⁰⁹ The truth of the Mosaic narrative is proved from the *genuineness* of the Pentateuch, as written to contemporaries and eye-witnesses of the Miracles; from the *predictions* contained in the Pentateuch; from the *very existence* of the Jewish system, (Sumner's Records); and from the *declarations of the New Testament writers*. The Miracles of Elijah and Elisha are proved to us by the *authority of the Books* in which they are related, and by *means of the New Testament*.

¹¹⁰ The fact of the Christian Miracles may be proved, first, by the sufferings and consistent story of the original wit-

cesses of reasoning it may be shown, that if Christianity was established without Miracles, it was, to say the least, an altogether singular and unique event in the history of mankind; and the extreme improbability of so many distinct and striking peculiarities uniting (as it were) by chance in one and the same case, raises the proof of its divine origin to a moral certainty. In short, it is only by being made unnatural that the Christian narrative can be deprived of a supernatural character; and we may safely affirm, that the strongest evidence we possess for the most certain facts of other history, is weak compared to that on which we believe that the first preachers of the Gospel were gifted with Miraculous powers.

And thus a case is established so strong, that even were there an antecedent improbability in the facts attested, in most judgments it would be sufficient to overcome it. On the contrary, we have already shown their intrinsic character to be exactly such as our previous knowledge of the divine attributes and government would lead us to expect in works ascribed to him. Their grandeur, beauty, and consistency; the clear and unequivocal marks they bear of superhuman agency; the importance and desirableness of the object they propose to effect, are in correspondence to the variety and force of the evidence itself.

Union of testimony with antecedent probability.

Such, then, is the contrast they present to all other professed Miracles, from those of Apollonius downwards—which have all been shown, more or less, to be improbable from the circumstances of the case; inconclusive when considered as marks of divine interference; and quite destitute of good evidence for their having really occurred.

Conclusion.

Lastly, it must be observed, that the proof derived from interruptions in the course of nature, though a principal, is yet but *one* out of *many* proofs on which the cause of Revealed Religion rests; and that even supposing (for the sake of argument) it were altogether inconclusive at the present day, still the other evidences,¹¹¹ as they are called, would be fully equal to prove to us the divine origin of Christianity.

nesses; secondly, from the actual conversion of large bodies of men in the Age in which they are said to have been wrought; thirdly, from the institution, at the time, of a day commemorative of the Resurrection, which has been observed ever since; fourthly, by collateral considerations, such as the tacit assent given to the Miracles by the adversaries of Christianity, the Eclectic imitations of them, and the pretensions to Miraculous power in the primitive Church. These are *distinct* arguments, no one of them

absolutely *presupposes* the genuineness of the Scripture narrative, though the force of the whole is much increased when it is proved.

¹¹¹ Such as, the system of doctrine, marks of design, gradual disclosure of unknown truths, &c., connecting together the whole Bible as the work of one mind:—Prophecy:—the character of Christ:—the Morality of the Gospel:—the wisdom of its doctrines, displaying at once knowledge of the human heart and skill in engaging its affections, &c.









