Thomas Woolston

SIX DISCOURSES ON THE MIRACLES OF OUR SAVIOUR and DEFENCES OF HIS DISCOURSES



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SAVIOUR, AND DEFENCES OF HIS DISCOURSES ***

Thomas Woolston

SIX DISCOURSES ON THE MIRACLES OF OUR SAVIOUR

and

DEFENCES OF HIS DISCOURSES 1727-1730

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1979

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

In View of the Present Controversy between Infidels and Apostates.

—Nostrum est tantus componere Lites.

The Fifth Edition.

By Tho. Woolston, B. D. sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge*.

***LONDON*:**

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Star, in *Aldermanbury*, and by the Booksellers of *London*, and *Westminster*, 1728.

[Price One Shilling.]

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

EDMUND,

Lord Bishop of *London.*

MY LORD,



pon no other View do I make a Dedication of this Discourse to your *Lordship*, then to submit it to your acute Judgment, expecting soon to hear of your

Approbation or Dislike of it. If it so happen, that you highly approve of it, I beg of you to be sparing of your Commendations, least I should be puff'd up with them.

In my *Moderator*, some Expressions dropt from my Pen about the Miracles of our Saviour, which, for want of Illustration then, gave your *Lordship* some Offence, and brought upon me more Trouble: But, having now fully and clearly explain'd my self out of the Fathers, I hope you'll be reconciled to me; and as you are a Lover of Truth, will, against Interest and Prejudice, yield to the Force of it.

Whether your Prosecution of me, for the *Moderator*, was just and reasonable, I'll not dispute here, having already expostulated that Matter with you in several Letters, to which you would not condescend to give me any Answer. For what Reason you was silent, is best known to your self. But, in my own Vindication, I hope, I may publish without Offence, that your taking me for an *Infidel*, was such a Mistake as I thought no *Scholar* could have made; and the Injury done to my Reputation and low Fortunes, by the Prosecution, so considerable, that the least I expected from your *Lordship*, was a courteous Excuse, if not an ample Compensation, for it.

As to the Expediency of prosecuting *Infidels* for their Writings (in whose Cause I am the farthest of any Man from being engaged) I will here say nothing. The Argument, *pro* and *con*, has already, by one or other, been copiously handled. And I don't know but I might be, with your *Lordship*, on the persecuting side of the Question; but that it looks as if a Man was distrustful of the Truth of Christianity, and conscious of his own Inability to defend it; or he would leave

that *good Cause* to God himself and the Sword of the Spirit, without calling upon the *Civil Magistrate* for his Aid and Assistance.

That scurvy *Writer* of the *Scheme of literal Prophecy*, &c. which your *Lordship* must have heard of, would insinuate, that they are only atheistical Priests, who, for fear of their Interests in the Church, set Persecutions on foot: But after your *Lordship* has publish'd a strenuous Defence of Christianity to the Purpose of our present Controversy, I'll have no such Suspicions of you.

Your *Lordship*'s persecuting (or, if you will, prosecuting) Humour, is reputedly all pure Zeal for God's Glory; and, with all my Heart, let it be so accounted, whether it be according to Knowledge or not. Against Popery and Infidelity you are all Ardency! Who does not commend you? Who can question the Sincerity of the Zeal of a Protestant *Bishop*, and of a Protestant *Clergy*, when they persecute the Enemies of their Church, that considers their own Steadiness to Principles against Interest, under all Changes, since the Reformation; and their Abhorrence of Extortion upon the People, for the Duties of their Function, in and about this City. Such Honesty and Constancy in their Profession, is a Proof of the Integrity of their Hearts, or I know not where to find one.

But that your *Lordship*'s Zeal for Religion is very remarkable and successful, I could prove by many Instances; one is, *that* of your routing a turbulent Sect of *Peripateticks* out of St. *Paul*'s Cathedral; and if you could as effectually clear *Christ*'s Church of *Infidels*, what a glorious Bishop would you be!

And what Pity is it, that *Infidels* likewise are not to be quell'd with your Threats and Terrors! which (without the Weapons of sharp Reasonings, and thumping Arguments, that others are for the Use of) would transmit your Fame to Posterity, for a notable Champion for Christianity, as certainly as, that your judicious Prosecution of the *Moderator* for Infidelity is here remember'd by,

London,
April 17,
1727.

My LORD,
The Admirer of
Your Zeal
Wisdom and
Conduct,
Thomas Woolston.

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.



f ever there was an useful Controversy started, or revived in this Age of the Church, it is *this* about the *Messiahship* of the holy Jesus, which the *Discourse of the Grounds*, &c. has of late rais'd. I believe this Controversy will end in the absolute Demonstration of Jesus's *Messiahship* from Prophecy, which is the only way to prove him to be the *Messiah*, that great Prophet expected by the *Jews*, and promised under the Old Testament. And tho' this way of Proof from Prophecy seems to labour under many Difficulties at present; and tho' some *Writers* against the *Grounds*, being distressed with those Difficulties, are for seeking Refuge in the Miracles of our Saviour; yet we must persist in it, till what I have no doubt of, his *Messiahship* shall be clearly made out by it.

And the way in Prophesy that I would take for the Proof of *Jesus*'s *Messiahship*, should be by an allegorical Interpretation, and Application of the Law and the Prophets to him; the very same way, that all the Fathers of the Church have gone in; and the very same way, in which all the ancient *Jews* say their *Messiah* was to fulfil the Law and the Prophets: But this way does not please our ecclesiastical *Writers* in this Controversy, neither will they at present give any Ear to it.

The Way in Prophecy that they are for taking, is by a literal Interpretation and Application of some Prophecies of the Old Testament to our *Jesus*, but they are hitherto unsuccessful in this Way. The Authors of the *Grounds* and of the *Scheme*, grievously perplex them with their Objections against this way of Proof, so far as, being sensible, I say, of almost insuperable Difficulties in it, they are flying apace to the Miracles of our Saviour, as to their sole and grand Refuge.

But to show that there's no Sanctuary for them in the Miracles of our Saviour, I write this Discourse: And this I do, not for the Service of Infidelity, which has no Place in my Heart, but for the Honour of the Holy *Jesus*, and to reduce the *Clergy* to the good old way of interpreting Prophecies, which the Church has unhappily apostatis'd from, and which, upon the Testimony of the Fathers, will, one Day, be the Conversion of *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

For this Opinion, that there is no Sanctuary in the Miracles of our Saviour, I chanc'd to say in the *Moderator*,[1] *That Jesus's Miracles, as they are now-a-days understood, make nothing for his Authority and Messiahship*. And again,[2] *That I believe, upon good*

Authority, some of the Miracles of Jesus, as recorded by the Evangelists, were never wrought, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what will be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him: Which Expressions gave Offence to some of our *Clergy*, and brought upon me their Indignation and Displeasure. I see no Reason to depart from the said Expressions, or so much as to palliate and soften them, much less to retract them; but in Maintenance of my Opinion, to the Honour of our *Messiah*, and the Defence of Christianity, I write this Treatise on Jesus's Miracles, and take this Method following.

I. I will show, that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diseases, which *Jesus* was justly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Messiah*, neither are they so much as a good Proof of his Divine Authority to found a Religion.

II. That the literal History of many of the Miracles of Jesus, as recorded by the Evangelists, does imply Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, consequently they, either in whole or in part, were never wrought, as they are commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him.

III. I shall consider what Jesus means, when he appeals to his Miracles as to a Testimony and Witness of his Divine Authority, and show, that he could not properly and ultimately refer to those he then wrought in the *Flesh*, but to those mystical ones, which he would do in the *Spirit*; of which those wrought in the Flesh are but mere Types and Shadows.

In treating on these Heads, I shall not confine my self

only to Reason, but also to the express Authority of the Fathers, those holy, venerable, and learned Preachers of the Gospel in the first Ages of the Church, who took our Religion from the Hands of the Apostles, and of apostolical Men, who dy'd, some of them, and suffer'd for the Doctrine they taught; who professedly and confessedly were endu'd with divine and extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit; who consequently can't be supposed to be Corrupters of Christianity, or Teachers of false Notions about the Miracles of our Saviour, or so much as mistaken about the apostolical and evangelical Sense and Nature of them. I know not how it comes to pass, but I am a profound Admirer, and an almost implicit Believer of the Authority of the Fathers, whom I look upon as vast Philosophers, very great Scholars, and most orthodox Divines. Whatever they concurrently assert, I firmly believe. And tho' they are, for the most part, mysterious Writers out of the Reach of the Capacities of many, who slight them; yet I, who have had the Honour and Happiness of much of their Acquaintance, fancy my self well apprised of their Meanings. If at any time I read a Passage in them which I don't presently apprehend, I salute it with Veneration for all that, till my Understanding is opened to receive the Sense of it. If I meet with but a single Opinion in any one of them, I pay my Respects to it; but where there is an Harmony and Agreement of Opinion amongst them, it is with me, and ought to be with all Christians, of such Weight, as to bear down all Prejudice, Opposition, and Contradiction before it; or the Authority of no Man, whether ancient or modern, is to have any Regard paid to it; and of what ill Consequence to Religion such an utter Rejection of Authority will be, I need not say.

This I thought fit to premise, concerning the

Authority of the Fathers, to abate of the Prejudice beforehand, which some may conceive against the following Discourse about the Miracles of *Jesus*. I don't question, but some may be startled at the foregoing Heads, as if, what is the farthest of any thing from my Heart, the Service of Infidelity was in View; but craving the Temper and Patience of such Readers for a while, and they shall find, that its no other than just Reasoning, clear Truth, and primitive Doctrine about *Jesus*'s Miracles, that I advance: Or if it should so happen, that none besides my self should discern the Reasoning and Truth of the Argument; yet I hope it will not be thought a Crime to revive primitive Doctrine, which none will be able to deny it to be, whether they like it or not. If I err, I err upon Choice with the Fathers, of whose Faith I am. And if any are offended at what follows about the Miracles of *Christ*, let them turn their Displeasure and Indignation against the Fathers, for whose express or implicit Opinions I can be deserving of no Blame.

I am sorry for the Occasion of such a Preface against Offence, which the Apostacy of the Age, and its Unacquaintedness with the Fathers, has made necessary. So I enter upon the particular handling of the Heads foregoing. And,

I. I will show that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diseases, which *Jesus* was justly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the Messiah, nor are they so much as a good Proof of *Jesus*'s divine Authority to found and introduce a Religion into the World.

And to do this, let us consider, first, in general, what was the Opinion of the Fathers about the Writings of the *Evangelists* in which the Life of *Christ* is recorded.

Eucherius says,[3] *That the Scriptures of the New as well as Old Testament, are to be interpreted in an allegorical Sense*. And this his Opinion, is no other than the common one of the first Ages of the Church, as might be proved by many the like Expressions of other Fathers. As in such Expressions, they do not except the Writings of the *Evangelists*; so they must include the History of *Christ*'s Miracles, which as well as other Parts of the History of his Life, is to be allegoriz'd for the sake of its true Meaning; consequently the literal Story of Christ's Miracles proves nothing.

But let's hear particularly their Opinion of the Actions and Miracles of our Saviour. *Origen* says, that[4] *Whatsoever Jesus did in the Flesh, was but typical and symbolical of what he would do in the Spirit*; and to our Purpose,[5] that *the several bodily Diseases which he healed, were no other than Figures of the spiritual Infirmities of the Soul, that are to be cured by him*. St. *Hilary* is of the same Mind with *Origen*, as any one may see by the[6] Expressions referr'd to, and his Commentary on St. *Matthew*. St. *Augustin*,[7] and St. *John*[8] of *Jerusalem*, both say, that the Works of *Jesus* import farther Mysteries; and with them, the rest of the Fathers agree, making the Miracles that *Jesus* did then, no more than the Shadow of some more powerful and mystical Operations to be done by him, as I could show by more Citations out of them, if it was needful. But from the foregoing Citations out of the Fathers it is plain, in their Opinion, that our modern *Divines* are in the wrong of it, to lay much Stress on any of the Operations of *Jesus*, which he did in the Flesh, for the Proof of his divine Authority and *Messiahship*, which is only to be proved by his more mysterious Works, of which those done in the Flesh are but Type and Figure.

But to come closer to the Purpose, let's see how indifferently, I had almost said contemptibly, the Fathers speak of the Miracles of *Jesus*, and particularly of his Power of healing all bodily Diseases, which by modern *Writers* is so much magnified and extoll'd. St. *Irenæus* says,[9] that if *we consider only the then temporal Use of Jesus's Power of Healing, he did nothing grand and wonderful*; consequently *Irenæus* could not hold, that *Jesus*'s Miracles then wrought, were a sufficient Proof of his divine Authority, much less of his *Messiahship*. *Origen* says[10] that *tho' many were brought to believe in Jesus upon the Fame of the Miracles which he did once among the* Jews, *yet* (what implies the Insufficiency of them for the Conversion of Men) *he intimates that his greater and mystical Works do prove his Authority*. St. *John* of *Jerusalem* says[11] that *Jesus's Cures performed upon the Blind*, &c. *were indeed considerable and great, but unless he do daily as mighty Works in his Church, we ought to forbear our Admiration of him.* St. *Augustin* not only says[12] that *if we examine into Jesus's Miracles by human Reason, we shall find he did nothing great, considering his Almighty Power, and considering his Goodness, what he did was but little*; but he tells us also, that[13] *such Works as Jesus did, might be imputed to, and effected by Magic Art*. And accordingly *Moses* and our Saviour himself confess, that false Prophets, and false Christ's, will do Miracles; and *Anti-Christ* himself, according to St. *Paul*, will do them to the Deception of Mankind. Nay, the Fathers[14] say, what I believe, that *Anti-Christ* will imitate and equal *Jesus* in all his Miracles which he wrought of old. How then can we distinguish the true Prophet from the false; the true *Christ* from the *Anti-Christ* by Miracles? our *Divines* will find it hard to do it, if what the Fathers say of *Anti-christ* be found true. Moreover

History affords us Instances of Men, such as of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, *Vespasian*, and of the *Irish Stroaker*, *Greatrex*, who have miraculously cured Diseases to the Admiration of Mankind, as well as our *Jesus*: But if any of them, or any other greater Worker of Miracles than they were, should withall assume to himself the Title of a Prophet, and Author of a new Religion, I humbly conceive, we ought not to give heed to him.

Neither is there the least Reason that we should; for the Power of doing Miracles is no certain, nor rational Seal of the Commission and Authority of a divine Lawgiver. St. *Paul* says[15] there is a *Diversity of the Gifts of the Spirit, for to one is given by the Spirit, the Word of Wisdom; to another the Word of Knowledge; to another the Gift of Healing; to another the working of Miracles; to another Prophecy; to another discerning of Spirits; to another divers Kinds of Tongues; to another the Interpretation of Tongues.* These Gifts may be given apart and separately. One of them may be conferr'd on this Man, and another of them on his Neighbour. There is no Necessity that any two or more of these Gifts should meet in one Man. To argue then, that a Man, who has one of these Gifts, must have the other; that is, that he must needs have the Gift of Wisdom, or of Prophecy, or of discerning of Spirits, or of divers Kinds of Tongues, because he has the Gift of Healing and of working Miracles, is very inconclusive, and false Reasoning: And yet this is the Reasoning of our modern Writers who would prove *Jesus*'s Authority, to found a Religion, from his Miracles. I don't question but *Jesus* had all the foresaid Gifts and Powers of the Spirit in a most superlative Degree; but then it is unreasonably inferr'd, for all that, that a Man, because he of Certainty has some of them, must of consequence

have the other. St. *Augustin*[16] cautions us against being deceived into a good Opinion of a Man's Wisdom, because of his Power to do Miracles. And I think accordingly, that we may as well say, that the strongest Man is the wisest; or that a good Physician must needs be a good Casuist; or that the best Mathematician is the ablest Statesman, as that *Jesus*, because he was a Worker of Miracles, such as his are, and a Healer of all manner of Diseases, ought to be received as the Guide of our Consciencies, the Director of our Understandings, the Ruler of our Hearts, and the Author of a Religion.

What then will the Writers against the *Grounds* do to prove *Jesus*'s Authority and *Messiahship* from his Miracles? Or how by his Miracles will they be able to distinguish him from an Impostor, a false Prophet, and the *Anti-christ*? Why, they will say perhaps,

1. That besides Greatness of Power, there was nothing but Goodness, Kindness, and Love to Mankind shewn in *Jesus*'s Miracles. As to the Miracles of false Prophets and Impostors, if they be, many of them, of a kind and benevolent Aspect, yet the *Devil*'s Foot, if we look well to it, will discover it self in some ludicrous and mischievous Pranks: But *Jesus*'s Miracles were all of a beneficent Nature; He went about doing good, healing all manner of Diseases among the People, and did no Wrong to any one; which is a good Argument, they say, of his divine Authority, or God would not have suffer'd, nor the *Devil* have work'd such a Testimony in behalf of it. On this Head our *Divines* are copious and rhetorical, and many notable and florid Harangues have they made on it. But

In answer to them, they don't seem to have their

Memories at Hand, when they declaim at this rate. The Fathers, upon whose Authority I write, will tell such Orators, that *Jesus*, if his Miracles are to be understood in the literal Sense, did not only as foolish Things as any Impostor could do, but very injurious ones to Mankind. I shall not here instance in the seemingly foolish and injurious Things which *Jesus* did for Miracles, intending under the next Head to speak to some of them: But they are such, if literally true, as our *Divines* do believe, as are enough to turn our Stomachs against such a Prophet; and enough to make us take him for a *Conjuror*, a *Sorcerer*, and a *Wizard*, rather than the *Messiah* and Prophet of the most High God. But

2. To prove the *Messiahship* of the Holy *Jesus* from his Miracles, our *Divines* urge the Prophecies of the Old Testament, such as that of *Isaiah*, *C.* xxxv. *V.* 5, 6. *Then the Eyes of the Blind shall be opened, and the Ears of the Deaf shall be unstopp'd; then shall the lame Man leap as the Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb sing*; and say that these Prophecies were accurately fulfill'd by our *Jesus* in the several specifical Cures of Blindness, Deafness, Lameness, and Dumbness, which he often perform'd upon one or other; and, inasmuch as our Saviour seems to appeal to such Prophecies, do conclude this his Accomplishment of them, to be no less than a Demonstration, that he was the true *Messiah*, that great Prophet, who was to come into the World. To which I answer,

First, That the Accomplishment of Prophecies that can neither be given forth by human Foresight, nor fulfill'd in a Counterfeit, are good Proofs of *Jesus*'s *Messiahship*: But then, what shall we say if others besides *Jesus* should do the like Cures and Miracles? It is said of *Anti-christ*, and I believe it, that he will

not only do all the Miracles that *Jesus* did, but will appeal to the like Prophecies too. How then we are to distinguish the *true* Christ from the *false* Christ by Miracles and Prophecies in this Case, is the Question, which I leave with our *Divines* to consider of an Answer to, against the Time that it is proved that *Anti-christ* does all those Miracles, which *Jesus* in the Flesh wrought. But

Secondly, The foresaid Prophecies and others mentioned in *Isaiah*, neither were, nor could be Prophecies of the miraculous Cures of bodily Diseases which *Jesus then* did. And this may be made appear, not only from the Context of those Prophecies which received then no Accomplishment from *Jesus*, who ought to have fulfill'd one Part of the Prophecy as well as the other, or is not to be taken for the Fulfiller of either; but from the Opinion of both *Jews* and *Fathers*, who adjourn the Accomplishment of those Prophecies to Christ's spiritual Advent. But

Thirdly, The Prophet *Isaiah*, in the Place above cited, speaks not of bodily Blindness, &c. which the *Messiah* is to heal, but of the spiritual Distempers of the Soul, metaphorically so called; as may be easily proved, not only from the Prophecies themselves, but from the old *Jews*, who were allegorical Interpreters of those Distempers, and from the antient Fathers,[17] who so understood them. Consequently our *Jesus*'s healing of those bodily Diseases, was no proper Accomplishment of those Prophecies. It is true our Saviour, *Matt.* xi. 4, 5. seems to appeal to those Prophecies, and to make his Cure of corporal Distempers an Accomplishment of them: But he means not in the literal Sense, that our *Divines* take him in, as I shall show hereafter, when I come to

consider what *Jesus* means, by appealing to his Works and Miracles, as bearing Witness of him.

Our *Divines* then may admire and adore *Jesus* as much as they please for his Miracles of healing bodily Distempers; but I am for the spiritual *Messiah* that cures those Distempers of the Soul, that metaphorically pass under the Names of Blindness, Lameness, Deafness, *&c.* And the Cure of these spiritual Diseases, is the proper and miraculous Work of the true *Messiah*; for the sake of which, says[18] St. *Augustin*, *Jesus* condescended to do those *little* Miracles of healing bodily Distempers, which were but the Type and Shadow of his more stupendous Miracles of curing spiritual Diseases. The Cure of spiritual Infirmities is a God-like[19] Work, above the Imitation of Man or of *Anti-christ*, infinitely more miraculous than the healing any bodily Distempers can be.

Whether our *Jesus* be at this Day such a spiritual *Messiah*, I leave to our *Divines* to consider, with those spiritual Distempers of the Church, that seem to want his miraculous Hand and Touch. The Fathers of the Church said, that *Jesus* was *in part* such a spiritual *Messiah* in their time, and argued[20] his *Messiahship*, not from bodily Cures, but from his most miraculous Cures of the Diseases of the Soul: But there was another and future Time, in which he would be such a spiritual and glorious *Messiah* to the greatest Perfection. In the mean while, no healing of corporal Distempers can prove *Jesus* to be the *Messiah*, nor any other of his miraculous Works recorded in the *Evangelists*: So far from it, that

II. I shall prove that the literal Story of many of *Jesus*'s Miracles, as they are recorded in the

Evangelists, and commonly believed by Christians, does imply Improbabilities and Incredibilities, and the grossest Absurdities, very dishonourable to the Name of Christ; consequently, they, in whole, or in part, were never wrought, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him.

The reading of this Head will, I doubt not, strike with Horror some of our squeamish *Divines*, who, notwithstanding they will sacrifice almost any Principles to their Interest, will not bear that our literal evangelical History of such renown'd Miracles should be thus called in Question, and contemptuously spoken of. What does this *Author* mean, will some say, thus to do Service to Atheism and Infidelity? Away with him! Our Indignation is moved against him! No Censure and Punishment can be too severe for such Impiety, Profaneness, and Blasphemy, as is aim'd at, and imply'd in this Proposition.

To calm therefore the Spirits, and abate the Prejudices of such Accusers, I must proceed with the greater Caution and with Reason and Authority well fortify myself before and behind, or I shall feel the Weight of the Displeasure of our *Divines*, who are prepossess'd of the Belief of the literal Story of all *Jesus*'s Miracles.

Before then I enter upon the particular Examination of any of his Miracles, I will premise two or three general Assertions of the Fathers about them. And first *Origen*[21] says, that in the historical Part of the Scriptures, *There are some Things inserted as History, which were never transacted, and which it was*

impossible should be transacted; and other Things, again, that might possibly be done, but were not. This he asserts of the Writings of the *Evangelists*, as well as of the Old Testament, and gives many Instances to this Purpose. St. *Hilary*[22] says, *There are many historical Passages of the New Testament, that if they are taken literally, are contrary to Sense and Reason, and therefore there is a Necessity of a mystical Interpretation*. And St. *Augustin*[23] says, that *there are hidden Mysteries in the Works and Miracles of our Saviour, which if we incautiously and literally interpret, we shall run into Errors, and make grievous Blunders.* Of the same Mind are the rest of the Fathers, as might be proved by express or implicit Citations; but, studying Brevity, I think the three Testimonies above, enough to cool the Rage, and assuage the Prejudices of my Adversaries against the Proposition before us, which I now come to a particular Consideration of; that is, to shew that the Story of many of *Jesus*'s Miracles is literally absurd, improbable, and incredible. And

1. To speak to that Miracle of *Jesus*'s *driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*, which all the[24] four Evangelists make mention of.

I have read in some modern Author whose Name does not occur to my Memory, that this was, in his Opinion, the most stupendous Miracle that *Jesus* wrought. And, in truth, it was a most astonishing one, if literally true, and *Jesus* must appear more than a Man, he must put on an awful and most majestick Countenance to effect it. It is hard to conceive, how any one in the Form of a Man, and of a despised one too, (and we don't read that *Jesus* chang'd his human Shape) with a Whip in his Hand, could execute such a Work upon a great Multitude of

People, who were none of his Disciples, nor had any regard for him. Supposing he could, by his divine Power, infuse a *panick* Fear into the People; yet what was the Reason that he was so *eaten up* with Zeal against the Profanation of that House, which he himself came to destroy, and which he permitted, I may say commanded, to be filthily polluted not long after. But not to form by my self an Invective against the Letter of this Story, let's hear what the Fathers say to it,

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Origen makes the whole but a[25] Parable. His allegorical Expositions of it, are frequent, and one time or other he gives us the mystical Meaning of every Part of it. By the *Temple*, he understands the Church: By the *Sellers* in the Temple, he means such *Preachers* who make Merchandize of the Gospel, whom the Spirit of Christ, some time or other, would rid his Church of. He is so far from believing any thing of the Letter of this Story, that he has form'd a[26] large Argument against it: The Substance of which is, that if *Jesus* had attempted any such thing, the People would have resisted, and executed their Revenge on him; if he had effected it, the Merchants of the Temple might have reproach'd him with Damage done to their Wares; and would have justly accused him of a Riot against Law and Authority. Whether there is not Reason in this Argument of *Origen*, let any one judge.

St. *Hilary* is of the same Mind with *Origen*. He says that this Story is only a[27] Præfiguration of what

will be done in Christ's Church upon another Occasion. And he admonishes[28] us to search into the profound and mystical Import of every Part of it; particularly he hints that[29] by *the Seats of those who sell Doves*, may be understood the Pulpits of Preachers who make Sale of the Gifts of the Spirit, which is represented by a Dove. As to the Letter of the Story, he is plain enough, that there was no such[30] Market kept in the Temple of *Jerusalem*: And if any Historians besides the *Evangelists* had asserted it, I know of none, who would have been so foolish as to believe that Oxen and Sheep and Goats were there sold.

St. *Ambrose* too is for the Mystery, and against the Letter of this Story, saying[31] what should be the Reason that *Jesus* should overturn the Seats of those that sold Doves? This must be, says he, a figurative Story, and signifies nothing less than the future Ejection of Priests out of his Church, who shall make Gain and Merchandize of the Gospel.

St. *Jerome*, as his manner is in other Cases, gives us a literal Exposition of this Miracle, as far as it will bear it: But then corrects himself again, saying, there are[32]Absurdities in the Letter; but, according to its mystical Meaning, *Jesus* will enter his Temple of the Church, and cast out of it Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, who make a Trade of Preaching. And in another Place he tells us of the mystical[33] Whip, that *Jesus* will make use of to this Purpose.

St. *Augustin* also is against the Letter of the Story of this Miracle, saying,[34] Where could be the great Sin of selling and buying Things in the Temple, that were for the Use of it, and offer'd as Sacrifice in it? We must therefore, says he, look for the Mystery in

this[35] figurative Story, and enquire what is meant by the Oxen, and Sheep, and Doves, and who are the Sellers of them in Christ's Church; and he is very positive that Ecclesiasticks, who are selfish, and make worldly Gain of the Gospel, are here meant. And as to the Expression of *turning the Temple into a Den of Thieves*, he says it has Respect to the[36] *Clergy* in Time to come, who would make such a Den of Christ's Church.

Lastly, with the foregoing Fathers agrees St. *Theophylact*, who is an Allegorist too upon this Miracle, saying, that those[37] who sell Doves, are the Priests who sell spiritual Gifts; and that Christ sometime or other would overturn their Seats, and clear his Church of them. In another Place he intimates what are meant by Oxen and Sheep, *viz.* the literal Sense of the Scriptures. And if the literal Sense be irrational and nonsensical, the Metaphor we must allow to be proper, inasmuch as now-a-days, dull and foolish and absurd stuff we call Bulls, Fatlings, and Blunders.

Behold a wonderful Harmony among the Fathers in their Rejection of the literal, and Espousal of the mystical Sense of this Miracle. It is said of the Church in her first Ages, that she was inspired; and so she was, or before an Hire for the Priesthood was established, and pleaded for, she could never have written in this Fashion. If the Fathers had lived now, and written thus, we should have thought the Spirit of *Quakerism* was gotten amongst them, or they would never have given such an Exposition of this Story to favour an Enmity to an *Hireling Priesthood*.

How and when Christ's Power, according to the Figure and Parable before us, will enter his Church,

and drive out of her these ecclesiastical Merchants, is not the Question. But when ever it does so effectually, it will be a stupendous Miracle, much greater than the typical one is supposed to be; and not only a Proof of Christ's divine Power and Presence in his Church, but an absolute Demonstration of his *Messiahship* from his Accomplishment both of the foresaid Prophecies of the Fathers, and of other remarkable ones of the *Old Testament*, which will be then clearly understood, and which it is not my Business here to apply or mention.

Against the aforesaid Exposition of this Miracle, perhaps it may be objected, that (excepting a little Reasoning against the Letter of it) this is only the chimerical and whimsical Dream of the Fathers, whose Notions are obsolete, and who[38] *have adulterated Christianity with their Cant and Jargon*; and that none of our *Protestant* and Orthodox *Divines* have ever given into their Opinion.

I confess, that none of our Protestant *Divines*, whom I know do embrace the foresaid Exposition of the Fathers, but it may be nothing the worse for all that: And tho' their Exposition may be very disagreeable to the Priesthood of this Age, yet I can tell them of the greatest Man of these last Ages, and that was

Erasmus, who, cautiously expressing himself for fear of giving Offence to the *Clergy*, is of the same Mind with the Fathers; or he would not say that[39] *that Work of* Jesus *did prefigure somewhat else: For* Jesus *could not be zealous against the Prophanation of that Temple of the* Jews, *which was soon to be destroy'd, but meant to shew his Dislike and Hatred of ecclesiastical Covetousness, which, after the Way of the Type, he would take his Opportunity to rid the Church of.*

Before I dismiss this Miracle, I must observe, that if the Fathers are right above, then our *Latin* and *English* Translations of the Place in St. *Matthew* err in a main Point. Instead of reading, *and Jesus cast out them that sold and bought*, it should be, *those who sold and preach'd*; that is sold what they preach'd: For the Word αγοραζειν, does more properly signify to *preach* than to *buy*; and in this Sense here, according to the Fathers, it should be construed.

Again, I must observe, that our Commentators are a little perplex'd to know who, and what those κολλυβιστων, *Money-Changers*, were. The Greek[40] Word does import those who have a Knack to barter away little base and Brass Money, with the Effigies of an Ox or Bull on it, in exchange for good Coin. How applicable the Word was to any Merchants of the old Temple at *Jerusalem*, is hard to conceive. But it is very agreeable to our ecclesiastical *Collybists*, who, as I may appeal to Freethinkers, vend their brasen-faced Bulls and Blunders at an extravagant and great Price. And if τραπεζας, which is translated *Tables*, does properly signify[41] *Pulpits*, who can help it?

So much then on the Miracle of *Jesus*'s driving the *Sellers* and *Buyers* out of the Temple. And how I appeal to our *Divines*, whether it be not an absurd,

improbable, and incredible Story according to the Letter, and whether it be any other than, as the Fathers said of it, a prophetical and parabolical Narrative of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by *Jesus*. And so I come to speak to a

2. Second Miracle of Jesus, and that is, that of his[42] *casting the Devils out of the Madman or Madmen, and permitting them to enter into the Herd of Swine, which thereupon ran down a Precipice, and were all choaked in the Sea.*

To exorcise, or cast Devils out of the Possess'd, without considering the Nature of such a Possession, or the Nature and Power of the Devil, we'll allow to be not only a kind and beneficent Act, but a great Miracle. But then, be the Miracle as great as can be imagined, it is no more than what false Teachers, [43]*Workers of Iniquity*, and even some Artists amongst the *Jews*, have done before; consequently, such a work of *Exorcism* in our Saviour, could be no Proof of his divine Authority. And if there was no more to be said against this Miracle, this is enough to set it aside, and to spoil the Argument of *Jesus*'s divine Power from it. But there are many Circumstances in the Story literally consider'd, that would induce us to call the Truth of the whole into question. How came those Madmen to have their Dwelling amongst the Tombs of a Burying-Ground? Where was the Humanity of the People, that did not take Care of them, in Pity to them, as well as for the Safety of others? Or if no Chains, as the Text says, which is hardly credible, could hold them, it was possible surely, as well as lawful, to dispatch them, rather than their Neighbours and Passengers should be in Danger from them. Believe then this Part of the

Story who can? But what's worse, its not credible there was any Herd of *Swine* in that Country. If any Historians but the *Evangelists* had said so, none would have believed it. The *Jews* are forbidden to eat Swine's Flesh; what then should they do with Swine (which are good for nothing till they are dead) who eat neither *Pig*, *Pork*, nor *Bacon*? Some may say that they were kept there for the Use of Strangers: but this could not be; because that after the Time of *Antiochus*, who polluted the Temple with the Sacrifice of an Hog, the *Jews*[44] forbad, under the Pain of an *Anathema*, the keeping of any *Swine* in their Country. Perhaps it may be said, that the *Gadarens*, so call'd from the Place of their Abode, were not *Jews*, but neighbouring *Gentiles*, with whom it was lawful to eat, and keep *Swine*. We will suppose so, tho' it is improbable; but then its unlikely (without better Reason than at present we are apprised of) that our Saviour would permit the Devils to enter into a Herd of them to their Destruction. Where was the Goodness and Justice of his so doing? Let our *Divines* account for it if they can. It is commonly said of our Saviour, and I believe it, that his Life was entirely innocent, that his Miracles were all useful and beneficial to Mankind, and that he did no Wrong to any one. But how can this be rightly said of him, if this Story be literally true? The Proprietors of the Swine were great Losers and Sufferers; and we don't read that *Jesus* made them amends, or that they deserv'd such Usage from him. The Proprietors of the Swine, it seems upon this Damage done them by *Jesus*, desire him to depart out of their Coasts, to prevent farther Mischief; which was gentler Resentment, then we can imagine any others would have made of the like Injury. I know not what our *Divines* think of this Part of the Story,

nor wherefore *Jesus* escaped so well; but if any *Exorcist* in this our Age and Nation, had pretended to expel the Devil out of one possess'd, and permitted him to enter into a Flock of Sheep, the People would have said that he had bewitch'd both; and our Laws and Judges too of the last Age, would have made him to swing for it.

Without Offence, I hope, I have argued against the Letter of this strange Story of the holy *Jesus*; I should not have dared to have said so much against it, but upon the Encouragement of *Origen* and other Fathers, who say, we ought to expose the Absurdities of the Letter, as much as may be, to turn Men's Heads to the mystical and true Meaning.

Let's hear then what the Fathers say to this Miracle. *Origen*'s Commentaries on this Part of St. *Matthew*, and St. *Luke*'s Gospel, are lost; otherwise unquestionably he would not only have told us, that he believed no more of the Letter of this Story, than he did of the Devil's[45] taking our Saviour to the Top of a Mountain, and shewing him all the Kingdoms of the World; but, as he is an admirable *Mystist*, would have given us curious Light into the Allegory and Mystery of it. But without *Origen*, we have enough in the other Fathers against the Letter of this Story.

St. *Hilary* reckoning up all the Parts of this Miracle together, says of it, that it is[46] typical and parabolical, and written for our Meditation of what would be done hereafter by the holy *Jesus*. According to him, and other Fathers, the *Madman* is Mankind; or if they were two, they were *Jew* and *Gentile* at Christ's coming, who may be said to[47] be *possess'd with Devils*, in as much as they were under the Rule of diabolical Sins, and subject to the Worship of

Δαιμονιων, false Deities, which we translate *Devils*. They were *so fierce*[48] *as no Chains could hold them*, because of their most furious Rage and Enmity to the Church, whom no Bonds of Reason could restrain from doing Violence to the Christians. They are said *to be*[49] *naked*, because they were destitute of the Clothing of the Spirit, and of Grace. And may be said to be *among the*[50] *Tombs*; because they were dead in Traspasses and Sins. After that *Jesus* had exorcis'd these diabolical Spirits out of the *Gentiles*, and brought them to their right Senses, which was upon their Conversion to the Faith; then a *good Way off*, some Ages after, did the like *Devils*, by divine Permission, enter into a[51] *Herd of Swine*, i. e. into *Hereticks* of impure Lives and furious Natures. What sort of *Hereticks* are meant, or whether they are not to be understood of Christians In general, let our *Divines* consider. But one would be apt to think that *Ministers of the Letter* are included, because the *Letter* of the Scripture is mystically call'd[52] *Swines* Food. I am not obliged to pursue the mystical Interpretation of this Parable (for so I will call it) thro' all its Parts, nor to say what is meant by the Sea, that the *Swine* are to be absorp't in; but leave our *Divines* to chew upon this mystical Construction given them in part, and to consider, whether there's not a Necessity for such an Interpretation to make the Story credible.

And thus have I given you the Opinion and Exposition of the Fathers upon this Miracle, which they turn all into Mystery. If our *Divines* are still far adhering to the Letter of this Story, let them account for the Difficulties it is involv'd with. To cure Men violently distracted, and possess'd with *Devils*, is, whether it be miraculous or not, a good and great Work; but to send the *Devils*, who without *Jesus*'s Permission could not go into the *Herd of Swine*, was

an Injury done to the Proprietors, and unbecoming of the Goodness of the holy *Jesus*. Neither is there any other Way to solve the Difficulty, than by looking upon the whole, with the Fathers, as Type and Figure.

If this miraculous Story had been recorded of *Mahomet*, and not of *Jesus*, our *Divines*, I dare say, would have work'd it up to a Confutation of *Mahometanism*. *Mahomet* should have been, with them, nothing less than a *Wizard*, an *Enchanter*, a *Dealer* with familiar Spirits, a sworn *Slave* to the Devil; and his *Mussulmen* would have been hard put to it to write a good Defence of him.

When our Saviour was brought before *Pilate* to be arraign'd, try'd, and condemned, *Pilate* put this Question to the *Jews*, saying, *What Evil hath Jesus done?* If both, or either of the Stories above, had been literally true of *Jesus*, there had been no need of false Witnesses against him. The Merchants of the Temple were at hand, who could have sworn "that he was the Author of an Uproar and Riot, the like was never seen on their Market-Day; that they were great Sufferers, and Losers in their Trades; and, whether he or his Party had stolen any of their Goods or not, yet some were embezzled, and others damaged; and all thro' the outragious Violence of this unruly Fellow, against Law and Authority." If such Evidence as this was not enough to convict him of a capital Crime, then the *Swine-Herds* of the *Gadarenes* might have deposed, "how they believed him to be a *Wizard*, and had lost two thousand Swine through his Fascinations: That he bid the Devils to go into our Cattle, is not to be deny'd. And if he cured one or two of our Countrymen of a violent Possession, yet in as much as he did us this Injury in our Swine, we

justly suspect him of diabolical Practices upon both."

Upon such Evidence as this, *Pilate* asks the Opinion of the *Jews*, saying, *What think you?* If they all had condemn'd him to be guilty of Death, it is no wonder, since there is not a *Jury* in *England* would have acquitted any one arraign'd and accused in the like Case.

It is well for our literal *Doctors*, that such Accusations were not brought against *Jesus*; or their Heads would have been sadly puzzled to vindicate his Innocence, and to prove the Injustice and Undeservedness of his Death and Sufferings. But for this Reason, if no other, that no such Crimes were laid to his Charge, I believe little or nothing of either of the seemingly miraculous Stories before us, but look upon them both as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would mysteriously and more wonderfully, and consistently with the Wisdom and Goodness of *Jesus*, be done by him. And so I pass to a

3. Third Miracle of *Jesus*, and that is *his Transfiguration*[53] *on the Mount*. And this is the darkest and blindest Story of the whole Gospel, which a Man can make neither Head nor Foot of; and I question whether the Conceptions of any two thinking *Doctors* do agree about it. To say there is nothing in the Letter of this Story, we Believers must not, because St. *Peter*[54] says he was an Eye-witness of *Jesus*'s Majesty, saw his Glory on the Mount, and heard the Voice out of the Cloud. But as Infidels will be prying into the Conduct of *Jesus*'s Life, and forming their Exceptions to the Credibility or Probability of this or that part of it, so we Christians should be ready at an Answer, that might reasonably satisfy them; and not forcibly bear down their

Opposition, which will make no sincere Converts of them. And I believe they would easily distress us with Difficulties and Objections to the Letter of this Story.

St. *Augustin* himself[55] owns, that the whole of it might be perform'd by Magic Art; and we know, in these our Days, that some Jugglers are strange Artists at the Imitation of a Voice, and to make it as if it came from a far off, when it is uttered close by us, and can cast themselves too into different Forms and Shapes, without a Miracle, to the Surprise and Admiration of Spectators.

But what, I trow, do our *Divines* mean by *Jesus*'s *Transfiguration*. We read that his Countenance did shine like the Sun, and his Raiment was made as white as Snow, and that's all. And is this enough can we think, to demonstrate that Transaction, a miraculous *Transfiguration*? Philosophers will tell us, that the Reflections of the Light of the Sun will change the Appearance of Colours, and to none more than Whiteness; and *Sceptics* will say, that its no Wonder if the Countenance of *Jesus* look'd *Rubicund*, when the Sun might shine on it.

The Word in the Original for *transfigured*, is μεταμορφωθη, that is, he was metamorphosed, transform'd, or, if you will, transfigured. And what is to be understood by a *Metamorphosis*, we are to learn not only from the natural Import of the Word, but from the ancient Use of it. Accordingly, it signifies nothing less than the Change or Transformation of a Person into the Forms, Shapes, and Essences of Creatures and Things of a quite different Species, Size, and Figure: But *Jesus*, it is conceived, was not so *transfigured*. Our *Divines*, I suppose, would not

have him thought such a *Posture-Master* for the whole World. If I, or anyone else, should assert, that *Jesus* upon the Mount transform'd himself into a Calf, a Lyon, a Bear, a Ram, a Goat, an Hydra, a Stone, a Tree, and into many other Things of the animate and inanimate World, I dare say there would, among our orthodox *Divines*, be such Exclamations against me for Blasphemy, as the like were never heard of. They, to be sure, will not hear of such a Transfiguration; nor, like good plain believers, will bear any thing more than that *Jesus*'s *Countenance did shine* like the Sun, and the Colour of his Vestments was changed; which whether it comes up to the Import of a *Metamorphosis* or not, they don't care.

But to close with our *Divines*, and acknowledge that the glorious Change of *Jesus*'s Countenance, and of the Colour of his Vestments, was a true and proper Transfiguration, and that it was as real and wonderful a Miracle as could be wrought: But then we may, I hope, ask them, what was the particular Reason and Use of this Miracle? Was it a Miracle only for the sake of a Miracle? That's an Absurdity in the Opinion of[56] St. *Augustin*, who says, what is reasonable to think, that all and every one of *Jesus*'s Miracles had its particular End and Use; or he who is the Wisdom as well as Power of God, had never wrought them. And what, I pray, was the life of this Miracle? Of that the evangelical History is silent, and our *Divines*, with all their reasoning Faculties, can say nothing to it.

And what did *Moses* and *Elias* on the Mount with *Jesus*? Was it in their own proper Persons that they appear'd? or were they only some Spectres and Apparitions in resemblance of them? It is said, that

they were talking with *Jesus*; what then did they talk about? The three greatest Prophets and Philosophers of the Universe could not possibly meet and confer together, but on the most sublime, useful, and edifying Subject. Its strange that the Apostles, who over-heard their Confabulation, did not make a Report of it, and transmit it to Posterity for our Edification and Instruction. St. *Luke*, as our *English* Translation has it, seems to say that they talk'd together of *Jesus*'s *Decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem*; but this can't be the Meaning of St. *Luke*'s[57] Words, which so interpreted, are no less than a *Barbarism*, and, I appeal to our Greek *Criticks*, an Improper Expression of such Signification. We must then look for a more proper Construction of the Phrase in St. *Luke*, or we must remain in the Dark, as to the Subject, that *Moses* and *Elias* talked with *Jesus* about.

But further, Why could not this Miracle have been wrought in the Valley as well as upon a Mountain, whither *Jesus* and his three Apostles ascended for the Work of it? Naughty *Infidels* will say, it was for the Advantage of a Cloud, which often moves and rests on the Tops of Mountains, to display his Pranks in. And why was it not done in the Presence of the Multitude, as well as of his three Apostles? The more Witnesses of a Miracle, the better it is attested, and the more reasonably credited; and there could not surely be too many Witnesses of this, any more than of others of *Jesus*'s Miracles, if real ones. Ought not the unbelieving Multitude, for many Unbelievers unquestionably were amongst them, to have had a Sight and Hearing of this Miracle, as well as the Apostles? Who should rather see the Miracle, than those who wanted Conviction? Were they to take the Report of the Miracle upon the Word of the Apostles,

who were Parties in the Cause? Our *Divines* may possibly say they ought: But *Infidels* and *Free-Thinkers* would cry out against them, for juggling Tricks, and pious Impostures.

These are all Difficulties and hard Questions about the Miracle of Christ's Transfiguration, which our *Clergy*, who are Admirers of the Letter of that Story, are obliged to account for; and I believe it will be long enough before they give a proper and satisfactory Answer to many of them.

Let's hear then what the Fathers say to this miraculous Story of *Jesus*'s Transfiguration. And it is agreed amongst them, that the whole is but a Type, [58] Prefiguration, and[59] ænigmatical Resemblance of a future and more glorious and real Transfiguration. And whenever they speak of any Part of the Story, they never explain to us how the Matter went upon Mount *Tabor*, but tell us of what *this* or *that* Part of it is figurative and emblematical; and how it is to be understood, and will be fulfill'd in future Time. As thus, by *the*[60] *six Days*, they understood six Ages of the World, after which a real and mysterious Transfiguration will be exhibited to our intellectual Views. By *Moses* and *Elias*[61] talking with *Jesus*, they mean the Law and the Prophets, upon an allegorical Interpretation, bearing Testimony unto Christ as the Fulfiller of them. By the[62] *Mountain* on which this future Transfiguration will be exhibited, they understand the sublime and anagogical Sense of the Law and the Prophets. By his *Transfiguration* it self, they mean his taking upon him, and passing through the Forms of all the Types of him under the Law, as of a Lamb, a Lion, a Serpent, a Calf, a Rock, a Stone, and of many others, which he is to fulfil, and which will then be clearly

discern'd by us. By the black Cloud[63] that at present obstructs this Vision, they understand the Letter of the Old Testament. By the white[64] Vestments of *Jesus*, they mean the Words of the Scriptures, which will then shine clear and bright. By the Voice out of the Cloud, they mean, with St. *Peter*, the Word of Prophecy, that will sound in the Ears of our Apprehensions. And lastly, they tell us, that the Way to attain to the Sight of this glorious Vision, is by ascending (not by local Motion, but by Reason) to the Tops of the Mountain of the mysterious and sublime Sense of the Law and the Prophets. If we continue in the Plains and Vallies[65] of the Letter, like the Multitude under the Mountain, we shall never see *Jesus* in his shining Vestments, nor how he was transform'd into the Types of the Law; nor *Moses* and *Elias* talking with him; nor the Law and the Prophets agreeing harmoniously in a Testimony to him.

After this fashion do the Fathers, one or other of them, copiously treat on every Part of this Transfiguration of *Jesus*. I could collect an almost infinite Number of Passages out of their Writings to this Purpose: But from these few it is plain, they look'd on the Story of Christ's Transfiguration, but as a Figure and Parable; and they were certainly in the right on't, in as much as this their Sense of the Matter, and no other, will solve the Difficulties before started against the Letter, as any one may discern, if he attentively review and compare one with the other: As, for instance, this their Sense and Interpretation lets us into the Reason of *Moses* and *Elias*'s appearing on the Mount with *Jesus*; and gives us to understand what they talk'd about, and that was, not on *Jesus*'s *Decease which he would accomplish at* Jerusalem, as our Translation has it, but on the

Prophecy of the Old Testament; particularly, as St. *Luke* says, on *Moses*'s Book of *Exodus, and how he would fulfill it* at the New Jerusalem.

Whether any, besides my self, does really apprehend, and is willing to understand this Story of Christ's Transfiguration, as I do, I neither know nor care. I am not bound to find others Ears, Eyes, and Capacities. What I have said is enough to shew the Sense of the Fathers about this Matter. If any dislike their concurrent Opinion of *Jesus*'s Transfiguration's being an Emblem, an Enigma, and figurative Representation of a future and most glorious Transfiguration, such a one as they speak of; let him account for the Difficulties and Objections which I have before raised against the Letter of this Story. In the mean time I shall think it, literally, an absurd, improbable, and incredible one, and no other than a prophetical and parabolical Narrative of what will be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by *Jesus*.

And thus I have considered *three* of the Miracles of our Saviour, and shewn how they are Absurdities, according to the Letter, consequently do make nothing for his Authority and *Messiahship*. I can and will do as much by his other Miracles; for I would not have any one think I am gotten to the End of my Tedder, but for some Reasons best known to my self, I publish these Remarks on these three first. After the *Clergy* have chew'd upon these a while, I will take into Examination some others of *Jesus*'s Miracles, which for their literal Story are admired by them. As for Instance,

I will take to task his Miracle[66] *of changing Water into Wine at a Marriage in Cana of Galilee*; which was the beginning of *Jesus*'s Miracles, and should by right

have been first spoken to; but I am almost too grave to handle the Letter of this Story as I ought; and if I had treated it as ludicrously as it deserves, I don't know but at setting out, I should have put the *Clergy* quite out of all Temper. I would not now for the World be so impious and profane, as to believe, with our *Divines*, what is contain'd and imply'd in the Letter of this Story. If *Apollonius Tyanœus*, and not *Jesus*, had been the Author of this Miracle, we should often have reproached his Memory with it. It is said of *Apollonius Tyanœus*, that a Table was all on a sudden, at his Command, miraculously spread with Variety of nice Dishes for the Entertainment of himself and his Guests; which Miracle, our *Divines* can tell him, makes not at all to his Credit, in as much as it was done for the Service and Pleasure of luxurious Appetites. But if *Apollonius* had done, as our *Jesus* did at this Wedding, they would have said much worse of him; and that, modestly speaking, he delighted to make his Friends thoroughly merry, or he would not be at the Pains of a Miracle to turn so much Water into Wine, after they had before *well drank*. If the Fathers then don't help us out at the mystical and true Meaning of this Miracle, such farther Objections may be form'd against the Letter, as may make our *Divines* asham'd of it.

I will also take into Examination *Jesus*'s Miracle[67] of *feeding many Thousands in the Wilderness with a few Loaves and Fishes*; which, according to the Letter, are most romantick Tales. I don't in the least question *Jesus*'s Power to magnify or multiply the Loaves, and, if he pleass'd, to meliorate the Bread: But that many Thousands of Men, Women, and Children, should follow him into the Wilderness, and stay with him three Days and Nights too, without eating, is a little against Sense and Reason. Whether the Wilderness

was near to, or far from the People's Habitations, the Difficulties attending the Story are equally great. I wonder how *Jesus* amused them all the while, that they had the Patience to stay with him without Food; but I much more wonder, that no Victuallers besides the *Lad* with his Loaves and Fishes, of whom, and his Occupation, whether it was that of a *Baker* or *Fishmonger*; and of his Neglect of his Master's Business here; and of the Reason that he met with no hungry Chapmen for his Bread before, we shall make some Enquiry; but particularly why he alone, I say, and no other Victuallers, no other Retalers of Cakes and Gingerbread followed the Camp. In short, for all the imaginary Greatness of the Miracle (which there is a way to reduce and lessen) of *Jesus*'s feeding his Thousands with a few Loaves, there must be some Fascination or Enchantment (condemn'd by the Laws of the *Jews* as well as of other Nations) in the Matter; or the People if they had stay'd one Day, would not two, much less three *to faint*, but would, especially the Women and Children, have been for returning the first Night home. We must then seek to the Fathers (who say the five Books of *Moses* are the *five Barley Loaves*, &c. and the septiform'd Spirit, the *seven Loaves*, &c.) for a good Notion of this Miracle, and if they don't make it a Parable; do what our *Divines* can, it will turn to the Dishonour of the holy Jesus.

I will also consider the Miracle of *Jesus*'s[68] *curing the Man sick of the Palsy, for whom the Roof of the House was broken up, to let him down into the Room where* Jesus *was, because his Bearers could not enter in at the Door for the Press of the People*. This literally is such a *Rodomontado*, that were Men to stretch for a Wager, against Reason and Truth, none could out-do it. Where was the Humanity of the People, and

wherefore did they so tumultuate against the Door of the House? Its *strange* they had not so much Compassion on the *Paralytick*, as to give way to him: Its *more strange* that his Bearers could get to the Top of the House with him and his Bed too, when they could not get to the Door, nor the Sides of it: Its *yet stranger*, that the good Man of the House would suffer his House to be broken up, when it could not be long ere the Tumult of the People would be appeas'd: But most *strange*, that *Jesus*, who could drive his thousands out at the Temple before him, and draw as many after him into the Wilderness, did not, by Force or Persuasion, make the People to retreat, but that such needless Trouble and Pains must be taken for the miraculous Cure of this poor Man. Let's think of these Things against the Time, that out of the Fathers I prove this Story to be a Parable.

I will also take into Consideration the Miracle of *Jesus*'s curing *the*[69] *blind Man, for whom Eye-Salve was made of Clay and Spittle*; which Eye-Salve, whether it was balsamick or not, does equally affect the Credit of the Miracle. If it was naturally medicinal, there's an End of the Miracle; and if it was not at all medicinal, it was foolishly and impertinently apply'd, and can be no otherwise accounted for, than by considering it, with the Fathers, as a figurative Act in *Jesus*.

I will also take into Consideration the several Stories of *Jesus*'s raising of the Dead; and, without questioning his actual bringing of the Dead to Life again, will prove from the Circumstances of those Stories, that they are parabolical, and are not literally to be apply'd to the Proof of *Jesus*'s divine Authority and Messiahship; or, for Instance, *Jesus*,

when he raised *Jairus*'s[70] Daughter from the Dead, would never have turned the People out of the House, who should have been his best and properest Witnesses.

I will also consider the Miracle of *Jesus*'s[71] *cursing the Fig-Tree*, for its not bearing Fruit out of Season; which, upon the bare mention of it, appears to be a foolish, absurd, and ridiculous Act, if not figurative.

I will also consider the[72] Journey of the Wisemen out of the East, with their (literally) senseless and ridiculous Presents of *Frankincense* and *Myrrhe*, to a new-born Babe. If with their *Gold*, which could be but little, they had brought their *Dozens* of Sugar, Soap, and Candles, which would have been of Use to the Child and his poor Mother in the Straw, they had acted like wise as well as good Men. But what, I pray, was the Meaning and Reason of a Star, like a *Will-a-Whisp*, for their Guide to the Place, where the holy Infant lay. Could not God, by divine Impulse, in a Vision or in a Dream, as he ordered their Return home, have sent them on this important Errand; but that a Star must be taken or made out of Course to this Purpose? I wonder what Communication passed between these Wisemen and the Star, or how they came to know one anothers Use and Intention. But the Fathers shall speak hereafter farther to the Senselessness of this Story literally, and make out the Mystery and true Meaning of it.

I will also, by the Leave of our *Divines*, take again into Consideration the miraculous Conception of the Virgin *Mary*, and the Resurrection of *Jesus* from the Dead. I do believe, if it may so please our *Divines*, that *Jesus* was born of a pure Virgin, and that he arose from the Dead: But speaking too briefly, in the

Moderator, to these two Miracles, they took Offence. I will therefore give them a Review, and speak home to them; particularly to Christ's Resurrection, the evangelical Story of which literally, is such a Complication of Absurdities, Incoherences, and Contradictions, that unless the Fathers can help us to a better Understanding of the *Evangelists* than we have at present, we must of Necessity give up the Belief of it.

These and many[73] other of the historical and miraculous Parts of *Jesus*'s Life, will I take into Examination, and shew, that none of them literally do prove his divine Authority: so far from it, that they are full of Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities; but that his whole Life in the Flesh, is but[74] Type, Figure, and Parable of his mysterious and spiritual Life and Operations in Mankind.

In the End of this Head, it will be a curious and diverting Subject to examine the Miracles of *Jesus* as they are literally understood, by the Notions which our *Divines* have advanced about Miracles; and to shew, that even their Notions compared with Christ's Miracles, are destructive of his Authority, and subversive of Christianity. This, I say, would be a most diverting Undertaking, and it will be strange, if some *Free-Thinker*, that loves Pleasure of this kind, does not take the Hint, and snatch the Work out of my Hands. If I do it my self, I shall have especial Regard to the Writers against the *Grounds*, without passing by Mr. *Chandler*'s *Essay on Miracles*; on which the more Remarks will be made, if it be but to pay my Respects to the *Archbishop*'s Judgment, and to shew my Admiration at those extravagant Praises, which his *Grace* at *Lambeth* has bestowed on that Author. Among other his notable Notions of a

Miracle (and the *Archbishop* says he has[75] *set the Notion of a Miracle upon a clear and sure Foundation*) one is,[76] *That Miracles should be Things probable as well as possible, that they do not carry along with them the Appearance of Romance and Fable, which would unavoidably prejudice Men against believing them*. This is certainly a good and right Notion of a divine Miracle; and I don't doubt, but according to it, Mr. *Chandler* and the *Archbishop* think, they can justify the literal Story of our Saviour's Miracles, against the Charge of *Fable* and *Romance*: But whether they are able to do it or not, I shall go on, in some Discourses hereafter to be publish'd, to prove that our *Divines*, by espousing the Letter of Christ's Miracles, have deceived themselves into the Belief of the most arrant *Quixotism* that can be devis'd and palm'd upon the Understandings of Mankind. I say, they have deceived themselves; for neither the Fathers, nor the Apostles, nor even *Jesus* himself, means that his Miracles, as recorded in the *Evangelists*, should be taken in a literal Sense, but in[77] a mystical, figurative, and parabolical one. And this should bring me to the

III. Head of my Discourse; that is, to consider what *Jesus* means, when he appeals to his Works and Miracles, as to a Witness and Testimony of his divine Authority; and to shew, that he could not properly and truly refer to those supposed to be wrought by him in the *Flesh*, but to those mystical ones he would do in the *Spirit*, of which those seemingly wrought by him in the Flesh, are but Types and Shadows.

But this Head can't be rightly spoken to, till I have more amply discuss'd the former, which, by God's Leave, I promise to do: And if my *courteous Readers* will be so kind as to trust me till that Time, I assure

them to prove, that no Ignorance and Stupidity can be greater, than the Imagination that *Jesus* really appeal'd to his Miracles, supposed to have been wrought by him in the Flesh, as to a Witness and Testimony of his divine Authority, and *Messiahship*.

In the mean Time our *Divines* may go on in their own Way, if they think fit, and admire *Jesus* of old, and celebrate his Power and Praises for healing of bodily Diseases, and doing other notable Feats according to the Letter of the evangelical Story; but I am for the spiritual *Jesus* and *Messiah*, who cures the worse[78] Distempers of the Soul, and does other mysterious and most miraculous Works, of which those recorded in the Evangelists, are but Figure and Parable. This is the primitive and concurrent Opinion about the true *Messiah*, which the Fathers universally adher'd to. Whether our *Jesus*, at this Day, be such a spiritual *Messiah* to his Church, or whether she does not stand in need of such a one, is the Question that our *Divines* are to see to. But I will add here, what I believe, and than have another Opportunity to prove, that God on purpose suffer'd or empower'd *false* as well as *true* Prophets, *bad* as well as *good* Men, such as *Apollonius*, *Vespasian*, and many others to cure Diseases, and to do other mighty Works, equal to what are literally reported of *Jesus*, not only to defeat us of all distinction between true and false Miracles, which are the Object of our bodily Senses, but to raise and keep up our Thoughts to the constant Contemplation of *Jesus*'s spiritual, mysterious, and most miraculous Works, which are the Object of our Understandings, and loudly bespeak the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God; and which are to be the absolute Demonstration of *Jesus*'s divine Authority and *Messiahship* to the Conversion of *Jews* and *Infidels*.

I have no more to do at present, but, like a *Moderator*, to conclude with a short Address and Exhortation to *Infidels* and *Apostates*, the two contending Parties in the present Controversy. And

First, To *Apostates*, I mean the Writers against the *Grounds* and *Scheme*. Whether you, *grave Sirs*, who account your selves orthodox *Divines*, tho' there is little but Contradiction and Inconsistency amongst you, do like the Name of *Apostates* which is given you, I much question: But it is the properest, I could think of, for your Desertion of primitive Doctrine about Prophecy and Miracles. I could, not improperly have given you a worse *Title*, but I was willing to compliment you, rather than reproach you with this.

But setting aside the Title of *Apostates*, whether it be, in your Opinion, opprobrious or not; you may plainly perceive, that I am, *Sirs*, on your Side, as to the Truth of Christianity; and if you'll accept of my Assistance for the Proof of *Jesus*'s Messiahship from Prophecy, upon the Terms of the allegorical Scheme proposed in my *Moderator*, you shall find me your hearty Abettor. Upon the allegorical Scheme, I don't doubt but we shall soundly drub and mawl *Infidels*, and beat them out of the Field of Battle. If you, being wedded to the literal Scheme, will not accept of my Assistance, you may go on in your own Way, and see the Event of the Controversy, which in the End will turn to your Dishonour.

You, *Sirs*, can't but be sensible, how those two great Generals, Mr. *Grounds*, and Mr. *Scheme*, with their potent Armies of Reasons and Authorities against your literal Prophecies, have grievously distress'd and gall'd you; and if you don't make an honourable Retreat in Time, and seek to *Allegorists* for Help, will

gain a compleat Victory and Triumph over you.

Instead of the Help of *Allegorists*, you, I find, under the Disappointment of your literal Scheme, chuse rather to have Recourse to *Jesus*'s Miracles: But what little Dependence there is upon his Miracles, in your Sense, I have in *part* proved in this Discourse; and this I have done (give me leave repeatedly to declare it) not for the Service of your unbelieving Adversaries, but to reduce you to the good old Way of interpreting Oracles, which, upon the Testimony of the Fathers, will, one Day, be the Conversion of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

Whether you, *Sirs*, will be pleas'd with this short Discourse on Christ's Miracles, I much question. But before you put your selves into a Rage against it, I beg of you to read St. *Theophilus* of *Antioch*, *Origen*, St. *Hilary*, St. *Augustin*, St. *Ambrose*, St. *Jerome*, St. *Chrysostom*, St. *John* of *Jerusalem*, St. *Theophylact*, and other occasional ancient Pieces on one part or other of the *Evangelists*; and you'll find how they countenance such a Discourse as this on Miracles, and will abundantly assist me in the Prosecution of it.

I expect, *Sirs*, that some of you will be ready to rave against me for this Discourse; but this is my Comfort, that if your Passion should arise to another Prosecution of me, you can't possibly separate any of mine from the Opinions of the Fathers to ground a Prosecution on: And what Dishonour in the End will redown to Protestant and pretendedly learned *Divines* of the Church of *England*, to persecute again the Fathers for primitive Doctrine, I desire you to think on.

But, as I suppose, you'll have more Wit, *Sirs*, than to

prosecute me again for this Discourse; so I hope you'll have more Ingenuity, than odiously (after your wonted manner) to represent me to the Populace, for Profaneness, Blasphemy, and Infidelity. If you dislike the whole, or any part of this Discourse, appear like Men and Scholars, from the *Press* against it. Use me as roughly in Print as you think fit, I'll not take it ill.

Veniam petimus, dabimusq; vicissim.

I desire nothing more than to be furiously attack'd from the *Press*, which, if I am not much mistaken, would give me a long'd for Opportunity to expose your Ignorance to more Advantage.

Be not longer mistaken, *good Sirs*. The History of *Jesus*'s Life, as recorded in the *Evangelists*, is an emblematical Representation of his spiritual Life in the Soul of Man; and his Miracles are Figures of his mysterious Operations. The four Gospels are in no Part a literal Story, but a System of mystical Philosophy or Theology.

If you are resolved not to come into this Opinion, I beg of you again, before you break forth into a Passion, to try to vindicate the literal Story of the three Miracles spoken to in this Discourse, *viz.* those of Jesus'*s driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple; of his exorcising the Devil out of the Madman; and of his Transfiguration on the Mount;* which if you are able to defend against the Fathers, and my Objections, I'll give up the Cause to you, and own my self (what I am far enough from being) an impious Infidel and Blasphemer, and deserving of the worst Punishment. In the mean time, I make bold again to assert, that the literal Story of Christ's Life and Miracles, is an absurd and incredible Romance, full

of Contradictions and Inconsistencies; and that modern Paraphrases are not only a consequential Reflection on the Intellects of the *Evangelists*, and their divine Gifts of the Spirit, as if they could not write an intelligible and coherent Piece of Biography without your Help at this Distance of Time; but have even darken'd and obscured the seemingly native Simplicity of the Story of the Life of *Jesus*. So leaving you to chew upon this, I turn

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My Address to *Infidels*, particularly to the two most renown'd Writers of the Party, Mr. *Grounds*, and Mr. *Scheme*. I should, *Gentlemen*, by right, salute you with the Title of *Free-Thinkers*, a proper Name for your philosophical Sect, who are for the free Exercise of your Reason about divine and speculative Points in Theology. And I had distinguish'd you by this Title from your apostatical Adversaries, but that I had a mind to oblige my old Friends the *Clergy*, in giving you a no more honourable Title than I do them. And I trust you will not be offended at the Title of *Infidels*, since not only your Writings seem to have a Tendency to Infidelity; but, if there be any Fault in your Principles, you know how to charge it on your Adversaries, the pretended Advocates for Christianity, whose Absurdities, false Reasonings, Inconsistencies, and foolish Glosses on the Scriptures, have occasioned your Departure from the Faith in Christ.

I thank Mr. *Scheme* for the noble Present of his Book, which I received and read with Pleasure. But instead of one, he should have sent me a *Dozen* for the Use of

Friends and Borrowers, who are very curious and importunate for the Perusal of it. For what Reason he envies the *Booksellers* the publick Sale of his Work, chusing rather to give it away *gratis*, than that they should reap any Profit by it, I know not. Surely it is not to bring an *Odium* on the *Clergy* for Persecutors, as if such an useful and philosophical Piece might not appear publickly without Danger from them: If so, I hope the *Clergy* will resent the Indignity, and invite him to a Publication of his Book, with a Promise of Impunity, which would wipe off the Reproach, which this clandestine Method of disposing of it has cast on them.

I once almost despair'd, *Sirs*, of seeing such another Piece from your Quarter. I was afraid the Prosecution of the *Moderator*, would have deterr'd you from the Press, whereby our excellent Controversy on Foot must have been dropt: But the sudden and unexpected Appearance of Mr. *Scheme*, has revived me, and rejoiced the Cockles of my Heart. Go on then, *great Sirs*, in this Controversy, which Mr. *Grounds* happily commenc'd; and if you are deny'd the Liberty of the Press, and publick Sale of your Books, I hope you'll, for all that, as occasion offers it self, oblige the Learned and Curious with some more of your bright Lucubrations, tho' you print them, and dispose of them in this clancular and subtil Method.

It is not that I wish well to your Cause of Infidelity, that I thus encourage you. You have more Sense and Reason than to suspect me tainted with unbelieving Principles. Christianity will stand its Ground against your battering Armour; and the Church of Christ will be the more firmly establish'd on a Rock of Wisdom, for that Opposition you make to it. Tho' you will entirely vanquish the literal *Schemists*, and ride in

Triumph over them, yet other Defenders of the Faith, call'd *Allegorists*, will arise to your Confutation and final Overthrow.

If I am not mistaken, *Sirs*, your Adversaries, the literal *Schemists*, whom I call *Apostates*, are about making a Retreat, and yielding the Field of Battle to you. The *Bishop* of *Litchfield*, the greatest General on their Side, will not only find it hard to levy any more Forces in Defence of his *twelve* literal Prophecies; but he knows that, if he draws his Sword any more against you, he must attack too the Authority of the Fathers for the allegorical Interpretation of some of those Prophecies, already urg'd in my *Supplements* to the *Moderator*; or, if the Fathers are neglected by him; they and I, keeping out of the Reach of his *Bug-Bear*, will treat him with such familiar Language, as never was given to one of his Order.

Mr. *Scheme* seems to promise us a Discourse on the Miracles in the Scriptures; I hope he'll be as good as his Word, and ere long publish it. This Discourse of mine can't possibly supersede his. As I question not but his Thoughts and Remarks on Miracles will be very considerable; so I shall be a little impatient till I see them. But be his Discourse on Miracles of what Kind soever, I believe it will hardly be an Obstruction to my Undertaking in Hand, which I intend, by God's Leave, to go on with, to the Honour of the holy *Jesus*, our spiritual *Messiah*, to whom be Glory and Praise for ever and ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.

A SECOND

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

In View of the present Controversy between Infidels and Apostates.

Audendum est, ut illustrata Veritas pateat, multique ab Errore liberentur. Lactant.

By Thomas Woolston, sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge*.

***LONDON*:**

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[Price One Shilling.]

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

EDWARD,

Lord Bishop of *Lichfield*.

My Lord,



our Fame for that celebrated Book, call'd the *Defence of Christianity*, is the Occasion of this Dedication. I need not tell you, what vast Reputation you have acquired by it: You have been not only often applauded from the Press, but have met with large Compliments and Thanks from your Clergy for it. And tho' Mr. *Scheme* has very untowardly written against you, yet this is *still* your Honour, that you are an *Author*, not unworthy of his Regard and Notice.

I am, in Opinion with the Fathers, against an establish'd Hire for the Priesthood, thinking it of disservice to true Religion: But when I consider'd the Usefulness of your Lordship's Episcopal Riches and Honours to this Controversy, I almost chang'd my Mind. Your exalted Station in the Church, has given Credit and Authority to your Work, which, if it had came from the Hands of a poor Priest, had never been so much admir'd; neither would Mr. *Scheme*, I believe, nor my self, have paid so many Respects to it.

For this Reason, I wish some more of your *Order* would appear in this Controversy, that the World might see what famous Men are our *Bishops*, and of what Use their *Hundreds* and *Thousands* a Year are to the Defence of Christianity; which, if such able Hands were not amply hired to its Support, might be in Danger, as certainly as, that Men of low Fortunes must needs be Men of poor Parts, little Learning, and slender Capacities to write in Vindication of it.

Some have conceiv'd Hopes that the great *Bishop* of *London*, from his last Charge to his *Clergy*, will second you in this Controversy; if so, there's no doubt on't, but his Performance will be commensurate to his State and Revenues. Of his Zeal in the Controversy, he has already given a notable Instance, when he prosecuted the *Moderator*; and I dare say, he'll vouchsafe us a more remarkable Specimen of his Knowledge in it, as soon as he can spare Time for't; and then (Oh my Fears!) he'll pay me off for my Objection against Christ's Resurrection, which he would have persuaded the Civil Magistrate to have done for him.

But whether the *Bishop* of *London* seconds you or not, it's Time, *my Lord*, to expect another Volume from you, in Answer to Mr. *Scheme*, which, for all the Reports that are spread of your intended Silence, I hope soon to see publish'd. What will the People say, if that *Philisthin* goes off, giving you the last Blow in the Controversy? Nothing less than that he has gotten the better of the Learned *Bishop* of *Lichfield*, and has refuted Christianity to the Conviction of the Bishop himself, who would renounce it too, but for the temporal Advantages he enjoys by it.

Think, *my Lord*, on the Dishonour of such Reflections, and resume Courage against the Adversary. I look upon you as a more sturdy Gladiator than for one Cut on the Pate, to quit the Stage of Battle. Tho' Mr. *Scheme* has unluckily hit you on a soft Place, and weaken'd your Intellectuals for a while; yet he is a generous Combatant, and gives you Time to recover your wonted Strength of Reason. At him again then, *my Lord*, and fear not, in your Turn, to give him such a Home-Thrust, as will pierce his unbelieving Heart.

And when your *Lordship* engages him again from the *Press*, I hope you'll be more explicite for Liberty of Debate. Through godly Zeal for *Church*, you unhappily made a Slip, in your *Dedication* to the *King*, on the persecuting Side of the Question, which had lik'd to have sully'd the Glory of your whole Work. Such a grand Philosopher, as you are, should trust alone to the Goodness of your Cause, and the Strength of your Reasonings, in Defence of it: Such a potent Champion for Christianity, as you are, should disdain the Assistance of any, but of God, to fight for you. The Use of the Civil Sword on your Side, is not only a Disparagement to your Parts, but a Disgrace to our Religion.

I know not what your *Lordship* may think on't, but the Prosecution of the *Moderator* was, in the Judgment of others, more than of my self, some Reproach to you: Because of a few slender Animadversions, I made on your renown'd Book, some think I suffer'd a Prosecution, which you, in Honour, should have discourag'd. I am willing to acquit you as much as may be; and would, if I could, impute it to your Forgetfulness, rather than your Malice, that you step'd not between me and Danger.

Whether this Discourse will be acceptable to your Lordship, is somewhat uncertain; I am afraid it will be a little disgustful to your nice and delicate Taste in Theology, which relishes nothing better than the plain and ordinary Food of the Letter of *Christ*'s Miracles: But however, you will readily interpret this *Dedication* to your Honour, and if you should make me a large present of Gold for it, I sincerely assure your *Lordship*, it will be more than I aim'd at; neither do I desire any other Return for it, than to be endulg'd the Liberty and Pleasure to pay my

customary Respects to your Writings; and upon proper Occasions to testify to the World, how much I am,

London,
October
13th
1727.

MY LORD,
The Admirer of
Your Wit, Learning
and Orthodoxy,
Thomas Woolston.

A Second

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.

I here publish another *Discourse* on our Saviour's Miracles, which I am not only oblig'd to, by the Promise I made in my former; but am encouraged to it by the Reception which *that* met with. If any of our *Clergy* were, and besides them, few or none could be offended at my former *Discourse*, they should have printed their Exceptions to it, and, if possible, their Confutation of it, which might perhaps have prevented me the giving them any more Trouble of this Kind.

In my former *Discourse* I fairly declar'd, that if the *Clergy* could disprove my Arguments against the *Letter*, and for the *Spirit* of the Miracles I there took to task, I would not only desist from the Prosecution of my Design, but own my self an impious *Infidel* and *Blasphemer*, and deserving of the worst Punishment: But since they are all mute and silent, even in this Cause, which in Honour and Interest they should have spoken out to, they ought not to be angry, if I proceed in it. I have given them time enough to

make a Reply, if they had been of Ability to do it: What must I think then upon their Silence? Nothing less than that my Cause is impregnable, and my Arguments and Authorities in Defence of it irrefragable; and though they don't professedly yield to the Force of them; yet they have nothing to say in Abatement of their Strength, or it had certainly seen the Light before now.

I go on then in my undertaking to write against the literal Story of our Saviour's Miracles, and against the Use that is commonly made of them to prove his divine Authority and Messiahship: And this I do, I solemnly again declare it, not for the Service of Infidelity, but for the Honour of the Holy Jesus, and to reduce the *Clergy* to the good *old Way*, and the *only Way* of proving his Messiahship, and that is, by the allegorical Interpretation of the Law and the Prophets. Therefore, without any more Preamble, I resume again the Consideration of the three Heads of Discourse, before proposed to be treated on to this Purpose. And they are,

I. To shew, That the Miracles of healing all manner of Bodily Diseases, which *Jesus* was justly fam'd for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Messiah*, neither are they so much as a good Proof of his divine Authority to found a Religion.

II. That the literal History of many of the Miracles of *Jesus*, as recorded by the *Evangelists*, does imply Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities; consequently they, either in whole or in part, were never wrought, as they are commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would be mysteriously, and more wonderfully done by him.

III. To consider, what *Jesus* means, when he appeals to his Miracles, as to a Testimony and Witness of his divine Authority; and to shew that he could not properly and ultimately refer to those, he then wrought in the *Flesh*, but to those mystical ones, which he would do in the *Spirit*, of which those wrought in the Flesh are but mere Types and Shadows.

I have already spoken, what I then thought sufficient to the first of these Heads; and though I could now much enlarge my Reasons, and multiply Authorities upon it to the same Purpose; yet I shall not do it; but only, by Way of Introduction to my following *Discourse*, say, that if it had been intended by our Saviour, that any rational Argument for his divine Authority and *Messiahship* should be urged from his miraculous healing Power; the Diseases which he cured, would have been accurately described, and his Manner of Operation so cautiously express'd, as that we might have been sure the Work was supernatural, and out of the Power of Art and Nature to perform: But the *Evangelists* have taken no such Care in their Narrations of Christ's Miracles. As for Instance, *Jesus* is supposed often miraculously to cure *Lameness*; but there is no Account of the nature and degree of Lameness he cured; nor are we certain, whether the Skill of a *Surgeon*, or Nature it self, could not have done the Work without his Help. If the *Evangelists* had told us of Men, that wanted one or both their Legs, (and such miserable Objects of Christ's Power and Compassion, were undoubtedly in those Days as well as in ours) and how *Jesus* commanded Nature to extend itself to the entire Reparation of such Defects; here would have been stupendous Miracles indeed, which no Scepticism, nor Infidelity itself could have cavill'd at; nor could I, nor the Fathers themselves

have told how to allegorize, and make Parables of them. But there is no *such* Miracle recorded of Christ, nor any thing equal to it; so far from it, that the best and greatest Miracles of *Jesus*, which must confessedly be those related at large, (for no Body can suppose he did greater than those more particularly specify'd) are liable to exception, being so blindly, and lamely, and imperfectly reported, as that, by Reasonings upon the Letter of the Stories of them, they may be dwindled away, and reduced to no Wonders, which brings me to treat again on the

II. Second Head of my Discourse, and that is, to shew, that the literal History of the Miracles of *Jesus*, as recorded in the *Evangelists*, does imply Absurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities; consequently they, in whole or in part, were never wrought, but are only related as parabolical Narratives of what would be mysteriously, and more wonderfully done by him.

To this Purpose I, in my former Discourse, took into Examination *three* of the Miracles of Jesus, *viz.* those, of *his driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*; Of *his exorcising the Devils out of the Madmen, and sending them into the Herd of Swine;* and *Of his Transfiguration on the Mount*. How well I perform'd on these Miracles which have been admired for their literal Story, let others judge and say.

I now will take into Consideration three others of *Jesus*'s Miracles, *viz.* those, Of *his healing a Woman that was afflicted with an Issue of Blood, twelve Years*; Of *his curing the Woman that labour'd under a Spirit of Infirmity, eighteen Years*; and Of *his telling the* Samaritan *Woman her Fortune of having had five husbands, and living then in Adultery with another Man*:

Which are, all three, reputedly most miraculous and admired Stories. The two former, they say, are Arguments of *Jesus*'s mighty Power; and the latter, of his immense Knowledge: But how little of certain Power and Knowledge there is in any of them, according to the Letter, will be seen in the sequel of this Discourse. Infidels, I dare say, if they had not wanted Liberty, would e'er now have facetiously exposed those Stories. If I snatch that Work out of their Hands, our *Clergy* ought to be glad, because what I do in it, is to the Honour of the Holy *Jesus*, and to turn those pretendedly miraculous Stories into divine Mysteries.

In my former Discourse I gave my *Readers* some Reason to expect, that in *this* I would treat on some of *Jesus*'s Miracles, which I there mentioned, *viz. On his turning Water into Wine at a Marriage in* Cana *of* Galilee; and *On his feeding of Thousands with a few Loaves and Fishes in the Wilderness*; and *On his Cure of the Paralytick, for whom the Roof of the House was broken up to let him down into the Room where* Jesus *was*, &c. And I then really did design to speak to these Miracles, but upon Consideration, finding them most ludicrous Subjects according to the Letter, I forbear it at present, having no Inclination to put the *Clergy* quite out of all Temper. If any should say, this is Fear and Cowardice in me, I can't help it: But, for all that, now I have the *Clergy* in a tolerable good Humour for Liberty, I'll endeavour to keep them in it, and not disturb them by an hasty and unnecessary Provocation of them. Who knows not, that the *Clergy*, like an untamed *Colt*, that I have a mind to ride, may be apt to winch and kick, and may give me a Fall before I come at the end of my Journey, to the Disappointment of my Readers? They shall therefore be gently handled and stroak'd, till they are a little

more inur'd to the Bit and Saddle: And for their Sakes will I postpone such Miracles as are most obnoxious to Ridicule, and at present chuse the aforesaid *three*, that of almost any in the Gospel may be most inoffensively treated on. I begin then,

1. To speak to that Miracle of *Jesus*'s[79] healing a *Woman diseased with an Issue of Blood, twelve Years*. To please our *Divines*, I will allow as much of the Truth of the Letter of this Story, as they can desire. The Fathers themselves, who are for turning the whole History of *Jesus*'s Life into Allegory and Mystery, don't deny that a Woman was cured of an *Hæmorrhage*, after the Manner that is here described by the Evangelists. St. *Augustin* says[80] of this Miracle, *that it was done, as it is related*; and I have a greater Veneration for his Authority, than to gainsay it. But for all that, *Infidels* may and will take into Examination the nature of this Miracle, and if possible make little or nothing of it. And if I do this for them, it is not to do Service to Infidelity, but to turn Mens Heads to the mystical Use of it, for which it is recorded.

As there is a particular Narration of this Miracle, among the few others, that are specified; so Reason should tell us, that if the Letter of the Story of *Christ*'s Miracles, as our *Divines* hold, is only to be regarded, this is one of the greatest that Jesus wrought, or it would not be related by itself, but thrown into the Lump of all manner of Diseases, which He heal'd. And how then shall we come to the Knowledge of the greatness of this Miracle? Why, there are but two Ways to it, and they are,

First, By considering the nature of the Disease, or the lamentable Condition of the Patient before Cure. And

Secondly, By considering the Manner or Means by which the Cure was performed.

If one or both of these Considerations don't manifest the Certainty of a Miracle, *Infidels* may conclude there was none in it.

First, As to the nature of the Disease of this Woman, we are much in the Dark about it, and very uncertain of what Kind and Degree it was. St. *Matthew* writing of it, says the Woman was αιμορροουσα, that is, *obnoxious to bleeding*; St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* say of her, that ουσα εν ρευματε αιματος, she was in an efflux or running of Blood. But neither one nor the other of the *Evangelists* signify of what Degree her *Hæmorrhage* was, nor from what part of her Body it proceeded, nor how often or seldom she was addicted to it. It might be, for ought we know, only a little bleeding at the Nose, that now and then she was subject to: Or it might be an obnoxiousness to an Evacuation of Blood by Siege or Urine: Or it was, not improbably, of the menstruous Kind. Any of these might be the Case of this Woman for what's written; and I don't find that any of our *Divines* have determined of what sort it was. But a great Miracle is wrought, they think, in her Cure, without knowing the Disease; which *Infidels* will say is asserted at Random and without Reason, in as much as it is necessary to know the nature of the Distemper, or none truly and properly can say, there was a great, much less a miraculous Cure wrought.

But supposing this *Hæmorrhage* proceeded from what Part of the Body our *Divines* think fit; How will they make a grievous Distemper of it in order to a Miracle? The Woman subsisted too long under her Issue of Blood, and bore it too well, for any to make

her Case very grievous. *Beza*[81] will have it, that is was a constant and incessant Effusion of Blood that the Woman labour'd with. But this could not be, nor was it possible, as I suppose *Physicians* will agree, for Nature to endure it so long, or the Woman to live twelve Days, much less twelve Years under it.

No more then, than some slight Indisposition can reasonably and naturally be made of this Woman's Distemper. And it would be well, if Infidels would rest here with their Objections against it. But what if they should say, that this *Hæmorrhage* was rather of Advantage to the Health of the Patient, than of Danger to her, and that the Woman was more *nice* than *wise*, or she would never have sought so much for Help and Cure of it? Some *Hæmorrhages* are better kept open than stop'd and dry'd up; and if *Infidels* should say, that *this* was a Preservative of the Life of the Woman, like an *Issue*, at which Nature discharges itself of bad Humours, Who can contradict them? Nay, if they should say that *Jesus*'s Cure of this Woman's *Hæmorrhage* was a Precipitation of her Death, for she died some time after it, rather than a Prolongation of her Life, for she lived twelve Years under it, and was of good Strength, when she applied to our Saviour for Cure, or she could never have born the press of the People to come at him; Who can gainsay them? It is true she was very sollicitous for a Cure, and uneasy under her Distemper, or she would never have spent all she had on *Physicians*; which is a Sign, some may say, that her Disease was grievous, irksome, and dangerous, as well as incurable by Art. But *Infidels* will say, not so; for there are some slight cutaneous Distempers, sometimes issuing with a little purulent and bloody Matter, that nice Women will be at a great Expence for Relief, and are always

tampering, and often advising about them, though to no Purpose: And if they should say that this was the worth of the Case of this Woman, Who can disprove it?

In short then here is an uncertain Distemper both in Nature and Degree; how then can there be any Certainty of a Miracle in the Cure of it? Mr. *Moore*, the *Apothecary*, accurately describes the Diseases he pretends to have cured; and he is in the right on't so to do, or he could not recommend his Art, and aggrandize his own Fame. So the Bodily Disease of this Woman should have been clearly and fully represented to our Understanding, or we can form no Conception of Christ's Power in the Cure of it. And I can't but think that the *Evangelists*, especially St. *Luke* the *Physician*, had made a better Story of this Woman's Case, if Christ's Authority and Power had been to be urg'd from the Letter of it. It's enough to make us think, Christ cured no extraordinary and grievous Maladies, or the *Evangelists* would never have instanced in this, that so much Exception is to be made to. As then, reasonably speaking, there was no extraordinary Disease in this Woman cured, and consequently no great Miracle wrought; so let us now,

Secondly, Consider the Manner of the Cure, and whether any Miracle is to be thence proved. *The Woman said within her self,*[82] *that if she could but touch the Hem of Jesus's Garment, she should be made whole.* And I can't but commend her, at this distance of Time, for the Power of her Faith, Persuasion, or Imagination in the Case, which was a good Preparative for Relief, and without which, it's certain, she had continued under her Disease. The Power of Imagination, it's well known, will work

Wonders, see Visions, produce Monsters, and heal Diseases, as Experience and History doth testify. There being many Instances to be given of Cures performed by frivolous Applications, Charms, and Spells, which are unaccountable any other Way, than by the Imagination of the Patient. Against the Reason and Judgment of a *Physician*, sometimes the diseased will take his own Medicines and Benefit. And I don't doubt, but Stories may be told of Cures wrought, the Imagination of the Patient helping, by as mean a Trifle, as the Touch of Christ's Garments, and no Miracle talk'd on for it. Even in the ordinary, natural, and rational Use of Physick, it is requisite, that the Patient have a good Opinion of his *Physician* and of his Medicines. A good Heart in the Sick, tends not only to his Support, but helps the Operation of Prescriptions. As despair and dejection of Mind sometimes kills, where otherwise reasonably speaking, proper Medicines would cure; so a good Conceit in the Patient at other times, whether the Medicines be pertinent or not, is almost all in all. And if Infidels should say that this was the Case of this Woman in the Gospel; if they should say as St. *John of Jerusalem*[83] did, *that her own Imagination cured herself*; and should urge the Probability of it, because *Jesus* could do no Cures and[84] Miracles against Unbelief, Who can help it? In this Case our *Divines* must prove, that this Woman's *Hæmorrhage* was of that kind, that no Faith nor Fancy in herself could help her without the Divine Power; but this is impossible for them to do, unless there had been a more certain Description of her Disease, than the *Evangelists* have given of it.

Our *Divines* will indeed tell us, what I believe, that it was the Divine Power co-operating with the Faith and Imagination of the Woman that cured her;

because Jesus says *that Virtue had gone out of him* to the healing of her: And I wish *Infidels* would acquiesce here, and not say, that *Jesus*'s Virtue hung very loose on him, or the Woman's Faith, like a Fascination, could never have extracted it against his Will and Knowledge: But what if they should say, that *Jesus*, being secretly appriz'd of the Woman's Faith, and Touch of him, took the Hint; and to comfort and confirm her in her Conceit, and to help the Cure forward, said, *Virtue was gone out of him?* This would be an untoward Suggestion, which if Infidels should make, our Divines must look for a Reply to it.

It is said of the *Pope*, when he was last at *Benevento*, that he wrought three Miracles, which our Protestant *Clergy*, I dare say, believe nothing at all of. But, for all that, it is not improbable, but that some diseased People, considering their superstitious Veneration for the *Pope*, and their Opinion of the Sanctity of the *Present*, might be persuaded of his Gift of Miracles, and desirous of his Exercise of it; and if they fancyfully or actually received Benefit by his Touch, I don't wonder, without a Miracle. And what if we had been told of the *Popes* curing an *Hæmorrhage* like this before us? What would *Protestants* have said to it? Why, "that a foolish, credulous, and superstitious Woman had fancy'd herself cured of some slight Indisposition; and the crafty *Pope* and his Adherents, aspiring after popular Applause, magnified the presumed Cure into a Miracle. If they would have us *Protestants* to believe the Miracle, they should have given us an exacter Description of her Disease, and then we could better have judg'd of it". The Application of such a supposed Story of a Miracle wrought by the *Pope*, is easy; and if *Infidels*, *Jews*, and *Mahometans* who have no better Opinion of

Jesus, than we have of the *Pope*, should make it, there's no Help for it.

And thus have I made my Descants on this supposed Miracle before us and argued, as much as I could, against the Miraculousness of it, both from the *Nature* of the Disease, and the *Manner* of the Cure of it. Whether any one shall think I have said any thing to the Purpose or not, is all one to me. My Design in what I have done, is not to do Service to Infidelity, but, upon the Command and Encouragement of the Fathers, to turn Mens Thoughts to the mystical Meaning of the said Miracle, which I come now to give an Account of.

None of the Fathers (excepting St. *Chrysostom*[85], who writes here more like an *Orator* than a *Physician*) ever trouble themselves, when they speak of this Miracle, about the Nature of the Disease, literally, in this Woman, or the greatness of the Cure of it; but alone bend their Studies to the mystical Interpretation, for the sake of which, this Evangelical Story was written, and originally transacted.

Accordingly, they tell us that this Woman is a Type[86] of the Church of the *Gentiles* in after Times. And as to her *Hæmorrhage* or *Issue of Blood*, they understand it of the[87] Impurity and Corruption of the Church by ill Principles and bad Morals, that the would *flow with*. Some of the Fathers, as[88] *Gregory Nazianzen*, and[89] *Eusebius Gallicanus*, will have the *Issue of Blood* to be a Type of the scarlet Sin of Blood-guiltiness in the Church: If so, we must understand it of the Effusion of Christian Blood by War and Persecution.

The *twelve Years* of the Woman's Affliction with her *Hæmorrhage* is a typical Number of the Church's

impure State for above *twelve Hundred Years*. And whether some of the primitive Church did not, by the said *twelve Years* of the Woman, understand *twelve Ages*, I appeal to[90] *Irenæus*, to whom I refer my Readers, Accordingly this typify'd Woman of the Church, should be the same with the Woman[91] in the Wilderness, that, as St. *John* says, was twelve Hundred and sixty Days or Years there sustained; and by whom many Protestants, as well as the Fathers, understand the Church universal. When the said twelve Hundred and sixty Days or Years of the Church's being in the Wilderness, did commence or will end, is none of my Business to enquire or ascertain. But as this Woman in the Gospel is said after *twelve Years* Affliction, to be cured of her Disease by *Jesus*; so it is the Opinion of the Fathers, that the Church universal, after *twelve Hundred Years* of her Wilderness State, will be purified and sanctified by the Gifts of the Spirit of Christ, and enter upon a more holy, peaceable, and happy Condition, absolutely freed from her *Issue of Blood*, which, through Persecution and War, she has for many Ages labour'd under. It is not my Concern to collect all the Authorities of the Fathers to this Purpose; but only say, that if at the End of twelve Hundred and sixty Days or Years, the Church, like the Woman, be not cur'd of her *Hæmorrhage* and mystical *Wounds* and *Sores*; if her present impure and unsound State be not chang'd into an holy, healthy, and peaceable one; many good *Protestants*, as well as the Fathers, are mistaken, and abundance of Prophecies of the Old and New Testament, that have been hereunto urged, will lose their Credit.

But who are meant by the *Physicians* of the Woman, that have had the mystical *Hæmorrhage* and Diseases of the Church Under Cure all this while? Who

should, but pretended Ministers, of the Gospel? Ministers of the Gospel are not only by the Fathers call'd metaphorically[92] spiritual *Physicians*; but our *Divines* and Preachers of all Denominations like the Metaphor, and think themselves able *Physicians* at the Diseases of the Church, which they are forward to prescribe and apply Medicines to, whenever, in their Opinion, she stands in need of them. Whether our *Divines* like to be accounted the *Physicians* of the Text before us, I much question; but it is certain that[93] *Eusebius Gallicanus* expressly says, that our *Divines* and pretended Philosophers are meant by them; and venerable *Bede*[94] upon the Place is of the same Mind too.

The Woman of the Gospel is said[95] to *suffer many Things of many Physicians, and was nothing better'd, but rather grew worse*; that is, she grew worse not in time only, but through the Use of her *Physicians*, who were her[96] Tormentors. So the Diseases of the Church in time have increased, for all the Use she has made of her spiritual Physicians, *the Clergy*. In every Age has the Church been degenerating in Morals and Principles, as any one knows, that is able to make an Estimate of Religion in times past; and all along have her ecclesiastical *Quack Doctors* contributed to her ill State of Health. As many Physicians with their different Applications tormented the poor Woman; so our many *Empericks* in Theology with their different *Schemes* of Church Government and various *Systems* of Divinity, like so many Prescriptions for Cure, have increased the Divisions, widen'd the Wounds, and inflamed the Sores of the Church. And if the Woman's *Issue of Blood* be, according to the Fathers, a particular Type of the Blood of the Church, that is shed in Persecution and War; our Theological Pretenders to

Physick, have been so far from providing and prescribing a good *Stiptic* in this Case that they have been the Occasion of the Effusion of much Christian Blood; there having been many a War and Persecution, that these *Incision* Doctors, who should be all *Balsam*, have been the Cause of.

The Woman *spent all her Living*, all her yearly Income, upon her Physicians, and as it seems to a bad Purpose; so very great and large Revenues of the Church, are expended on her ecclesiastical Doctors in spiritual Physick: And to what End and Purpose? Why, to open and widen the bleeding Wounds of the Church, which they should heal and salve up. It is now about *twelve Hundred Years*, like the *twelve Years* of the Woman, that the *Clergy*, our Practitioners in Theological Physick, have received of the Church vast Fees, Stipends and Gratuities (for before that time her *Doctors* prescrib'd freely) to take care of her Health and Welfare; but unless God provide in due time a Medicine of his own, she is likely to continue in a diseased and sorrowful Condition for all them.

One would think that the Woman of the Gospel might have had more Wit than to lay out all she was worth upon *Physicians* to no good Purpose; one would think that after some Experience of their Insufficiency to cure her, she might have forborn seeing them, and reserved the Remains of her Estate for better Uses: So the Fees and Revenues of the Church, after due Experience of the Inability of her spiritual Doctors to heal her Sores, might have been in my Opinion better employ'd, and the Church of Christ more out of Danger of Wounds and Sickness, by Sin and Error. Certain it is, that many an *Issue of Blood*, through Persecution and War, had been prevented; if such barbarous and blood thirsty

Doctors of Ecclesiastical Physick, had never been so fee'd and hired to take care of the Welfare of the Church, which, for all their Spiritual Medicines, will continue in a languishing Condition, till heal'd by the Virtue and Graces of the Spirit of Christ in his foresaid appointed Time.

So much then to the mystical Interpretation of the Story of the Cure of the *Issue of Blood* in this Woman. Every minute Circumstance of it is thus to be allegorized, if need was. Whether the *Clergy* will like this parabolical Explication of it, I neither know nor care. They have their Liberty with *Atheists* and *Infidels* to believe as little of it as they think fit; and I hope they'll give me leave with the Fathers of the Church to believe as much of it as I please. But whether they approve of this allegorical Interpretation of this supposed Miracle or not; they must own, that if the Church, after the foresaid *twelve Ages*, should be purified and sanctified; if her Errors and Corruptions, of which the Woman's *Uncleanness* is a Type, should be heal'd; if War and Persecution, typified by her *Issue of Blood*, should then entirely cease; if all Christians should then be united in Principle, Heart and Affection, and made to walk in a peaceable and quiet State, as the Woman was[97] *bid to go in Peace*; if the Church should then *come behind* Jesus (which[98] is a Figure of future Time) and rightly touch by Faith, and apprehend his[99] Garments or Words of Prophecy, about which Christians have hitherto been *pressing* and urgent; and if the Gifts of the Spirit, like *Virtue on the Woman*, should then be poured forth upon the Church to the absolute Cure of her present Diseases, we must, I say, allow the Story of this Woman to be an admirable Emblem and typical Representation; and the Accomplishment of it most miraculous and

stupendous; and not only an indisputable Proof of the Power and Presence of Christ with his Church, but a Demonstration of his *Messiahship*, in as much as an almost infinite Number of Prophecies of the Old Testament, will thereupon receive that Accomplishment, which hitherto, by no shadow of Reason, can be pretended to.

After such a mystical Healing of the *Hæmorrhage* of the Church, there's no doubt on't, but the Story of this Woman in the Gospel will be allow'd to be typical and emblematical. In the mean time, without making a Parable of the Story of her, I assert, there is little or nothing of a Miracle to be made of her Cure, unless we were at a greater Certainty about the Nature of her Disease, and the Manner, rationally speaking, of *Jesus*'s healing of it. And so I pass to the Consideration of

2. Another Story of a miraculous Cure perform'd by *Jesus* on another Woman, and that is on her, who[100] *had a Spirit of Infirmity, eighteen Years, and was bow'd together, and could in no wise lift up herself ——being bound of Satan*, &c. This too, as I suppose, is with our *Divines* a great Miracle, and one of the greatest that *Jesus* wrought, or it had not been specify'd, but cast indiscriminately into the Number of all manner of Diseases, which he heal'd. And for the sake of the Letter, and to please our *Divines*, whom I would not offend wilfully, I will allow, that *Jesus* might lay his Hands on, and speak comfortably to such a drooping, stooping, and vaporous Woman, full of Fancies of the *Devil*'s Temptation and Power over her; and she might thereupon recover, and be afterwards of a more cheerful Heart, and erect Countenance, freed from the whimsical Imagination of being *Satan-ridden*: And what of all that? Where's

the Miracle? If the Story of such a Miracle had been related of any *Impostor* in Religion, of an *Arch-Heretick*, or *Popish Exorcist*, our *Divines* would have flouted at it; they would have told us, there was nothing supernatural and uncommon in the Event, nor any thing at all to be wonder'd at in it. Taking the *Devil* out of this Story, and there's no more in it, than what's common for a simple, melancholy, and drooping Woman, to be chear'd and elated upon the comfortable Advice and Admonition of a reputedly wise and good Man. And the putting the *Devil* into the Story, in another Case, our *Divines* would have said was only the Fancy of the Woman, or the Device of the *Miracle-Monger*, to magnify his own Art and Power. And if *Infidels*, *Jews*, and *Mahometans*, should say so of this Story of *Jesus*, they would be no more unreasonable in their Conjectures and Solutions of this Miracle, than we should have been in another and parallel Case.

The *Pope*, when last at *Benevento*, is said to have exorciz'd a *Dæmon* out of a young Maid, which our *Divines* no more believe than *Infidels* do. But it is not at all impossible or improbable, that a young Woman might be troubled with Vapours, and go droopingly upon it, whom the holy Father, of whose Prayers and Sanctity she had a good Opinion, might relieve with his Talk, and give another Turn to her Thoughts and Temper: And if she fancy'd herself before possess'd with a *Dæmon*, or rather, if the *Pope*'s Partizans persuaded her so, it's not unlikely to make a Miracle on't. Just so may *Infidels*, with their Descants on this Miracle before us, reduce and lessen it: And what must we Believers do then? Why, we must find out a Way to ascertain the Truth and Greatness of the Miracle, or give it up. We must determine certainly what was the Woman's Distemper, and how the Cure

of it by ordinary Means was impossible, or make no more Words about it.

And how can we come at the Knowledge of this Woman's Disease, but by the original Words of the *Evangelist*. St. *Luke* says, she was one πνευμα εχουσα ασθενειας, *that had a Spirit of Weakness*, that is, was poor-Spirited and pusilanimous; and if she was συγκυπτουσα, *bow'd down* upon't, its no more than might be expected of a disconsolate, melancholy and dejected Person. Here then is the Disease of the Woman: If it had been worse, St. *Luke*, the Physician, if he was of Sufficiency in his Art, should better have express'd himself; so as to give us another Conception of it. And if *Satan* had not been brought into the Tale, whom it is easy, by reasoning as above, to exorcise out of it, here is a no more grievous Distemper, than what upon the comfortable Exhortations of a wise Man may be cured. And do what our Divines can, they can make literally no more of this Story.

It is said, that for *eighteen Years* the Woman labour'd under this Disease. And she might be *hippish* and *drooping* for a longer time, and be no less easily at last cured. It's pity the *Evangelist* had not told us how old this Woman was, when the Distemper first seiz'd her; then we could have made better Conjectures about the Nature and Cure of it. If there was any room to suppose, either from the Words of Scripture or extra-scriptural History, that she was about *fifty* or *sixty*, when she first began to droop and the *Devil* got upon her Back; here had been Scope for a most stupendous Miracle; and our *Divines* might have asserted, what no Body could have contradicted, that *Jesus* had made an old Woman, who was *bow'd down*, not only under the Weight of *Satan*, but under the

Burthen of seventy or eighty Years, young again; and had restored her to the Health, Vigor, and Beauty of one of fifteen. Here would have been a mighty Miracle indeed. And I don't doubt, but our *Divines* would willingly get into such a Notion of this Miracle, and would heartily espouse it, but for the Offence they must needs give to decrepid old Women, who may be out of Conceit with themselves upon it, as if they carried the *Devil* on their Shoulders, as the Cause of their Decripedness and Incurvity. And such an Offence would be of ill Consequence.

Reasonably then speaking, there was not much in the Disease and Cure of this Woman. Excepting that Part, which *Satan* bears, in the Story, there is nothing wonderful in it. And supposing *Jesus* might exorcise the *Devil* out of this Woman, or dismount him from off her Shoulders; yet even this makes nothing for his Divine Power and Authority, in as much as many *Exorcists* among the *Jews* and even among *Papists*, if Protestants had not more Wit than to believe it, could do as much. And after all, I don't believe the *Evangelist* intended, that our Saviour should be had in Admiration for the Letter of this Miracle, or St. *Luke* would accurately have described the Disease, so as to put it out of the Power of Nature and Art to heal it, and of the Wit of *Infidels* to cavil at the miraculous Cure of it. Neither do I find that the Fathers of the Church ever trouble themselves about the Letter of this Story, which is some Argument, that no great Heed is to be given to it; but are only curious about the Mystery, for which this Miracle was related, and which I come now to give an Account of.

As the Fathers said of the Woman with her *Issue of*

Blood, that she was a Type of the Church; so they say of this Woman with her *Spirit of Infirmity*, that she is a[101] Figure of the Church too.

As the Woman was *bow'd together*; so the Church, as the Fathers do interpret, may be said to be[102] *bow'd down* to the Earth, when she is *prone* and *bent* to, and *intent on* the literal or earthly Interpretations of the Scriptures; and *can in no wise lift up her self*, like the Woman, *that is*, can't raise her Thoughts to the Contemplation of the cælestial, spiritual, and sublime Sense of them. Hence we see the Propriety of the Name of the Woman's Disease, call'd πνευμα ασθενειας, a *Spirit of Weakness*, which is not properly significative of any bodily Distemper, but succinctly is very expressive of the Church's *Weakness* at the *Spirit* of Prophecy, which at this Day she labours under.

As it was *eighteen Years* that the Woman was griev'd with her *Spirit of Infirmity*, for so long had her Distemper been growing on her; so it is almost eighteen (hundred) Years, or the eighteenth Century of Years, that this *Infirmity* of the Church at the *Spirit* of Prophecy has been coming on her: And she is now so *bent* to the Earth of the Letter, that nothing less than the Hand and Power of Jesus, that erected the Woman, can raise her to mystical, divine, and sublime Contemplations on the Law and Prophets. St. *Augustin*[103] will have these *eighteen Years* of the Woman's *Infirmity*, as she is a Type of the Church, to be synchronical with the[104] *three Years* of the Fig-Tree's Unfruitfulness. I don't rightly apprehend his mystical Arithmetic. But this is certain, upon the Authority of the Fathers, that those two Numbers, with the *twelve Years* of the Woman's *Issue of Blood*, are all conterminous and will end together:

Consequently at the same time, that the Woman of the Church will be cured of her *Issue of Blood*, she will be heal'd of her *Infirmity* at the *Spirit* of Prophecy; *that is*, at the Conclusion of certain grand Periods of Time she will enter upon a blessed State of *Peace* and *Vision*; which is the concurrent Doctrine of the Fathers, as any one may discern, that has dip'd into them, and is a good Confirmation of our present Exposition, and mystical Application of the miraculous Story before us.

St. *Luke* says, that the Woman could not lift up herself εις το παντελες, *v.* 11. which, without animadverting on our *English* Translation, should be rendered, *until all was perfected*, or until the *Perfection of Time*, which, the Apostle[105] and the Fathers agree, is the Time for the Church to be cured of her *Weakness*, and to be endu'd with *Power* at the Spirit of Prophecy.

As the Woman was heal'd by *Jesus* on the Sabbath-Day; so the Church, upon the ample Authorities of the Fathers, which Men of Reading will excuse me the Production of, is certainly to be heal'd of her *spiritual Infirmity*, at the Understanding of Prophecy against the mystical and[106] grand Sabbath, which, according to the Fathers, commences at the Expiration of her eighteen (hundred) Years *Weakness*.

But the *Ruler of the Synagogue is said to be moved with Indignation, v.* 14. at this charitable Work of *Jesus*, in healing of the Woman, because it was done on the Sabbath-Day; which in my Opinion can't be literally true: Though I am willing enough, to please our *Divines*, to allow as much as may be of the Letter of this Story, yet I except against this Part of it. *Origen* says, there are some things of the Gospel related as

Facts, which were not done; and I believe this of the Ruler of the Synagogue to be one of them. Human Nature, I think, is not capable of such base and unnatural Resentment. Works of Necessity, and requisite Offices of Kindness and Charity to Man and Beast, were allow'd by the Law, and practised by the *Jews* on the Sabbath: And the Cure of this Woman, though on the Sabbath-Day, was such an Act of Beneficence and Compassion in the Holy *Jesus*, that I can't but think *bad*, as well as *good* Men, would rather glorify God, that had given such Power unto Man, than find fault with it. But in the Mystery of this Part of the Story, there is clear Sense and Truth. Who then is this *Archisynagogus*, or Ruler of the Synagogue, that will be full of Indignation at the healing of the Church of her foresaid *Infirmity* at the *Spirit* of Prophecy? *Origen* says that the[107] right Interpretation of the Names of Persons and Places in Scripture is of good Use to the mystical Application. Accordingly *Archisynagogus* does signify the *Chiefs of our Congregations*: And who should they be then but the Clergy? And if this ben't enough to fix this Name and Character upon them, then let *Theophanes Cerameus* speak here, who says, that the *Archisynagogus*, is a[108] *Type of all Priests*, who will be against the foresaid miraculous healing of the Church. And why will the *Clergy* be mov'd 'with Indignation at the curing the Church of her *Infirm*, and restoring her to a *sound* Spirit of Prophecy? Because as St. *Augustin* says,[109] they are not only *bow'd down* to the Letter themselves; but because this *Infirmity* of the Church will be a Reproach to them, in as much as it is a Proof of their Apostacy and Insufficiency at Prophecy; and the Cure of it will be attended with such Consequences, as affect their Reputation and Interests. Who can question but the

Clergy, who are the *Archisynagogus* of the Text, and who are for the Church's *bending* and *stooping* to the low Sense of the Letter of the Scripture, will be averse to her being rais'd, *lifted up*, and erected to the Contemplation of the sublime, anagogical, and heavenly Sense of it? Such an Healing and Erection of the Church will vex them at the Heart, as it will bring *Shame* and loss of Interest along with it; and they will undoubtedly be *Adversaries* to this good Work of *Christ*, which, upon the Testimony of all Antiquity, is to be done on or against the Evangelical and great Sabbath.

Our Saviour is supposed to reprove the *Ruler* of the *Synagogue*, for his *Indignation* at the Cure of the Woman on the Sabbath-Day, saying, *v.* 15. *Thou Hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his Ox or his Ass from the Stall, and lead him away to Watering? And ought not this Woman to be loos'd from this Bond on the Sabbath-Day?* There is Force in this Argument according to the Letter: And the *Ruler* of the *Synagogue*, and other *Jesus*'s Adversaries hereupon, might well be *asham'd* for finding Fault with such a merciful and beneficent Work done on the *Sabbath*; when they themselves did Works on the *Sabbath* of much less Consequence. But to[110] the Mystery. What may be said to our Ministers of the Letter, of whom the *Archisynagogus* is a Type, for their Averseness to the healing of the Church in like manner? Why, that they are *Hypocrites*, that is, superficial Criticks on the Scriptures, and don't consider that *the Law is spiritual*, and how against the Evangelical Sabbath every Man is to be released from his Bondage and Servility to irrational Principles (for which he has been like an *Ox* and an *Ass*) and to be conducted to drink of the Waters of Divine Wisdom: For this grand Sabbath

will be a Day of absolute Liberty, perfect *Rest*, immense Knowledge, real Vision and Contemplation on God and his Providence, as the antient *Jews* and Fathers so copiously declare, that they who are ignorant herein, may be *ashamed*; consequently they might know, that the Church is to be cured of her *Spirit of Weakness* at Prophecy on that Day.

But *Satan* is said to have *v.* 16. *bound*, and, as is supposed, *bow'd down* this Woman; the literal Truth of which I much question: But how then has *Satan bound and bow'd down* the Church? This, seemingly, is the great Difficulty in the mystical Application of this Story, and must be the great Curiosity of my Readers to know how I will account for it. If the Fathers don't help me out at this dead Lift, and that clearly and intelligibly too, I shall abate of my Veneration for them. If they don't tell me, and make me to apprehend, what this *Satan* is, that for many Ages has *bound* and oppress'd the Church after the supposed Manner of the typical Woman, I had better have held my Peace, and said nothing to this parabolical Miracle.

The Writings of the *Evangelists* so abound with Stories of *Satan*, *Belzebub*, the *Devil*, and of greater and less Number of *Devils*, and of *Dæmons* and of *unclean Spirits*, more than any Histories before, as one would think, if these Stories were literally to be understood, that was the Age in which Christ came, that *Hell* first broke loose, and then primarily infested Mankind; and that upon the Destruction of *Judæa* and Propagation of the Gospel, the *Devils* accompanied the *Jews* in their Dispersion, or the *Apostles* in their Travels, and have been the Tempters, Seducers, and Tormentors of other Nations ever since.

Arnobius[111] says, *That before Christ, Devils were things unknown to the World*; by which *Arnobius* must mean, either that they were hardly talk'd of before, or that their Nature was not understood, till Christ inform'd us of it. In both these Senses, I believe, *Arnobius* may be taken, *viz.* that there was not only little Talk of *Satan* and the *Devil*, but less of his Nature apprehended, before *Christ* by his Parables and parabolical Miracles, rightly interpreted, instructed us in it. And if after Ages have departed from the true and original Doctrine of *Devils*, making a literal Story of that, which is only mystical and cabalistical; and have formed to themselves *Ideas* of hideous and horrible Fiends, *Mormos* and *Hobgoblins*, it shall not disturb me.

As to the Place and State of *Hell*, many are the Notions of *Divines* of several Ages past, as well as of the present. I shall not recount them all here, much less refute any of them. But there is an antient, rational, and cabalistical Notion of Hell, which I have learned of the Fathers, who signify, that the babylonish and bewilder'd State of Christ's Church may be call'd *Hell*, because, as the Word αδης does import, it is a State *without Vision*. Hence *Origen* says, [112] that whoever can form to himself an *Idea* of the Church in time to come, when she will be dignified with the Title of the *New Jerusalem*, for her Peace and Vision may understand what is meant by *Hell*, and all that is written of it.

As then the Fathers had a cabalistical Notion of *Hell*, which modern *Divines* are Strangers to; so they had of *Satan*, and the *Devil* and his Angels. I own myself at a Loss for an express Testimony out of the Fathers about *Satan* in the Text before us; but according to their Explications of *Satan* in other Places, nothing

more is meant by him here than, "That furious Principle and Temper in Man that is not only averse to Liberty in Religion, but for binding, restraining, and tying down the Church and Christian People to certain Opinions and Ways of Worship." In such a State of Bondage has the Woman of the Church been kept, by such a *Satan*, in one Order of Men or other, for all Ages past. And that this is a right and primitive Notion of *Satan*, I could prove by Authorities enough. *Origen* tells us[113] of the Names of Kings in prophetical Scripture, which would be Enemies to Christ's Church; but such Kings never did, nor would personally exist; their Names, according to Interpretation, standing only for so many Sins and Vices, reigning in Mankind. To the same Purpose he says[114] *human Vices are Devils*: And *Satan* himself, (as the Word signifies *Adversary*) is with him[115] and the antient *Jews* too, no other than an *Aversness* in Man to the Will of God. I could quote other Fathers to this Purpose; but being sparing of my Pains at present, I refer my Readers to my former[116] *Discourse*, in which they will see the Opinion of the Fathers about the *Devils* in the Madman, and afterwards in the Herd of Swine; from which let them judge, whether the Fathers could have any other Notion of *Satan* here, than what I have represented. It is certain, and may be easily prov'd, that by *Satan*, the *Dragon* and the *Devil*, mentioned in the *Revelations*, nothing more is to be understood, than a furious, persecuting, satanical, and diabolical Temper in Man; and if what St. *John* writes of *Satan* be cabalistical and allegorical; the other Assertions of the Evangelists and Apostles about *him* will of Course come under that Denomination; or the primitive Rule of Interpretation of Scripture according to the natural Signification of the Names of Persons and

Places is not good.

As then the *Woman* of the Gospel was, as is supposed, *v.* 16. *bound by Satan, loe, for eighteen Years*: So the foresaid furious Principle in Man, which is a mystical *Satan*, an *Adversary* to Liberty, has bound the Church, *loe*, to the *eighteenth* Century of Years: But she is to be entirely released from this spiritual Bondage, and set at[117] *perfect Liberty* against the acceptable and Evangelical Sabbath. And here it is to be noted out of St. *Augustin*, and most worthy of Observation it is, that at the[118] same time, in which the Church will be loosed from her Bondage; *Satan* himself will[119] be *bound* and *chain'd* for a[120] *thousand Years*, the time of the evangelical Sabbath, that is, says *Ephræm Syrus*[121] for ever. And how will our mystical *Satan* or the *Dragon* be bound and chain'd? Not with Chains or Links of Iron or other Metal; but *Vinculis Rationis*, with the Chains of Reasons and Arguments for Christian Liberty, which will restrain the *Adversary*, *Satan*, from any more Impositions and Persecutions of the Church. And I can't here but applaud the great Mr. *Grounds* and Mr. *Scheme*, for their Work and Labour of Love to Mankind, in making *Chains* of Argumentations for Liberty, which I hope will prove of sufficient Strength to bind *Satan* and restrain him (in Dr. *Rogers*, Bishop *G—bs—n*, and others his Angels) from giving any more Molestation to Christian Philosophers in their Enquiries after, and Lucubrations on Divine Truth. All the Honour that I aim at in that Work is, by the Help of the Fathers, to point out that anti-Christian Principle or Temper in the *Clergy*[122] which, for its *Averseness* to Liberty, is called *Satan*; for its *Calumnies*, is called the *Devil*; for its *Furiousness*, is called the *Dragon*; and for its *Unreasonableness*, is called the *Beast*, to the

intellectual Views of Mankind, and to direct them how to apprehend and lay hold on it.

Our Saviour, according to *Origen*, had never call'd *Peter*,[123] *Satan*, if *Satan* had been any Thing else than *Man-averse* to the Will of God.

And thus have I spoken to the Miracle of *Jesus*'s healing the *Woman of her Spirit of Infirmity, whom Satan had bound and bow'd down*, which, according to the Letter, is no Miracle at all; and some Parts of the Story are improbable and incredible; but the mystical Completion of it will be most prodigious, and a Demonstration not only of Christ's Power and Presence in his Church, but of his *Messiahship*, in as much as a vast Number of Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, more than can soon be collated to this Purpose, will thereupon receive their Accomplishment. And so I come to a

3. *Third* miraculous Story of *Jesus*'s, that is of his telling (*John* iv.) the Woman of *Samaria* her Fortune, *of having had five Husbands, and being then an Adulteress*, &c. in which there is a notable Miracle display'd, in the Opinion of our *Divines*, that proves *Jesus*'s Omniscience, or he could not so have search'd into the Heart of this Woman, and told her such Occurrences, that concern'd her Life past. I thought once of transcribing here entirely this Story; and so I would, but that it is a long one, and might have set some Readers, who are by this time awaken'd to pry into the Absurdities of the Letter, a laughing, before I had time my self regularly to animadvert on it.

Whether there was any Truth at all in the Letter of this Story, I should much have questioned, but that some Fathers write of it, as if they believed it

literally, tho' they make a mystical and allegorical Explication of the whole and every part of it. And I, having a sincere Veneration for the Fathers, will not contradict them, (and I hope this Concession will please the *Clergy*) but, for all that, can't like any part of this Story literally, but could almost wish, that the Fathers, for the Honour of *Jesus*, had made the whole no other than a Parable.

It's strange that no *Jews* or *Infidels* have as yet ludicrously treated this Story to the, almost, Confutation of our Religion. If their Tongues had not been ty'd by the aforesaid *Satan* or *Adversary* to Liberty, I can't think but they must have made some pleasant Animadversions upon it before now. If such a broken, elliptical, and absurd Tale had been told of any other Impostor in Religion; the Wits of our *Clergy* had been at Work to expose it plentifully; and indeed there's no need of much Wit to make this Tale nauseous and ridiculous to vulgar Understandings.

I shall not myself here make all the Remarks I can to the Disadvantage of this Story: I am not as yet so disposed to make Scoffers and *Infidels* laugh at the *Clergy* for their Adherence to the Letter of it. All I shall do now, is to make my Observations on the two Uses, that the Clergy very seriously put this Story to, and they are,

First, to prove the Expectation that there was amongst the *Samaritans*, of a *Messiah* to come; And

Secondly, to prove *Jesus*'s Omniscience, or he could not have entered into the Heart of the Woman, and told her, that she had had five Husbands, and was then an Adulteress. To these two Purposes, I find this Story urged by our *Divines*, and I must needs say, as to the

First of them; it is rightly from hence asserted by the[124] *Bishop* of *Lichfield* and others, that the *Samaritans* had an Expectation of a *Messiah*: But why then did not the *Bishop* and others, who are now in Quest after Arguments of *Jesus*'s Messiahship, prove him hence to be the *Messiah*, because he told the *Samaritan* woman her Fortune? If this was a real and substantial Argument to her of *Jesus*'s *Messiahship*, it ought to be urg'd by the Clergy at this Day. The Controversy about *Jesus*'s Messiahship is now on foot; Why do the Advocates for it overlook this Proof of it? Why, because, as I suppose, they are aware, that *Infidels* would make sport with it. But if *Jesus*'s telling the Woman her Fortune was no real and conclusive Argument of his being the *Messiah*; St. *John* has told us an impertinent Tale of a simple Woman, upon whose Credulity and false Notions *Jesus* palm'd himself as the true *Messiah*; and whether he did not ill thus to banter and deceive the Woman, let any one judge.

But let us here behold the Difference amongst the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, as to the Expectation of a *Messiah*. Some of the old *Jews*, like the Apostles, expected the *Messiah* would be a temporal Prince, a great Warriour and Conqueror of the World. Others[125] of them, like the Fathers, expected he would be a Prophet like *Moses* in all Things, and deliver his People out of another *Egypt*: But here the *Samaritans* expected he would be a *Conjurer* and *Fortune-Teller*; or there is no Sense in what the Woman said to the Men of the City, *v.* 29. *Come and see a Man that has told me all that I have done*, particularly my Fortune of having had five Husbands, and being now an Adulteress, *Is not this the Christ?* What could she mean, but that the *Messiah* would be a strolling *Fortune-Teller*, to inform People

of the Events of their Lives past and to come? And *Jesus* to humour the Woman in her Conception of himself and of the *Messiah*, says to her, *v.* 26. *I that speak unto thee, am He.* Whether our *Divines* like *Jesus* the better for this Story of him literally, I can't tell; but I am sure they dislike the Fortune-telling Trade at this Day in others, and believe it to be all Fraud, and are for punishing strolling *Gypsys* for Cheats, who practice it; and in the last Age were intent on the[126] Prosecution of judicial Astrologers, who pretended to it: And if antient History had furnish'd us with an Instance of the Punishment of a pretended *Fortune-Teller* in the Reign of *Tiberius*, they could not have found Fault with it. Whether any Accusations were laid against *Jesus* for such his Delusions of the People, we know not. Evangelical History is silent, or the *Evangelists* have prudently suppressed it. But I much wonder, that our *Gypsys*, from this Story, don't account themselves the genuine Disciples of *Jesus*, being endu'd with the like Gifts and exercising no worse Arts, than he himself practised.

If the *Samaritans* did not expect the *Messiah* would be a *Fortune-Teller*; how came the Thought into the Woman's Head, that *Jesus* was the *Messiah*, because he had told her, her Fortune? What can our *Divines* say to it? Why, they must either say, that his telling the Woman her Fortune was a real Proof of his *Messiahship*; or that the Woman was foolish and credulous, and drew a false Conclusion; and if she had not been an impudent and graceless Whore, would have gone away blushing, and never have divulg'd, as the Text supposes she did, her Shame to the Men of *Sychar*, who too had but little Wit, or they had never stir'd from their Homes, to see such a Fortune-Teller upon the Report of a poor Whore.

But the Men of the City had their Fortunes too told them by *Jesus*, and they concluded him to be the *Messiah* upon it; or there is no Sense in what they *v.* 42. *said to the Woman, Now we believe not because of thy Saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ*: What could they hear, but their Fortunes, as the Woman had before? And if *Jesus*, whose Ability at all fair Questions in the magic Art I don't question, did tell them their Fortunes; I hope he had more Prudence than to talk to them in common of their Fornications and Adulteries, which might occasion domestick Jarrs, and the Breach of good Neighbourhood amongst them; but if he directed any of them to find their lost Cattle, and help'd them again to their stolen Goods, he did well, and they alone did amiss, to conclude thereupon, *that he was indeed the Christ*. Let our *Divines* now judge whether I have not made a natural and excellent Comment on this part of the Story, which relates to the Expectation and Opinion, which the *Samaritans* had of a *Messiah* to come. But,

Secondly, From this Story literally our *Divines* prove *Jesus*'s[127] Omniscience; and *Cardiognostick* Power to tell what was in the Hearts and Thoughts of Man. But how so? Is it because he told a Woman, that she was an Adulteress, and had had five Husbands? Where's the Consequence? *Duncan Campbel*, and other *Moorfields*-judicial-Astrologers have done greater Feats at Conjuration than *this*, and never were thought to be Omniscient. And for any Thing appears in this Story of our Saviour, it might be all Cheat and Fraud in him. If *Infidels* should assert it, our *Divines* could not disprove it. If they should say, it was possible for *Jesus* to get Intimations of these and other Circumstances of the Woman's Life, before he attempted to tell her, her Fortune; we can't say, that

this is an impious and unreasonable Suggestion, since it is the common Subtilty of delusive Fortune-Tellers, to get what Intelligence they can by Insinuations and Informations, before they utter their Oracles, and ambiguous Responses to simple poor Folks. And there is one Circumstance in this Story, that looks very ill upon *Jesus*, and is enough to make him suspected for a Cheat in his pretended Art, and that is, he seems to draw the Woman in by a[128] *Wile* to hear her Fortune, saying to her, *v.* 16. *Woman go, call thy Husband*; upon whose denying she had any Husband, Jesus was forward, very forward to surprize her with his Knowledge of her having had five Husbands, and living then in Adultery; which raising the silly Woman's Admiration of his prophetick and soothsaying Talent, he closes with her Conceptions, and what upon other Occasions, before wiser People, he was[129] backward to own, says to her, *that he was the Messiah*; and so he pass'd for the *Messiah* with her and the Men of *Sychar*, who had no more Wit than to receive him for such, upon such Proof, and gave him Entertainment for no less than *v.* 40. *two Days*. I am glad we hear of no Money, he squeez'd out of them for the exercise of his prophetick Art, which our *Divines* would have made an Argument of their Divine Right to Tythes, Fees, and Stipends for their Divinations.

But no more of this silly Story according to the Letter. To point at it is enough to expose it to the considerate and unprejudiced. I could not help saying so much as I have; because it is necessary to form some Invective against the Letter, to make way for the Reception of the mystical and allegorical Interpretation of it, which I am now to speak to.

Tho' the Fathers, against whose Authority I dare not write, or I should be tempted to it in this Case, acknowledge the Letter of this Story, suspecting only some[130] particular Passages of it; yet they look upon the whole, for all that, as a[131] typical Narration, and endeavour at the mystical Construction of all and every part of it. St. *Augustin*, as if he was afraid some Christians of after Times should espouse, as our Divines do, only the Letter, prefaces his Exposition of this Story with these Words, saying,[132] *There are mysteries in all the Sayings and Actions of our Saviour, particularly in the Story of the Woman of* Samaria, *and whoever carelesly and imprudently* (meaning literally) *interprets it, will advance erroneous and pernicious Doctrine*; which, if modern Commentators had any Regard for the Authority of St. *Augustin*, is enough to deter them from their literal Expositions. The most literal Interpreter among the Fathers, whom I know of, is St. *Cyril*, and he says[133] there is a Type and Parable in this Story. But to descend to Particulars.

By the *Woman of Samaria* is to be understood an[134] Heretical and Adulterous Church, which Jesus, *being wearied* with her[135] corrupt State, will meet with in *the sixth Hour*, that is in[136] the *sixth grand Age* of the World. So, by the By, according to the Fathers, *Jesus* will come to, and meet with the *Samaritan* Church to her Edification, at the same time, that he cures the Church of her *Issue of Blood* and *Spirit of Infirmity*.

And where did *Jesus* meet with the Woman of *Samaria*? At *Jacob*'s *Well*, where she was for Water to quench Thirst: So at the[137] *Well* of the Holy Scriptures, whose Sense lies deep as in a Well, and

flows with Knowledge as with Water, will Christ then find his Church, drawing and drinking of the[138] Waters of the Letter, which could not quench the Thirst of the Soul hitherto: But in the Perfection of Time, signified by the *sixth Hour*, will Christ, according to the Fathers, enable her to draw out of this *Well* of the Profundity of the Scriptures, spiritual Waters of Divine Knowledge, which will daily more and more, like the Fountains of the Waters of Life, arise and flow in upon the Soul, and constantly recreate and refresh her with Wisdom, to her Delight and Satisfaction; so as she may be said never to thirst more, after the Manner she does now.

And Jesus *then* told the Woman of *Samaria*, *all that she had done*: So will Christ in the *sixth Hour*, that is, towards the latter End of the *sixth Age* of the World, give the Woman of the Church to understand *all that she has done*, according to the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets, who, upon the Testimony of the Fathers, have written a prophetical History of her, in Types, Symbols and Parables; which Understanding of the Things that have been prophecy'd of her, will enable her, of Consequence, to prove and declare to the World, with Joy and Pleasure, that *Jesus* is the true Messiah, the Christ, and Fulfiller of the Law and the Prophets.

But particularly, as *Jesus* then told the Woman that *she had had five Husbands, and was then an Adulteress* with one who was not her true Husband: So the Church will be made to apprehend, according to[139] *Origen* and[140] St. *Augustin*, and others, how she has had five Husbands of the five bodily Senses, that is, metaphorically speaking, has been *wedded* not only to sensual Pleasures, but to the sensible Things of the Letter of the five Books of *Moses*; and that at present,

consequently, she lives in Adultery[141] with Anti-Christ, whom the Fathers call the Devil, instead of the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Law, who should be her true Spouse, whom she should *call* for, and believe in.

And not only the Woman of *Samaria*, but the Men of the City, *Sychar*, believ'd *Jesus* to be the Messiah, *v.* 42, upon what he said to themselves as well as to her: So the Ministers of the Letter, who are *Sycharites*, according to *Origen* and *Theophanes Cerameus*, will be clearly convinced, and be able to convince others, that *Jesus is the Christ or Messiah*, when they shall hear, learn and apprehend from the Spirit of the Law and the Prophets, that the Church and all she has been doing, was foretold and prophecy'd of.

Lastly, *Jesus*'s Disciples, *v.* 27. are said *to Marvel that he talk'd with the Woman*. What in the Name of Wonder, literally, could be the Meaning of this? Did they *Marvel* at *Jesus*'s Condescention to speak to a Woman, as if the Sex was beneath his Care? Or did they *Marvel* that he who was very bashful, had Courage to speak to one? Or did they *Marvel* at his Conversation with a Whore, for fear of his being tempted by her? Some one or other of these must be the *Marvel* of the Disciples; but how absurd and ridiculous they all are, according to the Letter, let a reasonable Man judge. But mystically, the true Disciples of our Lord, who understand the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, will, when they are apprized of *Jesus*'s spiritual Conversation with his Church, and of all the Things that she has done according to Prophecy, *Marvel* with rapturous Astonishment at the Wisdom and Power of God in the Accomplishment of the Scriptures.

After such a Mystical and Allegorical Manner, is every minute Circumstance of this Story of the *Samaritan* Woman to be apply'd. St. *Augustin*[142] says there are so many great Mysteries contain'd in it, that they require much Time to go through them all. I find it so, and that no less than a Volume might be written of them, out of the Fathers. But what I have briefly here touch'd on, is enough to convince any one of the Absurdities of the Letter of this Miracle, which consisted in the telling a Woman her Fortune, and such a Fortune, as *Jesus* by Craft might come to the Knowledge of. Therefore, for the Honour of *Jesus*, let us look upon the whole Story as a typical and parabolical Representation of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him.

And thus I have spoken to the three Miracles, proposed to be treated on in this Discourse. Before I enter upon my third general Head, which is, *to consider what Jesus means when he appeals to his Miracles as to a Witness of his Divine Authority*; I must take to Task some more of his pretended Miracles even till I have not left him a good, credible and substantial Miracle, according to the Letter, to appeal to. The Consequence of which will be, that his mysterious Operations are to prove his Authority and Messiahship, or we must give up him and his Religion for a Piece of Fraud and Imposture.

What Miracles will be the Subject of my next Discourse, I can't certainly foretell, but there are many Historical as well as miraculous Parts of *Jesus*'s Life, that according to the Letter, are to be call'd into Question; such as

The History of his riding on an Ass to *Jerusalem*. I have given some Offence on this Point already in my

Moderator, and ought to excuse or justify my self, by calling the Fathers to Account for laughing at the Letter of that Story. It was an untoward saying of St. *Jerome*, that I there cited, and suffered a Prosecution for: But it is a worse Intimation of St. *John* of *Jerusalem*, who, if there was any literal Truth in the Peoples pulling off their Garments, and Branches of Trees, and strewing them in the Way of *Jesus*, will needs have it not respectfully but mischievously done, to make the Colt stumble, and so dismount his Rider. And according to him it may be questioned, whether the *Hosannahs* of the People were of any more Respect to *Jesus*, than the *Huzzahs* of a *Mob* would be to the Bishop of *L——n*, if to shew his Meekness and Lowlyness, he should ride upon an Ass, in his *Pontificalibus* through this City. But I have here a momentous Controversy to decide about the Beast *Jesus* rode on. St. *Matthew* seems to say, he rode upon both *Ass* and *Colt* together. St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* say, he rode upon the *Colt, on which Man never before sat*. The Bishop of *Lichfield* says, he rode upon the *Ass* (on which Man had before sat) and the *Colt* ambled after. St. *Cyril* and St. *Chrysostom* say, he rode upon the *Colt*, and the *She-Ass* trotted after. St. *John* the *Evangelist* says he rode upon a *Mule*, or an ονάριον Ass-like Creature of the neuter Gender. The *Jewish Cabalists* say, their *Messiah* was to ride on a great huge *Ass*, big enough to carry him and all true Israelites, and that the Ministers of *Antichrist* would then hang an *A-ss*. So do the great Doctors of the World differ! To whom I shall decree the Prize of Orthodoxy, I shan't foretell; but am inclined to favour the Opinion of the *Cabalists*. However, I shall be very grave as well as learned on this Head: And if I can, I will, to oblige Dr. *Sherlock*, hook in a Digression about *Shilo*'s *binding his Fole to the Vine,*

and his Asses Colt to the choice Vine: The Accomplishment of which *literal* Prophecy seems to have been drop'd in the Providence of God, or the *Dean* of *Chichester*[143] had never stopt at it. I will endeavour to look it up, in some Corner of History, if it be but to merit the Praises of the *Master* of the *Temple*.

I must also sometime take into Consideration the Story of *Jesus*'s Abode in the Wilderness, forty Days, in Company of the *Devil*, who tempted him. This literally, as our *Divines* understand it, is a Scandalous Story. The *Jews*, in our Saviour's Time, said, that through *Belzebub*, he cast out *Devils*; and their Posterity have asserted, that he learn'd the Magick Art of a *Dæmon*. This Story gives too much Grounds for such a Suspicion. Our *Divines*, who should know best, talk of abundance of Mischief, the *Devil* has been permitted to do in the World ever since; I hope it was not by Compact and Agreement between them; but it would have been of some Satisfaction to the Contrary, if the *Evangelist* had told us expresly upon what Terms they mett and parted. As Fables go, it is said to the Honour of St. *Dunstan*, that he took the *Devil* by the Nose, when he tempted him; and if *Jesus* had taken him by the *Collar*, and thrust him into his *Dungeon*, and there chain'd him, and shut *Hell-Gates* upon him; I appeal to honest plain Christians, whether such an *Herculean* Labour would not have pleased them well. Ever since I read of *Martin Luther*'s Conversation with the *Devil*, I have had but indifferent Thoughts of his *Protestantism*; and unless the Fathers turn this Story before us into Mystery, Allegory and Cabalism, I shall think ill of Christianity.

I should also take into Examination the Story of an

Angel's appearing to the Shepherds, and saying to them; *Behold I bring you Tidings of great Joy*, &c. If there was any Truth literally in *this* Story, and in *that* of a Star's appearing to the wise Men, there must be a great Mistake in the Report of both of them. St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke* have both blunder'd. It was the Star that appear'd to the Shepherds by Night; and the Angel (I speak upon Reason and Authority) that was sent to the wise Men. What then to do with these two Stories, and to salve the Credit of the *Evangelists*, I knew not, till the Fathers directed me to the Use of a mythological *Metamorphosis*: And then I presently learn'd the Trick on't, to transform Stars into Angels, and Shepherds too, or Pastors of Christ's Flock (which was the Difficulty) into wise Men; and so I made one Moral or Mistery of the two Fables.

I must also some Time take to task the Story of the *many dead Bodies of the Saints, that upon Christs Resurrection, came out of their Graves, and appear'd unto many*; which is too imperfectly related to merit Credit. The *Evangelist*, if he would have a reasonable Man believe his Story, should have told us, who those Saints were, and what Numbers of them; and whether they appear'd to the converted or unconverted *Jews*; whether they were some of the Patriarchs and Prophets of old, or some lately departed Disciples, who, for all *Jesus*'s healing Power, died in the Time of his Ministry; and whether there were any Women among those Saints; and whether they appear'd naked (as *Jesus* modestly did to *Mary Magdalen*, unless he flip'd himself by *Stealth* into the Cloths of the Gardener, which might be the Reason of her Mistake, for she suppos'd she saw the Gardener) and whether they return'd again to Corruption, or ascended into Heaven. For want of these specifical Circumstances, the *Evangelist* has told

us a Tale, that has neither Head nor Foot to it: and unless the Fathers mystically answer, to Satisfaction, every one of the aforesaid *Queries*, I'll reject this Story for mere Romance and Imposture.

These and many other historical and seemingly miraculous Stories of the Gospel, are some time to be taken into Consideration; for I will not give this Work over, till I have demonstrated beyond all Contradiction, that the evangelical Writings are but the Shadow of Divine Mysteries; and that literal Interpreters, whom[144] *Origen* calls *vulgar Capacities*, are under a Mistake, if they think, they understand any Thing, as they ought, of the four Gospels.

I should conclude now, as it becomes a *Moderator*, with an Address to *Infidels* and *Apostates*, the great Combatants in this Controversy. But I have not Room to be as large, as I would, in my Exhortations to them distinctly, so I can only desire them to continue the Controversy with Zeal and Vigour, not doubting but it will end to the Honour of Jesus, the Good of his Church, and the Happiness of Mankind. The blessed Fruits of this Controversy are already seen and felt in the almost Cure of a most malignant Distemper, call'd *Bigottry*, which has been the Bane of human Society, and in Times past more destructive of the World than either War or Pestilence. Go on then, *Great* and *Good Sirs*, till the Cure is perfected. And as you merit Praises and Rewards for your several Labours; So I hope you'll meet with them. The *Nobility* and *Gentry*, of the Kingdom, as I learn, are sensibly touch'd with the Usefulness of this Controversy; whereupon it is to be hoped the *Legislative Authority* will soon give Thanks to the great Mr. *Grounds* and Mr. *Scheme* for their Pains in it; and not forget to do Justice to the *Bishops* and

Clergy according to their Merits. But I can't stay here to talk more on this Head, being obliged to make an Epistolary

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P. S. To Mr. *T. Ray*, the Author of a *Discourse*, call'd *Our Saviour's Miracles vindicated*, &c. As I, *Sir*, enter'd the *Press*, you came forth, or I might possibly have paid more of my Respects to you another Way. But upon mature Consideration, I found a properer Reply could not be made to you, than is the foregoing Discourse; which, if you are not sick of your former Performance, will find you some more Work. And that you may write more pertinently against this Discourse, than you did against my other, I'll give you some Instructions, *viz.* if you think of writing to the Purpose, you must prove these two Things; *First*, that the Fathers did not hold the Stories of *Jesus*'s Miracles to be typical and figurative; and *Secondly*, that *Jesus*'s Miracles neither will nor can receive a mysterious and more wonderful Accomplishment. But you have not said one Syllable to either of these Points; consequently have written nothing to the Purpose against me. As for Instance; In the Miracle of *Jesus*'s *driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*: You should prove, *First* that the Fathers don't hold that Miracle to be typical of the future Ejection of *Bishops*, *Priests*, and *Deacons* out of the Church, that make Merchandize of the Gospel: And *Secondly*, that it was impossible that the Miracle should receive such an Accomplishment. But you have done nothing of this. So, if you should attempt again to write against this Discourse, as for Instance, against my

Explication of the Miracle of *Jesus*'s healing the Woman, that *had an Issue of Blood*; you must prove that *that* Story neither was in the Opinion of the Fathers Typical, nor could receive a mystical Accomplishment; or you may as well hold your Peace. And after all, whether your Reasonings for the Letter of Christ's Miracles, are equal to mine against it, let our Readers judge, who will easily discern, that you jump over my choicest Invectives against the Letter, as if you was afraid of being touch'd by them.

As to your charging me falsly in one or two Places, with Misrepresentations of the Fathers, I'll expostulate that Matter with you, when I hear that the *Bishop* of *London* gives your Performance, the Reputation of a solid, and substantial one, by a Change of your *Cloak* into a *Gown*, which you seem to aim at; or you had never so besmear'd the *Bishop* with your Compliments, nor had been so mealy-mouth'd as to the Point of Liberty.

But what need you, *Sir*, have told the World, that you take me for an *Unbeliever of the Scriptures*. If the *Bishop*'s wise Prosecution of me for an *Infidel* had not given you the Hint, you could never of your self have made that Discovery. And why did you not join the Fathers with me in Unbelief? I thought I had been of the same Faith with them. A Man of your Penetration into another's Principles, will, I suppose, from this present going Discourse, conclude me to be a downright *Atheist*. And what must I do then to clear my self!

If you write any more, *Sir*, I desire you, without making more Haste than good Speed, to be as expeditious as you can; or you will not prevent my Publication of another Discourse, like these two, to

the Honour of *Jesus*, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.

A THIRD

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

In View of the Present Controversy between Infidels and Apostates.

Litteratos gravissimo Somno stertere convincam, HIERON.

The Third Edition.

By Tho. Woolston, B.D. sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge*.

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[Price One Shilling.]





TO THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD

RICHARD,

Lord Bishop of St. David's.

MY LORD,



n your Sermon *before the* Societies *for Reformation of Manners, you are pleased to give a Character of my former* Discourses on Christ's Miracles; *which, tho' I don't at all like, yet I thank you for the Favour of taking Notice of them; a* Favour *that I have long'd for from a considerable* Clergyman; *but could not flatter myself with the Hopes of receiving it from so great a* Prelate.

Some of the inferior Clergy, *whom I despise for their Ignorance and Malice, have before in their Conversation*

represented me as an impious *and* blasphemous Infidel; *and I have met with Affronts for it: But I never imagin'd that any, much less your* Lordship, *would have ventur'd such a Character of me from the* Press, *for fear of a Resentment, which would not be agreeable. Surely your* Lordship *has not read my* Discourses, *but has taken a Report of them upon Trust, from some Ecclesiastical* Noodle; *or you could never have been so much mistaken about my Design in them.*

I took myself to be a Christian *of the same Faith with the Fathers of the Church; and, without Vanity, think, I have publish'd some Tracts, in Defence of Christianity, equal, if not superior to any Thing this Age has produced. I repeatedly also in my* Discourses on Miracles, *to obviate the Prejudices of an ignorant* Clergy, *made solemn Protestations of the Sincerity of my Design, not to do Service to Infidelity, but to make Way for the Demonstration of* Jesus*'s Messiahship from Prophecy: But all these Asseverations of the Integrity of my Heart, it seems, stand for nothing (and I don't wonder at it) with the* Clergy, *who in their Principles, their Oaths, and Subscriptions are so accustom'd to prevaricate with God and Man. I shall make no more serious Protestations of my Faith, but expect your* Lordship *should soon publish a Defence of your foul* Charge *against me, that I may see what Skill you have in the impious and blasphemous Writings of an* Infidel.

And if your railing Accusation *be not soon followed with a Dissertation of more Reason, I shall insist on a publick Reparation of the Injury done to my Reputation by your* vile *and* slanderous *Sermon; and appeal to the worshipful* Societies *for Reformation of Manners, whether it be not just and reasonable, you should do one or the other.*

Now I have laid hold on your Lordship, *than whom I could not have wish'd for an* Adversary, *that will do me more Honour to overcome, I will hold you fast; and you must expect to be teaz'd and insulted from the* Press, *if you enter not the Lists against me.*

A clear Stage, my Lord, *and no Favour. If you have the Sword of the Spirit in your Hand, cut as sharply as you can with it. I had conceiv'd a great Opinion of your Learning, and should have been a little apprehensive of the Power of it; if you had not in your* Sermon *betray'd as great Weakness and Ignorance, as could be in a poor* Curat; *or you had never asserted that the* Greek *Commentators adher'd more strictly, to the litteral Sense of the Holy Scriptures; as if you knew not, that St.* Theophilus *of* Antioch, *and even* Origen *himself and others, the greatest* Allegorists, *if a Comparison may be made, were* Commentators *of the* Greek *Church.*

The sooner your Lordship *appears from the* Press, *the better, in as much as you may possibly prevent my Publication of more* Discourses *of this Kind. And that it may not be long first, I will accept of a Dissertation from you, on any two or three of the Miracles, I have handled, as sufficient for all. Take your Choice of them: but don't I beseech you, touch the Miracle of* Jesus*'s driving the* Buyers *and* Sellers *out of the Temple, because it is a* hot *one, and may possibly burn your Fingers. The Miracles, that I have most ludicrously and, of consequence, most offensively handled, are the* two *of this present Discourse. If you please*, my Lord, *let them be the easy and short Task imposed on you. If you can defend the Letter of the Stories of these* two *Miracles, I'll quietly give up the Rest to you.*

So heartily thanking your Lordship *for the Favour done me, in taking Notice of my* Discourses on Miracles,

which shall be turn'd to good Use and Advantage, I subscribe myself,

Feb. 26.
1728

My LORD,
Your most obliged
Humble Servant,
Tho. Woolston.

A THIRD

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.



y two former Discourses having met with a favourable Reception, I am encourag'd to go on and publish another; which, without any more Preface, I enter upon, by a Repetition of three general Heads, at first proposed to be spoken to, and they were,

I. To show that the Miracles of healing all Manner of bodily Diseases, which *Jesus* was justly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Messiah*, neither are they so much as a good Proof of his divine Authority, to found a Religion.

II. To prove, that the literal History of many of the Miracles of *Jesus*, as recorded by the *Evangelists*, does imply Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities; consequently they, either in whole or in part, were never wrought, as they are commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related as prophetical and Parabolical Narratives of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him.

III. To consider, what *Jesus* means, when he appeals to his Miracles, as to a Testimony and a Witness of his divine Authority; and to show that he could not

properly and ultimately refer to those he then wrought in the *Flesh*, but to those Mystical ones, that he would do in the *Spirit*, of which those wrought in the Flesh are but mere Types and Shadows.

Tho' I have already, spoken what may be thought sufficient, to the first of these Heads; yet I have several Things still, both from Reason and Authority, to add to it; but having not here a convenient Place for that purpose, I defer it to a better Opportunity; and so pass immediately to the Resumption of my

II. Second general Head, and that is, to prove, that the literal History of many of the Miracles of *Jesus*, as recorded by the *Evangelists*, does imply Absurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities; consequently they, either in whole or in part were never wrought, as it is commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related, as Prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him.

To this Purpose I have taken into Examination six of the Miracles of *Jesus*, *viz.* those.

1. Of his driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple.

2. Of his exorcising the *Devils* out of the Mad-men, and sending them into the Herd of Swine.

3. Of his Transfiguration on the Mount.

4. Of his healing a Woman, that had an Issue of Blood, twelve Years.

5. Of his curing a Woman that had a Spirit of Infirmity, eighteen Years, and

6. Of his telling the *Samaritan* Woman her Fortune of having had five Husbands, and being then an Adulteress with another Man.

Whether I have not prov'd the Storys of these Miracles, either in whole or in part, to consist of Absurdities, Improbabilities, and incredibilities, according to the Proposition before us, I leave my *Readers* to judge; and now will take in Hand

7. A Seventh Miracle of *Jesus*; *viz.* that[145] *of his cursing the Figtree, for not bearing Fruit out of Season*; which Miracle, upon the bare mention of it, appears to be such an absurd, foolish, and ridiculous, if not malicious and ill-natured Act in *Jesus*, that I question, whether, for Folly and Absurdity, it can be equalled in any Instance of the Life of a reputed wise Man. The Fathers, such as *Origen*, St. *Augustin*, St. *John of Jerusalem*, and others, have all said as smart Things, as the wittiest Infidels can, against the Letter of this Story. St. *Augustin*[146] very plainly says, that *this Fact in Jesus*, upon Supposition that it was done, was *a foolish one*. If therefore I treat this Story a little more ludicrously than ordinary, and expose the Folly of the Fact as well as of the modern Belief of it, I hope their Authority and Example will plead my Excuse for it.

Jesus was hungry, it seems, and being disappointed of Figs, to the Satisfaction of his Appetite, cursed the Figtree. Why so peevish and impatient? Our *Divines*, when they please, make *Jesus* the most patient, resign'd and easy under Sufferings, Troubles and Disappointments, of any Man. If he really was so, he could hardly have been so much out of Humour, for want of a few Figs, to the Allay of his Hunger. But to curse the Figtree upon it, was as foolishly and

passionately done, as for another Man to throw the Chairs and Stools about the House; because his Dinner is not ready at a critical Time, or before it could be got ready for him.

But *Jesus* was hungry, some will say, and the Disappointment provoked him. What if he was hungry? He should, as he knew the Return of his Appetite, have made a better and more certain Provision for it. Where was *Judas* his Steward and Caterer with his Bag of Victuals as well as Money? Poor Forecast, and Management amongst them, or *Jesus* had never trusted to the uncertain Fruits of a Figtree, which he espy'd at a Distance, for his Breakfast.

And if *Jesus* was frustrated of a long'd-for Meal of Figs, what need he have so reveng'd the Disappointment on the[147] senseless and faultless Tree? Was it, because he was forc'd to fast longer than usual and expedient? not so, I hope neither: Could not Angels, if he was in a desert Place, have administered unto him? Or could not he miraculously have created Bread for himself and his Company, as he multiplied or increased the Loaves for his Thousands in the Wilderness? What Occasion then for his being out of Humour for want of Food? If he was of Power to provide Bread for others on a sudden, he might sure have supply'd his own Necessities, and so have kept his Temper, without breaking into a violent Fit of Passion, upon present Want and Disappointment.

But what is yet worse, *the Time of Figs was not yet*, when Jesus look'd and long'd for them. Did ever any one hear or read of any thing more[148] unreasonable than for a Man to expect Fruit out of Season? *Jesus*

could not but know this before he came to the Tree, and if he had had any Consideration, he would not have expected Figs on it, much less, if he had regarded his own Reputation, as a wise Man, would he have so resented the Want of them. What, if a *Yeoman* of *Kent* should go to look for *Pipins* in his Orchard at *Easter*, (the supposed Time[149] that *Jesus* sought for these Figs) and, because of a Disappointment, cut down all his Trees; What then would his Neighbours make of him; Nothing less, than a *Laughing-stock*; and if the Story got into our publick News, he would be the Jest and Ridicule of Mankind. How *Jesus* salv'd his Credit upon this his wild Prank; and prevented the Laughter of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* upon it, I know not; but I cannot think of this Part of the Letter of this Story, without smiling at it at this Day; and wonder our *Divines* are not laugh'd out of Countenance for reading it gravely, and having *Jesus* in Admiration for it.

Again, I would gladly know, whose Figtree this was, and whether *Jesus* had any legal Right to the Fruit, if haply he had found any on it, or any Leave or Authority to smite it with a Curse for its Unfruitfulness? As to the Tree's being *Jesus*'s Property, that could not be. For he was so far from being either Landlord or Tenant, that it's said he had not where to lay his Head. During the Time of his Ministry, he was but a Wanderer, like a Mendicant Fryar, or an itinerant Preacher, and before that Time was no better than a Journeyman Carpenter (of whose Workmanship, I wonder, the Church of *Rome* has no holy Relicks, not so much as a Three-footed-stool, or a Pair of Nutcrackers;) consequently he had no House nor Land of his own by Law, much less any Figtree, and least of all *this* which he espy'd at a distance in his Travels. How then had he any Right

to the Figs, if he had met with any? I hope he ask'd Leave beforehand of the Proprietor, or *Infidels* will say of him, that if he had had an Opportunity he would have been a *Rob-Orchard*. And it he had no Right to the Fruit, much less to smite the Tree with a Curse; where was his Honour,[150] *his Justice*, his Goodness, and his Honesty in this Act? The *Evangelists*, if they would have us to think, *Jesus* did no wrong to any Man, should have left us somewhat upon Record, to Satisfaction, in this Case; or *Infidels*, who have here Scope for it, will think worse of *Jesus*, than possibly he may deserve. Whether *Jesus*, modestly speaking, met with any Blame or Reprimand from the Proprietor, for his Act of Execration, none can affirm or deny. But if any one so spitefully and maliciously should destroy almost any other Tree, whether fruitful or not, of another Man's, in this Country, he would have good Luck, if he escaped the House of Correction for it.

And what now have our *Divines* to say, to all this Reasoning against the Letter of this Story? Nothing more than "That the Act of cursing the Figtree, whether it be at this Distance of Time reconcilable to Reason, Justice and Prudence or not, was a supernatural Work, above the Power of Nature or Art to imitate; consequently it was a Miracle, and they will admire and adore *Jesus* for it." And to agree with them at present, that it was a real Miracle, and a supernatural Event, yet I hope, they'll acknowledge, that if *Jesus*, as St. *Augustin*[151] says, had, instead of cursing the Figtree, made a dry, dead and withered one, immediately to bud, flourish and revive, and in an Instant to bring forth ripe Fruits, out of Season, it would have pleased them much better. Such an Instance of his Power had been an indisputable Miracle: Such an Instance of his divine Power had

carry'd Goodness along with it, and none of the foresaid Exceptions could have been made to it: Such an Instance of his Almighty Power, had been a Demonstration of his being Lord of the Creation, and Author of the Fruits of the Earth for the Use of Man, in their Season, or he could not have produced them out of Season: In such an Instance of Power, his Divine Care and Providence against Hunger and Want would have been visible; and it would have been an Admonition to us, to depend daily upon him for the Comforts and Necessaries of Life: Such an Instance of his Power would have been, as St. *Augustin* says above, like his Miracles of healing Diseases, of making the Languid, *Sound*; and the Feeble, *Strong*; and we might more certainly have inferr'd from one with the other, that both were the Operations of a good God. But this Instance of his cursing the Figtree in this Fashion spoils the Credit, and sullies the Glory of his other Miracles. It is in its own Nature of such a malevolent Aspect, that its enough to make us suspect the Beneficence of *Christ* in his other Works, and to question whether there might not be some latent Poyson and diabolical Design under the Colour of his fairer Pretences to Almighty Power. It is so like the malignant Practices of *Witches*, who, as Stories go, upon Envy, Grudge, or Distaste, smite their Neighbours Cattle with languishing Distempers, till they die, that it's hard, if not impossible, to distinguish one from the other, in Spite and Malice. If *Mahomet*, and not *Jesus*, had been the Author of this Miracle, our *Divines* would presently have discover'd the *Devil*'s Foot in it, and have said that *Satan* drew him into a Scrape, in the Execution of this mad and foolish Frolick, on purpose to expose *him* for a *Wizard* and *his* Musselmen of all Ages since for *Fools* in believing on him. The Spirit of

Christ, who is all Love and Mercy, should, one would think, breath forth nothing but Goodness and Kindness to Mankind; but that such a pestilential Blast, like a mortiferous North-East Wind in some Seasons, should proceed from his Mouth, to the Destruction of another Man's harmless and inoffensive Tree, is what none upon Earth can account for.

Our *Divines*, one or other of them, have publish'd several notable Notions about Miracles, and have laid down good Rules to distinguish *true* from *false* ones; but none of them, as far as I perceive, have taken any Pains to shew the Consistence of *Jesus*'s Miracles to their own Rules and Notions. Mr. *Chandler*, (who as the *Archbishop*[152] says, has rightly slated the Notion of a Miracle) among his Rules of judging by whom Miracles are perform'd, says,[153] *That the Things pretended to be done, are to be such, as that it is consistent with the Perfections of God to interest himself in*; and again, *they must be such as answer to the Character of God as a good and gracious Being*; and again, *It seems reasonable to believe, that whenever the first and best of Beings is pleased to send an extraordinary Messenger with a Revelation of his Will, he will furnish him with such Proofs of his Mission, as may argue, not only the Power of him in whose Name be comes, but his Love to Mankind, and his Inclination to do them good*. I have no Dislike to these Notions of Mr. *Chandler*; but as it is not to be questioned, that he (and the *Archbishop* too) had this Miracle of *Jesus*'s cursing the Figtree, and some others, as of his *boisterous driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*; of *his sending the Devils into the Herd of Swine*; of *his turning Water into Wine for the Use of Men, who had before well drank*, &c. in his View, when he gave forth the foresaid Rules; (for

acute and learned Writers in Theology are supposed to have their Wits about them;) so it is to be hop'd that he or the *Archbishop* will soon publish somewhat to reconcile these Miracles of *Jesus* to their own Notions; tho' I don't expect it before *latter Lammas*.

But after all, it may be questioned, if Infidels should go about it, whether this Work of *Jesus* was miraculous; and whether there was not more of the Craft of Man, than of the Power of God in it; or to use Mr. *Chandler*'s[154] Words, whether it don't *look like the little Tricks and cunning Deceits of Impostors*. St. *Matthew* says, *presently the Figtree withered away*; but this *presently* is an indeterminate Time, and may be understood of a Day, or a Week or two, as well as of the Moment in which the Words were spoken, *Let no Fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever*. St. *Mark* says, *that in the Morning as the Disciples passed by; they saw the Figtree dry'd up from the Roots*, which was at least the Day[155] after the Curse was utter'd, so that there was certainly four and twenty Hours for its withering; and if it is said that the *Tree dry'd up from the Roots*, it does not imply that the Trunk of it perish'd, or was reduc'd to nothing; but only that the green Leaves of the Whole, and of every Part of it, were in a withering Condition: And might not all this be done without a Miracle? What if *Jews* and *Infidels* should say, that *Jesus*, being minded to impose on his Disciples and Followers, took a secret Opportunity beforehand to lay his Carpenter's Ax to the Root of this Tree, and so imperceptibly circumcised it, as that the Leaves did, what they will do, wither in a Night and a Day's Time. God forbid, that I should think, *Jesus* did so; but as to the Possibility of such a Fraud in an Impostor, none can doubt of it.

I am so far from thinking there was any such Fraud

in this supposed Miracle of *Jesus*, that I don't believe it was at all done by him according to the Letter: And for this I have not only a clear and intrinsick Proof from the Story itself; but the Authority of the Fathers. St. *Ambrose*, treating on the Parable of the Figtree in[156] St. *Luke*, intimates, that what St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* write of *Jesus*'s cursing the Figtree, is but[157] Part of the same Parable. And St. *John* of *Jerusalem*[158] says expressly enough, that the three *Evangelists* write of one and the same Figtree, consequently parabolically, and that, what St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* write of it, was no more a literal Transaction, than the Parable in St. *Luke*. Thanks to these holy Fathers for their ridding us of the Belief of the Letter of this Story, which otherwise might have perplex'd us with its Absurdities before urg'd. And to their Opinion I desire it may be added and considered, whether it be not as reasonable in itself to take what the three *Evangelists* write of this Figtree as Part of one Story, as well as, what they write of the *Woman with her Issue of Blood*, and of *Jesus's calling the Devils out of the Madmen*, and of other Miracles which are but several Relations of the same Story, Parable or Miracle, Neither is it any Argument for a literal Transaction of this Miracle, that the *Evangelists* speak of it, as a Thing done: For, as *Origen* says, there are some Things spoken of in the *Evangelists*, as Facts, which were never transacted; so it is of the Nature of Prophecy (and our Saviour in his whole Life prophesied) to speak of Things to come, as if they were already past; because such Prophecies are not to be understood till after their Accomplishment, and then the Reason of the Use of the *præter*, instead of the *future* Tense, in Prophecy, will be visible. But what, in my Opinion, is an absolute Demonstration, that there's no Truth in

the Letter of this Story, is, what our Saviour adds, upon the Disciples wondering at the sudden withering of the Figtree, saying,[159] *that if they had Faith they should not only do what was done to the Figtree; but should say to this Mountain*, (that was near him, I suppose) *be thou removed and cast into the Sea, and it shall be done*. But these Things were never litterally done by them, consequently *Jesus* himself did not litterally curse the Figtree; or the Disciples wanted Faith for the doing the said Miracles, which is an Absurdity to suppose; or *Jesus* talked idly of a Promise to invest them with a Power, they were never to be possess'd of. But of what ill Consequence to Religion, either of these Suppositions is, let the old Objection in *Paschasius Rathertus*[160] speak; which I shall not stay here to urge and revive; but only say at present, that if *Jesus* actually cursed a Figtree, his Disciples ought to have done so too, and to remove Mountains. If we adhere to the Letter in one Case, we must in the other also; but we are only to look to the Mystery in both, or St. *Augustin*[161] will tell us, that *Jesus* utter'd vain, empty and insignificant Words and Promises.

St. *Augustin*, who believes no more of the Letter of this Story, than I do, says, that the Works of *Jesus* are all figurative and of a spiritual Signification, which is so manifest from his Act of cursing the Figtree, as Men must,[162] *whether they will or not* acknowledge it. But he is mistaken: Tho' there might be none in his Time who would question, that this supposed Fact of *Jesus* had a mystical Signification; yet if he had liv'd in our Days, he would have met with *Divines*, who, for all the foresaid Absurdities and their Cogency to drive us to Allegory, do adhere to the Letter only, whether the Truth, Credibility and Reasonableness of it be defensible or not. But then to

do Justice to St. *Augustin*'s Assertion, he would have met with others, who *against their Wills*, interpret this Miracle figuratively, such as Dr. *Hammond* and Dr. *Whitby*, who say, *Jesus* cursed the Figtree by way of Type of the Destruction of the *Jewish* State, which declined and wasted away after the Similitude of this withering Tree. But why then don't these *Commentators* allegorically interpret and apply other Miracles of our Saviour? Because they think the Letter will stand good and abide the Test without an Allegory. And why do they allegorise this Miracle only? Because of the Difficulties and Absurdities of the Letter, which they can't account for. And are these Reasons good? No, certainly: The *Evangelists* should have made the Distinction for them. They should have told us, which Miracles are to be allegoris'd and mystically applied, and which are not; or we are to allegorise all or none at all. And how came these modern Allegorists of this Miracle to apply it as they do, and to make it a mystical Representation of the Ruin of the *Jewish* State? Did they take up this Notion of their own Heads, or did they borrow it of the Fathers? Why in all Probability they took the Hint from the Fathers; wherefore then don't they, what none of them do, cite and acknowledge their Authors for it? Because, like Men of Subtilty, they would be thought to devise it of themselves; for if they had quoted the Fathers for it, the Fathers would have oblig'd them, upon their Authority, to allegorise the rest of *Jesus*'s Miracles, in the way that I have interpreted some of them; but this would not have agreed with their Stomachs for many Reasons. No Thanks then to the aforesaid *Commentators* for their allegorical Application of this Miracle, which they are again to desert, or abide the Consequence of allegorising others also, which for

their Interests and Reputations they will not do. Therefore let them return again to the Letter of this Miracle, and say for it, what is all that is to be said for it, with *Victor Antiochenus*, an Apostatical Writer of the fifth Century,[163] *that when we read this Passage of Scripture concerning the Figtree*, Jesus *cursed, we ought not curiously to enquire whether it was wisely or justly done of* Jesus, *or not; but we ought to contemplate and admire this Miracle, as well as that of* Jesus'*s drowning the Swine, notwithstanding some think it void of the Face of Justice*. Ay, ay, our *Divines* must allegorise all *Jesus*'s Miracles, or betake themselves to this Opinion of *Victor*; which this *Free-thinking* Age will hardly let them quietly rest in. So, supposing our *Divines* to be, what they generally are, still Ministers of the Absurdity of the Letter, I pass to the Consideration of the Authority of the Fathers, and to see, whether we can't learn of them this Parable of the Figtree.

Who or what is meant by the Figtree seems not to be agreed among the Fathers; or, more properly speaking, they are not agreed, all of them to apply it always to one and the same Thing. Some, as[164] *Gregory* the *Great*, say Human Nature or Mankind is typified by the Figtree. Others, as[165] St. *Hilary*, say the *Jewish* Church or State is meant by it. Others, as[166] *Origen* say, it is a Type of the Church of Christ. So do the Fathers seem to be divided in their Opinions; but it is without any Difference or Inconsistency with each other. For as there is, according to the Fathers, Mystery upon Mystery in all the Actions of *Jesus*; so I believe the Figtree here, as a Type, may be properly enough apply'd to the foresaid three Purposes. And if the Fathers had been ask'd their Opinion in this Case, I dare say, they would have said so too. This is certain that

Origen[167] understands it as applicable to the *Jewish* as well as the *Christian* Church. And St. *Augustin*, as Occasion offers itself, takes it in the foresaid three Senses. When they understand it as a Type of all Mankind, they say that the *three Years* of its Unfruitfulness are to be interpreted of the[168] *three grand Periods* of the World; the *one* before the Law of *Moses*; *another* under the Law; and the *third* under the Gospel; at the Conclusion of which *third* Period, as it was an ancient and common Opinion, *Jesus* in Spirit would come to his Figtree of Mankind, and animadvert on them for their Unfruitfulness, not by any Destruction of human Nature, but by a Cessation of its Unfruitful State, which then will wither away, and be turn'd into a fruitful one against the grand Sabbath, or acceptable Year, which is the Year signified in the Parable, *that it is to be let alone to bring forth Fruit in*. They that understand the Figtree as a Type of the *Jewish* State, mean by the *three Years Jesus* came to it, the *three Years* of his preaching among the *Jews*; at the End of which, after *Christ*'s Passion and Resurrection, the *Jewish* State, like the Figtree, withered away, and, for its Unfruitfulness, was rooted up. They, that understand the Figtree as a Figure of the Church of *Christ*, by the *three Years*, mean the apocalyptical *twelve hundred and sixty Days* (that is, three Years and a half) of the Church's barren and unfruitful State in the Wilderness, at the Conclusion of which, the Fathers say, *Jesus* will come again to his Church or Figtree, seeking Fruit on it.

Some perhaps may be ready here to interpose with a Question, and say, how will *Jesus* then come to his Church? I have carefully perused the Fathers upon this Question, and can't find that they mean any more by *Christ*'s second or spiritual Advent, than that clear *Truth*, right *Reason* and divine *Wisdom* (which

are the mystical Names of *Jesus*) will descend upon the Church, on the Clouds of the Law and the Prophets, to the Removal of her unfruitful and unprofitable Errors, and to enable her to bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit, against the grand Sabbath. Neither can any reasonable Man conceive how otherwise[169] *the Lord should come*, (not *with ten thousand of his Saints*, as our Translation has it, but) εν μυριασιν αγιαις αυτου, that is, as *Origen* interprets, *in his holy thousands* of Allegorists ποιησαι κρισεν, *to criticise upon all* the Scripture, and to convince *Ministers of the Letter* of their abominable Errors, and of their horrid Blasphemies spoken, preach'd and printed against the Holy, (Ghost or) Spirit of the Law and Prophets. As to that literal and common Pulpit-Story (with all its Appendages) of *Jesus*'s second Coming on ætherial Clouds, as on a Wool-sack, in his human, tho' glorious and majestick Appearance, for the Resurrection of Mens Bodies, by the Sound of a Trumpet, in the Audience of the Dead, *&c.* it is the most absurd, nonsensical and unphilosophical, (such groundless and worthless Stuff have the *Clergy* sold and preach'd to God's People!) that ever was told against Reason, against prophetick and evangelical Scripture, and against other antient and good Authority. It is no Place here to multiply Testimonies and Arguments to either of these Purposes which my Readers, if they do but attend, will see no Occasion for. But if our *Divines* should think I have put a false Gloss on the Text of St. *Jude* above, I have a Bundle of Arguments and Testimonies to produce in Defence of it, at their Service.

In the Parable of St. *Luke*, it is said, *Lo, these three Years come I seeking Fruit on this Figtree*; as if *Jesus* came annually and successively for *three Years*

together: but according to the Original, it ought to be read, *Lo, it is three Years and I now come*, or, *Lo, the three Years are now past, and I come*. And here it is to be noted, that whether we understand the Figtree, as a Figure of the Church in particular, or of Mankind in general; the mystical Number of *three Years* will terminate about the same Time, against the Evangelical Sabbath, on which the Unfruitfulness of the Church, or of Mankind, according to the Fathers, is to have an End put to it.

And *Jesus*, when he came to the Figtree, *found nothing thereon but Leaves only*: So *Jesus*, when he comes to his Church, will find nothing in her but Leaves only. And what is here meant by Leaves? Let the Fathers, such as[170] St. *Hilary*, St. *John*[171] *of Jerusalem*, and[172] St. *Theophylact* tell us, who by Leaves understand a vain and empty Appearance of Wisdom and good Works, or the Words and Letter of the Scriptures, which are the Leaves of the Oracle, without any Figs of spiritual Interpretations of them. And whether this ben't the Case of the Church at present, our *Divines* are to consider. The Figs that *Jesus* may be supposed to look for at his Coming, are not only the Fruits of the Spirit mention'd by St. *Paul*, but[173] *spiritual Interpretations* of the Scriptures, which St. *Jerome*[174] says are *mystical Figs*; because, as ripe Figs are sweet to the Palate of our Mouths, so are they no less delicious to the Soul of Man.

But *Jesus* is said to be *hungry* after Figs: so will *Jesus* in Spirit *hunger* for the mystical Figs of his Church, that is, as *Origen*[175] rightly interprets, he will earnestly desire, like a Man that is hungry, the Fruits of the Spirit in his Church, which will be as grateful to him as Figs can be to a Man naturally. To understand this Expression of *Jesus*'s *Hunger* literally,

is such a mean Circumstance of Life, that unless it be, what's next to impossible, necessarily introductory to some noble Transaction, its unfit to be remember'd of a *Saint* in History. *Diogenes Laertius* would have disdain'd to mention such a frivolous Circumstance in the Life of a Philosopher as *this* of *Jesus*. But if we understand this *Hunger* in *Jesus* mystically, and figuratively of his Desires of the Fruits of the Spirit in his Church, it is sublime and noble; and the Emblem confessedly proper and instructive.

But *Jesus* is said to come to the Figtree at an unseasonable Time; *For the Time of Figs was not yet*; which Expression has been the Perplexity of *Commentators*, who with all their Wit and Sagacity can't get well over it. I shall not mention here all or any of their pretended Solutions of this Difficulty; but let us see whether we can't easily and at once unlose it. St. *Mark*'s Words are ου γαρ ην καιρος συκων, which are and have been commonly translated, *for the Time of Figs is not yet*. But if we change the *Point* into an *Interrogation*, and read thus, *for was it not the Time of Figs?* the Difficulty vanishes as certainly, as that it is absurd to suppose *Christ* should come to his Figtree and look for Fruit, when he could not reasonably expect any. This my Solution of this Difficulty certainly serves the Purpose of the mystical Interpretation; and if it does not the litteral, I answer, we are not to heed the Letter, which seldom or never has any Sense or Truth in it. But, by the by, it does the litteral too, since there are no Grounds from the Text to think, what has been the common Opinion, that it was about the *Jewish* Passover that *Jesus* came to the Figtree. If this my Solution of the Difficulty don't please, I must say with[176] *Heinsius*, that it must be left as a Knot for

Elias to untie, who, according to the[177] ancient *Jews*, is first to gather Fruits off this mystical Figtree, and present them to the intellectual Taste of Mankind. But, that my Solution is good, will appear by what follows.

And *Jesus* finding Leaves only says, in St. *Matthew*, to the Figtree, *Let no Fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever*; which (with its parallel Place in St. *Mark*) is in my Opinion a false Translation: The Original is, Μηκετι εκ σου καρπος γενηται εις τον αιωνα, and ought to be englished, *not as yet*, or *not until now*, (that I come) *against the* (grand) *Age* (of the Sabbath) has Fruit grown on thee. So that the Miracle of *Jesus* was to make the Figtree of the Church fruitful; and if her preceding unfruitful State, which (in St. *Mark*) *Jesus* is said to curse, or rather to devote to Ruin, wasted away, it was by Consequence.

But what Time of Day was it that *Jesus* came to the Figtree? It was in the *Morning*. And of what Day? That is uncertain as to the Letter, but according to the mystical Extent of the *Three Years*, whether we understand the Figtree as a Type of the Church, or of all Mankind of all Ages, it will be on the *Morning* of the great Sabbath, when, upon the Appearance of the Light of Christ, like the Rising of the Sun, an unfruitful and erroneous Church must needs wither away. And the Disciples on the said *Morning* will, as *Origen*[178] says, with their intellectual Eyes behold her waste with Admiration. And then too, they under Christ *will do what is done to the Figtree*, of the Church, and *remove Mountains* of Antichristian Power, that exalt themselves against him; as the Fathers interpret, and I need not explain.

And what is meant by the Means, which St. *Luke*

speaks of, to make the Figtree of the Church fruitful on the Sabbatical Year; *the Year it is to be let alone to bear Fruit in*? There must be *digging about it*, that is[179] into the Earth of the Letter of the Scriptures, and *dunging* of it, that is calling[180] to Remembrance her Sins and Errors of the Time past, which rationally speaking will make the Church to bring forth good Fruit.

After this Fashion is the rest of the Parable of the Figtree to be allegorized out of the Fathers. St. *Gregory*[181] the *Great* and St. *Augustin*, make these two Stories or Parables, *viz.* of the Figtree, and of the Woman with her *Spirit of Infirmity*, as they are blended together in St. *Luke*, to be Figures of the same Mystery. The *eighteen Years* of the Woman's Infirmity and the *three Years* of the Figtree's Unfruitfulness, they will have to be mystically synchronical. And the Woman's *Incurvity* to the Earth is, they say, significative of the same Thing with the *Unfruitfulness* of the Figtree. And the *Erection* of the Woman on the Sabbath is of the same Import with the *Reservation* of the Tree for Fruitfulness on that Day. And let any one see, if they don't admirally agree, as I have interpreted these two Parables.

Before I dismiss this Story of the Figtree, I can't but adore the Providence of God, that the Miracle has been hitherto placed in the withering away of the Tree. If the Miracle had been a plain Story of a dead and wither'd Tree's being made to bring forth Leaves and Fruit on a sudden; this would have been such a manifestly supernatural Work, and so agreeable to modern Notionists about Miracles, that Mens Thoughts would have been so absorpt in the Consideration of the Letter, as they would never have extended them to the Contemplation of the

Mystery. And our Divines would have made such a Noise, in our Ears of the Excellency and Marvellousness of such a Miracle, as that there would be no bearing of it. But But as the *Evangelists* have in a good Measure suppress'd all mention of the after Fruitfulness of the Tree; and the Story, by Misconstruction, is clog'd with the foresaid Difficulties and Absurdities, we are of Necessity driven to the search after Mystery for good Sense and Truth in it.

And thus have I spoken enough to the Miracle of *Jesus*'s cursing the Figtree, which according to the Letter is a foolish and absurd Story: But the mystical Operation, of which the Letter is a Shadow, will be ravishing, marvellous and stupendous; and not only a Proof of *Christ*'s Power, and Presence in his Church, but a Demonstration of his *Messiahship*, in as much as an infinite Number of Prophecys upon Prophecys, will thereupon be discern'd to be accomplish'd, or the Church can't bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit, that is Spiritual Interpretations of the Scriptures, like ripe Figs. And so I pass to an

8. *Eighth* Miracle of *Jesus*, and that is,[182] "of his healing a Man of an Infirmity, of thirty eight Years Duration, at the Pool of *Bethesda*, that had five Porches, in which lay a great Multitude of impotent Folk, blind, halt, withered, waiting the troubling of the Waters, upon the Descent of an Angel, who gave a Sanative Virtue to them, to the curing of any one, be his Distemper of what kind soever, who first stept down into them."

This whole Story is what our Saviour calls a *Camel* of a monstrous Size for Absurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities, which our *Divines*, and their implicit

Followers of these last Ages, have swallowed without chewing; whilst they have been straining at *Knats* in Theology, and hesitating at frivolous and indifferent Things of the Church, of no Consequence.

As to *Jesus*'s Miracle in this Story, which consisted in his healing a Man, of no body knows what *Infirmity*, there neither is nor can be proved any Thing supernatural in it, or there had been an express Description of the Disease, without which it is impossible to say, there was a miraculous Cure wrought. As far as one may reasonably guess, this Man's *Infirmity* was more *Lazyness* than *Lameness*, and *Jesus* only shamed him out of his pretended Illness, by bidden him to take up his Stool and walk off, and not lie any longer, like a lazy Lubbard and Dissembler, among the Diseased, who were real Objects of Pity and Compassion: Or, if he was no Dissembler, he was only fancyfully sick, and *Jesus* by some proper and seasonable Talk touch'd his Heart, to his Relief; and so, by the Help of his own Imagination, he was cured, and went his Way. This is the *worst* that can be made of this *infirm* Man's Case; and the *best* that can be said of *Jesus*'s Power in the Cure of him, as will appear, by and by, upon Examination into it. But the other Parts of the Story of the healing Virtue of the Waters, upon the Descent of an Angel into them, is not only void of all good Foundation in History, but is a Contradiction to common Sense and Reason, as will be manifest after an Inquiry into the Particulars of it.

St. *John* was the beloved Disciple of our Lord, and I hope he lov'd his Master: or he was worse than an Heathen, who loves those who love him: But this Story, and some others, that are peculiar to his Gospel, such as, of *Jesus's telling the Samaritan Woman*

her Fortune; *of his healing the blind Man with Eye-Salve made of Clay and Spittle*; *Of his turning Water into Wine for the Use of Men, who had before well drank*; and of *his raising Lazarus from the Dead*, are enough to tempt us to think, that he wilfully design'd, either to blast the Reputation of his Master, or to try how far the Credulity of Men who through blind Love were running apace into Christianity, might be imposed on; or he had never related such idle Tales, which, if the *Priesthood*, who should be the philosophical Part of Mankind, had not been amply hired into the Belief of them, would certainly have been rejected with Indignation and Scorn before now.

St. *John* wrote his Gospel many Years after the other *Evangelists*: What then should have been his peculiar Business? Certainly nothing more, than to add some remarkable Passages of Life, to *Jesus*'s Honour, which they had omitted; and to confirm the Truths which they had before reported of him. But St. *John* is so far from doing this, that the Stories, he has particularly added, are not only derogatory to the Honour of *Jesus*, but spoil his Fame for a Worker of Miracles, which the other *Evangelists* would raise him to. By reading the other *Evangelists*, one would think, that *Jesus* was a Healer of all manner of Diseases, however incurable by Art and Nature, and that where-ever he came, all the sick and the maim'd (excepting a few Infidels) were perfectly cured by him. But this Story before us will be like a Demonstration, that *Jesus* was no such Worker of Miracles and Healer of Diseases, as he is commonly believed to have been; and that he wrought not near the Number of Cures, he is supposed to have done, much less any great ones. The best Conception that an impartial Reader of the Gospel can form of *Jesus*,

is, that he was a tolerable good natural *Orator*, and could handsomely harangue the People off hand, and was according to the Philosophy of the Times, a good *Cabalist*; and his Admirers finding him endewed with the Gift of Utterance, which was thought by them more than human, they fancy'd he must have the Gift of healing too, and would have him to exercise it; which he did with Success, upon the Fancies and Imaginations of many, who magnified his divine Power for it. And the Apostles afterwards, to help forward the Credulity and Delusion of the People, amplified his Fame with extravagant Assertions and strange Stories of Miracles, passing the Belief of considerate and wise Men. Whether this Representation of the Case, according to the *Letter* of the Gospels, be false and improbable, let my *Readers* judge by the Story before us, which I come now to dissect, and make a particular Examination into the several Parts of it. Accordingly it is to be observ'd

First, that this Story of the *Pool* of *Bethesda*, abstractedly considered from *Jesus*'s Cure of an infirm Man at it, has no good Foundation in History: It merits no man's Credit, nor will any reasonable Person give any heed to it. St. *John* is the only Author that has made any mention of this Story; and tho' his Authority may be good, and better than another Man's in Relation to the Words and Actions of *Jesus*, in as much as he was most familiar and conversant with him; yet, for foreign Matters, that have no immediate Respect to *Jesus*'s Life, he's no more to be regarded than another *Historian*, who, if he palm upon his *Readers* an improbable Tale of senseless and absurd Circumstances, will have his Authority questioned, and his Story pry'd into by the Rules of *Criticism*, and rejected or received as it is

found worthy of Belief and Credit. If there had been any Truth in this Story before us, I cannot think but *Josephus* or some other *Jewish* Writers, it is so remarkable, peculiar and astonishing an Instance of the Angelical Care and Love to the distressed of *Jerusalem*, would have spoken of it: But I don't find they have; or our modern *Commentators* would have refer'd to them, as to Testimony of the Credibility of the Gospel-History. *Josephus* has professedly written the History of the *Jewish* Nation, in which he seems to omit nothing that makes for the Honour of his Country, or for the Manifestation of the Providence of God over it. He tells us of the Conversation of Angels with the Patriarchs and Prophets, and intermixes Extra-Scriptural Traditions, as he thought them fit to be transmitted to Posterity. How came he then and all other *Jewish* Writers to forget this Story of the Pool of *Bethesda*? I think, we may as well suppose that a Writer of the natural History of *Somersetshire* would neglect to speak of the medicinal Waters of *Bath*, as *Josephus* should omit that Story, which, if true, was a singular Proof of God's distinguishing Care of his peculiar People, or an Angel had never been frequently, as we suppose, sent to this Relief of the Diseased amongst them. Is then St. *John*'s single Authority enough to convey this Story down to us? Some may say, that there are several Prodigies, as well as political Events of antient Times, that, tho' they are reported but by one Historian, meet with Credit; and why may not St. *John*'s Testimony be equal to another Writer's? I grant it; and tho' it is hardly probable but that this Story, if true, before us, must have had the Fortune to be told by others; yet St. *John*'s single Authority shall pass sooner than another Man's, if the Matter be in itself credible and well circumstanc'd. But where it

is blindly imperfectly and with monstrously incredible Circumstances related, like this before us, it ought to be rejected. Which brings me,

Secondly, To ask, what was the true Occasion of the Angel's Descent into this Pool? Was it to wash and bath himself? Or, was it to impart an healing Quality to the Waters for some one diseased Person? The Reason, that I ask the first of these two Questions, is, because some antient Readings of v. 4. say[183] the Angel ελουετο *was washed*, which supposes some bodily Defilement or Heat contracted in the Cælestial Regions, that wanted Refrigeration or Purgaton in these Waters: But how absurd such a Thought is, needs no Proof. To impart then compassionately an healing Power to the Waters for the Benefit of the Diseased was the sole Design of the Angel's Descent into them. And God forbid, that any should philosophically debate the Matter, and enquire how naturally the Waters deriv'd that Virtue from the Angel's corporal Presence. The Thing was providential and miraculous, our *Divines* will say, and so let it pass. But I may fairly ask, why one diseased Person only at a Time reap'd the Benefit? Or why the whole Number of impotent Folks were not at once healed? I have a notable Answer presently to be given to these Questions; but I am afraid beforehand, our *Divines* will not approve of it: Therefore they are to give one of their own, and make the Matter consistent with the Goodness and Wisdom of God; or the said Questions spoil the Credit of the Story, and make an idle and ridiculous Romance of it. And when their Hands are in, to make, what it impossible, a satisfactory Answer to the said Questions; I wish, that, for the sake of *Orthodoxy*, they would determine, whether the Angel descended with his Head or his Heels foremost, or

whether he might not come, swauping upon his Breast into the Waters, like a Goose into a Horse-pond. But,

Thirdly, How often in the Week, the Month or the Year did the Angel vouchsafe his Descent into the Pool? And for how many Ages before *Christ*'s Advent, and why not since and even[184] *now*, was this Gracious and Angelical Favour granted? St. *John* should have been Particular as to these Points, which he could not but know Philosophers would be curious to enquire about. If it was but once in the Year, as St. *Chrysostom*[185] hints, little Thanks are due to him for his Courtesy. One would think sometimes, that his Descent was frequent; or such a Multitude of impotent Folk, variously disorder'd had never attended on it. And again at other Times, one would think that his Descent was seldom, or the Diseased as fast as they came, which could not be faster than the Angel could dabble himself in the Waters, had been charitably dismissed with restor'd Health. Here then is a Defect in St. *John*'s Story, and a *Block*, at which wise and considerate Freethinkers will stumble. But,

Fourthly, How came it to pass, that there was not better Care taken, either by the Providence of God, or of the Civil Magistrates of *Jerusalem* about the Disposal of the Angelical Favour to this or that poor Man, according to his Necessities or Deserts: But that he, who could fortunately catch the Favour, was to have it. Just as he who runs fastest obtains the Prize: So here the Diseased, who was most nimble and watchful of the Angel's Descent, and could first plunge himself into the Pool, carried off the Gift of Sanation. An odd and a merry Way of conferring a divine Mercy. And one would think that the Angels

of God did this for their own Diversion, more than to do good to Mankind. Just as some throw a Bone among a Kennel of Hounds, for the Pleasure of seeing them quarrel for it; or as others cast a Piece of Money among a Company of Boys for the Sport of seeing them scramble for it: So was the Pastime of the Angels here. It was the Opinion of some Heathens, that *Homines sunt Lusus Deorum*, the Gods sport themselves with the Miseries of Mankind; but I never thought, before I considered this Story, that the Angels of the God of the *Jews* did so too. But if they delighted in it, rare sport it was to them, as could be to a *Town-Mobb*. For as the poor and distressed Wretches were not to be supposed to be of such a polite Conversation, as in Complaisance to give place to their betters, or in Compassion to make way for the most miserable; but upon the Sight or Sound of the Angel's Fall into the Pool, would without Respect of Persons strive who should be first: So those who were behind and unlikely to be cured, would like an unciviliz'd *Rabble*, push and press all before them into it. What a Number then, of some hundreds perhaps, of poor Creatures were at once tumbled into the Waters to the Diversion of the City Mob, as well as of God's Angels? And if one arose out of it, with the Cure of his Disease, the rest came forth like drown'd *Rats*, to the Laughter of the foresaid Spectators; and it was well if there was not sometimes more Mischief done, than the healing of *one* could be of Advantage, to those People. Believe then this Part of the Story, let him that can. If any Angel was concern'd in this Work, it was an Angel of *Satan* who delights in Mischief; and if he healed *one* upon such an Occasion, he did it by way of Bait, to draw others into Danger of Life and Limb. But as our *Divines* will not, I suppose, bear the Thoughts of its

being a bad Angel; so I leave them to consider upon our Reasonings, whether it was credible that either a good or a bad Angel was concerned, and desire them to remember to give me a better Reason, why but *one* at a Time was healed.

If any Pool or Cistern of Water about this City of *London* was so blessed with the Descent of an Angel to such an End, the Magistrates, such is their Wisdom, would, if God did not direct, take care of the prudent Disposal of the Mercy to the best Advantage of the Diseased. And if they sold it to an infirm *Lord* or *Merchant*, who could give for it most Money, to be distributed among other Poor and distressed People, would it not be wisely done of them? To suppose they would leave the Angelick Favour to the Struggle of a Multitude, is absurd and incredible. And why then should we think otherwise of the Magistrates of *Jerusalem*? Away then with the Letter of this Story! And if this be not enough to confute it. Then,

Fifthly, Let us consider, to its farther Confutation, who and what were the impotent Folk, that lay in the Porches of *Bethesda*, waiting the Troubling of the Waters. St. *John* says they were *Blind*, *Halt*, *Withered*, and as some Manuscripts[186] have it, *Paraliticks*. And what did any of these there? How could any of them be supposed to be nimble enough of Foot to step down first into the Waters, and carry off the Prize of Sanation, before many others of various Distempers? Tho' the troubled Waters might be of such medicinal Force as to heal a Man of whatsoever Disease he had; yet none of the foresaid Persons for want of good Feet and Eyes could expect the Benefit of it. Tho' the Ears of the Blind might serve him to

hear, when the Angel plump't like a Stone into the Waters, yet through want of Sight for the guidance of his Steps, he would by others be jostled out of the right Way down into them. And if the Lame had good Eyes to discern the Descent of the Angel, yet Feet were all in all to this Purpose: Consequently these impotent Folk, specified by St. *John*, might as well have stay'd at Home, as resorted to *Bethesda* for Cure. I know not what Fools the Diseased of *Jerusalem* of old might be, but if there was such a Prize of Health to be strove for, by the Distempered of this City, I appeal to all Men of common Sense, whether the *Blind*, the *Lame*, the *withered* and *Paralyticks* would offer to put in for it. St. *John* then forgot himself, or else blundered egregiously, or put the Banter upon us, to try how far an absurd Tale would pass upon the World with Credit. There might be, if there was any litteral Sense in the Story, many of other Distempers, but there could be neither *blind*, *halt* nor *withered*, without *such an Absurdity*, as absolutely disparages the Story, blasts the Credit of the *Relator*, or rather brings to mind the Assertion of St. *Ambrose*, that the Letter of the *New* as well as of the *Old Testament* lies abominably. If what I have here said does not overthrow the Letter of this Story; Then what I have,

Sixthly, To add, will do it more effectually, and that is, of the *certain Man, that had an Infirmity thirty and eight Years*, and lay at this Pool for an Opportunity to be cured of it. Tho' these *thirty* and *eight* Years are, in our *English* Translation prædicated of this Man's Infirmity, yet more truly, according to the Original, are they spoken of the Time he lay there? and the Fathers so understood St. *John*'s Words. What this Man's Infirmity was, we are uncertain: For ασθενεια *Weakness* or *Infirmity* is a general Name of all

Distempers, and may be equally apply'd to one as well as to another: Whereupon, tho' we can't certainly say from this Man's Infirmity, that he was a Fool to lay there so long, expecting that Cure, which it was impossible for him to obtain; yet what he says to our Saviour, *I have no Man, when the Waters are troubled to put me into the Pool, but while I am coming another steppeth down before me*, does imply his Folly sufficiently, or rather the Incredibility of the whole Story. What then did this *infirm* Man at this Pool, if he had neither Legs of his own good enough, nor a Friend to assist him, in the Attainment of Sanation? Was he not a Fool, if it was possible for any to be so great a one, for his Patience? Would it not have been as wisely done of him to wait, in the Fields so long, the Falling of the Sky, that he might catch Larks? The Fathers say, this Man's *Infirmity* was the *Palsy*; but whether they said so for the Sake of the Mystery, or to expose the Letter, I know not. But that Distemper, after *thirty* and *eight* Years Duration, and Increase; if it was more curable than another at first, had in that time undoubtedly so weakened and render'd him uncapable to struggle with others for this Relief, that it is without Sense and Reason to think he should wait so long for it. Our *Divines*, if they so please, may commend this Man for his Patience, but after a few Years, or rather a few Days Experience, another Man would have been convinc'd of the Folly and Vanity of his Hopes, and returned Home. If he could not put in for this Benefit, with Prospect of Success in his more youthful Days, when the Distemper was young too, much less Reason had he to hope for it in his old Age, after *thirty* and *eight Years* Affliction, unless he dream'd of, what was not to be imagin'd, an Opportunity, without Molestation and Competition, to go off with it. Whatever then

our *Divines* may think of this Man and his Patience, I will not believe there ever was such a Fool; and for this Reason will not suppose St. *John* could literally so romance, unless he meant to bambouzle Mankind into the Belief of the greatest Absurdity. A Man that Lies with a Grace to deceive others, makes his Story so hang together, as to carry the Face and Appearance of Truth along with it; which this of St. *John*, that for many Ages has been swallowed, for the Reason before us, has not. But what is the worst of all against this Story is,

Seventhly, That which follows, and absolutely destroys the Fame and Credit of *Jesus* for a Worker of Miracles. *And* V. 1, 2, 3. *Jesus went up to Jerusalem, where there was by the Sheep-Market, a Pool, called Bethesda, having five Porches, in which lay a great Multitude of impotent Folk, blind, halt, withered.* Why then did not *Jesus* heal them? Here was a rare Opportunity for the Display of his Healing and Almighty Power; and why did he not exercise it, to the Relief of that Multitude of impotent Folk? If he could not cure them, there's an End of his Power of Miracles? and if he would not, it was want of Mercy and Compassion in him. Which way soever we take this Case, it turns to the Dishonour of the Holy *Jesus*. What then was the Reason, that of so great a Multitude of diseased People, *Jesus* exerted his Power, and extended his Mercy, on only *one* poor Paralytick? St. *Augustin*[187] puts this Question and Objection into my Mouth; and tho' neither He nor I start it for the Service of Infidelity, but to make Way for the Mystery, yet I know not why *Infidels* may not make Use of it, till Ministers of the Letter can give a satisfactory Answer and Solution to it.

The Evangelists, *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, tell such

Stories of *Jesus*'s healing Power, as would incline us to think he cured all where-ever he came. He *heal'd*, they say, *all Manner* of Diseases among the People, and they make mention of particular Times and Places, where all the Diseased were healed by him, which Assertions imply, that *Jesus*'s healing Power was most extensive and (excepting to an hard-hearted and unbelieving *Pharisee* now and then) universal; so far that it might be question'd, whether any died, during the Time of his Ministry, the Places where he came: And our *Divines* have so harangued on *Jesus*'s Miracles, as would confirm us in such an Opinion: But this Story in St. *John* confutes and confounds all. St. *John* in no Place of his Gospel talks of *Jesus*'s healing of many, nor of all manner of Diseases, much less of all that were Diseased; which, if it be not like a Contradiction to the other *Evangelists*, is some Diminution of their Authority, and enough to make us suspect, that they stretch'd much in praise of their Master, and said more to his Honour than was strictly true. But this Place before us is a flat Contradiction to them, and *Jesus* is not to be supposed to heal many in any Place, much less all manner of Diseases, or he had never let such a Multitude of poor Wretches pass without the Exercise of his Power and Pity on them. Some good Reason then must be given for *Jesus*'s Conduct here, and such a one as will adjust it to the Reports of the other Evangelists; or *Infidels* will think, that either they romanc'd for the Honour of their Master, or that St. *John* in Spite told this Story to the Degradation of him. I can conceive no better of this Matter according to the Letter.

The *Bishop* of *Litchfield* very remarkably says,[188] *that Jesus where-ever he went, healed all that came to him without Distinction, the impotent, halt, withered*. He

certainly had this Text of St. *John* in his Eye, when he said so, because *Impotent, Halt, Withered*, are only mention'd here, where *Jesus* cured *none* of them: Whereupon if his *Lordship* had made but a marginal Reference to this Text, it would have been the best Jest and Banter, with a Sneer, that ever was put upon *Jesus* and his Power of Miracles: As it is, it's a very good one, and I desire my Readers to take Notice of it, that his Lordship may not lose the Credit and Praise of it. It's for such Circumspection of Thought, Exactness of Expression, and Acuteness of Wit, that I admire that *Prelate*, and must needs say of him, whether he ever be translated to *Canterbury* or *York*, or not, that he's an *arch* Bishop.

But to return and go on. The Conduct of *Jesus*, to all Appearance, is not only blameable, his Power of healing disputable, and his Mercy indefensible, for that he cured but *one* infirm Man out of a Multitude, at *Bethesda*, but,

Eightly, and lastly, it may reasonably be questioned, whether he wrought any Miracle in the healing of this *one* Man. Miracles (to say nothing of the ridiculous Distinction between divine and diabolical ones) are Works done out of the Course of Nature, and beyond the Imitation of human Art or Power. Now whether the Cure of this infirm Man can be brought under this Definition of a Miracle, may be doubted. What this Man's *Infirmity*, which is a general Name for all Distempers, was, we know not. How then can we say he was miraculously cured, unless we knew his Disease to be incurable by Art, which none can affirm? The worst that we know of this Man's Case, is, that it was of a long Continuance, no less than of *eight* and *thirty* Years: And the *Bishop*

of *Litchfield* and others in their florid Harangues of *Jesus*'s Works, make the Cure of such Chronical Diseases to be miraculous: But why so? Many Instances may be given of Infirmities of human Nature, of a long Duration, which in Time, and especially in old Age, wear off. If such Infirmities don't occur to the Memory of our *Divines*, I could put them in Mind of them. And who knows but this was the Case of this impotent Man, whose Infirmity *Jesus* observing to be wearing off, bid him to be gone, and take up his Couch, for he would soon be made whole.

The Fathers indeed call this Man's Infirmity the *Palsy*, which in truth is generally worse than better by Time, and after *thirty* and *eight* Years, must needs be very deplorable, and incurable without a Miracle. But why do they call it the Palsy? They have no Authority for it from the Text, without which, as our litteral *Doctors* will not subscribe to their Opinions in other Cases; so why should I here? In short, the Fathers had never call'd it the *Palsy*, but for the sake of the Mystery; and I am not bound to own *that* to have been the Distemper, any more than it was want of Legs; for that would be making of Miracles for *Jesus*, without Reason and Authority.

If *Jesus* here had healed the whole *Multitude of impotent Folk*; without Enquiry what Numbers there might be of them, I should have believed that he wrought there many great Miracles, in as much as in such a great Multitude, there must needs, in all Probability, be some incurable by Art or Nature: But since he cured only this *one* Man, it affords Matter of Speculation, whether he was the *most* or the *least* diseased amongst them. Our *Divines*, for the sake of the Miracle, may possibly suppose him to be the

most grievously afflicted of any; but *Infidels*, on the other hand, will say, not so: but with their Cavils will urge that this infirm Man was either a Dissembler, whom *Jesus* shamed out of his pretended Disease, or that he was only hippish, and fancyfully more than really distemper'd of a long Time, whom *Jesus* by suitable Exhortations and Admonitions, working upon his Imagination, persuaded into a Belief of his Cure, and bid him to walk off. Certain it is, that *Infidels* will say, it was not a Power of Miracles in *Jesus* which heal'd him, or he had used it then and there for the Sanation of others also.

And thus have I finish'd my Invective against the Letter of this Story; which, if any are offended at, they enjoy, what is the most reasonable Thing in the World, the same Liberty to write for the Letter, which I have used against it: And so I pass to the Consideration of the Opinions and Expositions of the Fathers on this strange Story.

The Fathers, upon whose Authority I form'd my preceding Invective against the Letter, so universally betake themselves to the mystical Interpretation of this Story, that it may be question'd, whether any of them, more than myself, believ'd any Thing at all of the Letter of it. St. *Chrysostom*, who is as much a litteral Interpreter of the Scriptures as any of them, here intirely discards the Letter, saying admirably thus,[189] *what a strange Way and Story of healing the Diseased is here? but what is the Mystery of it? that we are to look to. The Matter could not be so simply and unadvisedly transacted litterally, as it is related. There must be somewhat future here, as by a Type and Figure, signify'd; or the Story, it is so incredible in itself, will give Offence to many.* St. *Chrysostom* was certainly in the right on't; and I wonder, for which no Reason but

want of Liberty can be given, that *Infidels* have not before now, with their Jests and Cavils, ridiculed this Story. St. *Augustin*, to the same Purpose, says,[190] *Can any one believe, that these Waters of Bethesda were wont to be troubled in this Fashion, and that there was not Mystery, and a spiritual Signification in it?* Yes, I could tell St. *Augustin*, that our modern *Divines* seem to believe it, tho' he, if he was now alive, would laugh at them for it. But to come to the profound Mystery signified by this Story, which to use the Words of[191] St. *Augustin*, as God shall enable me, I will now speak to.

Our *English* Version says, *There is at Jerusalem by the Sheep-Market, a Pool*. How our *Translators* came by the Notion of a *Market* here, I can't imagine, since there is nothing to favour it in the Original, which stands thus, επι τη προβατικη κολυμβηθρα: By κολυμβηθρα, the Fathers understand[192] Baptism, or the spiritual *Laver* of Regeneration; and who is that for, but the Flock of Christ, signified by προβατικη? So we have another and clearer Interpretation of these two Words. And as to *Bethesda*, that is a mystical Name of the Church, which according to the Signification of *Bethesda*, is the House of Grace. And if it is said to be at *Jerusalem*, it is not to be understood of the Old *Jerusalem*, but of the *New* and Apocalyptical *Jerusalem*, at the Entrance into which the Flock of Christ will be baptiz'd by the Waters of the Spirit, as in a mystical Laver.

Bethesda is said to have five *Porches*, that is, as the Fathers[193] agree, the five Books of *Moses*, which are as so many Doors of Entrance into the House of Wisdom, or of the Grace of *Christ*.

At these *five Porches* of the five Books of Moses lay *a great Multitude of impotent Folk, blind, halt, withered*. And who are these mystically? The ignorant, erroneous, and unstable in Faith and Principle, as the Fathers often understand them spiritually. And what is the Reason of these their mystical Diseases? Because, as St. *Augustin*[194] and other Fathers say, they rest on the Letter of the Law, which throws them into various Errors, like Diseases, of different Kinds, of which they can't be cured without the Descent of the Spirit, like an Angel, to instruct them mystically to interpret.

With these impotent Folk lay *a certain Man who had an Infirmity*. And who is this infirm Man? Mankind in general, say St. *Cyril*[195] and[196] St. *Augustin*, And what is his Infirmity? The Fathers call it the[197] *Palsy*, because of his Instability, and Unsteadiness in Faith and Principles, which is now the Case of Mankind. St. *John* calls it ασθενειαν *a Weakness*, which being a general Name of all Distempers, we can't guess what might be here the specifical one. But reasonably speaking, according to the Rule of Interpretation, this Man's *Infirmity* is the same with the Woman's *Spirit of Infirmity*, and that is a Weakness at the Spirit of Prophecy, which Mankind, as well as the Woman of the Church, is to be cured of in the Perfection of Time.

And how long did this Man with his Infirmity lay in these Porches of *Bethesda*? *Thirty eight Years*: So has Mankind with his Weakness at the Spirit of Prophecy lay eight and thirty (hundred)[198] Years, reckoning two thousand under the Law, and eighteen hundred since under the Gospel. St. *Augustin*[199] has an ingenious and more mystical way of Computation of these *thirty and eight Years*, which pleases me too, but

possibly some Readers may not so easily apprehend it, unless they are well acquainted with the Mystery of Prophetical Numbers.

And how is Mankind to be cured of his Infirmity at the Spirit of Prophecy? By being instructed, by the Spirit of Truth, who is to come at the Conclusion of the said thirty and eight mystical Years, *to arise and take up his bed and walk*, that is, to raise his Thoughts to the Contemplation of the divine Mysteries of the Law, and to lift up his Bed of the Letter, on which he has hitherto *rested*, into a sublime Sense, and then he will walk uprightly and steadily in the Faith, without wavering like a Paralytick.

And at what Season did *Jesus* come to this infirm Man? It was at a Feast of the *Jews*. *Irenæus*, *Chrysostom*, *Theophylact*, and *Cyril* call it the Feast of Penticost. And the grand Feast of Penticost is, as St. *Cyril*[200] says upon the Place at the Perfection of Time, the Time of the Evangelical Sabbath, and of *Jesus*'s spiritual Advent, which will be a Time of feasting on intellectual and divine Mysteries, of seeing Visions and of dreaming Dreams; consequently at that Time, as the ancient *Jews* and Fathers assert, Mankind will be cured of this Infirmity at the Spirit of Prophecy. And this too is the *certain Season, that the Angel will descend and trouble the Waters*. By Angel is here meant[201] the Spirit of Christ. And by Waters the Fathers understand,[202] the People of all Nations. But how will the Descent of the Spirit of Truth, like an Angel, trouble these Waters, that is, give any Molestations and Disturbance to the People? Is there not a Mistake in the Oracle? If the *Clergy* will be but greater Lovers of Truth than of their Interests; if they, who should be

Teachers of Forbearance of one another in Love, will but keep their Temper, there would be found a mistake in it. But alas!

Lastly, The *Jews*, as is intimated, seem to have been mov'd with Indignation at the Cure of the infirm Man, saying to him, ver. 10. *it is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for thee to carry thy Bed*; which litterally could not be true. The *Jews* were not such precise Observers of the Sabbath; nor *so stupid and foolish*, as St. *Cyril*,[203] says, as to think the taking up and carrying a Stool to be a Breach of it. But mystically, it is to be fear'd, this will be most true, and that the *Clergy*, who would be *Jews* inwardly, and the Circumcision in Spirit, will be bitter Enemies to Man's Exaltation of his Couch of the Letter of the Scriptures on or against the Evangelical Sabbath, and will make it, if possible, an *unlawful* Work; because it will bring to them Shame, Dishonour and Loss of Interests along with it.

After this Manner is every other Circumstance of this Story to be allegorically apply'd out of the Fathers. The Moral or Mystery of the whole, in short, is this, that at the Perfection of Time, signified by the *Sabbath*, the *Pentecost*, the End of *thirty eight Years*, the Spirit of Truth will descend on Mankind, to their Illumination in Prophecy, and to the healing of their *Errors*, call'd *Diseases*; which is admirably represented by the Parable before us, that according to the Letter, has neither Reason nor common Sense in it.

And thus have I spoken to *eight* of the Miracles of *Jesus*; and whether I have not shew'd them, in whole or Part, according to the Proposition before us, to consist of Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities; and whether they are not prophetical

and parabolical Narratives of what will be mysteriously, and more wonderfully done by *Jesus*, I appeal to my *Readers*.

After another Discourse of some other Miracles, I intend to take into Examination the several Stories of *Jesus*'s raising of the Dead as of *Lazarus*, *Jairus*'s Daughter, and the Widow's Son of *Naim*; which reputedly are *Jesus*'s grand Miracles; but, for all the seeming Greatness and Excellency of them, I don't doubt but to give the Letter of these Stories a Toss out of the Creed of a considerate and wise Man; at least show their Insufficiency for the Purpose for which they have been hitherto apply'd. And if I should afterwards, by the Leave and Patience of the *Bishop* of *London*, give my Objection against *Christ*'s Resurrection a Review, and some more Force, then what will become of the Argument of *Christ*'s Power, Authority, and *Messiahship* from his Miracles?

But, besides *Jesus*'s Miracles, I am, as Opportunity serves, to take into Consideration some of the Historical Parts of his Life; and shew them to be no less sensless, absurd and ridiculous than his Miracles.

And why may I not sometimes treat on the Parables of *Jesus*, and show what nonsensical and absurd Things they are, according to the Expositions of our most famous Commentators of these last Ages. *Jesus* was certainly the absolute, and most consummate Perfection of a *Cabalist*, *Mystist*, *Parabolist* and *Enigmatist*; but according to modern Commentaries and Paraphrases, he was the merest Ideot and Blockhead that ever open'd his Mouth, in that sort of Learning, to the Instruction of Mankind. And I am oblig'd a little to speak to the Absurdities of *Christ*'s Doctrine and Parables, because one Article of the

Prosecution against me was for saying, *that any of the Philosophers of the Gentiles*, or *any rational Man* (meaning according to modern Expositions) *would make a better Teacher, than Jesus was*.

What a great deal of Work have I upon my Hands, which, if God spare my Life and Health, I intend to go on with: If what I have already done in it be not acceptable to the *Clergy*, their Way to prevent the Prosecution of this great Undertaking, is to battle me upon what's past. Who knows but they may write, if they would try their Strength, so acutely in Defence of the Letter of *Jesus*'s Miracles already discuss'd, as may effectually stop my Mouth, and prevent my giving them any more Trouble of this Kind? And I suppose I have now gotten an Adversary in the *Bishop* of St. *David*'s, who has already discharg'd one Fool's Bolt at me.

There has nothing been a more common Subject of Declamation among the *Clergy* than the *Reasonableness* of Christianity, which must be understood of the History of *Christ*'s Life and Doctrine, or the Application of the Word *Reasonableness* to the Christian Religion is impertinent. But if I proceed, as I have begun in this Work, I shall shew Christianity, as it is understood, to be the most unreasonable and absurd Story, that ever was told; and our modern Systems of Theology groundless and sensless in almost every Part of them. *Mahometanism*, without Offence be it spoken, is a more *reasonable* Religion than the Christian, upon modern *Schemes* and *Systems*.

If what I here say is offensive to our *Divines*, the *Press* is open for them as well as for myself, and they may, if they can, shew their Resentment of it. Thanks unto

God and our most excellent Civil Government for such a Liberty of the *Press*: A Liberty that will lead and conduct us to the Fountain of Wisdom and Philosophy, which Restraint is a down-right Enemy to. And that this Blessing of Liberty may be continued, for all *Bishop Smallbrook* and Dr. *Roger*'s *Hobbism*, is, I dare say, the Desire of the curious, inquisitive, and philosophical Part of Mankind. If this Liberty should be taken away, what a notable Figure will our *Divines* make from the *Press* and *Pulpit*, declaiming on the Reasonableness, Excellency and Perfection of the Christian Religion, without an Adversary; and telling their Congregations, that all, their bitterest and acutest Enemies can object, is clearly answered!

The *Press*, of late Years, has been productive of so many cogent and persuasive Arguments for Liberty of debate, and the Advocates for this Liberty, in the Judgment of the impartial and considerate, have so far gotten the better of their Adversaries, that I wonder any one can appear in behalf of Persecution. If I was a *Bishop* or *Doctor* in *Divinity*, I shou'd think it a Disgrace to my Station and Education to ask the Assistance of the Civil Authority to protect my Religion: I should judge my self unworthy of the Wages and Emoluments I enjoy'd, for the Preaching and Propagation of the Gospel, if I was unable to give an Answer to any one, that ask'd a Reason of my Faith; Or if I was so Shallow-pated, as to think Heresy and Infidelity punishable by the Civil Magistrate, I should think myself as much oblig'd to confute by *Reason*, as he is to punish by the *Sword*. If the *Bishop* of *London* had taken this Course with me; if he had publish'd a Refutation of my supposed Errors, as well as endeavour'd at a Prosecution of me for them, I had forgiven him the Wrongs and Injuries

done me, and made no repeated Demands of Satisfaction for them.

Christianity is, as I believe, founded on a Rock of Wisdom; and what's more, has an omnipotent and omniscient God on its Side, who can incline the Hearts of Men to believe, and open the Eyes of their Understanding to discern the Truth of it; consequently there can be no Danger in the Attempts of our Adversaries, whether, *Jews*, *Turks* or Domestick *Infidels*, against it. But Persecution implys Weakness and Impotency in God to defend his own Cause; or his Priests would not move for the Help of the Arm of Flesh in Vindication of it. And if, at this Time of Day, after so many Treatises of *Infidels*, and some of them as yet unanswered, against our Religion, this good Cause should be taken out of the Hands of God, and committed to the Care of the Civil Magistrate; if instead of Reason the Clergy should have Recourse to Force, what will By-standers, and even Well-wishers to Christianity say? Nothing less than that *Infidels* had gotten the better of *Christ*'s Ministers, and beaten them at their own Weapons of Reason and Argument.

The two great Pleaders for Persecution, to the Disgrace of themselves and Dishonour of our Religion, that have lately arose are Dr. *Rogers* and the *Bishop* of St. *David*'s. Dr. *Rogers*'s chief Reason against Liberty of Debate, is because, as he says it is pernicious to the Peace and Welfare of the Community, by unsettling the Minds of the People about the Religion established: But here's no consequence, unless it could be proved, that such as the great Mr. *Grounds* and Mr. *Scheme*, have it in their Hearts to raise Mobbs upon the Government, and to beat out the Brains of the *Clergy*. All the

Harm, or rather Good, they aim at, is to exercise the Wits of the *Clergy* with their Doubts and Objections; and if the Passions of our *Ecclesiasticks* are not raised upon it, to the doing of Violence to these *Gentlemen*, the Peace of the Publick will never be disturb'd. As to myself, tho' I have a vast and numerous Party on my Side, no less than all the Fathers and primitive Christians for some Ages; yet as we were peaceable and quiet Subjects of old and passively obedient to the *Emperors* of *Rome*; so we will continue to the Civil Authority of this Nation. We only take the Liberty to awaken the Clergy out of a Lethargy of Dulness and Ignorance; and hope the Civil Magistrate will consider the Goodness and Charity of our Intentions, and guard us against their Insults for it.

The *Bishop* of St. *David*'s[204] says, "It is absurd to assert, that the Liberties of any Nation will allow, with Impunity, a Set of distinguish'd Infidels to insult and treat with the greatest Contempt and Scorn the most sacred and important Truths, that are openly professed, by the whole Body of the People, of whatever Denomination." By a Set of Infidels, I suppose, he means me and the Fathers: And by *treating with Contempt and Scorn the most sacred and important Truths*, he means, our burlesquing, bantering and ridiculing the *Clergy* for their Ministry of the Letter: And for *this* he would, I conceive, have incensed the *Societies* for Reformation of Manners to a Prosecution of me. And if they had not been wiser, and more merciful than their Preacher, I must have gone to Pot. But why should the *Bishop* dislike this way of Writing? Don't he know, that the Fathers of the Church used to jest and scoff at the *Gentiles* and their Priests for their foolish Superititions? Don't he know, that our *Reformers* banter'd and ridicul'd Popery out of Doors, and almost within the Memory

of Man, it was reckon'd but a dull Sermon, that was not well humm'd for its Puns and Jest on the Papists? why then should the *Bishop* be against that way of writing, which was of good Use to the *Reformers*, and first *Christians*? The grand Subject for *Burlesque* and *Banter*, in my Opinion, is *Infidelity*; and that *Bishop*, who can't break two Jests upon *Infidels* for their one upon Christianity, has but a small Share of Wit. The Christian Religion according to the *Bishop*, will abide the Test of calm and sedate Reasoning against it, but can't bear a Jest; O strange!

But to leave these two Contenders for Persecution to the Chastisement of acuter Pens. What I have here pleaded for Liberty is not thro' any Fears of Danger to myself, but for the Love of Truth and Advancement of Christianity, which, without it, can't be defended, propagated and sincerely embraced. And therefore hope, that the Controversy before us, between *Infidels* and *Apostates* will be continued by the Indulgence of the Government, till Truth arises and shines bright to the Dissipation of the Mists of Error and Ignorance; like the Light of the Sun to the Dispersion of the Darkness of the Night. I will by God's Leave, go on to bear my part in the Controversy; And, if it was not more against the Interests than Reason of the *Clergy* to believe me, would again solemnly declare that what I do in it is with a View to the Honour of *Jesus*, our spiritual *Messiah*, to whom be Glory for ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.



A FOURTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

In View of the Present

Controversy between Infidels and Apostates.

Canes qui oblatrant contra Inquisitionem Veritatis. Clem. Alex.

The Third Edition.

By Tho. Woolston, B.D. sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge*.

***LONDON*:**

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[Price One Shilling.]

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

FRANCIS,

Lord Bishop of St. Asaph.

MY LORD,

I f the Convocation *had been sitting, I would have made this Dedication to them, and humbly implored of them, what, for their Love to the Fathers, they would readily have granted, a Recommendation of these my* Discourses *on* Miracles *to the* Clergy: *But being unhappily disappointed of a Session of that* Reverend *and* Learned *Body, for whose wise Debates and orthodox Votes I have such a Veneration, as is not to be express'd in a few Words, I presently turn'd my Thoughts on your* Lordship, *to whom a* Dedication *is due,*

because of your Respect, often declared, for the Authority of the Fathers, which induces me to think, you now approve of the Use I have made of them.

But what I am here to applaud your Lordship *for, is, your* Discourse *call'd* Difficulties and Discouragements, *&c. That admirable Satire against modern Orthodoxy and Persecution! How was I tickled in the Perusal of it! It is plainly the Sense of your Soul, or you had set your Name to it: And if the Temptation of Praise for it, had not been too great to be resisted, I could have wish'd you had always conceal'd your self; and then you had not written against the Grain, an aukward Piece on* Church Power, *like a Retraction, to reingratiate your self with some Ecclesiastical* Noodles, *whom you no more, than, I need to care for.*

I have sometimes wondered, My Lord, *where and when the Great Mr.* Grounds *imbibed his notable Notions about Religion and Liberty; for he suck'd them not in with his Mothers Milk, who, I suppose, train'd him up in the Belief of Christianity: But when I consider'd, that he was once the* Pupil *of Mr.* Hare *at* Cambridge, *my wonder ceas'd. Under your* Lordship*'s Tuition, it seems he laid the Foundation of his distinguish'd Learning and Opinions! His Pupillage will be your immortal Honour! I wonder, none of the Writers against him have as yet celebrated your Praise for it! How does he imitate and resemble his* Tutor *in Principles! I can't say, he surpasses you, since there is such a Freedom of Thought and Expression in your* Difficulties, *&c. so strongly savouring of Infid—ty, that he has not as yet equall'd.*

Upon your Lordship*'s Advancement to a Bishoprick*, Difficultys and Discouragements of the Government in the choice of *not withstanding, I wish'd, without prescribing to the Wisdom a learned Prelate, that the*

great Mr. Grounds, *for the good of the Church too, might be soon consecrated: And I should not have despair'd of it, but that he is a* Gentleman *of real Probity and Conscience, and might possibly boggle at Subscriptions, unless you and Bishop* Hoadly *could help him to some of your* Reserves *and* Distinctions, *wherewith you must be both well Stock'd, to overcome that* Difficulty. *And why should not* Dean Swift *for his Writings, as well as some others, be made a Bishop? I should like to see him one; if the* then *Right Reverend Bishop* Grounds *would not think him, for his* Tale of a Tub, *too loose in the Faith, for his Company*.

Don't, imagine, My Lord, *that I am forming of Schemes for my self to be a Bishop. Tho' these my* Discourses *on* Miracles *are of very great Merit, as well as your Lordship's* Difficulties, *&c. yet you may be assured, I have no such View, when I tell you, that the Honour, the Fathers have exalted me to, of a* Moderator *in this Controversy, sets me above all Ecclesiastical Preferment, excepting the* Arch-Bishoprick *of* Canterbury, *which I'm afraid will be void, before the King is apprised of my singular Worth and Qualifications for it.*

But however, if such excellent Prelates, *as* Grounds, Hoadly, Swift, Hare *and* my self *were at the Head of Ecclesiastical Affairs, what would we do? What should we not do? What would not this free-thinking Age expect from us? Nothing less, than that, according to our Principles, we should endeavour to set Mankind at perfect Liberty, and to lay open the dirty Fences of the Church, call'd Subscriptions, which are not only the Stain of a good Conscience, but the* Discouragements, *your* Lordship *hints at, in the Study of the Scriptures: And if we made a Push for an Act of P——t to turn the* Clergy *to Grass, after King* Henry VIIIth's *Monks and Fryars; where would be the Harm of it? Nay, the*

Advantage to the Publick, as well as to Religion, would be great, if their Revenues were apply'd to the Payment of National Debts; with a Reserve to our selves (*remember*, My Lord) *of large Emoluments out of them, according to our great Merits; otherwise worldly-wise Men will repute us impolitick Fools, which you and Bishop* Hoadly, *I humbly presume, will never endure the Reproach of*.

So, hoping your Lordship will accept of this Dedication to your Praise, in as much Sincerity as it is written, I subscribe myself,

London,
May
14. 1728.

My LORD,
The Admirer of your
Difficultys and
Discouragements,
Thomas Woolston.



A FOURTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.

Now for a *fourth* Discourse on *Jesus*'s Miracles, which, as before, I begin with a Repetition of the three general Heads, at first proposed to be treated on; and they are,

I. To show, that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diseases, which *Jesus* was famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Messiah*; neither are they so much as a good Proof of his divine Authority to found a Religion.

II. To prove that the literal History of many of the Miracles of *Jesus*, as recorded by the *Evangelists*, does

imply Absurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities; consequently they, either in the whole or in part, were never wrought, as it is commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives, of what would be mysteriously, and more wonderfully done by him.

III. To consider what *Jesus* means, when he appeals to his Miracles, as to a Testimony and Witness of his divine Power; and to show that he could not properly and ultimately refer to those he then wrought in the *Flesh*, but to the mystical ones, he would do in the Spirit; of which those wrought in the Flesh are but mere Types and Shadows.

I am upon the second of these Heads, and according to it, have, in my *former Discourses*, taken into examination *eight* of the Miracles of *Jesus*, *viz.* those:

1. Of his driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple.

2. Of his exorcising the *Devils* out of the Mad-men, and sending them into the Herd of Swine.

3. Of his Transfiguration on the Mount.

4. Of his Healing a Woman, that had an Issue of Blood, twelve Years.

5. Of his curing a Woman, that had a Spirit of Infirmity, eighteen Years.

6. Of his telling the *Samaritan* Woman, her fortune of having had five Husbands, and being than an Adulteress with another Man.

7. Of his cursing the Fig-tree for not bearing Fruit out of season. And,

8. Of his healing a Man of an Infirmity at the Pool of *Bethesda*.

Whether it be not manifest, that the Literal and Evangelical Story of these Miracles, from what I have argu'd and reason'd upon them, does not consist of Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, according to the Proposition before us, let my Readers judge; and so I come to the Consideration of

9. A ninth Miracle of *Jesus*, *viz.* that[205] of his giving sight to a Man who was born blind, by the means of Eve-salve, made of Dirt and Spittle.

Blindness, as far as one may guess by the Evangelical History, was the Distemper that *Jesus* frequently exercis'd his Power on: And there is no doubt to be made, but he heal'd many of one Weakness, Defect and Imperfection, or other in their Eyes, but whether he wrought any Miracle upon any he is supposed to have cured, is uncertain. There are, as it's notorious, many kinds of Blindness, that are incurable by Art or Nature: and there are other kinds of it, that Nature and Art will relieve a Man in. But whether *Jesus* used his healing Power against the former, as well as the latter sort of Blindness, is more than can be affirm'd, or at least proved by our *Divines*. And unless we knew of a certainty, that the sore or blind Eyes, *Jesus* cured, were absolutely out of the reach of Art and Nature; *Infidels* will imagine, and suggest, that he was only Master of a good Ointment for sore Eyes, and being successful in the use of it, ignorant People would needs think, he wrought Miracles.

The World is often bless'd with excellent *Oculists*, who thro' Study and Practice have attain'd to wonderful Skill in Eye-Maladies, which, tho' they are of various sorts, yet, by Custom of Speech all pass

under the general Name of *Blindness*. And sometimes we hear of famous *Chance-Doctors*, like *Jesus*, who by a Gift of God, Nature, or Fortune, without any Skill in the Structure of the Eyes, have been very successful in the Cure of one Distemper or other incident to them: Such was Sir *William Read*, who, tho' no Scholar, nor of acquir'd Abilities in *Physick* and *Surgery*, yet cured his Thousands of sore or blind Eyes; and many of them too to the surprise and astonishment of profess'd *Surgeons* and *Physicians*. Whether He, or *Jesus*, cured the greater number of Blindness may be question'd. To please our *Divines*, it shall be granted that *Jesus* cured the greater Numbers; but that he cured worse or more difficult Distempers in the Eyes, can't be proved. Sir *William* indeed met with many Cases of blind and sore Eyes, that were out of the reach of his Power; and so did *Jesus* too, or he had never let great Multitudes of the blind, and otherwise distemper'd People, go unheal'd by him. Our *Divines* will here say, that it was never want of Power in *Jesus*, but want of Faith in the diseased, if he did not heal them; but in other *Surgeons* and *Physicians*, it is confessedly their own Insufficiency: To which I have only this Answer, that our *Physicians* and *Surgeons* are to be commended for their Ingenuity, to impute it to their own Defect of Power, and not to lay the Blame upon their Patients, when they can't cure them: And it is luckly for us Christians, that we have *this Salvo* for the Credit of *Jesus*'s miraculously healing Power, that it was not fit, he should exert it against Unbelief; otherwise reasonably speaking, He with Sir *William Read*, *Greatrex*, *Vespasian*, our former *Kings* of *England*, and *Seventh-Sons*, must have pass'd but for a *Chance-Doctor*.

But to come to the particular Consideration of the

Miracle before us. *Jesus* restored, it seems, a blind Man to his Eye-sight, by the use of a peculiar Ointment, and washing of his Eyes, as directed, in the Pool of *Siloam*. Where lies the Miracle? I can't see it; but hope our *Divines* will take their opportunity to point it out to me. Our *Surgeons*, with their Ointments and Washings can cure sore and blind Eyes of one sort or other; and *Jesus* did no more here; and yet he must be reckon'd a Worker of Miracles; and they but artificial Operators: where's the Sense and Reason of this difference between them? If Mr. *Moor*, the *Apothecary*, for the notable Cures he performs, by the means of his Medicines, should write himself, and be accounted by his Admirers, a *Miracle-worker*; he and they would be but laugh'd at for it: And yet *Jesus* for his curing the sore Eyes of a poor Man with an Ointment, must be had in veneration for a divine and miraculous Operator, as much as if by the breath of his Mouth he had removed an huge Mountain!

A Miracle, if I mistake not the Notion of our *Divines* about it, is a supernatural Event, or a Work out of the Power of Nature or Art to effect. And when it is spoken of the Cure of a Disease, as of Blindness or Lameness, it ought to be so represented, as that skilful and experienced *Surgeons* and *Physicians*, who can do strange and surprizing Cures by Art, may give it upon their judgment, that no Skill of Man could reach that Operation; but that it ought to pass for the Work of a divine and almighty Hand and Power. But there is no such care taken in the Description of any of the Diseases, which *Jesus* cured; much less of this before us; against the miraculousness of which, consequently, there are these two Exceptions to be made:

First, that we know nothing of the Nature of this poor Man's Blindness; nor what was the defect of his Eyes; nor whether it was curable by Art or not: Without which Knowledge, it is impossible and unreasonable to assert, that there was a Miracle wrought in the Cure of him. If his blindness or weakness of Eye-sight was curable by human means, and Jesus did use those means, there's an end of the Miracle. If the *Evangelist* had given us an accurate Description of the Condition of this Man's Eyes before Cure, we could have judg'd better: But this is their constant neglect in all the Distempers *Jesus* heal'd, and is enough to induce us to doubt of his miraculous Power. There are, as I have said, some sorts of sore or blind Eyes curable by Art, as Experience does testify; and there are others incurable, as *Physicians* and *Patients* do lament. Of which sort this Man's was, we know not. The worst that we know of his Case, is, that he was blind from his Birth, or Infancy, which might be: and yet Time, Nature and Art, may give relief to him. As a Man advances in Years, the diseases of Childhood and Youth wear off. What we call the *King's-Evil*, or an Inflammation in the Eyes, in time will abate of its Malignity. Nature will not only by degrees work the Cure it-self, but the seasonable help of a good *Oculist* will soon expedite it, tho' in time of Infancy he could be of no use. And who knows but this might be the Case of this blind Man, whose Cure *Jesus* by his Art did only hasten and help forward. However, there are Grounds enough to suspect, that it was not divine Power which heal'd this Man, or *Jesus* had never prepared and order'd an *Ointment* and *Wash* for him.

Should our *Divines* suppose or describe, for the *Evangelist*, a state of Blindness in this Man, incurable by Art; that would be begging the Question, which no Unbeliever will grant. But to please them, I will

yield, without Enquiry into the Nature of this Man's Blindness, that, if *Jesus* had used no Medicines; if with only a word of his Mouth he had cured the Man, and he had instantaneously recover'd, as the Word was spoken; here would have been a real and great Miracle, let the Blindness or Imperfection of the Man's Sight before, be of what kind or degree soever. But *Jesus*'s use of Washings and Ointments absolutely spoils and destroys the Credit of the Miracle, and we ought by no means to ascribe *that* to the immediate Hand and Power of God, which *Medicines* and *Balsams* are apply'd to the Effect of. And this brings me to the

Second Exception against the miraculousness of the Cure of this blind Man, which is, that *Jesus* used human means for the Cure of him; which means, whether they were at all proper and effectual in themselves, do affect the Credit of the Miracle, and give occasion of suspicion, that it was Art and not divine Power that heal'd him, or *Jesus*, for his Honour, had never had recourse to the use of them. And what were those Means, or that Medicine, which *Jesus* made use of? Why, "He spit upon the Ground, and made a Balsam of Dirt and Spittle, and anointed the poor Man's Eyes with it, and he recover'd." A strange and odd sort of an Ointment, that I believe was never used before, nor since, for sore and blind Eyes! I am not Student enough in *Physick* and *Surgery* to account for the natural and rational use of this Balsam; but wish that skilful Professors of those Sciences would help me out at this difficulty. If they could rationally account for the use of this Eye-salve, tho' it was by supposing, that Jesus imperceptibly had in his Mouth a proper unctuous and balsamick Substance, which he dissolv'd into Spittle, they

would do great service to a certain Cause; and I wonder none of them, whether well or ill affected to Religion, have as yet bent their Thoughts to it.

In the Practice of *Physick* and *Surgery*, there are sometimes very odd and unaccountable Medicaments made use of; and now-and-then very whimsical and seemingly ridiculous ones, by old Women, to good Purpose: But none of them are to be compared to *Jesus*'s Balsam for sore Eyes. I have heard of a merry *Mountebank* of Distinction, whose catholick Medicine was *Hasty-Pudding*, which indeed is a notable Remedy against the *Esuriency* of the Stomach, that the Poor often labour under. But *Jesus*'s Eye-Salve, for absurdity, whim, and incongruity, was never equall'd, either in jest or in earnest, by any *Quack-Doctor*. Whether *Infidels* think of this Ointment of the Holy *Jesus* with a smile; or reflect on it with disdain, I can't guess. As to myself, I should think with St. *Chrysostom*[206], that this Eye-Salve of *Jesus* would sooner put a Man's Eyes out, than restore a blind one to his Sight. And I believe that our *Divines*, for the Credit of the Miracle, and our *Surgeons*, for the Honour of their Science, will agree, that it could not be naturally operative and effective of the Cure of the blind Man.

What then was the Reason of *Jesus*'s using this strange Eye-Salve; when, for the sake of the Miracle, and for the honour of his own Power, he should have cured the Man with a word speaking? This is a Question and Objection in St. *Cyril*[207] against Ministers of the Letter, who are obliged to give an Answer to it, that will consist with the Wisdom and Power of *Jesus*, otherwise they must give up the Miracle or make him a vain, insignificant and trifling Agent. St. *Cyril*, of whose mind I am, says[208] that

the Reason of the use of this Balsam made of Dirt and Spittle is to be fetch'd from the Mystery. But, in as much as our *Divines* will never agree to that, which would be of ill Consequence to their Ministry, they must give a good Reason of their own, which I despair of seeing, that will comport with the Letter.

St. *Irenæus* too, says[209], that the *Clay and Spittle* was of no service to the Cure of the blind Man; and yet *Jesus* did not use it *in vain*. Is not this an Inconsistency? How will our *Divines* adjust it? With *Irenæus*, I am sure they'll not mystically solve the Difficulty; therefore if they don't provide another Solution of it to satisfaction; either their Ministry of the Letter, or the Reputation of *Jesus*, and this Miracle must suffer for it.

I am puzzled to think, how our *Divines* will extricate themselves out of this Strait, and account for the use of this Eye-Salve, without any Diminution of the Miracle. Surely, they will not say that *Jesus* used this sensless and insignificant Ointment to put a *Slur* upon the Practice of *Physick* and *Surgery*, as if other Medicines were of no more avail than his *Dirt* and *Spittle*. They have more wit than to say so; least it incense a noble and most useful Profession, not so much against themselves, as against *Jesus*, and provoke them to a nicer and stricter Enquiry, than I can make into his Miracles, the Diseases he cured, and his manner of Operation; and to infer from thence, that he could be no miraculous Healer of Diseases who used Medicines; nor his *Evangelists* orthodox at Theology, who were so inexpert at Anatomy and the Description of bodily Distempers. This might be of bad Consequence to Religion: And yet I wonder that none of them, who may be

supposed a little disaffected to Christianity, have taken the Hint from this pretended Miracle before us, and some others, to endeavour at a Proof of *Jesus*'s being little better than a *Quack-Doctor*.

If I was, what I am not, an *Infidel*, I should think, from the Letter of this Story, that *Jesus* was a *juggling Impostor*, who would pass for a miraculous Healer of Diseases, tho' he used underhand, proper Medicines. The *Clay and the Spittle* he made an open shew of, as what, to Admiration, he would cure the blind Man with; but in reserve he had a more sanative Balsam, that he subtilly slip't in the room of the Clay, and repeatedly to good purpose anointed the Man's Eyes with it. But as the Authority of the Fathers, and their mystical Interpretation of this Story is alone my safe-guard against such an ill opinion of *Jesus*; so I would now gladly know upon what Bottom the Faith of our *Divines* can stand, as to this Miracle, and *Jesus*'s divine Power in it.

I have perused some of our *Commentators* on the Place, and don't perceive that they hesitate at this strange Eye-Salve; nor make any Questions about the pertinent or impertinent Use of it. Whether it is, that they sleep over the Story, or are aware of greater Difficultys in it, than can be easily surmounted, and therefore dare not touch on't, I know not. But now that we enjoy Liberty of debate, which will make us Philosophers, and I have taken the Freedom to make a stricter Scrutiny than ordinary into *Jesus*'s Miracles, and to consider what Absurditys, their Stories, and *this* in particular, are clog'd with; it is incumbent on our *Divines* to answer solidly these Questions, *viz.* What was the Reason of *Jesus*'s Use of this Eye-Salve made of Clay and Spittle? Whether, if it was of service to the Cure of the blind Man, it does not

destroy the Miracle? And if it had no effect in the Cure of him, whether *Jesus* was not a *vain* and *trifling* Operator, making use of insignificant and impertinent Medicines to the Diminution of his divine Power? There Questions are not ludicrous, but *calm and sedate Reasoning*, which *Bishop Smalbroke*[210] does not disapprove of. Therefore a grave, rational, and substantial Answer is expected to them, such as will be a Vindication of the Wisdom and Power of *Jesus*, without any Diminution of the Miracle.

Should our *Divines* say, that this Matter was an Act of unsearchable Wisdom and must be left to the Will of our Saviour, and not curiously pry'd into, any more than some other Dispensations of Providence, that are past finding out: This Answer, which I believe to be the best, that can be given, will not do here. The Miracles of *Jesus* are, as our *Divines* own, Appeals to our Reason and Senses for his Authority; and by our Reason and Senses they are to be try'd, condemn'd or approved of. If they will not abide the test of Reason and Sense, they are to be rejected, and *Jesus*'s Authority along with them. Therefore a more close, pertinent and serious Answer is to be given to the said Questions; which as I believe to be impossible, consistently with the Letter; so our *Divines* must of necessity go along with me to the Fathers for a mystical and allegorical Interpretation of the Story of this Eye-Salve; or the Miracle will fall to the Ground, and *Jesus*'s divine Power be in great danger with it.

St. *Cyril*, (who is one of *Bishop Smalbroke*'s Greek Commentators, that should strictly adhere to the Letter) signifies, as I before observ'd, that *Jesus*'s Use of this Clay and Spittle would be an Absurdity, if it was not to be accounted for, from the Mystery.

Eusebius Gallicanus, treating on this Miracle, says[211]; "that our Saviour apparently manifests that his Miracles are of a spiritual and mystical Signification, because in the Work of them, he does somewhat or other, that literally has no Sense nor Reason in it. As for Instance, in the Cure of this blind Man, what occasion was there for *Clay and Spittle* to anoint his Eyes, if it was not of a mystical meaning, when with a Word of his Mouth, *Jesus* could have cured him? Let us then set aside the Letter of the Story, and Search for the Mystery, and consider who is meant by this Blind Man, *&c.*"

Origen too, upon occasion of this Miracle, and its Absurdity according to the Letter, says[212]; "that whatever *Jesus* did in the Flesh was but a Type and Figure of what he would do in Spirit, as is apparent from the Miracle of his curing a blind Man, which nobody knows why it was so done, if it be not to be understood of a mystical Ointment to open the Eyes of the blind in Understanding."

And who then is this blind Man mystically? St. *Augustin*[213], St. *Jerome*[214], *Eusebius Gallicanus*[215], St. *Theophilus* of *Antioch*[216], *Origen*[217], St. *Cyril* of *Alexandria*[218], and St. *Theophylact*[219], (Four of them, *Bishop Smalbroke*'s Greek and literal Commentators!) say, this *blind Man* is a Type of Mankind of all Nations, who in the Perfection of Time signified by the Sabbath[220] in the Story, is to be cured of this Blindness in Understanding.

And what is Mankind's Blindness here signified? St. *Augustin*[221], St. *Cyril*[222] and St. *Theophylact*[223], say, it is Ignorance, Error and Infidelity, or the want of the intellectual Sight and Knowledge of God and

his Providence. *Origen*[224], St. *John* of *Jerusalem*[225], and St. *Theophylact*[226], (Still *Bishop Smalbroke*'s literal and Greek Commentators!) tell us the Reason of this spiritual Blindness of Mankind, that is, because they adhere to the Letter of the Scriptures.

And how will *Jesus*, or right *Reason* and *Truth*, which are his mystical Names, cure Mankind of this his spiritual Blindness? By his mystical *Spittle* temper'd with mystical *Dirt*. And how shall we do to understand this mystical Ointment, so as to make it a proper Medicine for Mankind's spiritual Blindness? St. *Theophilus* of *Antioch*[227], has an allegorical Interpretation of this *Clay* and *Spittle* of our Lord; but as it is hard to apprehend his meaning, I shall not here insist on it. *Origen* says[228], that the anointing of the blind Man's Eyes with *Spittle*, is to be understood of the Unction of the *Spirit* of Christ. But this does not give us rightly to understand the Metaphor and Figure. St. *John* of *Jerusalem* says, that by the *Clay* and *Spittle* is meant[229] *perfect Doctrine*, which in Truth may open the Eyes of Mens Understanding: But what is *perfect Doctrine*? Why, to help the Fathers out here, without departing from their Opinions, by the *Spittle* of Jesus must be understood the *Water* of the Spirit instill'd into the *Earth* of the Letter of the Scriptures, which temper'd together, does, in the Judgment of them all, make *perfect Doctrine* to the opening of the Eyes of our Understanding in the Knowledge of the Providence of God of all Ages; which Knowledge, Light, Sight, or Illumination, Mankind has hitherto wanted.

St. *Irenæus*[230], gives an excellent and mystical Reason, by himself, for the use of this Ointment of *Clay* and *Spittle*, to the Cure of this blind Man, which

I shall not stay to illustrate, but only have cited it for the Meditation of the Learned and Curious.

The Story of the blind Man, as St. *John* has related it, is long, and would take up more time, than I have to spare at present, to go thro' all the Parts of it. What I have done at present is enough to awaken others to the Consideration, not only of the Absurdities of the Letter, but of the mystical Interpretation of the rest.

The Miracle, which consisted literally in the Cure of a blind Man by the use of an Ointment made of *Dirt* and *Spittle*, is absurd, sensless and unaccountable; but in the Mystery, there is Wisdom and Reason. And the Cure of Mankind of the Blindness of his Understanding, by the *Spirit*'s being temper'd with the *Letter* of the Scriptures, which is the mystical *Eye-Salve*, will not only be a most stupendous Miracle, but a Proof of *Jesus*'s *Messiahship* beyond all contradiction, in as much as by such an opening of the Eyes of our Understandings, which have been hitherto dark, we shall see, how he is the Accomplishment of the Law and the Prophets. And so I pass to a

10. Tenth Miracle of Jesus, *viz.*[231] *That of his turning Water into Wine, at a Marriage in* Cana *of* Galilee. This is call'd the beginning of *Jesus*'s Miracles; but whether it is to be understood of the *First* of his whole Life, or of the *First* that he wrought in *Cana* of *Galilee*, is not agreed amongst *Divines*. I shall not enter into the Dispute, which as it is of no Consequence to my Cause in hand; so I shall pass it by, and not urge any Arguments for or against either side of it.

Tho' I would not for the World be so impious and

profane as to believe, what is contain'd and imply'd in the Letter of this Story; yet I am still too grave to handle it as ludicrously as I ought; and it is now against the grain, that I write so freely, as I shall against it, being unwilling, not only to put the *Clergy* out of all Temper, but, to give *Scoffers* and *Infidels* so great an Advantage against their Ministry of the Letter. Some may wonder that I, who have gone so far in the ludicrous display of the gross Absurdities of some other Miracles, should boggle at this. But to be ingenuous, and speak the Truth sincerely, I am still a Christian (for all what the *Bishop* of St. *David*'s, [232] *Archdeacon Stubbs*, and others would make of me) upon the Principles of the Fathers, and have a greater Veneration for the Person of the Holy *Jesus*, than to be forward to make such sport with him, his Mother, and his Disciples, as this Story affords Scope for. And if it was not for the necessity of turning the *Clergy*'s Heads to the Consideration of Mysteries; this Miracle should have been pass'd by in silence.

There were some antiently, whom St. *Chrysostom*[233] writes of, whether *Jews*, *Gentiles*, or *Hereticks*, I know not, who took great offence at the Story of this Wedding, accounting it, from what is related in St. *John*, as a riotous Feast, and that *Jesus* and his Mother, and his Disciples, not only bore a part in the Revellings, but were most to blame for them, or he should not have countenanced them with his Presence, much less promoted them, by the Change of a large quantity of Water into Wine for the use of a Company, who were already *drunk* with it. But I, with St. *Chrysostom*, am inclined to believe, that, if *Jesus* did grace this Wedding with his Presence, there was no Excess encouraged, or so much as suffer'd at it. If he did accept of the Invitation of the Bridegroom, it was for an Opportunity, not so much

to turn *Water* into *Wine*, as to make a proper Discourse to the People of conjugal Duties; and, as he was a Searcher of the Hearts, secretly to admonish the Married of the Sin and Mischief of Adultery; tho' we read not of a seasonable and good Word spoken at it.

And the Empress *Eudocia*, a nursing Mother of the Church, has given us a Poetical, and I hope a fictitious Description of this Wedding. She makes a sumptuous and voluptuous Feast of it; and writes[234] of *Musick* and *Dancing* in abundance, enough to make us think of such Mirth and Pastime here, as was unbecoming of a Company of Saints to be present at. Whether it was, that this *Empress*, being only accustom'd to the Excesses of a Court, could form no meaner Conceptions of a Country Wedding; or whether she had any extra-scriptural Authority for what she writ, I know not: But I believe, that, if *Jesus* was at all at a Marriage-Feast, the whole was conducted with Decency, Order, and Sobriety; and if he there wrought any Miracle, it was to manifest his Glory, to the Conversion of some, and Confirmation of the Faith of others.

And our *Translators* of the *Bible* too have given occasion to suspect somewhat of Excess at this Wedding; or they need not have made the Waterpots to hold two or three Firkins apiece. If I had been the Translator, they should not have held above two or three *Pints* apiece, which Measure is as agreeable to the Original as *Firkin*; neither can I imagine, that *Jesus*, if he did convert Water into Wine, would do it in so large a Measure, for fear of an intemperate abuse of it, but only gave the Company a cast of his miraculous Power, and a little Taste of his Love and Good-will to them.

Such are the Conceptions, that, to the Honour of *Jesus*, I am willing to form of this *Wedding*; and wish that the Letter of the Story did suggest no worse Thoughts of it to us. I should be pleas'd, if no *Infidel* really could, what I, but for the sake of the Mystery most unwillingly should, write any ludicrous Descants on it. But if this Story had been related of *Apollonius Tyranæus*, as it is of our *Jesus*, I would have ridicul'd and satiriz'd it to the utmost of my Power, and have render'd him and his Disciples of all Nations, as contemptible as I could, for the Belief of it; and I don't doubt, but our Christian *Priests* would have given me ample Praises and Commendations for so doing. It is said of *Apollonius*, that for the Entertainment of his Friends, he commanded variety of nice Dishes of Meat, together with Bowls of choicest Wines, all on a sudden to descend upon his Table and range themselves in good Order. Whether there was any Truth in this Miracle of *Apollonius*, is not the Question; but Mr. *Chandler*[235] could see a Fault in it, (tho' none in *Jesus*'s Wine at this Wedding) as if it was done for the Pleasure of luxurious Appetites, tho' we read of no Intemperance at it, which can't be said of the *Wedding-Feast* before us. Our *Divines* I suppose, no more than myself, believe any thing of the said Miracle in *Apollonius*; but, if it was really wrought, I fancy, I could have lampoon'd him for it, and would have made it a diabolical Work, like that, as Fables go, of the Feastings of *Wizards* and *Witches*; and our *Divines* (passing by *Jesus*'s *Wine* here) would readily, as they are Believers of the Storys of Witchcraft, have struck in with me.

But setting aside that miraculous Story of *Apollonius*, which has but *one* Voucher; the Case before us is *Jesus*'s *turning Water into Wine* for the use of Men,

who had before *well drank*. How shall I force Nature and Faith to ridicule this Story? How shall I lay aside that profound Veneration for the Holy *Jesus*, which Conversation with the Fathers, more than the Prejudice of Education has begotten in me, and ludicrously here treat him and his Miracle too, as is incumbent upon me, to make way for the Mystery? In short, I can't do it, in my own Name; but having met with a satirical Invective of a supposed Jewish *Rabbi* to this purpose, I here publish it, that our *Clergy*, as well as myself, may think of an Answer to it, and so prevent that Mischief it may do by being handed about among *Jews* and *Infidels*, in Manuscript. It is as follows;

> "You Christians pay Adoration to *Jesus*, whom you believe to be a divine Author of Religion, sent of God for the Instruction, Reformation and Salvation of Mankind, and what induces you to this Belief of him, is, (besides some obscure Prophecies, which you can't agree upon, and which neither your selves, nor any body else understands the Application of) the History of his Miracles: But I wonder, you should have a good opinion of him for his Miracles, which, if he wrought no better than what are recorded of him, by your *Evangelists*, are, if duly consider'd, enough to alienate your Hearts from him. I can't spare time now to examine into all of them, but according to the cursory Observation I have made on them, there is not

one so well circumstanced, as to merit a considerate Man's belief, that it was the Work of an omnipotent, all-wise, just and good Agent. Some of them are absurd Tales, others foolish Facts, others unjust Actions, others ludicrous Pranks, others jugling Tricks, others magical Enchantments; and if many of them had been better and greater Operations than they are, and of a more useful and stupendous Nature than they seem to be; yet the first Miracle that he wrought, *viz.* that of his *turning Water into Wine* at an extravagant and voluptuous Wedding at *Cana* of *Galilee*, is enough to turn our Stomachs against all the rest. It is in itself enough to beget in us an ill opinion of *Jesus*, and to prepossess us with an aversion to his Religion, without farther Examination into it. It is enough to make us suspect his other Miracles, of what Name soever, to be of a base, magical, and diabolical Extraction; or he had never set up for a divine worker of Miracles with so ill a grace. Would any sober, grave, serious and divine Person, as you Christians suppose *Jesus* to have been, have vouchsafed his Presence at a Wedding; where such Levities, Diversions and Excesses (in our Nation of the *Jews*, as well as in all others) were indulg'd on such

Occasions, as were not fit to be seen, much less countenanc'd by the *Saint*, you would make of him. If your *Jesus*, his Mother, and his Disciples had not been merry Folks in themselves, they would have declined the Invitation of the *Bridegroom*; nay, it they had been at all graver and more serious People than ordinary, no Invitation had been given to such *Spoil-Sports*: But boon Companions they were, and of comical Conversation, or there had been at a Wedding no Room for them. You Christians may fancy, what you please, of *Jesus* and his Mother's Saintship; but the very Text of the Story implies, they were Lovers of good Fellowship and Excess too, upon occasion; or he had never, upon her Intimation, turn'd so large a quantity of Water into Wine, after all or most of the Company were far gone with it. You may suppose, if you please, that all were sober, and none intoxicated, and that the Want of Wine proceeded from the abundance of Company, rather than excess in drinking; but why then did *John* the *Evangelist* use the word μεθυσθασι, which implies, they were more than half Seas over? And if *Jesus* and his Mother had not both a mind to *top* them up; the one would not have requested, nor the other have granted a Miracle to that

purpose. Whether *Jesus* and his Mother themselves were at all *cut*, as were others of the Company, is not so certain. She might be an abstemious Dame for ought we know; tho' if old Stories are true of her familiarity with a *Soldier*, of whom came her *chara Deûm Soboles*, in all probability she would take a *Dram* and a *Bottle* too. But it looks as if *Jesus* himself was a little *in* for't, or he had never spoke so waspishly and snappishly to his Mother, saying, *Woman, what have I to do with thee*? *mine Hour is not yet come*: which was very unbecoming of a dutiful Son, who, excepting when he ran away from his Parents, and put them to[236] *Sorrow* and *Trouble* to look him up, was, and is still in Heaven, say the *Roman Catholicks* a most obedient Child. You modern Christians may put what Construction you can upon the words above of *Jesus* to his Mother, to salve his Credit; but the Fathers of your Church[237] confess them to be a sharp and surly Reply to her, which, if it did not proceed from the natural badness of his Temper, derived, *ex traduce*, from his supposed Father yet, was certainly the effect of Drinking, and that's the more likely, because it is a *broken* and *witless* Sentence, such as *Fuddlecaps* utter by halves, when the

Wine's in, and the *Wit's out*. Your modern *Commentators* are sadly puzzled to make good Sense of this broken and abrupt Sentence of *Jesus*, and a pertinent Reply of it, to what his Mother said to him, *they have no Wine*: If you will bear with me, I'll help you out at this dead lift, and give you the true meaning of it *thus*. *Jesus*'s Mother being apprised of a deficiency of Wine, and willing, as well as the *Bridegroom*, that the Company should be thorowly merry before they parted, intimates to her Son, (whom she knew to be initiated in the Mysterys of *Bacchus*) *that they had no Wine*: But before she could finish her Request to him, He, mistaking her meaning, imagines, she was cautioning against drinking more Wine, and exhorting him to go home; whereupon he takes her up short and quick, saying, *Woman, what have you to do with me?* (for that too is the *English* of the *Greek*) I'll not be interrupted in my Cups, nor break Company; *for mine Hour is not yet come* to depart: But after he rightly apprehended her, he goes to work, and rather than the Company should want their fill, by trick of Art, like a *Punch-maker*, meliorates Water into what they call'd Wine. That this is the obvious Interpretation, and natural Paraphrase of the Words before us, shall be try'd by the

Absurd Comments now-a-days put upon them, that are enough to make a considerate Man laugh, if not hiss at them.

"Some antient Hereticks[238], very gravely inferr'd from this Expression, *Woman, what have I to do with thee*, that *Mary* was neither a Virgin, nor *Jesus* her Son; or he had never accosted her with such blunt Language, that implys, they could not be so akin to each other. This was a perplexity to St. *Augustin*, and gave him some trouble to explain the Expression, consistently with her Virginity (for all she cohabited with the old Carpenter) and his Filiation. But this being a quibble, that has been long since dropt, I shall not revive, nor insist on it. But that the Expression above do's suppose a little Inebriation, in *Jesus*, I may avert, neither is there a better Solution to be made of it.

"The Fathers of your Church, being sensible of the absurdity, abruptness, impertinence, pertness, and senslesness of the Passage before us according to the Letter, had recourse to a mystical and allegorical Interpretation, as the only way to make it consistent with the Wisdom, Sobriety and Duty of the Holy *Jesus*. But you *Moderns*, abandoning Allegories and Mysteries on

Miracles, have endeavour'd, I say, to put other Constructions upon it, as may comport with the Letter and Credit of Jesus: But how insipid and sensless they are, I appeal to a reasonable Man, who will give himself the trouble to consult them, upon the Place, and save me the Pains of a tedious and nauseous Work to recount them for him.

"But to Humour the Christian Priesthood at this Day, I will suppose that *Jesus*, and his Mother, and Disciples, tho' Fishermen, to have been all sober, grave and serious at this Wedding, suitably to the Opinion that their Followers now would have us to entertain of them. But then it is hard to conceive them, less than Spectators and even Encouragers of Excess and Intemperance in others; or *Jesus*, after their more than sufficient drinking for the satisfaction of Nature, had never turn'd Water into Wine, nor would his Mother have requested him to do it, if, I say, they had not a mind, and took Pleasure in it too, to see the Company quite *stitch'd up*.

"A sober, prudent and wise Philosopher or *Magician*, in the place of *Jesus*, if he had an Art or Power to turn Water into Wine, would never have exercised it upon such an

occasion; no, not to please his best Friends, nor in obedience to the most indulgent Parent. What would he have said in such a Case? That the Company had drank sufficiently already, and there was no need of more Wine: The Bridegroom had kindly and plentifully entertain'd his Guests, and he would not for the Honour of God, who had endow'd him with a divine Power, be at the Expence of a Miracle to promote the least Intemperance. Whether such a Speech and Resolution in *Jesus*, upon this occasion, would not have been more commendable, than what he did, let any one judge.

"If I was a Christian, I would, for the Honour of *Jesus*, renounce this Miracle, and not magnify and extol it as a divine and good Act, as many now-a-days do. I would give into, and contend for the Truth of *that Gloss*, which the *Gentiles* of old[239] by way of Objection put upon it, *viz. That the Company having exhausted the Bridegroom's Stock of Wine, and being in Expectation of more*; Jesus, *rather than the Bridegroom should be put to the Blush for deficiency, palm'd a false Miracle, by the help of the Governour of the Feast, upon a drunken Crew; that is, having some spirituous Liquors at hand, mingled them with a quantity of Water, which the Governour of the Feast vouch'd to*

be incomparable good Wine, miraculously made by Jesus: *and the Company being, thro' a vitiated Palate, uncapable of distinguishing better from worse, and of discovering the Fraud, admired the Wine and the Miracle; and applauded* Jesus *for it, and perhaps became his Disciples upon it.* If I, I say, was a Disciple of *Jesus*, I would give this Story such an old turn for his Credit. And I appeal to indifferent Judges, whether such a daubing of the Miracle, to remove the Offence of *Infidels* at this Day, would not be politically and wisely done of me. Whether modern Christians may be brought into such a Notion of this supposed Miracle, I know not; but really there is room enough to suspect such a Fraud in it.

"But supposing *Jesus*'s Change of Water into Wine to have been a real Miracle; none commission'd of God for the Reformation and Instruction of Mankind would ever have done it here. Miracles (as Mr. *Chandler*[240] says excellently well) *must be such things, as that it is consistent with the Perfections of God, to interest himself in*; and again, *they must argue not only the Power of God, but his Love to Mankind, and his Inclination to do them good*; which this of *Jesus* is so far from, that it has an evil Aspect and Tendency, as is above represented; consequently it is to be

rejected, and no longer esteem'd a divine Miracle; neither is *Jesus* to be received as a Revealer of God's Will for it, as Mr. *Chandler* will bear me witness.

"No doubt on't, but you Christian Priests would have us *Jews* and *Infidels*, to believe the whole Company at this Wedding, for all what is intimated by St. *John* to the contrary, to consist of sober and demure Saints. I will suppose so; but then, what occasion had they at all for Wine? What reason could there be for God's Power to interpose and make it, especially in so large a quantity, for them? I can conceive none. If any of the Company had been taken with fainting Fits; and *Jesus* for want of a Cordial Bottle, had created a chearing Drain or two, I could not have found fault with it; tho' even here, if he had restored the *Patient* with a word of his Mouth, it had been a better Miracle, than making of Wine for him: But that he should make for a Company of Sots, a large quantity of Wine, of no less than twelve or eighteen Firkins of *English* Measure, enough to intoxicate the whole Town of *Cana* of *Galilee*, is what can never be accounted for by a Christian, who should, one would think, wish this Story, for the Reputation of *Jesus* expunged out of the New Testament.

"Besides, if *Jesus* had really and miraculously made Wine, which no Power or Art of Man could do, he should, to prevent all suspicion of deceit in the Miracle, have done it without the use of Water. You Christians say, he is the original Cause of all Things out of nothing; why then did he not[241] create this Wine out of nothing? why did he not order the Pots to be emptied of their Water, if there was any in them, and then with a word of his Mouth command the filling them with Wine instead of it? Here had been an unexceptionable Miracle, which no *Infidels* could have cavil'd at, for any thing, but the *needlessness* of it. But this subject Matter of Water spoils the Credit of the Miracle. The Water-Pots, it seems, are to be fill'd, before *Jesus* could do the notable Feat; is not this enough to make us think, that Jesus was but an artificial *Punch-maker*? Could not he create Wine without Water for a Transmutation? Yes, you'll say he could: what was the Reason then, that he did not? This is a reasonable Question to a learned Priesthood: and a rational Answer should be given to it. And a Question too it is that heretofore has been under debate. Some said that the Water might be used to abate of the[242] immensity of the Miracle, which

otherwise for its greatness might have surpass'd all Belief. But this Reason will not do. A Miracle can't be too great in itself, if well attested, to transcend Credit: but it may easily be too little to conciliate the Faith of a Free-Thinker. The Fathers of your Church fetch'd a Reason, for the use of Water here, from the Mystery; but since Mysterys on Miracles are set aside by the Priesthood of this Age, they are to assign another and good Reason of their own; or this Miracle is to be rejected, as a Piece of Art and Craft in the Operator, if for no other Reason than this, that *Jesus* used Water to make Wine.

"All that I have to say more to this Miracle, is, that it is to be wish'd, if Jesus could turn Water into Wine, that he had imparted the Secret and Power to his Disciples of the *Priesthood* of all Ages since, which would have been of greatest Advantage to them in this World. He has empower'd them, they say, to remit Sins, which few old Sinners think themselves the less in danger for: And he has enabled them, some say, to transubstantiate Bread into Flesh, and Wine into Blood, which none but foolish and superstitious Folks believe they ever did: And he promised to invest them with a Power to do greater Miracles than himself, even to remove Mountains,

> and to curse Trees; but I thank God, they never were of so strong a Faith, as to put it in Practice, or we might have heard of the *natural* state, as well as we do now of the *civil* state of some Countrys, ruin'd and overturn'd by them. But this Power to transmute *Water into Wine*, without Labour and Expence, would have been of better worth to them, than all their other Priestly Offices. Not, that our Conduits would thereupon run with Wine, instead of Water; or that Wine would be cheaper and more plentiful than it is now, excepting among themselves, if they could withal curse Vineyards. They would make the best Penny they a could of their divine Power. And as surely as they can now fell the Waterdrops of their Fingers at a Christening, at a good Rate, they would set a better Price on their miraculously made Wine, and give a notable Reason for its dearness, *viz.* that Miracles should not be *cheap*, which would bring them into Contempt, and lessen the Wonder and Admiration of them."

So ends the Invective of a suppos'd Jewish *Rabbi* against this Miracle; which our *Divines*, as well as myself, are to consider of an Answer to. Whether they shall think themselves able to answer the rational Parts of it, consistently with the Letter, I know not; but I own myself unable, and believe it

impossible for them, to do it: And therefore they must of necessity go along with me to the mystical Interpretation of the Fathers; or this Miracle will turn to the dishonour of *Jesus*, and disadvantage of his Religion.

Justin Martyr[243] says, it is absurd to take the Stories of the Marriages and Concubinages of the *Patriarchs* of the Old Testament in a literal Sense. And indeed, literally consider'd, they are some of them too luscious Tales to be related by divine and inspired Penmen: whereupon he, as well as St. *Paul* and *Philo-Judæus*[244], turn these Stories for the Honour of God and Edification of his Church, into an Allegory. Consequently, if *Justin* had had an occasion to speak of this Marriage before us, there's no doubt on't, but he would have made Mystery of all and every Part of it.

To the same purpose *Origen*[245] says, "That since the Law is a shadow of good Things to come, and writes sometimes of Marriages and of Husbands and Wives; we are not to understand it of Marriages according to the Flesh, but of the spiritual Marriage between Christ and his Church. As for Instance, *Abraham* had two Sons, *&c.* here we ought not to confine our Thoughts to carnal Marriages, and their Offsprings; but to extend them to the Mysteries here signified. And there are almost a thousand other places in Scripture about Marriages; but in every place (*unusquisque Locus castum & divinum de Nuptiis continet Intellectum secundum Expositionem moralem*) is to have a divine, moral, and mystical Construction put on't. Whoever therefore reads the Scriptures about Marriages, and understands no more by them, than carnal Marriages; he errs, not knowing the

Scriptures, nor the Power of God." From hence may be easily concluded, what was *Origen*'s opinion about this Marriage in *Cana* of *Galilee*, if there were no other Passages in him for a Confirmation of it. But to come closer to the Purpose.

St. *Augustin*[246] says, there is Mystery signified in the Story of this Marriage, as in all *Jesus*'s Miracles, which it becomes us to open and search for; till, if possible, we are *inebriated* with the spiritual and invisible Wine, that *Jesus* made at this Feast. And again[247] says, Let us then consider the several Particulars of the Story, and what is meant by the six Waterpots; and the Water that is turn'd into Wine; and the Governor of the Feast; and who are the Bridegroom and the Bride; and who is the Mother of *Jesus* in a Mystery; and what is to be understood by the Marriage.

And again, says St. *Augustin*[248], there is Mystery in this Marriage, or *Jesus* upon no invitation had gone to it. The Bridegroom is our Lord himself, to whom it is said thou hast reserv'd the good Wine of the Gospel *until now*, that is, until the typified Time of the Celebration of this mystical Marriage, which according to St. *Augustin*[249] is to be on the sixth Age of the World, signified by the six Water-Pots, holding two or three Firkins apiece, that is, all Mankind, as they are divided into the *two* sorts of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, or into *three*, as they are descended of the *three* Sons of *Noah*.

And in another Place, the same St. *Augustin* interpreting this Story, says[250] thus; "Our Saviour is invited to a Marriage; what can that mean but that the Holy Spirit is courted and invocated by the Church, wishing to be espoused to him? *Jesus* comes

with his Disciples, that is, into a holy Place of a Company of Saints. *Mary* the Mother of our Lord signifies to him, *that they have no Wine*; so the Church makes known to him, the Deficiency of the Spirit, which she waits for the Power of. And if *Jesus* calls *Mary*, a Woman; he means the Church, who by Transfiguration may be a Virgin, the Mother, the Spouse of Christ, and a Whore too."

And again St. *Augustin* explaining[251] what is meant by the Water, and the Wine that it wou'd be turn'd into, at the Time of the spiritual Celebration of this Marriage of Christ with his Spouse of the Church, says plainly enough, that by *Water* is meant the Letter of the Scriptures; and by the best *Wine* is to be understood spiritual Interpretations, which would transport the understandings of Men with divine knowledge; and warm their Hearts and Affections into a spiritual *Inebriation*; after the similitude of Wine natural.

St. *Theophilus* of *Antioch*, a most antient Greek Commentator (who according to *Bishop Smalbroke* should strictly adhere to the Letter) says[252], that by this Marriage is meant the Conjunction of Christ and his Church, as it is the Tradition of the Old and New Testament. And that *Jesus* himself is the Bridegroom; and *Moses* the Governor of the Feast.

Other Fathers, such as St. *Cyril*, St. *Theophylact* and St. *Jerome* are of the same mind about the mystical Interpretation of this Marriage, as might be prov'd by Passages out of them, if I had room here to cite them. But I must observe here, that according to the Fathers, the Story of this Marriage is but another Emblem of the Marriage of the Lamb with the Bride of the *New Jerusalem*, spoken of in the *Revelations*, to

which all the Fowls of the Air will be invited, that is, spiritual and heavenly minded Christians, who[253] soar and fly aloft in their divine and sublime Contemplations on the anagogical Sense of the Scriptures, which will exhibit those intellectual Dainties, they are there to be entertain'd with.

What I have here said out of the Fathers to the Story of this Marriage, is enough to quicken our *Divines* to search for the like mystical Interpretation of the whole. The Part of it that's most difficult to be spiritually expounded, is that saying of *Jesus* to his Mother, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine Hour is not yet come.* For the clear interpretation of which, I own, I meet with little in the Fathers. But St. *Augustin*[254] assures us, there's latent Mystery in the words. How then shall we come at it? Why, if we cast away the *Interrogation*, and look upon the Sentence, as ellyptical, like an infinite number of prophetical ones, the Sense paraphrastically, and agreeably to the rest of the Mystery, arises thus: In answer to the Woman of the Church's Expectation of the Wine of the Spirit; *Jesus* will tell her or make her to understand of what importance it is to her (and himself) to be supply'd with that mystical Wine to her Edification, which it was not his time to pour forth upon the Church, till the Celebration of his Nuptials with her.

And thus have I done with the Miracle of *Jesus*'s turning Water into Wine at a Marriage of *Cana* of *Galilee*. Whether it be not an absurd and offensive Story according to the Letter, let any one judge. If the supposed Jewish *Rabbi* has forced a worse Sense upon it, than it will naturally bear, our *Clergy* may expostulate with him for it, which they hardly will any otherwise than by Exclamations against him,

without Reason and Authority. But in the mystical Operation of this Miracle at the Marriage of Christ with his Church, there will be the Wisdom and Power and Goodness of God visible. And it will be a demonstration of *Jesus*'s *Messiahship*, in as much as the Water of the Letter of the Law and the Prophets can't be turn'd into the Wine of spiritual Interpretations, but we must discern how he is the Accomplisher and Fulfiller of them. And so I pass to an

11. *Eleventh* Miracle of Jesus, *viz.*[255] That of his healing a Paralytick, for whom the Roof of the House was broken up to let him down into the Room where *Jesus* was.

And this Story (without excepting that of the Pool of *Bethesda*) is the most monstrously absurd, improbable and incredible of any according to the Letter. There is not one Miracle of *Jesus* specifically related, that does not labour under more or less Absurdities, either in Substance or Circumstance: But this, for number and greatness of Absurdities, I think surpasses them all: And the Absurdities of it too are so obvious and stare a Man in the Face, that I wonder they are hitherto overlook'd; and that considerate and intelligent Persons have not before now hesitated and boggled at them. If Interest had not blinded the Eyes of our learned *Clergy*, they would easily have descry'd the Incredibilities and Absurdities of this Story; and in another *Impostor*'s Case presently have pointed them out to the ridicule of his Admirers and Adorers.

If a Man was to torture his Brains for the Invention of a romantick Tale of improbable and surprizing Circumstances, that he might, withal, hope to palm

for a Truth, if it was but for a Week or a Day, upon the Faith and Understanding of the Credulous; he could never have presumed, I think, so far upon the weakness of their Intellects, as to imagine any thing so grossly and notoriously contradictory to Sense and Reason, would have gone down with them, as is *this* before us, which has pass'd currently thro' many Ages of the Church, has been read with attention by the Learned, and revered by the rest of Christians, without any exception, hesitation, or doubt of the Truth of it. In short, so palpable is the falsity of the Story of this Miracle, that it requires no Sagacity to detect it; and was it not for the sake of the Mystery more than to expose the Folly of the *Clergy* in believing of it, I had never bestow'd the following Pains on it.

The People, it seems, so press'd and throng'd about the Door of the House, where *Jesus* was, that the Paralytick and his Bearers could not get near it. What did they so throng and press for? Was it to see *Jesus*, who was *without Form and Comeliness*, according to the Prophet *Isaiah*; or, who was one of the most graceful of the Sons of Men, as *Painters* and *Publius Lentulus* do describe him? This could not be the Reason of the Croud. Tho' a Person extraordinary, either for Beauty or Deformity may attract the Eyes of the People, and occasion too a Throng about him; yet this could be no Reason for a *Press* about *Jesus*, at *Capernaum*, where he dwelt, and was commonly seen and well known.

Was it then to hear him preach? Nor this neither. Tho' an excellent Preacher does sometimes, and a very indifferent one does oftener draw multitudes after him; yet *Jesus*, as a Prophet, was without Honour at *Capernaum*, his own Country;

consequently, it is not to be supposed that, for his Doctrine, he was so much follow'd here, tho' we read, that he *preach'd the Word unto them*.

Was it then to behold him working of Miracles and curing of the diseased? This is the likeliest Reason of the Crouds and Throng about him. And perhaps it was a Day appointed beforehand for his healing of the diseased, which might occasion a more than ordinary Concourse of the People. But then this Reason would have induced the People to make way for the *Lame*, *Blind*, and *Paralyticks* to come to *Jesus*; for they frustrated their own Hopes and Expectations of seeing Miracles wrought; and acted more unreasonably than ever Mob did, or can be supposed to do.

But whatever was the Reason of this tumultuous Crouding, which is hard to be accounted for; it's said, the poor *Paralytick* with his Bearers could not get to the Door of the House for the *Press*, and therefore in all haste is he haul'd to the Top of the House, and let down, thro' a breach of the Roof, into the Room where *Jesus* was. What need was there of such Haste and Pains to get to *Jesus* for a Cure? It was but waiting a while, not many Hours, and in all probability the Tumult would be appeas'd, and access easily had to him. But that the Bearers of the poor Man should enterprise a trouble and difficulty, that could not require less Time, than the Tumult could be supposed to last, is a little strange and somewhat incredible.

St. *Chrysostom* says[256], that the *Paralytick* saw that the Market-place or Street was throng'd with People, who had obstructed all Passage to the House, where *Jesus* was; and yet he did not so much as say to his

Friends and Bearers, "What's the Reason of this Tumult? Let's stay till it is appeas'd, and the House clear'd of the People, who ere long will depart; and then we shall privately and quietly get admittance to Jesus," But why did he not say so? Any one beside himself and his Bearers, if they had any Reason and Senses about them, would have so argued. St. *Chrysostom* says, it was their *Faith* that made them in such haste to get to *Jesus*: But I should have thought their *Faith* might have work'd *Patience*, and disposed them to stay till Jesus could come out to them, or they get in to him: And it is an Addition to the strangeness and incredibility of this Story, that it did not.

But supposing this *Paralytick* in such haste and danger of Life, that he could not wait the dispersion of the Tumult, but, for want of a free entrance at the Door, is, cost what it will, to be rais'd to the top of the House, and a breach must be there made for him. The Question is, whether such an Enterprize was or could be feisable and practicable? I have no Conception of the possibility of it. If they could not get to the Door of the House for the Press; of consequence they could not come at the Sides of it. How should they? over the Heads of the People? That's not to be imagined; consequently here's another difficulty in the Story, that renders it yet more strange and incredible.

But, without questioning the possibility and easiness of getting the *Paralytick* and his Couch over the Heads of the Mob, to the sides of the House; thither he is brought, where we now behold him and his Bearers with their Pullies, Ropes, and Ladders (that were not at hand, nor could suddenly be procured) hauling and heaving him to the top of the House. Of

what height the House was, is not of much Consequence. Some for the Credit of the Story may say[257], it was a *very low one*; tho' antient and modern *Commentators* are pretty well agreed, that it was an *upper-Room*, where *Jesus* was; consequently the House was at least two Stories high: But if it was much higher, I'll allow that Art and Pullies (which they wanted for the present) would raise the Man and his Bed to the top of it: So we will not dispute nor differ upon that matter. On the top of the House then, we are now to behold the *Paralytick* and his Bearers with their Hatchets and Hammers, *&c.* (which they forgot to bring with them, for they could not think of any use they should have of them) uncovering the Roof of the House; breaking up *Tiles*, *Spars*, and *Rafters*, and making a Hole, capacious enough for the Man and his Bed to be let thro'. An odd, strange, and unaccountable Work *this*, which, if they had not been cunning Fellows, would hardly have enter'd into their Heads to project. But at work they are, when it was well, if Jesus and his Disciples escaped with only a broken Pate, by the falling of Tiles, *&c.*, and if the rest were not almost smother'd with the Dust; for it was over their Heads that the breach was made. Where was the good Man of the House all this while? Would he suffer his House to be thus broken up, and not command them to desist from their foolish and needless Attempt, till the Mob was quell'd, and there was a free entrance at the Door of his House, which could not be long first? Is there nothing in all this, of difficulty and obstruction in the way of the belief of this Story?

Some modern *Commentators*, being aware of these difficulties in this Story, and willing to reconcile Men to the earlier belief of it, say, as *Drusius*[258] did, that the Houses of *Judæa* were *flat-roof'd, and not ridg'd*:

And Doctors, *Lightfoot* and *Whitby*[259] say, there was a Door on their flat Roofs, by which the *Jews* used to ascend to the top of their Houses, where they discours'd on the Law and religious Matters; and that it was thro' such a Door, by a little widening of the sides of it, that the *Paralytick* was let down in the presence of *Jesus*. To which Opinion I would yield, if it was not liable to these Objections, *viz.* that it is not reconcilable to what St. *Luke* says, of *their letting the Paralytick down thro' the Tiling with his Couch, in the midst, where Jesus was*; nor hardly consistent with what St. *Mark* says of their *uncovering* and *breaking up the Roof of the House*: which Expressions the *Evangelists* had never used, if there had been a Door for him to descend by. But to indulge *Lightfoot* and *Whitby* in their Notion; I may ask them, what occasion was there then of widening the doorway, and breaking down the sides of it? They'll say, because the Passage otherwise was too narrow, for the Man's Couch to get thro'. Why then did not they take him out of his Couch, and let him down in a Blanket, a Chair, or a Basket? Or rather, why did not *Jesus*, to prevent this Trouble and Damage to the House, ascend thro' this Door, to the Top of it, and their speak the healing Word to this poor Man? To say, that *Jesus* could not or would not go up to the Paralytick, I would not, for Fear of an Imputation of Blasphemy against me. Our *Divines* therefore are to look for, what they'll hardly find, an Answer to the said Question, which will consist with the Wisdom, the Goodness and Honour of *Jesus*; or here will be another and insuperable Bar to the Credibility of this Story.

In short, there are more and greater Difficultys affecting the Credit of this Miracle, on the side of *Jesus*, than any before urg'd. Could not he, as it was

antiently[260] objected, have made the Access to himself more easy? Could not he, to prevent all this Trouble and Pains of getting to the Top of the House, and of breaking up the Roof of it, have desired or even forc'd the People to make way for this poor Man and his Bearers? This was not impossible for him to do. If it was hard for another; it was not for him, who was omnipotent. He that could drive his Thousands before him out of the Temple; and draw as many after him into the wilderness, might surely, by Force or Persuasion have made the People, how unreasonably mobbish soever, to retreat. And why did he not? Without a good and satisfactory Answer, which I can't conceive, to this Question, here is the most unaccountable and incredible part of the whole Story, that reflects on the Wisdom, the Power and Goodness of *Jesus*. If there had been no other absurd Circumstances of it, this is enough to spoil its Credit, so far as that I believe it impossible for *Ministers* of the *Letter*, with all their Wit, Penetration and Sagacity to get over it.

Believe then the Story of this Miracle, thus taken to Pieces, who can? It is such an Accumulation of Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, that a Man of the most easy Faith, if he at all think, can't digest. It's not credible, I said, to suppose, the People of *Capernaum*, where *Jesus* dwelt, and was well known and little admired, would at all *press* to see or hear him: And if the occasion of their Concourse was to behold his Miracles; it is less-reasonable to think they would tumultuate to their own disappointment; but rather make way for the diseased, for the satisfaction of their own Curiosity, to come to him: And if they did mob it to their own disappointment, about the Door of the House; it was next to impossible for the poor Man and his Couch to be

heav'd over their Heads, and rais'd to the top of it: More unreasonable yet to think, the master of the House would suffer the Roof of it to be so broken up: But most of all against Reason to suppose, *Jesus* would not give forth the healing word, and prevent all this Labour, or by his divine Power disperse the People, that the *Paralytick* might have present and easy access to him.

Whether all this be not absolutely shocking of the Credit of this Story, let my Readers judge. In my Opinion, no Tale more monstrously romantick can be told. I don't here question *Jesus*'s Power to heal this Paralytick, nor the miraculousness of the Cure of him: The trouble of that Question is saved me, by the many other incredible Circumstances of the Story, which are such a Contradiction to Sense and Reason, as is not to be equall'd, in any thing, that's commonly receiv'd and believ'd by Mankind. *Cicero* says, that there is nothing so absurd, which some of the Philosophers have not held. And they might and did, some of them, hold gross Absurdities. But the Letter of the Story of this Miracle before us, which is the Object of the Faith of our learned Priesthood at this Day is a Match for the worst of them.

But as absurd, as this Story is, I expect that our *Clergy* will be disgusted at my ludicrous display of it; and that Arch Deacon *Stubbs* in particular will again be ready to exclaim against me, and say, that this is turning a *miraculous Fact* and a *divine Testimony* of our Religion into Ridicule. Whereupon it is to be wish'd, *that Arch-Deacon* would write, what would be a Pleasure to see, a Vindication of this Story. If he can account for the possibility and credibility of the Letter of it, he shall have my leave to make another dull Speech in *Convocation* against me. And it is not

unlikely, but he may say as much for it, as another Man: For as the Story is senseless, so it is the better suited to his Head and Brains. But if he don't, I much question, whether any other Clergyman of more Wit will, appear in Defence of it.

So absurd is the Letter of this Story, that for the Honour of *Jesus*, and Credibility of his Gospel, it is absolutely necessary to turn it into Allegory. To the Fathers then, let us go for their help in this Case. If they did not read me a better Lecture upon this Miracle, than do our modern *Commentators*, I should be almost tempted to renounce my Religion upon it: But as they have rationally and rightly instructed me in its true meaning, so I retain my Christian Faith, and admire the Sublimity of the Mystery, which I am now to give an account of.

By this *Paralitick*, St. *Hilary*[261] says, is to be understood *Mankind* of all Nations, which opinion too the Fathers held of the *Paralitick*, who was heal'd at the Pool of *Bethesda*. And by his Palsy is not meant any bodily Distemper, but the spiritual Palsy of the Soul, that is, as St. *Augustin*[262] and St. *Jerome*[263] interpret, a dissoluteness of Morals, and an unsteadiness of Faith and Principles, which is the Condition of Mankind at present, who want *Jesus*'s help for the Cure of it. *Eusebius Gallicanus*[264] says, our Saviour's words signify, that it is not a bodily but a spiritual Disease here meant; or he had never said to the Paralytick, *Son, thy Sins are forgiven thee*, which words respect the inward Man, and demonstrate the Palsy here to be a disease Of the Soul.

The Man sick of the Palsy had *four Bearers*. And who are they mystically in this Case? Why, the

Fathers[265] understand by them the *four Evangelists*, on whose Faith and Doctrine Mankind is to be carry'd unto Christ; for no Soul can be brought unto him, for the Sanation of his Sins and Errors, but by these *four*.

But to the top of the House is Mankind, thus paralytically diseased, to be carry'd by the four Evangelists, his Bearers. And what then is this House and its Top? The House of *Jesus* is the intellectual Edifice of the World, otherwise call'd Wisdom's House; of the beautiful Buildings of which the Scriptures prophetically treat: therefore to the *sublime Sense* of the Scriptures, call'd the Top[266] of the House, is Man to be taken: He is not to abide in the *low and literal Sense*[267] of them, where People *press* and strive in vain to come to *Jesus*: But if he is taken to the Sublimity of the Scriptures and there *open*[268] *the House* of Wisdom, he will presently be admitted to the Presence and Knowledge of *Jesus*.

Venerable *Bede*, who is altogether a Transcriber of the Fathers, for which Reason I cite him among the Fathers, says[269], that by the *Tiles* of the House spoken of in St. *Luke*, is meant the *Letter* of the Scriptures, which is to be laid open for the manifestation of Christ and of divine Mysteries to the healing of Man's spiritual Palsy, the unsteadiness and dissoluteness of his Morals and Principles.

So much, in short, then to the mystical Interpretation of the Story of this Miracle. The literal Sense of it is so encumber'd with romantick Circumstances, as are enough to turn a Man's Heart against Christianity it self: But in the Mystery there will be a most stupendous Miracle, which will be not only an Argument of *Jesus*'s divine Power, but of his

Messiahship, as certainly as his House of Wisdom, of which the Scriptures write, is open'd to the Manifestation of his Presence, and to the Cure of Mankind of his paralytical Disease, call'd an instability of Faith and Principles.

And thus have I, in this *Discourse*, taken into Examination three more of *Jesus*'s Miracles; which I submit to the Judgment of my Readers, whether the literal Story of them does not consist of Absurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities according to the Proposition before us; and whether there is not a necessity, for the Honour of *Jesus*, to turn them into prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what will be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him.

My next *Discourse*, if my mind hold, shall treat on the three Stories of *Jesus*'s raising of the dead, *viz.* of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, of *Jairus*'s Daughter, and of *Lazarus*; after which I will give the literal History of Christ's Resurrection, that sandy Foundation of the Church, a Review; and so conclude my Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour.

To run thro' all the Miracles of *Jesus*, and handle them in the manner I have done the foregoing, would be a long and tedious Work. But if our *Divines* shall think, I have selected only those Miracles, which are obnoxious to Cavil and Ridicule; and have omitted others, that literally are a more unexceptionable Testimony of *Jesus*'s divine Power, and Authority; I will, for their Satisfaction take more of them to Task, and give the Letter of their Stories, the like ludicrous treatment. If I mistake not, the Miracles already spoken to, together with those of *Jesus*'s raising of the dead, and of his own Resurrection, are the most famous and remarkable of

any others: And according to the Observation I have made on the rest, they are no less but rather more liable to Ridicule and Exception. But if any are of a contrary Opinion, and will let me know, which in their Judgment are more unexceptionable Miracles, I will vouchsafe them an Examination. I am sure there is not one Miracle, which the Fathers of the Church did not turn into Allegory; and if we don't at this Day make mystical Operations of them, they will none of them according to the Letter, stand their Ground, nor abide the Test of a critical Inquiry into them.

I don't expect, that this *Discourse* will be any more pleasing and acceptable to the *Clergy*, who are *Ministers* of the *Letter* of *Jesus*'s Miracles, as well as of the Prophecies of him, than any of my former: But their Displeasure in the Case will give me no Disturbance, nor am I concern'd about any Resentment, they can make of it. If they are offended at these *Discourses*, they should as they came forth, have written solid Confutations of them, and so have prevented my Publication of any more of this kind: But instead of serious and potent Reasonings against me, I have met with little else but oral Railings, Exclamations, Defamations, and attempts for Prosecution; which have been so far from terrifying me, that they give me a secret Pleasure, and animate me to proceed in the Undertaking in hand.

I did not much question but the *Bishop* of St. *Davids*, whom I look'd upon as a Person of Ingenuity and Learning, would, before this Time, have publish'd somewhat in Confutation of one or other of my former *Discourses*. Whether he was not obliged to it, or to make me some publick Reparation of the Injury done to my Reputation, by his slanderous Sermon, I appeal now to the worshipful *Societys* for

Reformation of Manners; to whom, and to other Civil Magistrates, I hope his Sermon, without Reason, will be a Caution, that no Pulpit-Invective move them to prosecute or think the worse of any Author.

Liberty of thinking, writing and judging for our selves in Religion is a natural, a Christian, and a protestant *Right*: It is a *Right* that the Magistrates as well as the Subjects are interested in, and are to see to the Conservation of, or their Understandings as well as their Purses will be ridden and oppress'd by an ignorant and tyrannical Priesthood. I urge not this for my own security against Prosecution for Infidelity and Blasphemy, declaring that if the *Bishops* of *London*, St. *Davids*, or *Arch-Deacon Stubbs*, who are zealous for Persecution, will but engage me on the Stage of Controversy, and make good their Accusations against me, I will submit to the worst Punishment, that can be inflicted on the worst Offender.

In the mean time I will go on with my Undertaking, to the advancement of Truth, and demonstration of the *Messiahship* of the Holy *Jesus*, to whom be Glory for ever, *Amen*.

FINIS.

A FIFTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

In View of the Present Controversy between Infidels and Apostates.

——*Ridiculum acri*
Fortius & melius magnas plerumq; secat Res.

The Second Edition.

By Tho. Woolston, B.D. sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge*.

***LONDON*:**

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[Price One Shilling.]



TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

THOMAS,

Lord Bishop of *Bangor*.

MY LORD,



Whatever we poor *Authors* may sometimes pretend to, by the Dedication of our Works to *Great* Men; it's certain we aim at nothing less than Rewards and Preferments, whether we deserve them or not: That this is my Design in *Dedications*, is so apparent, that it's to no Purpose to deny or dissemble it.

Wherefore else have I made Choice of some of our Learned and Wealthy *Bishops* for the Patrons of these *Discourses*, which I foresaw would be grateful to their nice and critical Palates? Wherefore else have I been so profuse of such Compliments on their *Lordships*, as I was sure, they would take great Pleasure in? Wherefore else, *My Lord*, do I inscribe *this* to your *Right Reverend* Name, but that I expect your Approbation of it, and hope for a Recompence, equal to the Honour, that is here done you.

Some, who are envious, *My Lord*, of my good Fortune in *Episcopal* Patrons, will not believe that I have receiv'd so much as one *Purse* of *Gold* for any of my *Dedications*; but I would have such Malignants to know, that the less I have receiv'd, the more there is behind: And I can moreover assure them, that their *Lordships* have it in their Heads and their Hearts too,

highly to advance me in the World; and if their Endeavours for my Promotion fail not, I shall be a very *Great* Man.

Such primitive Doctrine, *My Lord*, as I have reviv'd, must, in the Judgment of our *Bishops*, be deserving of their distinguish'd Favours: And if they should Design for me such a *mystical* Crown of Glory, as the *Gentile Priests* help'd some of the Fathers of the Church to; I profess without Dissimulation, that, for all my Love to *Mysteries*, it will be more than I am ambitious of: But if the Honour is forc'd on me, it will be my Duty to their *Lordships*, to sound an *allegorical* Trumpet of their Fame, that their Names, which, might otherwise be soon forgotten, may be everlastingly remember'd for their Love and Good-will towards me.

But the chief Foundation, *My Lord*, of my Merits lies, they say, in my Treatment of the Miracles of our Saviour, after the Manner you handled a Scripture-Prophecy, of a *Man's kicking a Serpent on the Pate, for biting him by the Heels*: And if your *Lordship* got a *Welsh-Bishoprick* upon it, what may not I expect for my more meritorious Works of the same kind? The Great *Mr. Scheme* has celebrated your Praise for that Effort of your Wit: And I must needs say, to your *Lordship*'s Applause, that were not your Thoughts unhappily shackled with Interest and Subscriptions, (an Unhappiness you sadly lament!) you would endeavour to make as pleasant Work with the *Letter* of the *Old*, as I can do with that of the *New* Testament.

I have not here Room, *My Lord*, for a sufficient and deserv'd *Encomium* on your *Use and Intent of Prophecy*; therefore must be content to say of it, in

short, that it is a most curious Piece of, what the Fathers call, *Engastromuthism*; or such a singular Specimen of a Webb, spun out of a Man's own Bowels, as one of fewer Brains in his Head can hardly equal.

It was wisely done of your *Lordship* to caution your Readers against taking your *Book* for an Answer to Mr. *Grounds*; otherwise it had not been impossible, but some others as well as the *Worshipful Benchers* of the *Temple* might have mistaken the *Use* and *Intent* of it.

After I had gone thro' your *beautifully-printed* Work, I wish'd, *My Lord*, for another *Decoration* of it, that some Annotations out of the Fathers had been subjoin'd to it. How would your Notions then and Theirs about Prophecy have stood as a *Foil* to each other! How should I then have admired the Difference between a *Rich* Bishop and a *Poor* Father as to Wit and Sense! How should I then have contemplated the Usefulness of Ecclesiastical Wealth in our *Clergy* for the Understanding of the Inspirations of the poor old Prophets!

When your *Lordship* is call'd upon for another Edition of your *Book*, vouchsafe me the Favour of making some marginal Remarks on it, which shall not be without their good Use. As you know, savoury Sawce makes some sort of Food go down the better; so a little more of that Salt, which Mr. *Scheme* has too sparingly sprinkled on your *Work*, will give your *Readers*, a right Relish of it: But whether I am indulg'd this Favour or not; I than take another opportunity, according to Promise elsewhere made, of testifying to the World, how much I am,

October 25.
1728.

My LORD,
The Admirer of
Your Use *and*
Intent *of Prophecy*,
Thomas Woolston.



A FIFTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.



ccording to Promise in my last *Discourse*, I am in *this* to take into Examination the three Miracles of *Jesus*'s raising the dead, *viz.* Of *Iairus*'s Daughter[270]; of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son[271]; and of *Lazarus*[272]: The literal Stories of which I shall show to consist of Absurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities, in Order to the mystical Interpretation of them: And because some of our *Bishops* and *Clergy* were a little disgusted at the ludicrous Treatment of the *Letter* of some foregoing Miracles, I will handle these with the more Caution; being as unwilling, as any Man of my primitive Faith can be, to offend weak Brethren.

Whether *Jesus* rais'd any more from the dead, besides the foresaid three Persons is uncertain from the Evangelical History. St. *Augustin*[273] thinks, he rais'd many others; and he founds his Opinion on the modest *Hyperbole* of St. *John*, who supposes[274] *the World it self could not contain the Books that might be Written of Jesus*. And *Eusebius Gallicanus*, of whose Mind entirely I am, says[275] the Reason lies in the Mystery, why these *three*, and no more than these *three* Miracles of this Kind are recorded by the *Evangelists*. But since our *Divines* are averse to Mysteries on Miracles, I would gladly know their Opinion, whether *Jesus* rais'd any others from the dead, or not: I have made some search into modern Writers for their Opinion in this Case, but can't find

it: And unless I knew their Opinion, it would be lost Labour to argue against either Side of the Question, and much more against both Sides of it: But I can assure our *Divines*, that, which Side of the Question soever they should hold, the Consequence upon the Argument would be neither better nor worse, than that they must of necessity espouse the mystical and allegorical Interpretation of these Miracles, or grant that *Jesus* literally rais'd none from the dead at all.

But waving that sort of Argument for the present against the *Letter*; these three Miracles are reputed the greatest that *Jesus* wrought: And I believe, it will be granted on all hands, that the restoring a Person, indisputably dead, to Life again, is a stupendous Miracle; and that two or three such Miracles well circumstanced, and credibly reported, are enough to conciliate the Belief of Mankind, that the Author of them was a divine Agent, and invested with the Power of God, or he could not do them. But God knows, (and for the sake of the Mystery, I am not sorry to say it) this is far from being the Case of these three Miracles before us, or of any one them.

That these three Miracles are not equally great, but differ in Degree, is visible enough to any one, that but cursorily reads, and compares theirs Stories one with another. The Fathers of the Church[276] have taken Notice of such a Difference amongst them. The greatest of the three, and indeed, the[277] greatest Miracle, that *Jesus* is suppos'd to have wrought, is that of *Lazarus*'s Resurrection; which, in Truth, was a most prodigious Miracle, if his Corps was putrified and stank; or if there were no just Exceptions to be made to the Credibility of the Story. Next to that, in magnitude, is *Jesus*'s raising of the Widow's Son, as they were carrying him to his Burial: And a great

Miracle it was to bring him to Life again; if none before or since had been mistaken for dead, and carried to their Graves alive; or if no Impostor and his Confederates could frame such a seemingly miraculous Scene, as is that whole Story, to his own Glory. The least of the three is that of his raising *Jairus*'s Daughter, which in Appearance is so far from a Miracle, that according to the Story itself, she was but asleep, or by the Shrieks of By-standers frighted out of her Senses for the present.

But however it really might be with these three supposed dead and revived Persons; the Case of none of them was well enough circumstanced to serve the Purpose of our *Divines*. I am apt to believe with the Fathers, that *Jesus* actually did raise the dead; but then, as these Miracles are only recorded for the sake of the *Mystery*, I affirm that none of them, as to the *Letter*, will abide the Test of a critical Examination, nor stand its Ground against such Exceptions as may be made to them. If *Jesus* was to raise any dead Bodies to Life, for a Testimony of his divine Power and Authority, he would and should have made Choice of other dead Persons, under other Circumstances of Death; and the History of their Resurrection should have been more credibly and carefully transmitted to Posterity, so as there should have been no Room left to make a reasonable Doubt of the Truth of it. But this, I say, is not the Case in the Resuscitation of any of these Persons, as will appear from the following Remarks and Observations upon them. And

1. Observe, that the unnatural and preposterous Order of Time, in which these Miracles are related, justly brings them all under suspicion of Fable and Forgery. The greatest of the three is indisputably that

of *Lazarus*'s Resurrection; but since this is only mention'd by St. *John*, who wrote his Gospel after the other *Evangelists*, and above sixty Years, according to the best Computation, after our Lord's Ascension; here is too much Room for Cavil and Question, whether this Story be not entirely his Invention. What could be the Reason that *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, who all wrote their Gospel's before *John*, and many Years nearer to the Death of our Saviour, should omit to record this remarkable and most illustrious Miracle of *Lazarus*? They could not forget it, nor be ignorant of it, if the Story had been really true; and to assign any other Reason than Ignorance or Forgetfulness, is hard and impossible. To aggrandize the Fame of their Master, for a Worker of Miracles, was the Design of all the *Evangelists*, especially of the three first, who may be presumed to make a Report of the greatest, if not of all, that *Jesus* wrought: But that there should come after them an *Evangelist* with an huge and superlatively great Miracle, and meet with Credit for it, is against all Sense and Reason; neither is there any Story, so disorderly told, in all History, that *Critics* will admit of the Belief of. The first Writer of the Life of an *Hero*, to be sure makes mention of all the grand Occurrences of it, and leaves no Room for *Biographers* afterwards, but to enlarge and paraphrase upon what he has written, with some other Circumstances and Additions of less Moment. If a third or a fourth *Biographer* after him shall presume to add a more illustrious Transaction of the *Hero*'s Life, it will be rejected as Fable and Romance, tho' for no other Reason than this, that the first Writer must have been appris'd of it, and would have inserted its Story, if there had been any Truth in it. And whether St. *John*'s Story of *Lazarus*'s

Resurrection, that Miracle of Miracles, ought not to be subjected to the like Criticism upon it, *Christians* may consider, and *Infidels* will judge.

What then was the Reason, I ask again, that the three first *Evangelists* neglected to record this renown'd Miracle of *Lazarus*? And why too (may I enquire here) did not *Matthew* and *Mark* mention the Story of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, as they could not but know of it, if true, more certainly than *Luke*, the Companion of *Paul*, who alone has made a Report of it? *Grotius* says,[278] *it may seem strange that this illustrious Miracle of the Widow's Son* was omitted by *Matthew* and *Mark*: And what is the Reason that *Grotius* gives for this strange Omission? Why, he tells us[279] *that these two Evangelists were content with one miraculous Instance of this Kind, by which Christians might judge of* Jesus*'s Power in others also*. And is this Reason sufficient? True it is, they were content with one Instance; but if they had made a Report of two or three more of the same sort, no body would have thought their History of *Christ* overcharg'd with impertinent and tautological Repetitions. But one Instance of a Person rais'd from the dead, they were, says *Grotius*, content with: And I'll grant one to be sufficient: But which then should they, as wise and considerate *Historians* have made Choice of, the greatest or the least Miracle? The greatest, to be sure, and that was of *Lazarus*, or of the Widow's Son, if they knew of either. But instead of either of these, they tell us the Story of *Jairus*'s Daughter, that is[280] an imperfect and disputable Miracle, in Comparison of the other two, which consequently they knew nothing at all of, or they would have preferr'd the Report of them.

If *Matthew*, the first Writer, had recorded only the

Story of *Lazarus*, whose Resurrection was the greatest Miracle; and if *Luke* had added *that* of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son; and *John* lastly had remember'd us of *Jairus*'s Daughter, which the other *Evangelists*, not through Ignorance or Forgetfulness, but studying Brevity, had omitted, then all had been well; and no Objection had hence lain against the Credit of any of these Miracles, or against the Authority of the *Evangelists:* But this unnatural and preposterous Order of Time, in which these Miracles are recorded (the greatest being postponed to the least) administers just Occasion of suspicion of the Truth and Credibility of all their Stories. And it is lucky for Christianity, that *Jews* and *Infidels* have not hitherto hit upon the *Absurdity* of this preposterous Narration, or they might have form'd a cogent Objection against these Miracles thus, saying;

> "*Jesus*, it is manifest, rais'd not the dead at all. The only Person, that Christians can reasonably pretend, he did raise, was *Jairus*'s Daughter, whom *Matthew* writes of; and she, according to the Story was only in a Sleep, or an Extacy, when *Jesus* revived her. But the *Galileans*, who were after a Time call'd *Christians*, finding their Account in a Resurrection-Miracle; *Luke*, for the former Advantage of the Cause, devised another Story of better Circumstances, in the Widow of *Naim*'s Son: But this not being so great a Miracle, as the Church still wanted; *John*, when no body was alive to contradict and expostulate

with him for it, trumps up a long Story of a thumping Miracle, in *Jesus*'s raising of *Lazarus*, who had been not only dead, but buried so long that he stank again. But to prove the Story of this Miracle to be false and fabulous, we need say no more than that it was last recorded. If there had been any Truth in it, the first *Evangelist* would have remember'd us of it.

"We don't suppose, that you Christians, because of your Prejudices, will subscribe to this Account, that we thus give of the Rise of these Miracles: But this is certain, that if these three Miracles had not been reported of *Jesus*, but of *Mahomet*, in the same disorder of Time, by three different Historians, you would presently have scented the Forgery and Imposture: You would justly have affirm'd that the three Stories were apparently three Fables and Falsehoods; and that the three Historians visibly strove to outstretch each other: That the *first* was sparing and modest in his Romance; and the *second*, being sensible of the Insufficiency of the former's Tale, devises a Miracle of a bigger Size; which still not proving sufficient to the End proposed; the *third* Writer, rather than his Prophet's Honour should sink for want of a Resurrection-Miracle,

forges a Story of a monstrously huge one; against which it is, and always will be Objection enough, that it was not related by the first Historian. So would you Christians argue against these three Miracles in another Impostor's Case; and there is not a judicious *Critic* in the Universe, that would not approve of the Argument, and applaud the Force of it, tho' you will not endure the Thoughts of it in the Case of your *Jesus*.

"But to come nearer home to you; supposing *John* (who was then above a Hundred, and in his Dotage) had not reported this Miracle of *Lazarus*; but that *Clement* (joining it with his[281] incredible Story of the Resurrection of a *Phœnix*) or *Ignatius*, or *Polycarp*, or the Author of the *Apostolical Constitutions* had related it; would not your Christian *Critics* have been at work to explode it? There is not an antient extra-evangelical Tradition of any Note about *Jesus*, that some or other of your *Critics* have not boggled at; but such a Story as this of *Lazarus* would have been received by none. I question, whether Mr. *Whiston* would not have rejected the *Constitutions* upon such a Story in them; or if his Fancy for some other Things in them had overcome his Reason against this; yet *Bishop Smallbroke*, who has written against

> the Canonicalness of the *Constitutions*, with his judicious Animadversions upon this Story, would absolutely have overthrown their Authority. And what would he have said here? Not only that the Miracle smells rankly of Forgery and Fraud, or the *Evangelists*, especially *Matthew*, had never forgotten to record it; but he would have reminded us of intrinsic Notes (*hereafter to be mention'd*) of Absurdity, and Incredibility, that would for ever have cashier'd the Belief of it. And whether we *Infidels* ought not to take the same Liberty to criticize on *John*'s Gospel, which you do on your Apostolical Fathers, who wrote before him, let the impartial and unprejudiced judge: If in justice we ought to take it; we are sure we could give two or three notable Reasons (but that We will not now put Christians out of Temper with them) why *John* may be suspected of a Mistake or Fraud in this Miracle, rather than any other Christian Writer of the *first* or *second* Century."

To such an unhappy Objection, arising from the unnatural and preposterous Order of Time, in which they are recorded, are these three Miracles before us obnoxious. And I am thinking how Ministers of the Letter will be able to get over it. As for my self, who am for the mystical Interpretation of these Miracles, I have a solid and substantial Answer at hand to the

foresaid Objection, an Answer that curiously accounts for the Order of Time in which these Miracles are related; but my Answer will not please our *Divines*, nor stand them in any stead; therefore they must look up another good one of their own, that will comport with the *Letter*; or the said Objection, improved with another presently against *Lazarus*'s Resurrection, will be too hard, not for Christianity it self, but for their Ministry.

Grotius, being aware of the foresaid Objection, has given us such a[282] Solution of it as then occurr'd to his Thoughts. Dr. *Whitby*, not being satisfied with *Grotius*'s Solution, has given us[283] another: But how weak and insufficient both their Solutions are, I will not spare Time to consider, till some *Writer* shall appear in Defence of the Sufficiency and Strength of one or other of them. And so I pass to a

2. Second Observation, by Way of Objection to the *Letter* of these Miracles, and that is, by enquiring, what became of these three Persons after their Resurrection? How long did they live afterwards? And of what Use and Advantage were their restored Lives to the Church or to Mankind? The Evangelical and Ecclesiastical History is entirely silent as to these Questions, which is enough to make us suspect their Stories to be merely romantick or parabolical; and that there were no such Persons rais'd from the dead; or we must have heard somewhat of their Station and Conversation in the World afterwards. It's true, that *Ephiphanius*[284] says, what he found among Traditions, that *Lazarus* lived thirty Years after his Resurrection: But how did he spend his Time all that while? Was it to the Honour of *Jesus*, to the Service of the Church, and Propagation of the Gospel? Of that we know nothing; tho' in Reason and Gratitude

to *Jesus*, his Benefactor, it ought to have been so spent; and if it had been so employ'd, History surely would have inform'd us of it. According to the Opinion of *Grotius*, in a Citation above, *Lazarus* for the rest of his restored Life absconded, and skull'd about the Country for Fear of the *Jews*, who lay in Wait for him; which is a Suggestion, not only dishonourable to *Jesus*, as if the same Power, that rais'd him from the dead, could not protect him against his Enemies; but reproachful to *Lazarus* himself, who should have chosen to suffer Death again, rather than not bear an open Testimony to *Jesus*, the Author of his Resurrection. However it was, we hear no more of *Lazarus*, than that he lived thirty Years afterwards, which Tradition, without other Memorials of his Life, brings the Miracle more under suspicion of Fable, than if he had dy'd soon after it. And of *Jairus*'s Daughter, and of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, which is astonishing, we read nothing at all. Does not this Silence in History about them, make their Miracles questionable, and but like *Gulliverian* Tales of Persons and Things, that out of the Romance, never had any Being.

Jesus did but[285] *call a little Child, and set him in the midst* of his Disciples; and that Act was remember'd in the Piety and Zeal[286] of *Ignatius*, who made a renown'd Bishop. But the Favour and Blessing conferr'd on these three rais'd Persons was exceedingly greater; and one might have expected, that *Lazarus* and the Widow's Son would have been eminent Ministers of the Gospel. But instead of that, their Lives afterwards were pass'd in Obscurity, or, what's as bad, Ecclesiastical History has neglected a Report of them. What can any one hereupon think less, than that the Favour of the Miracles was lost on undeserving Persons, which I abhor the Thoughts of;

or that their Stories are but Parables, which I rather incline to.

Ministers of the *Letter* may here say, "That the Ecclesiastical History of the Apostolical Age is very scanty; and that many Memorials of other Persons and Transactions are lost and buried in Oblivion: Which unhappy Fate has attended the after-Lives and Actions of these rais'd Persons, or undoubtedly we should have had a famous Record of them." This is not impossible; tho' in the Wisdom of Providence it is hardly probable, but that some more Remembrance must have been left of one or other, if not of all the three Persons; in as much as such a Remembrance of them would now-a-days have no less gain'd a Belief of the Miracles, than this Historical Silence tends to the Discredit of them.

It's somewhat strange, that we hear no more of the after-Fame and Life of any of the diseased Persons, whom *Jesus* miraculously cured; excepting of the Woman, heal'd of an Issue of Blood; who, tho' she *spent* ALL *she had, even* ALL *her Living* upon *Physicians*; yet out of the Remains of it erected, says[287] *Eusebius*, at *Cæsarea Philippi*, two most costly Statues of Brass, to the Memory of *Jesus* and of herself, and of the Miracle wrought by him; which Dr. *Whitby*[288] as if he was tainted with Infidelity, endeavours to make an idle Tale of. But excepting, I say this Story of this Woman, we hear nothing of any other heal'd Person; which is Matter of some Speculation: But that the Persons rais'd from the dead should not at all be mention'd in History for their Labours and Lives afterwards to the Honour of *Jesus*, is absolutely unaccountable. Whether such a profound Silence in History about them be not shocking of the Credit of the Miracles, let our *Divines*

consider. I am of Opinion that if *Jesus* really rais'd these Persons from the dead; this and no other Reason, in the Providence of God, can be given for the Silence of Ecclesiastical History about them afterwards, than to make *dead-letter'd* Stories of their Miracles, in order to turn our Heads entirely to the Consideration of their mystical Signification, without which the *Letter*, for the Argument before us, is deserving of no Regard nor Credit. But

3. By way of Objection to the *Letter* of these three Miracles, let us consider the Condition of the Persons rais'd from the dead; and whether they were at all proper Persons for *Jesus* to work such a Miracle upon, in Testimony of his divine Power. If they were improper Persons according to the *Letter*, it's not credible that He, who was the Wisdom of God, would raise them; or if he did, it was because they were the properest to make mystical Emblems of their Stories.

That *Jesus* ought to have rais'd all that dy'd, where-ever he came, during the Time of his Ministry, none, I presume, can hold. Two or three Instances of his almighty and miraculous Power of this Kind will be allow'd to be sufficient: But then they must be wisely and judiciously made Choice of, out of a vast Number of Persons, that must needs die in that Time. Where then was his Wisdom and Prudence to chuse these three Persons above others to that Honour? Why were all of them, or indeed any one of them preferr'd to other Persons of a different Age and Condition in the World? Nay, if the *Letter* of their Stories is only to be regarded, were not all these three Persons almost the improperest and most unfit of any for *Jesus* to exercise that Power on?

Jairus's Daughter was an insignificant *Girl* of twelve

Years old: And there could be no Reason for raising her, but to wipe sorrow from the Hearts, and Tears from the Eyes of her Parents, who ought to have been better Philosophers, than immoderately to grieve for her. And was here a good Reason for *Jesus* to interpose with his Almighty Power? No certainly; a Lecture of Patience and Resignation this Case had been enough. And tho' *Jesus* could raise her from the dead; yet for as much as that Favour was to be conferr'd but on a few; and his Miracles ought to be useful as well as conspicuous, she should have been pass'd by, as an improper Object of his Power, in Comparison of many others, presently to be named. If therefore a better Reason, than what's discernible in the *Letter*, is not to be fetch'd from the Mystery; I can't suppose that *Jesus*, the Wisdom of God would raise this *Girl*; but that the modern Belief of her Resuscitation, exclusive of the mystical Signification, is, as shall be by and by argued, altogether groundless.

The Widow of *Naim*'s Son too was but a νεανισκος *Youth*, and whether any thing older than the *Girl* above is doubtful; but his Life certainly was of no more Importance to the World after, than before his Resurrection. And why was he then one of the *three* to be rais'd from the dead? Why had he this Honour done him, before others of greater Age, Worth, and Use to Mankind? Some will say, for the Comfort or his sorrowful Mother. And is this Reason sufficient? A Discourse on the Pleasures of *Abraham*'s Bosom, where she would e'er long meet her Son, had been enough to chear her Heart. If therefore the Fathers don't help me to a solid mystical Reason, why the Son and *only Son* of a Widow was to be rais'd by *Jesus*, as they were carrying him to his Burial, I'll not believe, He would raise this dead *Boy* rather than

many others, for the Manifestation of his Power; but that the Story of his Resurrection, as shall soon be reasonably proved, was all Sham and Cheat.

Lazarus indeed was *Jesus*'s Friend, whom he Loved; and as I will not question but *Jesus*'s Affection was wisely and deservedly placed on him; so here, to Appearance, was a better Reason for the raising of him, than of either of the other Two. But even this Reason, supposing *Jesus* was to raise but three Persons, is not sufficient against the Cases of many others, that may be put for the Manifestation of his Power, for the Illustration of his Wisdom and Goodness, and for the Conversion of Unbelievers: Consequently, if this Story of *Lazarus* be not parabolical, the litteral Fact is disputable, and obnoxious to such Exceptions presently to be observed against it, as will not be easily got over.

Jesus rais'd the dead, and wrought other Miracles, say our *Divines* often, not only to manifest his own Power and Glory, but his Love to Mankind, and his Inclination to do them good: For which Reason his Miracles are useful and beneficial as well as stupendous and supernatural Acts, on purpose to conciliate Men's Affections as well as their Faith to him. On this Topick our *Divines* are copious and rhetorical, when they write on *Jesus*'s Miracles, as if no more useful and wonderful Works could be done, than what he did. And I do agree with them, that (what Reason bespeaks) the Miracles of a pretended Author of Religion ought to be both as useful and great as well as could be. But such were not *Jesus*'s Miracles according to *Letter*, and least of all his Acts of raising the dead. For if we consider the Persons rais'd by him, we shall find, he could hardly have exerted his Power on any of less Importance to the

World, both before and after their Resurrection. A young *Girl* indeed is fitter to be raised than a decripid old Woman, who by the Course of Nature was to return to Corruption again, as soon as restored to Life: And a *Boy* rather than an infirm old Man for the same Reason: And *Lazarus* the Friend of *Jesus*, perhaps, and but perhaps, rather than his profess'd Enemy. But what are these three Persons in Comparison of many others of other Circumstances? Instead of a *Boy*, and a *Girl* and even of *Lazarus*, who were all of no Consequence to the Publick, either before or since; I should think, *Jesus* ought to have rais'd an useful Magistrate, whose Life had been a common Blessing; an industrious Merchant, whose Death was a publick Loss; a Father of a numerous Family, which for a comfortable Subsistance depended on him. Such dead Objects of *Jesus*'s Power and Compassion could not but offer themselves, during the Time of his Ministry, and if he meant to be as useful as he could, in his Miracles, he would have laid hold on them. If a few Persons only were to be rais'd from the dead, the foresaid were the properest, whose Resurrection and Return to Life would have begotten the Applause as well as the Wonder of the World; would most extensively have spread *Jesus*'s Fame; and would have gain'd him the Love and Discipleship of all that heard of his being so great a Benefactor to Mankind. Such Instances of his Power would have demonstrated him to be a most benign as well as a mighty Agent; and none in Interest or Prejudice could have open'd their Mouths against him, especially if the Persons rais'd from the dead were selected upon the Recommendation of the People of this or that City. But that an insignificant *Boy* and a *Girl*, (forsooth!) and the obscure *Lazarus*, are preferr'd by *Jesus*, to such publick and more

deserving Persons is unaccountable. Their Story therefore, upon this Argument, savours of Romance and Fraud; and unless the *Mystery* help us to, what the *Letter* can't, a good reason for *Jesus*'s Conduct here, the Miracles may be hence justly question'd, and the Credibility of their Report disputed.

But now I am speaking of the Fitness and Unfitness of deceased Persons to have this grand Miracle wrought on them; it comes into my Head to ask, why *Jesus* rais'd not *John* the Baptist to Life again? A Person of greater Merits, and more Worthy of the Favour of *Jesus* and of this Miracle, could not be. If *Jesus* could raise any from the dead he would surely have raised him; and why did he not? This is a reasonable Question and an Answer should be thought on for it. Was it a Thing out of *Jesus*'s Power? Not so; He was Omnipotent, and could by Force or Persuasion have rescued *John*'s Head out of the Hands of his Enemies; and the tacking it again to his Body, and the infusing new Life into him was no more difficult to *Jesus*, than the Resuscitation of a stinking Carcass. If *Jesus* had here exerted his Power, and rais'd his dearest Friend and choicest Minister for the Preparation, if not Propagation of the Gospel, none could question his Ability to raise any others, tho' he had rais'd no more. But in as much as *John* the *Baptist*, one of his singular Merits and Services to *Christ*, was overlook'd and neglected by him; and three useless and insignificant Persons had this Honour done them, the Facts may reasonably be called into question, and, if the Mysteries don't solve the Difficulty, their litteral Stories may hence be accounted foolish, fictitious and fabulous; especially if we consider,

4. That none of these three rais'd Persons had been

long enough dead to amputate all Doubt of *Jesus*'s miraculous Power in their Resurrection. As to *Jairus*'s Daughter, she was but newly expired, if at all dead, when *Jesus* brought her to Life again. *Jesus* himself says, she was but asleep. And according to *Theophanes Cerameus*[289], and *Theophilact*[290] there is Room to suspect that this *Girl* was only Κατοχος *beside herself*. And it is not impossible, but the passionate Skreams of the Feminine By-standers might fright her into Fits, that bore the Appearance of Death; otherwise why did *Jesus* turn there inordinate Weepers out of the House, before he could bring her to her Senses again? And why did he tell her Parents, that she was only in a sleep, but to Comfort them with the Possibility of his awakening her out of it? Is not this destructive of the Miracle, and making no more of it, than what another Man might do? And is there not some Probability, that here's all of this Story? But supposing she was really dead, yet for the sake of an indisputable Miracle in her Resurrection, it must be granted, that she ought to have been much longer, some Days if not Weeks, dead and buried.

As to the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, there was somewhat more of the Appearance of Death in him, than in *Jairus*'s Daughter. He was carried forth to his Burial, and so may be presumed to be really a dead Corpse. But might not here be Fraud or Mistake in the Case? History and common Fame affords Instances of the mistaken Deaths of Persons, who sometimes have been unfortunately buried alive, and at other Times happily, by one Means or other, restored to Life: And who knows but *Jesus*, upon some Information or other, might suspect this Youth to be in a lethargick State, and had a Mind to try, if by chafeing, &c. he could not do, what successfully he did, bring him to

his Senses again: Or might not a Piece of Fraud be here concerted between *Jesus*, a subtil Youth, and his Mother and others; and all the Formalities of a Death and Burial contrived, that *Jesus*, whose Fame for a Worker of Miracles was to be rais'd, might here have an Opportunity to make a shew of a grand one. The Mourning of the Widow, who had her Tears at Command and *Jesus*'s casual meeting of the Corpse upon the Road, looks like Contrivance to put the better Face upon the Matter. God forbid, that I should suspect, there was any Fraud of this Kind here; but of the Possibility of it, none can doubt. And where there is a Possibility of Fraud, it is Nonsense, and mere Credulity to talk of a real, certain and stupendous Miracle, especially where the Juggler and pretended Worker of Miracles has been detected in some of his other Tricks. All that I have to say here to this Matter, is, that if *Jesus* had a Mind to raise the Son of this Widow, in Testimony of his divine Power, he should have suffer'd him to have been buried two or three Weeks first; otherwise, if the Mystery don't account for *Jesus*'s stopping the Bearers of the Corpse upon the Road, here is too much Room for suspicion of Cheat in the Letter of the Story.

Lazarus's Case seems to be the less exceptionable of the three. He had been buried *four Days*, and supposed to be putrified in the Opinion of his Sister *Mary*, and of modern Christians: And if so, his Resuscitation was a most grand and indisputable Miracle. And I could have wish'd, if I had not loved the *Mystery* rather than the *Letter*, that no Cavil and Exception could have been made to it. Whether *Lazarus*, who was *Jesus*'s Friend and beloved Disciple, would not come into Measures with his Lord, for the Defence of his Honour, and Propagation of his Fame, *Infidels*, who take Christianity for an Imposture, will

not question: And whether he would not consent to be interr'd alive, in a hollow Cave, where there was only a Stone laid at the Mouth of it, as long as a Man could fast, none of them will doubt. Four Days was almost too long for a Man to fast without danger of Health; but if those *four Days* are number'd according to the Arithmetick of Jesus's *three Days* in his Grave, they are reducible to two Days and three Nights, which Time, if no Victuals were secretly convey'd with him, a Man might fast in *Lazarus*'s Cave. As to the *stinking* of *Lazarus*'s Carcass: that, *Infidels* will say, was but the Assertion of his Sister beforehand, like a Prologue to a Farce. None of the Spectators at his Resurrection say one Word of his stinking. And as to the Weepings and Lamentations of *Jesus* and of *Lazarus*'s Sisters, they will say that was all Sham and Counterfeit, the better to carry on the Juggle of a feign'd Resurrection. And what's worst of all, they will say, that tho' *Jesus* did call *Lazarus* forth with a *loud Voice*, as if he had been as deaf as a dead Man; yet his *Face was bound about with a Napkin*, so that the Spectators could not discern what was of the Essence of the Miracle, the Change of his Countenance from a dead to a live one, which is a plain Sign, that it was all Fraud and Imposture.

God forbid, that I should have the same sense with *Infidels*, of this Matter; but to be just to their Suggestions and Imaginations here, I must needs say, there are some other unhappy Circumstances, presently to be consider'd, in this Story, which, if they are not emblematical, make it the most notorious Cheat and Imposture that ever was put upon Mankind. In the mean Time, from what is here argued, it is plain, that *Lazarus* was not so long dead and buried, as that there is no Room to doubt of the Miracle of his Resurrection.

Now whether these Arguments against these three Miracles, drawn from the Shortness of the Time, in which these Persons lay for dead, have any Force in them, let our *Divines* consider. If nothing of all this is in their Opinion affecting of the Credit of the Miracles; yet they must allow, that *Jesus*, if he could raise the dead, might have made Choice of other Instances of Persons, more unquestionably dead, who had lain longer in their Graves, and were in a visible State of Putrefaction. And if this grand Miracle of raising the dead was to be wrought by *Jesus* for the Manifestation of his Glory, and in Testimony of his Authority; he should have exercised his Power on some such Persons, nominated by the Magistrates of this or that City, who with the People should be present at the miraculous Operation, beholding the putrified Bodies, (without a Napkin before their Faces) and how they were suddenly enliven'd and invigorated with new Flesh, after the Similitude of their pristine Form, when in Health and full Strength. Because that *Jesus* rais'd not some such Persons to Life, I must take the Stories of the three Miracles before us to be but typical of more mysterious Works; or believe them for the Arguments above to be downright Cheats and Fables. And what is enough to induce a modern *Divine* to this Opinion. Is

5. The Consideration, that none of these rais'd Persons did or could, after the Return of their Souls to their Bodies, tell any Tales of their separate Existence otherwise the Evangelists had not been silent in this main Point, which is of the Essence of Christianity. Are not our *Divines* here reduced to an unhappy *Dilemma*, either to deny the separate Existence of the Soul, or the precedent Deaths of these rais'd Persons? As Christians, We profess to

believe both, which seemingly are incompatiable; or the Evangelists had made such a Relation, as their return'd Souls had given of the other World. Was any Person, in this Age, to be rais'd to Life, that had been any time dead; the first Thing that his Friends and Acquaintance would enquire of him, would be to know, where his Soul had been; in what Company; and how it had fared with him; and Historians would certainly record his Narrative. The same Curiosity could not but possess People of old, when these Miracles were wrought; and if the rais'd Persons had told any Stories of their separate Existance, the Evangelists no less unquestionally would have reported them, in as much as such a Report would have been, not only a Confirmation of that Doctrine; which is of the Essence of our Religion; but an absolute Confutation of the *Sadducees* and *Sceptists* of that Age, and of the *Materialists* of this. But this their Silence in this Case is of bad Consequence, either to the Doctrine of the Soul's Existence in Separation from the Body, or to these Miracles themselves, since we must hereupon almost necessarily hold, that these rais'd Persons were not at all dead, or that their Souls dy'd with them.

The Author of a Sermon, ascrib'd to St. *Augustin* tells us[291] that *Lazarus* after his Resurrection made a large Report of *Hell*, where he had been: But as this is a mere Fiction of that Author, without the least Authority from Scripture; so I presume it will be accounted a *Blunder* in him, to suppose the Soul of *Lazarus*, the Friend and beloved of *Jesus*, was in Hell. The Soul of *Jesus* indeed, for Reasons best known to himself, upon his Death, descended into Hell, when some think he should rather have gone, with the penitent Thief, into Paradise. But the Thoughts, that any of *Jesus*'s Friends should go to Hell, I suppose

will not be born with; or what will become of the Preachers of this Age, who would be accounted Men or that Denomination. And if *Lazarus*'s Soul had been in Paradise, it was hardly a good Work in *Jesus* to recall it, for thirty Years afterwards, to the Miseries and Troubles of this wicked World. I wish therefore our *Divines* could determine, where *Lazarus*'s Soul was for the four Days of his Burial; because I can't possibly conceive any thing else, than that he was not really dead, or that his Soul dy'd with him, or went to a bad place, otherwise after his Resurrection he had never absconded for fear of the *Jews*, as if he was unwilling to die again, and return to the Place from whence he came.

But however it was with the Souls of these rais'd Persons before their Re-union to their Bodies, here is another Difficulty and Objection against these Miracles; and how will our *Divines* get over it? Perhaps they may say, that tho' these rais'd Persons were before really dead; yet their Souls were not as yet gone to their Places prepared of God for them, but continued hovering about their Bodies, like the Flame about the Snuff of a Candle, with desires

——iterumq; reverti
Corpora——

to be again rejoin'd to them. And withall my Heart let this Answer pass, if our *Divines* and *Infidels* can so agree upon it. As for my own Opinion, it is this, that these Miracles of *Jesus* are Parables, and that it was beside the Purpose of the Parable, and of the *Evangelists* to say any thing of the Place and State of the Soul upon its Separation from the Body; otherwise the Letter of their Stories is manifestly obnoxious to the Objection above, or the Deaths of

these pretended rais'd Persons, upon Christian Principles, are questionable. But

6. And lastly, Let us consider the intrinsick Absurdities and Incredibilities of the several Stories of these three Miracles. And such Absurdities shall we find in them, that, if they had been intended as Testimonies of *Jesus*'s divine Power, had never been inserted in their Narratives.

As to *Jairus*'s Daughter, and her Resurrection from the dead, St. *Hilary*[292] hints, that there was no such Person as *Jairus* whose Name was fictitious, and coin'd with a spiritual Signification for the Use of the Parable; and he gives this Reason, and a good Reason it is, why he thought so, because it is elsewhere[293] intimated in the Gospel, that none of the Rulers of the Synagogues confessedly believed on *Jesus*. Is not here then a stumbling-Block at the Threshold of the Letter of this Story? But why did *Jesus* say, this Girl was but in a Sleep? If he was going to work a Miracle in her Resuscitation, he should not have call'd Death, *Sleep*; but if others had been of a contrary Opinion, he should first have convinced them of the Certainty of her Death, before he did the great Work on her. And why did he charge the Parents of the Girl not to speak of the Miracle? If he meant it as Testimony of his divine Power, he should rather have exhorted them, in justice to himself to publish it, and make it well known. And why, as St. *Ambrose*[294] puts the Question, did he turn the People out of the House, before he would raise her? The more Witnesses are present at a Miracle, the better it is attested, and the more readily believed by others; and who should be present at the Miracle rather than those who were incredulous of *Jesus*'s divine Power? Are not all these

Circumstances, so many *Absurdities*, which, if they are not to be accounted for in the *Mystery*, are so far destructive of the *Letter*, as that it is Nonsense and Folly in our *Divines* to talk of a Miracle here, against *Jesus*'s express Word and Prohibition to the contrary.

As to the Story of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, excepting what is before observed of the shortness of the Time, in which he lay dead, and of the Unfitness of his Person to be rais'd before an Husband and Father of a Family, to the Comfort of his Wife and Children, (which are enough to overthrow the Credulity of the Miracle) I have here no more Fault to find in the Letter of it.

But the long Story of *Lazarus* is so brimful of Absurdities, that, if the Letter alone is to be regarded; St. *John*, who was then above a hundred, when he wrote it, had lived beyond his Reason and Senses, or he could not have committed them.

I have not Room here to make Remarks on all these Absurdities, which would be the Work of a Volume; but shall single out three or four of them at present, reserving the rest for another Opportunity, when the whole Story of this Miracle will appear to be such a Contexture of Folly and Fraud in its Contrivance, Execution, and Relation, as is not to be equall'd in all Romantick History; and our *Divines* will find themselves so distress'd upon the Dissection and Display of it, as that they must of Necessity allow this Story to be but a Parable; or, what's most grievous to think on, give up their Religion upon it.

First then, observe that *Jesus* is said to have *wept* and *groan'd* for the Death of *Lazarus*: But why so, says[295] St. *Basil*? Was not this an *Absurdity* to weep

at all for the Death of him, whom he could, and was about to recover to Life again? Another Man may as reasonably grieve for the Absence of his Friend, whose Company and Presence he can retrieve in an Instant, as that *Jesus* should shed Tears for *Lazarus* in this Case. If *Jesus* could not or would not raise him from the dead, he ought not, as a Philosopher, who knows Man is born to die, to betray so much Weakness as to weep for him. Patience and Resignation unto God upon the Death of our dearest Friends and Relations is what all Philosophers have rightly taught; and *Jesus*, one would think, should have been the most Heroical Example of these Graces; and how came he to fail of it here? A Stoical Apathy had better became him than such childish and effeminate Grief, which not only makes him a mean and poor-spirited Mortal; but is a gross *Absurdity* and *Incredibility* upon Consideration of his Will and Power to fetch *Lazarus* to Life again. If there be not, according to the Fathers, Mystery in these Tears of *Jesus*, they are a foolish and unnatural Prelude to a Farce, he was acting in the pretended Resuscitation of *Lazarus*.

Some antient Catholicks, not being apprised of the Mystery, were so offended at these Words, *Jesus wept*, that, as *Epiphanius*[296] says, they expung'd them out of their Bibles; and I wonder, they have not, before now, disturb'd the Faith of Ministers of the Letter, to the utter Rejection of the Miracle.

Secondly, Observe that *John* says, it was with *a loud Voice*, that *Jesus* call'd *Lazarus* forth out of his Cave. And why, I pray, a louder Voice than ordinary? Was dead *Lazarus* deafer than *Jairus*'s Daughter, or the Widow's Son? Or was his Soul at so great a Distance from his Body, as he could not hear a still and low

Voice? Some such silly Reason as *this* must be given for this *loud Voice* here; but how absurd it is according to the Letter, Infidels will judge, till Christians can assign a better. The dead can hear the Whisper of the Almighty, if Power go along with it, as soon as the Sound of a Trumpet. St. *John* then should not have written of a *loud Voice*, unless he meant to adapt his Story to the Capacities and Conceptions of the Vulgar, who have no Apprehensions of God's Power, out of sensible and human Representations of it.

Thirdly, Because that a Miracle should be well guarded against all Suspicion of Fraud, I was thinking to make it an *Absurdity*, that the Napkin, before *Jesus* rais'd *Lazarus*, was not taken from his Face, that the Spectators might behold his mortified Looks, and the miraculous Change of his Countenance from Death unto Life. What *Infidels* think of this Circumstance I know not: I hope it is not with them a Token of Fraud and Imposture; tho' I must needs say, that if the Fathers did not let me in to the Mystery of the Napkin about *Lazarus*'s Face when *Jesus* call'd him forth, I should not my self like it.

Fourthly, and lastly, Observe, St. *John* says, v. 45. that *many of the Jews, who had seen the Things that Jesus did* here; *believed on him*; and *some of them*, v. 46. who did not believe, *went their Ways to the Pharisees and told them what Things Jesus had done* in this pretended Miracle, and how the Business was transacted: Whereupon the Chief Priests and Pharisees were so far incens'd as v. 53. *from that Day forth they took Council together to put him to Death*; and Ch. xii. 10. *consulted, that they might put* Lazarus *also to Death*. Jesus *therefore* (and his Disciples and

Lazarus fled for it, for they) v. 54. *walk'd no more openly among the Jews*, but *went thence into a Country near to the Wilderness* (a convenient hiding Place) *and there continued with his Disciples*; otherwise in all Probability they had been all sacrificed.

I dare not argue upon these Circumstances, neither would I, for the Honour of *Jesus* have mention'd them; but that my old Friend, the Jewish *Rabbi*, who help'd me to the Satirical Invective against *Jesus*'s Miracle of *turning Water into Wine*, has hence form'd an Objection against *Lazarus*'s Resurrection, and sent me a *Letter* upon it, desiring me to publish it, and exhort the *Clergy* to answer it; otherwise he would clandestinely hand it about to the Prejudice of our Religion: Whereupon I, rather than Christianity should so suffer, do here publish it, and it is as follows.

> "*Sr.* When we last discours'd on *Jesus*'s Miracles, I promised to send you my Thoughts on *Lazarus*'s Resurrection, which I look upon as a notorious Imposture, and for the Proof of it, need go no farther, than to the Circumstances of its Story, which your *Evangelist* has related.
>
> "If there had been an indisputable Miracle wrought in *Lazarus*'s Resurrection; why were the *Chief-Priests* and *Pharisees* so incens'd upon it, as *to take Council to put both Jesus* and *Lazarus* to *Death for it*? Where was the Provocation? I can conceive none. Tho' the *Jews* were ever so canker'd with Malice and Hatred to

Jesus before; yet such a most stupendous Miracle was enough to stop their Mouths, and turn their Hearts: Or if their Prejudices against *Jesus* were insuperable, and they hated him but the more for the Number and Greatness of his Miracles; yet why is poor *Lazarus*, inoffensive *Lazarus*, upon whom this good and great Work was wrought, an Object of their Hatred too? Your *Divines* are to give a credible and probable Account of this Matter, such a one as will comport with Reason and Sense; or we shall conclude, that it was *Fraud*, detected in this pretended Miracle, which justly provok'd the Indignation of our Ancestors.

"To say, what is all you can say, that it was downright Inhumanity, Barbarity and Brutality in the *Jews* to hate *Lazarus* as well as *Jesus*, will not do here. Tho' this may pass with many Christians, who are ready to swallow, without chewing, any evil Reports of our Nation; yet it can't go down with reasonable and unprejudic'd Men, who must have other Conceptions of human Nature in all Ages and Nations, than to think it possible, that a Man, in *Lazarus*'s Case, can be hated and persecuted for having had such a good and wonderful Work done on him. And why then was he hated

and persecuted? I say, for this, and no other Reason, than because he was a Confederate with *Jesus* in the wicked Imposture, he was putting upon Mankind.

"But supposing, what is never to be granted, that the *Jews* of old were so inhuman, brutish, and barbarous as to hate and persecute *Lazarus* as well as *Jesus* for this Miracle; yet why did *Jesus* and his Disciples, with *Lazarus*, run away and abscond upon it? for they v. 54. *walk'd no more openly among the* Jews, *but went thence into a Country near to the Wilderness, and there* Jesus *continued with his Disciples*. Is not here a plain Sign of Guilt and of Fraud? Men, that have God's Cause, Truth and Power on their Side, never want Courage and Resolution to stand to it. And however your Christian *Priests* may palliate the cowardly and timerous Conduct of *Jesus* and his Confederates in this Case; yet with me, it's like Demonstration, that there was a discover'd Cheat in the Miracle, or they would undauntedly have faced their Enemies, without Fears And Apprehensions of Danger from them.

"Our Ancestors then, who unquestionably detected the Fraud, were in the right on't to prosecute with Severity, the whole Party

concern'd in it: And if they had aveng'd the Wickedness of it upon *Lazarus* as well as they did upon *Jesus*, I should have commended them for it. Whether such a monstrous Imposture, as was this pretended Miracle, happily discover'd does not call aloud for Vengeance and most exemplary Punishment; and whether any Nation of the World would suffer the like with Impunity, let any Man judge.

"For all the Reports of your Gospels, it is unnatural to hate a miraculous Healer of Diseases; and there must be somewhat suppress about the Inveteracy of the *Jews* to *Jesus*, or his healing Power, if it was so great as is imagined, must have reconciled them to him: But that they should hate not only *Jesus* for raising the dead, but the Person rais'd by him, is improbable, incredible, and impossible.

"If Historians can parallel this Story of the Malignity of the *Jews* towards *Jesus* and *Lazarus* upon such a real Miracle, with any Thing equally barbarous and inhuman, in any other Sect or Nation; we will acknowledge the Truth of it against our ancient Nation: Or if such Inhumanity, abstractedly consider'd, be at all agreeable to the

Conceptions any one can form of Human Nature in the most uncivilis'd and brutish People, we will allow our Ancestors, in this Case, to have been that People.

"Was such a real and indisputable Miracle, as this of *Lazarus* is supposed, to be wrought at this day in Confirmation of Christianity, I dare say, it would bring all us *Jews*, to a Man, into the Belief of it: And I don't think it possible, for any People to be so begotten, byass'd, and prejudiced, as not to be wrought on by it. Or if they would not part with their Interests and Prejudices upon it, they would have more Wit and Temper, than to break forth into a Rage against all or any of the Persons concern'd in it. And, for my Life, I can entertain no worse Thoughts of our old Nation.

"Supposing God should send an Ambassador at this day, who, to convince Christians of the Mischiefs and Inconvenience of an *Hireling Priesthood*, should work such a Miracle as was this of *Lazarus*'s Resurrection, in the Presence of a multitude of Spectators; how would your *Bishops* and *Clergy* behave themselves upon it? Why, they would be as mute as Fishes; or if they did fret and grieve inwardly for

the Loss of their Interests; yet they would have more Prudence (ask them else,) than to show their Anger openly, and persecute both *Agent* and *Patient* for it. Wherefore then are they so censorious and uncharitable as to preach and believe another Notion and Doctrine of our Ancestors?

"But if a false Prophet, for the subversion of an *Hireling Priesthood*, should, in spite to the *Clergy*, counterfeit such a Miracle, and be detected in the Operation; how then would Priests and People, Magistrates and Subjects behave upon it? Why, they would be full of Indignation, and *from that day forth would take Council to put* the Impostor and his Confederate to Death, of which they would be most deserving; and if they did not abscond and fly for it, like *Jesu* and his Disciples *to a Wilderness in the Country* to hide themselves, the Rage of the Populace would hardly wait the Leisure of Justice to dispatch and make terrible Examples of them. Was not this exactly the Case of *Jesus*'s Imposture in the Resurrection of *Lazarus*; and of the Punishment he was threaten'd with, and afterwards most justly underwent for it?

"Mankind may be in some Cases very obdurate, and so hard of Belief, as to

stand it out against Sense, Reason and Demonstration: But I will not think worse of our Ancestors than of the rest of Mankind; or that they any more than others would have withstood a clear and indisputable Miracle in *Lazarus*'s Resuscitation. Such a manifest Miracle, let it be wrought for what End and Purpose, we can possibly imagine, would strike Men with Awe and Reverence; and none could hate and persecute the Author of the Miracle; least He who could raise the dead, should exert his Power against themselves, and either wound or smite them dead with it. For which Reason, the Resurrection of *Lazarus*, on the certain Knowledge of our Ancestors, was all Fraud, or they would have reverenc'd and adored the Power of him, that did it.

"It may be true, what *John* says, that *many of the Jews, who had seen the Things that Jesus did, believed on him*, that is, believed that he had wrought here a great Miracle: But who were these? the ignorant and credulous, whom a much less *juggler* than Mr. *Fawkes* could easily impos'd on. But on the other hand, it is certain, according to *Christian Commentators*, that *some of them* did not believe the Miracle, but *went their ways to the Pharisees and told them what Things*

Jesus had done, that is, told them, after what manner the Intrigue was managed; and complain'd of the Fraud in it. How they came to suspect and discover the Fraud, was not *John*'s Business to relate; and for want of other ancient Memorials, we can only guess at it. Perhaps they discern'd some motion in *Lazarus*'s Body, before the Word of Command, to *come forth*, was given; perhaps they discover'd some Fragments of the Food, that for *four days* in the Cave, he had subsisted on. But however this was, they could not but take Notice of the *Napkin about his Face* all the while; which *Jesus*, to prevent all suspicion of Cheat, should have first order'd to be taken off, that his mortify'd Countenance might be view'd, before the miraculous Change of it to Life was wrought. This neglect in *Jesus* (which I wonder *John* had no more Wit than to hint at) will be a lasting Objection to the Miracle. *Jesus* was wiser, than not to be aware of the Objection, which he would have obviated, if he durst, by a Removal of the Napkin, to the satisfaction of all Spectators there present. Because this was not done, we *Jews* now deny, there was any Miracle wrought; and, whether our Unbelief upon this Circumstance be not well grounded, we appeal to Christian

Priests themselves, who must own, that if there was a Miracle here, the Matter was ill conducted by *Jesus*, or foolishly related by his *Evangelist*."

"It is a sad Misfortune, that attends our modern enquiry after Truth, that there are no other Memorials extant of the Life and Miracles of *Jesus*, than what are written by his own Disciples. Not only old Time has devour'd, but Christians themselves, (which in the Opinion of the impartial makes for us) when they got Power into their Hands, wilfully destroy'd many Writings of our Ancestors, as well as of *Celsus* and *Porphiry* and others, which they could not answer; otherwise I doubt not but they would have given us clear Light into a the Imposture of *Lazarus*'s Resurrection: But if *Jesus*, according to his own *Evangelists*, was arraign'd for a *Deceiver* and *Blasphemer*, in pretending to the Sonship and Power of God by his Miracles; in all Probability this Piece of Fraud in *Lazarus* was one Article of the Indictment against him; and what makes it very likely, is that the *Chief Priests* and *Pharisees*, from the Date of this pretended Miracle, *took Council together to put him to Death*, not clandestinely or tumultuously to murder him, but judicially to punish him with Death, which, if they proved their Indictment by credible

and sufficient Witnesses, he was most worthy of.

"As it is plain from the Story in *John*, that there was a Dispute among the By-standers at *Lazarus*'s Resurrection, whether it was a real Miracle or not; so it is the Opinion of us *Jews*, which is of the Nature of a Tradition, that the *Chief-Priests* and civil Magistrates of *Bethany*, for the better Determination of the Dispute and quieting of the Minds of the People, requir'd that *Jesus* should re-act the Miracle upon another Person, there lately dead and buried. But *Jesus* declining this Test of his Power, the whole Multitude of Believers as well as of Unbelievers before, question'd the Resurrection of *Lazarus*; and were highly incens'd against both him and *Jesus* for the Deceit in it. And this was *one* Reason among others of that vehement and Universal Outcry and Demand, at *Jesus*'s Tryal, for his Crucifixion. I'll not answer for the Certainty of this Tradition or Opinion, but as the Expedient was obvious, so it has the Face of Truth and Credibility; and for the Proof of it, I need only appeal to Christian *Priests* and *Magistrates*; whether, under a Dispute of a Miracle of that Consequence, they would not require, for full Satisfaction, it should be acted over again; and, if the *Juggler* refused,

whether there would not be a general Clamour of People of all Ranks for his *Execution*.

"*Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*, who knew as much of this Sham-Miracle as *John*, had not the Confidence to report it; because, when they wrote, many Eye-Witnesses of the Fraud were alive to disprove and contradict them; therefore they confined their Narratives to *Jesus*'s less juggling Tricks, that had pass'd more current: But after the *Jewish* State was dissolved, their judicial Records were destroy'd, and every Body dead that could confute him, *John* ventures abroad the Story of this Miracle; and if the good Providence of God had not infatuated him, in the Insertion of the Circumstances here observed, it might have pass'd through all Generations to come, as well as it has done for many past, for a grand Miracle.

"Thus, *Sir*, have you a few of my Thoughts on the pretended Miracle of *Lazarus*'s Resurrection. I have more to bestow on it, but that I would not be tedious. There's no need to argue against the other two Resurrection-Stories. You know *omne majus includit minus*, and if the greatest of the three Miracles be an Imposture, the two less ones of

Consequence are Artifice and Fraud. And rather than the Miracle of *Lazarus* shall stand its Ground, I'll have t'other Bout at it from some other Circumstances; the Consideration of which will make it as foolish and wicked an Imposture, as ever was contrived and transacted in the World; such a *wicked Imposture* of most pernicious Consequence to the Welfare of the Publick, that it is no Wonder, the People, by an unanimous Voice, call'd for the Releasement of *Barabbas*, a Robber and Murderer, before *Jesus*. I don't suppose these Arguments against this Miracle will be convincing of your Christian *Clergy*, who are hired to the Belief of it. But however, a *Bishop* of many *thousands* a Year to believe, can't in Conscience deny, that the Arguments above are a sufficient Justification of our *Jewish* Disbelief of it.

"If you, Sir, should write a Discourse gainst the Letter of the Story of *Jesus*'s Resurrection, I beg of you to accept of a few of my Conceptions on that Head, which, I promise you, shall be out of the common Road of thinking. Your *Divines* think they have exhausted that Subject, and absolutely confuted all Objections that can be made against it, but are much mistaken. Sometimes we *Jews* dip into their Writings on this Head,

> and always smile with Indignation at their foolish Invectives against the Blindness of the Eyes, and Hardness of the Hearts of our Ancestors. If they would but favour us with a Liberty to write for our selves, a reasonable Liberty, which in this Philosophical Age we don't despair of, especially under so wise just and good a Civil Administration, as this Nation is happily bless'd with, we would cut them out some more Work, which they are not aware of. In the mean Time I am your assured Friend,"
>
> *N.N.*

So ends the Letter of my Friend, the *Jewish Rabbi*, which consists of *calm* and *sedate* Reasoning, or I would not have publish'd it; for I am resolv'd he shall no more impose upon me with his ludicrous and bantering Stuff, like his Satirical Invective against *Jesus*'s Miracle of *turning Water into Wine*, so offensive to our Godly *Bishops*. And because it consists of *calm* and *sedate* Reasoning, which *Bishop Smalbroke* allows of, I hope his *Lordship* will take it into Consideration, and write an Answer to it, which I, without the Help of the Mystery, can't do.

If the foresaid *Letter* be offensive to our *Clergy*, who don't judge it meet that the *Jews* should take this Liberty to write against the Miracles of our Saviour, and in Vindication of their own disbelief of Christianity, I beg of them, for the Love of *Jesus*, not to let their Displeasure be visibly seen; because the *Jews* will then laugh in their Sleeves, and perhaps

openly insult and triumph upon it: But if they will privately acquaint me with their Displeasure at it, I'll promise them to hold no more Correspondence with such *Jewish Rabbies*; neither will I ever hereafter publish any other Objections against *Christ*'s Religion and Miracles, than what come from the *Hotentots* and *Pawawers*: and then it will be strange, if our dignified *Clergy*, of most grave and demure Looks, can't solidly confute the worst, that such ignorant and illiterate People can urge against them.

And thus have I done with my Objections against the Letter of these three Miracles. If our *Divines* shall think there is little or nothing of Force in them; then an Answer, which I should be glad to see, may the more easily be made to them. As for my part, without being conceited of the Acuteness and Strength of any of the Objections, I think it impossible satisfactorily to reply to them, without having Recourse to the Opinions of the Fathers, that these three Miracles, whether they were ever litterally transacted or not, are now but emblematical Representations of mysterious and more wonderful Operations to be perform'd by *Jesus*.

To the Fathers then let us go for their mystical Interpretation of these Miracles. St. *Augustin*, in his Introduction to a Sermon on the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, says[297] thus, "There are some so silly as to stand amazed at the corporal Miracles of *Jesus*, and have no Consideration of his greater and spiritual Miracles, signified by them: but others who are wiser can hear of the Things that *Jesus* did on Men's Bodys, without being astonish'd at them, chusing rather to contemplate with Admiration his more wonderful Works on Men's Souls; after the similitude of bodily Miracles. And these are the Christians that conform

their Studies to the Will of our Lord; who would have his corporal Miracles, spiritually interpreted: For He wrought not Miracles in the Flesh, for the sake of such Miracles abstractedly consider'd; but that, if they were surprising to some Mens Senses, they should be more astonishing to the Understanding of others, who apprehend the spiritual Meaning of them. And they who by Contemplation can attain to the mystical Signification of *Jesus*'s Miracles, are the best Scholars and most learn'd Disciples in his Church and School. And, (*speaking of the Absurdity of Jesus's cursing the Figtree according to the Letter*) presently after says, that this he observ'd, that he might persuade his Hearers to think, that our Lord *Jesus* therefore wrought Miracles, that he might signify somewhat by them, which he would have his Disciples to learn and consider of. Come now, *says he*, and let us see what we are mistically and spiritually to understand by the Stories of the three Persons rais'd from the dead."

There are two Ways, that the Fathers took in the moral and mystical Interpretation of these Miracles: One was from the Number *three*, and their Difference in Magnitude. According to which they said with St. *Augustin*[298] that these three sorts of dead Persons, so rais'd to Life, are Figures of three sorts of Sinners, whom *Jesus* raiseth from the death of Sin to the Life of Righteousness. They who have conceiv'd Sin in their Hearts, and have not brought it forth into Act; are figured by *Jairus*'s Daughter, who lay dead in the House of her Father, and was not taken forth to her Burial. Others, who after Cogitation and Consent, pass into actual Sin are figured by the Young Man, carried towards his Grave. But those Sinners, who are habituated and long accustom'd to Sin, are like *Lazarus* bury'd, and in a stinking Condition under the

Corruption of it; whom *Jesus*, for all that, with the *loud Voice* of the Prædication of his Gospel, will call forth out of the Death and Grave of their Sins to a new Life. So does St. *Augustin* make these three dead Persons and their Resurrections, Emblems of the said three Sorts of Sinners, who are dead in Trespasses and Sins, and by the Power of *Jesus* quicken'd to a Life of Righteousness. And to this Opinion of St. *Augustin*, do St. *Ambrose*, *Eusebius Gallicanus*, and Venerable *Bede* agree. And according to this Notion of these Miracles they descend to a particular Explication of the several Parts of their Stories. As to give you two or three Instances.

The People who were turn'd out of the House, upon the raising of *Jairus*'s Daughter, which is an *Absurdity* according to the *Letter* are, says[299] *Bede*, a Multitude of wordly and wicked Thoughts, which, except they are excluded from the Secrets of the Heart, are a Hindrance of the Resurrection of a Sinner to a new Life.

The Bearers of the Young Man[300] to his Burial are Vices, evil Spirits, Hæreticks, and Seducers; and the *Widow*, his Mother, to whom he was restored, is the *Church*, who mourns for the Death of such Sinners, as are typified by that Young Man.

Jesus's *weeping* for dead *Lazarus*, which is an *Absurdity* according to the *Letter*, is a Sign[301] of the deplorable State, that habitual Sinners are in, enough to excite the Sorrows and Mournings of good Christians, who have the Spirit of *Christ*, for them. And the Stone that lay at the Grave of *Lazarus*, is[302] a figure of the Hardness of the Heart of such a Sinner which must be taken away before *Jesus* will call him to a new Life. So do the Fathers moralise and

allegorise every Minute Circumstance of these three Miracles, as any one, who will consult them, may find, and save me the Trouble of a tedious Recital of their Authorities.

But the other mystical Way of interpreting these three Miracles is by making them Types of three great Events at the Time of *Christ*'s spiritual Advent. Accordingly the raising of *Jairus*'s Daughter is a Type of the Conversion of the *Jews* at that Day, as *Eusebius Gallicanus*[303] and venerable *Bede*[304] and others expound it. By *Jairus*, the Ruler of a *Synagogue*; is meant *Moses*[305]; and by his Daughter is to be understood the *Jewish Church*, which, being at present in a State of Spiritual Death, will be revived and converted in the Perfection of Time. And to the mystical Resurrection or Restitution of the *Jewish Synagogue*, call'd *Jairus*'s Daughter, will *Jesus* come[306] at the same Time he heals the Woman of the Church of her Issue of Blood. And this is the Reason that the Stories of these two Miracles are blended together by the *Evangelists*, with their synchronical Numbers of the Age of the *Girl* and of the Disease of the Woman; because they are Types of that blessed Scene of Affairs at the Conversion of the *Jews*, when the Fulness of the *Gentiles* is come in. Concerning which blessed state of the Church, *Origen*[307] says, *Jesus* wrought many Miracles, by Way of Type and Figure.

Among all the Miracles that *Jesus* wrought, and are recorded by the *Evangelists*, I think, as far as I have had Occasion to observe, the Fathers are most scanty in their Interpretations of that of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son: Excepting what is before noted of his being a figure of a Sinner dead in actual, tho' not habitual Sin, I find very little. But if *Origen*'s

Comments on this Miracle had been extant, I dare say he would have given us this following Interpretation of it. This Widow, he would have call'd the Church; and her *only Son* or masculine Offspring, he would have call'd the *Spiritual Sense* of the Scriptures, which is now dead, and that the *Ministers* of the *Letter*, who are his Bearers, are for interring him within the *Earth* of the *Letter*: But *Jesus*, upon his Spiritual Advent will put a stop to the Intention of such Bearers, by reviving the *Spiritual Sense* of the Scriptures; and by restoring it, like a *quicken'd Son*, to the Comfort of his Mother, the Church; who has been in a sorrowful and lamentable Condition upon the Death and Want of it: This, I am sure, would be *Origen*'s Interpretation of this Miracle, which, if I had Room here, by a little Circumlocution, I could prove.

As to *Lazarus*'s Resurrection, it is in the Opinion of the Fathers[308] a Type of the general and mystical Resurrection of Mankind in the Perfection of Time. But this is a most copious Subject; and unless I could here throughly handle it, I had much better say nothing.

And thus have I done with the three Resurrection Stories. If the *Convocation*, next Session, would determine by an Orthodox Vote, whether *Jesus* rais'd any more, than the said three Persons, from the dead or not; I would present them with a new and more entertaining Chain of Thoughts against these Miracles; such a Chain of Thoughts, as, upon the Conclusion, let them hold which Side of the Question, they please, will necessarily induce us to hold the mystical Meaning of these Miracles, or to grant that *Jesus* rais'd none from the dead at all.

My next and last *Discourse* on *Jesus*'s Miracles shall be against the Letter of the Story of his own Resurrection, in which, if our *Bishops* will keep their Temper and Patience, till I publish it, I'll cut out such a Piece of Work for our *Boylean Lectures*, as shall hold them tug, so long as the *Ministry* of the *Letter* and an *Hireling Priesthood* shall last. If *Christ be not risen*, then, according to the Inference of St. *Paul*, *is their Preaching vain*; and why should the People be any longer charg'd with the Maintenance of an ignorant and idle Order of Men, to no Use and Purpose?

If I had not had Experience of it, I could never have believed that, for all the ludicrous Nature of these *Discourses*, our *dignified Clergy* could have been so foolish or malicious as to prosecute me for an *Infidel* and *Blasphemer* upon them. How a Man may be mistaken in himself! I took my self for a real Advocate for the Truth of Christianity; and was so vain as to imagine these Discourses tended to a Demonstration of *Jesus*'s Messiahship: And tho' the *Bishop* of *London* may be of a contrary Opinion, yet I am still so conceited of my Ability to defend our Religion, that I'll stake my Life against his *Bishoprick*, which I'll not be troubled with, if I win it, that he can't form an Objection against Christianity, which I can't solidly confute, and make our Readers merry too, with his Weakness and Impertinence in it. But perhaps it may be unbecoming of his Lordship's Character, and against the Grain, to make an Objection to that Religion, which he finds much *temporal*, as well as some *spiritual* Comfort in the Profession of; I will therefore descend to another Proposal, *viz.* If he'll but publish an Answer to the *Jewish Rabbi*'s Letter in this Discourse, and vouchsafe me the pleasure of a Reply to him; then (to save the

Civil Magistrate's Trouble) I will suffer any Punishment that in his Clemency he shall think fit to inflict on me, for what's past. Oh, what a Hazard do I here run of Life or Liberty!

Some Christians, in my Case, would think it a sad Misfortune to be odiously represented as an *Infidel* and *Blasphemer*; but I, in Temper and Principle, despise such Obloquies, Slanders and Defamations; and would not give a Rush to remove them, so long as I had the Answer of a good Conscience that I was undeserving of them: But considering, that it is the Duty of a Christian to seek the Peace and Friendship of all about him, and especially of our good *Bishops*, who, in Compassion to the Danger they think my Soul is in, have taken zealous and laudable Pains with the *Civil Magistrate* for my Conviction and Conversion; I do here, for the sake of a Reconciliation with their *Lordships* and other good People, make a formal and solemn Confession of my Christian Faith, which tho' I don't express in the Words of the *Apostical*, *Nicene* or *Athanasian* Creeds; yet will do it in such Terms as will be a Demonstration that at the Bottom I am found as a *Roch*. Be it known then to all Christian People, that

Imprimis, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that the Ministry of the Letter of the *Old* and *New* Testament is downright *Antichristianism*.

Item, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that the Miracles of *Jesus*, as they are recorded by the Evangelists, *litterally* understood, are the *lying Wonders* of Antichrist.

Item, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that all opposition and Contradiction to spiritual and allegorical Interpretations of the Scripture, is the Sin

of *Blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost.

Item, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that the *Ministry* of the *Spirits* or allegorical Interpretations of the Law and the Prophets will be the Conversion of *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

Item, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that the *Ministry* of the *Letter*, and an Hireling-Priesthood have been the Cause of the Infidelity and Apostacy of these latter Times.

Item, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that the Spirit and Power of *Jesus* will soon enter the Church and expel Hireling-Priests, who make Merchandise of the Gospel, out of her, after the manner he is suppos'd to have driven the *Buyers* and *Sellers* out of the Temple.

These are a few Articles of that Faith, once deliver'd to the *Saints* of the primitive Church, which I firmly believe, and will earnestly contend for. Now I appeal to the Christian World, whether a Man of such a Faith, like Heart of Oak, can be an Infidel or Blasphemer. Upon this ingenuous Confession of my Faith, which I make by way of Atonement for my past supposed Errors and Offences, I hope the *Bishops* and all good Christian People will be reconciled to me.

St. *James* says, that *Faith without Works is dead*, and how a Man ought to show his Faith by his Works, without which Faith is an empty and airy Nothing. Accordingly I am making what haste I can to show the Sincerity of my Faith by these my *Works* and *Discourses* of this Kind. And by the Grace of God, I hope our Bishops will find me as unmoveable as a

Rock in the said Faith.

According to the foresaid Articles of this my Faith, I am so fully convinced, not only of the Error of the *Ministry* of the *Letter*, but of the Mischiefs and Inconveniences of an *Hireling-Priesthood*, that, having set my Shoulders to the Work, I am resolv'd, by the Help of God, to endeavour to give *both* a Lift out of this World. This is fair and generous Warning to our *Clergy* to sit fast, and look to their own Safety, or they may find me a stronger Man than they may be aware of. And tho' I don't expect long to survive the Accomplishment of so great and glorious a Work; yet I am delightfully ravish'd and transported with the Forethought and Contemplation of the Happiness of Mankind, upon the Extinction of Ecclesiastical *Vermin*, out of God's House; when the World will return to its *Primogenial* and *Paradisaical* State of Nature, Religion and Liberty; in which we shall be *all taught of God*, and *have no need* of a foolish and contentious Priest, hired to harangue us with his Noise and Nonsense. Which blessed State of the World God of his infinite Mercy hasten, for the sake of our Spiritual Messiah, Mediator and Redeemer *Jesus Christ*. To whom be Glory for ever, *Amen*.

FINIS.



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A SIXTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

In View of the Present Controversy between Infidels and Apostates.

Jamque Opus exegi,——

The Second Edition.

By Tho. Woolston, B.D. sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge*.

***LONDON*:**

Printed for the AUTHOR, and Sold by him next Door to the *Star*, in *Aldermanbury*, and by the Booksellers of *London* and *Westminster*.

MDCCXXIX.

[*Price One Shilling.*]

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God,

JOHN,

Lord Bishop of *Oxford*.

MY LORD,



hen *the following* Discourse *was finish'd and ready for the* Press, *I consider'd to what* Bishop *the* Dedication *of it would be most acceptable* (*for I am resolv'd that none but* Bishops *as yet shall have the Honour of my* Dedications) *and I had not long ponder'd upon the Matter, before I hit upon your* Lordship, *who must needs be pleas'd with this* Discourse, *because of the Advantage, that you, as well as my self, in the End, will reap by it.*

By *Virtue of your* Professorship *at* Oxford, *you*, my Lord, *are a* Moderator *at theological Disputations, as I am here: And whether the Execution of your Office be as troublesome as mine is, I know not: But if the Design of this* Discourse *takes Place, we shall find that modern Controversies about Religion are all vain; and thereupon be* both *of us soon eas'd of the Trouble of our* Moderations *at them.*

It *may be*, my Lord, *you are not so weary of your* Moderatorship, *as I am: Besides, that you are better paid for your Pains, your Disputants are more amicable, and, in the midst of their Disputes, more tractable: Tho' they may warmly contend, at the present, for and against the Point in Debate; yet like* Lawyers *who are no less zealous for their* Clients *in the Day, they commonly agree to drink a Bottle together at Night, and go to Bed, good Friends. And this is very well done of them.*

But *my Disputants*, my Lord, *call'd* Infidels *and* Apostates, *at whose Controversy I have the Trouble, by*

the Appointment of the Fathers, to preside, are more stubborn, turbulent and refractory. What ill Treatment they would give each other, if it was in their Power, I know not: But my Apostates, *since they can't be aveng'd on their Adversaries, are full of Resentment against their* Moderator, *because I am not altogether partial to their Side; and how I shall escape their Indignation, God alone knows.*

WHATEVER *the* Clergy, my Lord, *whom I dignify with the Title of* Apostates, *may think, I look upon my self as a notable* Moderator *of the Controversy; I have shewn them all the Favour I can in it, and would have brought them off with Honour, but for a* little Flaw, *here discover'd, in the Foundation of their Church, which, for the Determination of our Disputes, must be confess'd and granted.*

IF *your* Lordship, *upon reading this* Discourse, *should be of the same Mind with me, I beg of you to stroak the* Clergy *into Temper, Patience and Compliance: Tell them, they have been long orthodox and glorious Victors over* Infidels, *and that it would be now an Act of Generosity to yield to them in a* small Point; *upon which such a Pacification would ensue, as nothing hereafter would be able to dissolve.*

BUT *I have another Favour*, my Lord, *here to crave of you*, viz. *that you would be pleas'd to persuade my old Friend, the* Bishop *of* London, *to stay at Home this* Lent, *and keep to his* Prayers *and* Fasting, *for the casting out a certain* Kind *of* ——, *that by Fits he's unhapily troubled with; or upon the Publication of this* Discourse, *I shall be in Danger of being soon knapp'd for it.*

IF *your* Lordship *will do me that Favour, then I will do you as good a Turn; and praise you for your Doctrine of*

Passive Obedience, *preach'd at the* Coronation: *Tho' many may laugh at your Revival of that Doctrine, saying the* Clergy *upon an Occasion, which our most excellent* Sovereign *will never give them, would again have Recourse to their* Reserves *and* Distinctions; *yet I say it was well done of your* Lordship *to preach it, that the Tongues and the Hands (to say nothing of the Hearts) of the* Clergy *might go together in Subscriptions to* Articles *and* Homilies; *and so avoid that Prevarication and Inconsistency, which some now have no more Wit than to charge them with.*

So *not questioning your* Lordship's *Approbation of this* Discourse *and the* Dedication; *nor doubting but you'll make me as bountiful a Recompence for it, as any of my other Episcopal Patrons have done; I subscribe my self,*

Feb. 15th
1728-9

My Lord,
The Admirer of your
Passive Obedience Sermon,
Thomas Woolston.

A SIXTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.

HEre goes my sixth and last *Discourse* on *Jesus*'s *Miracles*; the Subject whereof is the literal Story of his own Resurrection; which, according to the Proposition in Hand, I am to shew to consist of

Absurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities. And I hope our *Bishops* will quietly permit the Publication of this *Discourse*, especially if I assure them that I mean nothing worse by it, than to make way for the understanding what the Fathers write of the mystical Resurrection of *Jesus* out of the Grave of the Letter of the Law and the Prophets; of which mystical Resurrection of our *spiritual Jesus*, the Evangelical Story of the Resurrection of a *carnal Christ* is but mere Type and Shadow.

I am so far from designing any Service to Infidelity by this *Discourse*, that I aim at the Accomplishment of some of St. *John*'s Apocalyptical Visions. The Fathers say that a *Church*, built on the Letter of the Scriptures, particularly on the Letter of *Jesus*'s Miracles, is *Babylon*; and that antiliteral Arguments and mystical Interpretations will be the Downfal of her. Whether there is any Truth in this Opinion of the Fathers, I am minded to make the Experiment; and tho' I should bring the old House of the Church over my Head, and be crush'd to Pieces in its Ruins, I can't forbear it: But however, I would advise the *Clergy* to make Haste and *come out of Babylon*, for Fear of the worst; or they, who upon the Authority of the Fathers are *the Merchants of Babylon*, will *weep*[309] *and mourn* upon her Fall, because *none will buy their Merchandize* of the Letter *any more*. Dear *Jesu*, that such a *Student* as I am in the *Revelations* of St. *John*, and an Interpreter of them too, upon the Authority of the Fathers, should be charg'd with Blasphemy and Infidelity!

So to Work I went; and I had not been long musing by myself, how to sap this Foundation of the Church, before I was sensible of my own Insufficiency for it. Whereupon I sent to my old Friend, the *Jewish Rabbi*,

for his Thoughts on this grand Miracle of *Jesus*'s Resurrection, which he gave me some Promise of. But I desired him to forbear all Ludicrousness, Satire and Banter, for fear of Offence: For tho' our *Clergy* liked Volumes of Jests and Facetiousness, if they were discharg'd against *Jews*, *Turks*, and *Infidels*; yet when they were levell'd at *Ministers* of the *Letter*, the *Case was alter'd*, as quoth *Plowden*, and they were not to be borne with. Therefore he was to remember that Decency, Seriousness and Calmness of Argument, required by the *Bishop* of *London*[310] or I durst not print it.

In Compliance with my Desires he sent me the following *Letter*, which, having purg'd it of a few *Puns* and *Cunundrums*, because all Appearance of *Wit*, as of *Evil*, was to be abstain'd from, I here publish, and it runs thus.

SIR,

According to your Request, I here send you my Thoughts on *Jesus*'s Resurrection, in which I shall be shorter than I would be, because of the customary Bounds of your *Discourses*.

The Controversy between us *Jews* and you *Christians* about the *Messiah* has hitherto been of a diffusive Nature: But as the Subject of *this* is the Resurrection of your *Jesus*; so, by my Consent, we'll now reduce the Controversy to a narrow Compass, and let it turn intirely on this grand Miracle and Article of your Faith. If your *Divines* can prove *Jesus*'s Resurrection against the following Objections, then I will acknowledge him to be the *Messiah*, and will turn Christian, otherwise he must still pass with us for an Impostor and false Prophet.

I have often lamented the Loss of such Writings, which our *Ancestors* unquestionably dispers'd against *Jesus*, because of the clear Sight they would give us, into the Cheat and Imposture of his Religion. But I rejoice and thank God, there is little or no Want of them, to the Point in Hand. For I had not long meditated on the Story of *Jesus*'s Resurrection, as your *Evangelists* have related it, but I plainly discern'd it to be the most notorious and monstrous Imposture, that ever was put upon Mankind. And if you please to attend to my following Arguments, which require no Depth of Judgment and Capacity to apprehend, I am persuaded that you and every one disinterested, will be of the same Mind too.

To overthrow and confute the Story of this monstrous and incredible Miracle, I was thinking once to premise an Argument of the Justice of the Sentence denounc'd against and executed upon *Jesus*, who was so far from being the innocent Person, you Christians would make of him, that, as may easily be proved, he was so grand a *Deceiver*, *Impostor* and *Malefactor*, as no Punishment could be too great for him. But this Argument (which I reserve against a Day of perfect Liberty, to publish by it self in Defence of the Honour and Justice of our *Ancestors*) would be too long for the Compass of this Letter; and therefore I pass it by, tho' it would give Force to my following Objections; it being hard and even impossible to imagine, that God would vouchsafe the Favour of a miraculous Resurrection to one, who for his Crimes deservedly suffer'd and underwent Death.

But waving, I say, that Argument for the present, which of itself would be enough to prejudice a reasonable Man against the Belief of *Jesus*'s Resurrection; I will allow *Jesus* to have been a much

better Man, than I believe him to have been; or as good a one in Morals as your *Divines* do suppose him; and will only consider the Circumstances of the Evangelical Story of his Resurrection; from which, if I don't prove it to have been the most bare-fac'd Imposture that ever was put upon the World, I deserve for the Vanity of this Attempt, a much worse Punishment, than he for his Frauds endured.

I have sometimes wonder'd, considering the Nature and Heinousness of *Jesus*'s Faults, for which he dy'd, that our *Chief Priests* and *Pharisees* had any Regard to his Prediction (which was so like a Bambouzlement of the Populace) that he was to rise again the *third Day* after his Crucifixion. There's no other Nation in the World, which would not have slighted such a vain Prognostication of a known Impostor. Let him foretell with ever so much Confidence his speedy Return to Life, I dare say, any other Magistrates of ordinary Prudence would have despised him for a presumptuous *Enthusiast*: But, when I reflected on the Imposture of *Lazarus*'s Resurrection, and of what pernicious Consequence it had like to have proved to the Peace and Welfare of our Nation, if it had not been happily discover'd, my Wonder here ceas'd; and I as much admire now the Wisdom, Caution and Circumspection of our *Chief Priests* against all possible Fraud and Deceit in the foretold Resurrection of *Jesus*. Tho' *Jesus* himself, the Head of the Confederacy, and prime Projector of the design'd Cheat in the Case of *Lazarus* was cut off, yet his Associates were still numerous; and it was not impossible, but they might concert a Project of a counterfeited Resurrection of him, in Accomplishment of his Prophecy, that might be of more fatal Consequence, and tend to such Confusions and Distractions among the People, as would not be

soon quell'd and quieted. Whereupon our *Chief Priests* very prudently consider of Precautions against Cheat here, and wisely make Application to *Pilate* the *Governour*, that proper and effectual Measures may be taken against a false and feign'd Resurrection, for Fear of the ill Effects of it. And one of them, as the *Spokesman* of their Company, seems, according to *Matthew*, Ch. xxviii. to have made the Speech following.

> *SIR*, "We remember that this Deceiver and Impostor *Jesus*, who was yesterday crucified, and justly suffer'd Death for his Blasphemy and many Delusions of the People (that were of bad Consequence, and might have been of much worse, if he had not been timely brought to condign Punishment) said repeatedly before, that notwithstanding the Death he was to undergo he should rise again to Life the *third Day* after. It is not that we are at all apprehensive of such a wonderful and miraculous Event, which knowing him to have been a false Prophet as well as a deceitful Juggler, we have no Fears nor Belief of. But as it is not long since, that the Inhabitants in and about *Bethany* had like to have been fatally deluded and imposed on by him, in the pretended Resuscitation of *Lazarus*, one of his Disciples and Confederates in Iniquity; so it is not altogether impossible nor improbable but his Disciples and

> Accomplices, who are many, may project a feign'd Resurrection of *Jesus* (in Accomplishment of his Prediction) by stealing his Body away, and pretending he is risen from the dead. Should such a Sham-Miracle be contrived amongst them, and cunningly executed, it would be πλανη (*not an Error but*) an Imposture of worse Consequence to our Nation and Religion, than the former in *Lazarus* could have been, if it had never been detected: We crave therefore the Favour of your *Excellency*, to give Command for the making his Sepulchre sure, till the *third* Day is past, that neither his *dead* Body may be taken away, and a Resurrection pretended; nor a *living* one slipt into its Place, and a Miracle counterfeited on that Day, when we will be present at the opening of the Sepulchre, and give Satisfaction to the People of his being a false Prophet."

Whether *Pilate* was at all intent on the Prevention of Fraud in this Case, or would not willingly have connived at it, to increase the Divisions and Distractions of our then unhappy Nation, may be question'd: But the Request of our *Chief Priests* was so reasonable, and their Importunities so urgent, that he could not resist them; and therefore order'd them a *Watch* for the Sepulchre, which they might make as sure, as they could, against Fraud and Imposture, till the *third Day*.

Whereupon our *Chief Priests* deliberate, what Measures were fittest to be taken to this Purpose. And as I can't, and don't believe any Man else can, devise any better for the Security of the Sepulchre against Fraud, than what they took; so I admire and applaud their Prudence, Circumspection, and Precaution in the Case. They *seal'd the Stone* at the Mouth of the Sepulchre, and placed a Guard of Soldiers about it; which were *Two* such certain Means for the Prevention or Detection of Cheat in a Resurrection, as are not to be equall'd by any other.

They *seal'd the Stone* of the Sepulchre, which, tho' it was no Security at all against Violence, yet was an absolute one against Fraud. How the *Stone* which fitted the Mouth of the Sepulchre, as a Door does the Entrance into a Room, was seal'd, I need not describe. The Use and Manner of sealing the Doors of Closets, of Chests, and of Papers is common; and as it is an obvious Expedient, for the Satisfaction of the Signators, against Deceit; so it has been an antient as well as a modern Practice. *Darius*, King of *Babylon*, [311] seal'd the Door of the Den of Lions, wherein *Daniel* was cast, with his own Signet: And wherefore did he so? For the Satisfaction of himself and of his Courtiers, when he came again to open and compare the Signature with his Signet, that no Art nor Artifice had been used for the Preservation of *Daniel*. So our *Chief Priests* seal'd the Stone of *Jesus*'s Sepulchre, which they design'd to be present at the opening of, on the *third Day*, the Time appointed by *Jesus* for his Resurrection, and then give ample Satisfaction to the People, that there was a real, or could be no Resurrection of his Body. Wherefore else did they *seal* the Stone of his Sepulchre?

Your *Grotius*[312] thinks, that *Pilate*'s Seal was affix'd

to the Stone of the Sepulchre; but, as I believe, *Pilate* little concern'd himself about the Prevention of Deceit here; so I much question it. It is more reasonable to think that the *Chief Priests* and other Civil Magistrates of *Jerusalem* with their several Seals, which could not be open'd, but by themselves, without Suspicion of Fraud, sign'd the Stone, and intended to be present, on the Day appointed, at the opening of the Sepulchre; not doubting, what no body could question, but *Jesus* would wait their coming, and arise to Life, if he could, in the Sight of themselves, and of a vast Concourse of People, that were sure to attend on them to behold the Miracle. Such a Resurrection would have been of Satisfaction to the whole Nation; and such a Resurrection, reasonably speaking, *Jesus* would, if he could, have vouchsafed in Accommodation to the *sealing* of the *Stone*.

But, notwithstanding this Precaution, in sealing of the Stone, the best that could be taken against Fraud, *Jesus*'s Body was privately slipt off, early in the Morning of the Day before, and a Resurrection pretended by his Disciples; and you would have us and our Ancestors to believe, there was no Deceit in the Case; tho' confessedly none of the *Sealers* of the Sepulchre were present: Who can believe it? Was, or can there be, any Imposture more against Sense and Reason palm'd upon the Understandings of Mankind? If there had been a real Resurrection, the *Sealers* of the *Stone* would have been the *Openers* of the Sepulchre; wherefore else was the *Stone seal'd*?

A Question, that here arises, is, On what Day, and what Time of the Day, did our *Chief Priests*, the Sealers of the Stone, expect, what they could not think would ever come to pass, *Jesus*'s Resurrection?

Or what was the Extent of the Time meant by *Jesus*, when he said that after *three Days*, or on the *third Day* after his Passion, he should rise again? If any Impostor or Prophet like *Jesus* should in this Age so predict his Resurrection, and be executed on *Friday*, the Day for his Resurrection would be presumed to be *Monday*, and not *Sunday* Morning before Day. And I humbly conceive former Ages and Nations, and our Nation in particular did compute after this Fashion. Accordingly on *Monday* our *Chief Priests* I don't doubt, intended to be present at the opening of the Seals of the Sepulchre, and to behold the Miracle: But *Jesus*'s Body was clandestinely moved off early on *Sunday* (the Day before *that* signified and predicted for his Resurrection) to the Laughter more than the Surprize of our Ancestors, at the Notoriety of the Fraud committed, and at the Vanity of a Resurrection pretended upon it. And I may appeal even to your *Chief Priests* of the Church, whether here's not another Note of Cheat and Imposture; and whether the Disciples were not afraid to trust *Jesus*'s Body, its full time, in the Grave; because of the greater Difficulty to carry it off afterwards, and pretend a Resurrection upon it.

But because your *Divines* (who have singular Knacks at making two Nights and a full Day, that *Jesus* was buried, to be *three Days* and *three Nights*; and whose various Ways of Computation I always smile at) do assert that *Sunday* was the *third Day*, on which, in Accomplishment of *Jonah*'s Prophecy, and of his Own Prediction, he was to rise again; I will suppose so with them, and will, if they please, grant that our *Chief Priests*, and the *Sealers* of the Sepulchre, expected his Resurrection on that Day, and intended, for the opening of the Seals, to be present at it.

But at what Time of the Day were they to come or could be expected at the Sepulchre? Not long before Noon. But *Jesus*'s Body was gone betimes in the Morning, before our *Chief Priests* could be out of their Beds; and a barefac'd Infringment of the Seals of the Sepulchre was made against the Laws of Honour and Honesty, and a Resurrection confidently talk'd of by the Disciples; and yet your Christian Priesthood at this Day would have us to believe, there was no Fraud and Deceit in all this! O most monstrous!

If our *Chief Priests* had trespass'd upon *Jesus*'s Patience, and would not attend at the Sepulchre for the opening of the Seals, on the Day and Time appointed; if they had been for confining him longer in the Grave than was meet, according to Prophecy, then his Resurrection, without their Presence, had been excusable and justifiable. But this his pretended Rising to Life, not only a Day before the *Chief Priests* could imagine he would, or earlier in the Morning than he should, for the Sake of their requisite Presence, is, together with the Fracture of the Seals against the Law of Security, such a manifest and indisputable Mark and Indication of Fraud, as is not to be equall'd in all or any of the Impostures, that ever were attempted to be put upon the World.

In short, by the sealing of the Stone of the Sepulchre, we are to understand nothing less than a Covenant enter'd into between our *Chief Priests* and the *Apostles*, by which *Jesus*'s Veracity, Power and *Messiahship* was to be try'd. Tho' we read not of the Apostles giving their Consent to the Covenant, yet it was reasonably presum'd and could not have been refus'd, if ask'd. The Condition of the seal'd Covenant was, that if *Jesus* arose from the dead in the Presence of our *Chief Priests*, upon their opening the Seals of

the Sepulchre, at the Time appointed; then was he to be acknowledg'd to be the *Messiah*: But if he continued in a corrupt and putrified State of Mortality, then was he to be granted to be an *Impostor*: Very wisely and rightly agreed! And if the Apostles had stood to this Covenant, Christianity had been nipt in its Bud, and suppress'd in its Birth. But they had other Views, and another Game to play at all Adventures. The Body was to be removed and a Resurrection pretended, to the Delusion, if possible, of all Mankind, in which they have been more successful than could be imagin'd upon a Project that had so little Sense or Reason, so little Colour of Truth or Artifice in the Contrivance and Execution of it. Our *Chief Priests* were apprehensive at first of their stealing the Body away, and pretending a Resurrection: But after the *sealing* of the *Stone*, those Fears vanish'd; because upon the stealing the Body, away against such Security and Precaution, the Fraud would be self-evident, and want no Demonstration and Proof of it. But, for all this Precaution, I say, the Body was in a barefaced Manner taken away, a Resurrection talk'd of, and to the Amazement of every one, who can think freely, has been believed thro' all Ages of the Church since. Upon the whole then, I think, you may as well say, when a seal'd Closet is broken open, and the Treasure gone without the Privity of the Signators, that there's no Wrong done; as that in the Resurrection of *Jesus*, there was no Fraud. The Cases are equal and parallel. What then can your Christian *Priests* say to this demonstrative Argument of a manifest and bare-faced Cheat in *Jesus*'s Resurrection? I have been thinking, what they will or can say; and upon the maturest Consideration I don't find they can make any other than one or more of

these shuffling Answers to it, *viz.*

1. That it was impossible for the Disciples to steal the Body of *Jesus* away, because of the Watchfulness of the Guards, and therefore there was a real Resurrection, tho' the *Chief Priests* and *Sealers* of the Sepulchre were not present at it.

2. That, tho' the *Chief Priests* and *Sealers* of the Stone of the Sepulchre were not present, as I say they ought to have been, to behold the Miracle; yet his Resurrection was afterwards made as manifest to them, as if they had been there present.

3. That if *Jesus* did not really arise from the dead, the Belief of his Resurrection could never have been so propagated at first, nor would have been retain'd in the World for so many Ages since.

I can think of no other Answers, and believe it impossible for your Christian *Priests* to form any other, to the foresaid Argument of Fraud in *Jesus*'s Resurrection: But how weak, frivolous and insufficient they all and every one are, will appear upon a little Examination into them.

1. Then, against the aforesaid demonstrative Argument of Fraud, it may be pretended, *That it was impossible for the Disciples to steal the Body of* Jesus *away, because of the Watchfulness of the Guards; and therefore there was a real Resurrection, tho' the* Chief Priests, *the* Sealers *of the Sepulchre were not present at it.*

To which I reply, and confess, that if it was impossible to evade the Guards of the Sepulchre, then there was a real Resurrection; but if there was

but a bare Possibility of evading them, then this Answer is of no Force. And I am of Opinion, that the Thing was not only possible, but easy, feasible, and practicable. Tho' the *Roman* Soldiers were of as much Fidelity and Integrity as any of their Profession; yet it is well known, that such Creatures are subject to Bribery and Corruption, if the Disciples had any Money to tempt them with: Or if their Faithfulness to their Trust was untainted; yet it is not improbable, but their Officers, at the Direction of *Pilate*, who found his Account in the Distractions of our Nation, might give them the Hint to wink hard at the Commission of such a Fraud. But not to insist on either of these Ways to evade the *Watch*; our Ancestors said, what your *Evangelist* has recorded, that the Disciples taking the Opportunity of the Sleep of the Guards, carry'd the Body of *Jesus* off; which was a thing both possible and probable.

Of what Number the *Watch* did consist is uncertain. Your *Whitby*[313] says they were *sixty*; but he has no Reason nor Authority to think, they were so many. If they had been to be a Guard against Violence, I could easily have believed they were more; but in as much as they were only a *Watch* against Fraud, and against any casual defacing of the *Seals* on the Stone, before the *Chief Priests* came to open the Sepulchre, *three* or *four* Soldiers were sufficient, and I don't think, there were any more set to this Purpose.

It is not then at all improbable, that so few Soldiers should be fast asleep at that time of Night, or so early in the Morning, when the clandestine Work was done; especially after keeping such a *Gaudy-day* as was the Feast of the Passover, which, like the Festivals of other Nations, was celebrated with Excess. Foot Soldiers then, you may be sure, upon

the Bounty of one or other, did no more want, than they would scruple to take their *Fill*, which like an Opiat, lock'd up their Senses for that Night, when the Disciples, being aware of the lucky Opportunity, carry'd the Body of *Jesus* off safely.

And where's the Absurdity to suppose, that the Disciples themselves might contrive the Intoxication of the Guards? *Herodotus* tells us a Story of a Deadbody's being stolen away by such an Artifice. And I don't think the Disciples of *Jesus* either so foolish or conscientious, as not to take the Hint, and enterprize the like Fraud. *Peter*, who, upon Occasion, could *swear* and *curse* like a *Trooper*, would hardly scruple to fuddle a few *Foot-Soldiers*. But which way soever it came to pass, the Watch were asleep, which is neither hard to conceive nor believe; and then the Disciples executed *that* Fraud, which has been the Delusion of Nations and Ages since.

Your *Evangelists* would hint that the *Chief Priests* gave Money to the Soldiers to say, they were asleep, when the Disciples stole the Body of *Jesus* away, as if they were brib'd to a false Testimony; but there neither was nor could be any such thing. If there had been a real Resurrection to their Astonishment and Amazement, as it is represented in your Gospels, no Money could so soon have corrupted them to a false Witness, being under such Fears of God and of *Jesus*. I don't doubt but our *Chief Priests* might reward the Soldiers for speaking the Truth, and exhort them to persist in it, with a Promise to *secure* them against the Anger of *Pilate* for their sleeping and Neglect of their Duty.

Here then is no *Answer* to the foresaid Argument or Objection against *Jesus*'s Resurrection. It was not at

all impossible for the Disciples, who stole the Body away, to avoid the Guards, who were and may reasonably be supposed to be lull'd asleep, when the Disciples did it. Neither is there any more Force in the

2. Second Answer to it, *viz. That tho' the Chief Priests, the Sealers of the Stone of the Sepulchre, were not present, opening the Seals and beholding the Miracle; yet his Resurrection was afterwards made as manifest to them, as if they had been there present.*

Ay, this is somewhat like an Answer, if there be any Truth in it. A Manifestation of *Christ risen* afterwards to our *Chief Priests* would have been equivalent to their Presence at and Sight of the Miracle. But how was his Resurrection manifested to them? did *Jesus* ever afterwards appear personally to them, to their Satisfaction, that he was the same Person, whom they crucified and put to Death for a Deceiver and false Prophet? No; this is not once affected by your *Evangelists* or ever insinuated by any antient or modern Writer. How then was *Jesus*'s Resurrection made manifest to our Chief Priests? Why; your *Divines* say, what is all that can be said here, that the Words of the Disciples, who, being Men of Honesty, Simplicity and Integrity, would not lye, are to be taken for it. Very fine, indeed! our Chief Priests are to take the Words of the Disciples for *Jesus*'s Resurrection, and look upon them as Men of Veracity, when they knew and experienc'd them to be grand Cheats, not only in stealing the Body of *Jesus* away, but in the *known Imposture* of *Lazarus*'s Resurrection, or your *Evangelist* had never implicitly called it so. When therefore Deceivers will not be *Lyars*; nor Thieves *Dissemblers* of the Fact they are accused of, I will own *Jesus*'s Resurrection to have

been manifest enough to our *Chief Priests*. There's no need of more Argument here: He that bellows more Words on it, loses Time.

It has been a constant Objection of us *Jews*, against the Resurrection of *Jesus*, that he appear'd not personally afterwards to our *Chief Priests*, to *Pilate* and to others his Crucifiers and Insultors, to upbraid them with their Infidelity and ill Treatment of him. Whether *Jesus* would not have done so, if he really arose from the dead; and whether he ought not in Reason, for the Conviction and Conversion of Unbelievers, to have done so, with me is no Question. *Celsus* of old[314] in the Name of the *Jews* made the Objection; and *Olibio*, a late *Rabbi*[315] has repeated it. But in all my Reading and Conversation with Men or Books, I never met with a tolerable Answer to it. *Origen* and *Limborch*, the Writers against *Celsus* and *Olibio*, gently slide over the Objection, as if it was too hot or weighty to be touch'd and handled by them. To recite the poor, short and insufficient Answers of those two Great Authors, to the Objection, would be the Exposing of them, and giving such Strength to the Objection, which it don't want. Therefore I will leave the Objection, which *Origen*[316] owns to be a considerable one, to the Meditation of your modern Advocates for Christianity; and when they can prove, that *Jesus*, after his Resurrection did personally appear to his Crucifiers, the *Chief Priests* and *Sealers* of the Sepulchre, to their Confutation; or that, according to the Law of Reason, he ought not to have appear'd to them, then I will turn *Christian*, and grant, that in the Argument above, which proves plain Fraud in the Resurrection, there's no Force nor Truth. In the mean time *Jesus*'s Non-Appearance to the *Chief Priests* is a Confirmation, that he did not

arise from the Dead, but that his Body was stolen away, or he would have waited in the Grave, the coming of the Sealers of the Stone, and their regular opening of the Sepulchre, to the Conviction and Conversion of all there present, and Confirmation of the Faith of all Ages and Nations since. But,

3. A third Answer to the foresaid Argument of Fraud in the Resurrection of *Jesus*, drawn from the Nature, Use and Design of sealing the Stone of the Sepulchre, is, *that tho' the* Sealers *of the Sepulchre were not present, opening the Seals and beholding the Miracle; yet* Jesus *did certainly arise from the Dead, or the Belief of his Resurrection could never have been at first propagated by the Apostles, nor would for so many Ages of the Church since have stood its Ground.*

Here's as little Reason in this Answer as in either of the two former. Who knows not, that many Errors in Philosophy, and as many Frauds in Religion have been sometimes accidentally, sometimes designedly espoused and palm'd upon Mankind, who in Process of Time become so wedded to them thro' Prejudice and Interest, that they will not give themselves Leave to enquire into the Rise and Foundation of them. False Miracles have been common Things among Christians; and as the Resurrection of *Jesus* is their grand and fundamental one, so it is not at all difficult to account for the Rise, Propagation and Continuance of the Belief of it.

Why it has been believed thro' these latter Ages of the Church, is no Wonder at all. The Priests had their Interest in it; the ignorant and superstitious had their Comfort in it; and the wise and considerate, for fear of Persecution, durst not enquire into the Grounds of it.

The only Difficulty here is to know, upon what Principle, the Project and Story of *Jesus*'s Resurrection was at first devised. And whether it was Ambition or Revenge upon our ancient and Pharisaical Priesthood, that prompted the Apostles to it, is all one to me. Such bad Principles too often put Men upon desperate Attempts. But however, an Imposture it was, for the Argument above. To say the Apostles and Confederates in the Fraud, would not have stood to it, and have dy'd for it, if the Resurrection had not been real Fact, signifies nothing. Many Cheats and Criminals, besides them, have asserted their Innocencey, and deny'd their Guilt in the utmost Extremity of Death, without the like Views of Honour and Fame. The only Thing that's surprizing and astonishing in this Sham-Miracle, is, that tho' it was the most manifest, the most bare-faced, and the most self-evident Imposture that ever was put upon the World; yet it has been the most fortunate and successful, having past thro' many Ages and Nations with Reputation and Renown; and might have continued for as many Generations to come, but for the Argument above, that perfectly and clearly overthrows its Credit.

But some may say here, where was the Wisdom and Providence of God, all this while, to suffer so many Ages and Nations to labour under such a Delusion? Why, I'll tell you; The Providence of God in it was, "To humble Mankind, in the End, for their vain Ostentation of Wisdom, Learning and *Science falsly so call'd*; "To shame them for their Madness and Wickedness to persecute one another for different Opinions in that Religion, whose very Foundation is false and groundless; "To caution them against a blind and implicit Faith for the future; against believing any thing out of the Sight and Reach of

their Understandings; "To admonish them of the Necessity of Liberty to think, speak and write freely about Religion, for the Correction of Errors and Discovery of Truth; and, lastly, "To reduce the World, when it should be ripe for it, to the golden Religion of Nature, which upon the Testimony of our old *Cabalistical* Doctors, and of your *Jesus* himself, is the *End of the Law and the Prophets*.

And thus have I spoken to the *Answers*, which your *Christian Priesthood* may be presumed to make, to the foresaid Argument of Fraud in *Jesus*'s Resurrection, drawn from the Design of our *Chief Priests* in sealing of the Stone of his Sepulchre. I should not have concern'd my self to speak to these their supposed *Answers*, but to save them the Trouble of making them, and the Imagination of there being some Force in them.

As to the Stories in your *Evangelists* of *Jesus*'s several Appearances after his pretended Resurrection, sometimes to the Women, and at other Times to his Disciples, I am not at all obliged to refute them. If these Appearances had been more frequent, better circumstanced, and more solemnly averr'd, they would have wanted no Confutation. There's no Doubt on't, but the Disciples, who, for the Argument above, unquestionably stole *Jesus*'s Body away, in order to pretend a Resurrection, would talk much of his appearing to them, and of the Conversation afterwards, they had with him. And if they had told better and more plausible Tales of their Sight of and Conversation with him, it would be nothing to the Purpose; *better*, I say, *and more plausible Tales* than those upon Record, which for Absurdity, Nonsense and Incoherence carry their own Confutation along

with them.

Whoever blends together the various History of the four *Evangelists*, as to *Jesus*'s Appearances after his Resurrection, will find himself, not only perplex'd how to make an intelligible, consistent, and sensible Story of it; but must, with *Celsus*[317] needs think it, if he closely think on't, like some of the confused and incredible womanish Fables of the Apparitions of the Ghosts of deceased Persons, which the Christian World in particular has in former Ages abounded with. The Ghosts of the Dead in this present Age, and especially in this Protestant Country, have ceas'd to appear; and we now-a-days hardly ever hear of such an Apparition: And what is the Reason of it? Why, the Belief of these Stories being banish'd out of Mens Minds, the crafty and vaporous forbear to trump them upon us. There has been so much clear Proof of the Fraud in many of these Stories, that the wise and considerate Part of Mankind has rejected them all, excepting *this* of *Jesus*, which, to Admiration, has stood its Ground. It's no Wonder indeed, that the *Clergy*, who are more incredulous than other Folks as to Stories of Apparitions, do stick to *this* of *Jesus*, the only one excepted out of all others. It is a sweet Morsel of Faith, and they readily swallow and digest it, because they live by it; otherwise this Story of *Jesus*'s Appearances after Death had hardly escaped the Fate of other Apparitions; nay, would have been rejected one of the first of them; there being hardly one, I dare say it, among all the Stories of Apparitions, were they to be collected together; that's more absurd and incredible than *this* of *Jesus*.

I have not Room here to make any Remarks on your Evangelical Story of *Jesus*'s Apparitions after his Death; and if I had, I durst not do it, for fear of an

offensive Ludicrousness, and of transgressing the Rules of *Decency*, *Sobriety* and *Sedateness* of Argument, you have confined me to. But however; I can't read the Story without smiling, and there are two or three Passages in it, that put me in Mind of *Robinson Cruso*'s filling his Pockets with Biskets, when he had neither Coat, Waste-coat, nor Breeches on. Sometimes I think your *Evangelists* wanted Wit to adapt their Tale to Sense, and to accommodate the Transaction to Nature; and sometimes I think them crafty, and were minded, like *Daniel de Foe* in his aforesaid *Romance*, to put the Banter upon the Credulity of Mankind, with some disguised and latent Absurdities, that, in the Conclusion and Discovery, they might be heartily laugh'd at for the Belief of them. I dare not, I say, so much as hint at one of these Absurdities, lest I should be unwarily tempted to crack a Jest on it. But the Time, I hope, is coming, when I shall use more Freedom. And should your Priesthood, in Proof of *Jesus*'s Resurrection, urge any of these Stories of his corporal Presence and Appearance after it, then I trust, they'll permit me to make as merry Descants on them, as your *Bishops*, when Academical *Jesters*, used to do on other Men's Bulls and Blunders.

In the mean time I depend on the foregoing single, sober and sedate Argument of Fraud in this grand Miracle, which I found on the Nature and Design of sealing the Sepulchre; and for Confirmation of my Opinion and Proof of Fraud in it, will conclude this Letter with a parallel Case and Story. Not many Years since, one Dr. *Emms*, of the Society of the *French* Prophets, who in their Inspirations were, like *Jesus* and his Disciples of old, Declaimers against the Pharisaical Priesthood of this Age, did by himself, or some of his Fraternity did for him, predict his

Resurrection on a certain Day, when there was a Concourse of People about his Grave in vain to behold the Miracle, as there would have been about *Jesus*'s Sepulchre, if he had lain in it, his full Time. But supposing in this Case, that the Magistrates and Priesthood of this City, to prevent a Cheat and Delusion of the People, had interr'd the *Doctor* in a Church-Vault, and seal'd the Door of it against the Day appointed for his Resurrection, commanding a *Night-Watch* to look to the Vault, that no Violence or Deceit be used: This would have been a wise Precaution against Fraud, as was in the Case of *Jesus*. But what if his Fraternity, having a Mind, like *Jesus*'s Disciples, to bambouzle the People and Priesthood, had, some of them drawn the Watch aside to a *Gin-shop*, whilst others carry'd the Body off, pretending a Resurrection? What would all reasonable Men have said here? That it was an impudent and bare-fac'd Imposture. But to carry on the Farce; supposing, the *Doctor*'s Fraternity had afterwards averr'd that they had seen and convers'd with him alive, several Times, as before his Death; and had told particular Stories of their Conversation with him; as *first* of all, how he appear'd to some of their Women (who were admonish'd of the Certainty of his Resurrection by a Youth or an Angel or two, they could not tell whether, but they were as like to Angels, which they never saw before in their Lives, as Youths could be) who knew him, not by his Countenance, for *their Eyes were holden*, but by his Talk on Scripture Prophecy, which was his usual Cant before his Death. And at another Time he appear'd to his old Acquaintance, who knew him, not by the Features of his Face, but by an habitual Motion and Action of his Hand in *breaking of Bread*. And at another Time he was corporally present, but *they thought, they saw a Spirit*.

About *eight Days after that*, he appear'd among more of his old Friends, but for all their former Intimacy with him, some of them *doubted* whether it was the *Doctor* or not. At another Time he came to them in *another Form* and Shape, unlike to his pristine one, but they were sure it was *He* by his Exposition of the Scripture. At another Time, when they were assembled together and the Doors were lock'd, *for fear of the Clergy*, the *Doctor* slipt unexpectedly into their Company, either from behind a Curtain, or miraculously enter'd at the Key-hole. And the last Time he appear'd, there was one of his intimate Friends had not known him, but by a *Sore* in his Breast, which the Power of God, in his Resurrection, did not heal: After which, they said, he *vanish'd away, was taken up into Heaven*, and they saw him no more. Supposing, I say, the *French* Prophets had told such like Stories of *Doctor Emms*'s Resurrection and of his Appearances to them; what would your Priests and all other wise Men have said to it? Why, that it was all idle Tales, manifest Lyes, Sham, and Imposture; and that if the *Doctor*, in Confutation of the Errors of our Priests, had risen to Life, God would have kept him in his Sepulchre, his full time, and have rais'd him in the Presence of Priests, Magistrates and People; and that he would have walk'd afterwards publickly in the Streets without Danger, to the Satisfaction of all, who knew him, that he was the same *Emms* who died and was bury'd: *Without Danger*, I say, from the Populace, who would have been so far from affronting him, that they would have almost adored him for the miraculous Favour God had done him, in his Resurrection from the Dead; and that he would never have skulk'd about, and absconded himself for *forty Days* together, before he was pretendedly translated;

and therefore there was nothing but notorious Deceit and Imposture in all these Pretences.

I need not make the Application of this Case and Story, which your *Priests* know how to do for me. To say here, that there's none would be so desperate to engage in such a Fraud, as is the supposed Case of Dr. *Emms* above, is a Mistake. Many Thousands for their Diversion would enterprise it; and the Stories of the Apparitions of Ghosts, which are almost all the Frauds of the Crafty to delude the Ignorant, do prove it. I my self would be forward to concert such an Intrigue, if it were but to put the Banter upon the *Clergy*, to ruffle their Tempers, and secretly to laugh at them. Nothing would deter me from it, but Fears of the Civil Magistrate, which was not the Danger of the Disciples of *Jesus*, because *Pilate*, for the Sake of Rule over the *Jews*, was a Countenancer of every Faction amongst them; and particularly[318] *Tiberius*, upon *Pilate*'s Representation of the Matter, soon commanded that the Disciples of *Jesus* should not be molested, nor call'd into Question: So the Disciples stood to the Fraud, told the Story of *Jesus risen* so often, till they believed it themselves, and drew Multitudes into the Belief of it: Which Belief must have continued thro' all Generations to come, but for my Argument of Fraud, before urg'd and argued.

Here, Sir, before I conclude this Letter, I think it my Duty however to give you my Opinion of the Religion, that *Jesus* and his Disciples were for introducing into the World. Tho' I believe, what I have proved, his Resurrection, to be a Piece of Fraud, and his other Miracles to have been all Artifice; and tho' our *Chief Priests* and ancient Nation are justifiable in the Sentence, that was pass'd and executed upon *Jesus*; yet I must do him and his

Disciples the Justice, to own, that the Doctrine they taught was, for the most Part of it, good, useful and popular, being no other than the Law and Religion of Nature, which, all Nations being wearied with their own Superstitions, and sick of the Burthen of their Priests, ran apace into. Accordingly one[319] of your ancient Fathers says, that they *who lived according to the Law of Nature, were true Christians*. And I must needs say, that if Christians, in Process of Time, had not sophisticated this primitive Religion of *Jesus*; if they had not built their systematical Divinity upon him, and brought strange Inventions of Men into his Worship; if, lastly, they had not again subjugated and entangled themselves with another and worse Yoke of Bondage, to an intolerable and tyrannical Priesthood of the Church, the World might have enjoy'd great Happiness under *Jesus*'s Religion, even *that Happiness* which is now only to be expected upon a Disproof of his miraculous Resurrection, that has been the Foundation of a most confused Superstructure of wild Doctrines and Opinions: Or more truely speaking, *That Happiness* of the State of Nature, Religion and Liberty, which may be look'd for upon the coming of our *Messiah*, the allegorical Accomplisher of the Law and the Prophets; whose Advent, upon the Tradition of our *Cabalists*, will be towards the latter End of the *Sixth* grand Age of the Creation, to remove from our Faces and our Hearts the Veil of the Letter; and in the mean while I adhere to the umbratical Rites, Ceremonies and way of Worship, derived from our Forefathers.

Thus, Sir, have I finish'd my *Letter* on *Jesus*'s Resurrection; and whether I have not said enough to justify our *Jewish* Disbelief of that Miracle, let your *Chief Priests* judge. I don't expect my Argument against it will be convincing of any of your

Preachers. They have a potent Reason for their Faith, which we *Jews* can't come at; or I don't know but we might believe with them.

I trust you'll meet with no Molestation for the Publication of this *Letter*; neither do I think, it was any thing of mine, inserted in your Discourses, that at any time brought Trouble on you. It was your own Imprudence to rave, as you do, against *Ecclesiasticks*. What need had you to talk of the Mischiefs and Inconveniences of an Hireling Priesthood? What Occasion had you to call them Ecclesiastical Vermin, and to speak of the Happiness of Mankind upon their Extinction? These things are very provoking. And here's the true Source, in my Opinion, of all your Troubles!

Tho' I have here shewn, that *Christ is not risen*, yet I have more Wit than to make the Inference of St. *Paul*, that *their Preaching is vain*. Their Oratory is still useful, if it be but to tickle the Ears and amuse the Understandings of the People about Doctrines they underhand not, whether true or false. And such an Order of Men, as are your Priesthood, are, by their Habit of long Robes, an Ornament to Society; and it is an Honour to the Country to have them well fed and clad. Had I Room for it, I could write a curious *Encomium* in Praise of them, and tell the World of what Use and Advantage they have been, in all Ages. O what Wars and Persecutions might have been rais'd in the World, but for their pacifick Tempers! How would Sin and Immorality have broke in upon Mankind, like a Deluge, but for the Goodness of their Lives, and the Excellency of their Precepts! How has the Increase and Multitude of their warm Sermons been the Ruin of *Satan*'s hot and divided Kingdom of

Darkness and Error! It's owing to their Pains and Labours, that every Age, for many past, has been improving in Virtue, till the present, which for Piety and good Morals is that perfection of Time, which is not to be meliorated but by the Restitution of the golden Age.

So could I enlarge in Praise of your *Clergy*; and so should you have done; and then you might have disputed, as you do, against any Doctrines, Miracles and Articles of Faith, without Molestation. Try, if you can't correct that fundamental Error, you have committed. Assert still, if you can, with Dr. *Rogers*, the Necessity of an establish'd Priesthood, well paid, for the Service of the *King* and the Country, under all Changes of Religion; which may be a Means to retrieve their Favour, and will beget in me a better Opinion of your Prudence, than at present is entertain'd by your *Assured Friend* N. N.

So ends the Letter of my Friend, the *Jewish Rabbi*, in which, to my Comfort, he has conform'd himself to the Rules of *Sedateness*, *Decency* and *Sobriety* of Argument, prescrib'd by the two great *Bishops* of *London* and St. *David*'s. If the Weight and Solidity of his Argument don't grieve the *Clergy*, I am in no Pain for the Levity and Ludicrousness of it. And whether the Weight and Nature of his Argument against *Jesus*'s Resurrection will at all startle and surprize them, I know not; but I profess for my self, that I might have study'd long enough for such an Argument against it, as this *Rabbi*, with his great grey Beard, has presently hit of. He told me beforehand, that his Thoughts on *Jesus*'s Resurrection should be out of the common Road of thinking; and I must needs say, he has been as good as his Word, or no Man ever kept his Promise.

There are two Things very remarkable in his Argument: The *one* is, the Use and Design of sealing the Stone of *Jesus*'s Sepulchre, which he lays great Stress on, to the Proof of Fraud in his Resurrection; and the *other* is, his Application of these Words, *the last Error* (or as he reads Deceit or Imposture) *will be worse than the first* or former, in which he makes the *Chief Priests* in their Speech to *Pilate*, to refer to *Lazarus*'s Resurrection as the former known Imposture. If his Application be just and true, the Consequence is, that the Resurrections of *Jesus* and *Lazarus* are both Impostures. It grieves me to the Heart to think of this Consequence, which our *Divines* are to see to, and evade, if they can. No sooner did I read his Application of the foresaid Words, but I run to our *Commentators* for another and better Exposition of them: But alas! to my Sorrow, they made nothing of them, but a sort of a *proverbial Expression*, which the *Chief Priests* must have spoil'd and knock'd out of Joint. Being then under great Trouble for the Truth of Christianity, and the Certainty of these two grand Miracles, I refer the Matter to our Learned *Clergy*, desiring them to be as speedy as they can in another and more proper Interpretation of the foresaid Words, or *Jews* and *Infidels* will run away with them in the *Rabbi*'s Sense, to the Confutation of our holy Religion.

I consider'd lately, that *Easter* drew nigh, when it was usual for our *Divines* in their Pulpits, to insist on the Proof of *Jesus*'s Resurrection; and therefore I hasten'd the Publication of this *Discourse*, that they might have these two peculiar Texts, *viz.* of *sealing the Stone* of the Sepulchre, and of *the last Error* or Imposture *will be worse than the first*, to treat on. He that produces a Sermon or Sermons, wresting the foresaid Texts out of the Hands of my *Rabbi*, and putting

another Sense on them, to the Credit of *Jesus*'s and *Lazarus*'s Resurrection,

Erit mihi magnus Apollo,

and by my Consent shall be the next *Arch-Bishop* of *Canterbury*.

But my Heart aches a little for our *Divines*, and I almost despair of their clean Solutions of the foresaid two Difficulties. What must they do then? Why, they must give up their *Religion* as well as their *Church*, or go along with me to the Fathers for their mystical Interpretation of the whole Story of *Jesus*'s Resurrection.

That the Fathers, without questioning their Belief of *Jesus*'s corporal Resurrection universally interpreted the Story and every Part of it mystically, is most certain. St. *Hilary*[320] enumerates many Particulars of the Story, and intimates what they are typical and figurative of, as any one may see by the Citation referr'd to, which I have not Room to translate and illustrate.

St. *Augustin*[321] says, that *Jesus*'s Resurrection from the Dead at that time, was to exhibit an Image and Resemblance of his future and mystical Resurrection. And elsewhere says[322] that it's a holy Pleasure to consider and search for the things signified by the Story of it.

That *Origen* is of the same Opinion, no body need question. A Multitude of his Testimonies might be produced to this Purpose, but I shall mention only one[323], wherein he asserts, that by the Sepulchre of *Jesus* is to be understood the *Letter* of the Scriptures, in which, as in a Rock, he is reposited.

St. *John* of *Jerusalem*[324] by the Crucifiers of *Jesus*

understands false Teachers, meaning *Ministers* of the *Letter* to be sure, because he himself was a great Allegorist.

St. *Hilary* says that[325] *Barabbas* is a Type of *Antichrist*; and by *Antichrist*, as I have elsewhere shewn out of the Fathers, is meant the *Letter* of the Scriptures, which modern Commentators and Crucifiers of *Jesus* would prefer to the Spirit. For these are the two, *Letter* and Spirit, the *Christ* and *Antichrist*, that are contrary one to another.

St. *Jerom*[326] says, that by the *Vail* of the *Temple* rent at *Jesus*'s Resurrection, is to be understood the opening the *Vail* of the *Letter* of the Law and the Prophets for the Manifestation of the divine Mysteries contain'd in them. And by the rending of the Rocks according[327] to him is to be understood the Apertion of the Oracles of God, that were before as hard as a Rock, till his spiritual Resurrection for the Illustration of them. And by the Earthquake, He says is meant the Shaking of the[328] Hearts of Men, and preparing them, by a Dereliction of their old Errors, for the Susception of the true Knowledge of God.

As to the Time that *Jesus* was dead and bury'd, which modern *Divines* call *three Days* and *three Nights*, St. *Augustin* says[329] that according to the Scripture he was not so long dead and buried. Many, says[330] he, have put various Constructions on the Time of *Christ*'s Burial, endeavouring to make three Days of it: But we, without slighting any of their Opinions, are for a mystical Interpretation, and suppose, that by the three Days are to be understood Three Ages of the World.

The Day would fail me to collect all the Passages out of the Fathers, in Interpretation of one or other of the Parts of the Story of *Jesus*'s Resurrection, but what I have here said in a few Citations, is enough to show, that they look'd upon the whole Story, as emblematical of his spiritual Resurrection out of the *Grave* of the *Letter* of the Scriptures, in which he has been buried about *three Days* and *three Nights*, according to that mystical Interpretation of prophetical Numbers which I have learn'd of them.

And thus have I done with the Miracle of *Jesus*'s Resurrection, which, by the Help of my Friend the Jewish *Rabbi*, I have shewn, according to the Letter, to consist of the greatest Incredibilities. And with this I conclude my *Discourses* on his Miracles, intending to treat on no more of them, unless I am invited or provoked to it. I had once an Inclination to make another *Discourse* on *Jesus*'s miraculous Conception, and on his feeding his Thousands, in the Wilderness, with a few Loaves and Fishes; but upon a little Consideration on the Letter of those two Stories, I found myself too grave for the Work; and my *Rabbi*'s Thoughts are too gay and wanton; therefore it must be omitted, till the *Clergy* importune me to it, and signify their Curiosity to see it perform'd by me.

My Discourses hereafter, if God spare me Life and Liberty, which under his Providence I don't despair of, to publish another Volume, shall treat on some historical Passages of the New Testament, such as, "On the Stories of *Jesus*'s Birth; and the Appearances of Angels to the Shepherds keeping Watch over their Flocks by Night: "The Journey and Presents of the Wise Men to *Jesus*: "The Slaughter of the Innocents at

Bethlehem, and of *Herod*'s Cruelty: "The Travels of *Joseph* with the Child *Jesus* and his Mother into *Egypt*: "The Disputation of *Jesus* with the *Doctors* in the Temple, and his Elopement from his Parents: "His riding on an Ass to *Jerusalem*; and on other such like Passages of his Life. For I am resolv'd to give the Letter of the Scripture no Rest, so long as God gives me Life and Abilities to attack it. *Origen*[331] *says*, that *when we dispute against Ministers of the Letter, we must select some historical Parts of Scripture, which they understand literally, and shew that according to the Letter, they can't stand their Ground, but imply Absurdities and Nonsense*. And how then is such a Work to be perform'd to best Advantage? Is it to be done in a grave, sedate, and serious Manner? No, I think Ridicule should here take Place of sober Reasoning, as the more proper and effectual Means to cure Men of their foolish Faith and absurd Notions. As no wise Man hardly ever reprehends a Blunderbuss for his Bull, any other way, than by laughing at him; so the Asserters of nonsensical Notions in Theology should, if possible, be satirized and jetted upon, or they'll never be put out of Countenance for, nor desert their absurd Doctrines. And there never was a polemical Divine, that, if he had an Opportunity and Advantage over the Weakness of his Adversary, did not take such a ludicrous and merry Course with him.

But on such historical Passages of the Gospel as before mention'd, do I trust to publish another Volume of *Discourses*, like to these on *Jesus*'s Miracles; and at present pass to my third general Head, at first proposed to be spoken to, and that is,

III. To consider what *Jesus* means, when he appeals to his Works and Miracles, as to a Testimony and

Witness of his Authority; and to show that he did not properly and ultimately refer to these done in the *Flesh*, but to those mystical ones he would do in the *Spirit*, of which those done in the Flesh are but mere Types and Shadows.

And on this Head I shall be short, there being no Occasion of many Words on it. The *Bishop* of *London*[332] has collected many Sayings of *Jesus*, wherein he seems to appeal to the Works he then did and had done in Flesh, as to a Witness of him. But why might not *Jesus* then prophesy, and mean the spiritual Works which *He-in-us* would do? It is the known Way of the Prophets to speak of Things to come, as if they were already past, because such Prophecies are not to be understood, till their Accomplishment: Even so did *Jesus* prophesy, when he appeal'd to his Works, as I could prove from the Nature and Manner of his Expressions, but that the Argument would be dry and tedious: And therefore I refer the Matter entirely to the Fathers, who asserted that *Jesus* prophesied in his *Miracles* as well as in his *Parables*, and that the Works he then did in the Flesh were but Types of his mysterious Operations, that would be the Demonstration of his Authority and Messiahship. Hence it is that *Origen*[333] says that *Jesus*'s first coming was but a Type and Shadow of his spiritual Advent and that his[334] true Miracles, by which his Authority is to be proved, are spiritual: Hence it is that St. *Hilary* repeatedly says[335] that *Jesus*'s Works were significative and predictive of mysterious Operations, which we were especially to look to. And Hence it is that all the other Fathers interpreted the Miracles of *Jesus* in a mystical and allegorical Sense.

The Question then is, to what Miracles did *Jesus* truly

and properly appeal, in the Opinion of the Fathers, for his Authority and Messiahship? Was it to the Typical or Antitypal Works? was it to the *Shadow* or to the *Substance* of his Operations? To his substantial Operations, to be sure, which are and will be his spiritual ones upon the Soul, that are greater than those once done on Men's Bodies, and which will be a proper Proof of his divine Power. And to declare my Opinion freely, I am only for such a spiritual *Messiah*, who will cure the *Errors* call'd the Diseases of Mankind, which *Jesus* of *Nazareth* has not as yet done.

But not to dispute this Point with *Bishop Gibson*, I will leave him in the Enjoyment of his Opinion of his literal *Messiah*, and miraculous Operator on Men's Bodies; if he'll but indulge me in the Belief of my spiritual *Messiah* to come for the healing of modern Distempers call'd the Sins and Errors of Mankind. And in the mean time let us draw the Comparison between his *literal* and my *spiritual* Jesus; and let the World judge, to whom the Preference is to be given for Power and Authority.

Bishop *Gibson* is for *Jesus* of *Nazareth*'s Messiahship, because he cured the *bodily Blindness* of many miraculously; And a good Work it was: But I am for the Messiahship of a spiritual *Jesus* to come, who will open the *blind Eyes* of our Understandings to discern Truth from Error, which will be a most glorious Operation, that his *Jesus* of *Nazareth* has not as yet done.

Bishop *Gibson* is for *Jesus*'s Messiahship, who once cured *bodily Deafness* in many, which was indeed well done of him: But I am for the Messiahship of a spiritual *Jesus* to come, to heal the *Deafness* of our

Souls, or their *Dulness* in Apprehension of sublime Mysteries, which will be a divine Work, that his *Jesus* has not as yet done.

Bishop *Gibson* is for *Jesus*'s Messiahship, because he cured Men's bodily *Lameness*, for which I do praise him: But I am for a spiritual *Jesus*'s Messiahship, who will heal Mankind of their *Halting* between two and more Opinions; a more blessed Work, that *Jesus* of *Nazareth* has not as yet done for us!

And so, comparing all other Diseases of Body and Soul together, I am for the *Jesus*, who will heal the Diseases of the Soul; and have a much less Regard for *Bishop Gibson's Jesus*, who cured the Diseases of a few Men's Bodies; but for all that, am not angry with the *Bishop* for his high Veneration of his *Jesus*, neither would I by any Means have him prosecuted and punish'd for not being of the same Mind with me.

But, because the *Bishop* suspects me of Infidelity, in that I have ludicrously treated some of the Miracles of his *Jesus*, which by the by he has not vindicated from the Absurdities and Incredibilities I charged them with; I will humour the *Bishop*, and supposing *Jesus* wrought literally those Miracles which are allegorically interpreted by me, will in those very Miracles compare his *literal* and my *spiritual* Jesus together; and appeal to all Men of Consideration, which is the most worthy of the Title and Honour of the true *Messiah*.

Bishop *Gibson* is for his *Jesus*'s Messiahship, who miraculously drove the *Buyers* and *Sellers* out of the Temple, just as if a Man, was God to invest him with Power, should furiously drive the *Butchers* and *Grasiers* with their Cattle, to the Confusion of their

several Properties, out of *Smithfield*: A notable Miracle That! But I am for the spiritual *Jesus*'s Messiahship, who according to the Form of that typical Story, will at his Coming expel Ecclesiastical Merchants out of his Church, who make Merchandise of the Gospel, selling their *Bulls* and *Beasts*, and *Fatlings* of the Letter: A most glorious and beneficial Work to Mankind will this be! And to prepare Mens Souls for the Susception of such a spiritual *Jesus*, I intend to publish a *Discourse* of the Mischiefs and Inconveniencies of an *Hireling Priesthood*, wherein it shall be proved, that Mankind can't be either good, wise or happy under the Kingdom of this *Messiah* to come, without an Abolition and Extirpation of them.

Bishop *Gibson* is for the Messiahship of his *Jesus*, who *cast the Devils out of the Madmen, and permitted them to enter into the Herd of Swine*, that *ran violently down a Precipice, and were choak'd in the Sea*: How great a Miracle it was thus to cure the Madmen, the *Bishop* may know best, being perhaps better acquainted with the Devil than I am; but was it not for Pity to the *Swineherds*, for their Losses, I could even now laugh at the Thoughts of the Hoggs running and tumbling down-hill, as if the *Devil* drove them: But leaving the Bishop *calmly*, *decently*, and *seriously* to admire the Wisdom and Justice of his *Jesus* in that Act, I am for the spiritual *Jesus*, who, according to the typical Form of that Story, exorcis'd the furious and diabolical Tempers out of the *Jews* and *Gentiles* of old, whom no Chains of Reason could hold from doing Violence to the Christians, till they were converted; and tho' He permitted the like persecuting and diabolical Spirits to enter into Ecclesiastical Swine; yet will they be precipitated into the *Sea* of the Knowledge of God, wherein they will be absorpt with divine Visions and Contemplations. O most

glorious Work! that bespeaks the Wisdom, Power and Goodness of our spiritual *Jesus*, from the Beginning to the End of it.

Bishop *Gibson* admires his *Jesus*, for his Transfiguration on Mount *Tabor*, tho' neither He nor any Body else can tell, wherein lay the Miracle, nor into what various Figures and Shapes *Jesus* was transform'd: But I am for the spiritual *Jesus*, whose glorious Transfiguration, after *six* grand Days of the Creation, will be conspicuous, when with the Eyes of our Understanding we shall behold him metamorphosed into the Forms of all the Types of him under the Law. I am now ravish'd with the intellectual View of this Transfiguration; and believe, was I to set about it, I could give others (except the Bishop) an Idea and Conception or it to their Astonishment at the Glory of *Jesus* in it.

Bishop *Gibson* is for the Messiahship of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, because he cured a *Woman of an Issue of Blood*, after she had spent all she had upon Physicians to no purpose, which might be, or might not be a Miracle, for any thing he can argue upon it: But I am for the spiritual *Jesus*'s Messiahship, who, at his Coming, will, according to that typical Story, cure the *Woman* of the Church of her *Issue of Blood*, that is shed in Persecution and War, which her Ecclesiastical Physicians of the *Clergy* have not been able to stop, tho' they have receiv'd large Fees and Stipends of the Church to that Purpose. Will not this be a desirable and beneficial Work to all Nations? And who knows not, (excepting the *Bishop*) that it is of the Office of the true Messiah, to give *abundance of Peace* to Mankind, to *make the Lion to lye down with the Lamb*; and to induce Men to *break their Swords into Plough-shares*, and *their Spears into*

Pruning-hooks; and to *make Wars to cease* in all the World. Which Prophecies are so far from being fulfill'd by *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, that there has been nothing but Wrangling and Jangling, and Scolding and Fighting about him ever since. I wonder the Want of the Accomplishment of the foresaid Prophecies has not long before now occasion'd the Rejection of *Jesus*'s Messiahship, or of the Authority of the Prophets.

Bishop *Gibson* is for his *Jesus*'s being the Messiah, because he cured an old *Woman* of a *Spirit* of, no body knows what, *Infirmity*; consequently little or nothing is to be laid for the Greatness of that Miracle. But I am for the spiritual *Jesus*'s Messiahship, who, according to the Figure of that literal Story, is to heal the *Woman* of the Church of her *Infirmity of the Spirit* of Prophecy, which *Jesus* of *Nazareth* has not done for her, or there would not be so many Disputes about Prophecies and their Interpretations, so far, as there is hardly one Prophecy that Christians are agreed about the Sense of. It is the grand Characteristick of the true *Messiah*, that he's to restore Prophecy and the Way of Interpretation of the Prophets, upon the allegorical Scheme too. I speak this, not only upon the Authority of the Prophets themselves, but upon an almost infinite Number of Testimonies of ancient *Jews* and *Fathers*; accordingly I expect the Advent of a spiritual Messiah, who alone can do it, to heal the Church of her present *Infirmity*, and to restore the Art and Gift of Prophecy.

Bishop *Gibson* is an Admirer of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, because he told a poor Whore of *Samaria*, her Fortune of *having had five Husbands*, and being then

an Adulteress with another Man; which, according to the Letter, is such a poor sort of a Miracle, that I can hardly think of it without blushing: But I am an Adorer beforehand of the spiritual *Jesus* who, according to that Type, will out of the Law and the Prophets, allegorically interpreted, tell the present heretical and adulterous Woman of the Church *all that she has done*, and how she has been wedded to the sensible Things of the *five* Books of *Moses*, and is now an Adulteress with the *Anti-Christ* of the Letter. Such an Information of the Church will be a most stupendous and miraculous Work, and a Demonstration of our *Jesus*'s Messiahship beyond Contradiction, in as much as it will be agreeable to the Opinion, that all Antiquity entertain'd of the true *Messiah*, *viz.* that he was to let us into the Sight, Knowledge and Understanding of the Wisdom and Beauty of Providence thro' all Ages of the World.

Bishop *Gibson* admires *Jesus* of *Nazareth* for *his cursing the Figtree; for not bearing Fruit out of Season*: Shame on that Miracle, according to the Letter, and on all Admirers of it! But I am for the spiritual *Jesus*, who, at his coming to the Figtree of his Church, will make its present unfruitful State to *wither away*, and cause it to produce the Fruits of the Spirit, and allegorical Interpretations of the Scriptures, that are compared to sweet and ripe Figs. For such his Advent to this miraculous and beneficial Purpose I daily pray and say too, Blessed are all those who love his Appearance!

After this Fashion could I go thro' the other Miracles, I have treated on in these *Discourses*; and upon the Comparison set plainly before the Eyes of my *Readers* the Difference between the *literal* Miracles of Bishop *Gibson's carnal* Jesus and the *allegorical* ones of my

spiritual Jesus, as to Stupendousness, Use and Excellency: But what I have here done in the seven Instances above, is enough to induce us to believe, with the Fathers, that *Jesus*'s first Coming in the *Flesh* was but a Type and Shadow of his second Advent in the *Spirit*; and that *Jesus* of old, when he appeal'd to his Works then done, as to a Witness of his Authority, did only prophesy, and refer ultimately to his mystical Operations, that are alone the Proof of his Godlike and divine Power. Bishop *Gibson* says[336] of me, that *pretending to raise the Actions and Miracles of our Saviour to a more exalted and spiritual Meaning, I have labour'd to take away the Reality of them, and by that to destroy one of the principal Evidences of Christianity*. But I presume now, he'll be sensible of the Rashness and Incogitancy of that Accusation. If he be not, I shall say of him, in Case he write any more for *Jesus's literal* Miracles in Opposition to his *allegorical* ones that he's like the Dog in the Fable (the Bishop will excuse the Coarseness of the Comparison) that let go the *Substance* of his Mutton, and catch'd at the Shadow, and so, like a foolish *Cur* as he was, lost both.

And thus have I done with the *Three* general Heads at first proposed to be handled in these *Discourses*. Now whether I am, upon the whole, an *Infidel*, or *Believer* of Christianity, the World is to judge. I'll make no more solemn Declarations of my Belief of it, much less at this Juncture of Time, when I am under Prosecution for Infidelity; because it would be a sneaking, tame, and cowardly Act in me, and such an Argument of that Meanness of Spirit, as I abhor and detest. My *Works* shall speak for me, in which, being conscious of the Innocency of my Intentions, and of the Usefulness of my Design, I mean to proceed; not doubting but some of our *clergy*, upon two or three

more *Discourses* against the Letter of the *New Testament*, will find me out, what I am, and whether I am not a true Professor of the Religion of the spiritual and holy *Jesus*.

In the mean Time I'll not compound the Difference depending between Bishop *Gibson* and my self, upon any other Terms, than his making me ample Satisfaction for the Injuries done to my Reputation and low Fortunes. Tho' he may thirst after my Life, or at least, my Liberty; yet under the Providence of God I fear not the Loss of either. God be prais'd, this Kingdom is bless'd with such a Civil Administration for Wisdom, Justice and Mercy, as no Nation of the World can equal. Our Magistrates are all Philosophers, Lovers of Truth, and of an Enquiry into it; and so tender of the religious as well as of the civil Rights of the Subject, that I have nothing to dread from them.

There is somewhat *popular* indeed, tho' nothing true nor rational, in the Clamour and Accusations of the *Clergy* against me. Bishop *Gibson* would insinuate[337] that my *Discourses* on *Miracles* strike *at the Foundation of civil Society*; but by an unnatural Consequence of his own making. I confess, it is an heinous Crime to write any Thing that tends to the Subversion or Prejudice of the civil Society: But how will the *Bishop* make me guilty of it? If the *Clergy* will not be Disturbers of the Peace of the Publick upon my *Discourses*; it's certain, that the Quiet of the World, which I wish and aim at, will be inviolably kept and preserv'd for all me. My Followers indeed, when I walk the Streets of this City, are *numerous*; and if any of them should break the Peace, what serves my *Lord Mayor*'s Power for, but to chastise them for it? As for my self and my Adherents at

home, which, as yet, are *without Number*, we are all *Quietists* and should act against our Consciences and Religion, if we should injure any Man in his Person and Property. But I smile to see a *Clergyman* all on a sudden, like the *Bishop*, so tender of the Welfare of the Publick, when *Ecclesiasticks*, in all Ages past, have been the *Bane* of Society and the *Pest* of Mankind, as appears from the Wars and Persecution they have rais'd in the World; and from that Strife, Variance and Discords, they have occasion'd in Cities and Families. And with Submission to the *Bishop*, who I hope will not be angry for my saying it, I am sure, the *Clergy* at this Juncture, are like an *high-mettal'd blind Horse*, that were they not ridden by the Civil Authority with a strait Rein, would be oppressing and trampling upon all, that flood in the Way of their Interests, to the Disturbance of *Civil Society*.

Profaneness too does the *Bishop* charge me with. But why so? Because I ridicule the Nonsense and Absurdities of *Jesus*'s Miracles according to the Letter, which he venerates. Very fine indeed! The *Bishop* would worship the *Head* of an *Ass*, and a wiser Man than himself, without the Charge of Profaneness, must not laugh at his foolish Superstition.

And *Blasphemy* lastly does the *Bishop* accuse me of: And this is a sad *Bugbear* Word, that has frighted Abundance of People into dreadful Apprehensions of my Guilt, even to the Abhorrence of me. But the *Bishop* should first have defined, what is meant by *Blasphemy*, and have proved me guilty of it, before he had made his Exclamations: Or the *Turks* may say that a Jest upon their *Alcoran*, in which there are no Contradictions, is as much a *Blasphemy*, as any

Ludicrousness upon the *Gospels*, which are full of Inconsistencies. That there is such a Sin or Error, call'd *Blasphemy*, according to the Scriptures, is certain: But our *Divines* are undetermined about the Nature of it. I intend to take my Opportunity to treat on the Sin of Blasphemy, and to prove, *Ministers* of the *Letter* are the only Persons that can be guilty of it. *Ministers* of the *Letter*, upon the Authority of the Fathers, are the Worshippers of the *Apocalyptical Beast*; and anti-allegorical Expositions are that *Blasphemy*, St. *John* writes of, which the *Beast* and his Worshippers will open their Mouths in, against the most High. This shall be proved as clear as the Light. But when I do it, I would not have any think, it is with an Intention to bring the Bishops of *London*, *Litchfield*, and St. *David*'s, or any other *Divines*, under Prosecution for that heinous Sin: No, my God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent; and knows how and when to reckon with such Blasphemers, without calling upon the Civil Magistrate to do it for him. Should I importune the Civil Authority to execute Vengeance upon them, I should make a foolish *Calf* or a Senseless *Idol* of my God, that was unable, or knew not how, nor when to vindicate his own Cause. Surely the *Bishop* of *London*, upon his Prosecution of me for *Blasphemy*, must think his God now *asleep* or *gone a Journey* from Home; or he would not be for taking God's own Work out of his Hands, and committing it to the Care of the Civil Magistrates.

The *Bishop* moreover should consider, that the Words *prophane* and *blasphemous* are of no Use and Signification among Philosophers, who in Disputation never cast them at each other, however they may differ in Opinion. Philosophers are all supposed to be such profound Venerators of the

Deity, as they would not be guilty of *Prophaneness* and *Blasphemy* for the whole World. If any of our School of *Free-Thinkers* should say of his Opponent that he's *prophane* and *blasphemous*, he would be reprimanded for want of Wit, Temper and good Manners; and be told that he's like a *Billingsgate Scold*, who has Recourse to impertinent bad Language, when her Reason fails her for better Rhetorick.

But it may be, for ought I know, the *Bishop* has some Design in his Accusations against me for *Profaneness* and *Blasphemy*; but I hope it is a better than to prejudice the Civil Magistrate, or to incense the Populace.

According to the Fathers I am so far from being a Blasphemer, that they say, *Christ* upon the literal Interpretation of his Miracles is metamorphosed into the False-Christ, call'd *Anti-Christ*. Whether there is any Truth in this their Opinion I can't be positive, till the Experiment is fully made. But if our *Clergy* will keep their Temper, and grant me a clear Stage of Battle, I'll try it out; and see whether I can't, by the Club of Reason and primitive Authority, give their *Anti-Christ* a fatal Blow: Who knows but I may give Peace to the Church, and reconcile all Parties by it?

However this may be; I am sure, no Man can wish for a greater Advantage over his Enemy, than I have over the *Bishop* in this Controversy: But he shall find me a generous Adversary, who will make no worse Use of my Advantage over him than now and then to put him in Mind of his *Pastoral Letter*, and of the Prosecution; unless I should be tempted, ere long, to publish my *Moderatorial* Letter, like his *Pastoral* one, to the People of *London* and *Westminster*, with *Ten*

wholesome Rules in it, not only to caution them against false Prophets and false Teachers, without forgetting the *Bishop* of the *Diocese*, but to direct them to the Ecclesiastical Fountain of the growing Sins, Errors and Infidelity of the Age, which the *Clergy* know I am of Ability to lay open.

When I began the Publication of these *Discourses*, I own, I laid a *Trap* for some considerable *Clergyman*; but little imagined, the great *Bishop* of *London* would be caught in it. But now I have taken hold of him, I'll not release him out of the Controversy, till he has sorely repented of his Ignorance or Malice in calling me a *Writer, in Favour of Infidelity*.

So much at present for the Bishop of *London*. I have been the quicker of late in the printing of *this*, because I am given to understand, the *Bishop* of St. *David*'s stays for it, intending to make but one Work of it, and answer all *six Discourses* together. I hope my *Rabbi*'s Letter here will be thought by him, a good Payment for his Patience. And now I shall be in Expectation of his Mountainous Production, and where I shall hide myself from the terrible Strokes of his Pen, I have not as yet consider'd.

I am not a little pleas'd to see a *Couple* of Dissenting Preachers, *viz.* Dr. *Harris* and Mr. *Atkinson*, lifted into the Controversy against me. If they had kept their Necks out of the Collar, they might have dissembled and pretended, that, upon the Conclusion of the Battle, when it would have appear'd, I am a real

Contender for Primitive Christianity, they had a better Understanding of the Fathers, and a clearer View of my Design, than to suspect me of Blasphemy and Infidelity: But now they are engag'd with equal Spite, Ignorance and Defamations against me, they must take their Share of the Fate and Shame, with the *Clergy*, upon the Conclusion of the Controversy.

There's no Body can think it worth my while to bestow a Six-penny *Pamphlet* upon either of these *Gentlemen*, but for all that, they shall not be altogether slighted and neglected by me. I have made a Collection of their Rhetorical Flowers, which occasionally shall be presented the Publick, to the Admiration of their Wit, Reason, Learning and Eloquence. And at present only take Notice, that they are *both* for the Persecution of me; but not so much for my Opinions, as the Indecency, Irreverence, and Immorality of my Stile; forsooth! which is just such a Distinction, as may be easily stretch'd to the Justification of the Persecution of all Authors, whom the Priesthood in Power shall not like. Mr. *Atkinson*'s Argument for the Persecution of me, is much the same with that, which *John Calvin* used for the Persecution of that great Philosopher *Servetus*; the Injustice and Cruelty of whose Death and Sufferings is a greater Reproach to the Name of *Calvin*, than the Martyrdom of any *Protestant* can be to the Memory of any Popish Prelate.

To conclude, what I have written, in these *Six Discourses*, is with a View to the Glory of God, the Advancement of Truth, the Happiness of Mankind, the Demolition of *Babylon*, the Edification of *Jerusalem*, and the Demonstration of the Messiahship of our Spiritual *Jesus*, to whom be Glory for ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.



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Mr. *WOOLSTON*'S

DEFENCE

OF HIS

DISCOURSES, *&c.*

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OF HIS

DISCOURSES

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

Against the *Bishops* of St. David*'s* and London, and his other *Adversaries*.

Part I.

Res Religionis non Verberibus sed Verbis est peragenda.

Lactant.

London: Printed for the Author, and Sold by him, next Door to the *Star* in *Aldermanbury*, and by the Booksellers of *London* and *Westminster*, 1729.

[Price *One Shilling*.]

TO THE

QUEEN.

Madam,



ot long since the Bishop *of* St. David*'s presented to Your* Majesty *his* Vindication; as *I would have done this my* Defence, *if I had known how to get Access to Your Royal Presence*.

Your Majesty *will perceive, that here's a sad War broke out between the* Bishop *and my self, about* Miracles; *which, in all probability, will cost a large Effusion of Words; and, unless Your* Majesty *can accommodate the Difference, will hardly be terminated without the Slaughter of many Notions and Arguments*.

The Bishop *is for making Your* Majesty *the Arbitress of our Controversy, which I consent to; and he talks of Your singular Qualifications to preside at it, which I as certainly believe, as that a* Bishop *will not lye nor flatter*.

Had I known before of Your Majesty's *Abilities at this Controversy, I should have gone near to have applauded You for them; and the World would readily have believed my Praises of You to be just, because I had no Bishoprick nor* Translation *in View for them*.

If Your Majesty *has no extraordinary Talent at this Controversy, I trust, You are wiser than to think the Better of Your self for the* Bishop*'s Compliment. You'll not be vain; tho' he is fulsome.*

But the Bishop, Madam, *has done me wrong. He would*

insinuate, that I am disaffected to the King's *Title and Government; which is entirely false. I Love and Honour Your whole Royal Family, and often pray for Your* Majesty *too*, without Pay, *which is more than any* Bishop *in* England *has done for You.*

And what are my Prayers for Your Majesty? *That God may prolong Your Days to the comfort of Your Royal Progeny, and the Joy of these Nations; That the Felicity of Your Life may be uninterrupted by Enemies and Misfortunes; and That after a good old Age, when Life is no longer desirable to the happyest Princes, You may be transferr'd to an heavenly and immortal Crown of Glory. This is the hearty and voluntary Prayer of*,

London,
September
27, 1729.

Madam,
Your Majesty's
most humble,
most obedient,
and faithful Servant,
Thomas Woolston.



A

DEFENCE

OF THE

Discourses on *Miracles*.



t Last, one Volume of *Bishop Smalbroke*'s mountainous Work, that the *Press* has been so long pregnant with, is brought forth: And I don't doubt, but it answers the Expectations of the *Clergy*, who will extol it to the Skies, and applaud it to the Populace, as an absolute Confutation of my *Discourses*; but I would advise them, if it be not too late, not to be too profuse in their Commendations of it, for fear that an Occasion should be given them to blush for their want of Judgment. We have had

Instances of Books before now (and one very remarkable, in the Case of *Boyle* against *Bently*) that have met with a general Approbation, till they have been sifted into, and upon Examination found empty; and it is not impossible, but *this* of the *Bishop* before us, may meet with the same Fate.

I had conceived a great Opinion of this *Bishop*'s Learning and Abilities, and, if he had not sent[338] two simple *Harbingers* before-hand, should have been so apprehensive of his Acuteness, that nothing, but a thorough Persuasion of the Goodness of my Cause, and of my Power to defend it, could have kept me from Flight before him. But I stand my Ground, and shall, against greater Adversaries than this *Bishop*, who has more weakly and maliciously attack'd me, than you'd have been expected from one of his reputed Candour and Learning; and given me greater Advantages to insult and triumph over him, than I could wish or desire.

Many other little *Whifflers* in Divinity have before attack'd me with their *Squibs* and *Squirts* from the *Press*, but I despised them all, as unworthy of my particular Regard and Notice, reserving my self for Defence against this *Bishop*'s grand Assault; when, by the by, I might have an Opportunity to animadvert on one or other of them. Some of these *Whifflers*, like Men of Honour, have set their Names to their Works; others very prudently have concealed their Names, which, upon the best Enquiry I could make, I have not been able to discover, or I had given them a Rebuke for their Impudence and Slanders. It may be wonder'd, that any polemical Authors, especially when they write on the orthodox and establish'd Side of the Question, should conceal themselves, and that they are not tempted with the Hopes of Reward and

Applause to make themselves known. I will say what I think here, that it's never Modesty in such *anonymous* Authors (for we *Scribblers* in Divinity, whatever we may pretend, have always a good Conceit of our selves) but Apprehensions of a sharp Reply to their Dishonour. And this is the true Reason, why some of my Adversaries industriously conceal themselves, knowing that they are guilty of wilful and malicious Lies and Calumnies, which I should chastise them for. But, as their Names are suppresst, they know, it's to no Purpose for me to expose their Malice, because no body can be put to shame for it.

The *Bishop* of St. *David's* acts here a more glorious Part: He comes not behind me, like other *Cowards*, to give me a secret Knock on the Pate, but like a courageous Champion, looks me in the Face, and admonishes me to stand upon my Guard. This is bravely done in him! And I have no Fault to find, but that he is providing himself with *Seconds* in the Controversy, I mean the *Civil Powers*, and calling upon them to destroy me, before the Battle is well begun, and whether he gets the better of me or not. This is not fairly nor honourably done of the *Bishop*, and I have Reason to complain of it. Tho' I think my self equal, if not superior in the Dispute, to any of our *Bishops*, yet I am not a Match for the *King*'s Power, neither would I lift up my Hand, or use my Pen against him for all the World. If the *Bishop* will yield to a fair Combat, and desire the Civil Authority to stand by and see fair Play between us, I will engage with him upon any Terms. But to make the *Civil Powers* Parties in our Quarrel, and to bespeak them, right or wrong, to favour his Side, is intolerable, and what we spiritual Gladiators ought to abhor and detest.

I liked the *Bishop*, when he proposed to the *Queen* to be *Arbitress* of our Controversy. As I will not here question her Qualifications to judge in it, so the first Opportunity I have of waiting on her *Majesty*, I will join my Requests to her to accept of the Trouble and Office. After she has fix'd the Terms of Disputation, and thought of a proper Reward for the *Victor*, or a Punishment for the *Conquer'd*, then will we proceed, and either dispute the Matter from the Press, or scold it out in the Queen's Presence, as she shall think it most conducive to the Edification of herself, and of her Court-Ladies.

But the *Bishop*'s Proposal here, and Compliment on the *Queen*, is but the Copy of his Countenance. He'll submit to no Arbitration: No, no, he's for having the Civil Powers to be immediate Executioners (without further hearing what I have to say for my self) of his Wrath and Vengeance upon me. He's for having them to take it for granted, that he has proved me an *Infidel* and *Blasphemer*, and would have them to inflict some exemplary Punishment upon me, so as to incapacitate me for ever writing more. Wherefore else does he say thus?[339] "Indeed a more proper Occasion cannot possibly happen in a Nation, where Christianity is establish'd by human *Laws*, to invigorate the Zeal of the Magistrate, in putting the Laws in Execution against so flagrant a Sort of Profaneness, that tramples with such Indignity on the Grounds of the *Christian* Faith; and to convince the World that the *Minister* of that *God*, who is so highly affronted, *bears not the Sword in vain*. And certainly the Higher Powers have great Reason to exert their Authority on this and the like Occasions."

I was astonish'd at this Passage, with some others, in the *Bishop*'s *Dedication*, and could hardly believe my

Eyes when I read it; that a Scholar, a Christian, and a Protestant Bishop, should breath so much Fury and Fire for the kindling again of *Smithfield* Faggots! That any Thing of human Shape should so thirst after that Destruction of another, which would turn to the Ruin of his own Reputation and Honour! Does the *Bishop* believe that he has clearly confuted me, or does he not? If he believes, and others know that I am absolutely confuted, then there's an End of the Controversy, the Danger of my *blasphemous* Books is over; and why should I undergo any Punishment, which would move the Compassion of many, and give a greater Reputation to my Writings than they do deserve? Does the *Bishop* think he has confuted me? This is Honour and Triumph enough to him; who, of all Men, should not desire me to be otherwise punish'd, for fear of getting the Character of a merciless and implacable Conqueror. Am I in my own Opinion confuted and baffled? This would be Pain and Mortification enough, even worse than Death. For, however we polemical *Writers* may pretend a Readiness to part with our Errors upon Conviction, as if we could easily yield to our Adversaries, yet it goes to the Hearts of us to be out-done in Reason and Argument. As it is said of *Bishop Stillingfleet*, that, being sensible of his Insufficiency to contend with Mr. *Lock*, he grieved and pined away upon it: So I, upon Supposition the Bishop of St. *David's* has confuted me, must not only necessarily afflict my self, but undergo the Shame of the Reproaches of the People, for my wicked and impotent Efforts to subvert their Religion: And what would the *Bishop* have more? He could desire no more, if he had absolutely confuted me: But it's plain he dares not trust to his own Confutation of me; it's plain he's afraid of, what he is conscious may be

made, a smart Reply to him, and therefore he calls upon the Civil Magistrate for his Help to prevent it.

After that the *Bishop* of *London* had publish'd his *Pastoral Letter*, and it was reported that the *Bishop* of St. *David's* was preparing a strenuous Vindication of the *litteral* Story of *Jesus*'s Miracles, I concluded that the Prosecution would immediately be dropp'd, and that the Clergy were betaking themselves to that Christian, Rational, and Philosophical Course of Confutation, and would no longer make use of Persecution, which is the Armour of hot, furious, and ignorant Bigots. And there is one Passage in the *Bishop*'s *Pastoral Letter*, which I interpreted as a Grant of full Liberty; but, whether I am apt to mistake the Sense of the Fathers of the *Primitive* Church or not, I find I did misconstrue the Words of a Father of our *English* Church, and turn'd them to another and better Purpose than he aim'd at. His Words are these[340] "And as to the *blasphemous manner*, in which a late Writer has taken the Liberty to treat our Saviour's Miracles, and the Author of them; tho' I am far from contending, that the Grounds of the Christian Religion, and the Doctrines of it, may not be discuss'd at all Times in a calm, decent, and serious Way (on the contrary, I am sure that the more fully they are discuss'd, the more firmly they will stand) yet I cannot but think it the Duty of the Civil Magistrate, at all Times, to take Care that Religion be not treated in a *ludicrous* or *reproachful* Manner, and effectually to discourage such Books and Writings as strike equally at the Foundation of all Religion, *&c.*" What the *Bishop* of *L.* here says, of his *thinking it the Duty of the Civil Magistrate at all Times, to take Care that Religion be not treated in a ludicrous manner*, I understood as an Excuse for what he had done in stirring up the Civil Magistrate to a

Prosecution of me; and that now, like a Philosopher, he was for letting Truth and Religion to take its Course, and for leaving it to a free Discussion, whether in a *ludicrous* or in a *calm*, *decent* or *serious* Way. But I confess, I have mistaken the *Bishop*'s Words, finding by Experience, that (for all the natural Import of his Expression, that Liberty should be used to discuss the Grounds of Religion in a *serious* Manner) he'll no more suffer it, if he can help it, to be contested in a *serious*, than in a *ludicrous* Way; wherefore else did he move for the Prosecution of a late *London Journal*, which was all *calm*, *decent*, and *serious* Argument. And the Bishop of St. *David's* his furious *Dedication* now, confirms me in this Opinion, that our *Clergy* (for all their preaching up Liberty with as much Force and Strength of Reason as any Men, and for all their Invitations to *Infidels*, to say and print their worst against Christianity) will by no means, if they can hinder it, suffer any Attacks to be made upon their Religion, nor cease their Importunities and Solicitations of the Civil Magistrate to Persecution. Blessed be God, the *Bishops* are not my *Judges* as well as my *Accusers*, or I know, what would become of me.

Mr. *Atkinson*, a little Writer against me, says,[341] "That I call the pretended Divines of the Church my Prosecutors, when they were not my Prosecutors. And *again*, That there was no need of my Supposition, that the *Clergy* would have more Wit than to prosecute me again for this *Discourse*; for he did not know that they had been concern'd in any Prosecution of me." And again he says, "If the Civil Magistrate thinks it his Duty to chastise me for my Sin and Folly, I am to blame my self, and not the *Clergy*, till I can prove the Zeal of our Christian Government to be excited by the malign Influence of

the *Clergy*." Mr. *Atkinson* is thus far certainly in the right on't, that, strictly speaking, the *Clergy* are not my Prosecutors, but the King, who, in all probability, knows no more of my Books than the Man in the Moon. But whether Mr. *Atkinson* could be so ignorant, as not to know the *Clergy* were the grand Instigators to Prosecution, let others judge. If he really was such a poor *Ignoramus*, I have no more to say: Otherwise, his Expressions above, will be look'd upon as the vilest Piece of Hypocrisy and Prevarication that can be, purposely utter'd to take off the *Odium* of the Prosecution from the *Clergy*, and to cast it upon the Civil Government; which, whether Mr. *Atkinson* believes it or not, had never, but for the Solicitations of the *Bishops*, given me any Trouble. Mr. *Atkinson* above, acts the Part of the Popish Clergy of *France*, upon the Revocation of the Edict of *Nantes*. After that the King, upon the urgent Importunities of the Clergy, had resolv'd to revoke that Edict; the Clergy were for excusing themselves to the Protestants, and laying the Blame only on the King, saying, *The King was bent and resolv'd on't, and they could not help it*; which was such Jesuitical Prevarication in the Popish Clergy, that the Protestants could not forbear *roguing* them for it. Mr. *Atkinson* knows how to apply this Story; which I had not told, but for the Use of the Bishop of *L.* who, upon a certain Occasion could say, that it was not He, but the *Government* that prosecuted Mr. *Woolston*. If Mr. *Atkinson* was really so ignorant as he seems to be, I suppose he is now of another Mind, upon reading the *Bishop* of St. *David's* Dedication; and convinced that the Prosecution against me was began and carried on at the *malign influence*, as he calls it, of the Clergy.

I will here use no Arguments for Liberty of Debate,

which Subject has already been copiously handled, and wants nothing, that I can add unto it. But before I enter into the Body of the *Bishop*'s Book, and upon a profess'd Defence of my Discourses against him, let us consider the manifest Lies, Prevarications, and wicked Insinuations in his *Dedication*, whereby he would move the Secular Powers to a severe Punishment of me. I will pass by the *Motto* of his Book, *viz. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a Kiss*; Whereby he would signify and intimate, not to *Scholars* (for they have more Wit than to think the worse of me for his Abuse of Scripture) but to the ignorant Multitude, that I am another *Judas*, a Traitor and Rebel to *Jesus*. Commonly *Mottos* of Books are suited to their Authors, and the Design of them; whether the *Bishop* will be willing to take this *Motto* to himself or not, I will upon another Occasion give it a pleasant and pertinent Turn upon him. At present I shall only say, what the Learned will observe, that *this* is of a wicked and malicious Use and Intention, of no less, than to create in the Minds of the People an Hatred and Detestation of me; of no other, than by dressing me up, as it were, in a Bear's Skin, to excite the Ecclesiastical and merciless Mob to worry and destroy me. Such has been the roguish Artifice of priests of all Ages, to represent their Adversaries, whom they would destroy, under odious and borrow'd Names, that their Persecutions of them might be thought the less cruel. But passing this by for the present, the

I. First wicked and wilful Misrepresentation that the *Bishop*, in his Dedication, has made of me, is that of being an *Infidel*, and an *Apostate* Clergyman. Wherefore else does he say thus to the Queen: "What is now presented to your Royal View, is an

Apologetical Defence of our holy Religion, against one of the most virulent Libels on it, by an *Apostate Clergyman*, that has appear'd in any Christian Country; and in Comparison of which, other *Infidels* have acted a modest Part." And again he calls my *Discourses*, "A flagrant Sort of Profaneness, that tramples with Indignity on the Grounds of the Christian Faith." And again he signifies, "That I am warmly engaged in subverting the Christian Religion, and active in propagating Infidelity." This is all wilful and downright Calumny, to incense the Queen and the Government against me. The *Bishop* knows in his Heart that I am no *Infidel*, but a Believer of Christianity, notwithstanding my *Discourses* on Miracles, that have occasion'd such a Clamour against me. In my *Discourses*, I have repeatedly and most solemnly declared, that my Designs are not to do Service to Infidelity, but to advance the Glory of God, the Truth of Christianity, and to demonstrate the *Messiahship* of the holy *Jesus*. If I have sometimes ridiculed the litteral Story of our Saviour's Miracles, I have profess'd as often that it was with Design to turn Men's Hearts to the mystical Interpretation of them, on which alone *Jesus*'s Authority and Messiahship is founded. I could collect a great Number of Passages out of my *Discourses* to this Purpose, if it would not be wasting of Time and Paper. And do all these solemn Declarations of my Faith, and of the Integrity of my Heart, and of the Sincerity of my Intentions, stand for nothing? Why should not my Word here be taken? I can think of no other Reason, than because some other Folks are accustom'd to dissemble and prevaricate with God and Man in their Oaths and Subscriptions, therefore I may be suspected here of Hypocrisy, notwithstanding my Professions to the contrary.

Besides, the *Bishop* knows by my other Writings, that I am certainly a Christian, and a true Believer of the Religion of Christ, though I may have some different Conceptions from other Men about it. It has been my good Luck before, not only to publish more Treatises purposely and professedly in Defence of Christianity, than any *Bishop* in *England*; but some of them are of such a Nature, as it's impossible for a Man to write without being a Christian, and impossible for him to depart from the Principles of them. This is my good Fortune and Happiness at this Juncture. The *Bishop* has perused, I see, some of my other Writings, and particularly, my *Old Apology for the Truth of Christianity revived*; and to his Praise, as well as my Comfort be it spoken, he apprehends and rightly relishes it. And as I was well pleased with his Representation of the Design of that Book, from the Principles and allegorical Scheme of which, he says (in Twenty-four Years since) I am not departed; so I would appeal to his Conscience, Whether a Man, who wrote, as I did then, of the Typical and Antitupal Deliverance of the *Jewish* and *Christian* Church, can possibly be an Infidel, or ever depart from the Christian Faith? If the *Bishop* has Ingenuity equal to his Penetration into that Book, he must own and confess to the World, that I was then, and am still a Christian, a Man of fix'd and unalterable Principles from that Day to this.

The *Bishop* would be thought in his *Preface* to enumerate all my Writings; but there are three others, whether wilfully or negligently omitted by him, I know not, that are direct Defences of the Truth of Christianity; and there is not a learned *Clergy-man* in *England* (I humbly presume to say it) who can read them, and not applaud them. If the *Bishop* will be pleas'd to read one of them, *viz. The*

Defence of the Miracle of the Thundering Legion, and say it from his Heart, that I might write that Book, and believe the Ecclesiastical Story of that Miracle, and yet be no Christian, then I will yield to his Accusation against me for Infidelity.

But why do I trouble my self thus to assert and vindicate my Belief of Christianity? The *Bishop* would readily come into the Acknowledgment of my being a sincere Christian, but for his Interests and Prejudices, and other political Considerations, which influence him and the *Clergy* so to decry and defame me, that, if possible, I must be destroy'd, or at least have my Mouth stopp'd.

In short then, it is not because I am an *Infidel*, that the *Clergy* so exclaim against me and my *Discourses*; but because, as a Christian, I have particular Designs in view, which, if I can compass, will tend to their Dishonour, and the Ruin of their Interests; and therefore, by Defamations and Prosecutions, they will, if they can, in time put a stop to them. The Designs that, for the Truth of Religion, and Good of Mankind, I have in view, and which, maugre all Opposition, Terrors, and Sufferings, I will pursue to the utmost of my Power, are these three.

1. To restore the Allegorical Interpretation of the Old and New Testament, that is call'd, say the Fathers, the sublime Mountain of Vision, on which we shall contemplate the Wisdom and Beauty of the Providence of God; and behold the glorious Transfiguration of *Jesus* with *Moses* and *Elias*, that is, the Harmony between the Gospel and the Law and the Prophets, agreeably to *Jesus*'s typical Transfiguration. And this is such a glorious and beatifick Vision, that it's enough to ravish our Hearts

with the Hopes and Desires of attaining to it. The old *Jews* say, that the allegorical Interpretation of the Scriptures will lead us to the sight of God and convert even *Atheists*. The Fathers say, that the allegorical Interpretation will be the Conversion of the *Jews* in the Perfection of Time; and St. *Augustin* speaks of a great allegorical *Genius*,[342] that will be sent to that Purpose. I believe all this, and being convinced of the Truth of it, I am much addicted to Allegories. And it is plain enough, and wants no Proof, that the Revival of the allegorical Scheme, which I am fond of, portends Ruin to the *Ministry of the Letter*; and will be such an Argument of the Ignorance and Apostacy of our *Clergy*, that it's no wonder they defame, calumniate, and persecute me for my Attempts towards it.

Origen says,[343] that *litteral Interpreters will run into Infidelity*, which is a Saying I am well pleased with, and thereupon will try if I can't turn the Tables upon our *Clergy*; I'll try if I can't shift from my self the present Load of Reproaches for Infidelity, and lay it upon them. What would the Wife and the Learned then say? That the great *Bishops* of *London* and St. *David's* had caught a *Tartar*.

I have indeed ludicrously treated the Letter of the Scriptures (in my *Discourses*) which by the said *Bishops* is falsly called *Blasphemy*: But should they either *ludicrously* or *sedately* write against the allegorical Sense of them, I could prove *that* to be real *Blasphemy*. However, I would not complain to the Civil Powers against them; no, it's God's peculiar Prerogative to punish that Sin, which ought not to be committed to the Care of the Civil Magistrate.

But what need I *ludicrously* to handle the Letter of

our Saviour's Miracles? Because some Sort of Stories are the proper Subjects of *Ridicule*; and because, *Ridiculum acri fortius & melius*, Ridicule will cut the Pate of an Ecclesiastical Numbskull, which calm and sedate Reasoning will make no Impression on.

To speak then the Truth in few Words. As I am resolv'd at any Rate to run down the *Letter*, in order to make way for the *Spirit* of the Scriptures, so certainly will our Clergy, for their Interests and Honour, as Ministers of the Letter, vilify and reproach me, and pursue me with an implacable Hatred: But I should think it meet for them to use a little more Temper in their Revilings, for fear the Torrent of Reproaches should sometime or other turn on them. It is asserted and predicted by the Fathers that, after a certain Time of the Church's Apostacy to the *Letter*, the *Spirit of Life*, or the allegorical Sense will re-enter the Scriptures, to the Advancement of divine Knowledge and true Religion; in the mean while the *Clergy* will do well to see to it. But,

2. The Second Design which, as a Christian, I have in View, and which occasionally I write for, is an universal and unbounded Toleration of Religion, without any Restrictions or Impositions on Men's Consciences; for which Design, the *Clergy* will hate and defame me, and, if possible, make an Infidel of me, as well as for the former. Upon an universal Toleration the World would be at quiet: That Hatred of one another, which is now so visible among different Sects, would then be terminated by a Unity of their Interests, when they are all upon the Level in the Eye of the Civil Magistrate, who would choose Men to Places of Trust, not for their Faith and Affection to Theological Doctrines, but for their Abilities to serve the Publick. In this Case, Ten

thousand different *Notions* in Religion would no more obstruct the Welfare of the Community, than so many different *Noses* do the Happiness of this City. The Variety of their Theological Opinions, would be the Diversion and Amusement of each other; and so long as it was out of their Power to oppress, they could not hate one another for them. Such a Toleration, the *Clergy* would persuade us, tends to Confusion and Distraction, as if Men would go to *Loggerheads* upon it. But this is one of their Mistakes; there would be a perfect Calm upon it, if such Incendiaries as they are did not disturb the publick Tranquillity. They'll tell us again, that such a Toleration makes Way for Dissoluteness of Morals, and would let in Sin like a Deluge upon us; but this is another of their Errors. Such a Toleration would promote Virtue, in as much as different Sects of Religion are a Check upon each other against Looseness of Morals, because every Sect would endeavour to approve itself above others, by the Goodness of their Lives, as well as by the Excellency of their Doctrine. But the *Clergy* will never hearken to such a Toleration, because it would be the Downfall of Ecclesiastical Power; for which Reason, among many others, I am

3. For the Abolition of an hired and establish'd Priesthood. And for this, if for nothing else, I am sure to be prosecuted with Hatred and Violence, and loaded with the Calumnies and Reproaches of Infidelity and Blasphemy: And the *Clergy*, if possible, will have my Mouth stopp'd, and my Hands tied, before I proceed too far in my Labours and Endeavours to this End.

And why should not the *Clergy* of the Church of *England* be turn'd to Grass, and be made to seek their

Fortune among the People, as well as Preachers of other Denominations? Where's the Sense and Reason of imposing Parochial *Priests* upon the People to take care of their Souls, more than Parochial *Lawyers* to look to their Estates, or Parochial *Physicians* to attend their Bodies, or Parochial *Tinkers* to mend their Kettles? In secular Affairs every Man chooses the Artist and Mechanick that he likes best; so much more ought he in Spirituals, in as much as the Welfare of the Soul is of greater Importance than that of the Body or Estate. The Church-Lands would go a good, if not a full Step, towards the Payment of the Nation's Debts.

I have promised the World, what, by the Assistance of God, and the Leave of the Government, shall be publish'd, a *Discourse* on the Mischiefs and Inconveniencies of an Hired and Establish'd Priesthood: In which it shall be shewn,

I. That the Preachers of Christianity in the first Ages of the Church (when the Gospel was far and near spread, and triumph'd over all Opposition of *Jews* and *Gentiles*) neither received nor insisted on any Wages for their Pains, but were against preaching for Hire; and, as if they had been endew'd with the Spirit of Prophecy, before an Hireling Priesthood was establish'd, predicted their Abolition and Ejection out of Christ's Church.

II. That since the Establishment of an *Hire* for the Priesthood, the Progress of Christianity has not only been stopt, but lost Ground; the Avarice, Ambition, and Power of the Clergy having been of such unspeakable Mischief to the World, as is enough to make a Man's Heartake to think, read, or write of.

III. That upon an Abolition of our present establish'd

Priesthood, and on God's Call of his own Ministers, the Profession of the Gospel will again spread; and Virtue, Religion, and Learning, will more than ever flourish and abound.

The Clergy are forewarn'd of my Design to publish such a *Discourse*; and this is the secret Reason, whatever openly they may pretend, of their Accusations against me for Blasphemy and Infidelity. Their Zeal and Industry will be never wanting to prevent the Publication of this *Discourse*; neither need I doubt of Persecution, if they can excite the Government to it, to that End.

In my first Discourse on Miracles, I happen'd to treat on that of Jesus's driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple; which, upon the Authority of the Fathers, I shew'd to be a Figure of his future Ejection of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons out of his Church, for making Merchandise of the Gospel. The *Bishop* has taken me and that Miracle to task; and if ever any Man smiled at another's Impertinence, I then heartily laugh'd when I read him. I begg'd of the *Bishop* before-hand[344] not to meddle with that Miracle, because it was a hot one, and would burn his Fingers. But for all my Caution; he has been so Fool-hardy, as to venture upon it; but has really touch'd and handled it, as if it was a *burning Coal*. He takes it up, and as soon drops it again to blow his Fingers; then endeavours to throw a little Water on *this* and *that* Part of it to cool it, but all would not do. The most fiery Part of it, *viz.* that of its being a Type of Jesus's future Ejection of mercenary Preachers out of the Church, he has not, I may say it, at all touch'd, except by calling it[345] *my allegorical Invective against the Maintenance of the Clergy*; which is such a Piece of *Corinthian* Effrontery in the *Bishop*, that was he not

resolv'd to lye and defame at all Rates, for the Support of their Interests, he could never have had the Face to have utter'd. If the *Bishop* had proved that *that* Miracle (which litterally was such a——, as I dare not now call it) neither was nor could be a Shadow and Resemblance of Jesus's Ejection of hired Priests out of the Church at his second Advent, and that the Fathers were not of this Opinion, he had knock'd me down at once. As he has done nothing of this, so he might have spared his Pains in Support of the Letter of this Story. But I shall have a great deal of Diversion with the *Bishop*, when I come, in a proper Place, to defend my Exposition of that Miracle. In the mean Time, as the Bishop has publish'd one of the Articles of my Christian Faith, thinking to render me odious for it; so here I will insert another, *viz.*[346] "I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that the Spirit and Power of Jesus will *soon* enter the Church, and expel Hireling Priests, who make Merchandise of the Gospel, out of her, after the manner he is supposed to have driven the *Buyers* and *Sellers* out of the Temple."

Now upon all this, whether the *Bishop*, modestly speaking, has not been unjust, uncharitable, and insincere, to represent me as an *Infidel*, I appeal to all learned and ingenuous Gentlemen. I am a Christian, though not upon the *litteral* Scheme, which I nauseate, yet upon the *allegorical* one. And by the following easy and short Argument it may be proved that I am most certainly a Christian. I heartily and zealously contend for the allegorical Interpretation of the Scriptures, which the *Bishop* allows to be true of me; consequently I must, and do believe the Scriptures to be of divine Inspiration, or I could not think there were such Mysteries and Prophecy latent under the Letter of them. Whether then a Believer of

the divine Inspiration of the Scriptures can be an Infidel (O most monstrous Paradox!) or any other than a Christian, judge Readers. Nay, if *Origen*'s and St. *Augustin*'s Testimony on my Behalf may be admitted, I am more truly a Christian and Disciple of the Holy Jesus, than any *litteral Schemist* can be. *Origen* says,[347] That the Perfection of Christianity consists in a mystical Interpretation of the Old and New Testament, of the Historical, as well as other Parts of it. And St. *Augustin* says,[348] That they who attain to the Understanding of the spiritual Signification of Jesus's Miracles, are the best Doctors in his School. The *Bishop* understands this Argument as well as any Man, and therefore I charge it home upon him, as a wilful and malicious Slander, to call and account me an Infidel in his *Dedication*, on purpose to incense the Government against me at this Juncture.

But the *Bishop* moreover calls me, as above, an *Apostate Clergyman*; And why so? Because I have deserted the *Ministry of the Letter*, and betaken my self to the *Ministry of the Spirit* of the Scriptures. That's like the Wit and Reasoning of his Pate! The *Bishop* is old enough, and has read enough to know that *Apostacy*, in the Sense of the Fathers, is a Desertion of the *Ministry of the Spirit*, and a Falling into the *Ministry of the Letter* of the Scriptures; whereupon I make bold to retort upon the *Bishop*, and say of him, and his Episcopal Brethren, that they are *Apostate Bishops*.

But to humour the *Bishop* in his fond *Dedication*, I will suppose my self to be, what I am the farthest of any Man living from being, an *Infidel* and *Apostate*; yet

II. The *Bishop* is a wilful Calumniator, or, at best, an unhappy Misrepresenter of me, and of other Infidels, saying in his *Dedication*, that our Design is *To sap the Foundation of all Government*, and——*That we were pursuing such Methods, as have a natural Tendency to introduce Confusion*. If this was true of us Infidels (for now I speak of my self as one of them) it behoves Civil Governors to look about them, and to punish and suppress us with all speed; and we should be the most unreasonable Men alive, if we complain'd of Persecution, or call'd it hard Usage. And the *Bishop* of *London*, and other *Divines* (like this *Bishop*) do commonly declaim on the Danger of Infidelity to Civil Society, but this is all Ecclesiastical Cant and Jargon. I thought I had given[349] the *Bishop* of *London* so much on this Head of Complaint against Infidelity, as I could not suppose the *Bishop* of St. *David's* would ever have repeated it. It is true, what the *Bishop* says, that *Religion is the firmest Support of Government*, and *Christianity especially lays the greatest Obligations, on Men's Consciences, of Obedience to the Civil Powers*. I believe all this, and that the better Christians Men are, the more quiet, peaceable, and useful Subjects, and the greater Friends would they be to the Civil Authority. But does it follow from hence, that we *Infidels*, because we have rejected the Belief of some systematical Divinity, as the *Clergy* are fond of, should consequently be Enemies to the Civil Government, and Foes to the Peace, Order, and Welfare of Society? O fie upon the Drawers of such Consequences! We are, I believe, a numerous and growing Sect in these Nations, though I am acquainted with none, no, not so much as with the Great Mr. *Grounds*: But I could never perceive that any of us, in Principle, were against Civil Government, and the Welfare of the Community; or

were for *Confusion*, for setting the People together by the Ears, to the Disturbance of the publick Peace and Tranquillity. No, no, our Interests in the World, as well as other Men's, oblige us to consult the publick Welfare; and our Consciences, from the Religion of Nature, bind us to Obedience to Government; and, was it not agreeable to our Inclination, the Necessity of Affairs would force us to be as quiet and obedient as are any Christians: And I thank God, we have hitherto behaved our selves very peaceably, clear of all Suspicion of Treason and Rebellion to any Prince or State. The *Bishop* hints at Experience to the contrary, but it will puzzle him to give an Instance. One would think, by this common Harangue, of *Ecclesiasticks* against us *Infidels*, that Christians, especially the Priesthood, being, as the *Bishop* says, both *under the Penalties of human Laws, and the stronger Impressions of a future State*, were of a Lamb-like Nature, and never given to disturb the Civil Authority: And I will own the Christian *Laity* might be acquitted here, but for the *Clergy*, who have been repeatedly the *Pest* and *Bane* of human Society, the Trumpeters of Sedition and Rebellion, and mere Make-bates in Cities and Families. And I dare say, that if the Civil Powers don't curb, and keep our *Priesthood* in awe, they will upon this present Occasion be the Disturbers of the publick Peace. So little Sense and Truth is there in the *Bishop*'s present Invective against us Infidels! If he had not been infatuated to a Forgetfulness of the *Rogueries* of Priests, in all Ages, against the Civil Powers, he could never have insinuated such a groundless and senseless Charge against us, to the Provocation of the Civil Magistrate to fall on us. But

III. The *Bishop* calumniates us Infidels (for against his Conscience, whether I will or not, he will have me to

be one of them) not only for being Enemies to Government in general, which he will have us to advance Principles destructive of; but insinuates and asserts that we are disaffected to the particular and present Government of these Kingdoms, saying, that as "we are active in propagating Infidelity, we do in the last Resort, not only insult the Title of *Defender of the Faith*, but undermine the undoubted Right of his Majesty and his Royal Family to the Crown of these Realms, as it is founded on the Profession of *Christianity*, reform'd, and now legally settled among us; and therefore Persons of that Character may well be consider'd, as equally false to the Author of our Faith, and to the present Government.——Therefore in a just Sense of that Allegiance which is due to the King, and for the Security of your Majesties, and the Royal Family, and thereby of the Publick it self, as well as out of a deep Concern for the Honour and Preservation of our most holy Faith, the ensuing Treatise is now offer'd, under your Majesty's Protection, to the View of the Publick." This is all such foolish and manifest Slander, that I can't but think the *Bishop* mad with Rage and Indignation at me, when he writ it. I dare say the *Queen*, who is firmly attach'd to the Interests of the Christian and Protestant Religion, did, when she read all this, almost grieve for the *Bishop*, and pity him for his Weakness and Ignorance. It is a *Maxim* among all Parties, that *Infidels* are heartily affected to the present Establishment of the State; yea, so far a *Maxim*, that *Jacobites* and *High-Church-men* are apt to accuse all the well-affected to the Government, of Infidelity. From none of the Writings or Practice of Infidels, much less of my self, could the *Bishop* gather any of these his *childish* Surmises. The Government, since the Succession of the Illustrious House of

Hanover, has been twice attempted to be disturb'd, and both times by profess'd Christians. The Rebellion at *Preston* consisted of *Papists* and *High-Church-men*, and tho' there were but few *Clergy-men* in Arms, yet they were join'd with the Prayers and Wishes of many Thousands of the *Clergy*, and even, as it was suspected, of some *Oxonian Bishops*. Bishop *Atterbury*'s Plot too consisted of Rebellious Christians, without the least intermixture of us *Infidels*, who are the more zealously affected to the Government, because of the Danger it is sometimes in from the *High-Church Clergy*. Away then with the *Bishop*'s Slander, which, for all we may be Unbelievers of Christianity, our Civil Magistrates will laugh at and deride him for. But,

IV. Another Misrepresentation, more foolish and absurd than the former, that the *Bishop* has made of us *Infidels*, is, that we are making Way for Popery and Slavery: For thus he says of us, "Nothing is more demonstrable, than that those Adversaries (meaning us *Infidels*) of the Christian Religion, who are now so busily employ'd in infusing Doubts into some weak Minds, in giving an Indifference and Coldness to other well-meaning Persons, and in making others, that are viciously inclin'd, actual Proselites to Infidelity, are pursuing such Methods as have a natural Tendency to introduce Confusion, and thereby betray us into *Popery*." And again he says of Infidels, "That in Consequence of their own Infidelity, and their wicked Diligence in spreading that Infection, are bringing in upon us the real Persecutions of the Church of *Rome*; who likewise, whilst they rail so plentifully at the most rational Religion in the World as Superstition, give great Advantages towards restoring the insupportable *Superstitions* of that Communion. These are the

Persons indeed that appear in favour of an unbounded Liberty, but God grant it may not terminate in an absolute *Slavery*." *Risum quis tenerat?* Who in his Wits could write such Stuff? And who without Impatience can read it? I was going about a particular Dissection of these two Paragraphs, and to lay open the Wit, Sense, and Oratory of the *Bishop*, to the Contemplation of his Admirers; but I find it unnecessary, as well as tedious to do it: The very transcribing of them, and exposing them to View, is enough to render him ridiculous. If there be no more danger of Popery, Slavery, Superstition, Tyranny, and real Persecution from our *Clergy*, than from us *Infidels*, the Nation is safe. *Infidels* find too much Inconvenience in the Power, Craft, and Follies of a Protestant *Clergy*, to make Way for *Popery*; which, as the *Bishop* rightly says, is a *Complication* of Errors. There are, what the *Bishop* should have thought of, many Protestant Priests for an Accommodation with the Church of *Rome*; and, if I mistake not, upon such easy Terms as *this*, *viz.* If she'll but part with some of her Superstitions that are of no Use to her; our *Clergy* will admit of others as will be of Advantage to them. But *Infidels* are irreconcilable Enemies to the Church of *Rome*, and so far from Wishes and Endeavours to restore Popery, that it is mere Nonsense to charge them with either direct or consequential Designs so to enslave Mankind. But

V. The *Bishop* says, that we Infidels (for I am one it seems) *labour industriously to root out all Sense of Virtue and Religion among us*. This is sad indeed, if true; and very bad Men should we be, and deserving of the worst Punishment. But this wants Proof. How does he know that we are for rooting out all Sense of Virtue and Religion amongst Men? Does it appear so by our Writings or our Practices? Does he find in our

Books any Exhortations to Looseness and Immorality? Nothing of this I am sure. Is he then so well acquainted with Infidels, as to know them to be of more depraved and debauch'd Lives than profess'd Christians? Nor this neither. I have not as yet heard that any of my Disciples have been hang'd, lamenting his Misfortune of reading my *Discourses*, as what encouraged him to Sin, and brought him to the Gallows. No, those unhappy People, hitherto, die in the Faith and Communion of the Church, either of *England* or of *Rome*, and hope to be saved through the Merits of their Saviour, Neither do, I hear of any Gentleman, old or young, who has given a greater Loose to his Lusts and Passions, since he read my Books. Such News would trouble me.

But because of this Out-cry of the *Bishop*, and of other Preachers against us, that we labour industriously to root out all Sense of Virtue and Religion amongst Men, I wish (for Proof) that *Infidels* were distinguishable from Christians, that a Comparison might be made, and the Difference discern'd between them, as to true Religion and Virtue. Tho' I am one of little Acquaintance with Infidels, yet it is my Opinion that, on this Score, they may vie with, and, all things consider'd, do surpass Christians. One would think, by the *Bishop*'s Insinuation above, that none but *good* People were of his Christian Faith; and that all Infidels were profligate Sinners; but he knows better, and what's more, he should have been more ingenuous than to charge *Infidels* with *Labours to root out all Sense of Virtue and Religion amongst Men*, if it was but in Regard to that learned Gentleman who is supposed to be at the Head of Infidelity, and who, they say, is as exemplary for all social Virtues, as any *Bishop*; and dislikes Vice and Immorality as much as any Saint

can do.

Whatever be the *Virtue* and *Religion* of *Infidels*, it is all genuine, natural, and sincere; and consequently more Praise-worthy than *that* of hired Priests, who may be suspected of Hypocrisy, because of their Interests. I heard a wild Spark say, that he could be as grave as the *Bishop* of *London*, if he was but as well paid for it. Whether he believ'd the *Bishop* would have been as loose as himself, but for his *Hire*, I can't tell. But this is certain that, what can't be said of Infidels, there are Priests who put on the Face and Form of Godliness, and want the Life and Power of it; who lift up their Hands and Eyes unto God, when their Hearts are far from him; and were not their Interests more than their Faith, a Restraint to their Lusts, it is commonly believ'd they would be a Company of loose *Blades*.

What a Pother is here of the Danger and Mischief of Infidelity to Church and State? Do but take away the Cause of Infidelity, and the Effect ceases. And what is the Cause of Infidelity? Why, what *Origen* predicted, I experience to be true, that the *Ministry of the Letter* is the Cause of it; and I appeal to Mr. *Grounds*, Whether litteral Expositions on the Scripture, and the absurd Doctrines which the *Clergy* have built upon the *Letter*, have not been one Cause of his calling into Question, the Truth of Christianity, and the divine Inspiration of the holy Scriptures? But this is not the only Cause of Infidelity; there are other grand ones, which Dr. *Moore* writes of, saying thus:[350] "That Men are exceedingly tempted to think the whole Business of Religion is at best but a Plot to enrich the Priests, and keep the People in awe, from observing that they, who make the greatest Noise about

Religion, and are the most zealous therein, do neglect the Laws of Honesty and common Humanity; that they easily invade other Men's Rights; that they juggle, dissemble, and lye for Advantage; that they are proud, conceited, love the Applause of the People, are envious, fierce, and implacable, unclean and sensual, merciless and cruel; care not to have Kingdoms flow in Blood, for maintaining their Tyranny over the Consciences of poor deluded Souls." If then there is any Danger of any kind in Infidelity, let the *Clergy* take the Blame and Shame of it to themselves, and not lay that Fault, which is their own, upon other Men.

But observing that Dr. *Moore* above speaks of Priests, their *neglecting the Laws of Honesty* and *common Humanity*, as a Cause of Infidelity, I must here do a piece of Justice to Infidels, who place the very *Essence* of all Religion (as I believe the Essence of Christianity consists) in *common Honesty*. If they keep to their Principles, and act agreeably, they will work such a Reformation in the World for the better, as the *Priests* of all Ages have not been able to do. The *Clergy* have made such a Noise in the World about *Faith* and *Doctrine*, that the People hardly think they need be *Honest* to be good Christians and even many *Clergy-men* are conceited of their being *orthodox* and *sound Divines*, though by their Dishonesty, Profuseness, and Neglect of a Provision for their Families, they have, in the Judgment of[351] St. *Paul*, deny'd the Faith, and are worse than Infidels.

And thus have I consider'd the Slanders and Misrepresentations of my self and Infidels, contain'd in the *Bishop*'s *Dedication* to the *Queen*, which entirely is such a Piece of Fury, Railing, and Impertinence, as a Man shall hardly meet with. Surely he was not

awake when he wrote his *Dedication*, it is so like the *Dream* of a disorder'd Brain which consists of confused Notions, and scatter'd Ideas, that are never to be so compacted together, as to make tolerable Sense, Reason, and Truth. If I had not met with much such flaming Stuff in the Body of his Book, I should have suspected that some-body, more a Foe than a Friend to him, had palm'd it upon him, and over-persuaded him to print it, as what would recommend him to her Majesty's Favour.

Whether he'll merit a *Translation* to an *Arch-Bishoprick*, for this Dedication, with me is no Question. For all he may take me for his Enemy, I wish him *translated*, as certainly as the Government has *transported* some other Folks, who are no more the Bane of Society. *Buggs* in a House, and *Caterpillars* in a Garden, are not a greater Grievance, than some sort of Ecclesiastical *Vermin* in Christ's Church and Vineyard.

That the *Bishop* himself admires his *Dedication*, and is pleas'd with it, I don't doubt. Like as *Bears* are fond of their ill-favour'd *Cubbs*, so the Brats of some Men's Brains, as well as those of their Bodies, are pleasing to than; and however deform'd and irrational in themselves, are hugg'd by them as so many Wits and Beauties. But whether many, beside the *Bishop* himself, will like his *Dedication*, is a great Question. I don't doubt, but there may be some for Persecution as well as the *Bishop*, and so far may approve of the *Dedication*: But whether there is any one that can think, he has not greatly injured *Infidels*, and made a false Representation of them, for being Enemies to our Civil Government, and to our present Establishment, can't surely be question'd. If he be not look'd upon here, by all Mankind, as a wilful and

malicious Misrepresenter of them, I shall much wonder at it.

But what's the *Dedication* to the Book it self, will some here say? Tho' the *Bishop* may have made some Slips in his *Dedication* which betray Weakness and Ignorance; yet his following Performance may be Strenuous and Nervous, and a compleat Confutation of my *Discourses*. I answer, that such a Dedication bodes ill to the Book; and a Man may as well expect to find the inside of a House beautiful and richly adorn'd, when the Porch and Entrance into it is mean and nasty; as that an admirable Treatise for Wit, Reason, and Learning, should follow upon such a poor, simple, and insipid *Dedication*. Commonly Authors take more care in their *Dedications*, than in their following Treatise; that is, they see better to the Accuracy of their Expressions, the Exactness of their Stile, and Beauty of their Thoughts; and if they err at all in them, it is only in Flattery, and excess of Compliments on their Patrons. Such Care too, after the best manner he was able, has the *Bishop* taken in his *Dedication* above; and whatever his Readers and Admirers may think, the *Dedication* is the best Part of the Book. The Exceptions I have taken at the *Dedication* are but small, in Comparison of the Faults I shall find and expose in the *Book* it self; which is such a Complication of Impertinence and Errors, of Rage and Confidence, and of Calumnies and Reproaches, as is not to be equall'd; and is so far from deserving the Character of a Confutation of my *Discourses*, that it has done them Service; and will be, after the Animadversions I shall make on it, a Confirmation of the Goodness, Usefulness, and Excellency of my Design in them.

I have not here room to make a compleat Dissection

of the *Bishop*'s Work, and to display its Insufficiency, in answer to my *Discourses*; neither was it my Design in this *first Part* of my *Defence* to do it. But however, I will spare a Place here for a short Character and Representation of his Performance, which take as follows.

> "The *Bishop*'s sole Aim and Design is to vindicate the *litteral Story* of our Saviour's Miracles, against my rational and authoritative Objections to it. And to this Purpose he wrangles with me, where he can, about the Sense of this and that Citation out of the Fathers; and after he has forc'd another Sense on it, than the Words do naturally bear, then he insults me for a Misrepresentation. And where he meets with a plain Testimony out of the Fathers, which he can't mangle nor strain to his Purpose, he fluently passes by it; tho' he would have his *Readers* to believe, he has vindicated the litteral Story against my Authorities, and shewn that the Fathers were all on his Side.
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> "He complains of my Mutilations of the Fathers, and of making too curt Citations out of them; which is true, but more to my own Disadvantage than to his. But, what is Matter of grand Triumph to the *Bishop*, is, that I have quoted *spurious* Works of the Fathers for *genuine* ones. And here he takes great Pains, and wastes

Time and Paper, to prove that *this* and *that* Book does not belong to the Author under whose Name I cite it; and then has a Fling at me for want of Skill in *Criticism*. But can the *Bishop* be so weak, as to think, I did not know when I quoted a *spurious* Work? Supposing the *Book* I quoted do not belong to the reputed Author, but to some other Writer, what's that to the Question between us? The Citation is no less the Testimony of Antiquity, and it's no matter whose Name it bears. If the *Bishop* had thought a little on this, he might have spared some Sheets of Paper, which he has in vain wasted, to the Loss of his Readers Time and Money.

"Again, where my rational Arguments against the *Letter* seem to the *Bishop* to be weak and inconclusive; there, to do him Justice, he handsomly turns upon me with his Reasoning, and admonishes me of my Spitefulness against the *Letter*, or I would never use such a slight Argument. But where I pinch and bear hard upon the *Letter*, and the Jest is not to be digested, there, instead of Reasoning against me, he makes a hideous Out-cry of Buffoonery, Blasphemy, and Infidelity; and calls upon the Civil Magistrate for his Help, or their Religion, and their *All* is in Danger, through the impious Writings of

untoward Infidels.

"The *Bishop* in some Cases gives up the Cause, and seems himself to be almost ashamed of the *Letter*; and for the Maintenance of the Honour of *Jesus*, and the Dignity of his miraculous Operation, flies to Allegory; allowing that *this* and *that* Miracle might be typical and figurative of somewhat else, as his Thoughts did suggest to him. But here he discovers his poor Talent at Allegories, making no more Resemblance between the *Type* and *Antitype*, than between an *Apple* and an *Oyster*.

"I am repeatedly charg'd by the *Bishop* with Infidelity, for writing against the *Letter*, tho' I am as grave as a Judge at the allegorical Interpretation; and he can't but know that Infidelity and Allegorism are incompatible in the same Person. To prove me an Infidel, he should have shewn that I meant to pour Contempt upon the allegorical, as well as litteral Sense of Jesus's Miracles; but he has not once hinted at this. A certain great Writer, call'd Mr. *Grounds*, plays a double Game upon the *Clergy*, he laughs at the *allegorical* as well as *litteral* Scheme, and distresses the *Clergy* with his Objections against both. But I have not done so; I really am, or seem to

be, a sincere Contender for the allegorical Sense. And to make an *Infidel* of an *Allegorist*, is more difficult and impossible than to make a *Monkey* of a *Bishop*.

"The *Bishop*, as a *Minister of the Letter*, has spoken too favourably of the allegorical Scheme; he has treated it with too much Respect, both as to the Origin and Use of it, and done enough to sap the Foundation of his Church; for which, I am afraid, he'll meet with a Reprimand from his Episcopal Brethren. The *Bishop* of *Lichfield* is the Man for my Money, to write against the allegorical Scheme; he tells us, that[352] *St.* Paul *suffer'd in the Esteem of the Jewish Christians for his Neglect of Allegories; and seems to be brought into the Use of them against his own good liking.* And again,[353] *It seems to have been in compliance with Jewish Christians, who were affected with allegorick Interpretations, that St.* Paul *used that way*. Which is as much as to say, St. *Paul* was more a *Minister of the Spirit*, than of Inclination he was disposed to be, or, in truth, ought to have been; and that, if he took upon him the Ministry of the Spirit for the present, it was only craftily and politically done of him, to catch the *Jews* in their own Snare of Allegories. He was consenting that the Preachers of

the Gospel, in future Times, should desert the *Ministry of the Spirit*, and betake themselves to the *Letter* of the Scriptures, as what is more agreeable to Truth, and conducive to the Defence and Propagation of Christianity. Such a *Craftsman* was the inspir'd St. *Paul*, in the Opinion of the *Bishop* of *Lichfield*! However, the *Bishop* of St. *David's* ought to be of the same Mind; he should assert, that the *Ministry* of the *Spirit* was all apostolical Craft and antient Error; and that the present Generation of Priests, being wiser, more learned, and more sincere than the Primitive and Apostolical ones, do adhere to the *Ministry of the Letter*. Because the *Bishop* has not gone thus far by much, he leaves more room, than he should, for the Revival of the *Ministry of the Spirit*; that is, of the spiritual and allegorical Interpretation of the Scriptures.

"The *Bishop* often reproves me for my primitive Interpretation of *this* and *that* Text of Scripture, and then palms his own forc'd Sense on us, for natural and genuine, contrary to the Judgment of all Antiquity.

"He is so *grave*, serious, and sedate at some simple Doctrines and Arguments, that his *Readers* must of necessity laugh, if not scoff at him. Was I *ludicrously* to handle the said

> Doctrines, my *Readers* would hardly smile. Such a wide Difference is there between the *Levity* of a Buffoon (as he is pleased to call me) and the *Gravity* of an Ass, to the exposing of Religion to the Ridicule and Contempt of Mankind.
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> "Lastly, He entirely mistakes the Design of my *Discourses*; he knows not what I aim and drive at. There's one Paradox runs through his whole Book, *viz.* That the litteral Story of our Saviour's Miracles must of necessity be true, or I should have no Foundation to build Allegories upon; which is a gross Mistake of other Writers against me, as well as of himself. Who knows not that the profest Parables of *Jesus* have nothing of *Letter* in them, yet are a good Foundation for Allegory? And let me tell him here again, that whatever was true, more or less, in the litteral Story of *Jesus*'s Miracles, there is absolute Necessity, for the Honour and Credit of them, to have Recourse to the Mystery; or litterally they are, and shall be farther proved such——Stories, as I dare not at present call them."

Thus have I given a brief Account of the *Bishop*'s mighty and pompous Performance; like to which he has promis'd us another Volume, that I shall long for the publication of, next *Winter*. This my brief

Account is but introductory to future and larger Defences of my *Discourses* on Miracles; which, by the Help of God, and Permission of the Civil Authority, shall be likewise publish'd.

I have not, I say, room here so much as to defend my self on any one Miracle; and if I had, I would not do it. For as I can't do it without writing in the same Stile and Strain for which I am prosecuted, so I will do nothing that may be interpreted as an Act in Defiance and Contempt of the Power of the Civil Magistrate. I did indeed publish two *Discourses* after the Commencement of the Prosecution, because I imagined that our *Bishops* were more in Jest than in Earnest; or if their Passions were raised for the present, I thought, that after a little Consideration of the unreasonableness of Persecution in general, they would cool upon it, and drop the Prosecution. But since they are in Earnest, and I must answer to the Civil Powers for some supposed Crimes in my *Discourses*, I'll not repeat here the like Acts, but be quiescent in respect to the said Powers, to whom Reverence and Obedience is justly due. For, tho' I look upon the Ecclesiastical Power as an Usurpation on the Consciences of Mankind, yet the *Civil* is Sacred, is God's Ordinance, and ought to be regarded as such. But if I survive the Prosecution, and escape with my Life and Liberty, which I don't despair of, under so wise, just, and good a Magistracy as this Nation is bless'd with, the *Bishop* may expect a strenuous Defence of my self against his weak Assaults on me.

If our *Bishops* were any thing *Heroical*, they would stop the Prosecution, and let the Controversy take its free Course. If they had any Sense of Honour and Reputation, any Regard for their Learning, they

would set any Adversary of their Church at Defiance, and disdain the Assistance of the Civil Magistrate to punish him, whom they could not confute. It is the Office of the *Bishops* and *Priests* of the Church, or I know not what is, to convert *Infidels*, to refute *Hereticks*, and by Reason and Argument to put to Silence all *Gain-sayers*. Wherefore have they a liberal and academical Education, but to qualify them for this Work? Wherefore do they receive large Revenues of the Church, but to oblige and encourage them to it? Nothing more unreasonable, than that Men should receive Wages, when they don't their Work. What will the People say hereupon less, than that an Army of at least Twenty thousand Blackguards of the Church are hired to little or no Purpose? The meanest of the People may as well be taken to Church Preferments, as our reputed learned Divines. They can discharge other Ecclesiastical Offices; and when they are distress'd with an Objection to their Religion, can do no worse than call upon the Civil Magistrate for his Aid and Assistance. But after all, I am inclin'd to think our *Bishops*, in Honour, would forbear Persecution, but for their Interests, call'd their *All*, which depend on the Issue of this Controversy.

However, not to urge the Argument for Liberty of Debate any farther, which has been already by others treated on to Perfection, and will be again returned, I doubt not, by some body else, on occasion of this *Bishop*'s *Dedication*, I can't but take Notice here how unpolitick, as well as unchristian, some Dissenters are in this Controversy, being, such as Dr. *Harris*, and Mr. *Atkinson*, no less for Persecution than the *Clergy*. If they had a Regard to their own Interests and Liberties, they would be silent. Infidels (of whom I am none) should be consider'd as Dissenting

Brethren, whom they should not be forward to oppress, for fear in time, and by degrees, it should come to their own Turn. Our *Dissenters* indeed, collectively, are vastly numerous, and a potent Party, but may trust too much to their own Strength and Numbers. Taking them separately, they may possibly be Extinguish'd by Ecclesiastical Art and Craft. If Blasphemy is a just Pretence for the Prosecution of me, the *Clergy*, upon Occasion, can urge the same Crime against them. I'll tell them a Story. The *Calvinists* and *Socinians* were once equally tolerated in *Poland*, and if they had been fast Friends to each other, the *Papists* could never have suppress'd them: But the *Calvinists* joining with the *Papists*, and urging them to complain against the *Socinians* for Blasphemy, in denying the Divinity of the Son of God, moved the Civil Authority to a Banishment of them; and the *Socinians* had not been long suppress'd, before the *Papists* accus'd the *Calvinists* of no less Blasphemy, in denying Adoration to the Virgin *Mary*; and so they were sent packing too; otherwise they might both have enjoy'd their Liberty to this Day. The Application of the Story is easy. So if all we *Dissenters* from the Church, whether we like one another's Principles or not, don't hold together for the Preservation of our Liberties, it's easy for Ecclesiasticks to feign an Accusation of *Blasphemy* against any of us. We have no Security, but in the Wisdom and Goodness of an excellent Government, which, if the *Clergy* should ever get on the Back of, its hardly a Question, whether they would not drive, *Jehu* like, most furiously.

But to return to my *Bishop*. I once thought he would never have been drawn into this Controversy. Sometime after the Publication of my Third *Discourse*, which, for a visible Reason, I dedicated to

him, and invited him to Battle, I ask'd a dignify'd *Clergy-man*, Whether the *Bishop* would write against me? He answer'd, No: Whereupon I concluded, that he had a Scent of somewhat, not here to be mention'd. But my repeated Provocations of him afterwards, have forc'd him, against Inclination, to engage me. His Passion got the better of his Reason, or he had been certainly quiescent: And the Violence of his Passion is so visible thro' his whole Book, that it's God's great Mercy it did not throw him into a Fever and Convulsions, to the Danger of his Life and Health.

I own here again, what I have done before, that I did lay a Trap for our *Clergy*; but little imagined that two such great *Bishops*, as of *London* and St. *David's*, would, to my Pleasure and Satisfaction, have been caught in it. If I had not baited my Trap well with *Ridicule*, I dare say, they would have kept themselves clear of it.

But when I experienc'd the hard Usage the Bishops had given me upon my *Discourses*, and the Fury with which they attack'd me, it surprised me, and brought to my Mind *Origen*'s Prediction[354] of this *very* War and Controversy of the *Spirit* against the *Letter* of the *Scriptures*, and of the Violence it would be carried on with. For all my Veneration for the Authority of the Fathers, I did here suspect the Truth of *Origen*'s Prediction, believing him to be mistaken, and that the Controversy would be manag'd in a *calm*, *decent*, and *sedate* Manner; and so it had been, but for the Interests of the *Clergy* that are at Stake in it, which I was not aware of. Finding then the Truth of *Origen*'s Prediction contrary to my Expectations, I had the Curiosity further to consult the Fathers about the Issue of this Controversy; and they presently, with

their mystical Fingers, pointed to a Prophecy of it in the *Revelations* of St. *John*; but, to say no more at present, assur'd me, that the *Spirit* would get the Better of the *Letter* in the Conclusion of it. Tho' I am accounted an Infidel, I am so easy and credulous a Christian as to believe all this; and I thank God have so much Courage in me, as to try the Truth of it.

But I must observe here, that besides my two *Bishops*, of *London* and St. *David's*, (and some other inconsiderable *Triflers*) there are two *anonymous* Authors against me, whose Works have acquir'd some Fame. The One is intitled, *The Miracles of Jesus vindicated*, in *Three Parts*. If I could have gotten to the certain Knowledge of the Author, I should have been tempted to have had a Bout with him; and to have expostulated with him, both with Regard to his Arguments and good Manners. I would have taught him a better Use, and a more proper Application of the Words *Dishonesty, and want of Honesty*, than to reproach me with them. Common Fame says, Dr. *Pearse*, of St. *Martin's*, is the Author; but I am apt to think, the *King*'s Parish Priest, and other City *Divines*, have more Wit and Craft than to upbraid me as above, for fear a just Charge of *Dishonesty*, for their Extortions and Exactions on the People, should be retorted on them. Upon the Publication of the *First Part* of the foresaid Treatise, my *Jewish Rabbi* comes to me in all haste, saying to me, "Look you here, do you see how this Author has new vampt the old *mumpsimus* Argument of *Jesus*'s Resurrection? Do you observe how imperfectly, here and there, he answers my Objections to it; and silently slips by some knotty Pieces of them, that were too hard for him to untie?" Yes, *Rabbi*, said I, I do observe all this; (and what I have observ'd since, he argues, awkwardly and backwardly, for the Certainty of *Jesus*'s other

Miracles, from his Resurrection.) My *Rabbi* presently re-inforc'd his Resurrection-Objection against this Author, and would have had me to print it. No, no, *Rabbi*, said I; you may print it your self, if you dare. I must wait to hear how Causes will go in *Westminster-Hall*, next Term, before I involve my self in another Law-Suit. Besides, *Rabbi*, they say, I don't really thus correspond with a *Jew*, but do only personate one; and the *Bishop* of St. *David's* hints, that I am answerable to publick Justice for so doing. Here my Rabbi stampt with Indignation; saying, What if you did personate a *Jew*? Is it not lawful, and in Use with your *Divines*, to write Conferences between a Christian and a *Jew*? And do you any more in this Case? Yes, *Rabbi*, said I, it is lawful to write such like Conferences, and to make *Jewish* Objections to Christianity, when they are no stronger than may be easily dissipated: But when Men write from the Heart, as you do, and raise a D——l that our *Clergy* can't easily lay, it is, they say, intolerable, and punishable; and either you or I, in the Opinion of the *Bishop*, ought to suffer for it.

The other considerable *Treatise* against me, is that of *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus*; which is an ingenious Piece, and I was well pleased with it. Some time after the Publication of this *Treatise*, I made my Jewish *Rabbi* a Visit, when, drinking a *Dish* of *Tea* together, we talk'd it over; and my *Rabbi* was pleas'd to deliver his Sentiments of it in this fashion: "Whoever was the Author of this Treatise, God knows, but he's certainly a Friend to my Objections against *Jesus*'s Resurrection, which he has fairly stated; but is so far from fully confuting all of them, that he discovers a Consciousness, here and there, that they are unanswerable. It is commonly reported that Bishop *Sherlock* is the Author of this

Treatise, but this Report I look upon as an Artifice of the Booksellers, to make it sell well; or rather the Author's contrived *Banter* upon the *Clergy*, and their weak Christian Brethren, to try how far they may be imposed on, and drawn into the Approbation and Admiration of a Treatise, that really makes against them. There is but very little in this Treatise, to make it reputed a sufficient Answer to my Objections, excepting the Verdict of the *Jury*, who brought in the Witnesses of the Resurrection, *Not Guilty*, of either Fraud or Mistake in it. *Bishop Sherlock* can't be the Author of this Treatise, if for no other Reason than this, that *that* Author is visibly against that Ecclesiastical Wealth and Power, which the *Bishop* is possess'd of, and does think not disagreeable to the Mind of Christ and his poor Apostles. If any *Bishop* is the concealed Author of this Treatise, he must secretly be of the Opinion of the atheistical Pope, who said, *quantum nobis profuit hæc de Christo Fabula*, what vast Advantage has the Story of Christ been to us Popes and Bishops." I readily gave into the Opinion of my *Rabbi*, and wonder'd, *Bishop Sherlock* did not so much as by a publick Advertisement clear himself of being the Author of this Treatise, and so put a Stop to the Report. It may be the *Bishop* is above the Scandal of it; but I was so concern'd for his Reputation, that I drew up a *Vindication* of him from the Slander of it; which I had publish'd, but for my *Rabbi*'s farther Thoughts about the Resurrection of Jesus inserted in it, that our *Bishops* might have possibly taken Offence at. So I dropp'd that Design at present, but hope still for an Opportunity to publish the said Vindication of the *Bishop*, by which, I don't doubt, but to merit his Friendship and Favour.

But whoever was the real Author of the foresaid Treatise, I humbly and heartily beg of him to

publish, what in the Conclusion of it, he has given us some Hopes of, *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of* LAZARUS, because my *Rabbi*'s Objections to it are a Novelty and Curiosity, which, by way of such a Reply to them, I should be glad to see handled.

But having here by Chance mention'd my *Rabbi*'s Letter concerning *Lazarus*'s Resurrection, it brings to my Mind a Challenge I made to the *Bishop* of *London* upon it, *viz.*[355] "If he would publish an Answer to that Letter, and vouchsafe me the Pleasure of a Reply to it; then (to save the *Civil Magistrates* Trouble) I would suffer such Punishment that he in his Clemency should think fit to inflict on me, for what's past." An ingenuous *Clergy-man*, upon reading this, said, that the *Bishop* was bound, in Honour, to accept of my Challenge, or, what was in his Power, in Generosity, to put a Stop to the Prosecution. But the *Bishop* is not of his Mind. And for what Reason he does not accept of my Challenge, is best known to himself, and others will conjecture. If he had not condescended to write against me in his *Pastoral Letter*, I should have imagined, that he thought it beneath the Dignity of One of his exalted Station in the Church, to set his Wit (for dignified Priests, for the most part, think their Wit and Learning proportion'd to their Wealth and Power) against such a poor Author as I am. But this is not the Reason. It may be, he thinks his Reputation and Honour secure in the Height of his Grandeur, and that his Dependents will admire his Learning nothing the less for his Neglect of my Challenge. However it be, this I will say, that were we upon the Level in the World as to Fortune, as well as we are to Age and Education, the Learned would despise him for declining the reasonable Challenge of one, whom he has

injuriously treated and persecuted. It's to no Purpose to challenge him here afresh; he, being purpos'd to carry the Matter with an high Hand, has taken other Measures, and is resolv'd to make use of his Power and Interest to suppress him, whom with Reason and Argument he can't convince.

However, I will here make another Proposal to the *Bishop* of St. *David's*. Because he thirsts after a very severe Punishment of me, or he would not be so warm in his Exhortations of the Government to that Purpose, I'll tell him how he may glut his Revenge, and inflict a greater Punishment on me, than, in all probability, the Civil Magistrate will humour him in. If he'll but put a Stop to the Prosecution at present (which is not out of the Power of our *Bishops*, whatever they may pretend) and let the Controversy go on, till I have finish'd my Reply to his *two Volumes*, which shall be done with all Expedition; then, if his Passion is not allay'd, I will submit to any Punishment, he in his Wisdom and Justice, without Mercy, shall think fit to have laid on me, whether it be to Death or Imprisonment. And what would he, or any implacable Priest, desire more? This Proposal makes him my Judge as well as my Accuser, and if he be not the most unreasonable Man alive, he must accept of it. All my Hopes here are, that his Reason may recover its Dominion over his Passion, against the Conclusion of my *Defence*, or it will go hard with me. If the *Bishop* will not comply with this Proposal, I shall conclude, he's possess'd with the only certain and allegorical *Satan*, mention'd in my *Discourses*; and I shall be confirm'd in the Opinion of St. *Hilary* (whose Testimonies about Devils, the *Bishop* has silently pass'd by, without any Charge upon me for Misrepresentation) that there are no worse *Devils* in the World, than the calumniating, furious, and

persecuting Tempers of Mankind. The *Bishop*, by the by, has taken Pains to prove there are other *Devils*, of an infernal, frightful, and independent Nature, and of a more certain Existence than *Hobgoblins*; and he gravely asserts, that three of those *Devils* enter'd into each *Hog*, that ran violently down-hill; thereby making the little *Pigs* to carry as great a Burden as the old *Boars* and *Sows*, which should have been better thought of by him. The *Bishop*, perhaps, for these my Descants, will say I am an Infidel; but I assure him, it is one of the Articles of my Primitive and Christian Faith, that the old *Dragon*, *Satan*, the *Serpent*, or the *Devil*, mention'd in the *Revelations*, is no other than the furious, violent, and persecuting Spirit in Man; which, upon the World's getting Liberty of Religion, will be bound and chain'd. And it is the Opinion of Thousands, as well as of my self, that Mankind will never be Happy, nor at Rest, till this *Devil* is exorcised out of the Priesthood, and so of consequence chain'd up. According to the primitive Way of interpreting the *Revelations* of St. *John*, the Time is near at Hand for the *binding* this Apocalyptical old *Dragon* or *Satan*, that has pester'd the World through all Ages past. All the Honour that I desire, is, by my Studies and Endeavours to be contributing to so great a Work, for the Good and Happiness of Mankind.

To conclude. I have been the more expeditious in printing of this Discourse, not only for fear the *Bishop*'s *Vindication* (as it is call'd) should have a *malign Influence* upon some People, I don't mean our *Civil Magistrates*, who are wiser and more learned than to be guided by such outragious Stuff; but because he should not long triumph in a Conceit of the Potency and Excellency of his Performance, as if no Reply could or would be made to it. If I had at

this Time enjoy'd free Liberty of Debate, I should not have thought it worth my while to meddle with his *Dedication*, which with a Scorn I should have pass'd by, and left to the Animadversions and Chastisement of other Enemies to Persecution; but would immediately have enter'd upon a Defence of my *Discourses* against him. If I do retrieve my Liberty, and the free Use of my Pen, and should not publish Defences of my self, I should deserve (what *one* said the *Bishop* of *London*, for his declining my Challenge, deserv'd) to be piss'd upon for a vain Pretender to Argument and Authority.

In the mean time, I have nothing to request of our *Clergy*, but that Liberty of Debate may be indulg'd us; *that* Liberty of theological Disputation, which would be granted, if they did not industriously labour to obstruct it. When will they cease to disgrace Truth, to dishonour their Religion, and to disparage their own Education and Learning; and no longer envy Mankind the blessed Enjoyment of such a Liberty!

But their Religion, they say, would be in Danger upon such a Liberty. How can that be? How can Christianity be in Danger, that has not only the Omnipotence of God on his Side, but a numerous standing Army of Priests, hired for the Defence of it? It is not then their Concern for Religion, that prompts them to so much Zeal here; but their Fears for their Interests, that depend on the Issue of this Controversy.

Was I to write against any other honest *Trade*, that is practised in this City, the Artificers of it, being sensible of the Usefulness of their Craft, would let me go on unmolested; and only pity and despise me for the Vanity of my Attempt to subvert them: But the

Clergy, being prick'd with a Consciousness of the Mischiefs and Inconveniencies of their Establishment, do therefore thus winch and kick.

And who, besides the *Clergy*, are at this time Enemies to Liberty? None hardly, but their immediate Dependents, whom they can easily infuse their fiery and furious Notions into. Was it to be voted this Day among the learned *Laity*, I dare say, the Friends of Persecution would be found vastly short of the Numbers of their Adversaries. And I hope to God, the Legislative Authority of these Nations will soon take the Matter into their Consideration; and either limit or enlarge the Bounds of Liberty, that honest and well-meaning Men may be no longer harrass'd and molested, for their sincere Endeavours to serve the Publick.

No Body, I trust, can complain of any disrespectful Usage, I have here given the *Bishop* of St. *David's*, that considers, how he has treated me in *his Sermon before the Societies for Reformation*; and *in his Charge to the Clergy of his Diocese*; as well as *in his Vindication*. It would be sufficient, if I had no other Excuse for my self than *this*, That Controversy is like a *Game* at *Foot ball*, in which, if a *Lord* will engage with a *Plowman*, and should meet with a Kick on the Shins, he ought not to complain of the ill Manners of it: So if a *Bishop* will dispute with one of lower Degree, he must look for a Rub on his Intellects, a Rap on his Pate, and if his Adversary cuts him on a soft Place, he should know how to bear it with Patience. But the *Bishop*, contrary to this *Game-Rule* in Controversy, complains[356] of my *unmannerly* Treatment of him, and cries out of the Sufferings and Reproaches he undergoes, as if he was already more than half a Martyr for Religion. I can't pretend to

equal him in Reproaches and Sufferings, having not so quick a Sense of them; and therefore I am willing, that good Christian People should pity my poor *Bishop*, rather than me, in a persecuted and sorrowful Condition.

How long it will be, before I publish another, and *second* Part of my *Defence*, is uncertain, for a Reason, that I need not again mention. But if it please God, that I enjoy Life, Health, and Liberty, I'll go on with my Designs. I am resolv'd to give the *Letter* of the Scriptures no Rest, so long as I am able by Reason and Authority to disturb it. If our Ministers of the *Letter* will not ascend with me, the sublime and allegorical *Mountain* of divine Contemplation, they than have no Comfort nor Enjoyment of themselves in the low *Valley* of the *Letter*, if I can disquiet them. Notwithstanding what the *Bishop* has written in *Vindication* of *Jesus*'s Miracles, the litteral Story of them, by the Leave of God, and of the Civil Magistrate, shall be afresh attack'd, and perhaps with more *Ridicule*, than I used before. What should I flinch for? The litteral Story of *Jesus*'s Miracles is not, in the Opinion of the Fathers, as well as of my self, agreeable to Sense and Reason; neither can *Jesus*'s Authority and Messiahship be founded on the *Letter* of them. I am not for the *Messiahship* of a carnal *Jesus*, who cured the bodily Diseases of Blindness and Lameness; but for Messiahship of the spiritual *Jesus*, who will cure the Blindness and Lameness of our Understandings. I am for the Messiahship of the spiritual *Jesus*, who will expel the mercenary Preachers out of his Church, after the manner that *Jesus* in the Flesh is supposed to have driven the Sellers out of the Temple, which litterally is but a sorry Story. I am for the Messiahship of the spiritual *Jesus*, who exorcised the furious and persecuting

Devils out of the Mad-men of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; and tho' he permitted them to enter into a Herd of Ecclesiastical Swine, yet will precipitate them into the Sea of Divine Knowledge. I am for the spiritual *Jesus*, who will cure the *Woman* of the Church, of her *Issue of Blood*, that is shed in Persecution and War; which her Ecclesiastical Physicians, and Quack-Doctors of the *Clergy*, have not been able to do, tho' they have received large Fees and Revenues to that End. I am for a spiritual *Messiah*, who will cure the Woman of the Church of her *Infirmity*, at the Spirit of Prophecy, of whose Infirmity this Age is her *eighteenth* Year. So could I write of all *Jesus*'s Miracles; for the whole Evangelical History is Figure and Shadow of the spiritual *Jesus*, whom we should *know to be in us of a Truth, unless we be Reprobates*. The *Clergy*, if they are not wilfully blind, may hence see my Christian Faith and Principles; and be assured, that what I do in this Controversy, is with a View to the Honour of God, the Advancement of Truth, the Edification of the Church, and Demonstration of the Messiahship of the Holy *Jesus*, to whom be Glory for ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.

Mr. *WOOLSTON*'s

DEFENCE

OF HIS

DISCOURSES

ON THE

Miracles of our *Saviour*.

Against the Bishops of St. *David*'s and *London*, and his other Adversaries.

PART II.

Nec Religionis est cogere Religionem, quæ sponte suscipi debeat, non Vi. Tertull.

***LONDON*:**

Printed for the AUTHOR, and Sold by him next Door to the *Star*, in *Aldermanbury*, and by the Booksellers of *London* and *Westminster*.

MDCCXXX.

[*Price One Shilling.*]

TO THE

Right Honourable

Sir *Robert Raymond*, Kt.

Lord Chief Justice of the Court of *King's Bench*.

MY LORD,



hat I am no Flatterer of *Patrons*, appears by my other *Dedications*: If therefore I should tell your *Lordship*, what I can in Sincerity, that I think you as wise and good a Magistrate, as any of your *Predecessors* in that *High Court* of *Justice*, you may be assured, I don't dissemble.

Tho' I was so unfortunate, *My Lord*, as to receive a Sentence in your Court, which I wish'd to avoid; yet I have no worse Opinion of your Wisdom and Justice. Your Conduct towards me, from first to last, has rather heighten'd than lessen'd my Esteem and Veneration for you. I observ'd in you such a Tenderness for our religious Liberties; such an Aversion to Persecution; and such Moderation towards my self, that if I had been absolutely acquitted, it would have been but with somewhat more Satisfaction.

And if I now write to clear my self of all Suspicions of Infidelity, for which I was sentenced; your *Lordship*, I humbly presume, will not think the worse of me. It is not expected that the Innocent should confess Guilt, in a Compliment to any Court of Justice: Nor does the Condemnation of the Guiltless, at any time almost, so much affect the Justice of the Magistrate, as the Honesty of the Evidence: So I, *My Lord*, know how to lay the Blame entirely on my Ecclesiastical Accusers, and believe your *Lordship* will be rather pleas'd than offended at any good

Defence I can make for my self.

From the Beginning of the Prosecution against me, *my Lord*, I hardly believed, that any Sentence would be pass'd on me, till the Day I received it: And the Reason was, not only because the good Tendency of my *Discourses* was so visible, that I thought it could not be overlook'd by the Wise and Learned; but because I imagin'd our *Bishops* would have better consulted their Reputation, than to let Matters come to this Issue.

That it is a Transgression of the Law of the Land to write against Christianity, establish'd in it, I'll not question, since I have your *Lordship*'s Word for it: But for all that, I could wish, for the Sake of Christianity, that such a Liberty was indulg'd to *Infidels*. Whatever our zealous *Clergy* may think, one Persecution of an *Infidel* does more Harm to Religion, than the Publication of the worst *Book* against it.

Liberty is so essential, *My Lord*, to the Enquiry after Truth, that where It is wanted, Truth will want that Splendor, which it receives from Disputation: And Christianity would be the more tryumphant over its Enemies, for that unbounded Liberty, they may enjoy to contest it from the *Press*. I say this, not for the Security of my self; against future Prosecutions but, from a Heart, full of Zeal for the Religion of the Holy *Jesus*.

Ever since the *Reformation*, which was founded on our Natural and Christian Rights to Liberty of Conscience, has this great Blessing of Liberty, at Times, been interrupted by Persecutions: But whether any of them hitherto have done any Service to *Church* or *State*, your *Lordship* is a good Judge.

However, tho' the Prosecution of my self, which was founded on a grand Mistake, is attended with no ill Consequence; yet I hope our *Ecclesiasticks* will grow cautious by it, and no more sollicit the most indulgent Civil Magistracy of this Kingdom to the Persecution of any other, much less of,

London
May
25. 1730.

My Lord,
Your Lordship's
Most Obedient and
Humble Servant,
Tho. Woolston.



A

SECOND PART

OF THE

DEFENCE, *&c.*



t's Time now to publish another *Part* of my *Defence*, which, in my former, I gave my *Readers* some Reason to expect from me. If I should keep Silence much longer, my *Adversaries* will be ready to charge me with Cowardice, or Insufficiency; and say, that I'm either absolutely confuted by the *Writers* against me, or so terrified by the Civil Magistrate's Authority, that I either can't, or dare not, engage afresh in the same Cause. And I must confess, that if I was not convinced of the Goodness of my Cause, which is no other than God's, and of my Ability to defend it, I should chuse to hold my Peace, and be glad that it has fared no worse with me.

One Reason indeed why I have been so long ere I publish'd *this*, is pure Respect to the Civil Powers, whom I am oblig'd, as a Christian, to honour and reverence, so far as may be, without Disobedience to God. Had I hastily, and as soon almost as *Sentence* was pass'd on me, publish'd *this*, some might have interpreted it, as an Act of Defiance and Contempt of the Civil Authority, (for there are not wanting those who will put the worst Construction they can on my Conduct;) therefore I forbore for a while: And now that I appear again from the *Press*, it is not without

professing a profound Veneration for our Civil Magistracy, who, I am sure, will never think the worse of a Man for vindicating his own Innocency, or for writing in a Cause that, in his Conscience, he is persuaded is most just and good.

Another Reason why I committed this no sooner to the Press, was to wait the Publication of the *Bishop* of *St. David*'s his *Second Volume*, which he promised us last Winter. I was almost of Opinion, that, in my former *Defence*, I gave the *Bishop* such Intimations of my sincere Belief of Christianity, notwithstanding my *Discourses* on *Miracles*, and of the Falseness of his repeated Charge against me for Infidelity, that I question'd whether he would write again in the same Strain. If the *Bishop* is convinced of this his grand Mistake about me, then the very Foundation of his past and future Work is shaken, and I shall hear no more of him. But whether he is certainly convinc'd of his Mistake or not, I am concern'd to go on with these *Defences* of my self, and to vindicate the Goodness and Usefulness of the Design of my *Discourses* on *Miracles*, against what the *Bishops* of *London* and *St. David*'s, and other *Adversaries* have written to the contrary.

But, before I enter upon such a *Defence* of my self and my *Discourses*, I must make, what is proper here, a short Preface. It is well known, that I am for Liberty of Debate, and against all Persecution or Force, or Impositions on the Consciences of Mankind. But for all that, there are some *Rules* in Controversy that we polemical *Writers* should observe, and be oblig'd to; or, instead of discovering and illustrating the Truth we pretend to search for, we shall but the more darken, obstruct and perplex it. As,

First, We should endeavour to write as plainly and intelligibly as we can, and never amuse our *Readers* with Expressions void of Sense, or with false Reasoning against our *Adversaries*, where we want what's good and solid. This *Rule* none can except against: Whether I am an Observer of this *Rule*, my Readers are to be Judges. As I am to answer it to God and a good Conscience, I endeavour to observe it; but much question, whether some of my *Adversaries* can say so too, or they would never vent such dark, impertinent and unintelligible Stuff, if it was not, because they are at a Loss for what's clear and shining. There's no End of giving Instances out of their Writings to this Purpose. I shall only mention one, that's repeated amongst them, and that is, of their pretended Distinction between Popish *Persecution* and Protestant *Prosecution* for Opinions, wherewith they have amused weak and injudicious Heads. The Wife, I am sure, can discern no more Difference here, than between a *Rope* and a *Halter* to hang an innocent Man, in which Case too there is a *nominal* Distinction without a *real* Difference.

Secondly, We should be open and sincere in our Opinions, and not profess with our Mouths to believe, what we disown in our Hearts; nor, like *Watermen*, that look one way and row another, should we pretend to have one Design in View, when we are pursuing the quite contrary. This is a reasonable *Rule*, and ought to be observ'd, or we shall confound the Understandings of our *Readers*, who will soon lose Sight of our Arguments, if they apprehend not their Aim and Drift. This *Rule*, my Adversaries will say, is levell'd at my self, than whom no body has more dissembled and prevaricated in his Opinions. Have not you, will they say to me,

frequently declared, that your Design in your *Discourses* is to make way for the Proof of the Truth of Christianity, and of the Messiahship of the Holy *Jesus*, when you mean and intend the Subversion of both? And is not here grand Hypocrisy, and a Transgression of this Rule? Yes, if I intend the Subversion of Christ's Religion and Messiahship, here is grand Hypocrisy, and a Transgression of this *Rule*; and I can't think of such a Piece of Prevarication without Horror. The Bishop of *St. David*'s[357] and Mr. *Stackhouse*,[358] in particular, have animadverted upon me for such Hypocrisy; and if I was guilty of it, in much gentler Terms than I deserv'd. This Hypocrisy, which they falsely charge me with, is as heinous a Sin as I can think of; it is as bad as wilful *Perjury*, as bad as a *Clergyman*'s taking the Abjuration Oath, with his Heart full of Zeal and Affection for the Pretender, and worse than his giving his solemn Assent and Consent to Articles of Religion he believes little or nothing of. I should hardly have mention'd this *Rule* to be observ'd in Controversy, if I had been guilty of the Breach of it. It is somewhat excusable in *Infidels* a little to disguise their real Sentiments, for fear of the Danger they may incur by an open Profession of them: But such a gross and foul Mask of Hypocrisy, as some think I have here put on, is intolerable, and must be hateful to *Infidels* as well as *Christians*, being obstructive to Truth, which, in all Inquirers after her, loves Sincerity and Simplicity. No doubt, but my *Adversaries*, some of them, will still think me a Transgressor of this *Rule*; but my present and following *Defences* will absolutely clear me. And if none of my *Adversaries* are more guilty of the Transgression of it than my self, we are all entirely innocent.

Thirdly, In Controversy we should avoid all wilful

Misrepresentation of the Sense of our *Adversaries*, and of the *Authors* we pretend to cite. Mistakes and Misapprehensions of one another will sometimes unavoidably happen, and are then as innocent things as involuntary Errors. But wilful Perversion and Falsification of another Author's Words, to the Service of our selves, or to the Prejudice of our *Adversaries*, is most blameable, and of that ill Consequence to the Search after Truth, that it will keep us always at a Distance from her. This then is another good *Rule* to be observed in Controversy, which some may wonder I have mention'd, because of that Misrepresentation and Falsification of Authorities I am charg'd with. And I must confess, my *Adversaries* have here made an hideous Outcry against me; which if I can't acquit my self of, I am the foulest Controvertist that ever appear'd in Print. The Bishop of *St. David*'s[359] calls my *Falsification* of Authorities, an *Immorality*, and speculative *Forgery*; but if I was so guilty as he would have me thought, he speaks too favourably of it. He should have deem'd it as great a Crime as practical *Forgery* by the Law; and all Philosophers and Lovers of Truth should wish it might be likewise punish'd.

But, good Christian Reader, don't too hastily pass thy Judgment on me. Suspend awhile; it may be, that I may unexpectedly vindicate my self. The Matter as yet is under Debate, whether my *Adversaries* or I are the grand Misrepresenters and Falsifiers of Authorities. One would think, that my Adversaries, who were bent on the Accusation of me for the foresaid Crime, should have kept themselves clear of it: But the *Bishop* of *St. David*'s[360] is such a resolute *Misrepresenter*, that he could not find in his Heart faithfully to transcribe the *Three Heads* of my *Discourses*; but by a Suppression of some Words, and

the Change of others, has given them an odious and invidious Turn to my Disadvantage: And he has studied so hard to pervert the Sense of the Fathers against me, and so tortured his Brain to make me a Misrepresenter of them, that I should not wonder, if he had labour'd under a Pain in his Head ever since, and is unable to write more. Tho' my Word should not be taken for all this at present; yet in the Sequel of these *Defences*, it will be made manifest.

It is a great Temptation to our *Bishops* falsely to accuse and misrepresent their Adversaries; because they know their Writings don't equally spread and go together among all their Readers. A *Bishop*'s Writing going more by itself amongst the *Clergy*, and other Friends to his Side of the Question, he is tempted to misrepresent his Adversaries, knowing his prejudiced Readers will take his Report of them, and credit it. For this Reason, and no other, did the *Bishop* of *Litchfield*[361] falsely charge the *Author* of the *Grounds* with odious Assertions, to which there is nothing akin in the Places seemingly referr'd to, nor in all that Author's Work.

However, the *Rule* in Controversy before laid down is a good, useful and necessary one. I pray God we may all be religious and conscientious Observers of it, or we shall retard the Discovery of Truth, and render our Attainment of it difficult, if not impossible.

Fourthly, We should think our selves oblig'd to set our Names to our Writings in Controversy, especially where it is such a *warm* one as is ours at present. The Observation of this *Rule* would not only prevent much of the Violation of the *two* former; but would hinder abundance of the Dirt of Scandal, Lies and Defamations, that we too often throw at each other.

For what Reason some of the *Writers*[362] against me have industriously conceal'd their Names, I know full well. They perhaps would have it thought Modesty, and that they are not ambitious of the publick Praises they may deserve for their learned and elaborate Performances. And possibly it may be Modesty in some Theological Authors to conceal themselves: But where Men have the Impudence to defame, it's in vain to pretend to the Cloak of Modesty to cover themselves under. Wherefore then do they sometimes who write on the establish'd Side of the Question, on which Honour and Preferment goes, thus conceal themselves? Why, that they might belie and slander their Adversaries the more securely, without being expostulated with for their Impudence. It's to no Purpose, they know, to upbraid an anonymous Author with his Scandal, because he can't be put to the Blush for it. And a wise Man will not lose his Labour to expose and confute a libellous Writing, unless he knew whom to charge with the Guilt of it. It is my Resolution to take no Notice of any nameless Authors against me, because I, being as it were blindfolded, engage them at a Disadvantage, whilst they have a full View of me. For this Reason the *Tryal of the Witnesses* was pass'd by, or I should have been tempted to have made some Remarks on it. Let such *Authors* come forth into the Light, and it may be, they'll meet with the same Favour I have done the *Bishop* of *St. David*'s. In the mean time, I declare my Abhorrence of Authors their Concealment of their Names, and I hope all ingenuous *Writers* in Controversy will do so too; tho' for no other Reason, than to prevent Misrepresentations, Defamations, and personal Reflections, which nameless Authors are too often guilty of.

Fifthly, and *lastly*, Others make it a common *Rule* to

be observ'd in Controversy, that the *Disputants* should consider each other's Arguments impartially, without the Byass of Prejudice and Interest. And a very good *Rule* this is, if Men would but put it into Practice. But I shall long despair of such Impartiality in Controversy. Such is the Power of Prejudice and Interest, that they will influence Men to believe against the most apparent Reason and Truth. Even Prejudice will much darken the Eyes of Mens Understandings, but Interest will put them quite out. O what a horrible Obstacle to the free Enquiry after Truth, is Interest! Against Demonstration itself will Men contend for Interest. Interest, upon Occasion, will induce them to desert the best Opinions, and keep them tight to the worst. This Experience proves true, and the various Faces of the Church, and Changes of the *Clergy* (all for Interest) is a Witness of it. God forbid that I should judge uncharitably of the Corruption of human Nature under the Power of Interest; but I believe, that was our *Legislature* to do, what they never will, that is, set up the Figure of a *Calf* in our Churches, there would be no want of Priests to worship him, if they were well paid for it; nor of Academical *Students* to prove his divine Power and Godship, if the Road to Preferment lay that Way. For this Reason, among many others, I am for the Abolition of an hired and establish'd Priesthood, that this grand Bar of Interest may be removed out of our Way to Truth. And the *Bishop* of *London*, that excellent Prelate, as *Bishop Smalbroke* calls him (for so do we, like other Creatures, knab one another where it itches) should by rights be of my Mind, saying,[363] "Where there is an Unwillingness to part with worldly Interests, there must of Course be a *Desire* that the Christian Religion should not be true; and a *Willingness* to favour and embrace any

Argument that is brought against it, and to cherish any Doubts and Scruples that shall be rais'd concerning it." So feelingly does this *Bishop* speak of the Power of Interest, by which, as I would conceive, he honestly hints to the Inhabitants of *London* and *Westminster*, that the *Bishop* of their Diocese, and the *Parson* of their Parish, are most unfit Guides in Religion, because of the worldly Interests they may have to deceive them, and keep them in Ignorance and Error.

Thus by way of Preface having spoken to the foregoing *Rules* to be observed in this Controversy, I come to a close. *Defence* of myself against the Charge of Infidelity, and to vindicate the Usefulness of my *Discourses on Miracles* for the Proof of the Truth of Christianity, and of the Messiahship of the Holy *Jesus*, against all my Adversaries. And the Method I shall take to this Purpose, is this following.

I. To show the Weakness, Childishness, and Insufficiency of the Arguments of my *Adversaries*, for the *Letter* of the Stories of *Jesus*'s Miracles; and further to prove both *ludicrously* and *seriously* the Absurdities, Incredibilities, and Improbabilities, that their literal Stories labour under.

II. To prove, that whether there be any Sense, Truth and Fact, or not, in the Letter of *Jesus*'s Miracles; yet they are Typical Things, and ought to be allegorically interpreted, and will receive a mysterious and more wonderful Accomplishment, after the manner, and to the same Purpose, that the Fathers and I do apply them, being no other (whether actually wrought or not) than Figures, Signs and Emblems of his future and mysterious Operations.

III. To show that the mysterious and future

Accomplishment of these supposed Works and Miracles of *Jesus* alone can and will be the Proof of his Messiahship.

If I perform well upon these Heads, which are deserving of my *Reader*'s Review, because of their Pertinency to the Cause in Hand, I shall not only vindicate myself from the Charge of Infidelity, but justify the Goodness and Usefulness of my *Discourses*, in order to the Demonstration of *Jesus*'s Messiahship. And in the midst of my handling of them, without going out of my Way, I shall, as Occasion offers itself, take Notice of particular Misrepresentations of the Fathers, and false Citations out of them, that my Adversaries charge me with: And Bishop *Smalbroke* and others had best to look to it, or their Accusations against me will recoil and return home to them. Then

I. I should show the Weakness, Childishness and Insufficiency of the Arguments of my *Adversaries* for the *Letter* of *Jesus*'s Miracles; and further argue both *ludicrously* and *seriously* the Absurdities, Incredibilities and Improbabilities, that their literal Stories labour under.

I should, I say, first treat on this Head, which naturally precedes the two following; but in as much as to handle it to Perfection, I should write as I did before, and shall run in Danger of Prosecution for Blasphemy and Infidelity; I must of Necessity wave and postpone it, unless I could more than dispatch it in the Compass of this *Part* of my *Defence*.

I have heretofore made solemn Professions of my Belief of Christianity, and most seriously declared in the plainest Terms, that my Design was not to do

Service to Infidelity, but to make way for the Proof of Christ's Religion and Messiahship; but my Word was not taken, being look'd upon as a Dissembler, an Hypocrite, and Prevaricator, for all that. And should I now ever so gravely repeat the like Asseverations of the Integrity and Sincerity of my Heart, that my Objections against the Letter of *Jesus*'s Miracles are none against his Religion, but only intended to turn Mens Heads to the mystical Interpretations of them; I question much whether I should be believed, and whether *Bishop Smalbroke*[364] would not say again, *that this is too thin a Disguise of what seems to be my great and worse Design*. What then in Prudence must I do in this Case? Why, I must let *This Head*, which reasonably should precede, rest for a while; and by treating on the *Second*, tho' out of Place, I must first effectually convince my Adversaries, that I am no *Infidel* of wicked Designs to subvert Christianity, but only the *Ministry of the Letter*; and then, I conceive, I may safely resume the Consideration of this *First Head*, and without the Imputations of Infidelity and Blasphemy, write as *merrily* or *gravely* as I please against the Letter.

Should any say, that this pretended Reason for waving this *First Head* for the present, is nothing but Cowardice and Inability to write more on it, I can't help it. *Ictus Piscator sapit*; I have already suffer'd much for the ludicrous Treatment of the *Letter*, and it is Wisdom to keep, if I can, out of the like Danger; neither will I do any thing, that in Conscience I can forbear, to incur the Displeasure of the Civil Magistrate. But however, if the *Bishop* of *London* would ensure me against, what the *Bishop* of *St. David*'s calls, the[365] *Nominal* Persecutions of *Protestants*, which I am more afraid of, than of the *real* Persecutions of *Papists*, I will soon enter upon

this Head; otherwise for Self-Preservation against the *nominal* Sufferings of Fines and Imprisonment, *&c.* I will forbear, promising my Readers, that in due Time, and on a more proper Occasion, I will resume the *merry Subject* of the *Letter*, and handle it to their entire Satisfaction.

And when I resume *this Head*, I will begin where I before left off in my *Discourses* on *Miracles*; that is, with the Resurrection of *Jesus*, which tho' I believe to have been a miraculous Fact, that happen'd, yet it was by no means timed and circumstanced, so as easily and readily to conciliate the Belief of Posterity. God has given to Man Reason to judge of the Credibility of Events, and the Certainty of Miracles: And if the Reason of every Man does not disapprove of the Management of that Event, (supposing it has no figurative Meaning in it) I am much mistaken, when we come to state a Case, how such a Miracle ought to be wrought and conducted, to get and preserve the Credit of it.

Thus having told my Readers, why I postpone my *First Head*, I now enter upon the *Second*, which is

II. To shew, that whether there be any Sense, Truth and Fact, or not, in the literal Stories of *Jesus*'s Miracles, yet they are all certainly typical Facts, and ought to be allegorically interpreted, and will receive a mysterious and more wonderful Accomplishment after the Manner, and to the same Purpose, that the Fathers and I do apply them, being no other (whether actually wrought or not) than Figures, Signs and Emblems of his future and mysterious Operations.

If the Authority of the Fathers would be admitted of,

as decisive on *this Head*, there would soon be an End of all Controversy upon it. Give me Leave to recite some of their Testimonies to this Purpose, which I have heretofore urg'd in my *Discourses*. *Origen* says[366] That *Jesus*'s Works were *Symbols* of other Things to be done by his Power. St. *Hilary*[367] says, That *Jesus*'s Actions bore a Resemblance of what he would do hereafter. St. *Augustin*[368] says, That the Facts of *Jesus* are Signs of somewhat else to be done by him. And *Eusebius Gallicanus*[369] says, That our Saviour manifestly shews, that his Miracles are of a spiritual Signification, or in the Work of them he would not have done somewhat or other, that seems to want Sense and Reason. These few, out of a Multitude of Citations from the Fathers that might be produced, are sufficient to the Proof of the present Proposition, if their Authority might determine our Dispute. And most pertinent Citations they are too, tho' *Bishop Smalbroke*[370] says, *that even the Passages cited by me from the Fathers, that are not falsified, are impertinent*; which is such an extravagant Stretch against the most glaring Truth, that (to use the Bishop's[371] own Words against himself) *it betrays a Mind lost to all Sense of Modesty and Religion*, or he could not have utter'd it.

And not only the Miracles of *Jesus* were Signs and Figures of future Events; but, according to *Origen*, [372] *every thing else that he did*: From whence we may gather what was *Origen*'s Meaning, when he said[373] *Christ's first* Advent in the Flesh is all Type and Shadow of his *second*, spiritual, and glorious Coming; which being an *Opinion* that our *Clergy* are Strangers to, I desire them to consider of it, and whether there is any Possibility of Truth in it, because it is contrary to modern Conceptions about *Christ's second* Advent.

Nay further, according to the Fathers,[374] the very Life and Ministry of *John* the *Baptist*, so far as it is recorded by the *Evangelists*, is Type and Figure of another's Ministry before Christ's spiritual Advent; and I am almost, if not altogether of the same Mind with them. It is beside my present Business, to insert here many of their Testimonies to this Purpose: But if the *Bishop* of *St. David*'s would spare a little Time, which can't be better employ'd, and make a Collection of the Opinions of the Fathers about the *Baptist*'s Ministry, and print it, I dare say he'll thereupon present the learned World with the most surprizing Curiosity they ever were entertain'd with. Tho' it is improper for me to do such a Work; yet I will here tell my *Readers* what will be the true Meaning of *John's Preaching Repentance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand*, when his Ministry revives, *viz.* "It will be an Exhortation to Ministers of the Letter, μετανοειν, to reconsider the Matter and Error of their literal Expositions, and to betake themselves to spiritual and allegorical Interpretations of the Scriptures, in which allegorical and spiritual Senses of them consists the *Kingdom of Heaven*." This I assert upon the Authority of *Origen*,[375] and if the *Clergy* please to consult St. *Austin* and others, they'll find them of the same Mind. But, this by the by, having no more to say to the Typicalness of *John*'s Ministry, than whenever his foresaid mystical Preaching of Repentance shall revive, it can hardly be to a more viperous Generation of Ecclesiastical *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, than are the *Ministers* of the *Letter* at this present.

But against all these, and Ten Thousand more Testimonies of the Fathers for the allegorical Interpretation of the Writings of the *Evangelists*, and of *Jesus*'s Miracles in particular, the *Bishop* of *St.*

David's says, the Fathers are not of good Authority in this Case, but, for all them, who were Men of whimsical and volatile Fancies, we ought to adhere to the *Letter* of the Story of *Christ*'s Life and Miracles. This the *Bishop* asserts roundly and frequently in express or implicit Terms, as his Readers may observe; and I dare say, the *Bishop* himself will not here charge me with a Misrepresentation of his Opinion, tho', to spare Time and Paper, I quote not his own Words and large Passages.

What Reason does the *Bishop* give, why the Authority of the Fathers for the allegorical Interpretation of the Evangelical Writings, and of *Jesus*'s Miracles, in particular, is not to be allow'd of? None at all. Does he quote so much as a Canon of the Church, or a Vote in Convocation, or an Act of Parliament, or the consentient Opinion of all Protestant *Writers* (which are the extrascriptural Standards of modern Orthodoxy) for his Opinion? No. Does he then reject the Authority of the Fathers in all other Cases, as well as in *this* before us? Nor this neither. He allows their Authority,[376] as they were good Persons and credible Witnesses, "In Testimony of *Facts*; "And about the Observation of the Lord's Day; "And concerning the three Orders of the *Clergy*; "And about the Government of the Church by Bishops; "And about the Books received into the Canon of the Scripture;" But as for allegorical Interpretations of the Scriptures, they are of *little*, and (elsewhere) of *no* Authority. Who can forbear smiling, unless the *Bishop* had better *evinced* the Reason of this Difference in their Authority? If he had rejected their Authority in all Cases, he would have judged more equally and impartially of it.

In my Opinion, and I appeal to my *Readers*, whether

it ben't their Opinion, that the *Bishop* had been an ingenuous and plain Dealer, if he had express'd himself about the Authority of the Fathers in this following Manner, saying, "That the Authority of the Fathers is good in *such* and *such* Cases as aforesaid; because their Authority is agreeable enough to the present Doctrine, Practice and Discipline of the Church: But the Authority of the Fathers is not good for the allegorical Interpretation of the *New Testament*, because it is disagreeable to our Prejudices, and because their allegorical Expositions of some Miracles, if they should receive such a Sense, will bring Shame and Reproach to our Ministry. Neither is the Authority of the Fathers for Toleration, and against Persecution, good; because it is destructive of Ecclesiastical Power. Nor is the copious Authority of the Fathers against Preaching for Hire, good; because it is averse to our Interests. Where the Authority of the Fathers is agreeable to our Interests, Power, and Prejudices, there will we be for the Authority of the Fathers: But where the Fathers are against us, there will we be against them; and why should we not?" This is the true Sense of the *Bishop*, tho' he is so unhappy as to want the Talent clearly and plainly to express his Mind.

But, like many others, who can't write Coherence, nor consistently with themselves; so the *Bishop*, for all his saying that the allegorical Interpretations of Scripture by the Fathers are of little or no Authority, yet almost, if not altogether, contradicts himself, and grants as much as I desire, saying[377] thus, "With relation to any Expositions of Scripture made by the Fathers in early Times, they must be allow'd to have had *some* Advantage in being near to the Fountain itself." I ask for nothing more from the Bishop. Why do I contend for the Authority of the Fathers as

Interpreters and Expositors? Only because they lived nearer to the Days of *Christ* and his Apostles, whose Mind and Will consequently they must needs know better, than we at this Distance: And because (what the *Bishop* elsewhere grants) those primitive Ages, as well as the Apostolical one, were in some measure inspired, upon the credible Testimonies of *Origen*, *Irenæus*, and *Eusebius*, whose Words I shall not stay here to produce.

Hence then, in the Authority of the Fathers, I should think, there is Foundation enough to build allegorical Interpretations on, and particularly to prove the literal Stories of Christ's Miracles to be Emblems of future and mysterious Operations; but all this will not do to pacify and stop the Mouths of my Gainsayers. This Controversy is *pro Aris & Focis*, for the ALL of the Clergy that is dear to them; and therefore they will shuffle and trifle for and against any Argument, rather than yield. Tho' the *Bishop* of *St. David*'s above speaks favourably of *Expositions made by the Fathers in early Times*, and may grant that the Church, in her first Ages was inspired, yet he will still wrangle against allegorical Interpretations, especially such as I have made on some Miracles; as for Instance, "On *Jesus*'s driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple; "On his precipitating the Swine with the Devils into the Sea; "On his healing the Woman of an Issue of Blood; and the Woman of a Spirit of Infirmity, *&c.* because the Interests and Reputations of the *Clergy*, as *Ministers* of the *Letter*, are touch'd to the quick by them. So true is that Saying of the *Bishop* of *London*, which deserves to be repeated, That "where there is an Unwillingness to part with Prejudices and worldly Interests, there must of Course be a *Desire* that the Christian Religion (*which consists in the Ministry of the Spirit*) should not

be true; and a *Willingness* to favour and embrace any Argument that is brought against it, and to cherish any Doubts and Scruples that shall be rais'd concerning it.

What must I do here then, since no Authority, no, not the most primitive, will suffice in this Case? Why, I have nothing left to do, but absolutely to demonstrate, and make the Matter as plain as a *Pike-Staff*, that the Miracles of *Jesus* will certainly receive such a mysterious Accomplishment, as the Fathers and I have before-hand interpreted them in. Upon such a Demonstration, if the Mouths of my Adversaries are not stopt, yet the Eyes of all impartial *Readers* will be open'd to behold what a Heap of Impertinence the *Bishop* of *St. David*'s and others, have hitherto urg'd against me.

Now to demonstrate absolutely, that the Stories of *Jesus*'s Miracles will receive such a mysterious Accomplishment, as I, by the Help of the Fathers, have understood them in, I must do these *two* things.

First, show, that the Old Testament is to be allegorically interpreted, and is already in Part, and will be entirely fulfilled by *Jesus*, the true *Messiah*, in an allegorical Sense. And thence

Secondly, Infer by a natural, obvious, and necessary Consequence, that, what we vulgarly call the New Testament is to be allegorically interpreted also, even in the Manner as I have understood some Parts of it.

The *Bishop* of *St. David*'s allows, that there is better Authority, tho' not sufficient, for the Interpretation of the *Old Testament* allegorically; but supposing it was better than it is, yet there is no Consequence that the

New should be also allegorically interpreted. Behold his Words, for fear of a Charge of Misrepresentation[378]. "But besides this ill-founded Imitation of St. *Paul* (in allegorical Interpretations of the *Old* Testament) will his mystical Expositions of any Passages of the Old Testament support their Pretensions (meaning the Fathers and mine) to interpret the *New* in a like mystical manner? No, it will not.——And therefore (*after a little more Reasoning against this Consequence, he concludes, that*) this Practice of *Origen* and other Fathers, that were mystical Expositors of the *New Testament*, was very precarious, and without Authority." From which Words of the *Bishop*, it is plain, that his Opinion is, that whatever Authority there may be for the allegorical Interpretation of the *Old* Testament, there is no Consequence to be thence drawn, that the *New* is to be interpreted in a like mystical manner. But in Answer to the *Bishop*, and in Confutation of his wild and inconsiderate Assertion, I chuse to treat on the two foregoing Particulars; and the

First is to show, that the *Old* Testament is to be allegorically interpreted, and is already in Part, and will be entirely fulfilled by *Jesus* in an allegorical Sense.

That the *Old* Testament is to be allegorically interpreted, I have Authority, even ancient Authority enough, if that would be allow'd to be sufficient to prove my Point. We have Apostolical Authority and Example for it. The Passages in the Epistles of St. *Paul* and *Barnabas* to this Purpose are numerous, and so well known, that I need not recite all, or any of them. And from the Passages in St. *Paul*, that might be here produced, the Fathers asserted and concluded from his Authority, that the whole *Old*

Testament was to be allegorized. This I believe the *Bishop* will grant, and spare me the Pains of Citations out of them. And if the *Bishop*, and my other *Adversaries*, were of the same Mind with the Fathers, on St. *Paul*'s Expressions in relation to allegorical Interpretations of the *Old* Testament, my present Dispute with them would be half over. And what is the Reason that the *Bishop* and others will not give into the Opinion of the Fathers on the Apostolical Passages to this Purpose? Because of their Prejudices to the *Letter* of the *Old Testament*, otherwise they would urge St. *Paul*'s Authority for the *Spirit* of it, as much as the Fathers or I can do. But being, I say, prepossess'd of *literal* Interpretations, and not discerning any Force and Truth in *spiritual* ones, they will not allow the mystical Expositions of Scripture by *Origen* and other Fathers, tho' made in Imitation of St. *Paul*, to be of good Authority. And therefore I must demonstrate to Sense and Reason, or Primitive and Apostolical Authority will stand me in no stead.

Again, If Authority for allegorical Interpretations of the *Old* Testament would avail any thing, there is ancienter, and I had like to have said *better*, Authority for them, than *that* of the Fathers and Apostles, *viz.* the Authority of the more ancient *Jews*. The Bishop of *St. David*'s[379] says, "The Christian Fathers (and why did he not say the *Apostles* too?) derived this allegorical Practice from the Jewish Interpreters." He owns[380] "that *Philo Judæus* was a great mystical Writer as his Works which are extant testify"; and[381] confesses that "there is Reason to believe, that this mystical Way of expounding Scripture was of greater Antiquity than *Philo* himself, even amongst the *Essens* and *Therapeuts*, whom *Philo* writes of, and who had amongst them several ancient Books of their Predecessors or Founders, full of

allegorical Interpretations." Thus far the *Bishop* says well and truly. And what Observation should he, as a Lover of Antiquity, have made hereupon? Should he not have said, *Id verius, quod prius*; the older any Doctrine was, the more likely to be true, in as much as Truth precedes Error?

But could not the Bishop have carry'd his Story of the allegorical Interpretation of the *Old Testament* much higher? Yes, he might, and have told us what I do him now, that the LXX Interpreters were *Allegorists*, as appears from the Translation itself, and from the Opinion of the ancient Jews and Fathers of the Church concerning them. And what's more still, he might, as a Christian, upon the Authority of St. *Hilary*[382] have derived the allegorical Art of Interpretation from *Moses* himself, who received it from God; and instructed the *Seventy Elders* in it, from whom it continued thro' all Ages of the Jewish and Christian Churches, without Interruption, excepting that Opposition which the later *Caraites* of the Jews, and *Ministers* of the *Letter* among Christians, have made to it. If this be true, as I firmly believe it, then the allegorical Method of Interpretation is of original and divine Right. And it is reasonable to think accordingly, that it is of *Mosaic* and *divine* Extraction, or the Apostles *Paul* and *Barnabas*, and the Fathers afterwards, had never been permitted of God to countenance a Practice, in Imitation of the *Jews*, if it was of a base, or of any other than *divine* Original. The Consequence is, that we at this Day ought to be allegorical Interpreters of the *Old Testament*, or we set ourselves against all Antiquity, and oppose a Tradition that's like a Command, derived from *Moses* and God himself.

And what can the *Bishop* of St. *David*'s say to this

Consequence? Why, he'll tell us, tho' the allegorical Method of Interpretation be as ancient as the *Therapeuts* and some of their Predecessors, yet, whatever the *Jews* and Fathers may say of its Antiquity, it came not from God and *Moses*, or he would subscribe to it; but took its Rise, some Ages after the Giving of the Law of *Moses*, tho' he knows not how nor when. And I am willing the *Bishop* should please himself with such an Answer and Opinion, till I have absolutely demonstrated the Certainty of the allegorical Method, and thence made it manifest, that it is of Mosaick and divine Original.

As to that other Account[383] of the Original of mystical Interpretation of Scripture, or at least of the greater Progress and Improvement of it, which the *Bishop* out of *Porphyry* gives, by saying the Fathers learned it of the gentile Philosophers, it is the most senseless and *unscholarlike* Opinion that a Christian can hold, and I was surprised to see it come from him. It is true that St. *Clement* of *Alexandria*, *Origen*, and others, were very conversant in the Writings of the *Greek* Philosophers: And wherefore were they so? Was it to learn mystical Theology of them? No, but, as St. *Jerom*[384] says, to confirm the Doctrines of our Religion, and to confute the *Gentiles* out of their own Books. For it was asserted by the Fathers, and confess'd by the *Gentile* Philosophers, that the Mythology of the *Greeks*, the hieroglyphical Learning of the *Egyptians* and the Oneirocritism of the *Chaldæans*, was all borrowed from the *Hebrews*, and had their Rise from the mystical and allegorical Interpretation of the Scriptures, as shall be made manifest, if the *Bishop* and I go on in this Controversy: And *therefore* the Fathers studied the Writings of the *Greeks*, and made the foresaid Use of them in the Conversion of the *Gentiles*; which the

Bishop can't but know, if he remembers at all, what he has read in St. *Clement* of *Alexandria*, and other Fathers. But this, by the by, with a Hint to the *Bishop* to consider, whether he, who holds here with *Porphyry*, or I who hold with the Fathers, writes the most like an *Infidel*. So much then to the Accounts, which the *Bishop* of St. *David*'s has given, of the Origine of the mystical Interpretation of Scripture.

The *Bishop* of *Litchfield*, who is to be looked on as a Writer in this Controversy, has a large *Chapter* against the allegorical Way of Interpretation. I shall comprise his Opinion in a few Words out of him. He says,[385] *he is not concerned to vindicate the Antiquity, ascribed by* Philo, *to the allegoric Way of writing, much less the Abuse it was carry'd to in After-Ages; no, nor to defend, at all, this Manner of writing.* And as to St. *Paul*'s allegorizing the Scriptures, he says,[386] *It seems to be in compliance with the Demand of the Jewish Christians, who were affected with allegoric Interpretations, that St.* Paul (*who appears to have been no Fool*) *above all the other Apostles used that Way, which he was brought into against his own good liking.* And in another Place he says,[387] *The Laws and Facts recorded by* Moses, *are commonly interpreted to natural, moral, theological and even anagogick Senses, which no one supposed to have been ever in* Moses*'s Thoughts, or to be other than the Exercise of a subtle Wit, for the Instruction and Entertainment of the Hearers*. Whether this *Bishop* had his Wits about him, when he said, *No one supposed the anagogick Senses of the Law to have been ever in* Moses*'s Thoughts*, I can't tell; but if he had rubb'd up his Memory a little, he might have consider'd, what he says in another Place,[388] that the Anagogical was the accustomed Way of the whole Nation of the *Jews* from *Moses*'s Time; and he might have known what St. *Hilary*,

whom I cited before, says, that *Moses* taught the Children of *Israel* the anagogical and allegorical Way; and whatever he may think, *Origen* says,[389] that *Moses* by the Acuteness of his Understanding, penetrated into the mystical and anagogical Meaning of his own Law. And tho' this *Bishop* says above, that he is not concern'd to vindicate the Antiquity of the allegorick Way of writing; yet I am oblig'd to vindicate its Antiquity and Truth, or I can't write a good *Defence of Christianity*, which should now bring me (to what I have undertaken) to make an absolute Demonstration of the Certainty of the allegorical Method of Interpretation, and of *Jesus*'s Messiahship upon it.

But before I enter upon a close Proof of this grand Undertaking, I must beg leave to tell my Readers a Story, which tho' it will for while defer my undertaken Demonstration, yet it is properly introductory to it. I had not long drawn up my foregoing Thoughts, (against the two Bishops, of *Litchfield* and St. *David*'s) of the Jewish and Christian Antiquity of the allegorical Method of Interpretation of Scripture, before I imparted them to my old Friend the *Jewish Rabbi*, who is a Cabalist and Allegorist, and desired his Sentiments upon them. Whereupon he was so kind as to send me the following Letter, with a pertinent Objection in it, against the Messiahship of the *Jesus* of our *Ministers* of the *Letter*; with a pertinent, I say, and lucky Objection, which paves the Way for my Demonstration of the Certainty of the allegorical Way of Interpretation, and of the Messiahship of the *Jesus* of us *Ministers* of the *Spirit*; and if I can but prevail upon the two forenamed *Bishops*, to give me their Assistance in answering the said Objection, by humouring my Rabbi in it; we shall go a better Step, than has been hitherto taken,

for the Conversion of the *Jews*: And this is Encouragement enough to such hearty Friends to Christianity as we are, to set about so great and glorious a Work. The Letter is as follows.

SIR,

After condoling with you for the extraordinary Penalty that was laid on you for my Invective against *Jesus*'s Miracle of *turning Water into Wine*, which, in my Opinion, you should not have been so heavily charg'd with, because it was purely *Cabalistical*, and contains in it nothing better or worse than the Conceptions that we *Jews* entertain of *Jesus* and his Miracles; I here send you my Thoughts on the short Account you have given of the Antiquity of the allegorical Method of the Interpretation of Scripture.

You and the Fathers of your Church are certainly in the right on't, to make it as old as *Moses*, agreeably to the Opinion, that we cabalistical *Jews*[390] at this Day entertain of it. If it was of later Date and original, your Adversaries are oblig'd to assign the Time *when*, and the Occasion *how*, such a surprising and extraordinary Method of Interpretation was introduced into the Jewish Nation. If our Ancestors in the Days of God's inspired Prophet, *Moses*, heard of none but

literal Senses of the Law, and if neither he nor God himself ever intended they should run into the allegorical Strain, I ask when and what was *that Incident* which turn'd the Heads of our ancient Nation so religiously and devoutly to it? I can easily conceive how it came to pass, that the Sect of the *Caraites* amongst us *Jews*, who now adhere to the Letter, deserted mystical Interpretations; and why your *Ministers* of the *Letter* have forsaken them; and that was because they don't relish nor apprehend those divine Mysteries, which *your* and *our* ancient Allegorists so much talk'd of, as veil'd and latent under the Law of *Moses*. But if this be a good Reason, why they have forsaken the allegorical Method, it is a much better Reason, why our Ancestors, of themselves should never have taken it up. And therefore it is plain to me, that God and *Moses* upon the Institution of the Law, at the same Time imparted the allegorical Method; or it could never afterwards, *by chance*, have enter'd into the Heads of Men, who have hitherto discern'd so little Use and Fruits of it.

The Reason why God by *Moses* communicated to the *Israelites*, and by his Providence since has kept up the allegorical Way of Interpretation

of the Scriptures, was to prepare the World for the Reception of the *Messiah*, who was to be the Accomplisher of them in an allegorical Sense; and our Ancestors accordingly so much excercised their Thoughts in divine and mystical Contemplations on the Law; because, they fancied, they could thereby, as through *a Glass darkly*, attain to some glimmering Foresight of the Kingdom of the *Messiah*: For you must know, that our old Cabalists[391] held (what your *Jesus* undertook to fulfil) that all Things that were written in the Law and the Prophets, were, *to a Tittle*, Type and Prophecy of the *Messiah*, who would be so far the clear Fulfiller and Illustrater of them, as that Men would then see God *Face to Face*: And, to be particular, they expected, in the first Place, that the *Messiah* would work the Redemption of his Church after the same manner, and by the like Signs and Wonders that *Moses* wrought the Deliverance of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*.

Agreeable to these our old Opinions of the Scripture, and to our Expectations of a *Messiah*, did the Fathers of your Church endeavour to prove *Jesus*'s Messiahship, by an allegorical Explication and Application of the Law and the Prophets to him: But in as much as

they labour'd in vain, proving little or nothing, this Way, to the Satisfaction of our old *Jews*; and in as much as your Priesthood have altogether given over this Way of Proof; we persist in our Disbelief of *Jesus*'s Messiahship, and expect another for the foresaid grand Purposes. Give me Leave here to make an Objection, founded on the concurrent and consentient Opinions of *your* Fathers and *our* Ancestors, against the Messiahship of *Jesus*, which if your Priests can answer, agreeably to their united Opinions, they will not only make a Convert of me, but open a Door for the Conversion of our whole Nation.

"It is agreed between us Jews, and you Christians (excepting two or three modern Commentators) that the Words of *Deuteronomy*, xviii. 18. *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren like unto thee*, are a Prophecy of the Messiah. From which Prophecy our Ancestors[392] look'd upon *Moses* as a Type of the Messiah, *in all Things*, and expected that the *Messiah* at his coming would by way of Antitype, imitate and resemble *Moses* in all the History of his Life, just as Face answereth to Face in a Glass, or as a Substance agrees to its Shadow. And I am well assured that the Fathers of your Church accordingly held and

believed, what they endeavoured to prove, that there was an exact Similitude between *Jesus* in the Christian Church, and *Moses* in the Jewish. Now if your Priesthood can perfect that Proof, and show me, either in a literal or allegorical Sense, an exact Resemblance, Correspondence, and Likeness between them, I must of Necessity turn Christian. It may be perhaps a Work of too large an Extent for them to shew this Agreement between *Jesus* and *Moses* in all and every Particular; I will be content therefore, if they can shew me a Similitude between them in a small Part of *Moses*'s Life; as for Instance, in the History of *Moses*'s delivering the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*. It was most expressly the Opinion of our Ancestors, that the Messiah would deliver his People from Bondage, and, if I forget not, from *Roman* Bondage, after the Manner, and by the like Wonders, that *Moses* delivered his People from *Egyptian*. *Jerom*,[393] a Father of your Church has recorded *this* as the universal Opinion of our Ancestors, and therefore you have the less Reason to question it. And agreeably to this Opinion of our Ancestors, the Fathers of your Church asserted, that *Christ* was such a *Messiah*, and did deliver his Church from *Roman*

Servitude, after the same Manner (in a Figure) that *Moses* delivered his *Israelites* out of *Egypt*. Nay, your Apostle *Paul*[394] seems to assert it, saying, *Brethren, I would not, that ye should be ignorant, how that all our Fathers were under the Cloud, and all passed through the Sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the Cloud and in the Sea. Now these things were our Examples or Types.* In which Words *Paul* apparently alludes to, and confirms the Opinion of our Ancestors, which he had imbibed before his Conversion; and intimates that *Jesus*, whom he took for the *Messiah*, was working a Redemption of his Church after the Manner of the Deliverance of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*. And so did your Fathers understand these Words of *Paul*, and accordingly many of them labour'd to shew the Similitude between the *Israelitish* and *Christian* Redemption, in order to the Conversion of the *Jews*. But they, it seems, labour'd in vain, shewing no tolerable nor visible Likeness of this sort between *Jesus* and *Moses*; and therefore our Nation to this Day continues in Disbelief of *Jesus*'s Messiahship. However, we have not so pertinaciously rejected *Jesus*'s Messiahship, as not to give you Leave to resume the old Argument of it, from his Likeness to *Moses* in all

things. If your *Priests* can now show a Likeness between them; if they can at this Day prove that *Jesus* wrought the like Miracles and Wonders (tho' in a figurative and allegorical Sense) for the Redemption of his Church from *Roman* Servitude, as *Moses* did for the Deliverance of *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, we will grant him to be the *Messiah*, and will believe in him. But as we despair of such a Proof, so we reasonably persist in our Disbelief of his Messiahship. Your *Divines* indeed, because of the foresaid Prophecy in *Deuteronomy*, do talk of a Likeness between *Moses* and *Jesus*; but it is not at all agreeable to the Sentiments of *your* Fathers, or the Expectations of *our* Ancestors concerning the *Messiah*'s Similitude to *Moses*. They tell us, that *Jesus* and *Moses* were alike, because both wrought Miracles; but this will not do, till they prove a Likeness between their Miracles, as to Number, Nature, Use and Circumstance. The Miracles that the *Messiah* is to work, and which are to prove his Messiahship, must be of a similar Nature, and to the like Purpose that *Moses*'s were in *Egypt*, as *our* Ancestors asserted, and *your* Fathers granted: But since no such Similitude is shown to be between them, we disown *Jesus*'s Messiahship, and appeal to the

Reason and Understanding of all indifferent Judges in the Controversy, whether we are not in the right on't for so doing."

Thus, Sir, for the Use of your *Clergy*, have I form'd an Objection against *Jesus*'s Messiahship, an Objection that is founded on the concurrent Opinions of *our* Ancestors and of *your* Fathers: And I shall with some Longings and Impatience wait till I hear what they have to say to it. The Objection, in my Opinion, absolutely destroys *Jesus*'s Pretences to the Messiahship, unless his *Priests*, by way of Answer to it, can prove the foresaid Similitude between him and *Moses*; between the Miracles of the One and the Miracles of the Other; between the Deliverance of the *Jewish* and the Redemption of the *Christian* Church, out of an *Egypt*.

I am thinking what your *Clergy* can say to the Objection. Will they deny, that it was the Opinion of both *your* Fathers and of *our* Ancestors, that there ought to be such a Similitude between the *Messiah* and *Moses*, as is before describ'd? That they can't do, because of the innumerable Testimonies to be produced out of them to confirm it. Will they then say, that it was a false and erroneous Opinion, which both ancient Jews and Fathers entertain'd concerning

the *Messiah*? This surely they will not do; because of the Consequence, which charges the Apostle *Paul* himself (in the above-cited Place) and the primitive Christians, with the grossest Error and Mistake concerning *Jesus* and his Messiahship; and yet I can't think they will ever give into the joint Opinion aforesaid of both *Jews* and Fathers; because of the Impossibility of proving *Jesus* to be like *Moses in all Things*, according to the literal Sense of the Law, which they adhere to; and because of the Improbability of doing it, in an allegorical Sense, after the Way of their Fathers, or, in all this Time surely, the Matter must have been made out, to the Satisfaction and Conversion of our Nation.

I long, I tell you, to hear what your Christian *Priesthood* will say to the Objection, which surely they will not let slip, without their Remarks and Observations upon it, any more than my Objections against the literal Story of some of *Jesus*'s Miracles. And this is your and my Comfort, that if you publish this present Objection against *Jesus*'s Messiahship, the *Clergy* can't account it a ludicrous, profane, and blasphemous one (as they did my others) and so bring you again under Prosecution for it: No, it is a plain,

serious, and reasonable Objection, founded on ancient Jewish and Ecclesiastical Authority; and a pertinent, solid, and rational Answer is expected to it.

Now the Controversy about *Jesus*'s Messiahship is thus far revived and commenced, let us, in God's Name, go on with it, till we come to a final Determination, either in the Demonstration, or Confutation of it. Your *Clergy*, can't, I think, for Shame, any more interrupt the free Course of the Controversy, which will make us Jews secretly insult and triumph over them; and not only confirm us in our Unbelief of *Jesus*'s Messiahship, but will occasion others to desert their Faith in him.

It's a strange thing to consider how your Priesthood have, in these latter Ages, managed the Controversy between Jews and Christians, all by themselves, furiously disputing against Adversaries, whom they will not allow with Impunity to speak in their own Cause: So do they make God, who is to decide the Controversy, like an unjust and partial Judge, that will hear only the Pleadings and Evidence on one Side of the Question.

But your *Clergy* will say, that in their Writings against the Jews, they

make Objections for us as well as Answers for themselves, and that's sufficient. Not so, say I, unless their Objections were as good and strong as we can make for our selves. But however, if your *Divines* so please, I will thus agree the Matter with them, *viz.* That they alone shall make Objections for us, if they'll let us alone to make Answers for them, which is most just and equal; and then the World shall behold the most pleasant and comical *Farce* of a Controversy, they ever were entertain'd with.

I remember, that in my Letter, you published, against *Jesus*'s Resurrection, I promised the Controversy between the *Jews* and *Christians*, by my Consent, should turn on that Miracle. Your *Clergy*, one or other of them, have answer'd that *Letter*; and so might expect to hear of my Conversion, if I had nothing to reply to them. My Reply you durst not publish, for fear of worldly Tribulation, and so I am free from that Promise. But now that you have fortunately given me an Occasion to make the more proper and substantial Objection against *Jesus*'s Messiahship, herein contain'd, I hope it will be freely and fully debated and consider'd to the Determination of the Controversy between us. So wishing you Health

and Happiness, I am *Yours*,

N. N.

So ends the Letter of my good old Friend, the Jewish *Rabbi*, which was a most seasonable and acceptable Present, in as much as the Objection, contain'd in it, will open a fair Way for me to prove, that the Stories of *Jesus*'s Miracles, as recorded in the Evangelists, are and ought to be allegorically understood, and will certainly receive such a mystical Accomplishment, as I, by the Help of the Fathers, have conceived of them. The *Bishop* of *St. David*'s, and my other Adversaries, may not, in all Probability, be aware of this Use to be made of the foresaid Objection; and I don't expect that on a sudden they should; but if they'll favour me with, what otherwise I'll endeavour to force them to, their Opinion and Debates about the foresaid Objection against *Jesus*'s Messiahship, they shall soon discern this Use and Consequence of it, that *Jesus*'s Miracles are not *literally* but *allegorically* to be understood, and will accordingly receive an Accomplishment.

I trust then, that the *Bishop* of *St. David*'s, who is principally concern'd, will, without more Importunity, favour me with his Opinion on the foregoing *Jewish* Objection, which may be done in a small Compass of Paper, either in *Print*, or in an *Epistle*.

I expect he should tell me plainly and expressly, whether it was really the joint Opinion of the ancient *Jews* and Fathers of the Church, as is affected in the Objection, that the *Messiah* was to be a Prophet like *Moses* in all things, in the whole History of his Life, and particularly with regard to the miraculous Deliverance of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*. If the *Bishop*

should, what I humbly conceive he will not, deny that it was the joint Opinion of both *Jews* and Fathers, as is before represented in the Objection, and should pretend to urge Reasons and Authorities, which he will hardly find, why such a Likeness and Agreement between the *Messiah* and *Moses* ought not to be look'd for; then my *Rabbi* and I will confirm the joint Opinion aforesaid, with Citations, almost innumerable out of the *Jews* and Fathers, till the *Bishop* shall yield to the Number and Clearness of them.

If the *Bishop* should own, what I am almost persuaded he will, that it was the joint Opinion of Fathers and *Jews*, that there ought to be such a Similitude and Harmony between the *Messiah* and *Moses*, as is represented above; but should say, that it was an erroneous and false Opinion, which the old Cabalistical *Jews*, by chance, and unfortunately took up; and which the Fathers, even the Apostle himself, unwarily and unhappily run into, complying with an Opinion of the *Jews* about the *Messiah*, without Consideration of the Weakness of it; then I, with a little of my *Rabbi*'s Help, will further prove the Truth and Certainty of the said Opinion, and demonstrate, that He can be no true Messiah, who in the History of himself and of his Church does not exactly, *to a tittle*, correspond to the History of *Moses* and of his People.

But if the *Bishop* should, what I am willing to hope he will, ingenuously confess, there ought to be such an Agreement and Likeness between *Moses* and the *Messiah* as is signified in the Objection, then he and I will go heartily to Work, and for the Honour of *Jesus*, whom we believe to be the *Messiah*, will absolutely demonstrate the Similitude, there is between him

and *Moses in all Things*. And this, by the by, in the Opinion of our Fathers, is the *ONLY* Way to prove *Jesus*'s Messiahship, *viz.* by his Resemblance to *Moses*, and by his Accomplishment of the Mosaick Types and Prophecy concerning him, who, upon his own Word, came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets *to a Tittle*.

If the *Bishop* and I should be so fortunate, and I trust in God we shall, as to prove a most apparent and manifest Likeness between *Jesus* and *Moses*, even such a Likeness as my *Rabbi* above demands, then shall we stop his Mouth, and soon pave a certain Way (which will be vast Honour to the *Bishop*) for the Conversion of the *Jews*.

I don't despair of the *Bishop*'s joint Labours and Endeavours with mine to so great and good a Work (for I can't think in my Heart, that he'll otherwise wrangle about the Objection above) so (if the *Bishop* pleases) we'll begin this Work with a Demonstration of the Likeness there is between the Redemption of the *Christian* Church, and the Deliverance of the *Israelitish* out of *Egypt*. Not only St. *Augustin*[395] hints that they who would show a Likeness between *Jesus* and *Moses* ought to begin here; but thereby we shall humour my *Rabbi* in his Objection, who calls for (upon the concurrent Testimonies of *Jews* and Fathers) a Proof of such a Likeness between the Redemptions of the two Churches, or he shall think it reasonable still to persist in his Disbelief of *Jesus*'s Messiahship.

And if the *Bishop* and I should be so happy as to shew in an apparent Manner, this Similitude between the Redemption of the Jewish and Christian Church out of *Egypt*, then meeting with Success in our

Studies, will we proceed further, and illustrate other Prophecies of succeeding Times of the Church; for I will not part with the *Bishop*, till he is able to travel by himself, in his Contemplations on the Law and the Prophets, and to behold, what with an ordinary *Telescope* at the Eyes of his Understanding he may discern, and show to his Episcopal Brethren, *Christ* spiritually sitting and coming on the Clouds of the *Letter* to the same Purposes that the old Jews, Fathers and Apostles say he is to come, *viz.* To open and illustrate the Parables and Ænigma's of the Scriptures, to restore Prophecy, to shew us God Face to Face; and to raise All from a spiritual Death to Life again. And blessed are all those, who love and desire such his Appearance.

In my *Third Discourse* on *Miracles*, I happen'd to speak of *Christ*'s second and spiritual Advent on the Clouds of the Law and Prophets; and to say "that the common Notion of his Coming on ærial Clouds for the Resurrection of dead Bodies, *&c.* is the most senseless and unphilosophical, that ever was taught to Mankind;" which gave Offence to my *Bishop*, who animadverted upon me for it; but if he ever get Sight, which I don't question, of *Christ*'s Coming on the metaphorical Clouds of Prophecy, he'll not only be of my Mind here, but will be sensible with me, that all or most of our systematical Divinity, that is built on the *Letter* of the Scriptures, is false and groundless; and of that ill Tendency to the Corruption of Mens Morals, that it is not so much a Wonder, that wise, good, and thinking *Gentlemen* are betaking themselves to Natural Religion, as it is, that there are any Believers of Christianity, upon the *Literal Scheme*, left among us. If it had not been *Force*, more than *Reason*, that has hitherto kept Mankind in their Christian Faith; or if Liberty had been indulg'd them

to consider the Absurdities of the *Letter* of the Scriptures, they would have run ere now, by Shoals, into Infidelity: But the allegorical Interpretation (which the Cabalistical *Jews*[396] say, will convert *Atheists*) will reduce Mankind to the Belief of the inspired Authority of the Scriptures, by shewing them the perfect *Reason*, the divine *Wisdom*, and resplendent *Truth* of them; otherwise call'd the Messiah, the χρισμα, the Spirit, or the *Christ* of them, than *whom*, or than *which* nothing can be more desired by Philosophers, to come for the spiritual Renovation, Restoration, Resurrection and Illumination of Man; *consequently* and implicitly for the Work of those mystical Miracles, of which those wrought by *Christ* in the Flesh are but Types and Figures. Whether the *Bishop* of *St. David*'s be already apprised of this Consequence, I can't tell; but if he rub his Intellects but a little, he must needs apprehend the Consequence of the foresaid spiritual Advent of *Christ thus* far "That Ministers of the Letter then are certainly to be turn'd out of the Church: "That the Woman of the Church then will be cured of her Infirmity at the Spirit of Prophesy: "That the Eyes of Mankind, like the blind Man's, will be then open'd to see, what he has hitherto been dark about, the Mystery of the Providence of God in all Ages. And so of the mystical Accomplishment of the other Miracles, with a little Application of Thought, may he discern the Consequence. And when he does so, then he will see too, what sort of a Christian I am, whom our *Ecclesiasticks* have falsely accused, and unjustly persecuted for Impiety, Profaneness, Blasphemy and Infidelity, only because I have written against the *Letter* of *Jesus*'s Miracles, in order to turn Mens Heads to the Consideration of their mystical Accomplishment at *Christ*'s second spiritual

and glorious Advent on the Clouds of the Law and the Prophets.

I have indeed written against the *literal* Stories of *Jesus*'s Miracles, which I still nauseate and abominate the Confinement of Mens Thoughts to it; but if our *Clergy* would but a little bear with me, they shall see, I *alone* do Honour to their literal Stories, by making them beautiful Emblems of future and more wonderful Operations. I have indeed call'd *Jesus* an Impostor, Juggler, Fortune teller (and what not?) by way of Objection against the *Letter* of his Miracles; but I *alone* shall do him Honour, in those very Miracles, which he wrought in the Flesh, by proving him to be the Wisdom, as well as Power of God, and that *God was in him of a Truth*, and endued him with a divine Prescience of Futurities, or he could not then have wrought such curious and admirable Models and Prefigurations of his mysterious Works at his *second* Advent.

Whether the *Bishop* of *St. David*'s, and others, can as yet certainly discern the foresaid Consequence of Christ's mystical Accomplishment of his Miracles upon his spiritual Advent, I can't guess; but if they'll favour me with their Opinion on my *Rabbi*'s Objection above, which will lead us to the allegorical Interpretation of the Law, they shall soon clearly see it.

And now I would have the *Bishop* of *St. David*'s to compare *this Part* of my *Defence* with the *Third Chapter* of his *Vindication*, which treats *on the Practice of the Fathers in interpreting the Scriptures in a mystical and allegorical Method*, and consider whether He or I write the most like a Christian of an orthodox and primitive Faith and Practice. The *Bishop* says[397]

"That it is certain, that without such Assistance (*of the Spirit*) as St. *Paul* enjoy'd, the mystical Expositions of the Scripture by *Origen* and other Fathers, tho' made in Imitation of St. *Paul*, have no such Authority as that of St. *Paul* stampt on them." What, in the Name of Wonder, does the *Bishop* here mean? Tho' St. *Paul* has not allegoriz'd the whole Law, but only some few Parts; yet he expressly says, often enough, that the whole is a *Figure* and *Shadow* of Things to come under *Christ*; and our Saviour himself, as the Fathers understood him, intimates often, that all Things that were written in the Law and the Prophets, are Types and Prophecy of him, and that he came to fulfil them *to a Tittle*. Is not here Authority enough for the Fathers to allegorize the whole Law and the Prophets, in order to shew the Agreement between the Type and Antitype; between the Shadow and the Substance; between the Figure and the Thing figured; and between the Prophecy and its Accomplishment. And whether the Fathers, in their allegorical Expositions, rightly or not, hit off the Sense of the Prophecy; (for it must be confess'd they variously allegorized *this* and *that* Passage of Scripture) yet it was *their* and *our* Duty and Office, from the Words of *Christ*, and the Practice of the Apostle, to keep on in the allegorical Method, till an Harmony between the Prophecy and its Accomplishment was made most clear.

The *Bishop* says in this his *Third Chapter* of his *Vindication*, "That the Fathers and I have abusively cited this Passage of St. *Paul*, *The Letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth Life*, in Justification of our mystical Expositions;" whereupon the *Bishop* gave us a large Explication out of his own Head, on that whole Verse; which (because of the Shallowness of my own Pate, or the Confusion of the Bishop's) I don't

understand, and much question, whether the *Bishop* understands himself. However, I will here paraphrastically give my *Readers* the easy, plain, and intelligible Sense of the Fathers and my self on that whole Verse[398] thus, *Who hath made us able Ministers of the New Testament, not of the Letter* [that is, not of the literal Sense of the Law and the Prophets, which is the *Old* Testament] *but of the Spirit*, [that is, of the spiritual Sense of the Law and the Prophets, which is the *New* Testament] *for* [as the Testimony of *Jesus*, according to St. *John*, is the Spirit of Prophecy, so] *the Letter* [that is, the literal Sense of the Law and Prophets] *killeth* [that is, nulls the Testimony of *Jesus* which is in them] *but the Spirit* [that is, the spiritual Sense of the Law and Prophets] *giveth Life* [to their prophetical Testimony.] This is most certainly the Sense of the Fathers on this Text; and I believe the *Bishop* will not gainsay it, tho' he may dislike it. Hence the Fathers, when they spoke *properly* and not *vulgarly*, call'd the spiritual Sense of the Law and the Prophets, the[399] *New Testament*, and asserted that there was or would be such an Agreement between the *Old* and *New* Testament; that is, between the Testament of the *Letter*, and the Testament of the *Spirit* of the Scriptures, as that there would not be[400] one Tittle in the *one*, that would not be consonantly fulfilled in the *other*; and so far as I already apprehend this Harmony between these two Testaments, of the *Letter*, and of the *Spirit*, I must needs say with *Origen*[401] that it's *pleasant and ravishing to behold and contemplate it*, and hope in a short time to make the Bishop of St. *David*'s a Partaker of the same Pleasure. The same right Notion had the Fathers of the *Gospel* of *Christ*, which they have of the *New Testament*. *Vulgarly* speaking, the Writings of the Evangelists, and of the Apostles, were

call'd the *Gospel* of *Christ*: But properly speaking, Christ's *spiritual Accomplishment* of the Law was the *Gospel*: Hence is the Meaning of their frequent saying, "That under the Law the Gospel was vail'd, and under the Gospel the Law was reveal'd." Hence they said, "That those Men had nothing of the *Gospel*, who understood not the Spirit of the *Law*." Hence they said, "The Gospel was hid to those, who had the Veil of the *Letter* upon their Hearts in reading of the Old Testament." Hence it was too, that they said, "That the Gospel was but *in Part*, and that too in a very *little Part*, reveal'd at *Christ*'s first Coming; the full Revelation of it being reserv'd for his second and more glorious Advent, which the World is now in great Want of, for the curing of their spiritual *Blindness*, *Deafness*, and *Lameness*; that is, for the Correction of their gross Ignorance and Errors in Religion; for the Healing of their Divisions; for the Manifestation of Truth; for the Conversion of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; and for the Reformation of the Manners of Mankind.

Dear *Jesu*, to what a sad Purpose have our Hired Priesthood and *Ministers* of the *Letter*, of all Denominations, hitherto studied and preach'd, even till they have lost the true, primitive, and Apostolical Notion of "the *Gospel*; "of *Revelation*; and "of the *New Testament*!

The Bishop of *London* has of late publish'd two *Pastoral Letters* on the Certainty, Necessity, and Use of Revelation, against *Infidels*, particularly against my self, whom he (God help his Understanding!) takes for a Favourer of Infidelity: And to do the *Man* Justice, I believe he's sincere, and laments at his Heart the Unbelief of this Age: But however, when the true *Gospel*, otherwise call'd the *Revelation* of the

Law and the Prophets, or the *New Testament* (which will be fatal to the Ministry of the Letter, and an hired Priesthood) shall be republished, restored, and repreach'd, I dare say, without Censoriousness, or pretending to a prophetick Spirit, that He, of all the Inhabitants of *London* and *Westminster*, will be the greatest Enemy to it; and for no other Reason than his own, "because of his Unwillingness to part with his worldly Interests, which will induce him to embrace any Arguments against it, and to cherish any Doubts and Scruples concerning it."

Whether the Bishop of St. *David*'s intends to proceed in this Controversy against me, as he has begun, I know not. He promised us his *Second Volume* last Winter, but has adjourn'd the Publication of it to the next, and I am apt to think he'll defer it to *latter Lammas*: For being, I suppose, sensible, that his *First Volume* is built on the false Bottom of my supposed Infidelity, he'll hardly trouble the World with another of that kind. But however, I'll not release him out of the Controversy. I shall insist upon his letting me know his Opinion on my *Rabbi*'s Objection against *Jesus*'s Messiahship, herein contain'd, which if he'll favour me with, I'll forgive him all the Virulence, and pass by all the Impertinence (to say no worse) of his *Vindication*: Otherwise I shall be tempted to do an unpleasant Work to myself, as well as an ungrateful one to him; that is, further to expostulate with him for his false Accusations, Misrepresentations, and other ill Usage of me.

When I review my *Discourses* on *Miracles*, and consider not only their visible Tendency to the Proof of *Jesus*'s Messiahship, but my solemn Declarations of the Belief of Christianity; I wonder that such a Number of Writers against me should all of them

(excepting Mr. *Laurence*[402] whom I here thank and praise for his Ingenuity) take me for an Infidel. I don't indeed much wonder, that the inferior Tribe of *Levi* (such is their egregious Ignorance!) should take me for one; but that such presumed great *Scholars*, as are the Bishops of *London* and St. *David*'s, should so mistake me, is astonishing. And I am not as yet fully satisfied, whether it be their *Ignorance* or their *Malice*, thus to accuse me of Infidelity: If it was really *Ignorance* in them, they'll soon be convinced of their Error; and then, like good Christians, they'll make me Satisfaction for the Injuries done me. But if it was *Malice*, and in Revenge on me for writing so much against an *Hired-Priesthood*, then they'll go on, and *die hard*, without any Remorse for the Troubles, Sufferings and Expences they have put me to.

As I am really a Christian, and shall, by God's Help, demonstrate the Messiahship of *Jesus*, to which my *Discourses* on his *Miracles* were subservient; so I will make bold to tell the *Bishops* concern'd, that I am as certainly persecuted, as ever any Christian was since the Days of the Apostles: And they will do well to consider, whether they have not everlastingly disgraced themselves, and done some Dishonour to the best Civil Administration, that ever Nation was bless'd with, by engaging them in the Persecution of the most sincere Advocate for the Truth of Christianity, that ever set Pen to Paper.

I am so far from being an Infidel, that, notwithstanding my *Discourses* on *Miracles*, I am an implicit Believer, and most devout Admirer of Doctrines, Historical Facts, and Traditions of the primitive Church, adhering to many Notions of the Fathers, besides their allegorical Scheme (as will be seen in the Sequel of this Controversy) which the

Divines of these last Ages have rejected, as so many Weaknesses and Mistakes in them. And when I come more fully to open my Mind, it will be well if the *Clergy* don't change their *Note* about me; and instead of accusing me of Infidelity, ridicule me for too much Credulity, and even Superstition; or I would not espouse *such* and *such* Doctrines and Traditions, which all learned and Protestant *Criticks* have discarded. Some of these old Notions I'll keep to myself, for fear of being over-much laught at by the *Clergy* for them, but others upon Occasion I will divulge; and don't care if I tell my *Readers* here one of them, thus:

"The Fathers intimate that *Ministers* of the *Letter* are Worshippers of the Apocalyptical *Beast*, or *Anti-Christ*; and that *that Beast* of a God, old *Baal*, was a Type of *Anti Christ*." This their Opinion I found hard to digest; but if there be any Truth in it, it can't be unlawful to jest a little with his Priests, or to ridicule their nonsensical, foolish and absurd Doctrines, founded on the *Letter*.

But let my Theological Notions and Speculations be of what kind soever; what Harm can my Arguings for them do to the Community? None at all. If they are not of God, they will come to nought sooner and better than by a Persecution of me for them. But if they are of God, they will stand and prevail against all Opposition of the *Clergy*, who will lose their Reputation, if they take any other Measures, than what Reason and Religion do allow of, to suppress them.

My earnest Request then to the *Clergy* is, that under the Debate I am like to have with them, they would be pleased to keep their Temper; or wise and

impartial By-standers will say, that it's more for their Interests than the Truth, that they are zealous and furious.

I am not afraid of another Prosecution at Law, because I already have, or soon shall cut off all Pretences to it, by clearing myself of all Suspicions of Infidelity; but, for all that, I am more apprehensive of the Rage and Indignation of the *Clergy*, than if I had been a downright *Atheist*. No *Atheist* or *Deist* is or can be of that dangerous Consequence to the modern Priesthood, as the Christian Allegorist. Against the Growth of Deism and Atheism, the *Clergy* may be able for some time to maintain their Ground; but upon the Revival of the *Ministry* of the *Spirit* of the Law and the Prophets, they can't stand long. And if I should demonstrate, what I have undertaken, the Certainty of the allegorical Scheme, and *Jesus*'s Messiahship upon it; tho' *Jews* and *Infidels* then will be ready to rejoice, yet Ministers of the Letter, notwithstanding their pretended Love to, and Faith in *Jesus*, will be enraged; and it will be well, if I don't feel the Weight of their Displeasure and Resentment. If that foolish old *Dotard*, Mr. *Ayscough*[403] the *Rector* of St. *Olave*'s, *Southwark*, could find in his Heart to instigate the Mob to *drag me through the Streets, and throw me into some Repository of Filth and Nastiness*, what may I not dread from young hot-headed *Priests*, upon the Performance of what is here undertaken? But I hope our pious and good *Bishops*, notwithstanding the Danger of their *Thousands* a Year, will be my Safeguard.

After all, it is a sad and melancholick Consideration, that the Understandings of Mankind, especially of the Wise, Thinking and Philosophical Part of them, should be enslaved to the Interests of Ecclesiastical

Clodpates, who for the sake of *Mammon* more than *Truth*, are furious and turbulent; otherwise any Opinions in Religion might be profess'd, consistently with the Peace of the Publick; and any Speculations publish'd without Animosities and Molestations.

What Course can be taken with the *Clergy*, to persuade them to Patience and Forbearance, whilst I prove them to be the most stupid Sect of Philosophers, who have amongst them the fewest Rudiments of true Philosophy, and even of the Gospel, of any Sect the World ever knew? It's said, there is nothing so absurd, which some of the old Philosophers have not held; but there is nothing, for Absurdity, equal to this Belief, that the *Bible*, for its literal Story, is the Word of God, and given by Inspiration of him.

The *Bishop* of *St. David*'s complains[404] of my unmannerly Behaviour towards my Ecclesiastical Superiors; and I must confess, I am no body at that low and *Right Reverend* Bow, that he is fam'd for, or I might have put in for a *Bishoprick* before now: But if our *Bishops* and *Clergy* will be pleased to keep their Temper, till I get to the End of this Controversy, I'll pass such Compliments upon them for their good Humour and Learning too, if they deserve it, as they hardly ever met with.

To conclude, I have written as plainly and intelligibly as I can, in this *Part* of my *Defence*. If any one shall complain of Obscurity any where, I will, upon Intimation, endeavour to illustrate it. I have, in some Places, asserted Things upon the Authority of the Fathers, without producing their Testimonies, in Proof of them; but if any question, whether their Testimonies can be here or there urg'd, they shall,

upon a proper Occasion, have Satisfaction given them. The Reason why I have sometimes omitted the Testimonies of the Fathers, where they might be look'd for, is because I study Brevity, intending never to publish at once a larger *Volume* than this present. And no body need question my Testimonies to be ready at Hand; because I have neither the Courage nor Confidence (like many others) to vent any new Doctrines out of my own Head. My Talent is only to illustrate what the Fathers have asserted; and tho' some would account me a Falsifier and Misrepresenter of primitive Authorities, my honest Endeavours shall be to turn the Hearts of our *Clergy*, who are like Children in Understanding, to the Fathers. I shall end all *seriously*, *gravely*, *calmly* and *sedately*, with the same Words that I began my *First Discourse* on *Miracles* with, saying, "If ever there was a useful Controversy started or revived in this Age of the Church, it is this about the Messiahship of the Holy *Jesus*, which the *Discourse of the Grounds*, &c. has of late rais'd. I believe this Controversy will end in the absolute Demonstration of *Jesus*'s Messiahship from Prophecy, which is the only Way to prove him to be the Messiah, that great Prophet expected by the *Jews*, and promised under the old Testament." And whether Bishop *Smalbroke* or Mr. *Stackhouse* will believe me, or not, I do now solemnly declare, that what I have written in my *Discourses*, or shall write in these *Defences*, is with a View to, what I am persuaded I shall effect, the absolute Demonstration of the Messiahship of the Holy *Jesus*, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.

BOOKS written by Mr. Woolston, *and sold by him next Door to the* Star *in* Aldermanbury, *and by the Booksellers of* London *and* Westminster.

I. The old Apology reviv'd, *&c.*

II. Dissertatio de Pontii Pilati Epistola ad Tiberium circa Res Jesu Christi gestas.

III. Origenis Adamantii Epistolæ duæ circa Fidem vere orthodoxam & Scripturarum Interpretationem.

IV. The exact Fitness of the Time of Christ's Advent, demonstrated by Reason, against the Objections of the old Gentiles, and modern Unbelievers.

V. Four Free-Gifts to the *Clergy*, or Challenges to a Dispute on this Question, whether the Hireling Priests of this Age, who are all Ministers of the Letter, be not Worshippers of the Apocalyptical Beast, and Ministers of Anti-Christ.

VI. An Answer to the said Four Free-Gifts.

VII. Two Letters to Dr. *Bennet*, on this Question, Whether the People call'd *Quakers*, do not the nearest of any other Sect in Religion, resemble the primitive Christians in Principle and Practice.

VIII. An Answer to the said two Letters.

IX. The Moderator between an Infidel and an Apostate: Or, the Controversy between the *Grounds* and his ecclesiastical Opponents, set in a clear Light,

&c.

X. Two Supplements to the Moderator, *&c.*

XI. A Defence of the Miracle of the *Thundering Legion*, against a Dissertation of *Walter Moyle* Esq.

XII. Six Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour.

XIII. Two Defences of the said Discourses.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Page 44.

[2] Page 53.

[3] Universam porro Sacram Scripturam tam Novi quam Veteris Testamenti ad allegoricum sensum esse sumendam, admonet nos vel illud, Aperiam os meum in Parabolis. *In Prasat. ad Form. Spirit. Intell.*

[4] Si quidem Symbola quædam erant quæ tunc gerebantur eorum, quæ Jesu virtute semper perficiuntur. *In Mat.* C. xv.

[5] Omnis languor & omnis Infirmitas quam sanavit salvator tunc in Populo referuntur ad Infirmitates spirituales

Animarum, &c. *In* Mat. *C.* xvii.

[6] Christi Gesta aliud portendunt. *In* Mat. *C.* xii. Evangelicis gestis est interior Sensus, *C.* xiv. Hæc licet in præsens gesta sunt, quid tamen in futurum significent contuendum est, *C.* x. Peragunt formam futuri gesta præsentia, *C.* xxi.

[7] Quæ a Jesu facta sunt, alicujus significantia erant. *Serm.* 77.

[8] Omne quod fecit Jesus, Sacramenta sunt. *Homil.* 31. *in* Marc. 9.

[9] Si enim temporalis erat ab eo Utilitas, nihil grande præstitit iis, qui ab eo curati sunt, *L. V.* C. 12. *S.* 6.

[10] Contra Celsum, *L.* 11.

[11] Cœcum curavit, magnum quidem est, quod fecit, sed nisi quotidie fiat, quod olim factum, nobis quidem magnum esse cessavit. *Homil.* 30. *in* Marc. 9.

[12] Si humano captu & ingenio consideremus Jesum facientem, & quod ad potestatem non magnum aliquid fecit, & quod ad benignitatem, parvum fecit. *In* Johan. *Cap.* v. *Tract.* 17.

[13] Etsi attestabantur Miracula, non defuissent (sicut & nunc mussitant) qui magicæ potentiæ cuncta illa

tribuerent. *Cont. Faust. L.* XII. *C.* 45.

[14] *Vid.* Sanctum *Augustinum* de *Anti-christo*.

[15] 1 *Cor.* C. xii.

[16] Atque illud ad Rem maxime partineat, ne decipiamur tendentes ad Contemplationem Veritatis—— Arbitrantes ibi esse invisibilem sapientiam, ubi Miraculum visibile viderimus. *In Serm. Dom. in monte, Lib.* 2. *Sect.* 84.

[17] Interim completur & Isaiæ Prophetia non tantum in corporalibus, verum etiam in spiritualibus, *Origen. In Matt. Cap.* xv. Aperientur igitur Oculi cæcorum, aures surdorum audient, nam qui quondam divinis sermonibus rejectis mysticam Sanctorum Institutionem recipere non studuerunt, libenter eam admittent. St. *Cyril in* Loc. Is. *Vide & Sanctum Hieronymum in* Loc. Isai.

[18] Et nunc majores sanitates operatur, propter quas non est dedignatus tunc exhibere illas minores. *In Serm.* 88.

[19] In quibus Spiritualibus maxime Christi Persona eminet. *August. Quest. 2. in Lucan.*

[20] Modo Caro cæca non aperit oculos miraculo Domini, sed cor cæcum aperit oculos Sermoni

Domini. Modo non resurgit mortale cadaver, sed resurgit anima quæ mortua jucebat in vivo Cadavere, *&c. August. Serm.* 88. *S.* 3.

[21] Historia Scripturæ interdum interferit quædam vel minus gesta, vel quæ omnino geri non possunt, interdum quæ possunt geri, nec tamen gesta sunt. *De Principiis*, Lib. 4.

[22] Multa sunt, quæ non sinunt nos simplici sensu dicta evangelica suscipere. Interpositis enim non nullis Rebus quæ ex Natura humani sensus sibi contraria sunt; Rationem quærere cælestis Intelligentiæ admonemur. *In Matt. L.* xx. *S.* 2.

[23] Evangelica Sacramenta in Christi factis signata omnibus non patent, & ea nonnulli minus diligenter interpretando asserunt plerumque pro salute Perniciem, & pro Cognitione Veritatis Errorem, *&c. De Quæst. Divers. Quest.* 84.

[24] *Matt.* xxi. *Mark* xi. *Luke* xix. *John* ii.

[25] In Comment. in *Matth.* xxi.

[26] Porro cui curæ est accuratior Inquisitio considerabit, an juxta dignitatem præsentis Vitæ erat, ut Jesus rem talem auderet facere, extrudere videlicet Mercatorum Multitudinem, qui ad Diem festum

ascenderant, distributuri boves ditioribus, & tanto populo oves mactandas per domos familiarium, quæ multorum millium complerent numerum; atque eos qui in rebus talibus gloriantes producturi erant in medio Columbas, quas multi emptori erant, ceu in Conventu celeberrimo convivaturi. Considerabit hic etiam, an Nummulariorum erat non accusare Jesum contumeliose propter suas ipsorum effusas pecunias & mensas subversas. Quis autem flagello e funiculis verberatus & expulsus ab eo qui penes eos habebatur vilis, hunc adortus non inclamasset totis viribus sese ulciscens? Cum præsertim haberet tantam multitudinem eorum, qui sibi æque contumeliam fieri credebant, faventem sibi adversum Jesum? Insuper consideremus, Dei filium funiculos sumentem; sibique flagellum tenentem ad extrudendum e templo, annon repræsentet Præter audaciam & temeritatem, inordinatum etiam quiddam? In *Johan.* Tom. XI.

[27] Præfiguratio futurorum dictis præsentibus continetur. *In Matt.* xxi.

[28] Admomemur altius Verborum Virtutes in istius modi significationibus contuendas, *ibid.*

[29] In Cathedra est sacerdotii sedes;

& eorum qui Spiritus sancti Donum venale habent, Cathedras evertet, *ibid.*

[30] Non habebant Judæi quod venire possent, neque erat quod emere quis posset, *ibid.*

[31] Cathedra autem Vendentium Columbas cur everterit? Secundum Litteram non intelligo. Admonet Typo ejectorum de Templo hujusmodi Mercatorum, in Ecclesia Dei Consortium eos habere non posse, qui sancti Spiritus Gratiam nundinentur. *In Loc. Luc.*

[32] Juxta simplicem Intelligentiam —quod ponitus absurdum—cæterum secundum Mysticos In tellectus Jesus ingreditur Templum Patris & ejicit omnes Episcopos, Presbyteros, & Diaconos, *&c. In Loc. Mat.*

[33] Faciet Dominus Flagellum de Scripturarum Textuum Testimoniis. *In Zechar.* C. xiv.

[34] Non magnum Peccatum, si hoc vendebant in Templo, quod emebatur, ut offerretur in Templo. *In Loc. Johan.*

[35] Qui sunt tamen qui boves vendunt? ut in figura quæramus Mysterium facti, qui sunt qui Oves vendunt Columbas? ipsi sunt qui sua quærunt in Ecclesia, non quæ Jesu

Christi. *Ibid.*

[36] Vos enim fecistis Domum meum, Domum Negotiationis & speluncam Latronum, significant futuros in Ecclesia. *L.* II. *Evang. Quæst. Quast.* 48.

[37] Διδασκαλος ων, ου καταγγελλει λογον, ει μη κερδος εχει, και τουτου την τραπεζαν ανατρεπει ο Κυειος. *In Johan.* C. ii.

[38] *Chandler's* Vindication, *&c.* p. 145.

[39] Hoc facto longe aliud significabat Jesus, nec enim illum tantopere commovebat Templum illud mercimoniis Boum, Ovium, Hircorum & Columbarum profanatum; sed ostendere voluit Avaritiam & Quæstum sore capitalem Pestem Ecclesiæ, quam Templum, cujus Religio mox erat abolenda, figurabat—In nullum Hominum Genus acrius sæviit Jesus, sed hos ipse sibi servavit ejiciendos, cum videbitur. *In Loc. Matt.* xxi.

[40] *Vid.* Suicerum in Κολλυβυστης.

[41] Τραπεζα, apud Aristophanem est Pulpitum. *Vid.* Scapulam.

[42] *Matt.* viii. *Mark* v. *Luke* viii.

[43] *Luke* xiii. v. 27.

[44] *Spencer* de Legibus Hebræ, *p.*

117.

[45] *Lib.* IV. De Principiis.

[46] Hanc habeant Causam, ut esset in rebus gerendis futuri plena meditatio. *In Loc. Matt.* In hoc Typica ratio servata est. *Ibid.*

[47] Significatæ sunt gentes quæ multis dæmonibus serviebant. *Augustin in Luc. Quest.* 13.

[48] Humanum genus ad Adventum Domini vexabatur furore dementi, rumpens vincula rationis. St. *Amb. in Loc. Luc.*

[49] Nudus quicunque tegumentum Naturæ suæ & Virtutis amisit. *Amb. Ibid.*

[50] In tumulis Sepulchrorum; quid enim aliud sunt Corpora perfidorum, nisi quædam defunctorum Sepulchra in quibus Dei verbum non habitat. *Ibid.*

[51] Videntes Dæmones non sibi jam locum in gentibus derelinqui, ut patiatur habitare se in Hæreticis deprecantur. *Hilar. in Loc. Matt.*

[52] Litera est Palea, & frequenter evenit, ut homines hujus sœculi mystica nescientes, simplici Scripturarum Lectione pascuntur. *Hieron. in* Isa. xi.

[53] *Matt.* xvii. *Mark* ix. *Luke* ix.

[54] 2 *Pet.* i. 16, 17, 18.

[55] Possunt infideles istam Vocem delatam de Cælo, per conjecturas humanas & illicitas Curiositates ad magicas Artes reserte. *In Serm.* xliii. *Sect.* 5.

[56] Neque enim Miracula propter Miracula faciebat, sed ut illa quæ faciebat, mira essent videntibus, vera essent intelligentibus. *In Serm.* xcviii. *Sect.* 3.

[57] Ἐλεγον την εξοδον αυτου ην εμελλε πληρουν, C. ix. V. 31.

[58] Regni cœlestis Honor prefiguratur. St. *Hilar. in Loc. Matt.* In Transfiguratione futura Regni Præmeditatio & Gloria demonstrata est. St. *Hierom. in Loc. Matt.*

[59] Αινιγματωδης παροδειξις της Βασιλειας, Anast. in Transfig. Dom. Υποδειγμα της δοξης εκεινης. St. *Chrysost. in Loc. Matt.*

[60] Sex millium scilicet Annorum Temporibus evolutis. St. *Hilar. in Loc. Matt.* Sic post Sex ætates Dominus a perfectis Famulis conspicietur. *Dionys. Alex. apud Damascen. in Orat. de Transfig.*

[61] Et Moses & Elias apparuerunt in Gloria, cum Jesu colloquentes, in quo ostenditur Legem & Prophetas, cum Evangeliis consonare & in eadem

Gloria spiritualis intelligentiæ refulgere. *Origen. in Epist. ad Rom.* c. 1.

[62] Montem ascendit ut te doceat, ne quæras eum nisi in Legis & Prophetarum montibus. *Origen in Cantic. Cantic. Hom.* 3.

[63] Per nubem tetram intellige opacitatem Legis. *Damascen. in Orat. de Transfigur.*

[64] Vestimenta candida Jesu sunt Sermones & Scripta Evangeliorum. *Origen in Loc. Matt.*

[65] Si quis Litteram sequitur, & deorsum est totus, hic non potest videre Jesum in veste candida; qui autem sequitur Sermonem Dei & ad montana, id est, excelsa Legis conscendit, isti Jesus commutatur —— Quamdiu Litteram sequimur occidentem, Moses & Elias cum Jesu non loquuntur; sin spiritualiter intelligimus, statim Moses & Elias veniunt, id est Lex & Prophetæ & colloquuatur cum Evangelio. *Johan. Hieros. Hom.* 32.

[66] *John* ii.

[67] *Matt.* C. xiv. and xv. *&c.*

[68] *Mark* ii. *Luke* v.

[69] *John* ix.

[70] *Mark* v.

[71] *Matt.* xxi. *Mark* xi.

[72] *Matt.* ii.

[73] Alia quam plurima his similia in Evangeliis inveniet, quicunque attentius legerit. *Origen. de Principiis*, lib. iv.

[74] Quæ Enarratio erit Evangelii sensibilis, nisi accommodetur ad intelligible & spirituale? Nulla sane, *Origen. is Præfat. ad Johan. Evang.*

[75] *See Archbishop* Wake's *Manuscript Letter to Mr.* Chandler, *which is handed about Town and Country*.

[76] Chandler's *Vindication*, &c. p. 81.

[77] Dominus noster ea quæ faciebat corporaliter, etiam spiritualiter volebat intelligi, *&c. August. Serm.* xcviii. *Sect.* 3.

[78] Quos in corporibus morbos sanavit Christus, hi in animabus existunt, & supernam ejus opem requirunt. *Johan. Nepos. Hieros.* Hom. LXI.

[79] *Matt. Ch.* ix. *Luke Ch.* viii. *Mark Ch.* v.

[80] Factum quidum est, &, ita ut narratur, impletum. *In Serm.* lxxvii. *Sect.* 7.

[81] *On Mat. Chap.* ix.

[82] *Matt. Ch.* ix. *v.* 21.

[83] Non autem Fimbria Jesu, sed ejus Cogitatio eam salvam fecit. *In Loc. Marci.*

[84] *Matt. Ch.* xiii. *v.* 58.

[85] In Locum *Matt.*

[86] Illa vero Mulier quæ Fluxum Sanguinis patiebatur, Ecclesiam figurabat ex Gentibus. St. *August. in Serm.* lxxvii. *Sect.* 8. Præparatur igitur Mulier, in cujus Typo universalis Ecclesia sub specie designetur. *Paschas. Ratbert. in Loc. Matt.*

[87] Hæc Mulier, i. e. Sancta Ecclesia de Gentibus congregata quæ lapsu Criminum deperibat Sancti *Ambrosii in Loc. Luc.* Ut Mulier, quæ fluxum sanguinis patiebatur, &c. ita omnis Anima percussa incurabili Vulnere Peccati, habens fontem pravarum Cogitationum, &c. *Macarii Ægypt. in Hom.* xx.

[88] Επιγαζες γαρ την φοινικην αμαρτιαν. *In Orat.* XL.

[89] Quæ est enim hæc Mulier nisi Ecclesia Gentium—Fluxum Sanguinis patiebatur, quia in suorum Peccatorum Sanguine versabatur; quia Sanguinum Rapina & Occisione nutriebatur. *In Dominic.* xxiv.

[90] Adversus Hæreses. *Lib.* I. *Cap.*

iii.

[91] *Revel. Chap.* xii. *v.* 6.

[92] Excellentes Verbi Prædicatores tanquam magni Medici.—*Sancti August. in Psal.* LXXXVII. *Sect.* 10.

[93] Per hos enim Medicos, Ariolos & Philosophos intelligere possumus, quorum persuasionibus cæteri credentes a fidei Veritate aberrantes ad Animæ Sanitatem attingere non valebant. *In Dominic.* xxiv.

[94] Per Medicos intellige falsos Theologos. *In Loc. Marci.*

[95] *Mark Ch.* v. *v.* 26.

[96] Medici Molestiam potius quam Sanitatem ægrotanti præbentes. *Ephræm. Syri.* p. 63.

[97] *Mark Ch.* v. *v.* 34.

[98] Dei Posteriora sunt novissima tempora. *Origen in Psal.* xxxvi.

[99] Vestimenta Jesu sunt Sermones & Scripta Evangeliorum. *Origen in Matt. Ch.* xvii.

[100] *Luke Ch.* xiii.

[101] In Muliere infirma est Figura Ecclesiæ. *Theoph. Antioch. in Loc. Lucæ.* Unde intelligitur illa Mulier in Typo Ecclesiæ a Domino sanata & erecta, quam curvaverat Infirmitas,

alligante Satana, *Sancti August. de Trinit. Lib.* iv. *Sect.* 7. In Typo Ecclesiæ fæminam salvat. *Sancti Ambros. in Loc. Lucæ.*

[102] Totum Genus humanum tanquam ista Mulier curvatum est ad terram,—Diabolus & Angeli ejus Animas hominum curvaverunt ad terras, id est, ut pronæ in ea quæ terrena, superna non quærerent. *Sancti. August. in Serm.* cccxcii. Qui occidentem sequuntur Literam terrena sapiunt. *Sancti Hieron. in Lib. Amos, Ch.* i.

[103] Quid illa Mulier octo decem Annos habens in Infirmitate. Sex Diebus Deus perfecit opera sua. Ter seni decem & octo faciunt. Quod ergo significavit triennium in Arbore, hoc octo decem Anni in illa Muliere. *In. Serm.* cx.

[104] *Luke Ch.* xiii. 7.

[105] 1 *Cor. Ch.* xiii. 9, 10.

[106] Ut Deus sex Dies in tantis Rebus fabricandis laboravit; ita & Religio ejus & Veritas in his sex millibus Annorum laboret, necesse est, malitia dominante & prevalente. Et rursus, quoniam perfectis operibus requievit Die septimo, eumque benedixit; necesse est, ut in sine sexti millessimi Anni Malitia omnis aboleatur e terra & regnet per Annos

mille justitia; sitq; tranquilltas & requies a Laboribus, quos Mundus jamdiu perpessus est. *In Lanctant. Instit. Lib.* VII. *Ch.* xiv. Dies septimus etiam nos ipsi erimus quando (Christi) Benedictione & sanctificatione fuerimus pleni & refecti; ibi vacantes videbimus, quoniam ipse est Deus. *Sancti August. de Civit. Dei. Lib.* XXII. *Ch.* xxx.

[107] Contemnenda non est accurata circa Nomina Diligentia ei qui volucrit prole intelligere sacras Literas. *In Johan. Evang. Tom.* 8.

[108] Jam Archi-Synagogus adumbrat omnes Sacerdotes, &c. *In. Hom.* xii.

[109] Caluminabantur autem erigenti, qui, nisi curvi? *In Serm.* cccxcii.

[110] Sed nesciebat Archi-Synagogus vel hoc vel illud multo excellentius sacramentum, quod Sabbato curando Dominus intimabat, quia scilicet post sex hujus seculi Ætates perpetuæ Vitæ immortalis erat gaudia daturus. *Venerab. Bed. in Loc.*

[111] Ante Christum in cogniti & a solo sciente detecti. *In Lib.* II. *adv. Gentes*.

[112] Consequens autem est ei, qui cognoscit quæ sit Hierusalem in

divisione veræ Hæreditatis filiorum Israël, ut intelligat Sermonem de Gehenna. *In Matt. Ch.* xxiii.

[113] Ego puto quod nomina hæc Scriptura divina non pro Historia narraverit sed pro Causis & Rebus,—non enim tam Regum quam Vitiorum Nomina, quæ regnant in hominibus referuntur. *In Numer. Ch.* xxxi.

[114] Quid ergo mirum videtur, si per singula genera Peccatorum singuli Dæmones ascribuntur. *In Lib. Josu. Ch.* xi.

[115] Sed in alio quodam Libello, qui apellatur Testamentum duodecem Patriarcharum, talem quendam sensum invenimus, quod per singulos peccantes, singuli Satanæ intelligi debeant. Evidentius autem & ipsa Nominis ejus interpretatio hoc idem significare videtur; *Satanas* namq; Adversarius dicitur. Omnes ergo qui adversantur dei voluntati, Satanæ possunt dici. *Ibid.*

[116] On Miracles, *p.* 36.

[117] Quamdiu vera Pax veniat, & Sabbatismus, & Septem decadarum Numerus.—Ecclesia non plenam recipiat Libertatem. *Sancti. Hieron. in Zechar. Ch.* i.

[118] Illa Mulier curvata intelligitur figurare Ecclesiam, quam *in Sexta*

Mundi Ætate a Captivitate Diaboli Jesus liberabit. *In Quæst.* 25. *Dialog.* LXV *Quæst.*

[119] Vidi Angelum habentem Clarem & Catenam ad ligandum draconem.—*In Sexto Annorum Millenario* hæc Res agitur. *De Civit. Dei. L.* XX. *Ch.* vii.

[120] *Revel. Ch.* xx. *v.* 2.

[121] Propter Infinitatem Annorum Mille Annos dixit. *In Serm. de Pœnitentia.*

[122] Diaboli Forman assumimus—Leonis Personam induimus & Draconis,—quando crudeles & callidi sumus. *Origen. in Luc. Hom.* viii.

[123] *Mark Ch.* viii. *v.* 33.

[124] Defence of Christianity, *p.* 8.

[125] Doctioribus inter Judæos notissimum est,—quod Moses qui primus fuit Salvator Israëlis etiam in omni Vita & Operibus suis fuerit Typus & Figura ultimi Redemptoris. *Christian. Meyer de Gen. Christi*, p. 145. Judæi Veteres expectabant similem Ægyptiacæ Liberationem, ut scilicet Pharaoh & omnis ejus Exercitus qui per 430 Annos Populum Dei Captivum tenuit, in Mari Rubro submersus est; sic etiam Romani qui eodem Annorum Numero Judæos possessuri, Ultione Domini deleantur.

Sancti Hieron. in Joel. Ch. v.

[126] See the Life of *William Lilly*.

[127] See Dr. *Hammond* on the Place.

[128] Percontando de Viro, Occasionem cepit occulta revelandi. *Sancti Cyril. Alex. in Loc.*

[129] *John Ch.* x. *v.* 24.

[130] Fortasse verum non erat, *Judæos cum Samaritanis Commmercium non habere*,—ac ne illud quidem verum, *neque Haustorium habes, & Puteus altus est*,—fortasse etiam neque illud, *quod Jacob ex Puteo biberit, & filii ejus, & Pecora* ejus. *Origen. in Loc.*

[131] Plena Mysteriis & gravida Sacramentis. *Sancti August. in Johan. Ch.* iv.

[132] Evangelica Sacramenta in Domini nostri Jesu Christi dictis factisque signata non omnibus patent, & ea nonnulli minus diligenter, minusque sobrie interpretando, afferunt plerumque pro salute Perniciem, & pro Cognitione Veritatis Errorem, inter quæ illud est Sacramentum quod Scriptum est de hac Samaritana, *&c. In Quæst.* 63, *de* Lxxxiii. *Quest.*

[133] Ως εν τυπω παλιν ημιν και δι αινιγματος υποδεικνευς. *In Loc.*

Johan.

[134] Illa Mulier Typum gerebat Ecclesiæ, quæ ventura erat ex Gentibus—Ecclesiæ non justificatæ, sed justificandæ. *Sancti. August. in Loc. Johan.*

[135] Tunc fatigatur Christus, quando nullam Virtutem in Populo suo recognoscit. *Sancti August. in Serm.* xciii. *Appen.*

[136] Hora sexta id est, sexta Ætate Generis Humani. *Sancti August. in Quæst.* 64. lxxxiii. *Quæst.*

[137] Puteus est Divina Scriptura, scientia scatens, ut aqua, Cujus putei Profunditas sunt plena Mysteriis Symbola. *In Theoph. Ceram Homil.* xxxviii. *de Samaritana.*

[138] Lex secundum Literam est aqua amara. *Hieronym. in Ezekiel. Ch.* xlvii. Qui bibit ex hac aqua sitiet rursus, id est, qui participat profunditatem humanæ sapientiæ, prudentesque Rationes, receptis Intelligentiis judicio suo inventis, tamen rursus secundo cogitans, denuo dubitabit de his in quibus requieverat. *Origen. in Loc. Johan.*

[139] *In Locum Johan. Evang.*

[140] Quinque enim Viros habuisti, & nunc quem habes *non est Vir tuus*. Sed non sunt hæc carnabiter accipienda,

ne huic ipsi Mulieri Samaritanæ similes videamur,—Per quinque Viros, quinque Libros Mosis Nonnulli accipiunt—sed quinque Viri intelliguntur quinque Corporis sensus. Et quia naturales sunt ipsi Sensus, qui ætatem primam regunt, recte dicuntur Mariti. *In Quæst.* 64. *de* lxxxiii. *Quæst.*

[141] *Et nunc quem habes non est Vir tuus*; Quia non est in te (Ecclesia) Spiritus qui intelligat Deum, cum quo legitimum potes habere conjugium; sed Error Diaboli potius dominatur, qui te adulterina Contaminatione corrumpit. *Venerab. Bedæ in Locum.*

[142] Magna quidem acta sunt Sacramenta, sed augustum Tempus est, ut omnia pertractentur. *In Serm.* xci. *Sect.* 2.

[143] *In his Dissertation on the Blessing of* Judah.

[144] Ut Lex Umbram continet futurorum bonorum, quæ declarantur ab ea Lege; sic etiam Evangelium, quod vel a quibusque vulgaribus intelligi existimatur, Umbram docet Mysteriorum Christi. *In Præfat. ad Johan. Evang.*

[145] *Matt.* Chap. xxi. *Mark*, Chap. xi.

[146] Hoc factum, nisi figuratum,

stultum invenitur. *In Serm.* lxxvii.

[147] Nulla esset Ligni Culpa, quia Lignum sine sensu non habebat Culpam. Augustin *in Serm.* lxxxix.

[148] Quærit poma; necesciebat tempus nondum esse? quod Cultor Arboris sciebat, Creator Arboris nesciebat? *Augustini in Serm.* lxxxix.

[149] Hoc ideo probamus, quia Passionis Domini Dies propinquabat, et scimus quo tempore passus sit. *Ibid.*

[150] Arbor non est justé siccato. *Johan. Hierosol in Loc. Marci.*

[151] Si miraculum fuerat tantummodo commendandum, et non alquid prophetice figurandum, multo clementiùs dominus et sua misericordia digniùs fecerat, Si quam aridam invenerat, viridem redderet, sicut languentes sanavit. Tunc vero e contrario, quasi adversus Regulam Clementiæ suæ invenit Arborem virentem, præter tempus fructus nondum habentem, non tamen fructum agricolæ negantem, et aridam fecit. *In Serm.* lxxxix. *Sect.* 3.

[152] See Arch-Bishop *Wake*'s Letter to Mr. *Chandler*, which is handed about Town and Country.

[153] *Vindication of the Christian Religion*, p. 82.

[154] *Ibid.*

[155] Quod sequenti die viderint exaruisse fieum. *Theophylact. in Locum Marci.*

[156] Chap. xiii.

[157] Quid sibi vult, quod in Evangelio suo Dominus Fici Parabolam *frequenter* inducit: Habes enim alibi, quod jussu Domini Viriditas omnis hujus Ligni frondentis aruerit. *In Loc. Lucæ.*

[158] Videamus, ubi alibi scriptum de ista ficu; in Evangelio secundum Lucam legimus, &c. *In Loc. Marci. Hom.* xii.

[159] *Matth.* Chap. xxi. 21.

[160] Quanquam igitur juxta Literam Hæc facta non legantur ab Apostolis, sicut quidam Paganorum calumniati sunt, et garriunt contra nos, etiam in suis scriptis asserentes Apostolos non habuisse fidem, quia monues non transtulerunt neque Ficulneas verbo exsiccarunt. *In Loc. Matth.*

[161] Legimus Apostolorum miracula, nusquam autem legimus arborem ab his arefactam, aut montem in mare translatum; quæramus ergo in mysterio ubi factum sit, non enim Verba Domini vacare potuerant. *In Serm.* lxxxix.

[162] Sed futurum aliquid Miraculo commendasse, multa sunt quæ nos admoneant, nobisq; persuadeant imo ab *invitis* extorqueant. *Ibid.*

[163] Porro quando in hunc locum incidimus, nemo curiose inquirat, aut anxie disputet, justene an secus factum sit; sed Miraculum editum contempletur et admiretur. Nam de submersis Porcis quoq; nonnulli hanc quæstionem moverant, factumq; justitiæ coloræ destitutum prædicare veriti non sunt. *In Loc. Merci.*

[164] Quid Arbor fici, nisi humanam naturam designet? *In Homil.* xxxi.

[165] In Ficu, Synogogæ positum Exemplum est. *In Loc. Matt.*

[166] Absit a nobis, ut, Jesu veniente ad nos et volente manducare de ficu (*Ecclesiæ*) non inveniatur Fructus in ea. *In Matth. Tract.* xxx.

[167] Potest autem ficus illa intelligi populus Circumcisionis. *Ibid.*

[168] Arbor ficulnea Genus humanum est——Triennium autem tria sunt Tempora, unum ante Legem, alterum sub Lege, tertium sub gratia. St. *Augustin in Serm.* cx.

[169] *Jude*, ver. 14.

[170] Inveniet infæcundam, foliis tantummodo vestitam, id est Verbis

inanibus gloriantem, sed fructibus vacuam, Operibus quippe bonis sterilem. *In Loc. Matt.*

[171] Habentem folia et non fructus; Verba, non Sensus; Scripturas, non intelligentiam Scripturarum. *In Loc. Marci.*

[172] Folia sola habentem, hoc est, apparentem Litteram, non Fructus Spiritus. *In Loc. Matt.*

[173] Qærens non Sensiles Fructus sed intellectilem ex Lege et Prophetis dulcemq, Fæcunditatem. *Cæsarii in Dialog.* 40.

[174] Ficus sunt dona dulcissima Spiritus Sancti, Spiritualia dogmata et Scientia Scripturarum. *In Aggæ*; *Cap.* ii.

[175] Esuriit autem Jesus semper in justis, volens manducare Fructum Spiritus Sancti i neis. *In Matt. Tract.* xxx.

[176] Ad quem (Locum) intelligendum, ut oportet, expectandum esse Eliæ, ut nonnunquam loquuntur Veteres de Locis obscurissimis Adventum. *In Excercitat. Sac. Lib.* ii. *cap.* 6.

[177] Fructus dulces omne genus de arbore Vitæ comedendum præbebit Elias. *Apud Buxtorf. Synag. p.* 738.

[178] Oculis Spiritalibus viderunt Mysterium fici siccatæ. *Matt. Tract.* xvi.

[179] Effodientes Literam Legis. *Cyril. Glaphyr.* L. 1. P. 1.

[180] Mittitur ergo Cophinus Stercoris ad Radicem Arboris, quando pravitatis suæ Conscientia tangitur memoria Cogitationis. *Gregor. M. in Hom.* xxxi.

[181] Sed hoc significat Ficulnea infructuosa, quod Mulier inclinata; et hoc Ficulnea reservata, quod Mulier erecta. Hoc autem & octodecem Annorum Numero signatur, quod tertio die Dominus Vineæ Ficulneam venisse perhibetur. *In Homil.* xxxi.

[182] *John*, Chap. v.

[183] Vid. Milli. Nov. Test. *In Loc.*

[184] Quare modo non movetur Aqua? *St. Ambros de Sacrament. Lib. C.* 2.

[185] Εις μονος του ενιαυτου εθεραπευετο. *In Serm. contra Eberietatem.*

[186] Vid. Milli. Nov. Test. *In Loc.*

[187] Tot jacebant & unus curatus, cum posset uno Verbo omnes erigere. Quid ergo intelligendum est, nisi quia Potestas & Bonitas illa magis agebat, *&c. In Loc. Johan.*

[188] Defence of Christianity, P. 415.

[189] Quis hic Curationis modus? quid hoc nobis mysterium significatur? non απλως nec εικη hæc, sed futura nobis, tanquam imagine et figura quadam describuntur, ne res nimium incredibilis et inexpectata, accedente fidei Virtute, Multitudinis Animas offenderet. *In Loc. Johan.*

[190] Aqua turbata——credas hoc Angelica Virtute fieri solere, non tamen sine significante aliquo Sacramento? *In Loc. Johan.*

[191] Cujus Rei & cujus signi profundum mysterium, quantum Dominus donare dignatur, loquar ut potero. *Ibid.*

[192] Piscina illa Baptismum designat. *Theophyl. In Loc.* Quænam igitur hæc descriptio? Futurum erat Baptisma plenum maximæ Potestatis & Gratiæ purgaturum peccata. *Chrysost. In Loc.*

[193] Per quinque Porticus, quinque Libras Mosis intelligo, St. *Theophil. Antioch. in Loc.* Quinque Porticus sunt quinque Libri Mosis. St. *August. in Loc.*

[194] Mosis quinque Libros scripsit, sed in quinque Porticibus Piscinam cingentibus languidi jacebant, et

curari non poterant. Vide quomodo manet littera, convincens eum non salvans iniquum. Illis enim quinque Porticibus, in figura quinque Librorum prodebantur potius quam sanabantur ægroti. Ergo quicunque amatis litteram fine gratia, in Porticibus remanebitis, ægri eritis, jacentes non convalescentes, de littera enim præsumitis. *In Psal.* lxx.

[195] Est Figura Populi in ultimis temporibus sanandi. *In Loc. Johan.*

[196] Languidus ille, de quo in Evangelio legimus, quia jacebat, Typum Generis humani habere videbatur. *In Serm.* cclxxiv. *Append.*

[197] Paralyticum qui juxta Natatoriam jacebat. *Irenæi. Lib.* ii. Chap. 22.

[198] Tempus et Annus sunt centum Anni, *Tichonii in Reg.* 5[a]

[199] Quod autem triginta et octo Annos in Languoribus positut erat, do illo Quadraginta numero, quem supra diximus duo minus habens; et quæ sunt ista duo, nisi duo præcepta, dilectio Dei et Proximi. Ista duo, in quibus tota Lex pendet et Prophetæ, si non habuerit, languidus et Paralyticus jacet. *In Ps.* lxxxiii.

[200] Quod autem sub finem Hebdomadum Sanctæ Pentecostes

ipse revertitur Hierosolymam, figuraté et ænigmatice significat futurum nostri Salvatoris Reversionem ultimis præsentis ævi temporibus. *In Loc. Johan.*

[201] Turbabat Angelus,——dictus est Dominus magni consilii Angelus. *Augustin in Serm.* cxxv. *Sect.* 3.

[202] Turbavit Aquam, id est, turbavit Populum. *Ejusdem in Ps.* cii.

[203] Sabbatum est et Grabatum non licet tollere. Quid stupidius aut inertius esse potest? *In Loc. Johan.*

[204] Sermon before the Society for Reformation, *&c.* p. 12.

[205] John. ix.

[206] Quid Lutum i linere opporet? hoc potius eæcum reddere, quis unquam hoc pacto curatus est? *In Loc. Johan.*

[207] Quam ob causam dicet aliquis, cum omnia solo Verbo præstare possit, nulloque negotio, Lutum quidem sputo macerat? *In Loc. Johan.*

[208] Sed Rationem quandam mysticam habet Vis Rei istius de sputo. *Ibid.*

[209] Ei autem qui cæcus fuerat a Nativitate, jam non per sermonem sed per operationem præstitit visum; non vane, neque prout evenit, hoc

faciens, sed ut ostenderet manum Dei, eam quæ ab initio plasmavit Hominem, &c. Contra Hæres. L. v. c. 15.

[210] *See his Sermons before the Societys for Reformation.* p. 12.

[211] Ipse Salvator noster apertissime ostendit, quod ejus Miracula Aliquid significent, dum ea faciendo, aliquid agit, quod Ratione carere videatur. Nisi enim aliquid significaret, quid necessarium fuit, in hujus cæci Illuminatione, ut Lutum faceret, quo oculos ejus liniret, cui solum dicere sufficiens erat. Quæramus igitur significationem, & videamus quid cæcus iste significet. *In Homil. quarta post quartam Dominicam.*

[212] Similitudo erat & Typus futurorum unumquodque quod fiebat in Corpore. Veluti nescio quis à Nativitate cæcus Visum recuperavit. Vere autem cæcus iste erat à Nativitate Gentilium Populus, cui Salvator reddidit Visum, Saliva sua ungens oculos ejus & mittens ad *Siloam*, quod interpretatur missus, mittebat quippe illos quos spiritu unxit ad Apostolos. *In Isai.* c. vi.

[213] Genus humanum est iste cæcus. *In Loc. Johan.*

[214] Cæcus humanum Genus

significatur. *In Com. Johan.*

[215] Cæcus iste a Nativitate, Genus humanum esse videtur à primo homine.——Hæc enim cæcitas non Corporis sed Animæ est. *In Loc. supra laudat.*

[216] Per cæcum naturaliter non videntem & illuminatum significat Genus humanum. *In Loc. Johan.*

[217] Vere autem cæcus iste erat a Nativitate Gentilium Populus. *In Isai.* c. vi.

[218] Cæci hujus Curationem in figuram & typus vocationis Gentium accepimus. *In Loc. Johan.*

[219] Intellige hoc Miraculum spiritualiter. Nam cæcus quidem erat omnis homo à Nativitate, id est, ab Initio Mundi. *In Loc. Johan.*

[220] In Sabbato est figura ultimi Temporis. *St. Cyril in Loc. Johan.*

[221] Cæcitas est Infidelitas. *In Loc.*

[222] Cæcus qui destituitur divino Lumine. *De Adorat.* p. 414.

[223] Cæcus qui sedet in tenebris omnis Ignorantiæ, & non potuit videre Conditorem Mundi. *In Loc. Johan.*

[224] Literam Legis sequentes, in Errores, Superstitiones &

Infidelitatem incurrunt. *In Matt. Tract.* xxvi.

[225] Cæcus iste est cæcus in Litera, & hoc statu Sanari non potest. *In Marc.* c. viii.

[226] Cæci qui imperiti Scripturarum. *In Loc. Johan.*

[227] Lutum vero factum de Saliva oris Domini, ac positum super oculos cæci, significat hic, quod naturæ deerat, opere suo implere Figulum. *In Loc. Johan.*

[228] Saliva sua ungens Oculos cæci & mittens ad *Siloam* quod interpretatur *Missus*, mittebat quippe illos, quos spiritu unxit. &c. *In Isa. c.* vi.

[229] Saliva est perfecta Doctrina. *In Marc.* c. viii.

[230] Ei autem qui cæcus fuerat à Nativitate, jam non per sermonem sed per operationem præstitit Visum; non vane neque prout evenit hoc faciens, sed ut ostenderet manum Dei, eam quæ ab Initio plasmavit hominem. Quapropter expuit in Terram, & fecit Lutum, & superlinivit illud Oculis, ostendens antiquam Plasmationem, quemadmodum facta est, & manum Dei manifestans his qui intelligere possunt, per quam è Limo plasmatus est homo. *Cont. Hæreses. L.*

v. *c.* 15.

[231] John ii.

[232] *See his Speech in Convocation, printed in the* Post-Boy *of* March *the 30th.*

[233] Rursus hoc in loco calumniantur nonnulli hunc ebriosorum fuisse Conventum, *&c. In Loc. Johan.*

[234]

Pueri aut Saltatores
volutabantur, in his
autem
Tibiæ, Lyræque Vocem
habebant. Mulieres
autem
Cantum accipientes,
volvebantur per medias
Quæcunque optimatum erant
uxores atque filiæ.
Illi vero ad Saltationem &
desiderabilem Cantum
Conversi delectabantur, &c.

In *Homero-Centon.*

[235] *Vindication of the Christian Religion.* p. 82.

[236] Luke ii. 48.

[237] Christus asperius respondit, quid tibi & mihi, Mulier? *St. Chrysost.*

in Loc. Johan. Vide & *Theopolact. in Loc.*

[238] Vide Sanctum Augustinum. *In Loc. Johan.*

[239] Apud St. Chrysostomum *In Loc. Johan.*

[240] *Vindication of the Christian Religion*, p. 82.

[241] Sed quanam gratia, antequam implerentur, non fecit Miraculum, quod longe fuisset admirabilius? Siquidem aliud est subjectæ Materiæ qualitatem mutare, aliud ipsam substantiam ex nihilo facere. *Chrysos. in Loc.*

[242] Sæpe obest Magnitudo, ne Miracula creditu sint facilia. *Theophylact. in Loc.*

[243] In Dialog. cum Tryphone, *p.* 364.

[244] In Lib. de Abrahamo.

[245] *In Matt. Tract.* xxii.

[246] Aliquid enim & in ipsis factis innuit nobis, puto, quia non sine causa venit ad Nuptias. Excepto Miraculo, aliquid in ipso facto Mysterii & Sacramenti latet. Pulsemus ut aperiet & de Vino invisibili inebriet nos. *In Loc. Johan.*

[247] Nihil dicemus, quid sibi velint

Hydriæ, quid Aqua in Vinum conversa, quid Architriclinius, quid Sponsus, quid Mater Jesu in Mysterio, quid ipsæ Nuptiæ? *Ibid.*

[248] Per hoc invitatus Dominus venit ad Nuptias, ut ostenderetur Sacramentam Nuptiarum,——Illarum Nuptiarum Sponsus Personam Domini figurabat, cui dictum est, servasti bonum Vinum usque adhuc, Bonum Vinum id est Evangelium servasti usque adhuc. *Ibid.*

[249] Sex Hydriæ sunt sex Ætates Temporum capientes Prophetiam pertinentem ad omnes gentes sive in duobus generibus hominum, id est, Judæis & Græcis, sive in tribus propter Noe tres Filios. *Ibid.*

[250] Vocatur Salvator ad Nuptias, hoc est, Ecclesiæ voto spiritus sanctus invocatur——Venit cum Discipulis suis, id est, in Loco sancto, Turba sanctorum. Mirabilia Dei Maria Mater expectat, hoc est, Virtutem Christi expectat Ecclesia.——Maria ait, ecce Vina deficiant, hoc est, Vinum Spiritus Ecclesia optat excipere.——Numquid Mulierem dicit Jesu Mariam, quæ Virgo post Pactum inventa est? Sed Ecclesiam alloquitur, quæ non solum Mulier, sed meretrix nuncupatur. *In Sermon* xcii. *Append.*

[251] Vinum multis Locis accipimus Scripturas Sanctas meracissimum

Vigorem cœlestis sapientæ continentes; quibus incalescant sensus & inebrientur Affectus. Operante Christo in Cana Galileæ Vinum defecit & Vinum sit, id est, Umbra removetur & Veritas præsentatur. Recedit Lex, Gratia succedit. Carnalia spiritualibus commutantur. Bonum quidem Vinum est vetus Testamentum, sed sine spirituali Intellectu vanescit in Litera. *In Sermon* xc. *Append.* Sed illud quod in Litera Legis aquam sapiebat, dum spiritualiter intellgi fecit, aquam in Vinum convertit. *In Sermon* xci. *Append.*

[252] Per Nuptias, Conjunctionem Christi Ecclesiæ, hoc est Veteris & Novi Testamenti Traditionem debemus accipere. Sponsus est Christus. Architriclinius est Moses. *In Loc. Johan.*

[253] Voluores Cœli sunt verè puri & ad cælestis sapientiæ Cognitionem evolare parati. *Clem. Alex. Strom. L.* iv.

[254] Quid mihi & tibi est, Mulier? Procul dubio, Fratres, latet ibi aliquid Mysterii. *In Loc. Johan.*

[255] Matt. ix. Mark ii. Luke v.

[256] Paralyticus reppletum videret Theatrum, Aditus Interclusos, Portum obseptum,——Non tamen dixit

Propinquis suis, quid hoc Rei est? Expectemus quousque Domus evacuetur, Theatrum dimittatur, recedent, qui congregati sunt, poterimus privatim ad ilium accedere. *In Homil. de hoc Paralyt.*

[257] Dicet aliquis valde dimissum fuisse Locum, à quo per Tegulas deposuerunt Paralytici Lectum. *Johan. Nepot. Hieros. in Loc. Luc.*

[258] Judæorum Tecta plana erant, & non in Coniformam lastigiata. *In Loc. Luc.*

[259] *In Loc. Marci.*

[260] Numquid enim facilem illi potuit Accessum redere? *Apud Chrysostom. de hoc Paralyt.*

[261] In Paralytico Gentium universitas offertur me denda. *In Loc. Matt.*

[262] Paralyticus potest intelligi Anima dissoluta Membris, id est, bonis operibus. *Inter. Quæst. Evang.*

[263] Paralysis Typus est Torporis, quo piger jacet in Malitia Carnis, habens desiderium Salutis, & Torporis Ignavia & duplis Cogitationibus, ac si enervatus Membris ostendit. *In Loc. Marci.*

[264] In hoc enim quod ait, remittuntur tibi Peccata, interiorem

hominem, id est, spiritum paryliticum esse demonstrat. Hoc enim non dixisset, si ad Corporis Infirmitatem respexisset. Non ideo Corpus sanatur, quia Anima a peccatis liberatur. *In Homil. in Dominic.* xix. *post Pentecost.*

[265] Sed qui sunt isti quatuor, qui hunc Paralyticum portant & Domino offerunt. Per hos enim nescio, qui melius quam quatuor Evangelistæ intelligi possunt. Nulla enim Anima nisi per istos Domino offertur, nulla Anima nisi per istorum fidem sanatur. *Euseb. Gallican. ibid.* Sum Paraliticus, quia non operantur & immobiles sunt Vires Animæ meæ ad bonum, sed si a quatuor Evangelistis gestatus & adductus fuero ad Dominum, tunc audiam, remittuntur Peccata. *Theophylact. in Loc. Marci.*

[266] Tectum Domus qua Christus docet, ascendendum, id est, Sacræ Scripturæ Sublimitas est appetenda. *Bedæ in Loc. Lucæ.*

[267] Non utique in Infirmis exterius, qua turbæ tumultuantur remanendum, sed Tectum Domus, &c. *Ibid.*

[268] Patefacto Tecto ægerad Jesum summittitur, quia reseratis Scripturarum Mysteriis, ad Notitiam Christi pervenitur. *Bedæ in. Loc. Marci.* Est Paralysis interior, ut pervenias ad Christum (forte enim

latet Medicus & intus est, hoc est, iste verus Intellectus in Scriptoris occultus est) exponendo quod occultum est aperi Tectum, & depone Paraliticum. *Augustin. In Serm.* XLVI. *Sect.* 13. Impediri turbis nisi Tecta id est operta Scripturarum aperiat, ut per hæc ad Notitiam Christi perveniat. *Ejusdam in Quæst. 4ta in Evangel. Lucæ.*

[269] Et bene Domus Jesu juxta alterius Evangelistæ Narrationem tegulis esse contecta reperitur, quia sub contemptibili Literarum Velamine, si adsit, qui reseret, divina spiritualis Gratiæ Virtus invenietur. Denudatio etenim Tegularum in Domo Jesu, Apertio est, in utilitate Literæ, sensus spiritualis ac arcanorum cœlestium. *In Loc. Marci.*

[270] Mat. ix. Mark v. Luke viii.

[271] Luke vii.

[272] John xi.

[273] Quot autem mortuos visibiliter suscitaverat quis novit? non enim omnia quæ fecit scripta sunt. *Johannes* hoc dicit, multa alia fecit Jesus, quæ si scripta essent, arbitror totum Mundum non posse Libros capere. Multi ergo sunt alii sino dubio suscitati, sed non frustra tres commemorati. *In Serm.* xcviii.

[274] John xxi. 25.

[275] Non autem vacat a Mysterio, quod, cum plures Dominus suscitaverat, tres tantum Evangelistæ eum suscitasse scripserunt. *In Homil. Feriæ quintæ post Dominis. 4tam.*

[276] Suscitaverat Dominus filiam Jairi Principis Synagogæ, sed adhuc mediante morte, adhuc viante Spiritu, adhuc Anima Claustra Tartari nesciente. Suscitavit & unicum Matris filium, sed sic ut retineret Pheretrum, ut anticiparet Sepulchrum, ut Corruptionem suspenderet, & præveniret fætorem; ut ante mortuo Vitam redderet, quam tota mortuus jura Mortis intraret. Circa Lazarum vero quod geritur totum singulare est, quem circa Vis tota Mortis impleta est. *In Pet. Chrysol. Serm.* lxiii.

[277] Inter omnia Miracula quæ fecit Dominus noster Jesu Christus, Lazari Resurrectio præcipue prædicatur. *St. August. in Loc. Johan.*

[278] Mirum videri potest Historiam hanc tam illustrem a Matthæo & Marco omissam. *In Loc. Luc.*

[279] Sed videtur mihi horum uterq; contentus fuisse uno Exemplo redditæ Vitæ in Jairi filia ex quo similia alia possunt intelligi. *In Loc. Luc.*

[280] Nondum perfecta Mors est in Puella. *St. August.* in Serm. xcviii.

[281] In Epist. prima ad Corinth. Cap. xxv.

[282] Quæri solet, cur hanc tam nobilem Historiam priores Evangelii scriptores non attigerint. Mihi hoc succurrit, cum illi scriberent, vixisse resuscitatum Lazarum, & periculum ei fuisse a judæis, si quod illi acciderat, palam vulgaretur. Nam etiam mox narratur C. xii. 10, ob hoc ipsum structas ei insidias. Quare visum illis hoc ad tempus subticeri posse, cum alia Exempla resuscitatorum suppeterent. At mortuo Lazaro, cum jam nemini Periculum ex rei Narratione fieri posset, additum hoc a Johanne in hac quasi prætermissorum Collectione. *In Loc. Johan.*

[283] The last of the three *Evangelists* writing but fifteen Years after our Lord's Ascension, might think it needless so mention a Miracle concerning a Person, living so near *Jerusalem*, where there was so great a Fame thereof, and so many living Witnesses. St. *John*, writing his Gospel, say the Ancients, above sixty Years after our Lord's Ascension, when by the Deaths of the Person, and most of the Witnesses that were present at his Resurrection, the

Memory and Fame of it might be much impair'd, had great Reason to perpetuate the Memory of it, by this large Rehearsal of it. *In Loc. Johan.*

[284] Quin & illud inter traditiones reperimus triginta tum Annos natum fuisse Lazarum, cum a mortuis excitatus est; atq; idem ille postea triginta aliis annis vixit. *In Hæres.* lxvi. *Sect.* 34.

[285] Matt. xviii. 2.

[286] In Nicephor. Callist. Eccl. Hist. L. ii. c. 35.

[287] In Eccl. Hist. L. vii. c. 18.

[288] In Loc. Matthæi.

[289] Puellam ex illo Tumultu plangentium stupore correptam esse, non vero defunctam. *In Homil. de Juri filia.*

[290] In Loc. Matthæ.

[291] Atque ut miraculum divinæ Virtutis accresceret, dum Convivis interrogantibus tristia Loca pænarum, sedesq; alta nocte semper obscuras, Lazarus indicat diligenti narratione per ordinem. Diu quæsiti longisq; temporibus ignorati invenerunt tandem Inferi Proditotem. *In Serm.* cxvi. *Append. St. August.*

[292] Princeps hic, Lex esse intelligitur, quæ Dominum orat pro

Plebe, quam ipsa Christo prædicata ejus Adventos Expectatione nutriverat, ut Vitam mortuæ reddat. Nam nullum Principem credidisse legimus, ex quo Persona hujus principis orantis merito in Typum aptabitur. *In Loc. Matt.*

[293] John vii. 48, and xii. 42.

[294] Quæ tamen tantæ diversitatis Causa? Supra publice Viduce filius suscitatur, hic removentur plures arbitri. *In Loc. Luc.*

[295] Qua igitur Ratione, qui tanta hæc erat facturus, id quod evenit, judicasset merito Lacrymis esse prosequendum? *In Homil. de Gratiarum Actione.*

[296] *Lacrymatus est Jesus*, quod aliquando erasum fuisse a Catholicis quibusdam scribit Epiphanius. Vid. *Drusium in Loc. Johan.*

[297] Quidam corporalia ejus Miracula stupentes, majora intueri non norunt. Quidam vero ea, quæ gesta audiunt in Corporibus nunc amplius in Animis admirantur.——Dominus enim noster Jesus Christus ea quæ faciebat corporaliter, etiam spiritaliter volebat intelligi; neque enim Miracula propter Miracula faciebat, sed ut illa quæ faciebat, mira essent Videntibus, vera essent Intelligentibus.——Alii & facta mirati

& intellecta assecuti. Tales nos esse debemus in Schola Christi.——Hoc dixi (de ficu arefacta) ut persuaderem Dominum Jesum Christum ideo Miracula fecisse, ut aliquid illis Miraculis significaret; ut excepto eo, quod mira & magna & divina erant, aliquid inde etiam disceremus. Videamus ergo quid nos discere voluit in tribus mortuis, quos suscitavit. *In Serm.* xcviii.

[298] Ista tria Genera Mortuorum, sunt tria Genera Peccatorum, quos hodie suscitat Christus.——Sunt ergo instar filiæ Synagogæ Principis, qui peccatum intus in Corde babent, in facto nondum habent. Condemnatur Consensus ad Iniquitatem; respiratur ad Salutem atq; Justitiam. Surgit mortuus in Domo, reviviscit Cor in Cogitationis Secreto. Facta est ista Resurrectio Animæ mortuæ intus intra Latebras Conscientiæ, tanquam intra Domesticos Parietes.——Alii post Consensum eunt in factum, tanquam efferentes mortuum, ut quod latebat in Secreto, appareat in publico. Nonne illi juveni dictam est, *Tibi dico, surge* & redditus est Matri; sic qui jam fecerit, si forte admonitus & commotus Verbo Veritatis ad Christi Vocem resurgit, vivus redditur Ecclesiæ.——Qui autem faciendo quod malum est, etiam mala Consuetudine se implicant, tales Consuetudine maligna pressi,

tanquam sepulti, ita sepulti ut de Lazaro dictum est, jam *putet*. In Serm. xcviii.

[299] *Cum ejecta esset Turba, intravit.* Moraliter non resurgit Anima, quæ intrinsecus jacet mortua, nisi prius a secretioribus Cordis excludatur inopportuna sæcularium Cogitationum Multitudo. *In Loc. Matt.*

[300] Mali isti Portitores, qui ad sepeliendum hominem ferunt, sunt Vitia & maligni spiritas, Hæretici & seductores. Hos enim nisi Dominus sisteret, quoscunq; semel acciperent, sepulturæ & æternæ Damnationi traderent. Suscitatus igitur Adolescens sedet, loquitur & Matri redditur, quia ad Penitentiam conversus in Ecclesiæ pace quiescit, Dei Magnalia loquitur, sua peccata confitetur; & Ecclesiæ reconciliatur. *Euseb. Gallic. in Homil. Feriæ quinta post Domin. 4tam.*

[301] *Et lacrymatus est Jesus.* Lacrymemur igitur & nos pro omnibus illis, quos in Fætore Vitiorum jacere sentimus. *Euseb. Gallic. in Homil. Feriæ 5ta post Domin. 4tam.*

[302] Lapis autem revolutus a Monumento significat Infidelitatis Duritiam ab Hominum Corde submotam. *Theop. Antioch. in Loc. Johan.*

[303] Quod enim tunc temporis factum est in una Puella, hoc in sine Temporum futurum est, ut fiat in tota Sonagoga. *In Homil. Feriæ 5ta post Domin. 4tam.*

[304] Synagoga circa finem sæculi erit restituta saluti. *In Loc. Matt.*

[305] Jairus illuminatus vel illuminans, Moses intelligitur. *Bed.* in *Loc. Mat.*

[306] Ad hanc ergo Principis filiam dum properat Dei Verbum, ut salvos faceret filios Isræl, sancta Ecclesia de Gentibus congregata, quæ inferiorum Lapsu Criminium deperibat, paratam aliis fide præripuit Sanitatem. *St. Ambros. in Loc. Luc.* Quod vero post restitutam immundæ Mulieri Valetudinem, defuncta Puella a mortuis restituitur; ne hoc quidem ab exquisita Allegoria alienum. Nam Reliquiæ salvæ fiant, juxta Apostolum, cum ingressa fuerit Gentium Plenitudo. *Theop. Ceram. in Homil. de Jairi filia.*

[307] Quarum Rerum Causa multa fuere Jesu Miracula. *In Johan. Cap. XI.*

[308] Per Lazarum Genus humanum ostenditur. *Theop. Antioch. in Loc. Johan.* Nostra Resurrectio figuratur per Lazari Resurrectionem.—— Spelunca sive Sepulchrum Lazari

Litteram Legis umbratilem designat. ——*Magna Voce clamavit Jesus*, id est, Prædicatio Evangelii per quam humana Natura Peccatorum Vinculis & in Sepulchro Infidelitatis jacens vocatur ad Vitam. *Theop Ceram. in Homil. de Lazaro.*

[309] Revelations, Chap. xviii. 11.

[310] *In his Pastoral Letter*, P. 35.

[311] Daniel, Chap. vi. 17.

[312] Adducor ut credam Pilati Annulo & hunc Lapidem signatum. *In Loc. Matt.*

[313] *Upon the Place in* Matthew.

[314] Si Jesus volebat re vera declarare suam divinam Potentiam, debuerat suis Insultatoribus, ipsique Præsidi qui capitalem sententiam contra se tulerat, denique cæteris omnibus se ostendere. *In Orig. Lib.* ii. *contra Celsum*.

[315] In *Limborchii* Amica Collatione cum Judæo.

[316] Magna sane Res & miranda occurrit hoc loco, quæ non solum aliquem ex vulgo Credentium exercere posset, sed perfectiores etiam; cur non Dominus post Resurrectionem æque ac superioribus temporibus conspiciendum se præbuerit. *In Lib.* ii. *cont.* Celsum.

[317] Quamvis Celsus has Jesu post Resurrectionem Apparitiones conferre conetur cum vulgaribus Spectris & Visionibus. *In Origen. Lib.* ii. *contra Celsum.*

[318] Comminatus est periculum Accusatoribus Christianorum. *Tertul. Apol. Cap.* v.

[319] Justin Matyr. *In Apol.* ii.

[320] Quod autem a Joseph, rogato Pilato ut Corpus redderet, & sindone involvitur, & in Monumento novo in Petra excisa reponitur, & Saxum Ostio Monumenti advolvitur: Quanquam sit Ordo Gestorum, & sepeliri eum erat necesse, qui resurrecturus erat a mortuis, tamen non sine Rerum aliquarum Momento expressa sunt singula. Joseph Apostolorum habet speciem: & idcirco quanquam in duodecem numero Apostolorum non fuerit, Discipulus Domini nuncupatur. Hic munda sindone corpus involvit; & quidem in hoc eodem linteo reperimus de cœlo ad Petrum universorum Animantium genera summissa. Ex quo forte non superflue intelligitur sub lintei hujus nomine consepeliri Christo Ecclesiam: quia tum in eo, ut in Confusione Ecclesiæ mundorum atque immundorum Animalium fuerit congesta diversitas. Domini igitur Corpus tanquam per

Apostolorum doctrinam in vacuam & novam requiem Lapidis excisi, *viz.* in pectus duritiæ Gentilis quodam doctrinæ opere excisum Christus infertur, rude scilicet & novum, & nullo antea ingressu timoris Dei pervium. Et quia nihil præter cum oporteat in pectora nostra penetrare, Lapis Ostio advolvitur: ut quia nullus antea in nos divinæ Cognitionis Auctor fuerat illatus, nullus absque eo postea inferatur. Metus deinde furandi Corporis, & Sepulchri Custodia atque Obsignatio, Stultitiæ atque Infidelitatis Testimonium est; quod signare Sepulchrum ejus voluerint, cujus præcepto conspexissent de Sepulchro mortuum suscitatum. *In Loc. Matt.*

[321] Ad hoc enim Dominus hodie resurrexit, ut Imaginem nobis futuræ Resurrectionis ostenderet. *In Serm.* clxviii. *Append.*

[322] Quid singula significent, quærere sanctæ quidem Deliciæ sunt. *In Johan. Evang. C.* xx. *Tract.* 120.

[323] Monumentum Christi est divina Scriptura, in qua Divinitatis & Humanitatis ejus mysteria densitate Litteræ veluti quadam muniuntur Petra. *In Diversos Homil.* 2.

[324] Ne putes, tunc solummodo traditus est Christus Principibus Sacerdotibus & Scribis.——Quando

enim vides Scripturas Prophetarum & Evangelii & Apostolorum traditas esse in Manus falsorum Sacerdotum & Scribarum; num intelliges quia Verbum Veritatis traditum est Principibus iniquis & Scribis? *In Mat. C.* xx.

[325] Interpretario autem Nominis Barabbæ est Patris Filius: Jam itaque Arcanum Infidelitatis futuræ ostenditur, Christo Patris Filium præferendo, Antichristum scilicet hominem Peccari & Diaboli filium, potiusque adhortantibus principibus suis eligunt, Damnationi reservatum, quam Salutis Authorem. *In Loc. Matt.*

[326] Velum Templi scissum est, & omnia Legis Sacramenta, quæ prius tegebantur, prodita sunt atque ad Gentium Populum transierunt. *In Loc. Matt.*

[327] Petræ scissæ, id est, universa Vaticinia Prophetarum. *In Epist. ad Hedibriam.*

[328] Sed mihi videtur Terræ Motus & reliqua typum ferre credentium, quod pristinis Errorum vitiis derelictis, & Cordis emollita duritia, postea agnoverint Creatorem. *In Loc. Matt.*

[329] Ipsum autem triduum, non totum & plenum fuisse Scriptura Testis est. *In Libro 4to de Trinitate,*

Sect. 10.

[330] De tribus diebus, multi sancti multa hinc senserint atque dixerint ——Sed nos neutram eorum vacantes sententiam; melius tamen, si placet in his spiritualem requiramus Intellectum, tres Dies tria Tempora Sæculi ponentes. *In Serm. de Symbolo.*

[331] Cum disputamus adversus eos, & cum conquirimus advicem, tunc quærimus locum Dogmatis illius in litera Legis Historiæ, & ostenditur secundum Historiam stare non posse. *In Psal.* xxxvi.

[332] *Pastoral Letter*, P. 25.

[333] Adventus quidem Christi unus in Humilitate completus est, alius vero speratur in Gloria. Et hic primus Adventus in Carne, mystico quodam Sermone in Scripturis Sanctis Umbra ejus appellatur. *In Jesu Novo Homil.* viii.

[334] Vera Christi Miracula & Sanatio Infirmorum est spiritualis. *In Matt. C.* xxv.

[335] Hæc licet in præsens gesta sunt, quid tamen in futurum significent contuendum est. *In Matt. C.* x. *S.* 1. Christi Gesta aliud portendunt. *C.* xii. *S.* 1. Peragunt formam futuri gesta præsentia. *C.* xxi.

[336] *Pastoral Letter*, P. 3.

[337] *Pastoral Letter*, P. 35.

[338] His Sermon before the Societies for Reformation; and his Charge to the Clergy.

[339] In his Dedication.

[340] Page 35.

[341] *Vindication of three Miracles*, p. 76, 77.

[342] Cum venerit ergo Elias exponendo Legem *Spiritaliter*, convertit Corda Patrum ad filios. *De Civit. Dei.* Lib. XX. c. 29.

[343] Litteram Legis sequentes in Infidelitatem & vanas Superstitiones incurrunt. *In Matt. Tract.* 26.

[344] In Dedication of Third *Discourse*.

[345] Page 177.

[346] *Discourse* the Fifth, *p.* 69.

[347] Inveniatur enim in Christianismo non minor (nequid dicam arrogantius) fide Ratio & Enarratio Propheticorum ænigmatum, parabolarumque evangelicarum, aliarumque innumerarum figurarum, quæ vel in *Gestis* continentur vel Legibus. *Cont. Celsum. Lib.* I.

[348] Quidam corporalia ejus Miracula stupentes, majora intueri

non norunt. Quidam vero ea, quæ gesta audiunt in Corporibus, nunc amplius in animis admirantur,—— Tales nos esse debemus in Schola Christi. *In Serm.* xcviii.

[349] In *Discourse* the Sixth.

[350] *Mystery of Godliness*, B. x. c. 2.

[351] 1 Tim. v. 8.

[352] *Defence of Christianity*, p. 347.

[353] Ibid. p. 353.

[354] Est adhuc alia Pugna his omnibus violentior; quod ii, quod Legem secundum Carnem intelligunt, adversantur his, qui secundum spiritum sentiunt, & persequuntur eos. *In Genesiæ Hom.* vii.

[355] In Fifth *Discourse*, p. 67.

[356] In his Preface, *p.* 17, 18.

[357] *Vindication in Preface, p.* ix. x.

[358] *Fair State of the Controversy*, p. 293, 294.

[359] *In his Preface*, p. xi.

[360] *Vindication*, p. 2.

[361] *Defence of Christianity*, p. 295, 310.

[362] *Some Observations of a Layman.* 2. Tom *of* Bedlam'*s Letter to his Cousin*

T. Woolston. 3. *For God or the Devil: Or, Just Chastisement no Persecution.* 4. *A Defence of the Scripture-History, &c.*

[363] *In his* First Pastoral Letter, p. 5.

[364] *In his Preface*, p. ix.

[365] *In his Dedication to the Queen.*

[366] Siquidem Symbola quædam erant, quæ tunc gerebantur, eorum quæ Jesu virtute semper perficiuntur. *In Matt.* C. xv.

[367] Peragunt Formam futuri Gesta præsentia. *In Matt.* C. xxi.

[368] Quæ a Jesu facta alicujus significantia erant. *In Serm.* lxxvii.

[369] Ipse Salvator noster apertissimè ostendit, quòd ejus miracula aliquid significent, dum ea faciendo aliquid agit, quod ratione carere videatur. *In Hom. quarta post Dominic. quartam.*

[370] *In his Preface*, p. xi.

[371] *Ibid.* p. x.

[372] Similitudo erat & Typus futurorum unumquodque, quod Jesus faciebat in Corpore. *In Isai.* C. vi.

[373] Adventus Christi unus quidem in Humilitate completus est, alius verò speratur in Gloria: Et hic primus

Adventus in Carne, mystico quodam Sermone, in Scripturis sanctis umbra ejus appellatur. *In Jesu Nave*, C. viii.

[374] Pertingit ad usque secundum & diviniorem Christi Adventum Johannis Testimonium. *Origen. in Lucam. Tom.* V.

[375] Appropinquat enim Regnum Cœlorum, ut Scribæ qui in simplici Littera acquiescunt, resipiscentes ab ejusmodi Intellectu, erudiantur spirituali Doctrina, quæ est per Jesum Christum, vivum Verbum, quæ vocatur Regnum Cœlorum. *In Matt.* C. xiii.

[376] *P.* 123, 124.

[377] *P.* 124.

[378] *P.* 108.

[379] *P.* 93.

[380] *P.* 94.

[381] Ibid.

[382] Nam idem Moses quamvis Veteris Testamenti verba in literis condidisset, tamen separatim quædam ex occultis Legis secretiora mysteria septuaginta senioribus, qui Doctores deinceps manerent, intimaverat. *In Psal.* ii. Sect. 2.

[383] *P.* 96.

[384] *Origenes* decem scripsit Stromateas, omnia nostræ religionis dogmata de *Platone*, *Aristotele*, *Numenio*, *Cornutoque* confirmans. *In Epist. ad Magnum.*

[385] *Defence of Christianity*, p. 345.

[386] *P.* 347, 353, 358.

[387] *P.* 341.

[388] *P.* 344.

[389] Perspicuum est Mosem mentis acie Legis Veritatem Historiarumque apud Scripturam Allegorias juxta Anagogen vidisse. *In Johan. Tom.* VI.

[390] Asseverant Judæi, deum Mosi primùm Legem scriptam tradidisse, arque hanc postea in longo illo Dierum 40 spatio, quo in monte apud se agebat Moses, exposuisse, ita ut singulorum præceptorum genuinum Sensum, Causas, & Fines tum Rationem quoque eadem adimplendi illi accurate declararet. *Apud Wagens. Tel. ignea.* p. 580.

[391] See *Basnage*'s History of the *Jews*, p. 189.

[392] Doctioribus inter Judæos notissimum est, quod Moses qui primus fuit Salvator Israelis, etiam in omni Vita & Operibus suis fuerit Typus & Figura ultimi Redemptoris. *Christiani Meyer* de Gen. Christi, *p.*

145.

[393] Judæi veteres expectabant similem Ægyptiacæ Liberationem, ut scilicet Pharoah & omnis ejus Exercitus qui per 430 Annos Populum Dei captivum tenuit, in mari rubro submersus est; sic etiam Romani qui eodem Annorum numero Judæos possessuri, ultione Domini deleantur. *In Joelis* C. iii.

[394] 1 Cor. *C.* x, 1, 2, 6.

[395] Eloquar Propositiones sive Ænigmata ab Initio, id est, ex quo Populi Congregatio adducta est ex Ægypto. *In Ps.* lxxvii. *Sect.* 4.

[396] See *Basnage*'s History of the *Jews*, p. 189.

[397] *P.* 108.

[398] 2 *Cor.* iii. 6.

[399] Et non Litera Legis, sed ejus Spiritus, hoc est, Novitas Testamenti. *Tertull. contra Marcion*, Lib. V. C. 11.

[400] Veteris Testamenti ad Novum tanta Congruentia, ut Apex nullus, qui non consonet, relinquetur. *Sti. Augustini de Utilit. Credendi*, Sect. 9.

[401] Jucundum est istum Consensum intelligere circa convenientia duorum Testamentorum. *In Matt. Tract.* 6.

[402] *In his Expostulatory Letter to Mr.* Woolston.

[403] *In his* Lent Sermon *at St.* Saviour's, Anno 1729.

[404] *In his Preface*, p. xvii.

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- Inconsistent hyphenation has been left as in the original text.
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- The long s has been replaced with the modern s in order to improve readability.
- In some cases the footnotes refer to the text prior to the footnote anchor and in some cases they refer to the text after. All anchors have been attached to the word before the anchor.
- Bishop Smalbroke and Smallbroke are used interchangeably throughout as are Lichfield and Litchfield, left as in the original text.
- Inconsistent italicising appears throughout, left as in the original text.
- There are several words that are consistently misspelled and also correctly spelled in the

text (i.e. litteral, sensless, antient, ideot), these were left as in the original text.

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