A FREE INQUIRY INTO THE MIRACULOUS POWERS,
Which are supposed to have subsisted in the CHRISTIAN CHURCH,
From the Earliest Ages through several successive CENTURIES.

By which it is shewn,
That we have no sufficient Reason to believe, upon the Authority of the Primitive Fathers,
That any such Powers were continued to the Church, after the Days of the Apostles.

By CONYERS MIDDLETON, D. D.

He sunt religiones, quas sibi a Majoribus suis traditas pertinacissime tueri ac defendere perferant: nec considerant quales sint, sed ex hoc probatas atque versus esse confidunt, quod eas Veteres tradiderunt. Tantaque est auctoritas vetustatis, ut inquirere in eam, tempus esse ducatur. Itaque creditur ei paenit, quam cognitae veritati.

Lactant. Div. Inst. 1. 2. c. 7.

Τὰς καὶ ἀλήθειαν ἐστείλα τῷ Ὑποστάσις, μόνον τὰ ἀληθικὰ τιμὰς ἐὰν τείχει, δρ λέος ὑπάρχει. Ὑμεῖς δὲ μνήμαντε ὡς διάδωσαν διὰ τοὺς παλαιοὺς ξακολούθησίν, ἐν φθοραὶ δὲ αὐτίν.

Justin Mart. Apol. 1.


Cic. Tusc. Quaest. 5. 20.

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Dr. Middleton's Free Inquiry &c. having been printed in such haste, and at such a season of the year, that the sheets have not had sufficient time to dry, it is thought proper to give this notice to Gentlemen, not to have their books bound in less than two months or they will run the hazard of having them spoiled.
PRÆFACI.

WHEN I first went abroad my Introdūctory Discourse, this larger work, which I then promised, and now offer to the public, was actually prepared, and intended to have been published at the same time and in the same form, in which it now appears, with that Discourse prefixed to it. But when I recollected the great importance of the subject, which had never before been professedly examined; and that the part especially, which I had undertaken to defend, was not only new, but contradictory to the general opinion, which prevails among Christians; and above all, that I had nothing to trust to in the management of it, but my own private judgment; I began to think it a duty, which candor and prudence prescribed, not to alarm the public at once with an argument so strange and so little understood; nor to hazard an experiment so big with consequences, till I had first given out some sketch or general plan of what I was project[ing]; so that all, who were disposed to examine it, might have notice and leisure, to inquire into
into the grounds of it, and qualify themselves to form a proper judgment of that evidence, which I might afterwards produce in its defence. I was in hopes also, by this method, of reaping some benefit to myself, from the opportunity, which it would give, not onely of drawing out other people's sentiments, but, if any just cause should be offered, of changing even my own; while I kept it still in my power, either to drop the pursuit of my scheme, or to reform it, in such a manner, as any new light or better information might happen to direct me.

This was my view, in publishing a separate edition of the Introductory Discourse: which, as I easily foresaw, was sure to encounter all the opposition, that prejudice, bigotry, and superstition are ever prepared to give to all free inquiries into opinions, which depend on the prevalence of their power. I was aware, that the very novelty of it would offend, and the matter of it still more: that many would rise up against it, and some of them by writing, others, by noise and clamor, try to raise a popular odium upon it; but my comfort was, that this would excite the candid inquirers also, to take it into their consideration, and to weigh the merit
and consequences of it; and it was the judgement of these alone, by which I proposed to determine my future measures and resolution with regard to it.

The event has answered, not only to my expectation, but to my wishes: for notwithstanding all, which has been published against it, from the Presb, the Pulpit, and the Theological Schools, the general approbation, which it has everywhere received from those, whose authority I chiefly value, has given me the utmost encouragement to persevere in the prosecution of my argument, as being of the greatest importance to the Protestant religion, and the sole expedient, which can effectually secure it, from being gradually undermined, and finally subverted by the efforts of Rome.

But besides the favorable reception, which it has met with both among the Clergy and the Layety, it was an unexpected satisfaction to me, to be informed lately by a friend, that Mr. Lock had many years ago declared the same opinion with mine, concerning the miracles of the Primitive Church, in a paragraph of his third Letter on Toleration; which I had never read or seen, but shall now offer to the reader.
reader in his own words; being persuaded, that the
authority of so eminent a writer, and so singularly
qualified by his talents and studies, to discern the
exact relations and consequences of things, will add
great weight and confirmation to the cause, which
I am here defending.

"And so I leave you, says Mr. Locke to his An-
tagonist, "to dispose of the credit of Ecclesiastical
writers, as you shall think fit, and by your au-
thority, to establish or invalidate theirs, as you
please. But this, I think, is evident, that he,
who will build his faith or reasonings upon mira-
cles delivered by Church-Historians, will find
cause to go no farther than the Apostles time, or
else, not to stop at Constantine's: since the writers
after that period, whose word we take, as unques-
tionable in other things, speak of miracles in
their time with no less assurance, than the Fa-
thers before the fourth century: and a great part
of the miracles of the second and third centuries
stand upon the credit of the writers of the fourth.
So that, that sort of argument, which takes and
rejects the testimony of the ancients at pleasure,
as it may best suit with it, will not have much
force
force with those, who are not disposed to em-
brace the hypothesis, without any arguments at
all [1]."

As to the writers, who have hitherto declared
themselves against this opinion, signified here in short
by Mr. Lock, and explained at large by myself,
they have shewn a great eagerness indeed, to disting-
guish their zeal, but a very little knowledge of the
question, which they have undertaken to discuss;
urged by the hopes of those honors, which they
have seen others acquire, by former attacks upon
me; and, like true soldiers of the militant Church,
prepared to fight for every establishment, that offers
such pay and rewards to its defenders. Who, from a
blind deference to authority, think the credibility of
a witness sufficient, to evince the certainty of all
facts indifferently, whether natural or supernatu-
ral, probable or improbable; and knowing no di-
inction between faith and credulity, take a facility
of believing, to be the surest mark of a sound
Christian. Their arguments are conformable to their
principles: for instead of entering into the merits of
the cause, and shewing my opinion to be false or

[1] See Lett. 3d on Tolerat. c. x. p. 269:
contradictory to any truth subsisting in the world, they think it a full confutation of it, to prove it contrary to the belief of the primitive ages, to the testimony of the ancient Fathers, and to the tradition of the Catholic Church: by the help of which venerable names, they insinuate fears and jealousies, of I know not what consequences, dangerous to Christianity, ruinous to the faith of History, and introductory of an universal Scepticism. Terrors purely imaginary; grounded on error and prejudice; which if suffered to prevail, would produce consequences much more to be dreaded; subversive of all true religion, as well as of every thing else, that is rational and virtuous among men. But after all their invectives, it is a pleasure to find them obliged, in the course of the debate, to confute their own clamors; and to declare at last with me, that, whatever be the fate of my argument, or were it allowed even to be true, the credit of the Gospel-miracles could not in any degree be shaken by it [1].

But to speak my mind freely on the subject of consequences. I am not so scrupulous perhaps in my regard to them, as many of my profession are apt to

be: my nature is frank and open, and warmly disposed, not only to seek, but to speak what I take to be true: which disposition has been greatly confirmed by the situation, into which Providence has thrown me. For I was never trained to pace in the trammels of the Church, nor tempted by the sweets of its preferments, to sacrifice the philosophic freedom of a studious, to the servile restraints of an ambitious life: and from this very circumstance, as often as I reflect upon it, I feel that comfort in my own breast, which no external honors can bestow. I persuade myself, that the life and faculties of man, at the best but short and limited, cannot be employed more rationally or laudably, than in the search of knowledge; and especially of that sort, which relates to our duty, and conduces to our happiness. In these Inquiries therefore, wherever I perceive any glimmering of truth before me; I readily pursue, and endeavour to trace it to its source; without any reserve or caution of pushing the discovery too far, or opening too great a glare of it to the public. I look upon the discovery of any thing which is true, as a valuable acquisition to society; which cannot possibly hurt, or obstruct the good effect
fect of any other truth whatsoever: for they all partake of one common essence, and necessarily coincide with each other; and like the drops of rain, which fall separately into the river, mix themselves at once with the stream, and strengthen the general current.

The light of truth indeed is sure to expose the vanity of all those popular systems and prejudices, which are to be found in every country; derived originally from error, fraud, or superstition; and craftily imposed upon the many, to serve the interests of a few. Hence it is, that upon the detection of any of these, and especially of the religious kind, we see all that rage of fierce Bigots, hypocritical Zealots, and interested Politicians; and of all, whose credit or fortunes in any manner depend on the establishment of error and ignorance among men: and hence, all those horrible massacres and persecutions, of which we frequently read, both in Pagan and Christian Countries, which, under the pretext of serving God, have destroyed so many thousands of his best servants. But truth was never known to be on the persecuting side, or to have had any other effect, than to promote the general good, and to co-operate with

Heaven
Heaven itself, in bringing us still nearer to the perfection of our being, and to the knowledge of that eternal rule of good and ill, which God originally marked out and prescribed to the nature of man. Let the consequences then of truth reach as far as they can; the farther they reach the better: the more errors they will detect, and the more they will dissipate of those clouds and mists, in which the crafty and interested part of mankind are apt to involve and disguise the real nature of things, from the view of their fellow creatures.

The present question, concerning the reality of the miraculous powers of the primitive Church, depends on the joint credibility of the facts, pretended to have been produced by those powers, and of the witnesses, who attest them. If either part be infirm, their credit must sink in proportion; and if the facts especially be incredible, must of course fall to the ground: because no force of testimony can alter the nature of things. The credibility of facts lies open to the trial of our reason and senses, but the credibility of witnesses depends on a variety of principles, wholly concealed from us; and tho' in many cases, it may reasonably be presumed, yet in none,
can it certainly be known. For it is common with men, out of crafty and selfish views, to dissemble and deceive; or, out of weakness and credulity, to embrace and defend with zeal, what the craft of others had imposed upon them: but plain facts cannot delude us; cannot speak any other language, or give any other information, but what flows from nature and truth. The testimony therefore of facts, as it is offered to our senses, in this wonderfull fabric and constitution of worldly things, may properly be called the testimony of God himself; as it carries with it the surest instruction in all cases, and to all nations, which in the ordinary course of his providence, he has thought fit to appoint for the guidance of human life.

But before we proceed, to examine the particular facts and testimonies, which antiquity has furnished for the decision of this dispute, our first care should be, to inform ourselves of the proper nature and condition of those miraculous powers, which are the subject of it, as they are represented to us in the history of the Gospel: for till we have learnt from those sacred records, what they really were, for what purposes granted, and in what manner exerted by the
the Apostles and first possessors of them, we cannot form a proper judgement on those evidences, which are brought either to confirm or confute their continuance in the Church, and must dispute consequently at random, as chance or prejudice may prompt us, about things unknown to us.

And this indeed appears to be the case of all these zealous Champions, who have attempted to refute the *Introductory Discourse*. Among whom, I have not observed one, who seems to have spent a thought, in considering the origin and use of those powers, as they are set forth in the New Testament. They appeal indeed to the Texts, in which they were promised by our Lord to his disciples: where tho' there is not the least hint of any particular time, for which they were to last, yet this they supply from their own imagination, and by the help of a postulatum, which all people will grant, *that they continued as long, as they were necessary to the Church*, they presently extend that necessity to what length they please, or as far as they find it agreeable to the several systems, which they had previously entertained about them.
PRÆFACÆ.

They urge especially that passage from St. Mark, in which our Lord, just ready to ascend into Heaven, and giving his last instructions to his Apostles, to go and preach to all nations, immediately adds; And these signs shall follow them who believe: in my name they shall cast out Devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover [1].

From these words, one of my Antagonists argues thus: “It will here be observed, that this promise was not made to the Apostles personally, but to them, that should believe through their preaching, without any limitation of time for the continuance of these powers to their days. And when it is considered how great a part of the Heathen world remained unconverted after their days, it is no unreasonable supposition, that these powers did not expire with the Apostles, but were continued to their Successors, in the work of propagating the Gospel. How long, I say not: and perhaps there is not light enough in history, to settle this point; as indeed it nothing concerns

us. But the earliest Fathers unanimously affirm, that these powers subsisted in the Church in their days; and why they are not to be believed, it is the Author's business to shew [1].

Another Advocate of the same cause makes the following remark on the same passage: "Our Saviour, before he left the world, promises these miraculous powers not only to the Apostles, but to private Christians: and the rules and directions, which St. Paul afterwards gave the Corinthians, concerning the exercise of them, plainly shew, that they must have continued some considerable time in the Church. And as Christ's promise is without any limitation of time, we may reasonably suppose, that they lasted as long as the Church had an immediate occasion for them, such as the farther conversion of the world."—For which purpose of converting those nations, who had not as yet heard of the Gospel, he declares it, "to be necessary, that the Successors of the Apostles should be indued with miraculous powers, especially with the gift of tongues, without which they could not expect, any considerable success — and he

concludes therefore, that it is highly probable, if not absolutely certain, that they did actually sub-
still in the Church for some considerable time, af-
er the days of the Apostles [1]."

It being agreed then, that in the original promise of these miraculous gifts, there is no intimation of any particular period, to which their continuance was limited, the next question is, by what sort of evidence the precise time of their duration is to be determined? But to this point one of the writers just referred to, excuses himself, as we have seen, from giving any answer; and thinks it sufficient to declare in general, that the earliest Fathers unanimously affirm them to have continued down to their times. Yet he has not told us, as he ought to have done, to what age he limits the character of the earliest Fathers; whether to the second or to the third century, or, with the generality of our writers, means also to include the 4th. But to whatever age he may restrain it, the difficulty at last will be, to assign a reason, why we must needs stop there. In the mean while, by his appealing thus to the earliest


Fathers
Fathers onely, as unanimous on this article, a common reader would be apt to infer, that the later Fathers are more cold or diffident, or divided upon it; whereas the reverse of this is true, and the more we descend from those earliest Fathers, the more strong and explicit we find their Successors, in attesting the perpetual succession and daily exertion of the same miraculous powers, in their several ages: so that if the cause must be determined by the unanimous consent of Fathers, we shall find as much reason to believe, that those powers were continued even to the latest ages, as to any other, how early and primitive forever, after the days of the Apostles.

But the same writer gives us two reasons, why he does not choose to say any thing upon the subject of their duration: 1st, because, there is not light enough in history, to settle it: 2dly, because, the thing itself is of no concern to us.

As to his first reason, I am at a loss to conceive, what farther light a professed Advocate of the primitive ages and Fathers can possibly require in this case. For as far as the Church-Historians can illustrate or throw light upon any thing, there is not a single point in all history, so constantly, explicitly
and unanimously affirmed by them all, as the continual succession of these powers through all ages, from the earliest Father, who first mentions them, down to the time of the Reformation. Which same succession is still farther deduced, by persons of the most eminent character, for their probity, learning, and dignity in the Romish Church, to this very day. So that the onely doubt, which can remain with us, is; whether the Church-Historians are to be trusted or not: for if any credit be due to them in the present case, it must reach either to all, or to none: because the reason of believing them in any one age, will be found to be of equal force in all, as far as it depends on the characters of the persons attesting, or the nature of the things attested.

The second reason is still more curious; that the point of their duration is of no concern to us. This indeed is strange, from a writer of his principles; for if primitive antiquity, as all these champions contend, is to be the rule, of regulating the doctrines and discipline of all modern Churches, it must surely be of the utmost concern to us to know, how far its authority may be trusted, and how far the hand
hand of God continued to co-operate visibly with the saints of those ages, by giving a divine sanction to the doctrines, which they taught, and the rites, which they established. For that God did actually exert himself in such an extraordinary manner, in those primitive days, this writer affirms from the unanimous testimony of the earliest Fathers; yet owns withal, that the same ages were imposed upon also by false and fictitious pretensions to miraculous powers. As far therefore, as it is our duty, to conform ourselves to the doctrines and usages of those early ages, so far it must be of great importance, to have a rule of distinguishing the true from the false; of discerning those, which God had stamped with his authority for the common good of mankind, from those, which fraud and craft had imposed, for the private interest of a few Impostors: towards which, nothing could afford more light and help to us, than to know the precise duration of true miracles, and to be able to pronounce, that they proceeded thus far and no farther. On my part indeed, it might very consistently be said, that it is of no use to inquire or dispute how long those powers subsisted, since, according to my principles, they never subsisted at all,
after the days of the Apostles: but when a writer affirms the Primitive Church to be a guide to us, and to have been indued with miraculous powers, for the confirmation of its divine authority, yet declares it of no concern to us, to know, how long those powers continued in it, or at what time God was pleased to withdraw them, on account of the prevailing corruptions and forgeries of the same Church, he acts not only in contradiction to his own principles, but to reason and common sense, and betrays a great want either of judgement or sincerity.

The argument also, which these writers alledge for the continuance of miracles, and especially of the gift of tongues, from the unconverted state of the Heathen world, is not less impertinent and injudicious: because it might have been alledged as justly and with equal force, through all ages of the Church, from the Apostolic times down to our own; and will justify the Romanists themselves in their pretensions to the same powers at this very day: since the greatest part of this habitable Globe remains still in the same unconverted state; immersed in gross idolatry; without any knowledge of the true God, or light of the Gospel among them.

But
P RÆFACE.

But in truth, this same consideration, of the unconverted state of the Heathens, was thought to have so much weight in it by Grotius, as to persuade him from a parity, both of reason, and of evidence also, which was found in every age, that these extraordinary gifts were certainly continued to the later, as well as to the earlier times of the Church. Nay, he took the conversion of the Heathens, to be an occasion so worthy of the divine interposition, as not to doubt, he says, but, that if any person were employed in it at this day, in a manner agreeable to the will of our Lord, he would find himself indued with a power of working miracles [1]. From which declaration, of so learned and judicious a Critic, we may observe in the first place, what I have elsewhere frequently signified; how naturally the allowance of those powers to the earlier ages, will engage us, if we are consistent with ourselves, to allow the same also to the later ages: and, in the second place, how fallacious the judgement even of the wisest will ever

[1] Cum vero suo etiam seriora secula plena sint testimonii ejus rei, necio qua ratione moti quidam id donum ad prima tantum tempora restringant.—— Quare siquis nunc etiam Gentibus Christi ignaris—— Christum, in ut ipse annunciari volui, annunciat, promissionis vim duraturam non dubito. In Mare. xvi. 17.
be found, when deserting the path of nature and experience, and giving the reins to fancy and conjecture, they attempt to illustrate the secret councils of Providence.

For experience has long taught us, that tho' all the different Churches and Sects of Christians, have sent abroad their several Missionaries, to propagate the Gospel among the remote and Idolatrous nations, yet none of them have ever been enabled to work a single miracle in confirmation of their mission. The Romanists indeed make a pretension to such a power, and boast of several miracles performed by their Missionaries in both the Indies: yet, as I have elsewhere observed, one of their gravest writers has openly acknowledged the vanity of such pretensions; and one of their most eminent wonder-workers, St. Francis Xavier, called the Apostle of the Indies, laments in some of his letters, "that through his ignorance of the language of those nations: he found himself incapable of doing any service to the Christian cause, and was but little better than a mute Statue among them, till he could acquire some competent knowledge of it: for which purpose, he was forced to act the boy again, and apply him-
himgelf to the task of learning the rudiments of it [1]."

Now this gift of tongues is what the adversaries of my scheme lay the greatest stress upon. They declare it to be so peculiarly necessary to the propagation of the Gospel, that no considerable success could be expected without it; and from this necessity infer the certainty of its continuance after the days of the Apostles. But they will have the mortification to find, in the sequel of this work, their imaginary hypothesis effectually confuted by the evidence of real fact; and this very gift, of whose continuance they are so assured, to have been of all others, the most evidently and confessedly withdrawn, in the earliest ages of the Church. They will find, I say, that the single Father, who lays any claim to it, and one of the gravest and most venerable of them all, laments, like the Romish Apostle of the Indies, his own want of it, in the work of propagating the Gospel among a rude and barbarous people: and that, in all the succeeding ages, while all the other kinds of miraculous gifts are frequently celebrated, and affirmed to flourish

still in great abundance, there is not a single instance to be met with of this, nor the least pretension made to it by any writer whatsoever.

From this fact, and many more of the same sort, which might be produced, the reader will observe, how rash and presumptuous it is, to form arguments so peremptorily upon the supposed necessity or propriety of a divine interposition, in this or that particular case; and to decide upon the views and motives of the Deity, by the narrow conceptions of human reason. Whereas the whole, which the wit of man can possibly discover, either of the ways or will of the Creator, must be acquired by a contrary method; not by imagining vainly within ourselves, what may be proper or improper for him to do; but by looking abroad, and contemplating, what he has actually done; and attending seriously to that revelation, which he made of himself from the beginning, and placed continually before our eyes, in the wonderfull works, and beautifull fabric of this visible world.

There is another mistake, which is common to all these Advocates of the primitive miracles, and the chief source of their prejudices against the Introductory
in taking it for granted, as they all do, that these miraculous powers, when they had once been conferred by our Lord, upon any of his Disciples, were ever after perpetually inherent in them, and ready to be exerted at their will and pleasure: whereas it is evident, from several instances, both of the collation and exercise of them, which we find in the New Testament, that they were merely temporary and occasional; adapted to particular exigencies, thought worthy of them by our Lord; and imparted only at the moment of their exertion, which, by some special impulse, was notified at the same time to the agent; and as soon as those particular occasions were served, they were withdrawn again or suspended, and the Agents reduced to the condition of all other men, and left to the guidance of their own natural prudence.

This, I say, is evident, from the account of these gifts and the effects of them, which is given to us in the Gospel; as it has been observed also and declared by some of the best Expositors. Thus Grotius, in his comment on our Lord's promise of them to all true believers, remarks; *that these wonderfull faculties were severally distributed to each faithful Disciple, yet not*
so, as to be exerted of themselves, or at pleasure, but reserved to special occasions[1]. And the same thing is signified by our Lord himself, in his first promise of them to his Apostles, when he sent them out, two by two, to preach his Gospel to the Jews: on which occasion he tells them, that when they were brought before Governors and Kings, they should not take any thought, about what they were to say for themselves, for it would be given to them, in that very hour, what they should speak[2]. And that it was not peculiar to the gift of language or tongues onely, to be given at the moment of it's exertion, but common likewise to all the rest, will be shewn probably, on some other occasion, more at large in a particular treatise, which is already prepared by me, on that subject.

As this then was the state of those extraordinary powers, with which our Lord thought fit, to arm his Apostles, against the first struggles and difficulties of their mission; so in his more intimate conversations with them, we find him frequently inculcating,

as an essentiaL qualification also for the same mission, the practice of all those moral virtues, which are peculiarly adapted to conciliate the favor and good will of men: a general benevolence, modesty, affability, gentleness of behaviour, with great circumspection and caution of giving offence. Behold, says he, I send ye forth as sheep, in the midst of wolves: be ye wise therefore as serpents, and harmless as doves [1]: as if he meant to admonish them, that they were not to be perpetually directed by divine impulses and inspirations, but left on many occasions to the ordinary direction of their own natural faculties: and that their success would depend as much on the purity of their lives, as the force of their wonderfull works: and that the miraculous gifts, which were indulged to them, in this infancy of the Gospel, were intended to draw people's attention more strongly to the contemplation of their manners; and to make them reflect on the excellency of that doctrine, which produced such rare fruits, and offered such examples of innocence and sanctity, for the correction of a depraved and sinful world.


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The writers however, of whom I am speaking, preposessed with the notion of the perpetual inherence of those powers, in all, who had once been in-duced with them, harangue with great gayety on the folly, which they impute to me, of imagining, that they should all be extinguished in a moment, upon the death of the last of the Apostles. They ob-serve, that St. John outlived all the rest near forty years; and that some of the most eminent and gifted of the other disciples, who are mentioned in the Gos-pel, survived him also, and were employing them-selves, in different parts of the earth, in propagating the Gospel, and working perpetual miracles for the conversion of Unbelievers; and it was incredible, that these powers, which they were exerting every hour, with such success and honor to the Christian cause, in all the principal Cities and countries of the world, and at so wide a distance from each other, should all fail them at once, and expire at that very instant, in which St. John happened to die at Ephe-sus.

But while they fancy themselves, to be displaying the force of their reasoning and eloquence, they are but exposing their own ignorance, not onely of
the nature of those extraordinary powers, which are
the ground of the dispute, but of the particular
question, against which they are disputing. For it
is no where affirmed in the Introductory Discourse,
as their way of arguing implies, that those powers ei-
ther vanished instantaneously, upon the death of St.
John; or subsisted even so long, as St. John remain-
ed alive: but the single point in dispute, as far as
it arises from that Discourse, is, whether we have
sufficient ground to believe, upon the testimony of
the ancient Fathers, that they subsisted at all, after
the days of the Apostles.

If the nature then of these powers be such, as I
have signified above, and shall endeavour hereafter
to demonstrate; and if what I am now disputing
with regard to the same powers, should appear also
to be true; some perhaps may be apt to demand,
what it is, that we are to judge at last, concerning
their real duration; and to what period we may
reasonably venture to restrain them. And tho' such
a demand be rather curious than pertinent, and
the solution of it of no consequence to the point
in debate; yet as we cannot help forming some
opinion on all subjects, which have fallen
under
under our particular observation, so I shall not scruple to declare in this, what I take to be the most probable, as far as I have been able to collect it, from the facts and instances relating to it, which are to be found in the New Testament: but I propose it only as a conjecture, which may excite others also, to search, and to guess for themselves, till they can hit upon something more satisfactory. In the mean while, my opinion in short is this; that in those first efforts of planting the Gospel, after our Lord's ascension, the extraordinary gifts, which he had promised, were poured out in the fullest measure on the Apostles, and those other Disciples, whom he had ordained to be the primary Instruments of that great work; in order to enable them, more easily to overrule the inveterate prejudices both of the Jews and Gentiles, and to bear up against the discouraging shocks of popular rage and persecution, which they were taught to expect, in this noviciate of their ministry. But in process of time, when they had laid a foundation, sufficient to sustain the great fabric designed to be erected upon it, and, by an invincible courage, had conquered the first and principal difficulties; and planted
planted Churches in all the chief Cities of the Roman Empire, and settled a regular ministry to succeed them, in the government of the same; it may reasonably be presumed, that as the benefit of miraculous powers began to be less and less wanted, in proportion to the increase of those Churches, so the use and exercise of them began gradually to decline; and as soon as Christianity had gained an establishment in every quarter of the known world, that they were finally withdrawn, and the Gospel left to make the rest of its way, by its own genuine strength, and the natural force of those divine graces, with which it was so richly stored, faith, hope, and charity: graces! which never fail to inspire all, who truly possess them, with a zeal and courage, which no terrors can daunt, nor worldly powers subdue. And all this, as far as I am able to judge, from the nature of the gifts themselves, and from the instances or effects of them, which I have any where observed, may probably be thought to have happened, while some of the Apostles were still living: who, in the times even of the Gospel, appear, on several occasions, to have been destitute of any extraordinary gifts:
gifts: and of whose miracles, when we go beyond the limits of the Gospel, we meet with nothing in the later histories, on which we can depend, or nothing rather, but what is apparently fabulous. And as to St. John in particular, who survived all the rest, the whole, that is delivered of him with any probability, is, “that he spent the last years of his life in writing his Gospel and Revelations, and in visiting and confirming all those Churches of Asia, which had been planted by himself and his brethren, and were allotted to him, as his peculiar province [1].” But in the miraculous kind, the principal story related of him, is, that being thrown, by the command of Domitian, into a caldron of boiling oil, he came out safe and unhurt from it: in memory of which, a chapel was afterwards built, and is still remaining, at the Latine Gate of Old Rome; the spot, where the fact is supposed to have happened; in which I saw the story of it represented in painting. Yet this, with a few other trifling tales, which are recorded of the same Apostle,

[1] Vid. Testimonia de Johanne, præfixa Evangelio ejus a Millio, in Editione N. T.

may
may justly be considered, as the fiction of the later ages.

But to return once more to the subject of the following sheets. The reader will find in them none of those arts, which are commonly employed by disputants, either to perplex a good cause, or to palliate a bad one; no subtil refinements, forced constructions, or evasive distinctions; but plain reasoning grounded on plain facts, and published with an honest and disinterested view, to free the minds of men from an inveterate imposture, which, through a long succession of ages, has disgraced the religion of the Gospel, and tyrannized over the reason and senses of the Christian world. In the pursuit of which end, I have shewn, by many indisputable facts, that the ancient Fathers, by whose authority that delusion was originally imposed, and has ever since been supported, were extremely credulous and superstitious; possessed with strong prejudices and an enthusiastic zeal, in favor, not onely of Christianity in general, but of every particular doctrine, which a wild imagination could ingraft upon it; and scrupling no art or means, by which they might propagate the fame
same principles. In short; that they were of a character, from which nothing could be expected, that was candid and impartial; nothing, but what a weak or crafty understanding could supply, towards confirming those prejudices, with which they happened to be possessed; especially where religion was the subject, which above all other motives, strengthens every bias, and inflames every passion of the human mind. And that this was actually the case, I have shewn also by many instances; in which we find them roundly affirming as true, things evidently false and fictitious; in order to strengthen, as they fancied, the evidences of the Gospel; or to serve a present turn of confuting an adversary; or of enforcing a particular point, which they were laboring to establish.

The chief instrument, by which they acquired and maintained their credit in the world, was an appeal to a divine and miraculous power, as residing continually among them, and giving testimony to the truth of what they taught and practised. This is the particular question, which I have undertaken here to examine: and, I persuade myself, that, as far as a negative can be demonstrated, I have proved all
all their appeals and positive attestations to be unworthy of any credit; mere words unsupported by facts; and in many cases directly confuted by opposite facts and testimonies. For example; among the miraculous gifts, which are expressly claimed by the Fathers, we find these three; the gift of raising the dead; of speaking with tongues; of understanding the holy Scriptures. Now, with regard to the two first, the most signal and important of all gifts, after weighing all the circumstances relating to them, and all that antiquity has delivered concerning them, I find the strongest reason to be convinced, that there never was a genuine instance of either of them, in any age, after the days of the Apostles: which I collect, not only from the improbability of the things themselves, as they are affirmed by the Fathers, but from facts also, which evince the contrary. And as to the third gift; it is allowed and frankly confessed by all, as well friends as enemies; that instead of a divine and infallible interpretation of the Scriptures, a most absurd and ridiculous method of interpreting them, was the very characteristic even of the earliest ages.
xxxiv  P R Æ F A C E.

If any one therefore should be disposed to answer or confute, what I have affirmed in this book, he must take a different method, from what my Antagonists have hitherto pursued; must not expect, to bear down facts with systems; and from the supposed integrity and piety of the Fathers, to infer the certainty of what they attested: but must refer us to instances, which tally with their testimonies, and experimentally prove the truth of them. When any of the Fathers tell us then, that many were raised from the dead in their days, in every place where there was a Christian Church, and lived afterwards several years among them; and that others were heard to speak in all kinds of languages: these Answerers must shew, how these testimonies were verified by facts; and what particular persons were so raised, and indued with languages; or must allege at least some special effects of those miracles, credibly reported by the ancient writers, either Heathens or Christians. Again, when any of them declare, that they were inlightened by the grace of God, with the gift of understanding the Scriptures: it must be shewn, that those specimens, which
which they have given, as the fruit and proof
of that gift, will justify such a pretension, and
may reasonably pass for divinely inspired. This
I say, is the onely way of answering, which can
satisfy men of sense; and what alone can in
any manner affect or invalidate the force of my
argument.
THE

Introductory Discourse.

It is an opinion commonly received among Christians, and above all, among those of the Romish communion, that after the days of the Apostles, there resided still in the Primitive Church, through several successive ages, a divine and extraordinary power of working miracles, which was frequently and openly exerted, in confirmation of the truth of the Gospel, and for the conviction of unbelievers. This is generally alleged by the Divines of all Churches, in their disputes with the Sceptics, as a subsidiary proof of the Divinity of the Christian Doctrine; and as it is managed by the Church of Rome, is rendered more persuasive and affecting to the multitude, than what the Gospel itself affords, by deducing the succession of those apostolical gifts down to our own times, and offering
offering the testimony of the same miracles to the senses even of the present Age.

This then being universally adopted by the Papists, as an indisputable fact, or an article rather of the Christian Faith; and espoused likewise in part by the Protestants, as subservient in some degree to the Christian cause, I thought it my duty to inquire into the grounds of it. For as it is the part of every Christian, to inform himself, as far as he is able, of every thing, which his religion requires him, either to believe or to practice, so it is more especially of those, whom Providence has blessed with a capacity, and leisure, and the opportunities of inquiring; nor yet merely for their own information, but for the instruction likewise of others, who want the same advantages.

It was this, which gave rise to the present inquiry, and what induced me also, to publish the result of it. I was not led to the one, by an idle curiosity; nor to the other, by the vanity of combating established opinions, but the duty of declaring my own: which, by the most impartial judgement, that I am able to form, I take not onely to be true, but useful also, and even necessary to
to the defence of Christianity, as it is generally received, and ought always to be defended, in Protestant Churches.

But if the facts and testimonies, which obliged me to embrace it, should not have the same force, nor suggest the same reflections to others, I shall neither be surprized, nor concerned at it: for it is every man's right to judge for himself; and a difference of opinion is as natural to us, as a difference of taste: and when the sensual faculties are perpetually passing different judgements on the same objects in different men, it cannot be thought strange, that the intellectual, in which nature seems to have formed a greater disparity, should act with the same variety. But if to the principles implanted in our nature, we add that peculiar bias, which every individual receives from education, example, or habit; and consider what strong prejudices, a zeal for opinions once imbibed, or an interest especially accruing from them, is apt to infill even into the better sort, we should have cause rather to wonder, that any number of men should ever be of one mind, in any question of difficulty or importance. Hence contrary doctrines in religion
are frequently deduced from the same texts, and contrary systems of politics, from the same monuments.

Whatever judgement therefore any other man may form, or whatever he may write, on the subject of this performance, I shall not easily be drawn into any controversy with him about it; but contenting myself with the discharge of my own conscience, by this free declaration of my real sentiments, and indulging the same liberty to every body else, shall leave the rest to the judgement of the public. I do not mean however, by this profession, to preclude myself so entirely from all farther concern with the present argument, as not to be ready on all occasions, to acknowledge any mistake, of which I may be convinced, in the representation of any fact, or testimony, or character, which I have applied to the support of it, and to retract it, in the same public manner, in which I committed it.

But besides that general obligation, which is common to me with all other Christians, of searching into the origin and evidences of our religion, I found myself particularly excited to this task, by what I had occasionally observed and heard, of the
late growth of Popery in this Kingdom, and the
great number of Popish books, which have been
printed and dispersed amongst us, within these few
years: in which their writers make much use of
that prejudice, in favor of primitive antiquity, which
prevails even in this Protestant Country, towards
drawing weak people into their cause, and shewing
their worship to be the best, because it is the most
conformable to that ancient pattern. But the most
powerful of all their arguments, and what gains
them the most proselytes, is, their confident attesta-
tion of miracles, as subsisting still in their Church,
and the clear succession of them, which they deduce
through all history, from the Apostolic times, down
to our own. This their Apologists never fail to dis-
play, with all the force of their rhetoric; and with
good reason; since it is a proof, of all others, the
most striking to vulgar minds, and the most decisive
indeed to all minds, as far as it is believed to be
true.

Thus one of their principal Champions, with
whom I have been engaged, demonstrates the or-
thodoxy of their faith, and their true descent from
that Church, to which our Lord has promised his
f
presence
presence to the end of the world. For speaking of the miracles of the Pagans, which I had opposed to those of the Papists, he says; "God has been pleased in every age, to work far more evident miracles in his Church, by the ministry of his Saints; in raising the dead to life; in curing the blind and the lame; in casting out Devils; in healing in a moment inveterate diseases, and the like stupendous works of his power; attested by the most authentic monuments; and very frequently, as may be seen in the acts of the canonization of Saints, by the depositions of innumerable eye-witnesses, examined upon oath; and by the public notoriety of the facts: which kind of miracles, so authentically attested, will be to all ages a standing evidence, that the Church, in whose Communion they have all been wrought, is not that idolatrous, pagan Church, which the Doctor pretends, but the true spouse of Christ." [a] And in a second piece,


N. B. I have been well informed, that among the deportees from the English army in Flanders, who were taken in the time of the late rebellion and shot to death in London, there was one, who professed to die in the Romish Communion, and being asked by the Clergyman, who
piece, which the same writer has since published, he promises to give us an history of the Christian miracles in a particular treatise, deduced, I suppose, from the earliest ages, down to the present.

Now these pious cheats of the Roman Church, as Mr. Leslie says, are the sorest disgraces of Christianity, and bid the fairest of any one contrivance to overturn the certainty of the miracles of Christ, and the whole truth of the Gospel, by putting them all upon the same foot [b]. This history therefore of miracles, which is promised by that writer, induced me, more particularly at this time, to inquire into the genuine state and succession of them, who affixed him, what were the motives, which induced him to forsake the religion, in which he was bred, made answer, "That a Priest of a very grave and civil behaviour had affixed him, that miracles had been wrought in confirmation of the Popish doctrine, and particularly, that a Protestant woman came one day to their Sacrament, with intent to make sport with it, and instead of swallowing the consecrated bread, found means to convey it into her pocket; but when she was making merry afterwards in company, with what she had done, and was going to produce the piece of bread, which she had pocketed, she found it changed into real flesh and blood." And he added, "that there was no reason to imagine, that a person, of so reverend a character, could have any design or interest, to deceive him in the attestation of such a miracle."

through all the several ages of the Christian Church, from the times of the Apostles; in order to discover the precise period and duration of them; and to settle some rule of discerning the true from the false; so as to be able to give a proper reason, for admitting the miracles of one age, and rejecting those of another.

It must be confessed however, in the first place, that this claim of a miraculous power, which is now peculiar to the Church of Rome, was universally asserted and believed in all Christian countries, and in all ages of the Church, till the time of the Reformation. For Ecclesiastical History makes no difference between one age and another; but carries on the succession of its miracles, as of all other common events, through all of them indifferently, to that memorable period. But the light of the Reformation dispelled the charm: and what Cicero fays of the Pythian Oracle, may be as truly said of the Popish miracles; when men began to be less credulous, their power vanished [c]. For that spirit of


[d] Some
of inquiry, with which Christendom was then animated, detected the cheat, and exposed to public view, the hidden springs and machinery of those lying wonders, by which the world had been seduced and enslaved to the tyranny of Rome [d].

And as the miracles of that age could not stand the test of a scrutiny, but were found, upon trial, to be the forgeries of a corrupt Clergy, so it gave just cause to suspect, that those golden legends of them, as they were called, which had been transmitted to them from their Ancestors, were of no better stamp, and that the Church of Christ had long been governed by the same arts. This also was found to be true by those, who made it their business, to

[d] Some of their Images were brought to London, and publicly broken there at St. Paul's Crofs, in the sight of the people; that they might be fully convinced of the juggling impostures of the Monks. And in particular, the Crucifix of Boxoley in Kent, commonly called the Rood of Grace; to which many pilgrimages had been made; because it was observed sometimes to bow, and to lift itself up; to shake and stir its head, hands and feet; to roll its eyes; move the lips; and bend its brows: all which were looked upon by the abused multitude, as the effects of a divine power. These were now publicly discovered to have been cheats. For the springs were shewed, by which all these motions were made, &c.

search into the records of past ages: where, though it was easy to trace the marks of the same fictions, exerted in the same manner, and for the same ends, even up to the early times of the primitive Church, yet it was difficult, to fix the origin of them, or to mark the precise æra, in which the cheat first began.

Many learned men among the Protestants have attempted indeed to settle this point; but with so little success, as to leave it at last as uncertain, as they found it; none of them having been able to adjust the exact limits between true and false miracles, or to shew, by any solid reason, how long after the days of the Apostles, the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit continued in the Church, or in what age they were actually withdrawn.

The most prevailing opinion is, that they subsisted through the three first Centuries, and then ceased in the beginning of the fourth; or as soon as Christianity came to be established by the civil power. This, I say, seems to be the most prevailing notion at this day, among the generality of the Protestants; who think it reasonable to imagine, that miracles
miracles should then cease, when the end of them was obtained, and the Church no longer in want of them; being now delivered from all danger, and secure of success, under the protection of the greatest power on earth.

Agreeably to this notion, Archbishop Tillotson says, "that on the first planting of the Christian religion in the world, God was pleased to accompany it with a miraculous power; but after it was planted, that power ceased, and God left it to be maintained by ordinary ways." And in another place, speaking of the particular gift, of casting out Devils, he observes, "that it continued the longest of any, and there was reason, that it should continue, as long as the Devil reigned, and Pagan Idolatry was kept up.—But when the powers of the world became Christian, and Satan's kingdom was everywhere destroyed, then this miraculous gift also ceased, there being no farther occasion for it."

The late Dr. Marshall also, who translated the works of St. Cyprian into English, taking notice of the continuance of

miracles and supernatural gifts, and especially of prophecy and visions, in that Cyprianic age, declares, "that there are successive evidences of them, which speak full and home to this point, from the beginning of Christianity, down to the age of Constantine, in whose times, when Christianity had acquired the support of human powers, those extraordinary assistance were discontinued [f]."

Yet this opinion, though generally received by the Protestants, is found liable still to such objections, and perplexed with such difficulties, that even those, who principally espouse it, cannot wholly acquiesce in it, but are forced to propose it with some reserve and exception.

Mr. Dodwell, one of the most zealous admirers of primitive Antiquity, and who has deduced the history of its miracles with the greatest accuracy, through the three first Centuries, closes his account of them, with the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity; not daring, as he frequently declares, to venture any farther, on account of the fabulous genius and manifest impostures.

[f] Epistles of Cyp. VII. not. b.
of the fourth Century [g]. But though he supposes
the true miracles to have generally ceased from
that time, yet he finds some particular instances of
them, so strongly attested by the Fathers of the best
credit; through the rest of the same century, that
he cannot but admit them, as exceptions to his ge-
eral rule [b].

Mr. Whiston contends, "that these miraculous
"powers were totally withdrawn at the very time
"when the Athanasian Heresy, as he calls it, was
"established by the second Council of Constan-
tinople, about A.D. 381: and that as soon as
"the Church became Athanasian, Antichristian, and

[g] Fateor ibi multa legi, quarti seculi impostorumque genium refe-
rentia, ut nihil ea certioribus immiscere—Quam fuerint quarti
seculi Scriptores fabulis dediti, & vita Pauli Hieronymiana; and Atha-
naeana Antonij, &c. intelligimus. Dissert. in Iren. 2. §. LV.

Ex ipsa miraculorum historia satis confit, a quarto tandem seculo
& temporebus. Eusebii, senem decrueisse vera, & in desuetudinem
abiisse miracula. ib. LIX.

Ego me infra prima secula contineo, ante receptam in Imperio
Christianitatem, &c. ib. LXII.

[b] Crysostomus—factur suo etiamnum tempore nonnulla fuisse
signa, sed & numero paucia, & locis variis hinc inde dispersa.—Qui
haec itaque agnovit negatis tamen aliis, erat procudubio & illa ag-
niturus, si pari omnia evidentia constitissent. ib. LIX.

" Popifi,
"Popish, they ceased immediately, and the Devil lent it his own cheating and fatal powers in their stead [f]."

Dr. Waterland on the other hand, the perpetual defender of Athanasius, in his treatise on *the importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, often affirms, "that the miraculous powers of the Church continued through the three first centuries at least, as a manifest proof, that the true faith was there preserved, where the spirit of truth so visibly resided [k]:" and in the addenda to the same work, he corrects himself, as it were, for a mistake, in confining them to such narrow limits, which, on the authority of Paulinus, he endeavours to extend, *to the latter end of the fourth century* [l].

Dr. Chapman declares, "that tho' the establishment of Christianity by the civil power, abated the necessity of miracles, and occasioned a visible decrease of them, yet after that revolution, there were instances of them still, as public, as clear, as well attested, as any in the earlier ages [m]."

[l] Ibid. p. 497.

And
And not content, like Dr. Waterland, with carrying the succession of them, to the end of the fourth century, he goes on to assure us, that the fifth also had its portion, tho' smaller than the fourth [n]: which he confirms by several instances, drawn from the middle of that fifth century, and then refers us to Dr. Berriman, for the accurate defence of another miracle, wrought in confutation of the Arian Heresy, which brings us to the end of it [o].

Thus these eminent Divines, pursuing their several systems, and ambitious of improving still upon each other's discoveries, seem unwarily to have betrayed the Protestant cause, by transferring the miraculous powers of the Church, the pretended insigns of truth and orthodoxy, into the hands of its enemies; and yielding up this sacred depositum, like the old Ancilia of Pagan Rome, to the defence and support of Popish Rome. For it was in these very primitive ages, and especially in the third, fourth and fifth centuries, those flourishing times of miraculous powers, as Dr. Chapman calls them, in which the chief corruptions of Popery were either actually introduced, or the seeds of them so effectually

[n] Ibid. p. 173.  
[o] Ib. p. 175.
torn, that they could not fail of producing the fruits, which we now see. By these corruptions I mean, the institution of Monkery; the worship of reliques; invocation of Saints; prayers for the Dead; the superstitious use of Images; of the Sacraments; of the Sign of the Cross; and of consecrated oil; by the efficacy of all which rites, and as a proof of their divine origin, perpetual miracles are affirmed to have been wrought in these very centuries.

For example; Monkery had it's beginning in the third, and a full establishment in the fourth century: in which all the principal Fathers of the Church, both Greek and Latin, employed their authority and eloquence, to extol the perfection and recommend the practice of it; by writing the lives of particular Monks; celebrating their wonderful sanctity and miraculous gifts; and founding monasteries also, where-ever they travelled. St Athanasius was one of the first, who, from the pattern of the Egyptian Monasteries, introduced them into Italy and Rome, where they had been held before in utter contempt [p]. St. Basil calls it an Angelical


institution:
institution: a blessed and Evangelic life, leading to the mansions of the Lord [q]. St. Jerom declares, the Societies of Monks and Nuns, to be the very flower and most precious stone among all the ornaments of the Church [r]. St. Chrysostom calls it, a way of life worthy of heaven, nor at all inferior to that of Angels [s]. And St. Auslin files them always, in

[s] Kai γὰρ τολμήσαν δεοδάτον πρέπειτον ἐὰν ἂν ἄργηλον ἓδειν χεῖρον διά-

N. B. This same Father wrote three books against the Oppugners of the Monastic life; [Oper. T. 1. p. 44.] and a separate one besides, to prove it to be preferable even to that of a King. [ib. p. 116.] Among many other instances of this preference, he observes, that a King, when deposed and fallen from his throne, cannot recover it without the utmost difficulty; whereas a Monk, who falls from his virtue, quickly recovers it by his penitence: of which he gives a curious example, in a story, which he relates in another place, of an old Monk, who after he had nobly sustained all the difficulties and fatigues of that discipline, was caught at last by the wiles of Satan, and fired with so violent a concupiscence for women, that he ran away from his Cell, to a bawdy-house in the neighbouring City, in order to quench his flame: where he had no sooner satiated his lust, than returning presently to his duty, he became so strict a penitent, that
in a peculiar manner, the Servants of God [\textsuperscript{1}]. By
the influence therefore of these Fathers, and the
many lies and forged miracles, which they dili-
gently propagated in honor of the Monks, innume-
rrable Monasteries, as they themselves tell us, were
over the eastern World; but especially in Syria,
Palestine and Ægypt; whose deserts were covered
with them; and where, in the next age, there were
some, which are said to have had five thousand
Monks in them [\textsuperscript{2}].

As to the reliques of the Martyrs, we find St.

within a short time after, when the country was afflicted with a famine,
the people were directed by an express revelation from heaven, to
apply to him, as the onely person, who could relieve them from it
by his prayers; by the force of which, the famine was accordingly
averted. Ibid. p. 29, 30.

[\textsuperscript{1}] De Servis Dei sepissime dicitur, tot annos ille in hoc vel in illo
Bened.

Cupiebas in ea vita vivere, in qua Servi Dei, Monachi vivunt.

[\textsuperscript{2}] Exemplo itaque ejus, per totam Palæstinam innumerabilia
Quid referamus Armenios, quid Persas, quid Indiæ & Æthiopiar
populos, ipsumque juxta Ægyptum, fertilem Monachorum—cun-
ctaque Orientis examina—ibid. p. 551.

Chrysostom
Chrysostom frequently haranguing on the great blessings, which the Church reaped from them, and the daily miracles which were wrought by them [x]; and he concludes one of his Homilies, on Two female Martyrs, Bernice and Prisidice, in the following manner; "with this ardor therefore, let us fall down before their reliques: let us embrace their coffins; for these may have some power, since their bones have so great an one: and not onely on the day of their Festival, but on other days likewise, let us fix ourselves as it were to them, and entreat them to be our patrons [γ]:"

and in his other Homilies, he often uses the same peroration "to dwell in their Sepulchres, to fix themselves to their coffins; that not only their bones, but their tombs, and their urns also overflowed with benedictions [ζ]."

St. Basil informs us, "that all, who were prefed with any difficulty or distress, used to fly for relief to the tombs of the Martyrs; and whosoever


[γ] Ibid. p. 645. C.

[ζ] Ib. p. 669. E.
"did but touch their reliques, acquired some share
of their sanctity [a]." In the same age also, when Vigilantius, a learned and eminent Presbyter of the Church, wrote a book just as a Protestant would now write, against the institution of Monks; the celibacy of the Clergy; praying for the dead, and to the Martyrs; adoring their reliques; celebrating their Vigils; and lighting up candles to them after the manner of the Pagans; St. Jerom, who answers him, defends all those rites with a most outrageous zeal and acrimony of language, and treats Vigilantius, as a most profligate Heretic, uttering the blasphemies, with which the Devil had inspired him against the sacred doctrines of the Church: "Answer me, says he, how it comes to "pass, that in this vile duff and ashes of the Mar-"tyrs, there is so great a manifestation of signs and "wonders. I see, thou most wretched of mortals, "what thou are so grieved at, what so afraid of; "that unclean spirit, which compels thee to write "thus, has oft been tortured, and even now is "tortured by this vile duff [b]." St. Ausfin also af-

"firms, " that at Milan, while he was there "present, the relics of the Martyrs, Protasius "and Gervasius, which lay buried in a place un- "known, were reveled to St. Ambrose in a dream; "and that by the touch onely of the fame relics, "a blind man was restored to his sight; of which "the whole people was witness, who flocked in "crowds to the bodies of the said Martyrs [c]."

In the sacrament also of the Eucharist, several strange abuses were introduced long before this fourth age. In Justin Martyr's time, within fifty years after the days of the Apostles, the cup was constantly mixed with water, and a portion of the consecrated elements sent also to the absent [d]: which soon became the source of much Superstition. For that mixture, considered at first as prudential onely, and indifferent, is declared by Irenaeus, to have been taught and practised by our Saviour [e]; and by

[e] Accipens panem, suum corpus esse confitebatur; & temperamentum calicis, suum sanguinem confirmavit. Iren. l. 4. c. 57. it. l. 5. c. 2. & 36.
St. Cyprian, to have been injoined to himself by a divine revelation. The consecrated bread also, which was sent at first only to the sick, was in Tertullian's and Cyprian's days, carried home by the communicants, and locked up in boxes as a divine treasure for their private use. From this time it began to work Miracles; and was applied to drive Devils out of haunted houses; and carried with them by people, in their journeys and voyages, as an amulet or charm, to secure them from all dangers both by sea and land.

This


[i] St. Ambrose relates a remarkable instance of this, in the case of one of his intimate friends, called Satyrum, who was a pious and zealous Christian, but had not yet received the Sacrament, or been initiated, as he calls it, in the more perfect mysteries. In this state, he happened to suffer Shipwreck in his passage from Africa, and the Ship
This Sacrament was administered likewise, in all their public communions, to infants, even of the tenderest age, before they were able to speak [k]: and was constantly filled, the Sacrifice of the body of Christ; which was always offered up, as Cyprian says, for the Martyrs, in their annual Festivals: as it was also, according to St. Jerome, by the Bishop of Rome, over the venerable bones of St. Peter and St. Paul [l]. Hence flowed those amazing titles, which were given to it in this fourth age; of most

Ship itself to be broken to Pieces, upon which, says Ambrose, "Satyrus not being afraid of death, but to die only, before he had partaken "of those mysteries, begged of some of the company, who had been "initiated, that they would lend him the divine Sacrament, (which "they carried about with them) not to feed his curiosity, by peeping "into the inside of the Box, but to obtain the benefit of his "Faith, for he wrapped up the Mysteries in his Handkerchief; and "then tying it about his neck, threw himself into the Sea; never "troubling himself to look out for a plank, which might help him "to swim, since he wanted nothing more, than the Arms of his "Faith: nor did his Hopes fail him, for he was the first of the "company, who got safe to the Shore." De Exceffu Satyri, 1. i. §. 43, 44. p. 1125. Op. T. 2. Ed. Bened.

[k] Cypr. ibid. p. 175.

[l] Sacrificio, pro eis semper, ut meminitis, offerimus, quoties Martyrum passiones & dies, anniveraria commemorazione celebri-
tremendous mystery; dreadful solemnity; terrible to Angels; Mystic table [m]; whose very Utensils and sacred coverings, as St. Jerom says, were not to be considered, like things inanimate, and void of sense, to have no sanctity, but to be worshipped with the same majesty, as the body and blood of our Lord [n]. And what is all this, but a description of that Sacrifice of the Mass, which the Romanists offer at this day, both for the living and the dead; and the same miraculous tales, which they still relate, of their transubstantiated bread?

The custom of praying for the dead, had also a very early origin: for it was common, as we learn from Tertullian, even in the second century [o]; and


[o] Enimvero & pro anima ejus orat, & refrigerium interim ad-positut el, & in prima resurrectione confortium, & offert annuis diebus
and became the universal practice of the following ages: so that in the fourth, we find it reckoned as a
fort of Hereby, to deny the efficacy of it [p]. The purpose of it was to procure relief and refresh-
ment to the departed souls, in some intermediate state of expiatory pains, which, according to the
opinion of those times, all men were to suffer for their sins, except the Martyrs, and Saints of the
first class [q]. A doctrine and practice, which could not fail of giving birth to the Popish Purgatory.

The Sign of the Cross likewise, was the subject
Rigalt. N. B. This passage may want a little explication. Tertullian,
in this treatise, is labouring to prove, that the second marriages of
Christians are utterly unlawful, and forbidden to them by the Gos-
pel, and though the parties be separated from each other by the
death of either, that the matrimonial bond still subsists, and obliges
the Survivor: For the widow, says he, prays for the Soul of her de-
parted husband; and begs refreshment for him in his intermediate state;
and to be a partner with him in the first resurrection; and makes an
oblation for him every year, on the Day of his death. By all which
she acknowledges and keeps up her conjugal union, and cannot
therefore marry any other man; because, to have one husband in the
Spirit, and another in the Flesh, is adultery, &c.

55, 58.
of much superstition in those ages. "Every step that we take, says Tertullian; when we come in, or go out; put on our cloaths, or our shoes; when we bath, eat, light up candles, go to bed, or sit down; we mark our foreheads with the sign of the Cross. "If for these, and other acts of discipline of the same kind, you demand a text of Scripture, you will find none; but tradition will be alleged to you, as the prescriber of them [r]." It was thought a sure preservative against all sorts of malignity, poisons, or fascination; and effectual to drive away evil spirits; and is affirmed by the principal Fathers of the fourth century, to have wrought many illustrious miracles. "This sign, says St. Chrysostom, both in the days of our Forefathers, and in our own, has thrown open gates, that were shut; destroyed the effects of poisonous drugs; dissolved the force of hemlock; and cured the bites of venomous beasts [s]."

[r] Ad omnum progressum atque promotum; ad omnem aditum atque exitum, ad vetitum, ad calcatum, ad lavacra, ad menfas, ad lumina, ad cubilia, ad fedilia, quaecunque nos converfatio exercet frontem crucis signaculo terimus. Harum & aliarum ejusmodi disciplinarum fi legem expositus Scripturarum, nullam invenies, traditio tibi prætendetur auætrix, &c. De. Coron. 3.

[s] Τὸ τὸ σημεῖον καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν προδίκων ἡμῶν, καὶ τῶν Ἰβρῶν ἄνωθεν χριστιανῶν, &c. Tom. 7. p. 552. A.
The sacred oil also of the Church, was held in great veneration in these same days, as an universal remedy in all diseases. For which purpose, it was either prepared and dispensed by Priests and holy Monks; or was taken from the lamps which were burning before the relics of the Martyrs. St. Jeron mentions great numbers, who had been cured of the bites of venomous animals, by touching their wounds with the first [?] kind: And St. Chrysostom speaks of many, who had been healed of their distempers, by anointing themselves with the second [\(\text{\textsuperscript{\text{x}}}\)]. And St. Austin affirms, from his own knowledge, that a young woman had been freed from a Devil; and a young man restored even from death to life, by the use of it [\(\text{\textsuperscript{\text{x}}}\)].


[\(\text{\textsuperscript{x}}\)] Hæc itaque estum milia fieras que idæmus Ædæ æra chrismum seeiæm illam. Chrys. Ib. p. 337. C.

[\(\text{\textsuperscript{x}}\)] Hipponensem quandam Virginem scio, cum se oleo perunxisset, cui pro illa orans Presbyter instillaverat lacrymas suas, mox a Daemonio fusse fanatam. [De Civ. D. I. 22. c. 8. §. 8.]

Rufus apud nos, Irenæi cuiusdam filius egregiudinis extinctus est. Cumque corpus jacet et examinum, atque exequiae præsentur, amicorum quidam fugissent, ut ejußdem Martyris oleo, corpus perungere retur. Factum est, & revixit. ibid. §. 18.

Lastly,
Lastly, as to *Images and pictures*, it appears from St. *Chrysostom*, that great numbers of them were standing in the principal Churches of that age [*y*]; and from the other writers of the same age; that the acts of the Saints and Martyrs began to be painted on the walls of those particular Churches, which were dedicated to their names [*z*]; and it is natural to imagine, that they would not long be considered, as mere ornaments, or memorials, or books, as they were called, for the illiterate, but would gradually acquire a share of that veneration, which the bones of those, whom they represented, had already acquired in the same Churches: and we are told accordingly by St. *Austin*, that he knew many, *who were actually the adorers of them* [*a*].

These were the principles and the practices of the fourth Century; as they are declared by the most eminent Fathers of that age: whence every one

[*y*] Oper. Tom. xi. p. 78.

[*z*] Forte requiratur quanam ratione gerendi
Sederit hæc nobis lententia, *pingere Sanitas*


may see, what a resemblance they bear to the present rites of the Popish Church. But some perhaps will be apt to suspect, that I am really defending the corruptions of that Church, by assigning to them an origin so ancient and venerable: and the suspicion indeed may seem plausible, since I have been saying little else, but what the Papists themselves would say on the same occasion. Yet it is no more, than what fact and truth oblige me to say; and no controversy, I hope, will ever heat me, or prejudice bias me so far, as to make me deny or dissemble, what the conviction of my own mind requires me to confess. But whatever advantage the Romanists may hope to reap from this concession, it really gives them none at all. Our dispute with them is, not how ancient, but how true their doctrines and practices are: And if they are not derived from Christ or his Apostles, nor founded in the holy Scriptures, it is wholly indifferent to us Protestants, from what age they drew their birth; whether it was from the four first, or the four last centuries of the Church.

But this short sketch, which I have been giving, of those primitive times, was not designed so much,
to illustrate the origin of their rites, as to lay open the grounds of their miracles; and to shew what reasons the Romish Church hath to espouse, and what the Protestant Churches, if they are consistent with themselves, to suspect and disclaim them. For example, after the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, we shall find the greatest part of their boasted miracles to have been wrought either by Monks, or Reliques, or the Sign of the Cross, or consecrated Oil: wherefore if we admit the Miracles, we must necessarily admit the rites, for the sake of which they were wrought: they both rest on the same bottom, and mutually establish each other. For it is a maxim, which must be allowed by all Christians, that whenever any faced rite or religious institution becomes the instrument of miracles, we ought to consider that rite, as confirmed by divine approbation. "I know, says one of the ablest writers of the Romish Church, by the evidence of manifest and incorrupt tradition, that there hath always been a never-interrupted succession of men from the Apostles time, believing, professing, and practising such and such doctrines, by evident argument of credibility, as miracles, sanctity, unity,
"unity, &c. and by all those ways, whereby the "Apostles and our blessed Saviour himself con-"firmed their doctrines: And we are assured, that "what the said never-interrupted Church propo-"seth, doth deserve to be accepted and acknow-"ledged as a divine truth [b]."

And thus far we must own, the Jesuit argues rightly; that if we receive those arguments of credibility, as he calls them, we must receive the doctrines which accompany them, as so many divine verities, revealed and attested by Almighty God. So that if the authority of a Chrysostom, or a Jerom, or an Austin can oblige us to believe the miracles of the fourth century, they must oblige us also, to espouse the rites, which those miracles confirmed, and those Fathers practi-

Dr. Chapman however, not aware perhaps of this consequence, or not allowing it to have any force, is not satisfied with asserting the miracles of the fourth century, but, as if more were still wanted to the support of the Christian cause, frankly

[b] See Mr. Knot, on Charity maintained, &c. in the Works of Chillingworth, 7th Edit. c. vi. p. 228. § 6.
 undertakes the defence also of the fifth; in which all those superstitious practices, above mentioned, had gained a greater root, and more general establishment: And while the warmest admirers of the primitive times, can hardly digest the wonderful tales of the fourth age, on the united testimony of all its renowned Fathers, he thinks himself obliged, to espouse those of the more corrupt age, which follows, upon the single authority of Theodoret.

But to this, I shall speak more fully hereafter, in the following work; where I shall consider those particular miracles, which Dr. Chapman has selected, as the proper objects of our belief, and defended as such, against the enemies of the Christian faith. In the meanwhile, I shall offer only a single passage from the same Theodoret, on whose testimony he lays so great a stress, which will help, not only to confirm what I have already been advancing, but give us a specimen also, of the character of this Father, as well as of the state of Christianity in this fifth age.

"The Temples of our Martyrs, says he, are shining and conspicuous; eminent for their grandor, and the variety of their ornaments; and dif-

"playing
"playing far and wide the splendor of their beauty.
"These we visit, not once or twice, or five times
"in the year, but frequently offer up hymns each
day to the Lord of them; in health we beg the
continuance of it; in sickness, the removal of it;
the childless beg children, and the barren to be-
come mothers; and when these blessings are ob-
tained, we beg the secure enjoyment of them.
"When we undertake any journey, we beg them
to be our companions and guides in it: and when
we return safe, we pay them our thanks: and
that those, who pray with faith and sincerity,
"obtain what they ask, is manifestly testified by
the number of offerings, which are made to
them, in consequence of the benefits received.
"For some offer the figures of eyes; some of feet;
some of hands, made either of gold or of silver;
which the Lord accepts, tho' but of little va-
"lue; measuring the gift, by the faculties of the
giver. But all these are the evident proofs of the
cures of as many distempers; being placed there,
as monuments of the fact, by those, who have
been made whole. The same monuments likewise
proclaim the power of the dead. Whose power
"also
also demonstrates their God, to be the true God [c]."

Now this is nothing else, but the very picture of that same superstition, which is practised at this day by the Papists, and was borrowed of old from the Pagans [d]. *Livy* tells the same thing of the Temples of the Heathen Gods which *Theodoret* does here of the] Temples of their Saints; that *they were rich in the number of offerings*, which the people used to make *in return for the cures*, and benefits which they had received from them [e]. In both cases, we allow the offerings to be real, but take the cures, or the miraculous part of them at least, to be imaginary: and as we reject *Livy's* miracles without scruple, or any hurt to the faith of history, so we may reject *Theodoret's* too, without shaking the evidence of any thing else, that is credible.

Thus we see, to what a state of things, the miracles of the fourth and fifth centuries would re-

[c] Serm. 8. de Martyrib.
[d] See my Letter from Rome on this subject.
[e] Epidaurus, inclita Æsculapiij nobili templo,—tum donis divinis crat, quæ remediorum salutarium ægri mercedem sacraverant: Deo. lib. 45. 28.
duce us: they would call us back again to the old superstition of our ancestors; would fill us with Monks and reliques, and Masses, and all the other trinkets, which the treasury of Rome can supply: for this is the necessary effect of that zeal, which would engage us in the defence of them. But if the miracles of these later ages must needs be rejected; and if, as I have said above, Ecclesiastical History makes no difference between them, and those of the earlier ages, it may reasonably be asked, where then are we to stop? and to what period must we confine ourselves? And this indeed is the grand difficulty, which was the chief object of my attention, through this whole inquiry; and what has puzzled all the other Doctors, who have been considering the same question before me. But before I give any answer to it, or declare my own opinion, it may be proper, to premise a remark or two, on the insufficiency of the several systems already advanced; and to lay down some general principles, which may lead us to a more rational solution of the matter, than what has hitherto been offered.

Mr. Dodwell, as we have seen above, chooses to shut up the history of true miracles with the three
first centuries; condemning those of the fourth, as generally forged and fabulous: for the proof of which, he appeals to the monstrous fictions, which St. Athanasius, St. Jerom, and St. Gregory of Nyssa, have related. And thus far, I entirely agree with him; that the pretended miracles of this age are utterly incredible; and particularly those, to which he refers us, and to which we might add many more, affirmed also from their own knowledge, by St. Austin, St. Epiphanius, and all the other Saints of the same times. Yet after so free a censure on the miracles of the fourth age, the same learned writer thinks it necessary still, to make some exceptions, for a few of them, which St. Chrysostom has attested. But such a distinction appears to be wholly groundless: or if there be any difference between this particular Father and the rest of them, it is clearly to the disadvantage of Chrysostom, when considered in the character of a witness. For his peculiar talents were those of a declamatory Preacher, whose art lay, in warming the passions, not in convincing the reason; and whose pompous style and rhetorical florishes, instead of being adapted to a simple narrative of plain facts, was apt rather to ex-
aggerate plain facts into miracles \([f]\). And as there is no ground for any preference, in his personal character, so there is none likewise in the particular miracles, which he attests; which are all said to be wrought, not by the ministr y, of any living and holy men, but by the reliques of the dead; or the oil of their lamps; or the sign of the Cross.

Dr. Waterland seems to have been of the same mind in general with Mr. Dodwell, concerning the miracles of the fourth century; yet being loth to part with them, and much more, to fix any slur on the credit of it's principal Fathers, has used a little artifice in the manner of declaring it. For after he has often affirmed, that the miraculous powers of the Church subsisted through the three first centuries at least, he adds the following amendment to it, \(Nay, \) and if we may believe Paulinus, who reports it as an eye-witness, they continued down to the latter end of the fourth \([g]\). But why must we be referred to Paulinus onely, in a question of such

\[f\] Ac ne forsitam Rhetores vobis displiceant, quorum artis est verisimilia magis, quam vera dicere——Hieron. Oper. T. 4, part. 2. p. 236.

\[g\] Import. of the Trin. p. 497.
importance? a name, unknown to the greatest part of his readers; while the names of Athanasius, Basil, Austin, Jerom, Chrysostom, are in every body's mouth, and appealed to by himself on every other occasion; and who have written whole books, on the miracles of that very age, wrought by Saints, and Monks, and reliques; many of which they have reported likewise, as eye-witnesses, as well as Paulinus. The omission therefore of these greater names, which could not possibly be accidental, is a clear, tho' tacit confession that he knew them all to have forfeited their credit, in this particular cause: and that even his beloved Athanasius, on whose faith he had pinned his own, and on the defence of whose orthodoxy, he had spent his whole life and studies, was not to be trusted at last with the report of a miracle.

But what is it after all, that Paulinus could teach us, more credibly than any of the rest? He was a noble convert from Paganism, and Bishop of Nola in Italy: where he built a Church to St. Felix the Martyr, with whose acts he painted it, and with whose reliques he enriched it; and has celebrated, both in prose and verse, the miracles performed by those
those reliques [b]. But the particular miracle, for
which we are referred to him by the Doctor as an
eye-witness, is this; that "when St. Ambrose,
"upon the conviction of a certain offender, was
"pronouncing the sentence of excommunication
"against him; in the very instant of delivering him
"over to Satan, and while the words were yet in
"his mouth, the Devil began to seize and tear him,
"as his own, to the great amazement and won-
"der of Paulinus, and the rest, who were pre-
"sented [i]."

On the whole then; after the strictest attention
to what both the ancients and the moderns also
have delivered on this subject, I find great reason
to be convinced, that the pretended miracles of the
fourth century, were not onely in general, and
for the greatest part, but entirely and universally,
the effects of fraud and imposture. Nor can I see the
least ground to admit any exception, either with
Mr. Dodwell, for those reported by St. Chrysostom;
or with Dr. Waterland, for those, by Paulinus, For

4to.
[i] See Dr. Waterland, ibid.

k 2 I take
I take it to be a maxim, on which we may safely depend, that wherever the Bishops, the Clergy, and the principal Champions of the Christian cause, are found to be tampering with false miracles, and establishing new rites and doctrines by lies and forgeries, it would be vain for us, to look for any true miracles in that age, and that Church. And this was actually the case of the fourth century: in which all it's most illustrious Fathers, now Saints of the Catholic Church; St. Athanasius, St. Epiphanius, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Austin, and St. Chrysostom have all severally recorded and solemnly attested a number of miracles, said to be wrought in confirmation of some favorite institutions of those days, which, in the judgement of all the learned and candid Protestants, are manifestly fictitious, and utterly incredible.

We have now therefore gained some footing and ground as it were to stand upon. For this discovery of the state of the fourth century, will reflect fresh light on our searches, both backwards and forwards; and from it's middle situation, give us a clearer view, as well into the earlier, as the later ages. For example; if we suppose the miraculous
culous powers of the Church to have been withdrawn, in the beginning of this century, the first inference, which it suggests, is, that they were withdrawn likewise through all the succeeding centuries. Because the reasons, for which they are imagined to have ceased at this particular period, grow stronger still in every later age, as the Church was every day gaining strength and a firmer establishment, not only from the protection of the Magistrate, but from an authority and power of its own, independent on the civil Government.

But above all, when, in all these later ages, instead of meeting with genuine miracles, we find fables and fictions, assuming that sacred character, and abounding still more and more, and, by the pretence of a divine authority, giving a sanction to Heathenish rites and superstitious doctrines, it would be childish, to expect the revival of real miracles, unless it were to detect and destroy the effects of those false ones, which were so evidently corrupting the faith and worship of the Christian Church. Since the miracles then of the fifth century, which our Doctors so strenuously defend, instead of defeating the frauds of the fourth, tend still to confirm them;
them; being performed chiefly by the same instruments, and for the same ends; we must necessarily rank them all under the same class of mere forgeries. But these advocates of the primitive miracles have not yet given us the least hint, or reason to imagine, that they intend to stop here, or to confine themselves even to the fifth century: since the same principles which carried them so far, would carry them still farther, if the credit of Ecclesiastical History, or its miracles should happen to be attacked by an Infidel or Heretic.

For example; Pope Gregory the first, commonly called the Great, wrote four books of Dialogues, in which he describes the lives and miracles of the Italian Monks; many of them from his own knowledge, and the rest, as he declares, from the testimony of grave and venerable persons, on whose fidelity he could depend. These books were written in the end of the sixth century, and are filled with a number of stories, so grossly absurd, and fabulous, that it would be difficult, one would think, to find any old woman in these days, so weakly credulous, as to believe them. They inform us of many persons "actually raised from the dead; many blind re-
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"stored to fight; and, all sorts of diseases cured,
"by the prayers or touch of those Monks [k]:
"Of their walking upon water as freely, as upon dry land; of rivers drawn by them from their natural course, and following them into a new channel, which they traced out to them. Of inundations of water rising up almost to the roofs of Churches, without entering the doors of them, which stood open: Of the arm of an Executioner, fixed upright in the air, as it was lifted up, to strike off the head of one of those holy men, and restored by him on condition, that it should never again behead any Christian: Of vessels of oil and wine miraculously replenished; and of pieces of gold, as fresh as from the mint, dropt from heaven into their laps:"

"with numberless other miracles, more trivial still and despicable contrived chiefly to advance the honor of Monksry; the worship of Saints and of the blessed Virgin; the belief of a Purgatory; and the divine effects of Holy water, &c. [l]."

[l] Ibid. l. 2. c. 7: l. 3. 9, 19, 37: l. 1. 5, 9, 10. l. 4. 15, 16, 39, 40.

3

The
The apparent forgery of these miracles, and the confident attestation of them by Gregory, has induced many Protestants, and even some Papists also, to call in question the genuineness of these books: but the learned Cave, after duly weighing all the arguments, on the one side and the other, takes them to have been really written by Gregory the Great, who indulged his credulity in them, he says, and gave more attention to fables, than he ought to have done, as all, who judge equitably and without prejudice, will easily allow. But these Dialogues contain several miracles, said to have been wrought in confutation of the Arian Heresy; of which Dr. Berriman makes some use, in his elaborate defence of the Athanasian Doctrine; where speaking of the objections, which have been made against the authority of the Dialogues, he takes occasion to observe; that as far as those objections arise from the miraculousness of the things related, he sees not, why we should dispute the facts, unless it could be proved, as it certainly cannot, that miracles were then ceased.

[m] Hist. Litter. V. i. p. 543.
Thus the miraculous powers of the Church are expressly avowed by him, to the end even of the sixth century; in which Popery had gained a full establishment: yet this Protestant Divine cannot conceive the least reason to dispute the miraculousness of those facts which established it; nay, defies any man to prove, that miracles were yet ceased in this Popish age.

In his accurate defence of that miracle of the fifth century, referred to above, amongst his other testimonies, he mentions the authority of this same Gregory the Great, and of his contemporary, Isidore of Sevil, who had too much learning and judgement, he says, to be deceived in so important a fact [5]. And since he thinks them infallible, in reporting a fact, which happened, as he owns, near an hundred years before, he has much more reason, to think them so, in relating the facts of their own times: of which times however, Dr. Cave gives us the following character, under that of Evagrius, the principal Historian of them, of whom he says; "that " he was agreeable enough in his style, and more " accurate in the orthodoxy of his doctrines, than the

"other Historians, but too credulous, and much addicted to fables, as it is manifest to all, who are not blinded by their prejudices, from the stories, which he relates on every occasion, concerning the Cross, and relics, and forged miracles, to be in high esteem in those days [p]." Yet neither the fabulous genius of this age: nor the incredibility of the miracles, said to have been wrought in it; nor the impertinence, the absurdity, nor the impiety, I may say, of the ends, for which they were wrought, can shock the faith of Dr. Berriman; or raise any suspicion of the miraculousness of facts, affirmed by the infallibility of Pope Gregory.

Since the zeal then of these Protestant Guides has now brought us within the very pale of the Roman Church, I see nothing, which can stop their progress, from the sixth age, down to the present: from Pope Gregory, the Great, to Pope Clement, the twelfth; the last of whom I personally knew, and believe to have been as honest and religious a Pontiff, as the first. For each succeeding age will furnish miracles, and witnesses too, of as good credit as those of the sixth. The next supplies a venerable

rable Bede; whose very name carries authority; and whose learning, zeal and purity of faith and manners, were celebrated through the Christian world; yet whose works are filled with miracles, which no man of sense can believe [q]. The eighth age yields a Damascene: whose great knowledge and erudition in all the learned sciences, no body, says Cave, in his senses can deny: yet he was monstrously credulous, and, as the Popish writers themselves allow, abounds with lies [r]. And thus we may proceed, through every following age, to find men of the same character; eminent for their learning, zeal and piety; yet all of them still carrying on the same frauds, down to the Perrons, the Baronius's, the Bellarmines, and the Huetius's, of these later times; whose names are full as venerable, and testimonies as credible, as any of the more ancient.

From these premises, it is evident, that the forged miracles of the fourth century, must necessarily taint the credit of all the later miracles, down even to the present age. For they depend as it were upon each other, as the parts of one uniform series, or chain,


[fo]
so that where-ever we draw out a link, all the rest which hang upon it, must of course fall to the ground. Let us consider then in the next place, what light the same forgeries will afford us, in looking backwards also into the earlier ages, up to the times of the Apostles.

And first, when we reflect on that surprizing confidence and security, with which the principal Fathers of this fourth age have affirmed as true, what they themselves had either forged, or what they knew at least to be forged; it is natural to suspect, that so bold a defiance of sacred truth could not be acquired, or become general at once, but must have been carried gradually to that height, by custom and the example of former times, and a long experience of what the credulity and superstition of the multitude would bear.

Secondly, this suspicion will be strengthened, by considering, that this age, in which Christianity was established by the civil power, had no real occasion for any miracles. For which reason, the learned among the Protestants have generally supposed it, to have been the very æra of their cessation: and for the same reason, the Fathers also themselves, when they were
were disposed to speak the truth, have not scrupled to confess, that the miraculous gifts were then actually withdrawn, because the Church stood no longer in need of them [s]. So that it must have been a rash, and dangerous experiment, to begin to forge miracles, at a time, when there was no particular temptation to it; if the use of such fictions had not long been tried, and the benefit of them approved and recommended by their ancestors; who wanted every help, towards supporting themselves under the presstures and persecutions, with which the powers on earth were afflicting them.

Thirdly, if we compare the principal Fathers of the fourth, with those of the earlier ages; we shall observe the same characters of zeal and piety in them all, but more learning, more judgement, and less credulity in the later Fathers. If these then be found, either to have forged miracles themselves; or to have propagated, what they knew to be forged; or to have been deluded so far by other people's forgeries, as to take them for real miracles; (of the one or the other of which, they were all un-

[s] This will be particularly shewn in the course of my following argument.
questionably guilty) it will naturally excite in us, the same suspicion of their predecessors; who, in the same cause, and with the same zeal, were less learned, and more credulous, and in greater need of such arts for their defence and security.

Fourthly, As the personal characters of the earlier Fathers give them no advantage over their Successors; so neither does the character of the earlier ages afford any real cause of preference, as to the point of their integrity, above the later. The first indeed are generally called, and held to be the purest: but when they had once acquired that title, from the authority of a few leading men, it is not strange, to find it ascribed to them implicitly by every body else, without knowing or inquiring into the grounds of it. But whatever advantage of purity those first ages may claim in some particular respects, is certain, that they were defective in some others, above all, which have since suceeded them. For there never was any period of time in all Ecclesiastical History, in which so many rank Heresies were publicly professed [7] nor in which so many

[7] The learned, I think, have reckoned about ninety different Heresies, which all sprang up within the three first centuries.
Spurious books were forged and published by the Christians, under the names of Christ, and the Apostles, and the Apostolic Writers, as in those primitive ages: several of which forged books are frequently cited and applied to the defence of Christianity, by the most eminent Fathers of the same ages, as true and genuine pieces, and of equal authority, with the Scriptures themselves [n]. And no man surely can doubt, but that those, who would either forge, or make use of forged books, would in the same cause, and for the same ends, make use of forged miracles.

But the true character of these ages may best be

[n] See Archbishops Wake's Preliminary Discourse to the Genuin Epistles of the Apostolic Fathers, p. 89, where he has given us a list of a great part of those spurious pieces, with a short account of each—in which he tells us, that it would be endless to insist on all the spurious pieces, which were attributed only to St. Paul; but that the superstitious books, ascribed to St. Peter, viz. his Acts, his Gospel, his Preaching, his Revelations, were of much greater authority even to the times of Eusebius. [§. 18, 19.] He observes also, that the book called the Recognitions of St. Clement, which he takes to be the most learned, as well as the most ancient of any of those pieces, was not set forth till about the middle of the second Century? and is rejected by Eusebius, as one of those many Impostures, which were even then published under the name of that Saint. §. 28.
learnt from one, who lived in the very midst of them, and was himself the chief ornament of them, I mean St. Cyprian, who has left us the following account of the state of the Church, just before the Decian persecution; about A.D. 250, when its discipline, as he says, was corrupted, and its faith almost lost, by the long ease and peace, which it had then enjoyed, for near forty years; during which interval, he tells us, "that the body of Christians studied nothing, but how to increase their patrimony; and forgetting, what the faithful had done, either in the times of the Apostles, or what they ought to do at all times, had no other passion, but an insatiable ardor, of inlarging their fortunes. That there was no true devotion in the Priests, no sound faith in the ministers: no mercy in their works, no discipline in their manners: that the men destroyed the comeliness of their beards, and women of their faces, by paint and false arts: their eyes also, so finished by the hand of God, were adulterated; and their hair stained with colors, not their own. That the simple were deluded, and the brethren circumvented by craft and fraud. That it was common, to con-
"tract marriages with unbelievers: and to profti-
tute the members of Christ to the Gentiles: and
to swear not onely rashly, but falsely: to contemn
t heir rulers with an insolent pride; to speak a-
against them with spite and rancour; and to quar-
rel among themselves, with an obstinate hatred.
That great numbers of the Bishops, who ought
to be an example and lesson to the rest, contemn-
ing their divine Stewardship, made themselves the
stewards of secular affairs; rambling about into
other people's provinces; and seeking out the
markets of traffic and gain; and instead of re-
lieving their hungry brethren in the Church,
were eager onely, to heap up money; to seize
people's lands by treachery and fraud; and to
increase their flock by exorbitant usury [x]."

This is the picture of those ages, which people
affect to call the purest, as it was drawn from the life,
by the ablest Master of the times, which he describes:
and tho' the character of the drawer must oblige us
to believe, that it bore a great likeness to the origi-
nal, yet it is so far from giving us any idea of purity

or perfection, that if it had been drawn, even for our own times, we might justly think the coloring too coarse, and the features charged beyond the truth.

Now from all these considerations taken together, it must, I think, be allowed, that the forged miracles of the fourth century give us just reason, to suspect the pretensions of every other age both before and after it. My argument would be much the same, if it were grounded on the allowed forgeries of any later age. Dr. Chapman, who defends the miracles of the fifth century, declares, that there were some of these later instances, as public, as clear and as well attested, as any in the earlier ages; and by an evidence, equal to that, by which most of the ancient miracles are supported[y]. Dr. Berriman, in his defence of a particular miracle near the end of the same century, insists, that it cannot be discredited, without shaking the whole faith of History, and rejecting all accounts of miracles, except those of the Scriptures[z]. And so far I agree with them both, and own their defence to be true; that the earlier

[z] Serm. p. 327.
miracles rest on no better foundation, nor are supported by any better evidence, than the later. But then, if these later, after all the confidence of their Advocates, may certainly be discredited, and must consequently be rejected; it follows from their own principles, that the earlier may, with as much reason, be rejected too. Which brings me at last to that general conclusion, which I have undertaken to illustrate; that there is no sufficient reason to believe, from the testimony of antiquity, that any miraculous powers did ever actually subsist in any age of the Church, after the times of the Apostles.

But this will be the proper business of the subsequent Treatise, in which, I shall endeavour to evince, by particular facts and testimonies, what this general view of the question, here given, and the reflections naturally arising from it, would previously dispose us to suspect; that the pretended miracles of the primitive Church were all mere fictions; which the pious and zealous Fathers, partly from a weak credulity, and partly, from reasons of policy; believing some perhaps to be true, and knowing all of them to be useful, were induced to espouse and propagate, from the support of a righteous cause.

m 2 I have
INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

I have already observed, that many spurious books were forged in the earliest times of the Church, in the Names of Christ and his Apostles, which passed upon all the Fathers, as genuine and divine through several successive ages. Now as the high authority of the Apostolic writings, and the zeal, with which they were sought for by all Churches, was the motive, without doubt, which excited some of the ablest, and most learned of the Christians, to take the pains of forging and vending such books under those false titles; so the great fame and success of the Apostolic miracles, would naturally excite some also of the most crafty, when the Apostles themselves were dead, to attempt some juggling tricks in imitation of them, and by the pretence of a divine power, to impose upon that simplicity and credulity, which distinguished the character of those early ages. And [a] when these artful pretenders, by insinuating

[a] The Primitive Christians were perpetually reproached for their gross credulity by all their enemies. Celcus says, that they cared neither to receive, nor to give any reason of their faith, and that it was an usual saying with them, do not examine, but believe only, and thy faith will save thee. Julian affirms, that the sum of all their wisdom was comprised in this single precept, believe. The Gentiles, says Arnobius, make it their
ing themselves chiefly in private houses, or among the ignorant populace, had been able to maintain their ground through the three first centuries, the leading Clergy of the 4th, who were then established by the civil power, and at liberty to apply all arts without reserve to the conversion of the Heathens, understood their interest too well, to part with the old plea of miraculous gifts, which had been found so effectual, to dazzle the senses and possess the minds of the multitude.

This seems to have been the general state of the case in question: and though it may shock the pre-judices of many, and clash with the systems, which are commonly entertained; yet it will be found, I dare say, to be true, or at least the most probable;

their constant business to laugh at our faith, and to laugh our credulity with their facetious jokes. Orig. con. Cels. i. 1. p. 8, 9. Greg. Nazian. Invecl. 1. Arnob. i. 2. p. 22, 23.

The Fathers, on the other hand, defend themselves by saying, that they did nothing more on this occasion, than what the Philosophers had always done; that Pythagoras's precepts were inculcated by an Ipse dixit, and that they had found the same method useful with the vulgar, who were not at leisure to examine things; whom they taught therefore to believe, even without reasons: and that the Heathens themselves, tho' they did not confess it in words, yet practised the same in their acts. Ibid.

and
and as such, the most useful also, to the real Defence of the Christian cause. For, as far as miracles can evince the divinity of a religion, the pretensions of Christianity are confirmed by the evidence of such, as of all others on record, are the least liable to exception, and carry the clearest marks of their sincerity; being wrought by Christ and his Apostles, for an end so great, so important, and so universally beneficial, as to be highly worthy of the interposition of the Deity; and wrought by the ministry of mean and simple men, in the open view of the people, as the testimonial of that divine mission, to which they pretended; and delivered to us by eye-witnesses, whose honest characters exclude the suspicion of fraud, and whose knowledge of the facts, which they relate, scarce admits the probability of a mistake. This is the genuine ground on which Christianity rests; the history of our Saviour’s doctrine and miracles, as it is declared and comprised within the cannon of the Holy Scriptures. Whenever we go beyond this, we weaken its foundation, by endeavouring to inlarge it; and by recurring to an evidence less strong and of doubtful credit, take pains only, to render a good cause suspected, and expose
expose it to the perpetual ridicule of the Sceptics and Freethinkers.

Should our Infidels then be disposed, to make
themselves merry with the miracles of a Symeon
Stylites, or any other crack'd-brain monk of the 4th
or 5th century, there is no reason for Dr. Chapman,
to be so angry with them [6]: let us suffer them to
laugh on, and even laugh with them ourselves; and
by throwing out an empty tub to their sport, secure
the vessel itself from their attacks. Or should the
Romanists, on the other hand, pretend to urge us
with their miracles, and to shew the succession of
them from the earliest ages, we have no reason to be
moved at it, but may tell them without scruple,
that we admit no miracles, but those of the Scrip-
tures; and that all the rest are either justly suspected,

[6] This Symeon, (who acquired the name of Stylites, by a most
extravagant whim, which he took, of spending the best part of his
life on the top of a pillar, six and thirty cubits high) was a mad,
enthusiastic Monk of the 5th Century, to whom many monstrous and
superfluous acts are ascribed, by the Ecclesiastical writers, as the
effects of a divine inspiration; all which Dr. Chapman most strenuously
and zealously defends, against the raillery of the Author of Christian-
ity as old as the Creation. See his Miscell. Tracts, p. 165. §.

or
or certainly forged. By putting the controversy on this issue, we shall either disarm them at once, or if they persist in the dispute, may be sure to convict them of fraud and imposture: whereas by granting them but a single age of miracles, after the times of the Apostles, we shall be entangled in a series of difficulties, whence we can never fairly extricate ourselves, till we allow the same powers also to the present age.

And in truth, it has always been considered, as a fundamental principle of the Reformation, that the Scriptures are a compleat rule both of faith and manners; and as such are clear also and intelligible, in all fundamental points, to every private Christian. In this, all Protestant Churches agree, how much soever they may differ in any other article: and if this be true, then whatever be the characters of the ancient Fathers, or whatever they may have taught, and practised in any age of the Church, is a matter wholly indifferent, and makes no part in the religion of a Protestant: and consequently, no difference of judgement with regard to those Fathers, ought to give any cause of offence or hatred among the members of that communion. For if the Scriptures are sufficient,
cient, we do not want them as guides; or if clear, as interpreters. Every one therefore may enjoy his opinion of them, with the same liberty, as of any other writers whatsoever, with this caution only; that an esteem of them is apt to carry us too far, and has actually carried many into great and dangerous errors: whereas the neglect of them cannot be attended with any ill consequence, since the Scriptures teach every thing, that is necessary, either to be believed or practised.

I cannot illustrate this principle so effectually, as by the following words of the excellent Chillingworth, who, of all men, best understood the real grounds of the controversy, between the Protestants and the Papists.

"The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants. Whatsoever else they believe besides it, and the plain, irrefrangible, indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold it, as a matter of opinions, but as matter of faith and religion, neither can they, with coherence to their own grounds, believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption. I, for my part, after a long, and
"(as I verily believ and hope) impartial search of the "true way to eternal happiness, do profess plainly, "that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot, "but on this rock only. I see plainly, and with my "own eyes, that there are Popes against Popes; "Councils against Councils; some Fathers against "others; the same Fathers against themselves; a "consent of Fathers of one age, against a consent "of Fathers of another age; the Church of one age, "against the Church of another age: Traditve in-
"terpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there "are none to be found. No tradition, but only "of Scripture, can derive itself from the fountain, "but may be plainly proved, either to have been "brought in, in such an age after Christ, or that "in such an age, it was not in. In a word, there "is no sufficient certainty, but of Scripture only, "for any considerate man to build upon, &c.

But tho' this doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scriptures be generally professed through all the re-
formed Churches, yet it has happened, I know not how, in our own, that it's Divines have been apt on all occasions, to join the authority of the primitive Church, to that of sacred writ; to supply doctrines from
from the ancient Councils, in which the Scriptures are either silent or thought defective; to add the Holy Fathers, to the College of the Apostles; and by ascribing the same gifts and powers to them both, to advance the primitive traditions, to a parity with Apostolic precepts.

Thus the late Dr. Waterland, who was supposed to speak the sense of our present Rulers, seldom appeals to the Scriptures in his controversial writings, without joining antiquity to them, or the authority of the three first centuries at least, that golden age of Christianity, as he calls it [c]. He declares, "that the true interpretation of Scripture, cannot "run counter, in things fundamental, to the judg-"ment of the first and purest ages: that to depre-"ciate the value of Ecclesiastical Antiquity, and to "throw contempt on the primitive Fathers, is to "wound Christianity through their sides [d]: and "that Christ never sits so secure and easy on his "throne, as with these faithful guards about him [e]; "and he concludes his elaborate treatise on the use "and value of Antiquity, in these words.

[d] Ibid. p. 395.  [e] Ibid. 396.

" The
"The sum of what I have been endeavouring through this whole chapter is, that Scripture and Antiquity (under the conduct of right reason) are what we ought to abide by, in settling points of doctrine. I have not put the case of Scripture and Antiquity interfering, or clashing with each other; because it is a case, which will never appear in points of importance, such as this is, which we are now upon. However, as to the general case, we may say, that those two ought always to go together, and to coincide with each other: and when they do so, they stand the firmer in their united strength: but if ever they clash, or appear to clash, then undoubtedly there is an error somewhere, like as when 'two accountants vary in casting up the same sum, &c."

Here we see Antiquity joined as a necessary and inseparable companion to the Scripture, and put even upon a level with it, by this eminent Advocate of the Christian Faith. But since this seems to be a flat contradiction to the principles of the Reformation, and dangerous to the general credit and interests of

[f] Ibid. 465.
the Protestant religion, it may be worth while to consider a little, from what particular motives and circumstances, so inconsistent a practice should happen to prevail more remarkably in this, than in any other Protestant Church.

Our first and principal Reformers, in the reign of Henry the VIIIth, had not the power, to carry the Reformation so far, as they desired; nor to make such changes in the old worship, as put them under a necessity of discarding the authority of the primitive Fathers; but on the contrary, were obliged against their wills, to comply still with many rites and doctrines, which had no other foundation, but in that authority; which therefore, in those circumstances, they were forced to assert and defend. For how much soever they might be disposed, to abolish such rites, and the authority too, on which they stood, they were restrained by the will of an arbitrary Prince, who would not suffer them, to take the least step but by his immediate direction, and from his high conceit of his Theological learning, gave the law even to his Bishops, in all the religious disputes of those days: and whose chief view after all was, to banish rather the power, than the religion of the Pope, out of his realm.
Introductory Discourse.

In the next reign of Edward the sixth, tho' the same reforming Bishops found themselves at liberty, to carry on their great work to its full perfection, yet for the sake, either of their former conduct, and prejudices; or to preserve a character of constancy; and to give the least scandal to the Clergy, who still generally favoured the old forms; they endeavoured, as far as they were able, tho' sometimes by forced and unnatural constructions, to justify all their proceedings, by the example and usages of the ancient Fathers.

On the accession therefore of Queen Mary, and the sad catastrophe, which ensued, when the same Reformers, now doomed to be Martyrs, and especially Cranmer and Ridley, (two Fathers of the Protestant Church, as truly venerable, as Christianity perhaps has to boast of, since the times of the Apostles;) when these, I say, were brought out of their prisons, on pretence of holding public disputations, but in truth, to be exposed only to the scorns and contumelies of their cruel enemies; and when they had solidly evinced the truth of their doctrines, and baffled all the sophistry of their opponents, by the clear and unanswerable testimonies of the Scriptures, it
it grieves us after all, to see them laboring and grated, at a passage of Chrysostom, or Ambrose, or Hilary, &c; and giving their adversaries an occasion of triumph, by submitting to an authority, which was nothing to the purpose, and which in those unhappy circumstances, they were neither at liberty to reject, nor yet able to reconcile to their cause.

Queen Elizabeth, who next succeeded, and finally established the Reformation, affected to retain more pomp and splendor in the external part of religion, than many of her chief Divines approved; who, in compliance however with her humour, submitted to several things, which they hoped in time to get rid of [g]. Her view was, to moderate the prejudices

[g] In the Preamble of the Will of Edw. Sandys, Archbishop of York, who died A.D. 1583, there is the following passage relating to the rites and ceremonies of the Church, as they were then settled by public Authority.

"I am persuaded, that such, as are now set down by public Authority—are no way either ungodly or unlawful, but may with good conscience, for order and obedience sake be used.—So I have ever been persuaded, that some of them be not so expedient for this Church, but that they may better be dispensed by little and little, than more and more urged. As I do easily acknowledge, that our Ecclesiastical polity may in some points be bettered—So I do utterly dislike all such rude platforms, &c."
of the Popish clergy; and to reconcile them by degrees to the new settlement, by leaving in it an outward shew, and some resemblance of the old. From the same principle, a reverence was still kept up to Antiquity; and appeals made on both sides, to the primitive Fathers and ancient Councils, by the Professors of the new, as well as of the old doctrines: which practice has been followed ever since, by the greatest part of our leading Churchmen. But from the little success which it has had, or ever can have, in our controversies with the Papists, it is evident, that it cannot be considered in any other light, but as a vain ostentation of learning, and an impatient zeal, to repel that charge of ignorance and contempt of primitive Antiquity, with which the Protestant Churches are constantly reproached by the Romanists.

In the two following reigns, the Popish interest began to raise its head again in England. James the First was a mere School-Divine, fond of theological disputes; and tho' he wrote against the Papists, yet being afraid of them, as Bishop Burnet says, always acted for them [b]. And Charles the First's Queen,


who
who was a zealot to that religion, used all her power with the King, which was very great, to support and propagate it's credit in the Kingdom, and to suspend the rigor of the laws against it. "By the King's connivence, says the learned Dr. Heylin, "and the Queen's indulgence, the Popish faction "gathered not only strength, but confidence; "multiplying in some numbers about the Court, "and resorting in a more open manner to the Mal-"fes at Somerset House; where the Capuchins "had obtained a Chappel and Convent [i]." The leading Churchmen also, from a compliance with the principles of the Court, and an abhorrence of those of the Puritans, seemed to have formed that senseless project of a reconciliation with Rome, and made considerable advances towards it, by giving such an interpretation to the doctrines and form to the discipline of our Church, as might invite all moderate Papists, to join with them in it's communion. But this compliance had no other effect, nor ever can have, than to weaken the Protestant cause, and to furnish it's enemies with the greater

power and means to oppress it. Nor did they fail to make their full advantage of it; by representing it, "as a proof of the fickle and unsettled state of the English Church; that it was grown sick, as it were, and weary of itself, and could find no rest in the novelties, which it had embraced, but was returning apace to its old principles, and resuming many of the rites and doctrines, for which it had forsaken the Church of Rome." All this was urged with great force against our Chillingworth, by that subtil Jesuit, Mr. Knot; and exemplified by him in many particulars, which the learned Dr. Heylin, who was perfectly acquainted with the ecclesiastical principles of that age, and a strenuous espouser of them, declares to be true, in the following words, drawn from his Life of Archibishop Laud.

"If you will take the character of the Church of England, says he, from the pen of a Jesuit, you shall find him speaking, among other falsehoods, these undoubted truths; viz. that the Professors of it, they especially of greatest worth, learning, and authority, love temper and moderation; that the doctrines are altered in many things; as for example, The Pope not Antichrist; Pictures, free-
"will, predestination, universal grace, inherent righteousness; the preferring of charity before knowledge; the merit, or reward rather of good works; the thirty nine articles seeming patient, if not ambitious also of some catholic sense; that their Churches begin to look with a new face; their walls to speak a new language; and some of their Divines to teach, that the Church hath authority in determining controversies of faith, and interpreting the Scriptures; that men, in talk and writing, use willingly the once fearful names of Priests and Altars, and are now put in mind, that for the exposition of Scripture, they are by Canon bound to follow the Fathers.—So far the Jesuit, says he, may be thought to speak nothing but truth. [k]."

It is needless to descend to the later reigns; or to observe, how far the discipline and principles of Archbishop Laud were adopted again at the Restoration; or what credit they still obtain with some of the principal Clergy of our own times; since this can hardly escape the notice of all, who pay any attention to Ecclesiastical affairs. But there is

[k] See Ibid. p. 238. and the Life also, of Mr. Chillingworth by Monsieur Des Maizeaux. p. 113. Not. (AA.) another
another circumstance, that I must not omit to mention, as it is peculiar to our Church, and from Queen Elizabeth's time down to our own, has had no small influence on its principles and practice, and which will always keep up amongst us a full respect to Ecclesiastical antiquity. I mean those unhappy dissensions among the Protestants of this nation, which have split them into different sects and separate communions. For in these disputes, which wholly turn on points of discipline, and external forms of worship, as the authority of the Fathers, whatever weight it ought to have, is mostly on the side of the established Church, so the Church will always be disposed to support that authority, which helps it to depress a set of men, who, tho' agreeing with it in essentials, and dissenting only about things indifferent, are yet more odious, than the Papists themselves, to all the zealous advocates, and warm admirers of the primitive Fathers.

These seem to have been the chief reasons, which from the time even of our reformation, have advanced the credit of Ecclesiastical antiquity to an higher pitch in this Kingdom, than in any other Protestant country. Which same principles, by the encourage-
ment, which they have generally received from our Governors, are now carried, as we have seen, to an heighth, that must needs alarm all serious Protestants, as they have no other tendency, nor can have any other effect, but to throw us again into the arms of the Romish Church. For I have long been of opinion, that the success, which their Missionaries have ever found in this Island, and which of late has been more particularly complained of, is chiefly owing, to those high notions of the primitive discipline, and that great reverence for the ancient Fathers, which are entertained and propagated by a great part of our Clergy. For by agreeing with the Romanists thus far, and joining with them in a common appeal to primitive antiquity, we allow all, which they can fairly draw from it, to be found and orthodox; and though in the end, they may not perhaps gain every thing, which they aim at, yet they will be sure always, to come off with great advantage.

Mr. Chillingworth himself is a memorable example of this truth: who, in his account of the several motives, which induced him to embrace the Romish faith, mentions the two following;

"Because,
Because, if any credit may be given to as credible records, as any are extant, the doctrine of Catholics hath been frequently confirmed, and the opposite doctrine of Protestants confounded, with supernatural and divine miracles.

Because, the doctrine of the church of Rome is conformable, and the doctrine of Protestants contrary, to the doctrine of the Fathers, even by the confession of Protestants themselves: I mean those Fathers, who lived within the compass of the first six hundred years; to whom Protestants do very frequently and very confidently appeal [7]."

These seem to have been the principal arguments, which abused this great man, as he expresses it, and hurried him into the Church of Rome. Silly Sophisms, as he afterwards calls them, grounded on mistakes and false suppositions, which he unadvisedly took for granted [m]. Till upon a clear view of the errors, into which they had drawn him, he perceived, that the means could not be pure, when the end was so corrupt, and found no other way of


[m] See ibid. §. 42.
retrieving his mistake, and becoming Protestant again, but by discarding those fallacious records, and fictitious miracles, which had seduced him, and committing himself to the sole guidance, and infallible authority of the holy Scriptures. On this foundation, he has built the most solid and rational defence of the Protestant cause, which has ever been offered to the public since the Reformation. Yet our Champions of these days are employing all their skill, to demolish what he had built, and to adopt again into the system of our faith, all that he had thrown out of it; all the nonsense, the superstition, and the pious frauds of the primitive ages; nor will they allow us even to be Christians, but on those very principles, which must finally make us Papists.

The design of the present treatise, is to give some check to the current of this zeal, and to fix the religion of Protestants, on its proper basis, that is, on the sacred Scriptures; not on the authority of weak and fallible men, the detection of whose errors, and the suspicion of whose frauds would necessarily give a wound to Christianity itself; which yet in reality, is no more concerned or affected by the characters
acters of the ancient, than of the modern Fathers of the Church. But to declare my opinion in short on the real value of those primitive writers, I freely own them to be of some use and service on several accounts.

1st, In attesting and transmitting to us the genuine books of the holy Scriptures. Yet this is not owing to any particular sanctity or sagacity of those ancient times, but to the notoriety of the thing, and the authority, with which the books themselves were received from their first publication, in all Churches: whence they have since been handed down to us, in the same manner, as the works of all other ancient writers, by the perpetual tradition of successive ages, whether pure or corrupt, learned or unlearned.

2dly, Their more immediate and proper use, is, to teach us the doctrines, the rites, the manners, and the learning of the several ages, in which they lived: yet as witnesses only, not as guides: as declaring, what was then believed, not what was true; what was practised, not what ought to be practised: since their works abound with instances of foolish, false and dangerous opinions, universally maintained and zealously propagated by them all.

Lastly,
Lastly, Their very errors also afford an use and profitable lesson to us: for the many corruptions, which crept into the Church in those very early ages, are a standing proof and admonition to all the later ages, that there is no way of preserving a purity of faith and worship in any Church, but by reviewing them from time to time, and reducing them to the original text and standard of the holy Scriptures.
POSTSCRIPT.

AFTER I had finished this Introductory treatise, and was preparing to send it to the press, I happened to meet with an Archidiaconal charge, delivered to the Clergy at a visitation, by the same learned Dr. Chapman, whom I have had frequent occasion to mention, in the course of my argument. And since this charge is of a singular kind, and bears some relation to the subject of the present inquiry, with regard both to Popery and Primitive Antiquity, the reader, I hope, will excuse me, if I detain him here a while, with a few short remarks upon it.

The Archdeacon enters directly into the matter of his speech; and instead of congratulating with his reverend brethren, on their deliverance from the late rebellion, drops but a slight hint on that, as the prelude only to another plot, of a more dreadful and fatal kind which he is in haste to communicate; the last effort of subtil Jesuits, who seeing every other method
method baffled and ineffectual, resolved to try a new, though bold expedient for their Church; more big, he says, with pest and confusion, than all the former devices of their party against us; striking decisively at the very root of the Reformation, and at the basis of all protestant Churches; and secretly working, at this very time, incredible mischief against our whole religion [a]. Then as to the Leader in this Plot, he describes him like another Catiline; furnished with every great talent, proper for the purpose; an head acute and prolific; learning extensive and various; language dogmatical and lively; a zeal never desitute of address, and length of days, attending constant studies and vivacity of genius: in short, with every art, to draw every creature; Papist and Protestant; zealot and freethinker, into his scheme [b].

After such an exordium, one cannot help figuring to himself what a surprize, so strange a piece of news must needs excite in this reverend Assembly, to find themselves exposed again so unexpectedly, to the effects of so direful a conspiracy; and what an impatience it would create, to hear the rest, and to learn, by

[a] See pag. 1, 2, 3.  
[b] Pag. 11, 12, 18, &c.
what arts and instruments, this calamity was to be brought upon them; which the Archdeacon proceeds to disclose in the following manner:

That there were certain Loyolites in France, who had assumed of a sudden a new character, and blazed out most fastidious Hypercritics: that these had entered into a vow, to deprive us of all our learning and religion at once, and by one desperate furious push, to stab the protestant cause to the heart, with the admired spirit of incredulity and freethinking: that their method of doing it was; to make all the world believe, that the ancient writers of Greece and Rome, were either figments, or worthless triflers; and by that means, to confound and dissipate all our notions in Chronology, History, Laws, usages, doctrines ecclesiastical and prophane, together with the genius and vitals of all the dead languages: that, in the execution of this design, they had already gone so far, as to reproach Thucydides and Xenophon very tattily, with modern Gallicisms and suspicious phraseologies; and had superciliously lashed all the rest; Diodorus, Polybius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Livy, Justin, Suetonius, Quintilian, Tacitus, Plutarch, Athenæus,
Athenæus, Dion Cassius, with multitudes of others, as mere counterfeit Romances; the works of recent Sophists, Impostors, and Fabulists [c].

And let any one should interrupt him here, and ask; how the protestant cause could be ruined and our whole religion overturned, by the lofs onely of these Pagan writers, he clears up that doubt in the following words, by declaring; that this blow, how daring soever, was but the introduction to the fatal stroke, which was to infue; for that the Clements, the Chrysoftoms, the Jeroms, and the Aultins, were to fall the next in this massacre; and the ancient Councils themselves, both general and provincial, would not long survive them [d].

This is the substance of his plot, as it is set forth by himself. For if we could penetrate the very marrow, as he says, or, in a metaphor still more elegant, the very vitals of the dead languages themselves, we could not find any words, so well suited to his subject, or so adapted, to spread wonder and amazement through an Assembly, as his own. As to the

success of the plot, he represents it every where, as most easy and probable. For the Papists would favour it of course, as it could not fail of reducing all Christendom under the absolute power of Rome; and the Protestants, among whom a fantastical passion for novelties, and a brisk giddy spirit of Pyrrhonism was rising very fast [e], would rejoice at any blow given to ecclesiastical history and the Scriptures, and readily give up even their favourite Virgils and Horaces, &c. on condition only, that the Jeroms might be sacrificed at the same time [f].

Now whatever surprize the first opening of this speech might give, either to the hearer or reader, the conclusion, I dare say, will give as great, to find this crazy projection, as he calls it, which he has been dressing up with such solemnity and laboured pomp of words, as a most desperate plot of the Romish Church, to be nothing at last but the stale and senseless whim of a single old Jesuit, formed by no concert or confederacy with any set of men in the world, and published about forty years ago without any other effect whatsoever, than of being laughed

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at ever since by all men of sense, and particularly condemned at Rome, as I have been certainly informed, as the mere delirium of a doting Critic.

One would not easily conceive, at the first thought, what should put it into this Archdeacon's head, to think of alarming the Provincial Clergy, at this time of day, with the vain terrors of such an exploded and obsolete tale. But his scheme was artfully laid, and the time exactly hit by him. He saw, that a Panic was spread over the land; that people's heads were filled with nothing, but conspiracies and Popish invasions; that this was the moment, to make a figure with his plot, and if the discovery was postponed, the merit of it would be lost. He struck in roundly therefore, as he expresses it, and like a true man of craft, with his taste and turn of the age [g]; and snatched the opportunity of displaying his abilities before his reverend brethren, and while he was rousing all their fears, of administering comfort to them at the same time; by shewing; what a champion they had got to defend them; that the old Jesuit himself could not outdo him, in those very talents.

[g] See page 12.
talents of his, which he had been enumerating; the acuteness of his prolific head; the extent of his various learning; the force of his dogmatical language: and that the Freethinkers were nothing to him, even in their own arts, and the management of those everlasting arms of theirs, in which their strength lay; the alertness of their sneers; their affection of appearing significant in erudition, and their fluent pompous show of some depth in letters [b].

But surely, no Archidiaconal Charge was ever more learnedly trifling, or pompously absurd than this. He confesses, that this conceit of the Jesuit raised so general an outcry against it, among the Papists themselves, that he was obliged to recant it, as soon almost as it was divulged; that his own Society of the Jesuits published a formal protestation against it [i]; and that the learned of all the other Orders both in France and Italy, sharply declared their abhorrence of it [k]. Yet this despicable project of a cloistered visionary, conceived so many years ago, retracted by himself, censured by his own Order, and abhorred by all the other Orders of France and

[b] See page 22, 23.  [i]  [k] Pag. 20.  

Italy,
Italy, is here puffed and dressed out by our Arch-deacon, in an Assembly of English Clergy, as a most dreadful plot, spreading it's infection far and wide, threatening ruin to our whole religion, fire and sword to all Protestants [I].

In opening the evidences of this plot, he declares from his own knowledge, that it was certainly begun, and is carried on to this day, with art and success; and is assisted also by a favourable concurrence of circumstances in this very age [m]: that one great man in France had loudly proclaimed a very high esteem for the author; that another person at Amsterdam had the confidence to suppose gravely, even in print, that the Jesuit's new system would bear a debate among the learned, and by degrees gain a strong, if not the ablest party to it's side [n]: and if any farther proof be required, he assures us, that though it may justly seem so extravagant and chimerical, as to make some good men believe it incapable of doing any mischief, yet he can prove, on the contrary, that it has already spread a taint too far:

among some, for catholic advantages, among others, for want of knowing that secret, or from passionate biasse to their coins, or to favour their Pyrrho-

nism [o].

The reader will be apt to wonder here again, why our Archdeacon is not more explicit and particular in declaring his proofs, in a cause, which, of all others, seems to want them the most. He knows, that the plot is carried on with success to this day; and can prove, he says, that it has spread a taint too far: yet after he has prepared us, to expect the history and progress of the infection, and what particular persons it has tainted in this and that nation; he drops all that at once, as if there were some latent sore in it, too tender for him to touch. But it is not very difficult to guess at the reason: it is his great regard for certain good friends of his, whom he is loth to impeach, as accomplices in this Jesuitical plot, which yet he must necessarily do, whenever he is forced to speak out; I mean the Tunfuls and the Marklands of our own country:

[o] Pag. xi. 20.

who,
who, with that same malignant spirit against the ancients, of which he talks [p], have been lately making the same desperate furious push, in this very protestant land, to deprive us of the works of Cicero, by adding them to the Jesuist’s list of counterfeit romances, and shewing them to be the fragments of those same busy Sophists and recent Fabulators. For of all the learned in this kingdom, there are none, who, like the Loyolites of France, have ventured, to assume that new character, of blazing and fastidious Hypercritics, or have pushed their protestant Pyrrhonism so far, as they.

Yet after all, which I have been saying of the Archdeacon’s Speech, I must do him the justice to own, that there are many observations occasionally interspersed in it, both exceedingly curious, and entirely new. I shall just give one of them, as a specimen of the rest; by which he informs his revered brethren, that the real necessaries of learned authors, in these times of ours, are extremely great; nay, almost infinitely so, beyond any thing, which the

[p] Page. 17. Note [†].

multitude
multitude can imagine [q.] This is a discovery so recondite, and remote from vulgar apprehension, that it could not possibly be made by any, but himself. For, though his modesty would fain conceal it, he is but drawing his own picture, under the character, which he gives of those great lights and pillars of Protestantism, whom he proposes to the Clergy as patterns of their studies: men, who spent their whole lives in the pursuit of erudition, penetrated the very marrow of all the learned languages, traversed, with the same zeal, every ancient, and monument they could find, had all antiquity before them in one grand comprehensive view, and attained to that abounding richness in learning, which rendered them the glories of their age, and a scourge and terror to any bold superficial pretenders, who should offer to impose upon the public any mischievous sophistries or chicanery of science [r]. For, how could any man know, the real necessaries of such deep scholars, as these, if he himself was not as profound, as they? or how indeed can any one else, reach even the sense of so deep a discovery; for as to those bold and super-

facial pretenders, whom he justly derides, for skimming only the surface of literature, and contenting themselves, as he tells us, with a few select authors, the most eminent, and elegant in each class [s]; they would be apt to pronounce at once, that there is no sense at all in it.

But, if I may presume to offer my opinion, the sense of it, I think, will be found clear and good by a due attention to the context; in which the Archdeacon, having first taken occasion to declare, that our Church is far inferior to the Romish in the provision of emoluments for the clergy, artfully introduces his observation, by way of complaint, or petition, as it were, to the public, on behalf of himself, and all the other learned authors, among the Clergy, that, whereas their learning, in these protestant days, is infinitely superior, to what it was in the Popish, yet our Governors do not consider, that their real necessaries are increased to them likewise, in the same proportion. For though he has not given any reasons, to confirm this, yet the truth

[i] Pag. 27.
of it may be demonstrated by a known and memorable fact. For instance; Erasmus, an Author, competently learned, for those Popish times, was supplied with all real necessaries, and a large overplus besides, from one single benefice, conferred upon him by an Archbishops of Canterbury: Our Archdeacon, on the contrary, in these Protestant times, holds the same benefice, which Erasmus then held, with a second still better, and the profits of an Archdeaconry into the bargain, yet out of the infinite superiority of his learning, wants the addition still of more preferment, to supply his infinite want of real necessaries.

But I am drawn insensibly too far, and wasting too much time in pointing out the solemn trifles; and elaborate nonsense of this strange speech. My chief purpose, in taking notice of it, was of a more serious kind; to shew, by the example of this very performance, to what poor shifts this Defender of the primitive monks, and their miracles, will naturally be reduced, whenever he finds it expedient, to give a public testimony of his zeal against Rome; and while he pretends to be fighting against Popery,
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Popery, how he will be driven, by the force of his principles, to make but a mock-fight of it, a mere theatrical shew, and to combat onely phantasms of his own dressing up.

This, I say, is the necessary consequence of his principles; of that superstitious veneration of the primitive Fathers, and that implicit faith in Ecclesiastical History, which it has been the business of his life and studies, to inculcate. For I have already shewn, by facts and instances produced in this Introductory treatise, how those Divines of our Church, who carry the authority of the Fathers so high, as to make them the guides and interpreters of our religion, and who appeal to them especially in our controversies with the Papists, preclude themselves of course, from attacking any of those principal corruptions, for the sake of which, the Protestants found it necessary, to separate themselves from the communion of Rome. Yet our Archdeacon maintains still, as we have seen, in this speech, that the Ancient Fathers and Primitive Councils, the Clements, the Chryostoms, the Jeroms, and the Aultins, are the very bulwarks of Protestantism,
and the instruments, through which we may most glaringly expose to every common eye, the unscriptural and unprimitive crudities of the Romish Church [7].

Now, as in all disputes, the readiest way to find out the truth, is, by reducing them, as far as it is possible, to questions of fact, and to the trial of our senses, so in this, I shall refer myself to a fact, which I have endeavoured to exemplify in the foregoing work, with regard to those very Fathers, to whom the Archdeacon appeals; and particularly, to Chrysostom, Jerome and Austin; concerning whom, I have there affirmed, and do now again affirm, that they have all severally taught, and practised, and warmly recommended to the practice of all Christians, certain rites and doctrines, which, upon their authority, and example, are received and practised at this day by the Romish Church, but condemned and rejected by Protestant Churches, as unscriptural, superstitious and idolatrous. If the Archdeacon allows this fact, every one will see at once, without asking his opinion any farther, on

[7] See pag. 2, &c. which
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which side those Fathers are to be ranged: if he
denies it, he must deny at the same, that those
passages, which I have produced in proof of it, are
really to be found in them; or otherwise, in spite
of any distinction or comment, which he can frame
upon them, every man of sense will allow the fact
to be true.

But of all the Primitive Fathers, Jerom seems to
be the peculiar favorite of our Archdeacon, and, as we
may collect from this very speech, is supposed by
him, to be of more eminent service to us than any
of them, both against the Papists and the Freethinkers: for which reason, I have chosen to employ
the few pages, that remain, in considering his par-
ticular merit and principles a little more precisely:
and with that view, shall propose another fact or two,
drawn from his writings; which will enable the rea-
der to form a clear judgement of his character, as
far as it relates to the point, now in dispute, between
the Archdeacon and myself.

This Jerom then, as I have observed in the
foregoing work, was a most zealous admirer and
promotor
promoter of the monkish life; and, for the sake of advancing it's credit in the world, wrote the lives of two celebrated Monks; the one called Paul, and the other Hilarion; in which, after he has invok-
ed that same Holy Spirit, which inspired the said Monks, to inspire him also with language, equal to the wonderous acts, which he was going to relate, he has inserted a number of tales, and miracles, so grossly fabulous, as not to admit the least doubt, of their being absolute forgeries. The Life of Paul was published the first, and, as we learn from Jer-
mon himself, was treated, as a mere fable, by the Freethinkers, or Scyllean dogs, as he calls them, of those days [x]. Nor is it considered at this day in any other character, or mentioned by the learned on any other account, than as a proof, of that pas-
sion for fiction and imposture, which possessed the Fathers of the 4th century [x]. Now whether Jer-

[x] Unde & nos—ceptum ab eo opus aggregientes, maledico-
rum voces contemnimus: qui olim detrahentes Paulo meo, nunc forte
detrahent Hilarioni—verum destinato operi imponam manum &
T. 4. par. 2. p. 74.

[x] Quam fuerint quarti seculi Scriptores fabulis dediti, e vita Pauli
Hieronymiana, ex Athanasiana Antonii, & c. intelligimus. Dodw. Dif-
sert. in Irenæum 2. §. LV.
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Rom forged these tales himself, or propagated what he knew to be forged by others, or whether he really believed them, and published only, what he took to be true; our Archdeacon may chuse which he pleases, I shall not dispute it with him, since the fact, which I would lay before the reader, and with which alone, we are at present concerned, is uncontestable, *that it was one of the principal views of Jerom's zeal and writings, to recommend to all Christians, as the perfection of the Christian life, a species of monkery, not onely abhorred by Protestants, but, in my opinion, more contemptible and superstitious, than any that is professed at this day in the Church of Rome.*

Again, Jerom, as I have intimated also above, wrote a little piece or two against Vigilantius, in which he treats him, as a most blasphemous Heretic, and gives us all the particular articles of his heresy, drawn from Vigilantius's own words, to the following effect.

"That the honors paid to the rotten bones and dust of the saints and martyrs, by adoring, kissing, wrapping them up in silk and vessels of gold,
" gold, lodging them in their Churches and lighting
up wax candles before them, after the manner of
the Heathens, were the insigns of Idolatry [y].

" That the Cœlibacy of the Clergy was an Hæ-
refy, and their vows of chastity the seminary of
lewdness [z].

" That to pray for the dead, or to desire the
prayers of the dead, was superstititious: and that
the souls of the departed Saints and Martyrs were
at rest, in some particular place, whence they
could not remove themselves at pleasure, so as to be
present every where to the prayers of their vo-
taries [a].

[y] Ais Vigilantium—os foetidum rurus aperire, & putorem
spurcissimum contra Sanctorum Martyrum proferre reliquias, & nos,
qui eas sucipimus, appellare cinerarios & idolatras, qui mortuorum
278, 279, 282, &c.

[z] Dicit—continentiam, hæreæm; pudicitiam, libidinis semi-
narium. ibid. p. 281.

[a] Ais enim vel in sinu Abrahæ, vel in loco refrigerii, vel subter
aram Dei animas Apostolorum & Martyrum confedisse, nec posse de
fuis tumulis, & ubi voluerint, adeòf præsentés—dícis in libello tuo,
quod dum vivimus, mutuo pronobis orare possimus; postquam au-
tem mortui fuerimus, nullius sit pro alo ex audienda oratio, &c. ibid.
p. 283. &c.

" That
"That the Sepulchers of the Martyrs ought not to be worshipped, nor their saints and vigils to be observed [b].

"That the signs and wonders, said to be wrought by their reliques, and at their Sepulchers, served to no good end or purpose of religion [c]."

These were the sacrilegious tenets, as Jerom calls them, which he could not bear with patience, or without the utmost grief [d]; and for which he declares Vigilantius, to be a most detestable heretic, venting his foul-mouthed blasphemies against the reliques of the Martyrs, which were working daily signs and wonders. He bids him, go into the Churches of those Martyrs, and he would be cleansed from the evil spirit, which possessed him, and feel himself burnt, not by those wax candles, which so much offended him, but by invisible flames, which would force

[b] Qui Martyrum neget sepulcras venerandas, damnandas dicit esse vigilias—ibid. 281.
that Daemon who talked within him, to confess himself to be the same, who had personated a Mercury, perhaps, or a Bacchus, or some other of their Gods among the Heathens [e]. At which wild rate, this good Father raves on, through several pages, in a strain much more furious, than the most bigotted Papist would use at this day, in the defence of the same rites.

Let our Archdeacon then speak directly to this fact, and tell us, which of these two is acting here the Protestant part, and serving the Protestant cause: whether it be Jerom or Vigilantius: whether the Primitive Father, who, by lies and forgeries, so fiercely maintains the honor of monkery and reliques; or the Primitive Heretic, who, by the Principles of reason and the Gospel, so firmly rejects them.

But he has told us already in his speech, that the Jeroms are the men, who must enable us, to ex-

[e] Ingredere basilicas Martyrum, & aliquando purgaberis: invenies ibi multos socios tuos, & nequaquam cereis Martyrum, qui tibi displiant, sed flammis invisibilibus comburentis——&c. p. 286.
pose the unprimitive crudities of the Romish principles and practices: and he will try again, perhaps on this occasion, what he has tried with success on others, to accommodate these very facts to his own system: and by an art, which he has learnt from Jerom himself, will teach us, "that we ought to distinguish between the dogmatical and the agnosticall style; that in the first, indeed, truth is the object aimed at, but in the second, nothing but victory; that sincerity therefore is necessary in the one, but art alone in the other: that Jerom was not here dogmatizing, but fighting with an enemy; and in that case, according to his custom, not saying what he thought true, but what was necessary to his cause, and catching up any words, to throw at him, which would best serve, to knock him down: then he will cry out again, in the same lamentable style, that this is not the first time, that poor St. Jerom has been thus managed and misrepresented [f]; that I have sup-


"pressed
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"pressed the very expressions, which would have
"cleared up the matter and justified the purity of
"his principles; for when Vigilantius charges him
"with Idolatry, for worshipping rotten bones, in
"the manner above-mentioned, that I had omitted
"to acquaint the reader, how Jerom denies the
"charge, and declares, that they paid no divine wor-
ship to any thing but to God, that by honoring the
"relics of the Martyrs, they meant to adore him,
"whose Martyrs they were; and gave honor to the
"servants, that the honor of the servants might
"redound to their Lord, who says, he that receiveth
"you receiveth me [g]." And what is this after all, but the same trifling and evasive distinction,
with which the Romanists defend the same practices
at this day, and shift off that charge of Idolatry,
which is urged against them by the Heretical Pro-
testants?

But to pursue this point a little farther. There
is another short passage, in the same work of Jerom,
where he urges Vigilantius, in the following man-

[g] See Dr. Chapman's defence of Jerom—in Miscellan. Tracts.
pag. 30, &c.
"That if it were such a sacrilege, or impiety, as Vigilantius contends, to pay those honors to the reliques of the Saints; then the Emperor Constantius must needs be a sacrilegious person, who translated the holy reliques of Andrew, Luke, and Timothy, to Constantinople; then Arcadius Augustus also must be held sacrilegious, who translated the bones of the blessed Samuel from Judea, where they had lain so many ages, into Thrace: then all the Bishops likewise were not only sacrilegious, but stupid too, who submitted to carry a thing, the most contemptible, and nothing but mere dust, in silk and vessels of gold: and lastly, then the people of all the Churches must needs be fools, who went out to meet those holy reliques, and received them, with as much joy, as if they had seen the Prophet himself, living, and present among them: for the procession was attended by swarms of people, from Palestine, even unto Chalcedon, singing with one voice the praises of Christ, who were yet adoring Samuel perhaps, and not Christ, whose Prophet and Levite Samuel was [b]."


Now
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Now let the Archdeacon declare once more, what it is, that we must say and think, of these translations and processions of holy reliques, which were solemnized, as Jerom here describes them, with such pomp and pageantry of devotion, by the Emperors, Bishops, people, and all Christian Churches of those Primitive times. Must we with Vigilantius, call them acts of impiety, superstition and stupidity; or with Jerom, treat such an opinion, as blasphemous and heretical? but whatever answer he may give, we may venture to affirm, without waiting for it, what is sufficient for my purpose, and notorious to all, who have heard or seen, what passes in the Church of Rome, that Jerom's account of those primitive reliques and their translations, is the very form, and pattern, by which the Romanists translate, receive and venerate their holy reliques, at this day.

I have now said enough, for the present occasion, concerning the use of the Fathers, and particularly of Jerom, with regard to our controversies with the Papists, yet cannot put an end to this Postscript, without adding a word or two, on what the Archdeacon has
has farther intimated, with respect to the same Jerom, and another sort of enemies, the Freethinkers; who make him likewise, as he would persuade us, the particular object of their spleen, and would be glad, as well as the Papists, to get rid of him at any rate. Now if this had been said of the Freethinkers onely, in popish countries, there would have been some sense in it; but as it is here applied, there is certainly none at all. For in the Romish Church, there are many without doubt, who from a freedom of thinking, superior to that of the vulgar, must needs condemn the whole system of their monkery, their worship of Saints and reliques, their holy water, holy oil, crosses, masses, exorcisms, and all their other superstitions; manifestly contrived, to serve purposes merely secular; to support the power, and increase the wealth of the Clergy: and it is natural to imagine, that men, whose scepticism turned chiefly on those rites and practices, might be particularly galled, by the writings of Jerom, or the other Fathers, by whose authority, they were all at first propagated, and are still maintained, and forcibly imposed upon them. But the case is widely different in Protestant countries; where we are neither
teized with such fopperies, nor tied down to the authority of the Fathers; and where the Freethinkers consequently have no reason, to fancy themselves specially hurt by any of them; but on the contrary, many obvious reasons, why they should enjoy and rejoice in them all; as affording infinite matter for the sport of sceptical wits; in the credulity, the superstition, the pious frauds, and forged miracles of those primitive times: all which, they have never failed to set forth, as the genuine characters of the Christian Priesthood, and Christian Churches of all ages; and to play them off with all their art, so as to make them bear against religion itself; and they bear indeed in the strongest manner against the religion of Rome, as being wholly founded, and still supported by those very arts. But the Protestants stand clear, and unconcerned in the dispute; and have nothing to do, but to look on, and divert themselves with the issue of it. For their religion rests on quite another foot, on the single, but solid foundation of the sacred Scriptures; unmixed with rubbish of ancient tradition, or ancient Fathers; and independent on the characters and writings of any men whatsoever, except of Moses and the Prophets; Christ
Christ and the Apostles. But when Protestant Divines, urged on by an unhappy zeal, or the vanity of displaying their superior learning, think fit, to take up the quarrel, as their own; and when Archdeacons especially, and Lambeth Chaplains, come forth, with a sort of oracular authority, to defend those primitive frauds and forgeries, and declare the cause of the Fathers, to be the common cause of all Christians; then the affair indeed becomes serious; for this adds a real force and sting to the railleries of the Sceptics; turns their flight cavils, into grave objections, and points them directly against Protestantism itself.

FINIS.
A FREE INQUIRY INTO THE MIRACULOUS POWERS,
Which are supposed to have subsisted in the CHRISTIAN CHURCH, &c.
AN INQUIRY

Into the Miraculous Powers, &c.

NOW proceed, according to my promise, to a more precise and accurate Discussion of the argument of the Introductory Discourse, and to open all the particular proofs, which induced me finally to embrace it, with that freedom and impartiality, which becomes every ingenuous and disinterested inquirer after truth: and, that I may lay the whole question before the reader in the clearest light, I propose to observe the following method.

I. To draw out, in their proper order, all the principal testimonies, which relate to the miraculous gifts of the Church, as they are found in the writings of the Fathers, from the earliest ages, after the days of the Apostles. Whence we shall see, at one view, the whole evidence, by which they have hitherto been supported.

II. To throw together all, which those Fathers also have delivered, concerning the condition of the persons who are said
said to have been indued with those gifts, and to have wrought
the miracles, to which they appeal.

III. To illustrate the particular characters and opinions of
the Fathers, who attested those miracles; so as to enable us to
determine with more exactness, what degree of credit may be
due to their testimony.

IV. To review all the several kinds of miracles, which
are pretended to have been wrought, and to observe, from the
nature of each, how far the credibility of them may reason-
ably be suspected.

V. To refute some of the most plausible objections, which
have hitherto been made by my antagonists, or which the
prejudices and prepossession of many pious Christians may be
apt to suggest to the general turn of my argument.

I. In collecting all the facts and testimonies, which re-
late to the present argument, from the earliest antiquity, af-
ter the days of the Apostles, our first thoughts are carried of
course to the Apostolic Fathers, that is, to those, who had
lived and conversed with the Apostles, and who, by their spe-
cial appointment, were ordained to succeed them in the Go-
vernment of the Church. For as there are several of this charac-
ter, whose writings still remain to us, St. Barnabas,
St. Clemens, St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, St. Hermas, so it is
natural
natural to expect, that, in these valued remains, the History of the miraculous gifts, which are so much celebrated by the writers of the New Testament, should be carried on still in the same manner by these their immediate successors, through the next generation. For if any such gifts had been actually subsisting in their days, it is highly probable, that men of their eminent zeal and piety, who had seen the wonderful effects of them, under the management of the Apostles, and must themselves have possessed a large share of them, would have made some appeal or reference to them, in their circular epistles to the Churches, as their predecessors had done, for the honor of the Gospel, and the credit of their own ministry. But instead of this, it is remarkable, that there is not the least claim or pretension, in all their several pieces, to any of those extraordinary gifts, which are the subject of this inquiry; nor to any standing power of working miracles, as residing still among them, for the conversion of the Heathen world. The whole purpose of their writings is, to illustrate the excellence and purity of the Christian Doctrine; and the whole power of their ministry seems to have lain, in the innocent and amiable character of their lives, and in the pious, charitable, and fervent strain of their pastoral exhortations.

They speak indeed in general, of certain spiritual Gifts, as abounding among the Christians of that age: yet these cannot reasonably be interpreted to mean any thing more, than the ordinary gifts and graces of the Gospel, faith, hope and charity; the love of God and of man; which they all recommend.
commend in the warmest terms, and appear to have possessed in the highest degree. Archbishop Wake however, who has translated their works into English, says, that, in all probability, they were indued with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that there are sufficient indications of it in their writings [1]: "which he endeavours to confirm, not by any facts or express testimonies, drawn from themselves, but by inferences only or conjectures, grounded on a supposed fre- quency of those endowments in that age, and the com- munication of them, as he says, to much less and worser men; on the sanctity of their lives, and the great- ness of the stations, to which they were called by the Apostles; and on the accounts of them, transmitted to us by their Successors: from all which he concludes, that they were not only instructed by persons inspired, but were themselves also in some measure inspired too, or indued with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost [2]." But whatever gifts of this sort they may be supposed to have possessed, it is certain at least, as the same Translator of their works takes occasion to inculcate, that their endowments were far inferior, both in their kind and degree, to those of their Predecessors, the Apostles [3].

But the learned Mr. Dodsell, a writer of a more sanguin complexion, peremptorily declares, from the mere title or

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address of St. Ignatius’s Epistle to the Church of Smyrna, that miracles subsisted in great abundance in those days; because that Church is there stiled, blessed with every good gift, and wanting in no good gift [1]. Yet these words, as they are explained by the context, manifestly signify nothing more, than the ordinary gifts of the Gospel, Faith and Charity: for the whole passage runs thus: To the Church of God the Father, and of the beloved Jesus Christ, which God hath mercifully blessed with every good gift, being filled with Faith and Charity, so as to be wanting in no good gift [2]. In another Epistle likewise of St. Ignatius, to the Romans, written on his journey towards Rome, whither he was going to suffer martyrdom, there are these words; “I am willing to die “ for God, unless you hinder me. I beseech you, that you “ shew not an unseasonable good will towards me: suffer “ me to be food for the wild beasts, by whom I shall attain “ unto God: for I am the wheat of God, and shall be ground “ by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the “ pure bread of Christ, &c. [3]” From which words, the same learned person again infers, that the prayers of the primitive Christians had the power to disable the wild beasts from assaulting the Martyrs, who were exposed to them in the Am-

[1] Difurtat. in Iren. i. i. § vii.
[2] Ἡλεμιμίν ἐν χαρίμαλι, ἐνεπλησσιμίν ἐν πίεις ἐν δυσκόη, δυ-
στρήγα εἴς εἰς χαρίμαλα. Epift. ad Smyrn.
[3] Ναρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς, μὴ δίκαιος ἄνευς γίνεσθi μου. ἀφίει μὴ ἞ρειον ἐνα
Βασiλ. &c. Ad Rom. c. iv.
Yet the passage itself has not the least reference to prayers, or to any thing miraculous, but to the ordinary endeavours and intercession of the Christian brethren at Rome, who offered to use their interest to preserve him from that cruel death, which he was then going to suffer: to which sense it is expressly restrained, in the relation of his Martyrdom, written by those who accompanied him in this very journey, and were present at his death: by whom we are told; "that the brethren, who came out to meet him on his approach to that city, and were zealous for his safety, undertook to appease the people, so that when he came to be exposed to the wild beasts in the Amphitheatre, they should not desire his destruction: but the Saint over-ruled, and commanded them to be quiet." And to the same sense also Dr. Cave has interpreted it, in his Life of this Saint. "The Christians at Rome, says he, came out to meet and entertain him — and when some of them did but intimate, that possibly the people might be taken off from desiring his death; he expressed a pious indignation, intreating them to cast no rubs in his way, that might hinder him, now he was hastening to his crown."


[2] See Relat. of Martyrd. of St. Ignat. §. 9, 10, 12.

And in truth, all the other expressions of these Fathers, which are commonly understood to signify the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, may be interpreted more rationally and more agreeably to the general turn of their writings, to denote only the ordinary graces of the Gospel, faith and charity; which they constantly extoll, as superior to all other perfections; as things wonderfull and admirable; and the peculiar gifts of God: [1] Nay in some places, they seem even to disclaim all gifts of a more extraordinary kind. Thus Polyarch, in his Epistle to the Philippians, says; “these things, my brethren, I took not the liberty to write to you of myself, concerning righteousness, but you before encouraged me to it. For neither I, nor any other such as I am, can come up to the wisdom of the blessed and renowned Paul. And in the same Epistle he declares, that it was not granted to him, to practise that, which is written in the Scripture; be angry and sin not, and let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” [2] St. Ignatius also, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, says;

Thus when St. Clement tells the Corinthians, that they had all been blesed with a large effusion of the Holy Spirit, [§ 11.] yet this effusion, as it appears from the context, was not of a kind which conferred any extraordinary powers, but only pious affections and good inclinations. And in the same Epistle, where he is exhorting them to submit themselves, one to another, according to the gift, which had been bestowed upon each: he means nothing more by that gift, or charisma, as he calls it, than the different talents, abilities, and advantages, whether natural or acquired, of strength, wisdom, riches, continence, &c. by which Providence thinks fit to distinguish the different characters of men. § 33.
“these
these things I prescribe to you, not as if I were some body extraordinary, for tho' I am bound for his name, I am not yet perfect in Jesus Christ, but now I begin to learn, and speak to you, as to fellow disciples. For I ought to have been stirred up by you in faith, in admonition, &c. [1].

This same Saint indeed, in one or two of his Epistles, seems to intimate, that the knowledge of certain events had been communicated to him by the Spirit. Thus, in his Epistle to the Philadelphians, speaking of the earnest exhortations, which he had given them, to unity and submission to their Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, he says; 'some people suspected, that I was acquainted before hand with the divisions among you: but he is my witness, for whom I am bound, that I did not know it from any human flesh, but the spirit declared it, speaking thus, do nothing without your Bishop, &c.' [2] from which Dr. Wake takes occasion to infer, that he was indued with a large portion of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost: [3] yet I do not find, that any other Commentator has ventured to build any thing miraculous or supernatural upon it.

It is related likewise of Polycarp, in the ancient narrative of his martyrdom, 'how in the time of that persecution, in which his life was particularly sought for by the Heathen

[1] Ad Ephes. c. III.
[2] Ibid c. VII.
Magistrates, he withdrew himself from Smyrna, by the
advice of his friends, into a little village, where he spent
his days and nights in prayer, with a few, who accompa-
nied him; and as he was praying, a vision was offered to
him, three days before he was taken, in which he saw
his pillow on fire: whereupon, turning presently to his
companions, he said prophetically, I must certainly be
burnt alive.” The same narrative calls him also a Pro-
phetic teacher; and declares, that every word, which he uttered,
had either been fulfilled, or would be fulfilled. [1] Whence
some later writers have affirmed, that he was induced with a
spirit of prophecy, and foretold every thing, that was to hap-
pen to him. But the foresight of his death, and the man-
ner of it, in the time of a cruel persecution, when his person
was particularly hunted from village to village, as the principal
and destined sacrifice, may reasonably be considered as the
effect of common prudence, without recurring to any thing
miraculous.

Here then we have an interval of about half a century, the
earliest and purest of all Christian Antiquity after the days of
the Apostles, in which we find not the least reference to any
standing power of working miracles, as exerted openly in the
Church, for the conviction of unbelievers; but on the con-
trary, the strongest reason to presume, that the extraordinary
gifts of the Apostolic age were by this time actually withdrawn;

and the Gospel left to make its way by its own strength, and the authority of those credentials, and original miracles, with which Christ had furnished it, as an effectual security of its success and triumphs over the powers of the earth. Yet before we take leave of these Apostolic Fathers, it may be proper to observe, for the prevention of unnecessary cavils; that, if from the passages referred to above, or from any other, which may be found in them, it should appear probable to any, that they were favored on some occasions, with extraordinary illuminations, visions, or divine impressions, I shall not dispute that point with them, but remind them only, that the gifts of that sort were merely personal, granted for their particular comfort, and reaching no farther than to themselves; and do not therefore in any manner affect or relate to the question now before us.

But if the Apostolic writers have left us in the dark, with regard to our present argument, their Successors, it must be owned, as far as their authority reaches, have cleared it from all obscurity, by their strong, explicit, and repeated attestations of many extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers, which were constantly and publicly exerted in the Christian Church, through each succeeding age.

Justin Martyr, who is supposed to have written his first Apology within fifty years after the days of the Apostles, says, "There are prophetical gifts among us at this day, and "both men and women indue with extraordinary powers "by
"by the Spirit of God [1]." And he frequently appeals, "to what every one might see with his own eyes, in every part of the world, and particularly in Rome, in the case of persons possessed with Devils; who were cured and set free, and the Devils themselves baffled and driven away by the Christians, adjuring or exorcising them in the name of Jesus, when all other Exorcists and Inchanters had tried in vain to help them [2]."

Ireneus, who was contemporary with Justin, but wrote somewhat later, and lived much longer, affirms; "that all who were truly disciples of Jesus, receiving grace from him, wrought miracles in his name, for the good of mankind, according to the gift, which each man had received: some cast out Devils, so that those, from whom they were ejected, often turned believers, and continued in the Church: others had the knowledge of future events, visions, and prophetic sayings: others healed the sick by the imposition of hands: that even the dead had been raised, and lived afterwards many years among them: that it was impossible, to reckon up all the mighty works, which the Church performed every day, to the benefit of nations; neither deceiving, nor making a gain of any, but freely bestowing, what


it had freely received [1]." And as to the particular miracle of raising the dead, he declares it, "to have been frequently performed on necessary occasions; when by great fasting, and the joint supplication of the Church of that place, the spirit of the dead person returned into him, and the man was given back to the prayers of the Saints [2]." And again, "we hear many, says he, in the Church induced with prophetic gifts; speaking with all kind of tongues; laying open the secrets of men for the public good; and expounding the mysteries of God [3].

Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, who lived in the same age with Irenæus, speaking of the evil and seducing Spirits, which used to inspire the Poets and Prophets of the Heathen world, says; "the truth of this is manifestly shewn; because those, who are possessed by such Spirits, are sometimes exorcised even at this day by us, in the name of the true God; when these seducing Spirits confess themselves to be the same Daemons, who had before inspired the Heathen Poets [4].

Tertullian, who flourished towards the end of the second, and died in the beginning of the third century, challenges the Heathen Magistrates, "to call before their tribunals, any person possessed with a Devil; and if the evil spirit, when ex-
**The Miraculous Powers.**

"orcified by any Christian whatsoever, did not own himself to be a Devil, as truly, as in other places, he would falsely call himself a God, not daring to tell a lie to a Christian, that then they should take the life of that Christian: and what is more manifest, adds he, than this operation; what more convincing than this proof?" In another place, there is a Sister, says he, among us, indued with the gifts of revelations, which she suffers in the Church, during the time of divine service, by an ecstasy in the spirit: she converses with Angels, and sometimes also with the Lord: sees and hears mysteries: and knows the hearts of some, and prescribes medicines to those, who want them [2].

**Minucius Felix,** who is supposed to have written in the beginning of the third century, addressing himself to his Heathen friend, in his Dialogue, called *Ostavius,* says; "the greatest part of you know, what confessions the Daemons make concerning themselves, as oft as they are expelled by us out of the bodies of men, by the torture of our words, and the fire of our speech. Saturn himself, and Serapis, and Jupiter, and the rest of them, whom you worship, constrained by the pain, which they feel, confess what they are:

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are: nor in this, do they tell us a lie, tho' it be to their own shame, especially when some of your people are present. Believe them therefore to be Dæmons, from their own testimony, and true confession. For being adjured by the true and onely God, they unwillingly and wretchedly betray their uneasiness in the bodies of men; and either fly out instantly, or vanish gradually, in proportion as the faith of the patient, or the grace of the agent afflicts towards the cure [1].

Origen, who lived at the same time with Minucius, tho' something younger, declares; "that there remained still among the Christians of his days, the manifest indications of that Holy spirit, which was seen in the shape of a Dove. For they drive away Devils, says he; perform many cures; foresee things to come; according to the will of the divine word: and tho' Celsius and the Jew, who is introduced by him, will make a jest of what I am going to say, I will say it nevertheless; that many people, as it were against their wills, have been brought over to Christianity, by the Spirit giving a sudden turn to their minds, and offering visions to them either by day or by night; so that instead of hating the word, they became ready even to lay down their lives for it. I have seen many examples of this sort; and should I onely set down such of them, as were transacted in my presence, I should expose myself

"to the loud laughter of the unbelievers, who imagine that
we, like the rest, whom they suspect of forging such
things, are imposing our forgeries also upon them: but
God is my witness, that my sole purpose is, to recom-
mend the religion of Jesus, not by fictitious tales, but by
clear and evident facts." [1]

In another place, he says; "that miracles began with
the preaching of Jesus, were multiplied after his ascen-
dion, and then again decreased: but that, even in his
days, some remains of them continued with a few, whose
souls were cleansed by the word, and a Life conformable
to it [2]." Again; some, says he, in proof of a mira-
culous power received through faith in Christ, heal the
sick, by invoking the name of God over them, and of
Jesus, with a recital of some story of his life. I myself
have seen many so healed in difficult cases; loss of senses,
madness, and innumerable other evils, which neither men
nor Devils could cure [3]." Again; speaking of Devils,
We are so far, says he, from worshipping them, that by
prayers and the rehearsal of some passages of the sacred writ,
we drive them before us, out of men and places, and also
out of beasts; for they sometimes attempt to do mis-

[2] Σημεία δὲ τὸ ἀγάλμα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀμφότερος μὲν τῷ Ἰησοῦ διδασκαλίας, μεῖος
dὲ τὴν αὐτολογίαν αὐτῶν πλείους ἑαυτίσκοι, ὑπὲρ τὸ Ιερόν ἑκάτον. ὡς ὅτι ὃν ἦν ἤν
tὸ ἄγαλμα αὐτῶν πρὸς ἀλήθειαν. &c. ib. I. 7. p. 337. it. 1. 2. 62.
An Inquiry into

"chief also to these [1]." Then as to the method of performing this miracle, "it was not, he says, by any curious, magical, or enchanting arts, but by prayer alone, and certain plain adjurations or exorcisms, which any simple Christian might perform: for even common and illiterate laymen were generally the actors in this case [2]." In which no man was more eminent, than one of his own disciples, Gregory, called the Wonder-worker, who cast out Devils, not only by word of mouth, but even by a message, or mandatory letter to them; as the Ecclesiastical writers have recorded of him [3]."

Cyprian, the scholar of Tertullian, who wrote about the middle of the third century, speaking of prophetic visions, which was the peculiar gift of that age, says; "besides the visions of the night, even boys among us are filled with the Holy Ghost, and in fits of ecstasy, see, hear, and speak things, by which the Lord thinks fit to instruct us [4]." And describing all the various pranks of the Devils, "they insinuate themselves, says he, into the bodies


"of
of men, raise terrors in the mind, distortions in the
limbs, break the constitution, and bring on diseases —
yet adjured by us in the name of the true God, they pre-
rently yield, confess, and are forced to quit the bodies,
which they possesed. You may see them by our com-
mand, and the secret operation of the divine power, lashed
with scourges, scorched with fire, tortured by an increase
of pains; howling, groaning, begging; confessing whence
they came, and whither they go, even in the hearing of
their own worshippers: and they either fly out immedi-
ately, or vanish gradually, according to the faith of the
patient, or the grace of him, who works the cure [1]."
In another place, treating again on the same miracle, "it is
performed, says he, at this day, so that the Devil is lashed
and burned and tortured by the Exorcists, with human
words, but a divine power: and when he promises to go
out, and to dismiss the men of God, he often deceives,
and by the same lie of obstinacy and fraud, does what
Pharaoh had done before, till he is oppressed by the salu-
tary water of Baptism [2].

[2] Ibid. Epist. 76. p. 154. The example of Pharaoh here alluded to, is
explained by him in the following manner: King Pharaoh having struggled and
perfumed in his perfidy, was able to carry on his resistance so far, till he came
to the water, where he was subdued and destroyed. For that Sea, as St. Paul
says, was the Sacrament of Baptism. — And so he shows how the Devils used to
act the same part, when adjured by the Christian Exorcists, and continued to
afflict the people of God till they came to the water of Baptism.

C Arnobius,
An Inquiry into

 Arnobius, who is supposed to have published his book against the Gentiles, in the year of Christ 303, tells us, "that Christ used to appear sometimes in those days, to just and holy men, not in vain dreams, but in his pure and simple form: and that the mention of his name put the evil spirits to flight; struck their prophets dumb; deprived the Southsayers of the power of answering; and frustrated the acts of arrogant Magicians; not by the terror or hatred of his name, as the Heathens pretended, but by the efficacy of his superior power."[1]

Laëntius, the disciple of Arnobius, who flourished and wrote about the same time, speaking of those Daemons or evil spirits, says; "that being adjured by the Christians in the name of God, they retire out of the bodies of men; and being lashed by their words, as by scourges, confess themselves to be Daemons; and even tell their names; the same, which are adored in the Temples; and this even in the presence of their worshippers; yet casting no reproach on religion, but on their own honor, because it is not in their power to lie either to God, in whose name they are adjured, or to the just, by whose voice


"they
the Miraculous Powers, &c. 19
"they are tortured: wherefore after many howlings, they
"frequently cry out, that they are scourged and burned,
"and are going out instantly [1]."

These are the principal testimonies, which affect the mir-
raculous gifts of the Primitive Church, through the three
first centuries: which might be supported still by many more
of the same kind, and from the same, as well as different
writers, if it were necessary [2]. But these are sufficient for
our purpose: and the warmest admirers of those ages, will
not scruple, I dare say, to risk the fate of the cause upon
the merit of them: for if these cannot command belief, the
credit of the miracles in question must sink at once; since
Christian antiquity can furnish no other evidence in their fa-
vor, half so strong and authentic as this.

I shall close this first article with a remark or two, which
it seems naturally to suggest. It has already been observed,
that the silence of all the Apostolic writers, on the subject of
these gifts, must dispose us to conclude, that in those days
they were actually withdrawn. And if this conclusion be
thought to have any weight in it, then surely the pretended
revival of them, after a cessation of forty or fifty years, and
the confident attestation of them made by all the succeeding
Fathers, cannot fail of infusing a suspicion of some fiction

[1] Divin. Institut. lib. 2. c. 16.
[2] See Mr. Whitton's Account of the Demoniacs, &c. in which he has
collected many more testimonies relating to them, to shew, that the gift of
curing them continued to the middle of the fourth century.
in the case. For if they did really cease for so long an interval, and at a time, when the Christian cause seemed to want them the most, as being then deprived of its first and ablest champions, the Apostles, we cannot conceive any reason, why they should afterwards be revived, when the Church, without any such help, had been gathering more and more strength all that while, by its own natural force. But it is remarkable, that as the Church continued to increase in power and credit, so its miraculous gifts are said to have increased also in the same proportion: for tho' by an increase of power it certainly stood less in need of true miracles, yet by the same power it became more able to reward, and more likely therefore to excite false pretensions to them.

Again, the difference which every one may perceive, between the miraculous gifts of the Apostolic days, and these of the following ages, not onely in the nature, but in the manner also of exerting them, will greatly confirm the suspicion just intimated. The Apostles wrought their miracles on special occasions, when they felt themselves prompted to it by a divine impulse; but at other times, were destitute of that power; as it is evident from many facts and instances, recorded in the New Testament. Agreeably to which, tho' they appeal sometimes, in confirmation of their mission, to the miraculous works, which their Master had enabled them to perform, yet we never find them calling out upon the Magistrates and people, to come and see the mighty wonders, which they were ready to exhibit before their eyes, on all occasions,
occasions, at any warning, and in all places, whenever they thought fit. Whereas this confident and ostentatious manner of proclaiming their extraordinary powers, carries with it an air of quackery and imposture, as it was practiced by the primitive wonder-workers; who, in the affair especially of casting out Devils, challenge all the world to come and see, with what a superiority of power they could chastise and drive those evil spirits out of the bodies of men, when no other Conjurers, Incanters, or Exorcists, either among the Jews or the Gentiles, had been able to eject them.

II. Under this head, I shall briefly lay before the reader; all such notices, as I have been able to draw, from any of the Primitive writers, concerning the persons, who were indebted with these extraordinary gifts, and wrought the several miracles, to which they appeal.

Now whenever we think, or speak with reverence, of those primitive times, it is with regard always to these very Fathers, whose testimonies I have been collecting; who have left behind them, in their writings, the genuine specimens of their sanctity and abilities. Venerable Saints, and eminent lights of the best and purest ages, as Dr. Waterland calls them, and of admirable endowments, ordinary and extraordinary [1]. And they were indeed the chief persons and champions of the Christian cause in those days; the Pastors, Bishops, and Martyrs of the Primitive Church. Yet none of these Venerable

nereable Saints have any where affirmed, that either they them-
selves, or the Apostolic Fathers before them, were indue with
any power of working miracles, but declare only in general,
" that such powers were actually subsisting in their days,
" and openly exerted in the Church; that they had often
" seen the wonderful effects of them; and that every body
" else might see the fame, whenever they pleased;" but as
to the persons, who wrought them, they leave us strangely
in the dark; for instead of specifying their names, conditions,
or characters, their general file is, "such and such
" works are done among us, or by us; by our people; by
" a few; by many; by our Exorcists; by ignorant lay-
" men, women, boys, and any simple Christian whatsoever;
" ever;" but in the particular case of casting out Devils,
Origen expressly says, that it was performed generally by lay-
men [1]. Agreeably to which Mr. Whiston declares, "that
this gift, which he ranks amongst the greatest of mira-
cles, was wholly appropriated by our Saviour, to the
meager sort of Christians, with an exclusion even of the
" Clergy, so that, after the days of the Apostles, none of
" the sacred order ever pretended to it [2].

But of what condition soever the actors were, it is cer-
tain, that in the performance of their miracles, they
were always charged with fraud and imposture by their ad-

versaries. Lucian tells us, that whenever any crafty juggler, expert in his trade, and who knew how to make a right use of things, went over to the Christians, he was sure to grow rich immediately, by making a prey of their simplicity. And Celsus represents all the Christian wonder-workers, as mere vagabonds and common cheats, "who rambled about to play their tricks at fairs and markets; not in the circles of the wiser and better sort, for among such they never ventured to appear; but wherever they observed a set of raw young fellows, slaves or fools; there they took care to intrude themselves and to display all their arts." Cecilius also calls them a lurking nation; flouncing the light; mute in public; prating in corners.

The same charge was constantly urged against them by all the other enemies of the Christian Faith, Julian, Porphyry, &c. of whom Dr. Waterland however has taken occasion to declare, that they had some regard to truth, in what they said, and to public report, and to their own characters. But as


[4] "I know not whether Celsus, Porphyry, or Julian would have said such a thing, in the greatest extremity of their rage. They had some regard to truth and to public report, and to their own characters." Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 426.
this seems to have been an hasty and inconsiderate concep-
tion, made to serve a particular point, which he was then
urging, that the ancient Infidels were better men than the mo-
derns, so I shall lay no stress upon it, but observe only on
the whole, that from these short hints and characters of the
primitive wonder-workers, as given both by friends and ene-
mies, we may fairly conclude; that the celebrated gifts of
those ages were generally engrossed and exercised by private
Christians, chiefly of the layety; who used to travel about
from City to City, to assist the ordinary Pastors of the
Church, and Preachers of the Gospel, in the conversion of
the Pagans, by the extraordinary gifts with which they were
supposed to be induced by the Spirit of God, and the mi-
raculous works, which they pretended to perform.

And here again, we see a dispensation of things ascribed to
God, quite different from that, which we meet with in the
New Testament. For in those days, the power of working
miracles was committed to none but the Apostles, and to
a few of the most eminent of the other disciples, who
were particularly commissioned to propagate the Gospel, and
preside in the Church of Christ: but upon the pretended re-
vival of the same powers in the following ages, we find the
administration of them committed, not to those, who were
instructed with the government of the Church; not to the
successors of the Apostles, to the Bishops, the Martyrs, or
the principal Champions of the Christian cause; but to boys,
to women, and above all, to private and obscure laymen, not
only
onely of an inferior, but sometimes also of a bad character [1]. But if those venerable Saints and Martyrs were not indue with them when living, they had amends made to them when dead, if we can believe the reports of their successors, by a profusion of them on their bones and reliques: which suggests a farther cause of suspecting the faith and judgement of those early ages. For how can we think it credible, that God should withhold his distinguishing favors, from his faithful servants when living, to bestow them on their rotten bones? or employ his extraordinary power, to no other use, but to perpetuate a manifest imposture in his Church? since it is to those ancient tales, so gravely attested, of miracles wrought by the bones of Saints and Martyrs, that the Church of Rome owes all that trade, which she still draws, from the same fund and treasure of her wonder-working reliques: and if we can believe such stories, as they are delivered to us by the Primitive writers, we cannot condemn a practice, which is evidently grounded upon them.

These things, I say, are so strange, as to give just reason to


Adjicent praeterea multa de auctoritate cujusque Doctoris Haeretici; illas maxime doctrinae, sive idem confirmasset, mortuos suscitasse, debiles reformasset, futura signifcasset, ut merito Apostoli credentur. Tertull. De Præscript. Haereticor. §. 44.


D suspect,
suspect, that there was some original fraud in the case; and
that those strolling wonder-workers, by a dexterity of juggling, which art, not Heaven had taught them, imposed
upon the credulity of the pious Fathers, whose strong prej-
udices and ardent zeal for the interest of Christianity, would
dispose them to embrace, without examination, whatever
seemed to promote so good a cause. That this was really
the case in some instances, is certain and notorious: and
that it was so in all, will appear still more probable, when
we have considered, in the next place, the particular char-
acters of the several Fathers, on whose testimony, the cre-
dit of those wonderfull narratives depends.

III. The authority of a writer, who affirms any ques-
tionable fact, must depend on the character of his veracity
and of his judgement. As far as we are assured of the one,
so far are we assured, that he does not willingly deceive us;
and from our good opinion of the other, we persuade our-
selves, that he was not deceived himself: but in proportion
as there is reason to doubt of either; there will always be
reason to doubt, of the truth of what he delivers. Nay,
in many cases, the want of judgement alone, has all the
same effect, as the want of veracity too, towards invalid-
dating the testimony of a witnes: especially in cases of an
extraordinary, or miraculous nature; where the weakness of
men is the most liable to be imposed upon; and the more so,
as it happens to be joined to the greater piety and simplicity
of manners. Since this then is the sole rule of determining the measure of credit, which is due to a witness of any strange and questionable facts, I shall apply it to the case before us; and examine what proofs of a sound judgement and strict veracity are to be found in the writings of those Fathers, who attest the miraculous stories, which we are now considering.

As to the Apostolic Fathers, of whom I have spoken above, since they have contributed but little towards the illustration of the present question, and bear no direct testimony in it; or none at least, but what confirms the point, which I am defending; there is no reason to enter into the consideration of their particular characters. Their works, as I have said, are translated into English, so that every one may judge of them for himself. They appear to have been men of great piety, integrity, and simplicity: and that is all, I think, which we need to declare of them on this occasion.

Justin Martyr comes next, whose genius will best be illustrated by some specimens of it, extracted from his writings. We have seen above, that among the endowments conferred in an extraordinary manner on the Primitive Christians, the gift of expounding the holy Scriptures, or the mysteries of God, was reckoned one: and this, as Justin frequently affirms, was granted by the special grace of God to himself [1]. Let us inquire then, what use he made of this divine

divine gift: and if ever he was really inlightened by it, we
might surely expect to find the effects of it there, where he
is discoursing on the mystery of the Cross; which he declares to
be the greatest symbol of power and dominion, and explains
in the following manner. "Consider, says he, all the
things in the world, whether they could be administrated,
or have any communication with each other, without this
form of the Cross. The Sea could not be passed, unless
that trophy called the sail, were preferred in the ship: the
earth could not be tilled without it: for neither diggers
nor artificers could do their work, but by instruments of
this shape. The form of man differs in nothing else from
other animals, but in the erection of his body, and the
extension of his arms, and the projection of his nose
from the forehead, through which respiration is made,
and which shews nothing else but the figure of the Cross:
in which sense also it is spoken of by the Prophet;
Christ the Lord is the breath before our face [1]." Upon
this passage the very pious and learned Dr. Grabe makes the
following remark, which I would recommend to all the zealous admiring of these venerable Saints and purest ages; "that
the holy Martyr must not be rashly blamed, for an interpreta-
tion so forced and far fetched; because it was the prevailing

Οδη γὰρ δύναμις ἤμα τοιαύτη τις ἡ ἡ, ἀλλὰ χάρις παρὰ Θεῷ μόνη τε τῇ
συμβαίναι τὰς γραφὰς αὕτη ἱδίη μοι. Ιβ. p. 258.

[1] Καλαποχέοις γὰρ πάντα τὰ τὶ τῇ κόσμῳ, ἢ ἄνω τῇ σχήματος τῶν δια-
κίνησις, η κοινώνια Ἦχον δύναται, &c. Απολ. ι. p. 82.

custom
"custom of that age, to import into the sacred text senses, 
which did not belong to it [1]."

Again; "Hear, says Justin, how Christ, after he was 
crucified, fulfilled the symbol of the tree of life in Paradise, 
and of all the other things, which were to happen after-
wards to the righteous. For Moses was sent with a rod, 
to redeem his people: with this rod he divided the sea; 
brought water out of the rock; and with a piece of 
wood, made the bitter water sweet. Jacob also with sticks, 
made his uncle Laban’s sheep bring forth such lambs, as 
were to be his own gain, &c. [2]." And so he goes on, 
in this way of allusion, to apply all the sticks and pieces of 
wood in the Old Testament to the Cross of Christ: and 
pursuing the same argument in another place, where he is 
describing the flight of the Israelites with Amalek, he says, 
that when the son of Nun, called Jesus, led the people on 
to battle, Moses employed himself in prayer, with his 
hands stretched out in the form of a Cross; that, as long 
as he continued in that posture, Amalek was beaten; but 
when he remitted any thing of it, his own people 
suffered: and that all this was owing to the power of the

[1] Alium autem fensum tradit hoc loco Justinus, qui nimirum quidem 
petitus videtur: nec tamen S. Martyr idcirco temere reprehendendus, quod 
mos iuris e civ tam inter Judaeos, quam Christianos obtinuerit, sacro textui 
haud innatos fensum sub inferre. Vid. not. (29) ad Justin. ibid.

[2] "Ortis, ἐ μὲν τὸ τερμαθεῖα τῶν — σύμβολον εἰκὼν τῆς ζωῆς, ὁ 
ἐν τῷ παραδίσῳ περικύκλωσαν έλικόδο, ἐ γὰρ τῶν γενετορίων πάσι τεις δικάοις, 
καί τίνως, &c. Id. Dial. p. 2. p. 325, 326.

"crosses:
"cros: for the people did not conquer, because Moses
"prayed; but because, while the name of Yojus was at the
"head of the battel, Moses was exhibiting the figure of the
"Cros [1]." It would be endless to run through all the
interpretations of the same kind, which are to be found in
this Father; since his works are but little else, than a wretched
collection of them: the pure flights of an enthusiastic fancy
and heated brain, which no man in his sober sense could
mistake for divine revelations. Yet as absurd as they now
appear to be, this pious Father insists, that they were all
suggested to him from Heaven; and appeals to the Jews them-
selves, against whom he was applying them, whether they
thought it possible for him, to acquire so perfect a knowledge of
the Holy Scriptures, if he had not received from the author of
them, the grace or gift, to understand them [2]. What credit
then can be due to this Father, in the report of other peo-
ple's gifts and inspirations, who was so grossly deceived him-
sely, or willing at least to deceive others, in this confident at-
testation of his own? Dr. Cave tells us, that Justin was
wholly ignorant of the Hebrew tongue; which was the cause of
his childish blunders, whenever he meddled with it. "Every
"one, says he, who has dipped but ever so little into that

[1] Ου γαρ ουτι ητος ουχι ελατο Μωσης, δια της κυριακης ο λαος κυριο, αλλ' 
οτι — αυτες τη Σαμια τη ταιω ειναι. Ibid. p. 336.

par. 2, p. 390.

"tongue,
tongue, knows, that Satan in the Hebrew signifies an ad-
versary: but see the ridiculous interpretation of Justin:
"He is called Satanas, says the Martyr; a name compounded
agreeably to his nature, of Sata, which signifies an Apo-
state, and Nat, a Serpent, &c. [1]" But for a farther
illustration of his character, I shall give an instance or two of
the doctrines, which he teaches, as orthodox and Apos-
tolic, as well as of the facts, which he affirms, as certain and
unquestionable.

He declares, that all the Christians, who were in all points
orthodox, embraced and believed the doctrine of the millen-
nium: "that all the Saints should be raised in the flesh, and
reign with Christ in Jerusalem, enlarged and beautified in
a wonderful manner for their reception, in the enjoyment
of all sensual pleasures, for a thousand years before the ge-
neral resurrection [2]." Which doctrine he deduces from
the testimony of the Prophets and of St. John the Apostle;
and was followed in it by the Fathers of the second and third
centuries: yet the doctrine itself was afterwards exploded, as
it well deserved, not only as absurd and monstrous, but as
impious and heretical. St. Jerome treats it as a mere fable, or

[1] Litterarum Hebraicarum rudem penitus & imperium suisse, Justinus vit-
tio verti non debet, &c. ——— Hinc factum est, ut in Hebrais adeo pueriliter

[2] Ερω δ' αυτ' ιν' εις εις ορθουμένους καὶ οὐδὲν ἤρμανιν, οὔς σπερμα
ἀνάκαμψεν μετ' ἑαυτῶν εἰσι παρακάλεσε, οὔ χάλκι έστιν ἐν Ἰερισαλημ όικοδομήσει, οὔ
κοσμηθείς, οὔ παλαιώθεις, &c. Dialog. par. 2. p. 313.
An Inquiry into
dream of the Jews, and Judaizing Christians. Yet from the
authority of those Fathers, who asserted it, and the credit,
which it had obtained with the generality of Christians, he
foreknew, as he tells us, "what a furious storm he should raise
against himself by that freedom [1]. The sure fate of all those,
who, in any age of the Church, from the earliest times
down to the present, have had the virtue and courage to at-
tack any popular error, or reigning superstition.

He asserts another doctrine full as monstrous; "that God
"having created the world, committed the care of it to
"Angels; who transgressing their duty, fell in love with wo-
"men, and begot children on them, whom we call Dæ-
"mons; who subdued mankind to their power; partly by
"magical writings; partly by terrors, and punishments;
"and partly by the institution of sacrifices, fumes, and
"libations; of which they began presently to stand in need;
"after they had enslaved themselves to their lusts and pas-
"sions, &c. [2]" And in another place, "the truth, says
"he, shall come out; that evil Dæmons of old debauched

[1] Quæ qui recipiunt, mille quoque annorum fabulam & terrenum Salvato-
ris imperium Judaico errore sufficiunt — Comment. in Isa. c. 30. Oper.

Ex quo dicitus mille annorum fabulam, in qua rursum nuptiae promittuntur,

Ut praefaga mente jam cernam, quantorum in me rabies concitanda sit ibid.
p. 478.

[2] Oi ò μάγις, παραβαπτεῖς τέως τῆς ταξιας, γυναικῶς μίξεσιν ἡπικάπως,
οὔ τι videas ἔτοιμως, οὐ τίνος οἱ λοίμωνοι δαιμόνες, &c. Apol. 2. p. 112.
women and corrupted boys, and spread terrors among
men; who did not examine things by reason; but seiz-
ed with fear, and not knowing, that these Dæmons
were evil spirits, called them Gods, and gave every one
that name, which they had each taken to themselves. But
when Socrates by true reason endeavoured to expose their
practices, and draw men away from their worship, they,
by the help of wicked men, took care to get him put to
death, as an Atheist and impious person [1]."

He professes likewise the highest regard for certain spuri-
ous books, which were published under the names of the
Sibyl and Hylaspis; which he treats with the same reve-
rence as the Prophetic Scriptures; appeals to them as di-
vine, and says, that "by the contrivance of Dæmons, it
was made a capital crime to read them, in order to deter
men from coming at the knowledge of what was good,
and keep them still in subjection to themselves: which
yet, adds he, they were not able to effect: for we not
onely read them freely without fear, but offer them also, as
you see, to your perusal; knowing, that they will be found
acceptable to all [2]." And it is certain, that from this

[1] Εἰρήνεια λαλῶ τί αἰλωνί. ἵππε τοῖς θάλασσοις θάλασσοι ἐπιθαυμάζει
καὶ γυναικὲς ἐμαίξουσαν καὶ παιδίας ἐμπνεύσας. &c. ib. Apol. 1.
p. x.

[2] Καὶ Σιβύλλης ἦ τῇ Ῥασώτε, γενέτευξιν τῶν Φθιλίων ἐκάλαν ἵνα ὑπʼ

Καὶ ἤνεμος ἦ τῶν θάλασσος τίθην, Χάλκης ὑγιώθεν καὶ τῶν τῆς Ῥασώτες,
ἡ Σιβύλλης, καὶ τῶν ὑπερφήνων βίβλων διὰ γνώρισκοιλν. &c. ib. p. 67.

Ε  example
example and authority of Justin, these silly writings were held in the highest veneration by the Fathers and rulers of the Church, thro' all succeeding ages.

Clemens of Alexandria supposes them to have been inspired by God, in the same manner as the Prophets of the Old Testament: which he confirms by the authority both of St. Peter and of St. Paul, whom he cites as appealing to them, for a prediction of the life and character of Jesus. For as God, says Clemens, out of his desire to save the Jews, gave them Prophets, so raising up Prophets also to the Greeks, from their own nation and language, as far as they were capable of receiving that good gift of God, he separated them from the vulgar, as not only the Preaching of Peter, but the Apostle Paul also declares, speaking thus: take the Greek books into your hands, and look into the Sibyl, how clearly she speaks of one God, and of the things to come: then take Hystaspes also and read, and you will find the Son of God much more clearly and distinctly described: and that many Kings shall employ all their forces against Christ, out of their hatred to him, and to all who bear his name.

The

[i] Clem. Alex. Strom. I. 6. p. 761. Edit. Ox. The Preaching of Peter, κρισιμα Πιτερ, was the title of a spurious book, ascribed to that Apostle: which is often cited as genuine by Clement, Origen, and the other Fathers: and was forged probably in the age, immediately succeeding to that of the Apostles. [Vid. Cave Hift. Litt. V. 1. p. 6. it. Grab. Spicil. Patr. T. 1. p. 62.] The palliation also cited here from St. Paul, was taken from some other spurious piece now
The heathens on the other hand charged the Christians with the forgery of these books, and gave the title of Sybils, by way of contempt, to those, who held them to be divine [1]. Which charge the Fathers constantly denied and treated as a pure calumny [2]: Yet all the Critics of these

now unknown, which then passed for the work of that Apostle. [Vid. Not. ad loc. Clem.] Hylobas is called by Laodam, a most ancient King of the Moes: [l. 7. c. 16.] and by Ammianus Marcellinus, the Father of Darius: and is said to have been a master of all the doctrine of the Magi. Vid. Amm. Marc. l. 23. c. 6. & Not. Vales.


[2] Celsus having charged the Christians with inserting many blasphemous passages into the verses of the Sibyl, Origen observes in answer to him, that he had neither produced any passages, so infected, nor any ancient and correct copies of the verses themselves, which wanted such passages; which he ought to have done, if he had been able. [l. 7. 369.] This indeed was, to put the controversy upon a right foot; by which however, as the learned Valesius remarks, Celsus might easily have made good his charge, and detected the forgery. [Not. in Euseb. Vit. Constant. p. 700. Edit. Cant.] If he did not therefore produce any old copies, which wanted the passages in question, the reason of it must be, that he either thought it unnecessary, in a case so manifest, or that the books themselves were not easy to be found.

The succeeding Fathers treat the same objection in a manner wholly equivocal and evasive. Laodam, after he has alleged many verses from the Sibyl, in which the principal acts and miracles of Jesus are circumstantially described, says; "those, who are confuted by these testimonies, usually fly to this shift, of declaring these verses, not to be the Sibyl's, but forged and composed by our people: which no man will believe, who has read Cicero and Varro; and the rest of the ancient writers, who make mention of the Erythrean and the other Sibyls, and who were all dead before Christ was born." [De Ver. Sap. E2 l. 4]
these days allow the fact to be true, and consider it, as one of the pious frauds of those primitive ages. There is no man, says

l. 4. 15.] The four following verses, cited from the Sibyl by Laërtius, will serve as a specimen of the rest.

Εἰπὲ δὲ ἡμῖν πῶς ἔχοις σιρόν
'Αλεξάνδρος χρῆσαις ἐν ἑρήμῳ πίθα κοπίῃ.
Καὶ τὰ τερπενόντα λαμβάνει κλάμασαι πάθα,
Διδόγκη πληρώσασι κοφίνας τις ἴππες πολλαῖ.

With five loaves and two fishes
He will satisfy five thousand men in the desert.
Then gathering up all the fragments, which remain,
He will fill twelve baskets for the confirmation of many.

Eusebius has preferred an Acrostich, said to have been taken from the Erythraean Sibyl; in which the initial letters of each line compose the following greek words, Ἰησοῦς, Χριστός, Θεὸς Υἱός, Σωτήρ, Σωσόμενος. 'Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Σοῦ τῆς Γεννήσεος. [Vit. Cont. p. 700. Ed. Cant.] Now the sole ground of this confident assertion is, that Cicero, speaking of certain verses, ascribed to the Sibyl, which had really been forged by the partisans of J. Caesar, to serve a political design, after he has ridiculed the verses themselves, and the purpose of them, intimates, that they were composed in the form of an Acrostich, which was a work of labor and attention, not of madness or rashness, and could not therefore come from the Sibyl. Div. 2. 54.

St. Austin has given us a Latin translation of the same Acrostich, which he introduces thus; "The Erythraean Sibyl has indeed written some things clearly
says Dr. Cave, who does not see, that they were forged for the advancement of the Christian faith [1]. Some impute the fraud to Hermas; some to Papias; and others to Justin himself. Mr. Blondel and Mr. Dodwell charge it upon the Heretics, called Montanists; but by a gross mistake, as Dr. Cave observes, since Montanus was not in being, till forty years after the Sibylline books were known to the world[2].

Justin affirms also that filly story, concerning the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, "That it was made by seventy Elders sent for that purpose from Jerusalem to " and manifestly relating to Christ; which I have read in the Latin tongue, "tho' in bad verses, thro' the unskillfulness of the translator, as I afterwards understood. For Flaccianus, an eminent person, who had been Proconsul; "a man of flowing eloquence and great learning; as we were convening together on the subject of Christ, produced a Greek book, being the verses, he "said, of the Erythrean Sibyl, where he shewed in a certain place, how the initial letters of each verse were managed so, as to form the words, "Ἰωάννης Ἐπιφανεὶς. &c. [De Civ. De 18. 23.] But the same Father declares in another place, that there were seven who suspected all those prophecies, which related to Christ, and passed under the name of the Sibyl, to have been forged by the Christians. [ib. c. 46.] Upon which the learned Editor of his works, Ludovicus Vives, remarks, that they could not be forged, because they are cited both by Lactantius and Eusebius. [Not in loc.] Thus a most gross and palpable forgery was imposed upon the Christian world, from the very midst of those best and purest ages; which tho' rejected and derided from the beginning by all men of sense among the Heathens, yet obtained full credit in the Church, through all ages, without any other ground to support it, but the utility of the deceit, and the authority of those venerable Fathers, who contrived and attested it.


"Egypt, at the request of King Ptolemy: whom that "King shut up in as many separate cells, and obliged them, "each to translate the whole Bible apart, and without any "communication with each other: yet all their several "translations were found to agree verbatim from the begin- "ning to the end; and by that means were demonstrated "to be of divine inspiration." And to raise the greater at- "tention to his story, he introduces it, by declaring, "that "he is not telling us a fable or forged tale; but that he "himself had seen at Alexandria the remains of those very "cells, in which the Translators had been shut up [1].

But repeating the same story in his Apology, he makes an unhappy blunder, by saying, that King Ptolemy's message, to beg the assistance of those seventy translators, was sent to Herod, King of Jerusalem; whereas Herod happened to live about three hundred years later than Ptolemy [2]. Dr. Grabe endeavours to excuse Justin by the help of a forced criticism, which the ingenious Editor of Justin's Apology, with good reason derides; since this pious Father was certainly guilty here of that weakness, against which St. Paul warned both Timothy, and Titus, of giving too much heed to profane, Jewish, and old women's fables [3]; and furnishes a pregnant instance,


[2] Ὅτι δὲ Πτολεμαίος ὁ Λιγνωτής βασιλεὺς——προσήματι τῶν Ἰσ- 


how
how easily his prejudices might impose upon him in all other cases of the like nature.

To these specimens of his want of judgement, I might add several more, from his frequent use of fabulous and apocryphal books, forged by the first Christians, under the names of the Apostles; and likewise from his false and negligent manner of quoting the genuine Scriptures. Dr. Grabe has collected several instances of the first sort [1]; and his learned Editor finds frequent occasion to animadvert upon the second [2].

It will be said perhaps, that these instances shew indeed a weakness of judgement, yet do not impeach the veracity of Justin, as a witness of fact. With regard to which, we must call to mind, what is hinted above, that the want of judgement alone may, in some cases, disqualify a man as effectually, from being a good witness, as if he wanted veracity too. For example, Justin expressly affirms, that he had seen the cells, in which the seventy were shut up to the task of translating the Bible. Now it is certain, that there never were any such cells, nor any such translators: and the best excuse, which can be made for him is, that he was imposed upon by some Jews or Christians of Alexandria, who might shew him some old ruins, under the name of Cells, which his prepossession in favor of the story, owing to his natural

credulity and want of judgement, made him take to be really such.

Again, in his Apology, addressed to the Emperor and Senate of Rome, he charges them with paying divine honors to the Heretic and Impostor, Simon, of Samaria, commonly called the Magician: and for the truth of his charge, appeals to a Statue, then subsisting in Rome, and publicly dedicated to that Simon in the Island of the Tiber, with this Inscription, SIMONI DEO SANCTO [1]. But it is manifest beyond all reasonable doubt, as some learned men have shewn, that Justin was led here into a grofs blunder, by his usual want of judgement and knowledge of Roman affairs, and his pre-conceived belief of certain fabulous stories, which passed current about this Simon among the first Christians [2]; for the Statue and Inscription, to which he appeals, were not dedicated to his Countryman, Simon Magus, of whose Deification there is not the least hint in any Roman writer, but to a Sabine Deity, of ancient worship in Rome, and of similar name, SEMONI SANCIO [3], frequently mentioned by the old Writers:


[3] Sancus, as Dionysius writes, was a Deity of the old Sabines, whom some called Δία μεθον. [Vid. Dionys. Hal. Antiq. l. 2. 49. it. 4. 58] and the Ro-
as the Inscription itself, dug up, about two centuries ago, from the ruins of that very place, or little Island, which Jußin describes, has clearly demonstrated [1].

Now should we allow these cases, to be clear of any fraud or design to deceive; yet they yield so bad a sample of his understanding, as to render his testimony of very little weight in any other relation whatsoever. For if he was deceived in such plain and obvious facts, where a common discernment and moderate knowledge of history, would have enabled him to have discovered the truth, how much the more easily would he be caught by a confederacy of subtle and crafty impostors, employing all their arts, to amaze and dazzle the fenes of the credulous, and to put off their surprising tricks, for the miraculous effects of a divine power?

I cannot dismiss this Father, without taking notice of an accusation, which he frequently brings against the Jews, that they had expunged many passages out of the Greek Bibles, in which the character and sufferings of Jesus were clearly demonstrated Deum Fidium. And Semoes, signified the same as Ἱερουσαλήμ, Demigods or Heroes deified. Livy mentions a Chappel of Semo Sancus in Rome — to whom the gods of certain enemies were consecrated.—bona Semoni Sanco conferrunt consecranda politi — in Sacello Sanci versus sedem Quirini. Liv. 8. 20.

[1]

Semoni
Sanco
Deo Fidio
Sacrum.

&c.

Gruter. Vol. 1. p. xcvi. 5. where there are several more Inscriptions to the same Deity.
scribed: which charge all the learned of these later ages have found to be wholly groundless. Let us see then how he supports it. "They have erased, says he, out of the book "of Esdras, the following words; Esdras said to the people, this passover is our Saviour, and our refuge; and if "you will but persuade yourselves, and be convinced in your hearts, that we are to humble him in a sign or figure, and afterwards to put our trust in him; this place shall not "be made desolate to all ages, says the Lord of Hosts. "But if you do not believe on him, nor attend to his preaching, you shall be as dirt to the nations." The Editor of Justin remarks here, that this passage is not to be found, in any copies either of the Apocryphal or Canonical Esdras; nor in any other Christian writer, but Lactantius: and instead of being expunged by the Jews, appears to have been forged by the Christians: where he refers us to the censure of an able Critic and Protestant Divine, John Croius; who charges the forgery on Justin himself, in the following words: "To propose what I think, freely and candidly; "and what all honest and religious judges of these matters "will allow to be true: I take this to have been a pi- "ous fraud of Justin, in which Lactantius followed him: "who forged and published this passage, for the confirmation of the Christian Doctrine, as well as the greatest


"part
part of the Sibylline Oracles, and the Sentences of Mercury [1]."

Again, Justin affirms, that in the 90th Psalm it was said, "tell the nations, that the Lord reigned from the tree"; and that the Jews had erased the words, "from the tree". But as there is no footstep of these words, either in the Vulgate, or any of the Greek or Hebrew copies, it is manifest, says the Editor, that they were not expunged by the Jews, but added by the Christians [2]. Lastly, he charges them with expunging a passage of Jeremiah, which yet he owns to be retained in some copies of their synagogues: as it actually is in all copies, both Greek and Hebrew, to this day. Upon which the Editor says, "that he abhors the Jews again from all fraud, but cannot abhor Justin from the utmost negligence and rashness" [3]. So unlucky and injudicious was this Father, in his charge of these frauds on the Jews, as to give an occasion only for fixing them after all upon the Christians, and, in the opinion of some, even upon himself.

The learned and ingenious Editor of his Apologies and Dialogues, who shews an inclination, to defend him on all occa-

[1] Sed fatis patet ab aliquo Christiano confita esse, non a Judaeis deleta.
Quod autem Ioannes Croesus, Observat. in. N. T. p. 205, Justinum hujus fraudis artificem suisse affirmat, in eo non Martyris nostri, in quem sita suspicione non cadit, sed suam potius ipsius exiftimationem laedit, &c. Vid. Not. ad loc.


Nos quoque Judeos fraudis abolvimus, Justinum summae negligentiae & temeritatis abolvere non possumus. Not. ad loc.
fions, where he is defensible, and on some, even where he is not, yet is often forced to break out into a kind of astonishment, at his ignorance, negligence, rashness, credulity, so gross in many instances, as to baffle all the art of criticism, nor to admit any certain rule, of collecting his real sense. Yet there are some still, says he, who extoll him, not only as a most learned, but a most eloquent writer [1].

Irenæus, whose character and doctrines come next to be considered, was, of all the Fathers, whose works still remain to us, the most diligent collector and assessor of Apostolic traditions. And in truth, as far as his judgement and veracity may be relied upon, he seems to have been well qualified for that character; being acquainted, as he tells us, with several, who had conversed familiarly with the Apostles, and curious also to inform himself, of all the particular doctrines, which they had ever taught by word of mouth.

"He lived, says Mr. Dodwell, so near to the times of the Apostles, as to be able, to transmit their doctrines to posterity with certainty and fidelity, as they were delivered to him by oral tradition, from their immediate Successors and Disciples [2]." Yet Photius, one of the ablest Critics of his own, or any other age of the Church, has intimated a different


character of him in the following short censure upon his writings; in which, he thought it necessary, he says, to advertise the reader, that in some of them, the purity of truth, with respect to Ecclesiastical doctrines, is adulterated by his false and spurious reasonings [1]. But the following instances of the doctrines, which he delivers, as orthodox and Apostolic, will be the surest rule of determining his real character, as well as the proper degree of credit, which may be due to his testimony.

He affirms then, that our Saviour lived to an old age, or was fifty years old at the least, at the time of his crucifixion; which he attempts to prove, first, from the reason of the thing; "that as Christ came to save all men, of all ranks and degrees, so it was necessary, that he should pass through all the several stages of life, that he might be a pattern to them all: 2dly, from the unanimous tradition and positive testimony of all the old men, who had lived with St. John, and the other Apostles, from whom, he says, they all received this account, and constantly bore witness to the truth of it [2]." Yet this unanimous tradition,

tradition, so solemnly vouched by this venerable Father, is as certainly false, as the Gospels are true. Dr. Whitby, after he has produced this same passage, cries out, as it were, with astonishment, "Behold here, according to Irenæus, how all the Elders of Asia testify with one voice, that they had received from St. John and the other Apostles, a tradition, concerning a fact manifestly false! behold an Apostolic man, professing to prove from St. John's Gospel, things not only contradictory to that Gospel, but to the articles of our Creed! etc." The learned Cave also, in his Life of Irenæus, tells us, "that he was betrayed into this error,—partly from a mistaken report, which he had somewhere picked up, (and it may be from his Master Papias) and partly out of opposition to his adversaries, who maintained, that our Saviour said no longer upon earth, than till the thirty-first year of his age; against whom the eagerness of disputation tempted him to make good his assertion from any plausible pretence, etc.

He asserts likewise the doctrine of the Millennium, in the grossest sense of it, from the same authority of a tradition, handed down to him by all the old men, who had conversed with St. John, and heard him relate, what our Saviour himself used to teach concerning it: of which he has recorded

the following passage: "The days will come, in which there
shall grow vineyards, having each 10,000 vine stocks;
and each stock, 10,000 branches; each branch, 10,000
shoots; each shoot, 10,000 bunches; each bunch 10,000
grapes; and each grape squeezed shall yield twenty-five
measures of wine; and when any of the Saints shall go to
pluck a bunch; another bunch will cry out, I am a
better, take me, and bless the Lord through me. In like
manner a grain of wheat sown shall bear 10,000 stalks;
each stalk 10,000 grains; and each grain 10,000 pounds
of the finest flour; and so all other fruits, seeds and
herbs in the same proportion, &c. These words, says he,
"Papias, a disciple of St. John, and companion of Poly-
carp, an ancient man, testifies in writing in his fourth
book, and adds, that they are credible to those who be-
lieve [1]." The pious and cautious Dr. Graber remarks
on this occasion, "that what Irenaeus says here about the
stalks of grain, will be thought an argument of straw by
those, to whom such things appear incredible: but, that
we ought not however, either to deny or affirm any thing

[1] Ταῦτα δι' Παπίας, Ιωάννου μιν ἄκακος, Πολυκάρπῳ δὲ ἵκαζσθαι γραφεῖς,
ἀρχαίῳ ἀνδρὶ ἱεράνως ἰμάπαιμη.——Et adjecit, dicens, hae autem
credabilia sunt credentibus. L. 5. p. 455.
Irenaeus then proceeds to confirm this doctrine, by the testimonies, of the
Prophets, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the revelations of St. John;
and contends, that it cannot be interpreted Allegorically, but will be fulfilled
according to the letter in an earthly Jerusalem.

" rashly
An Inquiry into

"rashly [1]." But Eusebius gives a frank and clear solution of the matter, by informing us, that Papias was a weak man, of a very shallow understanding, as it appeared from his writings, and by mistaking the meaning of the Apostles, imposed these silly traditions on Irenaeus, and the greatest part of the Ecclesiastical writers, who reflecting on the age of the man, and his near approach to the Apostles, were drawn by him into the same opinions [2].

Irenaeus affirms also, on the same authority of tradition, delivered to him by those, who had received it from the Apostles, that Enoch and Elias were translated into that very Paradise, from which Adam was expelled, to remain there, till the consummation of all things: and that it was the same


N. B. Eusebius indeed, in another place, speaks of Papias in a very different strain, as of a person singularly remarkable for his eloquence and knowledge of the Scriptures. [I. 3. c. 36] But this passage, as the learned Valesius informs us, is not found in any of the old copies, which he had consulted, nor in the ancient version of Rufinus. Whence he concludes, that it was inserted by some ignorant Scholiast, as being contradictory to what Eusebius had more explicitly delivered elsewhere of the same Papias. Vid. Not. Vales. ad loc.
place, into which St. Paul also was caught up [1]. This is affirmed likewise by all the later Fathers, both Greek and Latin; induced to it, we may imagine, by the pretence of an Apostolical tradition: which yet from the absurdity of it, must necessarily be as false, as the rest above mentioned. St. Epiphanius, the learned Editor of Irenæus, remarks upon this place; that tho' St. Austin does not allow this opinion to be a point of faith, yet since Irenæus and all the Primitive Fathers declare it to have been the doctrine of the Apostles, he cannot think it safe to believe otherwise [2]. And we must needs own him to be in the right, if, according to the principles of the Church of Rome, we can think the positive testimony of Irenæus, or the concurrent authority of all the Fathers, of weight enough to bear down the common sense and reason of mankind.

He asserts likewise very strongly, the fabulous story of the Septuagint version, with all the particulars already recited, of it's miraculous birth, and the separate cells, &c. To which he has added another, no less romantic; that the sacred Scriptures were utterly destroyed in the Babylonish captivity, but restored again, after seventy years, by Eedras, inspired by God for that purpose [3]. And tho' in this also, he was followed by all the principal Fathers of the succeeding centuries,

yet as Dr. Prideaux, and other learned men have remarked, there is no better foundation for it, than that fabulous relation, in the fourteenth chapter of the second apocryphal book of Elisha: a book, too absurd even for the Romanists themselves, to admit into their canon [1]: and notwithstanding the authority of Irenæus, and of all the other Fathers, who assert the same opinion, Mr. Tillemont declares it to be very dangerous to religion, and tending, extremely to weaken the authority of the Scriptures [2]. He intimates also more than once, his belief, of Angels mixing with the daughters of men: where his Editor takes notice, that all the early Fathers were drawn into the same error, by the authority of the Apocryphal book of Enoch, cited by St. Jude [3]. Yet as monstrous as this error was, it maintained its ground, as Dr. Whitby assures us, through the four first centuries; tho' St. Chrysostom treats it, as absurd and blasphemous, and all, who espoused it,


Hec forte refexit S. Judas verf. 6. scirens, Αργυρίους ἀπολύσας τῷ θύμῳ κύριορες κ. &c. — Smiliter ante ipsum S. Petrus in posteriore epistola c. 2. v. 4. cujus obscura quodammodo verba ex his Enochii verbis bene explicantur. ibid. p. 351.
as mad; and Theodore calls them infatuated and very stupid [1].

From some of the doctrines above mentioned, and particularly that of the Millennium, Mr. Chillingworth has proved against the Romanists, that the Catholic Church, even in the earliest ages, and within thirty or forty years after the Apostles, was not infallible in matters of faith: since all those absurdities were taught by the Fathers of those ages, not as their private opinions only, but as doctrines of the Universal Church, derived immediately from the Apostles, and held so necessary, that those, who held the contrary, were hardly considered, as real Christians: to which he adds the following remark; that if Papists, who first committed them to writing, could either by his own error, or a desire to deceive, crown the Fathers of the purest age in this, why not also in other things? Why not in twenty, as well as one? And why might not twenty others do it as well as be [2]?

As to Irenæus’s manner of expounding the Scriptures, it is much the same with that of Justin, or rather, according to Dr. Grabe, with that of the age, in which he lived: following no rule of criticism; nor giving any attention to the proper signification of words; but indulging a wild and enthusiastic fancy, in the invention of typical senses, and forced


allusions, utterly trifling and contemptible: which those, who read the Fathers, must always bear in mind, as a learned Critic observes, or they will be drawn into great and frequent errors [1].

Treating of the distinction of Animals into clean and unclean, he says; "The law foretold these things figuratively; "by animals denoting men. Those, who divide the hoof "and chew the cud, it pronounces clean: those, who do "neither, unclean. Who then are clean? Those, who be- "lieve in the Father and the Son. This is their Firmness, "or double hoof: and to meditate day and night on the "laws of God, so as to be adorned with good works, is to "chew the cud. But the unclean neither divide the hoof, "nor chew the cud: that is, neither have faith in God, "nor meditate on his laws. This is the abomination of "the Gentiles. But such as chew the cud, and do not di- "vide the hoof, are unclean: this is a figurative descrip- "tion of the Jews [2]." With much more to the same purpose. In which method of reasoning, as he followed "Barnabas, and the Apostolic Fathers, so he was followed


[1] Praedicit hæc omnia figurali lex, de animalibus delineans hominem—Qui sunt ergo mundi? qui in Patrem & Filium per fidem iter firmiter faciunt: hæc est enim firmitas eorum, qui duplicis sunt ungulæ. &c. l. 5. c. 8.
himself by the later writers; and especially by Clemens of Alexandria, who has copied this very passage [1].

Again, endeavouring to prove that the Mosaic law was to fill up the middle age of the world, between the natural law, and the law of Christ, he says; "This was typically shewn by many things, but especially by Thamar, daughter-in-law to Judas. For when she was bringing out twins, one of them put out his hand the first, and as the midwife supposed him to be the firstborn, she tied a scarlet string about his hand. But when this was done, he drew in his hand again, and his brother Phares came out first; and after him Zara, who had the mark. The Scripture clearly manifesting by it the people, who had the scarlet sign; that is, the faith professed by those of the forefkin, or the un circumcised: which was first shewn out in the Patriarchs, and then withdrawn, that it's brother might be brought out first; and then he be born afterwards, who had been shewn before, and was known by the scarlet sign: which is the passion of the Just one; praefigured from the beginning in Abel, described by the Prophets, but perfected in the last days by the Son of God [2]."


His reasoning also upon the number of the Gospels is in the same strain: "It is impossible, says he, that there could have been more or less than four. For there are four climates, and four cardinal winds; and the Church is spread over the whole earth; but the Gospel is the pillar and foundation of the Church, and it’s breath of life. The Church therefore was to have four pillars, blowing immortality from every quarter, and giving life to men [1], &c.

I have been the fuller in opening the characters and opinions of Justin and Ireneus, that I might save myself the trouble of enlarging in the same manner on the rest: especially as their characters will be sufficiently illustrated, by the specimens of them occasionally interspersed, in the sequel of this argument. But the later Fathers, generally speaking, do


N. B. This puts me in mind of a specimen also of Tertullian’s judgement and way of reasoning, on the question; why the number of the Apostles was twelve, and no other. I can account for this, says he, not only by the voices of the Prophets, but by arguments drawn from things: for I find this number presaged to us by the Creator. There were twelve wells in Elim; twelve gems in the vest of Aaron; twelve stones chosen by Joshua out of the river Jordan, and deposited in the Ark of the covenant: by all which the twelve Apostles were signified; who like fountains, were to water the dry desert of the Gentile world; like gems, to illuminate the sacred Vestment of the Church, which Christ the High Priest put on; and like stones, were firm in the faith. Cont. Marcion. i. 4. p. 519. D.
but copy the notions, and even the blunders of these two. For as they are the earliest, who have left any considerable works behind them, so they are the first likewise in credit and authority with succeeding ages, on the account of their piety, learning, and abilities: and the case was the same with the ancients, as it is still with the moderns; that when any facts or doctrines have once been established by men of eminent character, they are usually taken upon trust by all who follow, till some new inquirer arises, who, not content with opinions imposed on him by chance or education, resolves to judge for himself, and to use his natural right and liberty of searching into the real grounds of them.

For instance; St. Clemens of Rome having alleged the ridiculous story of the Phanix, as a type and proof of the resurrection; all the later Fathers take it from him of course, and refer us to the same bird, not only as really existing, but as created on purpose by God, to refute the incredulity of the Gentiles, on the subject of this great article of our faith. Yet all the heathen writers, from whom they borrowed the story, from Herodotus, down to their own times, treat it as nothing else but a mere fable.\[1\]. The case is the same with all the other facts, and absurd doctrines above specified; of the Millennium; of Angels deposing women, and begetting Demons; of the divinity of the Septuagint version; of the destruc-

tion of the sacred Scriptures in the Babylonish captivity, &c: In all which, these two Fathers, whose principles I have been illustrating, were implicitly followed, for a century or two at least, by all their Successors. *Irenaeus* indeed stands single in his account of the *old age of Christ*; tho' confidently affirmed by him, on the pretended authority of all the Apostles; because it was evidently inconsistent with the history of the Gospels. But the later Fathers generally ran into a contrary extreme, and affirmed, what was maintained by the *Heretics only of Irenaeus's days*, that *our Lord preached but one complete year, and died at the age of thirty*: which, according to *Clemens of Alexandria*, was both foretold by the Prophets, and affirmed by the Evangelists [1]. Whereas from the history of the Gospels, it is evident, that his ministry continued through several successive Passovers, or as Sir *Isaac Newton* has with great probability computed, through five; and that he died in his *thirty-fourth year* [2].

Now from what I have above collected, it is certain, that if a gross absurdity of opinions, and the belief of things

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[2] Thus have we, in the Gospels of *Matthew* and *John*, all things told in due order, from the beginning of *John's preaching* to the death of Christ; and the years distinguished by such essential characters, that they cannot be mistaken. Observat. on the Proph. of Dan. c. xi. p. 159.
impossible, be the proof of a weak mind; if expositions of the Scriptures, void of reason and common sense, betray a great want of judgement, then we may justly charge those defects upon these ancient fathers; from whose foolish reasonings, both in religion and morality, whole books have been compiled [4]. Mr. Dodwell, one of their most zealous admirers, does not pretend to defend them on this head; but frankly owns, that their way of reasoning is loose, sophistical and declamatory; far short of the solidity of the moderns; who excell them not only in philosophy and learning, but in the


N. B. I shall here take the liberty to transcribe the following note, from a very ingenious and candid Advocate of Christianity, the Rev. Archdeacon of Carlisle, as it exhibits a just idea of the characters and writings of these earliest Fathers.

"Christianity was in its infancy, at most in its childhood, when these men wrote, and therefore it is no wonder, that they spake as children, that they understood as children, that they thought as children. This was according to the economy they were then under. And besides, they had not time and leisure to search into the Christian doctrines, nor had they laid in a sufficient stock and fund for that purpose, they being but newly adopted into the Christian Church: yet they were willing to appear in its behalf, and to defend it as well as they could, which was accepted by Heaven. [Edward's Patrologia. p. 57.] Let me not be censured, tho' I should be so bold as to say, that we should have understood the Scriptures much better, if we had not had the writings of the Fathers: for they have obscured and depraved them by their different and contrary comments: They have raised controversies, taught men to quarrel and dispute about the sense of several texts, which otherwise are plain and obvious, and about several matters of practice, which are evident enough in themselves, some of which are superstitious &c. ib. p. 135. See Considerations on the State of the world with regard to Religion &c. p. 174.
knowledge of antiquity, and even of their own languages: and all that he pleads for in favor of their interpretations, especially of the New Testament, is, that they should not be wholly slighted, tho' they have but little sense in them, because they were agreeable to the custom or taste of those ages [1].

As to the question of their veracity, it may admit perhaps some debate, and it will probably be thought harsh in the opinion of many, to suspect men of such piety and sanctity of life, either of the invention, or the propagation of known forgeries. Yet there are many things so peremptorily affirmed, without any ground of truth or probability, by the two Fathers, whose characters I have been considering, as to give us too much cause for such a suspicion: which, as we have seen above, has been actually charged on Justin, by men of learning, and may, with equal reason, be charged also on Irenæus. For what other account can be given of his frequent appeals to the tradition and testimony of the Apostles, for the support of so many absurd and incredible doctrines? If the doctrines themselves be false; the pretended tradition of them


Sic illis nimium deferendum esse in Scripturarum interpretatione cenemus, ut ne quidem ratiocinia aliqui minus solida, quam tamen fuerint in more seculi, plane negligenda sint. ib. § 16.

could
could not possibly be true: and if we absolve Irenæus from the forgery; it must be charged on somebody else, more ancient still, and of authority enough, to impose it upon him; and on whomsoever it may fall, it gives but a lamentable idea of those primitive ages, and primitive champions of the Christian cause.

Papias, who is supposed to have been the disciple of St. John, and Bishop of Hierapolis, is said to have given rise to most of the fabulous traditions, which obtained in those early days. Dr. Whitby joins Irenæus to him, and says; "it is very remarkable, that these two earliest writers of the second century, who, on the credit of idle reports and uncertain fame, have delivered to us things—said to be done by the Apostles and their scholars, have shamefully imposed upon us, by the forgery of fables and false stories [1]." But whoever forged the rest of the spurious traditions above recited, yet that, which relates to the old age of Jesus, the most solemnly attested of them all, and peculiar to Irenæus, may be fairly presumed to be his own forgery, because it was never embraced by any body else, and was singularly adapted to the argument, which he was then afflicting, in opposition to certain Heretics, called

Valentinians, who allowed but one intire year to our Saviour’s ministry [1]

But be that as it will; since the very earliest of all traditions, and the nearest to the fountain’s head, are found to be so corrupt; it will demonstrate at least, what a treacherous foundation they must be, to build any opinion upon, and much more, any article of our faith: which might be exemplified by many other instances from the history of the first centuries. For as soon as religious disputes began to infest the Church, the plea of Apostolical tradition was presently employed, as the most effectual to silence an adversary; and was taken up therefore and urged with equal confidence by all sides. And it is an argument indeed, which of all others seems the best calculated for the use of controversy: for wherever it meets with credit, it must necessarily have great weight; and where it happens even to find none, yet it cannot easily be confuted; as not being reducible to any clear text, or fixed rule, by which it may be tried. It is not therefore strange, to find its authority carried so high, and in some cases, magnified even above the Scriptures themselves, by all the dealers in controversy, from the earliest Fathers, down to Dr. Waterland.

For example; in that most ancient and celebrated dispute between the eastern and western Churches, about the time of holding their Easter, St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, the Di-

[2] Ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ἐν τή βάσιμα αὐτῶν πάλι τή βάσιμα αὐτῶ μεν ἔκτυπε ἤν. Iren. l. i. c. i. p. 16.
siciple and immediate Successor of the Apostles, and Anicetus his contemporary, the Bishop of Rome, severally allledged the authority of Apostolic tradition for their different practice, from which neither of them could be induced to depart [1]. But Papias, as it is hinted above, the disciple of Polycarp, was the chief promoter and asserter of it: "as oft, says he, "as I met with any one, who had conversed with the ancients, I always inquired very diligently after their sayings and doctrines: what Andrew, Peter, Philip, John, --- and the rest of our Lord’s Apostles used to teach. For I was persuaded, that I could not profit so much by books, "as by the voice of living witnesses [2]." Irenæus, the scholar of Papias, who had learnt the use of it from his master, was likewise a zealous asserter of it. "If a dispute, says he, should arise, about any matter, thou but of little moment, ought we not to have recourse to the most ancient Churches, in which the Apostles resided, and take from them what is certain and clear about the point in question [3]?" Tertullian declares it to be the only weapon, that


[3] Refert Irenæus, vir Apostolicon temporum, & Papias, auditoris Evan-
that can knock down an Heretic: and in all such controversies, advances it's authority above the Scriptures; nay, forbids any appeal to the Scriptures, as hurtful to the cause of truth. We must not appeal to the Scriptures, says he, or trust the merits of the cause with them: in which there can either be no victory, or an uncertain one, or what is equivalent to uncertain [1]. And in this, Dr. Waterland declares, that he seems to have judged well, upon the prudential case, and like a wise and sagacious man, with regard to the circumstances of those times [2]. And in another place the same learned Doctor observes, from the authority of Irenæus, that Polycarp had converted great numbers to the Faith by the strength of tradition; being a sensible argument, and more affecting, he says, at that time, than any dispute from the bare letter of the Scripture could be [3].

Here then we see in short, the origin and history of tradition. Papias, a weak and silly man, who mistook the sense


Et si aliquibus de aliqua modica questione disceptatio effet, nonne oporteret in antiquissimas recurrere Ecclesias, in quibus Apofoi conversati sunt, & ab eis de praefenti questione fumere quod certum & re liquidum est? L. 3. c. iv. p. 205.


[2] Wherein to me he seems to have judged very well upon the prudential case, and like a wise and sagacious man. Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 378.

of the Apostles, was the first, who made it his particular business to recommend the use of it, and for that purpose took the pains to collect all the unwritten facts and sayings of Christ and his Apostles, from the report of those, who had conversed with them. These sayings, as Eusebius tells us, consisted of a number of strange parables, and doctrines of our Saviour, with several other fabulous stories; which the authority of so venerable a person, who had lived with the Apostles, imposed upon the Church for genuine [1]: and the


N. B. Nothing more effectually demonstrates the uncertainty of all tradition, than what is delivered to us by Antiquity, concerning this very Papias. Irenæus declares him, to have been the companion of Polycarp, and the Disciple of St. John the Apostle. [l. 5. c. 33.] But Eusebius tells us, that he was not a disciple of John the Apostle, but of John, called the Elder or Presbyter, who was a companion only of the Apostles: and whom Irenæus by mistake imagined to be the Apostle. [Hist. l. 3. c. 38.] Now Irenæus might probably be born while St. John was still living, and had conversed very familiarly in his youth with Polycarp, the disciple of that Apostle, and declares, that he retained the memory of all things which he had learnt from him, more distinctly, than of things, which had happened to him much later. [Euseb. 5. 20.] He was well acquainted also with Papias, whom he calls an ancient man: which makes it seem probable, both that Papias was contemporary with the Apostle John, and that Irenæus could not be mistaken in his account of Papias's master, which he might have received from Papias himself: and for this reason the generality of the modern writers prefer the authority of Irenæus to that of Eusebiius, who lived two hundred years later. Yet after all, it is evident, from the express words of Papias, as they are cited by Eusebius, that Papias had never personally heard or known any of the Apostles, but received his reports of them only from those, who had: and that Irenæus therefore was deceived by the identity of
gravity of his scholar Irenæus confirmed and propagated to succeeding ages; through which, every one still added to the collection, whatever he thought useful to the particular cause or opinion, that he favored. This account of the matter, deduced from the testimony of antiquity itself, confutes at once all the extravagant encomiums, which our leading Divines so lavishly bestow on those primitive Fathers, and their traditions. For if the earliest and best vouched traditions of all, which are transmitted to us, be true, or at all to be regarded, it follows of course, that we ought to receive the absurd doctrines above mentioned, as articles of faith; the fable of the Millennium; of Angels begetting Daemons on the bodies of women; of the old age of Christ, of Enoch translated into Adam's paradise; with many more of the same stamp; which were all embraced by the earliest Fathers, and delivered to us, on the authority of the Apostles, by some of their immediate Successors; and especially by those four, on whom Dr. Waterland lays the greatest stress; Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenæus and Clemens of Alexandria; "eminent personages, as he says, who flourished the name, and had never heard perhaps of that other John, called the Presbyter; who is supposed by some of the principal Fathers, to have written the second and third Epistles, as well as the book of Revelations, now ascribed to the Apostle. [Eusèb. Hist. 3. 38. Hieron. Catalog. Scriptor. de Joann. Apost. & Papia.] The learned Mr. Dodwell therefore declares it to be certain, that John the Master of Papia, was a different man from the Apostle; and consequently, that Irenæus himself, and Pelygratus his contemporary, and Clement Alexandrinus also, who was but a little younger, were all mistaken, with regard to this fact, Differt. in Iren. 1. § iv.

"within
"within fifty, sixty, or at most ninety years from the Apostolic age. Whose nearest to the time; known fidelity; admirable endowments ordinary and extraordinary, add great weight to their testimony or doctrine, and make it a probable rule of interpretation in the prime things [1]." To which he subjoins in a marginal note, "that Clemens, tho' the latest of the four, yet testifies of himself, that he had received his doctrine from several disciples of the very chief Apostles; who had truly preserved the tradition of the blessed doctrine, as it came directly from the holy Apostles, Peter, James, and John." Notwithstanding all which, the Doctor could not but know, that this very Clemens holds as many absurd, unsound, and exploded doctrines, and deals as largely in the fabulists and apocryphal books of the primitive Christians, as any other Father whatsoever. These facts shew likewise the weakness of that argument, which the Doctor alleges for the truth of doctrines, from the unanimity, with which they are asserted by the ancient writers. "This is the argument, says he, which Irenæus and Tertullian insist much upon and triumph in, over the Hæretics of their days — for it is highly unreasonable to suppose, that Churches distant in place, and of different languages, and under no common visible head, should all unite in the same errors — Again, such unanimity could never come by chance, but must be derived from one common source: and therefore the harmony of their doctrine

"was in itself a pregnant argument of the truth of it [1]."
But if the unanimity of the primitive Fathers must be allowed to have so great a force, as to evince the truth of any opinion, it would necessarily establish all those monstrous doctrines above specified; since it would be difficult to produce any other whatsoever, in which there was so great an harmony among them, or so general a consent of the whole Church, through the three first centuries, and that entirely grounded upon the pretence of Apostolic tradition.

But I cannot dismiss this article of the doctrines and opinions of these ancient Fathers, without taking notice of one, which was universally received and believed through all ages of the primitive Church, viz. "that there were a number of Magicians, Necromancers or Conjurers, both among the Gentiles and the Heretical Christians, who had each their particular Dæmons or evil Spirits, for their associates, perpetually attending on their persons, and obsequious to their commands; by whose help they could perform miracles, foretell future events, call up the Souls of the dead, exhibit them to open view, and infuse into people whatever dreams or visions they thought fit." — All which is constantly affirmed by the Primitive Writers and Apologists, and commonly applied by them to prove the immortality of the Soul.

"Let the powers of Necromancy, says Justin Martyr, and the evocations of human Souls, and of boys especially,


"who
"who had suffered violent deaths, and of those Spirits, whom the Magicians call the Inspirers of dreams and authors, and the works, which are performed by the skill-full in these arts, convince you, that the souls of men exist still after death [1]."

Laërtius, speaking of certain Philosophers, who held, that the soul perished with the body, says, "they durst not have declared such an opinion, in the presence of any Magician, or if they had done it, he would have confuted them upon the spot, by sensible experiments; by calling up souls from the dead, and rendering them visible to human eyes, and making them speak and foretell future events [2]."

The Author of the book, called, the Recognitions of St. Clement, one of the most ancient and most learned of those many spurious pieces, which were forged by the first Christians, affirms, "that Simon Magus confessed to one of his companions, that he wrought all his amazing works, by the help of the Soul of an healthy young boy, who had been violently put to death for that purpose, and then called up from the dead, by ineffable adjurations, and compelled to be his assistant [3]."

Irenæus, giving an account of the disciples of the same Simon, tells us, "that they lived lewdly, exercising magical "arts, and using exorcisms, incantations, and love-charms, "and industriously practising all other curious arts, by the af- "fiance of their familiar Spirits and Inspirers of dreams [1]."
And speaking afterwards of the Häretic Carpocrates and his followers, he says, "These likewise practise magical arts, "with incantations and love-charms, and have their affistant "Dæmons and Inspirers of dreams, with all the other ma- "levolent Spirits [2]."
"The Magicians, says Clement of Alexandria, boast of Dæ- "mons, as the Ministers of their impiety, reckoning them "part of their family, and forcing them by their incanta- "tions, to be the slaves of their will [3]."
Tertullian declares of these Dæmons, "that they had the "power of inflicting horrible diseases both on the minds and "bodies of men, and even cruel deaths; yet they fre- "quently contrived to cure the disorders which they had "wrought, in order to support the credit of their divinity, "and the honor of their Altars, and secure to themselves "their proper food and nourishment from the rich feasts

"
and
"and blood of the victims, which were offered to them [1]."
For this likewise, as monstrous as it is, was the common opinion of all the Fathers, taken, as usual, upon trust, from the authority of Justin Martyr, who was probably the inventor of it, "that the Dæmons, after they had given them- selves up to their lusts and lewd debaucheries with boys and women, began to want the rich fumes and the fat of sacri- fices, to strengthen them for the enjoyment of their luftfull pleasures [2]."

Cyprian affirms, "that they commonly lay lurking within the statues and images of the Heathen Deities; inspired the breasts of the Southlayers; animated the fibres of the entrails of victims; directed the flight of birds, and the chances of lots; involving falsehood always with truth, and themselves sometimes deceived, as well as deceiving others; disquieted the lives of men; disturbed their sleep; excited terrors in their minds, convulsions in their bodies; destroyed health, and brought on diseases, so as to force people to worship them; that being filled and fatted by the stews of Altars and burnt sacrifices, they might seem


"to cure the maladies, which they had inflicted; whereas "all the cure, which they performed, was by ceasing only "to do hurt [1]."

And as the whole system of Pagan Idolatry was believed by the Fathers, to have been managed by the craft and agency of Demons, so the whole art of Magic was supposed also to be carried on by the same powers, for the sake of deluding and destroying mankind. In the case of idolatry, they imagined them to assume the names, and to act the parts of the Heathen Gods, and in Magic to assume the forms of departed souls, and to appear under the names of those, who were called up from the dead; and as such, to foretell future events, and answer to all questions, which should be demanded of them. And the reason which they give, why the souls called up from the dead, were chiefly of those, who had been put to a violent death, is, because such spirits were generally thought to be the most malevolent and revengeful, and ready to perpetrate the same acts of violence on others, which they themselves had injuriously suffered [2].

Now the opinion, which I have here explained, is not only a proof of the grossest credulity, but of that peculiar

species of it, which, of all others, lays a man the most open to the delusive arts of Impostors. For a mind, so totally possessed by superstitious fancies, and disturbed by vain terrors, could not have either the judgement to discern, or the inclination to examine, or the courage even to suspect the pretensions of those vagrant Jugglers, who, in those primitive ages, were so numerous, and so industriously employed in the affair of deluding their fellow creatures. Every man will perceive, how easy it must have been to men of that clafs, whether Heathens, Jews, or Christians, (for they are all allowed to have had such Impostors among them) to impose the tricks of their art, as the effects of a supernatural power, on a multitude already persuaded, that they lived on magic ground, exposed at every step to snares and charms, contrived by malicious Spirits, perpetually haunting them, and watching every unguarded moment, to get possession both of their souls and bodies [1]. And when pious Christians are arrived to this pitch of credulity, as to believe, that evil spirits or evil men can work real miracles, in defiance and opposition to the authority of the Gospel, their very piety will oblige them, to admit as miraculous, whatever is pretended to be wrought in the defence of it, and so make them of course the implicit dupes of their own wonder-workers.

IV. I shall now proceed, as I proposed, to take a particular review of all the several gifts, or miraculous powers,


which
which were actually claimed, and pretended to have been possessed by the primitive Church: which, according to the testimonies produced above, were, the power of raising the dead; of healing the sick; of casting out Devils; of prophesying; of seeing visions; of discovering the secrets of men; of expounding the scriptures; of speaking with tongues.

Sect. 1. As to the first, and the principal indeed of all miracles, that of raising the dead; it was frequently performed, as Irenæus affirms, on necessary occasions; and men so raised had lived afterwards among them many years; but it is very strange, that from the time of the Apostles, there is not an instance of this miracle to be found in the three first centuries; except a single case, slightly intimated by Eusebius, from the books of Papias; which he seems to rank, among the other fabulous stories delivered by that weak man [1].

It is certain, that if a miracle of so surprising a nature, had been so frequent, as Irenæus affirms it to have been; or performed, as it were, in every parish, or place where there was a Christian Church, it must have made great noise in the world, and been celebrated, not only by the primitive Fathers, but by all the Historians of those times. But it was so far from being commonly or openly effected, as every

miracle should necessarily be, which is wrought for the conversion of Infidels, that all the enemies of the Gospel, as Irenæus himself confesses, constantly affirmed the thing itself to be impossible [1]. A sure proof, that they had never seen or known it to be done, unless in such a manner, as carried with it a strong suspicion of fraud or collusion. Mr. Dodwell however, from this single authority of Irenæus, afferts the miraculous powers of the second century, to be superior even to those of the first, or Apostolick age. They raised the dead, says he, in the Apostolick Churches; yet we have few examples of it, in the genuine acts of the Apostles: but in Irenæus's days, they raised not a few, but very often [2]. And in the same strain he runs through all the other miracles of the primitive times, and gives them the preference, in their number at least, to those of the Apostles; yet is forced to own, after all, that towards the end of the second century, and while Irenæus himself might be still living, this power of raising the dead was lost and vanished. For in the very same age, when one Autolycus, an eminent heathen, challenged his friend Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, a convert and champion of the Gospel, to shew him but one person, who had been raised from the dead, on the condition of turning Christian himself upon it; Theophilus discovers by his answer, that he was not


able to give him that satisfaction [1]. Upon which Mr. Dodd-
well remarks, that the great number of persons, who had been
raised some years before, when the fact was common, were dead
again for the second time in this interval; which, for the sake
of his hypothesis, he stretches, as well as he can, to forty
years [2]. But in truth, the fact itself, as delivered by Ire-
naeus, seems to be utterly incredible on many accounts: 1st,
that a case of so wonderful a nature, should be common
among them, yet not a single instance of it particularly
described, or clearly attested in all history. 2dly, That it should
be performed in every part of the world, where there was a
Church or assembly of Christians; yet all those, who were
not of that Church, and for whose sake it was chiefly per-
formed, should be insisting all the while, that the thing it-
self was impossible. 3dly, That it should be common in the
days of Irenaeus, yet Theophilus, who lived at the same time;
should not be able to allege a single instance of it, when
challenged to it by his friend, whom he was laboring to con-
vert, and who offered to be converted upon the proof of that
fact. Lastly, that a power, of all others, the most affecting
and reputable to the Church, should be withdrawn at a time,


[2] Quo temporis intervallo rursum obierint, qui sub initium Marci Aurelii su-
iffent in vitam revocati. ibid,
when it’s adversaries were defying them to shew any effects of it, and putting the merits of the controversy upon that very issue [1]. All which circumstances laid together, must needs leave the strongest suspicion on the claim of the primitive Church, with regard to this prime miracle of raising the dead.

Sect. 2. The next gift said to have resided in it, is that of healing the sick and curing all sorts of diseases: in favor of which the ancient testimonies are more full and express; tho’ with some variation, concerning the method of cure. Some affirm, that it was done by the imposition of hands [2]: some, by invoking the name of God, and of Jesus, and reciting some story of his life [3]. And others, by the use of oil: which was consecrated by holy men, and dispensed to the people for the cure of their diseases. Tertullian tells us, “that a Christian called Procclus cured the Emperor Severus of a certain distemper by the use of oil: for which service that Emperor was favorable afterwards to the Christians, and

[1] This shews the vanity of that distinction, which some are apt to make, between the primitive, and the Popish miracles; that the first were wrought for the sake, and in the midst of unbelievers; the last among the faithful only. Contra, recentiorum pleraque in fideles; in infideles paucissima, edita furentur. Dodw. ib. § lxiii.


kept Proculus, as long as he lived, in his palace [1]." And St. Jerom affirms, "that Hilarion the Monk used to heal all the wounds of the Husbandmen and Shepherds with consecrated oil; and preserved the life of the son-in-law and daughter of an holy woman called Constantia, by anointing them with the same [2]." Yet these cures, if true, might be accounted for probably without a miracle, by the natural power and efficacy of the oil itself, since in our days, the bite of vipers, after inflaming a man's arm to a degree, which threatened destruction to him, is known to have been checked and cured in a short time by the application of oil: which might perhaps have been the very case of Hilarion's Shepherds. But be that as it will, the pretence of curing diseases by a miraculous power, was so successfully maintained in the heathen world by fraud and craft, that when it came to be challenged by the Christians, it was not capable of exciting any attention to it, among those, who themselves pretended to the same power; which, tho' the certain effect of imposture, was yet managed with so much art, that the Christians could neither deny nor detect it; but


Sed & Constantia quaedam, sancta fœmina, cujus generum & filiam de morte liberaverat unêlione olei. ibid. p. 90.

inflected
insisted always, that it was performed by Demons or evil Spirits, deluding mankind to their ruin: and from the supposed reality of the fact, inferred the reasonableness of believing, what was more credibly affirmed by the Christians, to be performed by the power of the true God. *We do not deny,* says Athenagoras, *that in different places, cities, and countries, there are some extraordinary works performed in the name of idols, from which some have received benefit, others harm.* But then he goes on to prove, that they were not performed by God, but by Demons [*1*]. If I should allow, says Origen, "that there is a Demon cunning in medicine, called "Aesculapius, who cures diseases: yet I would say to those, "who are surprised at it, as well as at the predictions of "Apollo, that if the cure of diseases and prediction of "events be things of an indifferent character, and which be- "long to bad, as well as to good beings; shew me that "those, who cure and foretell, are not bad, but good, and "worthy to be held in a manner as Gods [*2*]."

Whatever proof then the Primitive Church might have among themselves of this miraculous gift, yet it could have but little effect towards making proselytes among those, who pretended to the same gift; possessed more largely, and ex-


[*2*] "Ἰδοὺ δὲ ἡ δῆμος τῶν Δαιμών θεραπεύειν εὔμακα, τὸν καλόμενον Ἀσκληπιὸν, εἰπομεν ἐν πρὸς τῆς Θαυμάζοντα τὸ τούτο. &c. Con. Celii. 1. 3. p. 124."
erted more openly, than in the private assemblies of the Chris-
tians. For in the Temples of Æsculapius, all kinds of dis-
ceases were believed to be publickly cured, by the pretended
help of that Deity: in proof of which there were erected
in each Temple columns or tables of brass or marble, on which
a distinct narrative of each particular cure was inscribed.
Pausanias writes, "that in the Temple at Epidaurus, there
were many columns anciently of this kind, and six of
them remaining to his time, inscribed with the names
of men and women, who had been cured by the God,
with an account of their several cases and the method of
their cure: and that there was an old pillar besides,
which stood apart, dedicated to the memory of Hippolytus,
who had been raised from the dead [1]." Strabo also, anoth-
er grave writer, informs us, "that these Temples were con-
stantly filled with the sick, implores the help of the God:
and that they had tables hanging around them, in which
all the miraculous cures were described [2]." There is a
remarkable fragment of one of these tables still extant, and
exhibited by Gruter in his collection, as it was found in the
ruins of Æsculapius's Temple, in the island of the Tyber, in
Rome; which gives an account of two blind men restored to

[1] Στίλπναι δ' ιερόπολες οἵτως τῷ περιβολῇ, τῷ μὲν ἄρχαιον ῱ τὸ ἔλνως, ἵνα
ἰμπληθῇ ἐν λασικῇ. &c. Corinth. l. 2. c. xxvii.

[2] Καὶ τὸ ιερὸν πάρει οὗ τῷ τῷ Καρνέττῳ, οὗ τῶν ἀναξιμάτων
Edit. Amstel.
fight by Æsculapius, in the open view, and with the loud accla-
mations of the people, acknowledging the manifest power of the
God. Upon which the learned Montfaucon makes this reflection,
that in this are seen, either the wiles of the Devil, or the
tricks of Pagan Priests, suborning men to counterfeit diseases
and miraculous cures [1].

Now tho' nothing can support the belief and credit of
miracles more authentically, than public monuments, erected
in proof and memory of them, at the time when they were
performed; yet in defiance of that authority, it is certain,
that all those heathen miracles were pure forgeries contrived
to delude the credulous multitude. And in truth; this par-
ticular claim of curing diseases miraculously, affords great room
for such a delusion, and a wide field for the exercise of craft.
Every man's experience has taught him, that diseases thought
fatal and desperate, are oft surprizingly healed of themselves,
by some secret and sudden effort of nature, impenetrable to
the skill of man: but to ascribe this presently to a miracle, as
weak and superstitious minds are apt to do; to the prayers of
the living, or the intercessions of the dead; is what neither
found reason, nor true religion will justify. Wherefore when
the narratives of these pretended cures are delivered to
us by partial and interested, or by weak and credulous
men, they will always furnish reason to suspect, that the
relators were either deluded themselves, or willing to de-

p. 1331.

lude
lude others: and unless we knew more precisely in this case the real bounds between nature and miracle, we cannot pay any great regard to such stories; especially when we are informed at the same time by the Christians themselves, that the same cures were performed also by Knaves and Impostors, of all sects and nations; by Heathens, Jews, and Heretics; which according to the principles of those days, were ascribed either to the power of Daemons, or to the magical force of amulets and charms.

Sect. 3. But the most eminent and celebrated of all the miraculous powers of the primitive Church was, the gift of casting out Devils, or the cure of Daemoniacs. To this the ancient Fathers and Apologists make the most frequent appeals; and on this they lay the greatest stress, towards evincing the divinity of the Christian Religion. It is not easy however to collect from their accounts, what was the real case of these Daemoniacs, and the proper nature of their malady. The Fathers indeed themselves seem to have been fully persuaded, and labor to persuade every body else, that they were actually possessed and tormented by Devils, or evil Spirits: yet many learned men of modern times have imagined them rather to have been affected by the Epilepsy, or falling sickness. Mr. Dodwell himself takes their case to have been of this kind, and curable by the ordinary way of medicine, as well
well as the extraordinary one of miracle [1]. And it is
certain, that the effects constantly ascribed to it, seem to
be nothing else but the ordinary symptoms of an Epilepsy, as
they are described by the Physicians. Justin speaks of them
as being thrown down always to the ground, by the Devils who
possessed them [2]: And Chrysostom, in his elaborate consolation
to Stagirius, who was also possessed, recites all the particulars
of his case, as they were related to him by a common friend;
the convulsion of his hands, the distortion of his eyes, the foam
of his mouth, his horrid and inarticulate voice, the tremor of
his body, and the long privation of his senses [3]. St. Gregory
of Nyssa, speaking of a woman also in the same cafe, says,
that groaning with a terrible and inarticulate voice, different
from human, she fell flat on the ground, tearing her hair, her
eyes distorted, her mouth foaming: nor did the Devil desist.


from strangling her, &c. [1] Then as to what these Fathers declare, concerning their power of lashing, burning and tormenting the Devils; and of their groaning and bowing under the torture of the Christian exorcism, such an imagination might easily be conceived, from the strange convulsions of the body, and the hollow sighs and groans which commonly attend such fits. And the other circumstances likewise, so constantly attested by them all, concerning the speeches and confessions of the Devils; their answering to all questions; owning themselves to be wicked spirits; telling whence they came, and whither they were going, and pleading for favor and ease from the bands of the Exorcists, may not improbably be accounted for, either by the disordered state of the patient, answering wildly and at random to any questions proposed, or by the arts of imposture and contrivance between the parties concerned in the act.

This, I dare say, will appear probable to every impartial reader, who, from the credulous and enthusiastic disposition of these Fathers, and their preconceived and erroneous notions about the origin and power of Daemons, will be apt to conclude, that they were either induced by their prejudices, to give too hasty a credit to these pretended possessions; or carried away by their zeal, to assent even in supporting a delusion, which was useful to the Christian cause. And tho'


this
this may sound harsh in the ears of many, it will not appear strange to those, who have given any attention to the history of mankind; which will always suggest this sad reflection; that the greatest zealots in religion, or the leaders of sects and parties, whatever purity or principles they pretend to, have seldom scrupled to make use of a commodious lie, for the advancement, of what they call the truth. And with regard to these very Fathers, there is not one of them, as an eminent writer of ecclesiastical history declares, who made any scruple in those ages, of using the hyperbolical style, to advance the honor of God, and the salvation of men [4]. For it is certain, that the greatest part of the wonderfull things, which they relate, are in themselves utterly incredible; and such of them as happen to be the most distinctly described, carry always the greatest marks of art and contrivance, for the sake of serving some particular purpose. For example, Tertullian, who was an utter enemy to plays and public shews in the Theaters, wrote a book, to deter all Christians from frequenting them, in which he tells the following story: "An example happened, says he, as the Lord is witness, of a woman, who went to the Theater, and came back with a Devil in her; whereupon when the unclean spirit was urged and threatened in the office of exorcising, for having dared to attack one of the faithfull; I have done nothing, replied he, but what is

"very fair, for I found her on my own ground." He adds a second story still more dreadful, "of another woman, who, in the very night, after she had seen a tragedy in the Theater, had her winding-sheet shewn to her in a vision, in which she was reproached by name, with the Tragedian, whom she had been seeing, and did not live above five days after [1]."

Now in this last case, it is not improbable, that a poor weak woman, who went to sleep, under the consciousness of a grievous sin committed by her, might, by the terrors of a dream, be thrown into a disorder, that put an end to her life. But in the first, tho' God himself is appealed to, for the truth of it, yet when we reflect on the principles of those times, and the particular warmth of Tertullian's zeal, we cannot but suspect, that the smart answer of the Devil, was contrived to enforce, what he was so warmly inculcating, the horrible sin and dangerous consequence of frequenting the public Theaters.

It is very remarkable, that all the Fathers, who lay so great a stress on this particular gift of casting out Devils, yet allow the same power both to the Jews and the Gentiles, as well before, as after our Saviour's coming. Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, says, "that all


"Deils
"Devils yield and submit to the name of Jesus, when they would not, to any other name of their Kings, Prophets or Patriarchs: yet if any should exorcise them in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they would in like manner submit. For your Exorcists, adds he, as well as the Gentiles, use this art in exorcising, together with certain fumes, and ligatures[1]." And the Jews, says Irenæus, even now, by this same invocation of the name of God, drive away Devils [2].

Origen, in his dispute with Celsus, asserting the descent of the Jews from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, says, "that these names joined to that of God, have such power, that not only their own nation use them in their prayers, and in casting out Devils, but all other Inchantors, and Magicians whatsoever: and that in magical books, the same invocation and use of God's name is often found, as peculiar to the art, and effectual against Devils [3]." And speaking of Abraham's great merit, he observes, "that it is not Moses only, who celebrates it, but that many of those, who charm or drive out Devils, call upon the God of Abraham, without knowing even who Abraham


"was.
"was [1]." Again, "if a man, says he, invoke or exorcise by the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Devils will obey, and do what they are commanded; but if he translate those names, according to their meaning, into any other language, they will have no force at all. The same, adds he, is true of the word Sabaoth, so much used in incantations: if it be applied in its original Hebrew, it is effectual: but if translated into another tongue, so as to put for it, the Lord of Hosts, it avails nothing, if we believe the skillfull in these matters [2]."

Josephus writes, "that Solomon was particularly instructed by God in the art of casting out Devils, for the benefit of mankind; and that he left behind him a receit of those charms and exorcisms, by which he used to drive


N. B. From what is here said by Origen, and the other Fathers, it appears that the power of calling out Devils, was considered as a peculiar gift, or art rather, grounded on certain rules, which were taught and delivered in books; and was common both to the Jews and the Heathens, as well as to the Christians; and, among them all, was administered by a particular set of men, called Exorcists: who about the time of Origen's death, or the middle of the third Century, began to be reckoned among the inferior orders of the Church: [Vid. Euseb. l. 6. c. 43.] The form of whose ordination is given us by the learned Bingham: [Antiqu. lib. 3. c. 4. § 5.]

"them
them out: which same method was the most effectual even to his time. For I saw, says he, one of my countrymen, Eleazar, casting out Devils, in the presence of Vespasian, his sons and officers, and a multitude of soldiers. His method was this: he applied to the nose of a person possessed, a ring, which had a certain drug or root under the seal of it, which Solomon had prescribed; and so, by the smell of the ring, he drew out the Devil, through the nostrils of the patient; who fell presently to the ground; upon which, he adjured the Devil never to return, rehearsing the name of Solomon, with certain charms, which he had composed and left behind him; and being desirous to convince the company, that he was really imbued with this power, to which he pretended, he placed a certain cup or vessel filled with water, at a little distance from the person possessed, and commanded the Devil, as he was going out of him, to overturn the cup, so as to give the spectators a manifest proof, that he had quitted the body of the man [1]." Which shews, in contradiction to what Justin Martyr affirmed above, that besides the name of Jesus, the Devils were subject likewise to that of Solomon.

Now it will be granted, I suppose, by all men of sense, that these Jewish and Gentile Exorcists were mere Knaves and Impostors; who, by their tricks and false miracles,

contrived to delude the credulous multitude, in order to acquire gain or power to themselves, and to keep their people firm to the Jewish or Heathenish rites, in opposition to the Christian. *Ulpian* the lawyer speaks of *Exorcism* in general, as a term of art used by Impostors: by whom he is supposed by some, to mean the Jewish, by others, the Christian Exorcists [3]. But Tertullian, and all the Fathers in general declare, that these Magicians and wandering Jugglers performed many wonderfull things, above the force of human power, which they wholly ascribe to the assistance of Daemons. And if they were so far deluded by those Jewish and Gentile pretenders, as to take such senseless charms, and tricks of legerdemain, for the effects of a supernatural power, their prejudices would operate much more strongly in favor of their own Impostors, who had taken up the same trade: or if they saw through the cheat of the Gentile practitioners, yet on account of the credit, which they had gained with the people, and the difficulty of detecting the fraud, they might think it convenient perhaps, to oppose one cheat to another, and set up rival powers of their own, in opposition to those of their adversaries, in hopes of beating them at their own weapons.

For it is very hard to believe, what *Origen* declares above, that the Devils, for the sake of doing the greater mischief to men, *used to possess and destroy their cattle*. In confirmation

of which, St. *Jerom* has related a most ridiculous story, in his life of St. *Hilarion* the Monk: where after a narrative of many cases of Devils, expelled by that saint from the bodies of men, he adds, "but it is to little purpose to talk of men; brute animals also were dayly brought to him, mad or possessed: among the rest, a *Bactrian Camel*, of an enormous size, which had already destroyed many people: above thirty men were employed to drag him along with the strongest ropes. His eyes were bloody; his mouth foaming; his tongue rolling and swoln; and his strange roaring above all terrors: the old man ordered it be let loose: upon which all, who were about him, ran away immediately: the saint came forward alone, and in the Syriac tongue, said, *thou dost not, affright me, Devil, with all that bulk of body: thou art one and the same in a little fox, or in a camel*: and so he stood firm with his arm stretched out; and as the beast advanced towards him, furious and ready to devour him, it presently fell down with its head to the ground; so that all present were amazed at the sudden change, from so great a fierceness, to such a tameness. Upon which the old man took occasion to teach them, that the Devil used to seize cattle, out of his hatred to men, to whom he bore so great a grudge, as to wish, not only that they, but that all which they had, might perish." To this story I cannot forbear adding, what is likewise affirmed by the same *Jerom*, of the same *Hilarion*; that he was *so full of the power of the Holy*
Holy Spirit, as to be able to discover, from the smell of the bodies and the cloaths of men, or of any thing else, which they had but touched, to what particular Daemon, or to what vice they were severally subject. Now tho' this good Father invokes the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in his attempt to describe a life so wonderfull; yet all, who read it, must needs be persuaded, that out of his zeal and warm affection to the Monkish Order, which he professed, and from a desire to advance it's credit in the world, he either wholly invented, or at least willfully propagated all these extravagant tales, which he himself could not possibly believe: "The time, says he, "would fail me, if I should attempt to relate all the wonderfull works, that were performed by him—wherefore by the influence of his Example, innumerable Monasteries began to be founded through all Palestine; and all the Monks ran eagerly to Hilarion, &c. [1]." This was the real purpose of St. Jerom's zeal; this the fruit of his fictitious miracles. But to return to the Daemoniacs. Since this gift of calling out Devils is what the Fathers, as I have said above, lay the greatest stress upon, and to which they make the most frequent appeals, it may be proper to strengthen what I have already been declaring upon it, by a few particular observations, which I would recommend to the attention of the reader.


Tempus me deficiet, si voluero univerfa signa, quae ab eo perpetrata sunt, discere.—Exemplo itaque ejus innumarabia Monasteria per totum Palestinam esse coeperunt, & ad eum omnes Monachi certatim curre, &c.
That there is such an uniformity in all the primitive accounts of them, tho' given by different Fathers and in different ages, of the Devils being scourged, burned, and tortured by the Christian Exorcists; and of their bowings, discourses and confessions, that they all seem to have been cast in the same mould; and to have been the copies rather of one original story, transcribed by the later writers from the earlier, than the natural descriptions, of what each of them had severally seen, at different times, and in distant places [1].

ady, That the persons thus possessed, and in whom the Devils used to hold discourses, were called by the primitive Christians, 'Εγγυσιμωμετιον or Ventiloplastes; because they were believed to speak out of the belly, thro' the navel [2]. Thus in a book ascribed to Justin Martyr, containing a number of Questions, with answers to them, for the use of the Orthodox, one of the Questions is this: "if all the arts of delusion are abolished by the coming of Christ, how comes it to pass, that Demons still speak by those, who are called Ventriloquists, and that they do not make Christianity ridiculous and contemptible, by shewing forth the works of imposture, and uttering oracular predictions in the bodies of Christians [3]?

[1] See what I have collected above on this subject, from Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Cyprian, and Against. Thus Mr. Whiston also observes, that a good deal of what is said upon it by Minucius Felix, is made use of by Cyprian, soon after his time, and that almost verbatim. Account of the Demons, p. 42.


Now many of us have seen, and may still see perhaps at this day, a sort of these *Ventriloquists*, who by a particular formation of their organs, managed by art and practice, could speak in such a manner, as to persuade the company, that the voice did not proceed from them, but from some invisible being: which they could direct likewise so, as to make it seem to come, from what part of the room they pleased: by which means, weak and ignorant people have been terrified almost out of their senses, believing it, to be the *voice of a Spirit or Daemon*. If we suppose then, that there were any Artifts of this kind among those ancient Christians, as there undoubtedly were among the ancient Gentiles, it is easy to imagine, what strange and surprising feats might be performed, by a correspondence between the *Ventriloquift* and the *Exorcift*, so as to delude the most sensible and sagacious of their audience, prepossessed with the belief of these diabolical possessions, and void of all suspicion, that such effects could possibly be produced by any human art or natural cause.

3dly, From the testimony of Antiquity itself it is evident, that many of their *Daemoniacs* could not possibly be cured by all the power of the Exorcifts; and that the cures, which are pretended to have been wrought on any, were but temporary, and appear to have been the cessation rather of a particular fit, or access of the distemper, than the real expulsion of a *Daemon*. This may be clearly collected from the method of treating them in the primitive Church, as it
it was regulated by several Canons and rules, made for that
purpose by Bishops and Councils, injoining: "that they
should not be received to baptism, but in the intervals of
their disorder; nor to the Communion, unless they shewed
signs of piety and sobriety, so as not to expose and
blaspheme the mysteries; in which case they might com-
municate now and then: that they should never be or-
dained or taken into any order of the Clergy; nor al-
lowed to pray in common with the congregation; but be
produced always separately, and commanded onely to bow
down their heads, while the rest of the Assembly were of-
sering up a prayer for them." In different Churches how-
ever, a different discipline was observed with regard to them;
for in some, they were admitted to baptism, and even to
daily communion; by which means many are affirmed to
have been relieved, when all the arts of the Exorcists had been
tried upon them in vain [1]. Now these cases manifestly
shew, that this celebrated gift, as it was managed by the pri-
mitive Church, was not able to work an absolute cure; or to
drive out the Devils so effectually, as to reduce the patients
to a permanent state of sanity; so as to render them ordi-
arily capable, either of baptism, or the Eucharist, or of
joining even with the congregation, in the daily prayers of
the Church. Whence we may reasonably conclude; that it
was nothing else, but a false mimicry of that genuine power.

xvi. it. ib. xvii. c. v. § iii, &c.

which
which was exercised by our Lord, and conferred afterwards on his Apostles: a power which never did its work by halves, or left it's cures imperfect. For, as we learn from the Gospel, Mary Magdalen, from whom seven Devils were cast out, continued ever after in her sober senses; accompanying and ministering on all occasions to our Lord, to the time of his death: and the man also, out of whom a Legion of them was ejected, was restored at once to perfect health; both of mind and body, and sent away to proclaim in Decapolis, and the neighbouring country, the miraculous cure which Jesus had wrought upon him [1].

4thly, There is another circumstance belonging to these primitive Daemoniacs, of which the reader perhaps may desire some farther explication: I mean the great numbers of them, which appear to have subsisted in those early ages: whose chief habitation was within a part of the Church, allotted to them for that purpose; in which, as in a kind of Hospital, they were committed to the care of the Exorcists; whose business it was, "to pray over them on some occasions, and to provide their daily food, and keep them employed in some bodily exercise and innocent business, of sweeping the Church and the like, to prevent the more violent agitations of Satan, and lest he should be tempted by their idleness to renew his attacks upon them [2]." Which method of relieving so miserable a tribe of help-

lefs mortals, will account for the numbers, with which the Churches were stored; as well as for the confidence of those challenges, made to the Heathens, by the Christian Apologists, to come and see at any hour, and any warning, how they could torment, and labour, and burn, and drive the evil spirits out of them; while they kept such numbers of them in constant pay, always ready for the show; tried and disciplined by their Exorcists, to an habit of groaning and howling, and to give proper answers to all questions, which should be demanded of them.

It is observable also in the last place, that this power of exorcising Daemoniacs or casting out Devils, which had hitherto been in the hands only of the meaner sort of the Christian layety, was put under the direction of the Clergy, by the Council of Laodicea, about the year of Christ three hundred and sixty seven, in which it was decreed, that none should be Exorcists, but those, who were appointed by the Bishop. After which appropriation of it, as Mr. Whitton informs us, "few or none of the Clergy, nor indeed of the Layety, were any longer able to cast out Devils: so that the old Christian exorcism or prayer for the Energumen in the Church, began soon after to be omitted as wholly useless." Which sudden failure of so eminent a gift seems to be ascribed by him to that fatal step of this unhappy Council, as he calls it; as if, by their presumptuous attempt to control the divine power, they had provoked God to withdraw it. But

[1] See Mr. Whitton's Account of Daemoniacs, p. 53.
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tho' this solution of the case may be agreeable to the character and principles of that very learned and pious writer; yet it is more agreeable to reason and the experience of mankind, to suppose, that the licentious abuse of this imaginary power, by the many false and impudent pretensions, of crafty impostors on the one hand, and wrong-headed Enthusiasts on the other, had brought such scandal on Christianity itself, that the Clergy were forced at last to interpose, and take the affair into their own hands. For that this was really the case, is manifestly shewn by the event: since the exercise of this gift was no sooner subjected to any regulation, even by those, who favored and desired to support it, than it gradually decrea sed and expired.

§ 4. The next miraculous gift ascribed to the primitive Church, is that of Prophetical visions, and extatic trances, and the discovery of men's hearts: for these seem to be the fruit of one and the same spirit: which exerted itself chiefly about the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, through Tertullian's and Cyprian's days. "The divine censure, says Cyprian, does not cease to chastise us, neither by night, nor by day, for besides nightly visions, even boys among us are filled with the Holy Ghost, and in fits of ecstasy, see, hear, and utter things, by which the Lord thinks fit to admonish and instruct us." This

[1] Castrigare nos itaque divina censura nec noctibus definit nec diebus. Praeter nocturnas enim visiones, per dies quoque impletur apud nos Spiritu sancto puerrorum
ecstasy was a temporary madness or loss of senses, and is called by Tertullian, the spiritual virtue, in which prophecy consisted [1]. Suidas says, that of all the kinds of fury or madness, that of the Poets and Prophets was alone to be wished for [2].

Mr. Dodwell observes, "that visions were peculiar to the young, dreams to the old: because it required a great strength of body to support the violence of such divine agitations [3]." Pbilo, the Jew, treating of the same ecstasies, with which the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Testament used to be affected, reasons thus, "the human mind, says he, is symbolically called the Sun by Mojes—while our mind therefore shines, and exerts itself within us, spreading as it were a meridian light through the Soul, we are then in our right senses, without any divine influx: but when the mind goes down, then a divine ecstasy and prophetic madness fall upon us: for when the divine light shines, the human sets: and when that sets, this again rises; and this is what usually happens to the prophetic


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"race: for the mind is driven out of us, when the divine spirit comes in; and when this again quits us, the other returns: for it is not fit, that mortal should cohabit with immortal." [1]

From these testimonies we may collect, that the Prophecy of the Primitive Church by vision or ecstacy, was of the same kind, as to it's outward appearance, with that divination by fury, as it was called among the Gentiles, which was practiced by the Delphic Pythia, and Cumæan Sibyl, when agitated by the pretended power and instinct of the God [2]. Of which Cicero says, in way of raillery; "what authority can that madness have, which you call divine; that a wife man should not be able to foresee, what a madman can; and that he, who has lost all human senses, should presentibly acquire divine ones [3]."

Montanus the Heretic, and his female Associates, seem to have been the Authors of these prophetic trances, towards the


[3] Quid vero autoritatis habet furor ille, quem divinum vocatis, ut quae sapiens non videat, ea videat insanus; & is, qui humanos senfus amiferit, divinos adfectus fit? De Div. 2. 54.

end
end of the second century; and acquired great credit by their 
visions and ecstasies, in which they acted their part so well, 
by seigned distortions and convulsive agitations of the body, as 
to appear to be out of their senses; and in those fits, ut-
tered many wild prophecies and predictions, which they im-
posed upon the people for divine revelations; and by affecting 
at the same time a peculiar sanctity and severity of discipline, 
gathered a great number of disciples [1], who first raised 
and propagated that spirit of enthusiasm in the Church, which 
subsisted in it for near a century, under the title of vision and 
prophecy, and then gradually sunk into utter contempt.

Tertullian, a writer of this enthusiastic turn, severe in his 
manners, and stiff in his opinions, wrote with great vehe-
mence against Plays and Shews: in which, as we have 
seen above, he made great use of visions, towards enforcing 
his argument. He wrote another book to prove, that it was 
a Sin, for a Soldier, to wear a garland or crown on any occa-
son, and that a Christian should rather suffer martyrdom than 
submit to it [2]: and in a third book, he affirms it to be 
rank idolatry, to deck their doors with garlands or flowers, on 
Festival days, according to the custom of the Heathens: " and 
" calls the name of God to witness, that he knew a per-
son, who had been grievously chastised in a vision, because 
" his servants, even without his knowledge and in his absence,

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"had crowned the door with flowers, on some occasion of
public joy [1]." He wrote a treatise likewise, to prove the
soul of man to be corporeal and of human shape: and for the
truth of his opinion, appeals to his ecstatic maid above-
mentioned, of whom he tells this story: that "as he hap-
pened to be discoursing on the nature of the soul, she fell
into one of her trances: and as soon as the service was
over, and the people dismissed, she came, as usual, to re-
late to him, what she had seen; which was always care-
fully taken down in writing, in order to be examined:
when she declared, that there was shewn to her among
other things, an human soul in bodily form; yet so, as
to appear to be a spirit: not of a void and empty qua-
"lity, but what might even be handled, tender and lucid, of
"an airy color, and in all points of human shape [2]."

Which wild dream of a frantic, or fiction rather of a silly
woman, this Father applies, as the testimony of God himself,
to evince the certainty of his opinion. Lastly, in another
book, written to prove, that women ought always to wear
a veil, he declares, that God, in a vision to a certain sister,

[1] Ex auctoritate quoque Dei contestor—feci fratrem per visionem eadem
nocte castigatum graviter, quod jam eum subito annuntiatis gaudios publicis
servi coronasset. &c. De Idolat. 15.
Post transacta solemnia, dimissi plebe—inter cetera, inquit, octo eis
mihi anima corporalitatem, &c. Hoc viro, & Deus tehis, & Apostolus Charifma-
tum in Ecclesia futurorum Spectat.—De Anima. c. 9.
had prescribed to her, by a special revelation, the exact length and measure of the veil [1].

Now it is easy to imagine, how Tertullian might be imposed upon by the craft of these extatic visionaries; and by the warmth of his temper and force of his prejudices, be drawn to espouse any delusion, that flattered his particular zeal and favorite opinions. But it is difficult to account for the same conduct in his scholar Cyprian; a man of a more acute head, and sober mind; but fond of power and Episcopal Authority; whose character would tempt us to suspect, that he was the inventor, rather than the believer of such idle stories; and the director, rather than the dupe of senseless visionaries. Yet in all questionable points of doctrine or discipline, which he had a mind to introduce into the Christian worship, we find him constantly appealing to the testimony of heavenly visions and divine revelations. It is certain, says Mr. Dodwell, that all things of great moment, which related to the public state of the Church, were foretold to him in visions [2]. For instance; in a letter to Caecilius, he declares, that he had received a divine admonition, to mix water with wine in the Sacrament


Ita confit gravioris momenti omnia, quæ quidem publicum Ecclesiae statum attinerent, effe siu modi visionibus prædicta. ibid. § 21.
of the Eucharist, in order to render it effectual. In another
to the Clergy, concerning certain Priests, who had restored
some lapsed Christians too hastily to the Communion of the
Church; he threatens them, to execute, what he was ordered
to do against them, in a vision, if they did not desist.

He makes the same threat to one Pupianus, who had
spoken ill of him, and withdrawn himself from his
communion: where his Editor Rigaltius makes this remark,
that the argument of visions and divine revelations, which
Cyprian so frequently uses, is a weapon of great force
in the hands of so good a man, otherwise a vain and
contemptible one; since crafty Sophists might easily in-
vent such visions, in favor of any cause, to delude the
simple and unwary.

In a letter likewise to the Clergy and the people, Cyprian
tells them, "how he had been admonished and directed by
God, to ordain one Numidicus a Priest: who by his perfua-

[1] Nec nos putes, frater carissime, noftra & humana conscribere, aut ul-
tronea volutate hoc nobis audacter affumere.—Sed quando aliquid Deo aspi-
rante & mandante praecipitur, necesse est Domino fervus fideli obteneret——
admonitos autem nos scias, ut calix, qui in commemoratione ejus offertur, mix-
tus vino offeratur &c. Epist. Ixiii.

[2] Quoniam si ultra in iisdem perseveraverint, utar ea admonitione, qua me
Domimus uti jubet.—Ep. ix. p. 22.


[4] Hic etiam (Cypriani) utitur ostenfionibus & visionibus: telo, ad conte-
randos adversarios, in manu praeertim Cypriani, viri optimi atque divini, valen-
tissimo; alias vano ac futili. Nam & callidus Rhetor & Sophista vafer hujusmo-
di vitio ad caufam suam appotiffima, poterit comminisci, & fallere incautos &

“five
five exhortations had sent a large number of Martyrs be-
fore him to the other world, either stoned or burnt to
death; and beheld even with joy, the wife of his
bosom burnt together with the rest; being himself also left
for dead, half burnt, and buried in stones, till he was
found scarce alive, and carried off by the piety of his daugh-
ter, and so restored to the world against his will. But
the Lord had now signified the cause of it; that he might
add him to the Priesthood of his Church [1]." In an-
other letter he recommends to them one Celerinus, whom he
had ordained a lecturer: *whose modesty, he says, had been over-
ruled and compelled by a divine vision, to accept that office [2].*
Where Rigaltius once more reflects on the great diligence of
Cyprian, in making such use of visions [3]. But Cyprian him-
sclf suggests the reason of it, in the Epistle immediately
preceding, addressed likewise to the Clergy and the people, con-
cerning one Aurelius, whom he had ordained a lecturer, by a
divine admonition, without calling them together and con-
Sulting with them in common, concerning the character,

[1] Nam admonitos nos & instructos sciatis dignatione divina, ut Numidicus
Prefbyter ascribat—qui hortatu suo copiosum Martyrum numerum, la-
pidibus & stamvis necatum ante seminum: quique uxorem adherentem lateri suo,
concrematam simul cum eeteris—letus aperit. Ipsa feminulatus & lapidibus
obrutus, & pro mortuo derelictus, remanuit invitus, sed remanendi, ut vi-
demus, hae fuit causa, ut eum Clero nostro Dominus adjungeret. Ep. 35.

divina dignatione conjunctum, &c. Ep. 34.

[3] Notanda hic etiam est industria Cypriani, uisionum efficacia tam suaviter
utentis. Not. b. ibid.
and merit of the Candidate, as it was the custom of those days in all Clerical ordinations; for which he excuses himself by saying, that there was no occasion, in the present case, to wait for human testimonies, when the divine suffrage had already been signified [1]. This then seems to be the meaning of Cyprian’s diligence in the use of visions, that whenever he thought fit to exert his Episcopal authority, without the previous consent of his Clergy and people, he might obviate their murmurs by alledging a divine command for it.

But the most memorable effect of any of his visions was, his flight and retreat, when he withdrew himself from his Church, in the time of persecution. A step which gave great scandal, and seems to have been considered by the Clergy of Rome, in a public letter written upon the subject of it, to the Clergy of Carthage, as a defertion of his post, and pastoral duty [2]. So that it is no wonder to find Cyprian himself, as well as his Apologist Pontius, the writer of his Life, so solicitous to excuse it. “There is no doubt, says Rigaltius, but that the severity of his master Tertullian, who wrote a book against all flight in time of persecution, raised such scruples and shame in the mind of Cyprian, as made him labor hard to wipe off that disgrace; as the pains and perplexity of his Advocate

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[1] In Ordinationibus Clericis, Fratres carissimi, solemus vos ante consulere, & mores ac merita singulorum communi confilio ponderare, sed expectanda non sunt testimonia humana, cum precedent divina suffragia, &c. Ep. 33.


“Pontius"
"Pontius likewise shew [1]." They both of them therefore affirm, "that he was commanded to retire, by a special revelation from heaven: and that his flight was not the effect of any other fear, but that of offending God: and that his mind, wholly devoted and subservient to the admonitions of God, was persuaded, that, if he had not obeyed the Lord, when he commanded him to retreat, he should even by suffering martyrdom [2]. Yet this plea was nothing else without doubt, but a mere fiction, contrived for the purpose of quieting the scandal, that was raised by his flight, and is in effect confuted by himself in another letter to the Clergy, in which he declares, "that it was the advice and authority of one Tertullus, which prevailed with him to withdraw himself from a place, where his life was so much sought for: wherefore he desires them, to perform all the functions of his office for him during his retreat,


"since their persons were not exposèd to so much envy and
danger as his would be [1]."

Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, who lived in the same
age, has left the same story likewise concerning himself, and
swears to the truth of it: that in the time of a persecu-
tion, he was commanded by God in a vision, to retire from
Alexandria, and was wonderfully preserved and guarded by
him in his retreat [2]. And shall we not believe a most holy
Bishop, says Mr. Dodwell, even upon his oath [3]? The fame
Dionysius affirms likewise, that he had another vision, upon
the subject of reading Heretical books, about which, he had
some scruples, till a voice from heaven expressly injoined him, to
read them all without reserve, because he was able to exa-
mine and confute them [4]. This reminds me of a vision
also which St. Jerom declares to have been given to himself,

[1] A Tertull., fratre nostro carissimo, ratio reddetur: qui pro cetera sua
cura, quam impendens divinis operibus impetravit, etiam hujus confiliis auctore fuit,
ut cauti & modereatus existerem, nec me in conspectum publicum, & max-
ime ejus loci, ubi toties flagitatus & quaestus fuisset, temere committerem.
Fretus ergo & dilectione & religione vestra, his litteris & hortor & mando, ut
vos quorum minime illic invidia & non adeo periculo praedictum eff, vice

[2] ἕγετο δὲ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ φόρῳ καλῶς, αὐτὸς εἶδεν ὅταν ἐκ ἐμφάνισεν. ἔδημαι
1. 6. c. 40.

[3] Quid hic faciemus? Viro Sanctissimo ne jurato quidem credamus? Dif-
fert. Cyprian. iv. § 17.

[4] "Ὅραμα Σενττίμπων ἐκτίθεμοι με. ᾖ λόγος πρὸς μοι ἤπειρῳ, ποὺντας
diarrēsion λόγων, ἰδὼν ἰδοὺ χρίσασθαι ἀλλαὶ ἐν εἰς χείρας λάθος. ἰδιούς
γὰρ ἱκανὰ
ἡ δοκιμάζων ἰκανὸς ii. Eufeb. Hist. 7. 7.

about
about a century after; in which he was dragged to the Tribunal of Christ, and terribly threatened, and even scourged for the grievous sin of reading secular and profane writers, Cicero, Virgil, and Horace; whom for that reason be resolves never to take into his hands any more: upon which Ruffinus rallies him with great spirit and sharpness, for inventing and publishing so silly a lie [1]. And it must needs be thought strange, that God should join contrarieties to his Saints and Servants; should command one Father, to read Heretical books, because he was able to confute them, yet forbid it afterwards to another, who was full as able, to confute them, as his Predecessor. But if Jerome's vision deserved to be treated by his contemporaries as a fiction, I see no reason, either from the nature of the thing, or the use, which is made of it, or the characters of the persons concerned, why the visions of Cyprian and Dionysius, should not merit the same treatment.

But how credible soever these visions might appear to the generality of Christians in those days, yet there were many at the same time, as Cyprian himself confesses, who contemned and made a jest of them all, as mere illusions and impertinent fancies: but they were a sort of men, he says, who

would sooner believe any thing against a Priest, than believe a Priest [1].

In one of the Dialogues, commonly ascribed to Lucian, the Christians seem to be ridiculed, on the account of their fasting and watching whole nights in hymns and prayers, as if they could infuse by that means, what sort of dreams or visions they thought fit [2]. Now there is a passage so applicable to this remark, in the ancient narrative of the Martyrdom of St. Ignatius, as to make us almost imagine, that the author had alluded to it. The narrative was drawn up by persons, who had accompanied the Martyr from Asia to Rome, whose thoughts, for several months past, had been employed on nothing else but the subject of his Martyrdom, and it concludes thus. “These things were done on the 13th of the Kalends of January; Sura and Symeius being the second time Consuls of Rome; of which we ourselves were eyewitnesses. And the night following, as we were watching with tears in the house, and praying to God with bended knees, that he would impart to us weak men, some assurance of what was done, [with regard to the Martyr;] it happened, that falling into a slumber, some of us, on a sudden, saw the blessed Ignatius standing before us and embracing us;


"others"
"others beheld the blessed Martyr praying for us; others,
"as it were dropping with sweat, as if just come from
"his great labor, and standing by the Lord: which when
"we saw, being filled with joy, and comparing the vi-
"sions of our dreams with each other, we glorified God the
"giver of all good, and being assured of the blessedness of
"the Saint, we have made known unto you, both the
"day and the time, that being assembled together, according
"to the time of his Martyrdom, we may communicate with
"the combatant and most valiant Martyr of Christ [1].

But to declare freely what I think: whatever ground there
might be in those primitive ages, either to reject or to allow
the authority of those visions, yet from all the accounts of
them, that remain to us in these days, there seems to be the
greatest reason to suspect, that they were all contrived, or au-
thorized at least, by the leading men of the Church, for the
sake of moderating and governing with more ease, the unruly
spirit of the populace, in those times of danger and difficulty.
For they are generally applied, to excuse the conduct of partic-
ular persons, in some instances of it liable to censure; or to
enforce some particular doctrine or discipline, warmly pressed
by some, and not well relished by others; or to confirm things
not onely trifling and frivolous, but sometimes even supersti-
tious and hurtful to true religion.

See also Archbishop Wake's Translation.

I have
I have already observed, that it was the Heretic Montanus, who first gave a vogue to prophetic visions and ecstasies, in the primitive Church. But when his pretensions came afterwards to be suspected and decried, it is remarkable, that those, who undertook to expose and confute them, employed such arguments against his prophecy, as seemed to shake the credit of all prophecy. For whereas the Montanists delivered their prophecies always in ecstasies, or with lots of sense; it was then urged against them, "that this was the proof of a Diabolical spirit; that the true Prophets never had such fits; never lost their senses; but calmly and sedately received and understood whatever was revealed to them." And Epiphanius makes this the very criterion or distinguishing character between a true and false prophet; that the true had no ecstasies, constantly retained his senses, and with firmness of mind apprehended and uttered the divine oracles [1]. St. Jerom also declares, that the true Prophets never spake in ecstasies, or madness of heart, like Montanus and his mad women, Prisca and Maximilla, but understood what they delivered, and could speak or hold their tongues, whenever they pleased, which those, who spake in ecstasies, could not do [2]. Eusebius also mentions a book of one Mil.


Qui autem in ecstasī, id est, invitus loquitur, nec tacere nec loqui in sua potestate habet. ibid. Prol. in Abacuc. p. 1591.

tiades,
tiades, written against Montanus, the purpose of which was, to prove, that a Prophet ought not to speak in ecstasies [1]. Yet from the testimonies collected above, we have seen, that before the Montanists had brought those ecstasies into disgrace, the prophecy of the orthodox, as well as that of the Heretics, was declared to have been exerted in ecstasies. And it appears to have been the current opinion in those earlier days, that the Prophets also of the old Testament received and uttered their revelations in ecstasies.

Athenagoras expressly affirms it, and says, "that while they were under the divine impulse, they were transported out of their senses, and delivered in ecstasies what was inspired, being mere organs of the Holy Spirit, just as a pipe or flute is of him, who blows into it [2]." Justin Martyr speaks of them in the same strain, "that the spirit of God descending from above, made use of them, as of an instrument, just as the quill strikes the harp or lyre, to reveal to us the knowledge of divine and heavenly things [3]." Tertullian also declares, "that he, who has the spirit within him, must necessarily be deprived of


[3] "Ιν' αὐτῶν τῷ Θεῷ ἐξ ἀρχαίας καλεόν πελαγίς, ὄσπερ ἐξήρανυ καθήμερον τοῖς ἁγίοις, τοῖς δικαίοις αὐθαυτοῦ χρήμασι, τοῖς τῶν Θεῶν ἣμῖν ἢ ἐρασίων ὑποκαλύπτην γένεσιν. Cohort. ad gent. p. 9, B. "his
his senses, especially whenever he beholds the glory of
God, or when God speaks by him, as being then over-
shadowed by the divine power [1]."

Again, Montanus’s Associate Maximilla, gave out, that the
gift of prophecy was to cease with her, and no other Prophet
to arise after her. In answer to which, the Orthodox affirmed,
that the true spirit of prophecy could never fail or cease in the
Church, till the consummation of all things [2]. In which as
Mr. Dodsell owns, "the Ancients argued rashly, and were
mistaken in their notion of the perpetuity of prophecy:
"since Eusebius, who made it his business to explore and de-
duce the succession of those prophetic gifts, intimates, that
"they were ceased and vanished in his days [3]:" that is,
about the middle of the fourth century.

Since we are now considering the miracles of the Cyprianic
age, I cannot forbear taking notice of two or three of those
wonderful stories, which Cyprian himself attests, in that

[1] In spiritu enim homo constitutus, præsertim quem gloriæ Dei conspicit
vel per ipsum Deum loquitur, necesse est, excidat senfu.—Adv. Marcion. I.
4. p. 537.

[2] Φάσαι γάρ ἡ παρ' αὐτοῖς λεγομένη Μαξιμίλλα ἡ προφητής — μετ' ἑαυτῆς
Διὸ γὰρ οἶμαι ὅτι προφητείαν χάρισμα ἔχω τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ μίχες τῆς τελείω-
σεως προφητείας, ἡ Ἀπόστολον αὐτὴν. Euseb. Hift. 5. 17.

[3] Scio equidem lacerisse concedo, in tota hac de prophetiarum perpetuita-

Eusebius, qui hoc in sua historia notatu dignum duxerit, quorumque donorum
prophetiorum successio permanavit, id fane inuit, suo jam tempore illam delec-
cisse, ibid. § 22.
magnificent treatise, as it was called, concerning the lapsèd Chris-
tians, who, in the time of persecution, had been induced, by
the terrors of present death or tortures, to deny Christ, or of-
fer incense to an Idol. "There was a man, says he, who
went up voluntarily to the Capitol, to deny the Lord;
and when he had denied him, was presently struck dumb.
"—A woman also, who, after her lapse, had the impu-
dence to go to the baths, was there seized by an un-
clean spirit, and thrown to the ground, and with her
teeth tore that tongue, with which she had been either
talking, or feeding impiously; and so became her own
executioner; for she died not long after in great anguish and
"torments of her bowels." He introduces the next story more
solemnly, by declaring, that he himself was present and an
eye-witness of it. "Certain Parents, says he, too solicitous
for their own safety, and flying from persecution, left
an infant daughter to the care of a nurse; who carried
it presently to the Magistrates. These, being then assem-
bled with the people before an Idol, and seeing the child
not yet old enough to eat flesh, gave it a piece of bread
dipt in wine, being the remains of what had been offer-
ed to the Idol. The mother, ignorant of the fact, with-
in a short time after took her daughter home again: but the
child was yet no more able to discover the crime com-
mitted, than she was before, to understand or to hinder
it. The mother brought her therefore to us at the sacra-
ment, while we knew nothing of the matter. But the
child being now mingled with the Saints, and impatient of the service and prayers, began to be seized, sometimes with fits of crying, sometimes with tortures of the mind, and, as if it had been upon the rack, betrayed by all the signs, which it's tender age could give, a sense of guilt and consciousness of the fact. The service being ended, when the Deacon began to give the Cup to all present, and it came to the child's turn, the little one, by divine instinct, turned away it's face, held it's lips close shut, and refused the cup: the Deacon persisted, and poured a little down it's throat, tho' by force: upon this, convulsions and vomitings ensued: the Eucharist could not stay in a body and mouth so defiled: the consecrated potion of the Lord's blood burst out of it's polluted bowels: so great is the power, so great the majesty of the Lord: the secrets of darkness are detected by it's light: nor could hidden crimes be concealed from the Priest of God: for this happened to an infant, which was not yet of age to speak, or tell the crimes, which others had committed upon it. There was another woman, says Cyprian, who, after she had taken the Sacrament with us unobserved, was instantly seized, with pains and torments, and fell down convulsed and trembling, as if she had swallowed a sword or deadly poison: and her crime, which had escaped the notice of men, met with it's punishment from God. Another, who had attempted with her polluted hands to open her chest,
the consecrated elements, according to the custom of that age, were kept for her use at home,) "fire burst out of it in such a manner, that she durst not touch it. Another man, who had also been defiled, having had the assurance to take a part of the consecrated bread, among the rest, undiscovered, could neither eat nor handle it, but instead of it, found a coal of fire in his hands [1]."

Now what other notion can we reasonably entertain of these strange stories, but that they were partly forged, and partly aggravated and dressed up into this tragical form, from some accidental disorders, which the sense of a concealed guilt, and the dread of God’s judgements upon it, would naturally raise in anxious minds, on that awful occasion of receiving the Sacrament? For it is certain, that they were of the greatest use, in these times of danger and trial, to support the discipline of the Church, which the Lord guarded, as Mr. Dodwell says, by those terrors, as by the sword of a Cherubim [2]. Since none of those, who had secretly lapsed, or been weak enough to deny the faith, and from a desire of concealing their shame, had evaded the penance of the Church, durst either come openly to the Sacrament, or take it even privately at home, or yet wholly abstain from it, when the divine judgements were so signally exerted upon all, who had ventured on any of those expedients, before they had made a

public satisfaction for their crime, and been absolved of it in form by the Pastors of the Church. And it was without doubt for this end, that all these stories, with many more of the same kind, were so pompously and rhetorically set forth by this eminent Bishop, in his celebrated treatise concerning the lapsed Christians.

§ 5. As to the gift of expounding the Scriptures, or the mysteries of God, by a divine inspiration, which is clamed likewise by the Primitive Fathers, there is not the least trace of it to be found in any age of the Church, from the days of the Apostles. For in the second and third Centuries, the very period, in which all the other miraculous gifts are supposed to have flourished in their greatest vigor, it is certain, as we have seen above, that a most senseless, extravagant, and enthusiastic method of expounding prevailed, which has ever since been utterly flighted and rejected: whereas in these later days, when all extraordinary gifts are confessedly ceased, a clear, solid, and rational way of interpreting generally obtains, as the warmest advocates of Antiquity are forced to allow. And whenever any particular Father happens to be censured for his ridiculous comments on Sacred Writ, his Apologists with one voice allege, that such explications are not to be charged to the man, but to the age, in which he lived, which could not relish or endure any better.

Justin
Justin Martyr however lays claim to this gift, as conferred upon him by the special grace of God [1], upon which Mr. Tillemont declares, "that of all the extraordinary graces, which the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the Church in those times, there were few so considerable, as that of understanding the Scriptures, which was communicated by singular favor to Justin [2]." Yet from all the writings and monuments of the very earliest Fathers, which remain to us, it is manifest, beyond all contradiction, that there never was any such gift in the Church, after the times of the Apostles; and that Justin in particular, had no better claim to it, than any of the rest. And if those Fathers then, through a fervency of zeal, or an enthusiastic turn of mind, could mistake such fanciful expositions, for divine inspirations, I see no reason, why they might not as easily be deluded in every other instance of those pretended gifts, which flattered the same zeal and spirit, that so strongly possessed them.

It is a common case with men of great piety, zealously persuaded of the truth and high importance of any religious doctrine, to think it reasonable, that God should interpose himself miraculously in favor of it, when it happens to be opposed by any earthly power and in danger of being oppressed: and when they are thus prepared by their prejudices, to


expect a divine interposition, they listen to every pretension of that sort, which craft or wild enthusiasm can devise, without allowing their reason to examine it, or to suggest the suspicion of a fraud. There are many instances of this in History, and a remarkable one in our own; that of the Holy Maid of Kent, in the reign of Henry the 8th: who by the presence of visions and divine revelations, communicated in trances or ecstacy, contrived by Popish Priests, to raise the sinking credit of their cause, drew in Bishop Fisher, with many other eminent persons, to take her for a Prophetess, divinely inspired, as Tertullian did his ecstatic Maid. Yet this modern Prelate was more learned and judicious, than any one perhaps of all the ancient Fathers, and by all accounts of him, as pious and religious too: since he lost his life, or, in the stile of the Romish Church, suffered martyrdom, for the sake of those very prejudices, which betrayed him into this folly. But the Lord Cromwell, expostulating with him on that subject, rightly told him, "that the true reason, which induced him to give credit to the maid, was the matter of her prophecies; to which he was so addicted, that nothing could come amiss, which served to that end; and he appealed to his conscience, whether, if she had prophesied in favor of the King's proceedings, he would have given such easy credit to her, and not have examined the matter farther [1]."

§ 6. The gift of tongues also is clamed, as we have seen, among the rest, and affirmed to have been actually possessed by the primitive Christians: for if the testimony of Irenæus can be credited, many were induced with it in his days, and heard to speak all kinds of languages in the Church. And in truth, this gift, in the common estimation of human reason, has been thought so essentially necessary to the propagation of the Gospel, in those first ages, that the Advocates of the primitive miracles, trusting to that hypothesis, instead of searching into the fact, urge the necessity of its continuance after the days of the Apostles, as a proof of the continuance of all the rest. Yet how great soever the importance of it may seem to be, it is evident, as I have elsewhere shewn, from the origin, nature and exercise of it, as they are represented in the New Testament, that it was not permanent or lasting, either in the Church at large, or in those particular persons, who were principally favored with it, but was granted only on certain special occasions, and then again withdrawn, even from the Apostles themselves; so that, in the ordinary course of their ministry, they appear to have been generally destitute of it.

Irenæus however declares it to have been indulged to many in his days. But it is very remarkable, that this Primitive Bishop, who ascribes it so liberally to others, appears to have been in great want of it himself, for the propagation of the Gospel in his own Diocese, among the Celts, or Gauls; where, as Dr. Cave interprets his words, it was not
the least part of his trouble, that he was forced to learn the lan-
guage of the country; a rude and barbarous dialect, before he
could do any good upon them [1]. Nor is it less strange also,
that from the time of Irenæus, there is not a single
Father, in all the succeeding ages, who, upon his authority,
has ventured to carry on the same pretension, or make the
least claim to it; or to speak of it in any other manner,
than as a gift peculiar to the first Christians, in the times
of the Apostles. And I might risk the merit of my argu-
ment on this single point; that, after the Apostolic times,
there is not in all history one instance, either well attested,
or even so much as mentioned, of any particular person,
who had ever exercised this gift, or pretended to exercise it,
in any age or country whatsoever. Mr. Dodwell supposes
it to have ceased, in the reign of M. Aurelius, about sixty
years after the death of St. John [2]. But it is not credi-
able, that a gift of such eminent use should entirely cease,
while all the rest were subsisting in full vigor, and abounding
every day more and more. If, according to the common
hypothesis, we admit them all to be true, it is not possi-
ble, I say, to imagine any cause, why this in particular
should be withdrawn, and the rest continued: but if, agreea-
bly to my system, we consider them all, as fictitious, we
then see an obvious and manifest reason for it. For all the

[2] A Marci temporibus deficeret cesserunt gratiae illæ extraordinariorum—defecer-
cere eorundem dona linguarum. Diff. in Iren. 2. § 44.
other extraordinary gifts, of healing diseases, casting out Devils, visions, and ecstatic revelations, afford great room to Impostors, to exert all their craft of surprizing and dazzling the senses of the simple, the credulous, and the superstitious of all ranks: whereas the gift of tongues cannot easily be counterfeited, or a pretension to it imposed on men of sense, or on any indeed, but those, who are utterly illiterate and strangers to all tongues but their own: and to acquire a number of languages by natural means, and to a degree, that might make them pass for a supernatural gift, was a work of so much difficulty and labor, as rendered it impracticable, to support a pretension of that kind, for a succession of many years. And this, in all probability, was the real cause of it's being dropped so early in those primitive ages: for after the mention of it by Irenæus, we find it no longer in any subsequent list of the miraculous gifts, nor the least hint of it's continuance in the Church, in any later writer, from that time, down to the present. If this then appears to have been the case of this particular gift; that a false claim to it was made by the early Fathers, and held up for a while, till it could no longer be supported; it is sufficient, one would think, of itself, to blast the general credit of all the rest, tho' no particular mark of fraud could have been fixed on each of them separately: but when there is not a single one among them all, which, either from it's nature, or end, or manner of exertion, or the character of it's witnesses, does not furnish just ground to suspect it as fictitious, it must needs
needs persuade every rational inquirer, that they were all derived from the same source of craft and imposture.

In short; if we trace the history of this gift from its origin, we shall find, that, in the times of the Gospel, in which alone the miracles of the Church are allowed to be true by all Christians, it was the first gift, which was conferred upon the Apostles, in a public and illustrious manner, and reckoned ever after among the principal of those, which were imparted to the first converts. But in the succeeding ages, when miracles began to be of a suspected and dubious character, it is observable; that this gift is mentioned but once by a single writer, and then vanished of a sudden, without the least notice, or hint given by any of the ancients, either of the manner, or time, or cause of its vanishing. Lastly, in the later ages, when the miracles of the Church were not only suspected, but found to be false by our Reformers, and considered as such ever since by all Protestants, this gift has never once been heard of, or pretended to by the Romanists themselves, tho' they challenge at the same time all the other gifts of the Apostolic days. From all which, I think, we may reasonably infer, that the gift of tongues, may be considered as a proper test and criterion, for determining the miraculous pretensions of all Churches, which derive their descent from the Apostles: and consequently, if, in the lift of their extraordinary gifts, they cannot shew us this, we may fairly conclude, that they have none else to shew, which are real and genuine.
I have now run through all the various kinds of the miraculous gifts, which are pretended to have subsisted in the Church, during the second and third centuries; and have opened the genuine state of them, as far as it is discoverable to us at this distance, from the most authentic monuments and testimonies of the principal Fathers of those centuries. Ages, which are always stiled the purest, and in which these very Fathers bore the first character; not only on the account of their piety and integrity, but of their abilities also and learning. If any suspicions then can be entertained against such witnesses, they will be stronger still against all who succeeded them, especially after the Empire became Christian, when, according to the hypothesis of the very Admirers of these primitive ages, a general corruption both of faith and morals began more openly to infect the Christian Church; which by that revolution, as St. Jerom says, lost as much of her virtue, as it had gained of power and wealth [1].

But in the case of these miracles, there is one circumstance, common to all the writers, who attest them, as well in the earlier, as the later ages; that tho' their assertions be strong, their instances are weak; and when, in proof of what they affirm, they descend to alledge any particular facts, they are usually so unlucky in the choice of them, that instead of strengthening, they weaken the credit of their general affirmation, and, from the absurdity of each miracle re-

lated by them, furnish a fresh objection to their power of working any. This the reader can hardly fail to observe, from the examples already produced; to which I shall add one or two more, of the most considerable, which are transmitted to us from the same ages, and which I had before omitted to recite.

One of the most authentic and celebrated pieces in all primitive antiquity, is the circular letter of the Church of Smyrna, containing a narrative of the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, their Bishop, and of the many miracles, as Mr. Dodwell says, which made it illustrious [1]. This letter, written about the middle of the second century, informs us, "that when that Saint was entring the lungs, in which he was to be burnt, there was so great a tumult, that no body could be heard. — But there came a voice to him from heaven, saying, be strong, Polycarp, and acquit thyself like a man: and tho' no body saw, who it was that spake, yet many of the brethren heard the voice [2]. — As soon as he had finish'd his prayer, the executioner kindled the fire, and the flame began to blaze to a great height. When behold,


" says
says the writer, a mighty wonder appeared to us, whose
lot it was to see it, and who were reserved by heaven,
to declare to others what we had seen. For the flame,
forming a kind of arch, like to the fall of a ship filled
with the wind, encompassed the body of the martyr, as
in a circle; who stood in the midst of it, not as flesh,
which is burnt, but bread, which is baked, or as gold and
silver glowing in a furnace: and so sweet a smell issued
from him all the while, as if it had been the smook of
frankincense, or some rich spices. At length, when these
wicked men saw, that his body could not be consumed
by fire, they commanded the executioner to draw near,
and to thrust his sword into him; which being done
accordingly, there came out of his body a Dove, and
so great a quantity of blood, as quite extinguished the fire:
so that the whole multitude were amazed, to see so great a
difference between the Unbelievers, and the Elect [1]."
Yet it appears from the sequel of the narrative, that there
was fire enough still left, to consume the body to ashes,
which was executed with great care, that the Christians might
not be able to preserve the least remains of it.

The greatest part of this Epistle is transcribed by Euse-
bius, who has omitted the mention of the Dove, which
flew out of his body; for which reason Mr. Dodwell and
Archbishop Wake have thought fit also to omit it. Yet all
the oldest copies still extant, from which Archbishop Usher,

[1] Vid. ibid. c. 15, 16.

Catererius
Cotelarius and Ruinart, published their several editions, retain this passage [1]: which Eusebius might probably drop for the same reason, for which Mr. Dodwell and Bishop Wake also, profess to have dropped it; viz. for the sake of rendering the narrative the less suspected [2]. To the end of this letter is annexed the following advertisement. "This Epistle was


N. B. Archb. Bishop Wake explaining his reasons for omitting the story of the Dove, says; "Now tho' there may seem to have been something of a foundation for such a miracle, in the raillery of Lucian, upon the death of Persgrinus the Philosopher, who burnt himself about the same time that Polycarp suffered, and from whose Funeral Pile he makes a Vultur to ascend, in opposition, it may be, to St. Polycarp's Pigeon, (if indeed he designed, as a learned man has conjectured, under the story of that Philosopher, to ridicule the life and sufferings of Polycarp) yet I confess, I am so little a friend to such kind of miracles, that I thought it better with Eusebius, to omit that circumstance, than to mention it from Bp. Ussor's Manuscript, &c." [Prelim. Discours. p. 57.] which Manuscript however, he afterwards declares, to be so well attested, that we need not any farther assurance of the truth of it. p. 59.

These deaths of the Primitive Martyrs seldom failed of being accompanied by miracles, which, as we find them related in the old Martyrologies, were generally copied from each other: concerning sweet smells issuing from their bodies, and their wonderfull steadfastness of all kinds of torture; and the miraculous cures of their wounds and bruises, so as to tire their tormentors by the difficulty of destroying them, which yet, after a vain profusion of miracles, was always effected at the last.
"transcribed by Caius, from the copy of Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp; and I, Socrates, transcribed it at Corinth.
"After which, I, Pionius, again wrote it out, from the copy above mentioned, having searched it out by the revelation of Polycarp, who directed me to it, &c."

Eusebius also relates a miracle, wrought by Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, about the end of the second, or the beginning of the third century: "that when the sacred oil was almost spent, in the vigil of Easter, and the people were in a great consternation about it, he ordered those, who had the care of the lamps, to go and draw water from a certain well in the neighbourhood, and to bring it away to him: which being accordingly done, Narcissus, after he had prayed over it, commanded them to pour it into the lamps with a sincere faith in Christ; upon which, by a miraculous and divine power, the nature of the water was changed into the fatness of oil: of which oil, as Eusebius says, several small quantities were preferred by great numbers of the faithful, to his time, which was about an hundred years after the date of the miracle [1].

The same Historian, giving an account of the horrible barbarities, which were exercised upon the Christians of Palestine, concludes one of his stories in the following manner: "after these things had been transacted many days successively, this miracle appeared. There was a clear and bright sky, and

An Inquiry into

"a remarkable serenity of the air: when on a sudden, the
pillars in the portico's of the City, poured out drops of
tears; and when there was not the least moisture in the air,
the streets and public places were all wet, no body knew
how, as if water had been thrown upon them: so that
it became a common talk, that the earth wept for the
impiety, which was committed; and to reprove the relent-
less and savage nature of men, stones, and inanimate bod-
ies shed tears for what had happened [1]." A description
of this kind, might easily be excused in an Orator or a
Poet, but when an Historian, after he has raised our attention,
and prepared us to expect something great and miraculous,
tells us only, of stones shedding tears for the impieties of
men, he debases the gravity of History, and makes mira-
cles themselves contemptible.

Mr. Dodwell, as I have before said, has, with great dili-
gence, deduced the History of the primitive miracles, down
to the very times of Eusebius; which he then shuts up with
the establishment of Christianity by human laws, declaring,
"that many things concurred to recommend the credit of
the preceding ages, which have no place in those, that fol-
lowed [2]:" and speaking of the Life of Gregory, called
the wonder-worker, written by Gregory of Nyssa, a Bishop of

Ibid. c. ix. p. 425.

[2] Multa enim faciunt ad primorum Seculorum commendandam fidem,
quæ locum in sequentium seculorum testimoniiis prorsus nullum habent. Differt. 
Iren. 2. § 62.
the greatest piety and gravity, he says, "in this Life "there are many things, which breath the air of imposture "and the genius of the fourth century, so that I dare not "mix them with what is more genuin, for fear of hurting "the credit of all [1]." For this reason therefore, it was my first intention, to confine my inquiries also to the same period; but having since perceived, that several of our learned Divines and principal advocates of the Christian faith have not scrupled, to affer the succession of true miracles, to the end even of the fifth century, I thought it necessary, to extend my argument to the same length, lest I should seem to neglect any evidence, which could be offered to me, and especially such, as is declared to be convincing and decisive by men of their character. But from every step, that we advance forward, we shall readily perceive, that Mr. Dodwell, who had as much piety and more learning, than any of them, has in this respect shewn more judgement too, by restraining the miraculous powers of the Church to the three first centuries.

In the fourth century, we find some of the principal Fathers delivering themselves on this subject so variously and inconsistently, as shews, that tho' they were ashamed to deny, what they knew to be true, yet they were desirous to inculcate, what they knew to be false. For on some occasions, when they are pressed, they plainly confess, that miracles

were then ceased; yet on others, they appeal to them again as common, and performed among them every day. For example, St. Chrysostom observes, "that in the infancy of the Church, the extraordinary gifts of the spirit were bestowed even on the unworthy, because those early times stood in need of that help, for the more easy propagation of the Gospel; but now, says he, they are not given even to the worthy, because the present strength of the Christian faith is no longer in want of them." In another place, speaking of the miraculous powers of the Apostles, and of the force, which they had in converting the Gentile world, therefore, adds he, because no miracles are wrought now, we are not to take it for a proof, that none were wrought then; for then they were of use, but now they are not: for the first planters of the Gospel were simple and ignorant men, and had nothing to teach from themselves; but what they received from God, that they delivered to the world: so we likewise of these times, bring nothing indeed of our own, but what we received from them, that we declare to all. Nor do we yet persuade by the force of our reason, but evince the truth of our doctrines from the holy Scriptures, and the miracles then wrought in confirmation of them.


"there
there are some also even now, who desire and ask, why are not miracles performed still at this day? and why are there no perfons, who raise the dead and cure diseases?

To which he replies, "that it was owing to the want of faith and virtue and piety in those times [1]." On another occasion also he declares, "that St. Paul's Handkerchiefs could once do greater miracles, than all the Christians of his days could do, with ten thousand prayers and tears [2]." Lastly, in his books of consolation, addressed to his friend Stagirius, who was supposed to be possessed and horriblety tormented by an evil spirit, it is expressly signified, "that neither the tombs of the Martyrs, to which he had often applied for relief, nor the repeated endeavours of the most holy and celebrated Exorcists of those days, were able to drive the Devil out of him [3]."

There


N. B. St. Chrystostom is thought to have written these books to Stagirius, about A. D. 380, which Mr. Whitton recommends, as very curious, and well worth the perusal of inquisitive men. [See Daemones, p. 60] I have run them lightly over, and shall give the reader a short abstract, of what I chiefly collected from them, since it relates to my present subject, and helps still to illustrate the true character and principles of this fourth age.

Stagirius was the Son and Heir of a noble family in Antioch, trained up in the Christian Religion; who, in contradiction to the will, and earnest remonstrances of his Father, had taken a resolution to enter into the Monastic life; for which purpose he seems to have withdrawn himself, in a secret manner, tho' with the privity of his Mother, into a certain Monastery, where he lay concealed.
There are several other passages in this Father of the same strain; in which he allows the cessation of miracles, and speaks

ceded from the pursuit and discovery of his Father. On his first entrance however, he did not easily relish the rough discipline of the cloyster; but presuming on the splendor of his birth, expected some exemption from the severer parts of it: till being inured to it by degrees, and confirmed by the example and admonitions of the Elder Monks, he became equal to the most perfect of them in the frequency of his fastings and watchings, and all the other arts of mortifying his body. But now the Devil resolved, if possible, to shake his constancy, and attacked him with all that train of evils, which his power and malice could inflict: by which he reduced him at last to such a state of melancholy and despair, as made life itself insupportable to him. In this condition he laid open his complaints to his friends, and particularly to St. Chrysostom, by whom they are severally enumerated and summed up in the following manner.

First, That in the former part of his life, while he lived like other men in the world, he never suffered any thing of this kind; but after he had crucified himself to the world, he presently fell under the sense of this disorder, which was sufficient to throw him into despair.

2dly, That many, who, from a luxurious life, had been afflicted in the same way, were yet relieved in a short time, and restored to perfect health, so as to marry, and become the Fathers of many children, and enjoy all the other delights of the world, without ever relapsing into the same misery: whereas he who had spent so much time in fastings and watchings and the other austerities of the Monkish discipline, could find no repose from his affliction.

3dly, That the holy man, who had shown so much power in healing others in the same case, was not able to do him any service; neither he himself, nor any of the rest, who were with him, and more powerful even than he in these cures, but were all forced to go away with shame to themselves.

4thly
speaks of them even with contempt, "as proper onely to "rouse the dull and sluggish, but useles to men of philo- "phical

4thly, That he was so oppressed on this account with grief and despair, as to be frequently tempted to hang, or drown, or throw himself from some precipice.

5thly, That his companions, who entered with him into the same sort of life, continued to live at their ease and undisturbed, while he had no peace or rest, but was confined as it were to a prison, of all others the most wretched, since no fetters of iron were so grievous as the chain, with which he was bound.

6thly, That what chiefly disturbed and made him tremble even with fear, was, left his Father should come to the knowledge of his case, and do some great mischief to those holy men, who first received him; and trusting to his power and wealth, and hurried on by his passion, should attempt all sorts of violence against them. That his mother indeed had hitherto been able to conceal the matter from him, and elude the effect of his inquiries; but if he should happen to detect her dissimulation, his resentment would be intolerable both to her and to the Monks.

Lastly, That the completion of his misery was, to have no confidence or hope in what was to come: and not to know, whether he should ever find any cure or safety, since his expectations had been so often frustrated, by relapsing still into the same evil.

Now from this detail of his complaints, as they were represented by himself, what else can we collect, but that this noble Youth, disgusted perhaps by some little domestic uneasiness, had been seduced by certain Monks, to bid adieu to the world and retire into a Convent. In which retreat, by reflecting at leisure on the roughness of his resolution, and the provocation, which he had given by it to an indulgent Parent, he seems to have been hung with remorse: while the austerities, which he now practised, and by which he hoped to calm his mind, and conciliate the favor of heaven, instead of appeasing, served only to increase his anxiety, and reduced him by degrees to such a weakness and dejection both of body and mind, as brought on horrible Symptoms, and Epileptic fits, and
and made him completely miserable. This naturally infused scruples and suspicions, which he himself gently intimates, that he was in a wrong way, and owed all his sufferings to his unhappy change of life; and that a return therefore to the world, where he had never felt any such, would free him from them again, by affording him the comforts of maternity, and children, and all the other sweets of social life.

That this was the real cause and source of his complaints, is evident from his own account of them. Let us see then what sort of comfort St. Chrysostom thought fit to administer to him in this sad state. This holy Father had himself also, when young, taken the same resolution of retiring from the world: in consequence of which, after he had spent several years in a Monastery, he betook himself to the mountains, where he lived, as an Hermit, in a solitary cave, for two years more: till perceiving at last, that the infirmity of his body could no longer induce the severity of that discipline, he quitted his solitude, and chose to reside in Antioch, where he is supposed to have written this elaborate confutation to Stagirius. But tho' he left the Aesthetic life himself, when he found it hurtful to his health, he never once suggests the same advice to his friend Stagirius, nor ever mentions the only remedy, which could afford him any solid comfort; viz. to quit the place and way of life, which had given birth to all his troubles, and to reconcile himself to his Father, by returning to the world, and by the use of its innocent pleasures, to calm the disorders of his mind, and restore it to its former tranquillity.

This, I say, was the most rational and effectual comfort, which could be administered to him; but instead of this, St. Chrysostom employs all his rhetoric to persuade him, that his sufferings were the true marks of the divine favor, and had been of the greatest service to him: that he could not but remember, on his first entrance into the Monastery, and before the Devil began to vex him, how difficult he found it, to comply with the rules of the society; how haughty and foppish he was; how hard to be roused from his bed; and how angry with those, who disturbed him; but from the time of this trial and struggle with the Devil, all that difficulty was at an end, and no man surpassed him in all those austerities and exercises of devotion, which constitute the perfection
perfection of the Christian life. He exhorts him therefore to persevere in his fastings and watchings, and all his other mortifications, as the only means of baffling all these efforts and terrors, by which the Devil was laboring to drive him from that blessed course. That while he was immersed in the pleasures of the world, or was yet a novice and raw in the Monastic life, God would not expose him to this trial, nor suffer the Devil to attack him; knowing, that he would then be an unequal match, and fall an easy prey to the Adversary: but now that he was become firm and perfect in all his exercises, God committed him to the Stadium, as an expert champion, and sure to come off with glory from the combat. That as to the trouble, which he suffered on the account of his Father, it was a weakness to afflict himself for what might or might not happen hereafter: that his Father perhaps would never come to the knowledge of his cafe; or if he did, would not be so much disturbed at it, as he imagined: that a man of his temper, fond of vain expences, and jovial company, puffed with pride and haughtiness, and enslaved to a Concubine, whom he kept in his house, would have but little concern for the distress of a Son. That he had shewn this already by experiments; for tho’ he had once loved him with the utmost tenderness, and above all things in the world, yet all that love was extinguished, upon his entrance into the monastery; which his Father declared to be a baseness, unworthy of his Ancestors, and disgraceful to the splendor of his Family. It was probable therefore, that he would rejoice at his calamity, and think it a punishment of his disobedience to him, in betaking himself to a way of life, from which he had labored to earnestly to diffuse him. — In short the Summ of St. Chrysostom’s consolation is this: that the more Stagirius suffered in this conflict, the more assured he might be, that he was under the peculiar care of heaven; and that by finding no relief, either from the tombs of the Martyrs, which he had so often visited, or from his long abode with those holy Exorcists, who had never failed of success before, he had a clear demonstration of God’s particular regard for him; who would never have hindered the effect of so much grace, nor exposed his own servants to so much shame, if he had not known it conducive to the greater good and probation of Stagirius.

Such were the arts, by which the Saints of this fourth age were subjecting the world to the tyranny of superstition. Not content to make men Christians, they could not rest, till they had made them also Monks; till they had persuaded them, that the only way of serving God, was, by rendering themselves useless to man; and of saving their souls, by doing mischief to their bodies.
that it was a proof of the greater generosity of that age, 
and to take God's word without such pledges [1]."

From these testimonies, one would necessarily conclude, 
upon the authority of St. Chrysostom, that miracles were easilv 
in his days: yet in other parts of his works we find 
him in a different story, and haranguing on the mighty 
and wonders, which were performed among them every day, 
by the relics of the Martyrs, in casting out Devils, curing 
all diseases, and drawing whole Cities and people to their Sep-
ulchres [2]. He displays also the miraculous cures, wrought 
by the use of consecrated oil, and by the sign of the Cross; 
which last he calls a defence against all evil, and a medicine

dies. By this senseless cant, they made it their business, to gain the Mothers 
chiefly in the first place, and through them, their children: especially those of 
the rich and the great; without the least regard to the will of their fathers, the 
distress of their families, the breach of filial duty, or the ruin which they wrought 
to the health, the fortunes, and the happiness of those, whom they infamed. 
We find several other instances of this kind in the works of this same Chrys-
ostom, concerning the heirs of rich families, stolen away from their fathers by 
the artifices of Monks, which, as he himself informs us, raised such a clamor 
and indignation against the whole Monkish Order, among the generality of the 
better sort, as transported them almost to madness; to see their children decoy-
ed from them into a life, which they considered as utterly forsook and despicable. 
It was for the sake of appeasing these clamors, that he composed his three books, 
against the Oppugners of the Monkish life; one of which is addressed to the be-
lieving, and another to the unbelieving Fathers, in order to convince them both, 
of the excellence of this divine philosophy, as it was called, and of the happiness 
accruing to their sons, from their choice and pursuit of it.

against all sickness, and affirms it to have been miraculously impressed, in his own time, on people's garments [1].

St. Austin also, who lived at the same time, tho' in a different part of the world, takes notice of the same objection, made by the Sceptics, with which the Christians were commonly urged in this age. "They ask us, says he, why are not those miracles performed now, which you declare to have been wrought formerly? I could tell them, that they were then necessary, before the world believed, for this very purpose, that the world might believe; but he, who still requires prodigies, that he may become a believer, is himself a great prodigy, who does not believe now, when the world does believe [2]." One would not imagine, that these words, which seem to imply a cessation of miracles, were the preface to an elaborate narrative and solemn attestation of great numbers of them, said to have been wrought in these very times: which, if true, as they are here affirmed by St. Austin from his own knowledge, must have been more illustrious, both for the number and the excellence of them, than all, which were wrought by the Apostles themselves.

But before we descend to particulars, I cannot forbear observing, what this Father has delivered concerning the general state and credit of them among the Christians themselves, at

the very time, when they were wrought. He tells us then, that tho' miracles were frequently wrought, either by the name of Jesus, or by his Sacraments, or by the prayers or the memorials of the Martyrs; yet the fame of them was not so illustrious, as of those of the Apostles: since they were scarce ever known to the whole City or place, where they happened to be performed; but for the most part, to a very few only; while all the rest were utterly ignorant of them; especially if the city was large; and if ever they were told abroad to other people, yet they were not recommended with such authority, as to be received without difficulty and doubting, tho' reported by true believers, to true believers[1].

That he might put an end therefore to this strange negligence of the Christians, with regard to their own miracles, he took care, as oft as he heard of any miracle, 'that the parties concerned in it should be examined, and a verbal process, or authentic narrative be drawn of the fact, which was afterwards publicly read to the people. Yet all this caution, as he says, was not sufficient to make the miracles known, or at all regarded: because those, who were present at the recital of such narratives, heard them but once, while the greater part were absent; and even

[1] Nam etiam nunc sunt miracula, in ejus nomine, five per sacramenta ejus, five per orationes vel memorias Sanctorum ejus, sed non eadem claritate illufrantur—& quando alibi, alisque narrantur, non tanta ea commendat auctoris, ut fine difficultate, vel dubitatione credantur, quamvis Christianis fidelibus a fidelibus indicentur. Ibid. § 1.

' those,
those, who heard them, retained nothing, a few days after, of what they had heard, and seldom or never took the pains, to tell it to any body else, whom they knew to be absent [1]." This account of the matter would be very surprizing, were it not explained to us by the miracles themselves; of which I have here added a few specimens, whence we shall easily collect the reason of that coldness and indifference, which the people of those days expressed towards them.

For instance, among many other stories of the same kind, he relates these, which follow: "A pious old Cobler of Hippo, where he himself was Bishop, having lost his old coat, and wanting money to buy a new one, betook himself to the twenty Martyrs, whose chappel or memorial was famous in that city; where he prayed to them very earnestly, that he might be enabled by them to get some cloaths. Some young Fellows, who overheard him, began to make sport with him, and pursued him with their scoffs, for begging money to buy a coat. But as the old man walked away, without minding them, he saw a large fish lie gasping on the shore, which he caught by the help of the young men, and sold to a Christian Cook, for three hundred pence; and laying out the money on wooll, set his wife to work, to provide

[1] Ut nec illi, qui adierunt, post aliquot dies, quod audierunt, mente retineant; & vix quiquam reperierunt illorum, qui ei, quem non adiisse cognoverit, indicet quod audivit. Ibid. § 21.
cloaths for him: but the Cook, cutting open the fifth, found a gold ring also in the belly of it; which, out of compassion to the poor man, and the terror also of religion, he presently carried to the Cobler, saying, see here is the cloathing, which the twenty Martyrs have given you [1].

There was one Hesperius likewise, as he tells us, a man of Tribunician quality, whose country house near Hippo was haunted by evil spirits, and his cattel also and servants afflicted by them: upon which he sent a message to the Priests at Hippo, when Austin happened to be absent, that some of them would come over to him, and drive the evil Spirits away by their prayers. One of them accordingly went, and offered the sacrifice of Christ's body upon the spot, praying at the same time, as fervently as he was able, that this vexation might be removed; upon which by God's mercy it instantly ceased [2].

The same Hesperius had received from a friend some holy earth, brought from Jerusalem, where Christ rose from his grave on the third day; which earth he hung up in his bedchamber, to secure himself from the mischief of those evil spirits. But since his house was now cleared of them, he was considering, what he should do with this earth, being unwilling, out of reverence to it, to keep it any longer in his bedchamber. It happened, that St.

Austin and another Bishop, called Maximinus, were then in the neighbourhood; so that Hesperius sent them an invitation to come to his house; which they immediately accepted; and after he had acquainted them with the whole affair, he desired, that the sacred earth might be deposited somewhere in the ground, and an Oratory built over it, where the Christians might assemble for the performance of divine service: the two Bishops had no objection, so that his project was presently executed. There was at the same place a country lad, afflicted with the palsy; who having heard what was done, begged of his parents, that they would carry him without delay to that holy place: whither as soon as he was brought, he put up his prayers, and presently returned back on foot in perfect health [1].

There are many more tales of this sort, as contemptible, as any, in the Popish legends, and all attested by this celebrated Father, from his own knowledge: yet these are nothing to the extravagant things, which he goes on to relate, of the reliques of the Martyr Stephen. For as reliques were now become the most precious treasure of the Church, so these of St. Stephen, after they had lain buried and unknown for near four centuries, were revealed in a vision, to one Lucianus a Priest, by Gamaliel, the celebrated Dr. of the law, at whose feet St. Paul had been bred, and being found by his direction, were removed with great Solemnity and many

[1] Ibid.
miracles into Jerusalem [1]. The fame of these relics was soon spread through the Christian world; and many little portions of them brought away by holy Pilgrims, to enrich the particular Churches of their own countries. For wherever any relics were deposited, an Oratory or Chapel was always built over them, which was called a Memorial of that Martyr, whose relics it contained. Several relics therefore of St. Stephen having been brought by different people into Africa, as many Memorials of him were consequent-ly erected in different places, of which three were peculiarly famous; one at Hippo, where St. Austin was Bishop; a second at Calama; and a third at Uzalis, two other Episcopal Cities; and many great and illustrious miracles were continually wrought in them all.

St. Austin has given us a particular relation of some of them, by which the gout, the stone, and fistula's were instantly cured; the blind restored to sight; and five different persons raised even from death to life. Two of whom were carried dead to the relics, and brought back alive: two more restored to life, by the virtue of their garments only, which had touched the relics; and a fifth, by the oil of the martyr's lamps. After all which wonderfull stories, he adds the following apology, not for telling us so many of them, but

[1] The history of this revelation of St. Stephen's relics, and of the miracles, which were wrought by them, is particularly delivered by several ancient writers, whose pieces are annexed, as an Appendix to the seventh Volume of St. Austin. Ed. Benedict. And the same revelation is referred to likewise by St. Austin himself in different parts of his works.
so few, out of the infinite number, which were publicly known and recorded.

"What shall I do? says he: I am engaged by promise, to finish the present work, so that it is not possible for me in this place, to relate all the miracles, which I know; and our people without doubt, when they read these, will be grieved, that I have omitted so many, which they know to be true, as well as I. But I beg them to excuse me, and to consider what a tedious piece of work it would be, to do that, which the nature of my argument does not oblige me to do here. For were I to relate onely the miracles of cures, without mentioning the rest, which have been performed by this Martyr, the most glorious Stephen, in the colony of Calama, and in our own, it would fill a great number of volumes. Nor would it be possible to collect them all, but such of them onely, of which certificates have been made, and read to the people. For this I ordered to be done, when I saw the effects of the divine powers, like to those of the ancients, so frequently exerted also in our own times, which ought not to be lost from the notice of the multitude. It is not yet two years, since this Memorial was founded at Hippo, and tho' I am certain, that no account was taken of many of the miracles, yet at the time, when I wrote this, the number of certificates publicly made, amounted to near seventy: but at Calama, where the Memorial is of longer standing, and certificates more
more frequently taken, they reach to a far greater
number.

"At Uzalos also, we know many eminent miracles wrought
by the same Martyr; whose Memorial was instituted there
by their Bishop Evodius, much earlier than with us. But
it is not the custom with them to take certificates, or it
was not rather, because now it is probably begun. For
when I was lately there, I exhorted Petronia, a celebrat-
ed Matron, who had been miraculously cured of a great
and lingering illness, in which the Physicians were not
able to help her, to get a certificate drawn of the case,
and read publicly to the people, to which, by the advice
also of the said Bishop of the place, she willingly con-
sented, and inserted in it another miracle, which notwith-
standing the haste, that I am in, to put an end to this
work, I cannot forbear relating, &c. [1]."

I have dwelt the longer on these miracles, than the im-
portance of them perhaps may be thought to require: but
they are so precisely described and authentically attested by
one of the most venerable Fathers in all antiquity, who
affirms them to have been wrought within his own know-
ledge, and under his own eyes, that they seem of all others
the best adapted, to evince the truth of what I have been
advancing, and to illustrate the real character of all the other
miracles of the primitive times, both before and after them.
Dr. Chapman however, speaking of the very same mira-

cles, roundly declares them all, to be so strongly attested, both by the effects, and the relating of them, that to doubt their reality, were to doubt the evidence of sense [1]. On these then, I am content to rest the fate of my whole argument; and if either Dr. Chapman or Dr. Berriman can maintain these miracles to be credible, I shall no longer dispute the credibility of any, from the Apostolic times, down to our own. But, on the other hand, if miracles so strictly examined by a most Holy Bishop, confirmed by the certificates of eyewitnesses, and rehearsed publicly to the people, at the time when they are said to have been wrought cannot command our belief, these Doctors must needs confess, nay, they have already confessed, that the Christian Church can shew no other, except those of Christ and his Apostles, which can make any better pretensions to it.

For not to insist on the objections, which might reasonably be made to the probability of the facts themselves; to the incompetency of the instruments, by which, and of the ends, for which they are said to have been performed; to the credulity of a prejudiced, or the fidelity rather of an artful and interested relator; it seems evident, from the neglect, with which they were treated by the Christians themselves; from the obscurity in which they lay; from the diligence of St. Austin, to search them out; to get certificates of them; and to publish them to the people; and from the insufficiency of all his pains, to make them still regarded or at all remem-

bered; that the people themselves saw or suspected the cheat, and were tired with the repeated frauds of this kind, which their Bishops were imposing upon them. For it is not possible to conceive any other reason of so surprizing a coldness, in a case of all others the most warming, but a general persuasion, grounded on experience, that these pretended miracles were nothing else but forgeries, contrived to enforce some favorite doctrine or rite, which the rulers of the Church were desirous to establish.

Yet these are not the stories, which chiefly shock Mr. Dodwell, and oblige him to reject the miracles of the fourth Century; but others still more extravagant, tho' attested likewise by persons of equal eminence and authority; by St. Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Jerome, St. Epiphanius, &c. Of which therefore, it will be necessary to add a specimen or two, from each of those Fathers.

St. Athanasius, in the Preface to his life of St. Antony the Monk, declares, "that he had inferred nothing in it, but what he either knew to be true, having often seen the faint himself, or what he had learnt from one, who had long ministered to him, and poured water upon his hands." In this life then, after a great number of monstrous stories, concerning the personal conflicts, which this Saint continually sustained with all the several Devils,


and
and powers of Hell, who assaulted him in every shape, which could imprint terror; and exerted every art and even corporal punishments, to drive him from the Monastic life, which threatened the speedy ruin of their Kingdom, he tells us; "that some body knocking one day at his Cell, Antony went to the door, where he saw a tall meager person, who being asked his name, answered, that he was Satan."

"His business, it seems, was, to beg a truce of the Saint, and to expostulate with him, on account of the perpetual reproaches and curses, which the Monks so undeservedly bestowed upon him, when he was no longer in condition to give them any trouble: for since the desert was now filled with Monks, and the Christians spread into all places, he was disarmed of all power to do them any mischief: so that the Christians had nothing more to do, but to take care of themselves, and to forbear their needless curses against him."

The rest of this piece is filled with many other miracles of the same stamp, too trifling to deserve any regard.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, in the life of his Namesake, called the wonder-worker, has this story, "that the Virgin Mary, accompanied by St. John the Evangelist, appeared to Gregory in a vision, and explained to him the mystery of Godliness, in a short Creed or divine summary of faith, which he took down in writing, as they dictated it to him, and left the copy of it, a legacy to the Church of NeoCaesarea,

[1] Ibid. p. 476.
of which he was Bishop: and if any one, says he, has
a mind to be satisfied of the truth of this, let him in-
quire of that Church, in which the very words, as they
were written by his blessed hand, are preserved to this
day: which, for the excellency of the divine grace, may
be compared with those tables of the law, made by God
and delivered to Moses [1].”

Dr. Waterland has given us a translation of this Creed,
and Dr. Berriman, an abstract of it; which is as express as
possible, they say, for the doctrine of the Trinity, as it was
taught afterwards by Athanasius. They both however intimate,
that the genuineness of the Creed had been called in question,
 tho’ without any sufficient cause [2]. Yet the learned Cave,
who for zeal, and orthodoxy, and facility of believing, was
scarce inferior to any, declares, that notwithstanding the autho-
ritie of Gregory Nyssen, who was apt to be too credulous, this
short exposition of the Christian faith will hardly find credit with
prudent and sensible men [3]. But whatever may be alleged
to persuade us, that this Creed was actually professed and
taught by Gregory, in his Church of Neoceasarea, yet no man
surely but Dr. Berriman, could have any scruple to own, that
the story of the vision, and of its delivery to him from hea-
ven, was a forgery, contrived to support the Athanasian

Par.
doctrine, at a time when it was warmly controverted, and in danger of being suppressed. But as the revelation of it, if admitted to be true, would put an end at once to all dispute, and give a divine Sanction to the doctrine itself, so the Dr. seems resolved not to part with it: for in his Historical account of the Trinitarian controversy, speaking on this very point, he says; "there are many arguments to convince us "of the genuineness and authority of this Creed of St. Grego-"ry: I do not mean of it's being taught him by revelation, "(tho' that may be well attested too, and will not seem incre-"dible to those, who shall consider, how highly this great person "was distinguished by the charismata, or extraordinary gifts "of the Holy Ghost) but I mean, as to the certainty, of it's "having been taught by St. Gregory, &c. [1]." From which we see, that tho' his sole business in this place was, to prove the Creed to have been really Gregory's, yet he could not forbear to acquaint us, that, if there was occasion, he could prove the revelation also to be genuine: since it cannot enter into his head, how any one should think it incredible, that, in those miraculous ages, a person of Gregory's exalted character might be favored with a visit from heaven, by the Virgin Mary and St. John the Apostle.

The fame Gregory of Nyssa relates likewise, "how his "Name sake, being upon a journey, was forced one night, "to take shelter in an Heathen Temple, famed for an "Oracle and divination; where the Daemons used to appear

visibly and offer themselves to the Priests. But the holy
Father, by invoking the name of Jesu, put them all
to flight; and by making the Sign of the Cross, pu-
rified the air, polluted by the steam of their sacrifices
the next morning when the Priest came to perform
his usual functions; the Devils appeared, and acquainted
him, that they had been driven out the night before by a
stranger, and had not the power to return; nor was he
able to recall them by all the charms of his expiatory sa-
crifices. Upon this, the Priest pursued Gregory in great
wrath, and overtaking him on the road, threatened him
most terribly, for what he had done. But Gregory, de-
spising his threats, gave him to understand, that he had
a power superior to that of Devils, and could drive them
whithersoever he pleased. The Priest amazed at what
he said, began to beg, that for a proof of his power, he
would fetch them back again into the Temple; to
which Gregory consenting, wrote this short note only,
upon a Schedule of paper, Gregory to Satan. Enter. With
this, the Priest was dismissed; and laying the little Sched-
dule upon the Altar, brought the Devils back again im-
mediately to their old Seats." The miracle however had
the good effect of converting the Pagan Priest [1].

I have already given a passage from the Life of St. Hila-
riot the Monk, written by St. Jerom, as a specimen of the
fidelity of the writer.—But for a proof of the fabu-

lous genius of the fourth century, Mr. Dodwell refers us to another Life of the Hermit Paul, compiled by the same Father, which is filled with stories still more monstrous; "of "Satyrs and Fauns presenting themselves to the Hermit, "and confessing their own mortality, and the folly of the "Gentiles in paying them any worship, and begging his re-
commendation of them to their common Lord, who "came to save the world: of a raven, bringing half a "loaf for sixty years successively to the Hermit, for his "dayly food in the wilderness; and then a whole loaf, "when St. Antony came to visit him: of two Lions, com-
ing to afflict Antony in the burial of Paul, by digging a "grave for him with their feet, and then departing with "the blessing of Antony [1]."

St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, who is said to have wrought miracles himself, both in his life-time and after it [2], affirms several false and absurd miracles from his own knowledge, which his advocates gently pass over, by remarking only, that this most holy Father was too cre-
dulous, or not so accurate, as we could wish [3]. He declares, "that in imitation of our Saviour's miracle at Cana in "Galilee, several fountains and rivers in his days were annu-

[3] Que de Melchizedeci parentibus narrat Epiphanii, redolent apocryph-
orum somnia, cujusmodi multa sunt in hoc operè bona fide a Sanctissimo Pate

ally turned into wine. A fountain of Cibyra a City of Caria, says he, and another at Gerasa in Arabia, prove the truth of this. I myself have drunk out of the fountain of Cibyra, and my brethren, out of the other at Gerasa: and many testify the same thing of the river Nile in Αἰγύπτι [1]. Should we then be asked here, as we were before in a similar case; will ye not believe a most holy Bishop, in a fact attested by his own senses? the answer is clear and short; the fact is not credible.

St. Chrysostom, celebrating the acts of the Martyr St. Babylas, Bishop of Antioch, says; "the Gentiles will laugh, to hear me talk of the acts of persons dead, and buried, and consumed to dust; but they are not to imagine, that the bodies of Martyrs, like to those of common men, are left destitute of all active force and energy, since a greater power than that of the human soul is superadded to them, the power of the Holy Spirit; which, by working miracles in them, demonstrates the truth of the resurrection." He then proceeds to inform us, how the remains of this Martyr were removed by a certain Emperor, out of the City of Antioch, into a suburb of it, called Daphne, famous for the delights of its situation, and the variety of pleasures, which it afforded to its inhabitants, as well as for a celebrated Temple and

"Oracle of Apollo Daphneus; to which the body of the Saint was thought proper to be removed, for the sake of giving some check to the lewdness and licentiousness, that reigned in the place. The Coffin therefore was no sooner deposited in a chappel provided for it, than the Oracle of Apollo was struck dumb at once: so that when Julian the Apostate came afterwards to consult it, he could receive no other answer from Apollo, but that the dead would not suffer him to speak any longer [1]. Wherefore Julian commanded the bones of St. Babylas to be conveyed back again into Antioch; but in the very moment, when they entered into the City, the Statue of the God, and the roof of his Temple were destroyed by lightning, upon the intercession of the Saint [2]." St. Chrysostom employs an entire Homily, and a larger discourse, which follows it, in haranguing on this same subject of Babylas; and on the blessings and daily miracles, wrought by the relics of the Martyrs, to the edification of the Church, and the confusion of unbelievers [3]. Yet his History of this Saint is so evidently fabulous and romantic, that the Benedictin Monks, who published the last and

[1] "By which answer we may understand, says Sir Jf. Newton, that some Christian was got into the place, where the Heathen Priests used to speak through a pipe in delivering their Oracles." See Observat. on the Prophecies of Daniel, par. 1. p. 210.


best edition of his works, found it necessary to admonish the reader, that it is written in a declamatory style, overflowing with rhetorical figures, and for the most part destitute of truth. In which those learned Papiists have shewn more candor as well as judgement, than our Protestant Doctor Cave; who, in his Life of the same Babylas, after relating the particular story just described, which he calls one of the most memorable occurrences, that Church-antiquity has conveyed to us, adds the following attestation to it.

"The reader 'tis like, may be apt to scruple this story, as favouring a little of superstition, and giving too much honor to the reliques of saints. To which I shall say no more, than that the credit of it seems unquestionable; it being reported not onely by Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, who all lived very near that time, but by Chrysostom, who was born at Antioch, and was a long time Presbyter of that Church, and was scholar there to Libanius the Sophia, at the very time when the thing was done, and an eye-witness of it; and who not onely preached the thing, but wrote a discourse against the Gentiles on this very subject; where he appeals to the knowledge both of young and old then alive, who had seen it, and challenges them to stand up and contradict, if they could, the truth of what he related. Nay, which farther puts the case

past all peradventure, Libanius the Orator evidently con-
"fesses it, &c. [1]" Whereas all, which that Orator con-
"fesses, and which the Benedictins allow to be well grounded
in the whole relation, is, that the reliques of Babylas were
"carried back again, by Julian’s order, out of Daphne into
the City; and that the Temple of the Daphnean Apollo was
"soon after destroyed in the night by fire; which the Christi-
"ans declared to have been sent from heaven by the power of
the Saint; and the Heathens ascribed to the revenge and con-
"trivance of the Christians [2].

A Popish writer, with whom I have been engaged, in or-
"der to reprove my raillery on their fictitious Saints and Image-
"worship, has allledged also a most notable miracle, from this
fourth century; which I shall here add to the Specimens
already given.

"When Julian the Apostate was pursuing his Persian ex-
"pedition, and at the very time, when he is supposed to
"have been destroyed by the immediate hand of God, the
"Great St. Basil was standing before the Image of the Blessed

[2] Julian suspected the Christians to have set fire to this Temple, on the ac-
count of his removal of the body of St. Babylas; for which reason, he ordered
some of them to be put to the rack, and their great Church in Antioch to be shut
up; as we are told by Ammianus Marcellinus; who mentions another report
also, tho' more slightly grounded, of a different cause of that accident. [1. 22.
The Christians, says Sozomen, took the fire to be sent from heaven at the re-
quiest of the Martyr, but the Gentiles look upon it as the act of the Christians.
lib. 5. c. xx.
Virgin, on which there was painted likewise the figure of St. Mercurius, an eminent Martyr; and while St. Basil was fervently praying, that the impious and atheistical Julian might be cut off, he received this revelation from the picture; out of which, the figure of the Martyr quite vanished for a little while, but presently appeared again, and held out a bloody spear; as a token of what had happened in the same moment to Julian.

But Julian's death was foretold likewise by visions, and divine revelations, as the Ecclesiastical writers inform us, to several other Saints and holy men, in different parts of the world, who were severally addressing their prayers to God for his destruction. Whence we cannot but observe, what a total change there was, both of principles and practice, between the Fathers of the fourth, and those of the preceding ages; or between the Church when persecuted, and when established in power and authority. For in the earlier times, under the very worst of the Heathen Emperors, and the cruellest persecutors of the Church, when the Christians were treated everywhere, as traitors to the government, all their apologists, through the three first centuries, declare with


N. B. This story is said to have been recorded by Helladius, the disciple and successor of St. Basil, in the Epitome of Caesarea, in the Life, which he wrote of St. Basil.

one voice, that they were obliged by the precepts of their religion, to be of all men the most loyal to their Princes, and that it was their daily practice, to put up their united prayers for their prosperity. We pray, says Tertullian, for every Emperor; that he may have a long life, secure reign, a safe house, strong armies, faithful Senate, honest people, a quiet world, and whatsoever else, man, or Caesar himself can wish.[1]

Yet after the Church had gained a firm establishment, it's temper was quite altered; and the Emperors no sooner began to give them any disturbance, than their prayers were turned into curses; and the divine vengeance confessedly implored to destroy them. So true it is, what all the Popish writers have not scrupled to affirm, from Pope Gregory the Great, down to Cardinal Bellarmin, that it was not the want of will, but of the power only to rebel, which made the primitive Christians so patient under the persecuting Emperors, and particularly under Julian, because the Church had not yet acquired strength enough, to control the Princes of the earth.[2]

Now it is agreed by all, that these Fathers, whose testimonies I have just been reciting, were the most eminent lights.

Oramus pro omnibus Imperatoribus, vitam illis prölixam, imperium securum — & quæcunque hominis & Caesaris vota sunt. Apolog. § 30.

of the fourth century; all of them sainted by the Catholic Church; and highly reverenced at this day in all Churches, for their piety, probity and learning: yet from the specimens of them above given, it is evident, that they would not scruple, to propagate any fiction, how gross soever, which served to promote the interest either of Christianity in general, or of any particular rite or doctrine, which they were desirous to recommend. St. Jerom in effect confesses it; for after the mention of a silly story, concerning the Christians of Jerusalem, who used to shew, in the ruins of the Temple, certain stones of reddish color, which they pretended to have been stained by the blood of Zacharias the Son of Barachias, who was slain between the Temple and the Altar, he adds, but I do not find fault with an error, which flows from an hatred of the Jews, and a pious zeal for the Christian faith [1].


N. B. The same Jerom speaking, in another place, of the different manner, which writers found themselves obliged to use, in their controversial and their dogmatical writings, intimates, that in controversy, whole end was victory rather than truth, it was allowable to employ every artifice, which would best serve to conquer an adversary: in proof of which, "Origen, says he, Methodius, Eusebius, Apollinaris, have written many thousands of lines, against Celsus and Porphyry: consider with what arguments and what slippery problems, they baffle what was contrived against them by the Spirit of the De
vil: and because they are sometimes forced to speak; they speak not what they think, but what is necessary against those, who are called Gentiles. I do not mention the Latin writers, Tertullian, Cyprian, Minatius, Victorinus, Lactantius, Hilarius, lest I be thought, not so much to be defending myself, as accusing others, &c." Op. T. 4. p. 2. p. 236.
If the miracles then of the fourth century, so solemnly attested by the most celebrated and revered Fathers of the Church, are to be rejected after all as fabulous, it must needs give a fatal blow to the credit of all the miracles even of the preceding centuries; since there is not a single Father, whom I have mentioned in this fourth age, who for zeal and piety, may not be compared with the best of the more ancient, and for knowledge and learning, be preferred to them all. For instance, there was not a person in all the primitive Church, more highly respected in his own days, than St. Epiphanius, for the purity of his life, as well as the extent of his learning. He was a Master of five languages, and has left behind him one of the most useful works, which remain to us from antiquity. St. Jerom, who personally knew him, calls him, the Father of all Bishops, and a shining Star among them; the pattern of ancient sanctity; the man of God of blessed memory; to whom the people used to flock in crowds, offering their little children to his benediction; kissing his feet; and catching the hem of his garment [1].

All the rest were men of the same character, who spent their lives and studies in propagating the faith, and in combating the vices and heresies of their times. Yet none of them have scrupled, we see, to pledge their faith for the truth of facts, which no man of sense can believe, and which their warmest admirers are forced to give up as fabulous. If such persons then could willfully attempt to deceive; and if the

sanc{tity of their characters cannot assure us of their fidelity; what better security can we have from those, who lived before them? or what cure for our Scepticism, with regard to any of the miracles above mentioned? was the first Author of them, Justin Martyr, more pious, cautious, learned, judicious, or less credulous than Epiphanius? or were those virtues more conspicuous in Irenaus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Arnobius, and La{chanius, than in Athanasius, Gregory, Chrysostom, Jerome, Austin? No body, I dare say, will venture to affirm it. If these later Fathers then, biased by a false zeal or interest, could be tempted to propagate a known lie; or with all their learning and knowledge, could be so weakly credulous, as to believe the absurd stories, which they themselves attest; there must always be reason to suspect, that the same prejudices would operate even more strongly in the earlier Fathers; prompted by the same zeal and the same interests, yet induced with less learning, less judgement, and more credulity.

But whatever light the fourth Century may give us, in discovering the real character of the earlier ages, it affords us at least a sure presage, of what we are to expect from the fifth, into which we are now entering. Dr. Waterland himself allows, on the authority of Nazianzen, that the state of the Church towards the end of the fourth century was become very corrupt [1]: for that reason, as we have elsewhere seen, he durst not venture to appeal, in the case of its miracles, to

any of the celebrated Fathers above mentioned, as being evidently infected with that corruption. The learned Mosheim also, a foreign Divine, and zealous advocate of Christianity, who, by his writings against the Freethinkers, as Dr. Chapman tells us, has deserved the esteem of all good and learned men, intimates his fears, "that those, who search with any attention into the writings of the greatest and most holy Doctors of the fourth century, will find them all without exception, disposed to deceive and to lie, whenever the interest of religion requires it." Since the degeneracy therefore of this age has obliged the most devoted admirers of antiquity, not only to suspect, but to reject its miracles as spurious, we cannot be at a loss, what judgement we ought to form on the miracles of the following age, which is allowed by all to have been still more corrupt.

The succeeding Fathers however go on still as before, to assert the same miraculous gifts, and even more of them to the fifth, than to any of the preceding ages. Whence a certain infidel writer has taken occasion to censure the credit of Ecclesiastical History, as being full of miracles, wrought by such madmen, as Symeon Stylites [2], a Monk of the fifth century; who spent the greatest part of his life on the top of a pillar, from which he drew his surname; and whose wonderful acts are particularly related by Theodoret. Now whether this Symeon was a madman or not, the credit of Christianity

is no way affected by it. The History of the Gospel, I hope may be true, though the History of the Church be fabulous. And if the ecclesiastic Historians have recorded many silly fictions, under the name of miracles, as they undoubtedly have, the blame must be charged to the writers, not to their religion. But the censure came from an Infidel, and for that reason was at all events to be confuted; since to allow a grain of truth to one of that class, is to betray the cause of Christianity, and to strengthen the hands of it's enemies.

This is the principle, which generally animates the zeal, and glares through the writings of the modern advocates of our religion: and which in reality, has done more hurt and discredit to it, than all the attacks of it's open adversaries: and it was the same principle without doubt, that gave birth to the defence of Symeon Stylites, which Dr. Chapman, in his remarks on the Author referred to, has thought fit to attempt in the following words:

"I know our Author too well, to take his judgement either of madness or sense. 'Tis more than probable, that it is madness with him, to believe any miracles at all, of any person, or at any time. So that we are not to wonder, if Symeon and his miracles have no sort of credit with him. For this reason I address myself here, not to him, but to those, who distinguish between truth and imposture, between clear and indisputable evidence, and that which is dark and suspicious. The great Theodoret, whose
character for sense, learning and piety, is abundantly known
and confessed, was himself contemporary with Symeon Sty-
lites, was personally and intimately acquainted with him,
conversed with him for many years together, and declares
himself an eye-witness to the wonderfull things related of
him. He has given us an account of a great part of his
Life, which he wrote, while Symeon was yet alive, and
appeals to all the world for the truth of what he says of
him. He farther tells us, that Symeon by his miracles
converted many thousands of Pagans, especially the Ishma-
lites or Saracens, to the Christian religion; that he him-
self, at Symeon's desire, gave many of them the Sacerdotal
benediction, and was in manifest danger of losing his life,
by the impatience and eagerness of the Barbarians to receive
it from him. If we may not admit such evidence as this
in proof of a matter of fact, I am afraid, we must
shake the evidence of all human testimony, and believe no-	hing, but what we see, and feel, and know ourselves. Nay
farther, our Author cannot prove, that there ever existed
such a man as Symeon Stylites, by better evidence, than that,
which I have produced, to prove his miracles [1].”

Here we see what a sort of character and language is pre-
pared for those, who dare to reject the miracles of Symeon.
They must be men, who know not how to distinguish between
truth and imposture; between indubitable and suspicious evidence;
who shake the credit of all human testimony, and believe nothing,


but
but what they see themselves. And all this assurance is grounded on the single testimony of Theodoret, to whom, in order to enhance his authority, he has added, according to his usual way, the title of the Great. But as the Doctor has carried his defence of Monks and their miracles much farther, than any other Protestant, I believe, would venture to do, so it was natural to suspect, that he had been drawn into it by some Popish writer, of whom he had conceived a favorable opinion, and we find accordingly, that he has borrowed, not only his notions, but his very expressions from Mont. Tillemont, who talks in the same pompous strain, of Le Grand Theodoret, whose evidence cannot be slighted, he says, without shaking the credit of all human testimony [1].

But let him borrow them from whomsoever he pleases; my business is, to inquire only whether, what he has borrowed and so peremptorily affirmed, be true, or credible, or fit for a Protestant Divine, to impose upon the consciences of Christians. This therefore is the point, which I shall now proceed to consider, from the authority of those very testimonies, to which he himself has referred us.

We are told then by Theodoret, "that this Symeon spent the first part of his life in certain Monasteries near Antioch in Syria, mortifying his body by horrible austerities, not only beyond the rules of their ordinary discipline, but above the force even of nature itself; till for his perseverance in these extravagancies, contrary to the Admonitions of his [1] See Tillem. Memoir. Vol. XV. p. 348. rulers,"
rules, he was turned out of the society, as giving an ex-
ample, that might be dangerous or fatal to those, who at-
ttempted to imitate it. Upon this he retired to a separate
Cave or Hut, where he took a fancy, after the example
of Moses and Elias, to keep a fast and total abstinence from
food, for forty entire days. But when another holy man
called Babis, represented to him the danger and even sin
of an attempt, which would probably destroy him, he
complied so far, as to suffer ten loaves, and a pitcher of
water to be immured with him in his cell, with a pro-
mise to make use of them, if he happened to want any
refreshment. Babis then closed up his door with mud,
and left him for forty days; at the end of which, he re-
turned, and clearing away the mud from the door, found
the ten loaves intire, and the pitcher also full; but Symeon
stretched upon the ground, quite spiritless and unable to
speak or stir, till by the care of his friend, and the applica-
tion of the symbols of the holy mysteries, he was gra-
dually restored to his strength and former health. From
which time, as Theodoret adds, he had then persevered
twenty eight years, in the same practice of fasting forty
days in each year. During the first part of which days,
he used constantly to stand: and when through want of
nourishment he grew too weak to endure that posture, he
then began to sit; but at the last, was forced to lie
down half dead and almost spent [1].

His next whim was, "to fix his perpetual station on the top of a pillar, whose circumference was hardly of two cubits: and after he had spent many years in that position, like a statue upon its pedestal, on several different pillars, he mounted one at last, thirty six cubits high, and lived thirty years upon it: being placed in the middle region, as it were, between heaven and earth; where he conversed with God, and glorified him with Angels; offering up for the men on earth his supplications to God, and drawing down from heaven the blessings of God upon men [1]."

But because these pillars allowed no other posture but that of standing, he contrived a method, which enabled him to endure still the fatigue of his usual fasts. "For he got a beam fixed to the top of his pillar, to which he tied himself, and by that support held out the whole forty days without changing his position; till being strengthened by heaven with a larger measure of grace, he no longer wanted that help, but stood all the time, without tasting the least food, yet with ease and cheerfulness [2]."

The manner of passing his time on the pillar was this; "all the nights and days also, till three in the afternoon, were spent by him in prayer, in which he used continual bowings of his body, and always touched his very toes with his head. For this, says Theodoret, was easy to him, because he made but one meal in the week, and that a

[2] Ibid. 880:
very light one, so that his belly being generally empty,
gave him no obstruction in bending his back. One of
those, who stood by, looking upon him with Theodoret,
had the curiosity to count the number of his bowings,
but when he had counted to twelve hundred and forty
four, he was tired and would count them no longer [1].
On solemn Festivals, he stood with his hands stretched out
towards heaven, from the setting of the Sun, to its rising,
without a wink of sleep the whole night [2].
From three in the afternoon it was his practice, to preach
and to give divine lectures; to answer all questions and peti-
tions, which were offered to him; to cure diseases, and
to compose differences; but at Sun-setting he began to con-
verse again with God [3]. He wrought innumerable mir-
cacles; giving health to the sick, children to the barren;
and dispensing sacred oil to those likewise who desired
it [4].” To many of which miracles Theodoret declares him-
sell to have been an eye-witness, as well as to his gift of
prophecy, for he heard “him foretell a famine and a perni-
cence, and an irruption of locusts, and the death of one
of Theodoret’s enemies, fifteen days before it happened [5].
One of the miracles, which Theodoret saw, was this;
an eminent Ishmaelite and believer in Christ, made a vow
to God in the presence of Symeon, that he would abstain
from all animal food during the rest of his life: but be-

"ing
ing tempted afterwards to break his vow, he resolved to
eat a fowl, and ordered it to be dressed for him according-
ly; but when he sat down to eat, he found the flesh
of it turned into stone. The Barbarian, amazed at this
miracle, ran away in all haste to the Saint, proclaiming his
secret crime to all people, and imploring the Saint, by the
omnipotence of his prayers, to release him from the bond
of this sin. There were many eye-witnesses of this mi-
acle, who handled the fowl, and found the part of it
about the breast, to be compounded of bone and of
stone [1]."

By these miracles and austerities, the fame of Symeon, as
Theodoret says, was spread through the whole world: so
that people of all nations and languages flocked to him in
crowds from the remotest parts of the earth; from Spain
and Gaul, and even Britain itself; and his name was so cele-
brated at Rome, that the Artificers of all kinds had little images of
him, placed in the entrance of their shops, as a guard and
security to them against all sorts of mischief [2].

This is the account in short of the Life of Symeon Sty-
lites: the bare recital of which, tho' attested by ten Theo-
doretos, must needs expose the absurdity of believing, that it
could in any manner be suggested or directed by divine in-
spiration. Yet Dr. Chapman contends, that there is no better
evidence for the very existence of Symeon, than we have for
his miracles [3]. By which he means, I suppose, that we


have
have the same evidence for both; the testimony of the same
Theodoret, which he imagines to be as good in the one case,
as in the other: not reflecting, that the same witness, of
whatever character he be, will necessarily find a very different
degree of credit, according to the different nature of the facts,
which he attests; and tho' credible in some, may be justly
contemptible in others. For example, when we are told by
Theodoret, and after him by Evagrius, that a certain Monk
called Symeon, who was personally known to them, took a
fancy to live upon a pillar, where he was seen every day by
many thousands; we have no reason to doubt of it; the thing
was notorious, and there were many such Enthusiasts in the
same age; and every one of those thousands, who saw him,
were as good witnesses of it, as Theodoret himself. But when
we are told by the same writers, that Symeon was inspired
by God, and performed many things above the force of human
nature: this is a different case, which cannot command
the same belief; being a matter of opinion, rather than of
fact; of which very few could judge, fewer still be certain,
and scarce one perhaps of all the thousands, who saw him,
could be a competent witness: while the character of Symeon
on the one side, and of Theodoret on the other, suggest many ob-
vious reasons against the credibility of it.

To illustrate this more clearly by a similar instance from
profane history. Two classical writers of undoubted credit,
Suetonius and Tacitus, have each written the Life and acts of
the Emperor Vespasian: who alone, they say, of all the Princes

Y

before
before him, was made a better man, by his advancement to the Empire [1]. But the same writers also declare, that this good Emperor, by a divine admonition from the God Serapis, publicly restored a blind man to his sight, and a cripple to his limbs, in the view of the people of Alexandria; and that many years after his death, when there was no reward or temptation for telling such a lie, several witnesses were still living, who had seen those miracles performed, and bore testimony to the truth of them [2]. Now it is certain, that no body in any age, ever doubted of the existence of Vespasian, yet many probably in all, and every single man in the present, not only doubt, but reject the story of his miracles: tho' these last be affirmed by the same writers, who assure us of the first: to whose authority still we pay all the regard, that is due, by believing them in every thing, that is credible; in every thing, of which they were competent witnesses; and charging the absurd and fabulous part, to the superstition, prejudices, and false principles, which prevailed in those ages.

The same is the same with Theodoret and all the Ecclesiastical Historians, who have transmitted to us the Lives and miracles of the Monks, and other pious men of their own


[2] Et plebe quidam luminibus orbatus, item alius debili crure, sedentem pro tribunali pariter adierunt, orantes opem valetudinis, demonstratam a Serapide per quietem. &c. Sueton. in Vit. c. 7.

Utrumque qui interfueserit, nunc quoque memorant, postquam nullum mendacio pretium. Tacit. Hist. 1. 4. c. 81.

1 times,
times. We take their word, as far as reason and religion will permit us; and ascribe the rest, to the credulity, the prejudices, and erroneous principles, which infected all the writers of those days. The Romanists indeed roundly embrace and espouse all the absurd and fictitious stories, which they have delivered to us; and are under a necessity of doing so, since they teach the same corrupt doctrines, retain the same superstitious rites, and exercise the same usurped powers, for the sake of which, those very stories were originally forged. But no Protestants, as far as I have observed, except the two Doctors above mentioned, have ever attempted to defend either the miracles, or the principles of the fifth century; but on the contrary, have constantly signified either their suspicion, or utter contempt of them.

Mr. Dodwell, whose piety and zeal for the honor of Christianity were as conspicuous as his learning, declares, "that nothing does so much discredit to the cause of miracles in general, among the Infidels and Atheists, as the impostures of the later ages; meaning the fourth, fifth, and following centuries. These, says he, they oppose to the undoubted credit of the earlier ages; and because these false prodigies deceived the whole world, they infer, that the ancient ones likewise, tho' false, might impose in the same manner upon the credulity of mankind." [1]

Dr. Cave, the large extent of whose faith shines through every page of his writings, yet plainly intimates his suspicion, of what Theodoret has attested concerning this very Symeon: for speaking of the amazing austerities, which he practised, he adds, moreover, if the Greek writers are to be regarded, he wrought innumerable miracles [1].

Mr. Collier also, whose Ecclesiastical History shews, that miracles even of the grossest kind were of no hard digestion with him, could not yet digest these of our Symeon, but declares them to be wholly fabulous, and such, as render the truth itself suspected [2].

Dr. Hody, so highly esteemed for his critical and theological learning, observes, "that stories concerning miracles are " common to all the writers of Lives, among the Christian " of the middle ages, tho' otherwise good authors: and " that the professed Historians themselves, as Theodoret " and " Evagrius, are full of relations; which were the result of a " superstitious piety [3].

Since the most learned then, as well as orthodox of our Divines, and the most conversant also in Ecclesiastical antiquity, have so strongly signified their distrust, both of the testimony of Theodoret, and the particular acts of this Symeon, it is surprizing, that Dr. Chapman should think it of service to Christianity, to lay so great a stress upon them, and in so per-

[3] The Cafe of Seez vacated by an unjust deprivation. c. x. p. 120.
emptory a manner, to vindicate the credit of miracles, whose sole tendency is to recommend, as a perfect pattern of the Christian life, the most extravagant enthusiasm and contemptible superstition, that any age or history perhaps has ever produced. For that this was really the case, is evident from the writings of Theodoret himself, whose Life of Symeon Stylites, is a part onely of his religious history, as it is called; filled with the Lives of thirty Monks, of the same class and character; distinguished by their peculiar austerities; and vying with each other, who could invent the most whimsical methods and painful arts of mortifying their bodies.

One of these called Baradatus, contrived a sort of cage for his habitation, coarly formed of lattice work, so wide and open, as to expose him to all the inclemencies of the weather, and so low at the same time, that it could not admit the full height of his body, but obliged him to stand always in the posture of stooping [1].

Another of them called Thalaicus, of a very bulky size, suspended himself in the air, in a cage of a different kind, contrived by himself, and made so low and so strait also, that it left him no more room, than to fit with his head perpetually bent down between his knees; in which posture, he had spent ten years, when Theodoret first saw him [2]. Yet all these ridiculous whims and extravagancies are considered by Theodoret, as the suggestions of the holy Spirit [3], and di-

vine inventions, to baffle the artifices of the Devil; or so many ladders, as he tells us, by which they mounted up to heaven \[1\]; and which were all confirmed by miracles, as a proof of the divine approbation.

These were the wonder-workers, and these the miracles of the fifth century; the character of which Dr. Chapman summs up to this effect in the following articles.

1. That they were of a public nature, and performed in such a manner, as left no room for delusion.

2. That they were attended with beneficial effects, which could not possibly have gained credit, unless the strongest evidence of sense had proved them to be true.

3. That the end of them was not to confirm any idle errors or superstitions, but purely to advance the glory of truth and virtue.

4. That the accounts of them are given by men of unquestionable integrity, piety, and learning, who were eye-witnesses of many of the facts, and declare in the most solemn manner, that they knew them to be true.

\[1\] Καὶ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως οἱ τροφίμοι τῆς ἔργων ἀνέπαυσαν ἐνὸς πολλαὶς ἀρ γὰρ διαφόρεις ἰμπρονεῖσι κλῖμασι. Ib. p. 889. Α.

5. That
5. That they were far from being vain and unnecessary, so as to render them doubtfull to after ages—but were attested by the strongest moral evidence, equal to that, by which most of the ancient miracles are supported.

6. That they are incapable of giving any countenance to the fabulous pretences of the Papists: and that a Protestant of common capacity will discern as much difference between them and the Popish miracles, as between gold and brass, between light and darkness [1].

Yet from the short specimen of these miracles already given, and much more, from a full list of them, which, if it were required, may hereafter be given, the very contrary character of them, I am persuaded, will appear to be the true one, to all unprejudiced readers, in every one of those articles.

1. That they were all of such a nature, and performed in such a manner, as would necessarily inject a suspicion of fraud and delusion.

2. That the cures and beneficial effects of them, were either false, or imaginary, or accidental.


3. That
3. That they tend to confirm the idlest of all errors and superstitions.

4. That the integrity of the witnesses is either highly questionable, or their credulity at least so great, as to render them unworthy of any credit.

5. That they were not only vain and unnecessary, but generally speaking, so trifling also, as to excite nothing but contempt.

And lastly, that the belief and defence of them, are the onely means in the world, that can possibly support, or that does in fact give any sort of countenance, to the modern impostures in the Romish Church.

Then as to the Monks also, who are said to have wrought those miracles, the Doctor is not less zealous in defending and extolling all their extravagancies. He declares, "that they were intended for the best and most excellent purposes [1]. That all the friends to Christianity must think, that in their voluntary austerities, they shewed such prudence, virtue, and greatness of mind, as deserve the highest encomiums of posterity [2]. And that the ancient Monasteries were very different from the modern; quite remote from the corruptions of Popery, and de-

"serving the approbation of the strictest Protestants." Yet for my own part, notwithstanding all his panegyric on those primitive Monks and monasteries, I shall not scruple to own, 1st, That I look upon the whole institution of monker-y, from what age or what Saint ever it drew it's origin, to be contrary not only to the principles of the Gospel, but to the interests of all civil society, and the chief source of all the corruptions, which have ever since infested the Christian Church. 2dly, That by all, which I have ever read of the old, and have seen of the modern Monks, I take the preference to be clearly due to the last, as having a more regular discipline, more good learning, and less superstition among them than the first.

Before

[1] Ibid. p. 180, 181:
[2] Sir J. Newton has shewn, that the Monks are the spawn and genuine offspring of those Hereticks, who in the second and third centuries, affected an extraordinary strictness of life: forbidding to marry and to eat the flesh of animals; and practising many absurd austerities of fastings and watchings, which they injoined as necessary to all Christians: whose doctrines and practices were rejected and condemned by all the Churches of those ages. But certain Enthusiasts, near the beginning of the fourth century, possessed with the same principles, yet with some little refinement and correction of them, retired into the deserts, where they spent their lives with an high reputation of sanctity, in exercises of devotion and divine contemplation; not imposing the same severities on all, as their predecessors, the Heretics had done, but on those only, who voluntarily preferred the same monastic life. These therefore began to be highly reverenced, and before the end of the fourth century, increased so fast, that they overflowed both the Greek and the Latin Church like a torrent: especially when Constantine the Great professed to esteem and honor them above all Christians; being persuaded, as Eusebius tells us, that God did freely dwell in those souls, who had devoted themselves entirely to his service. In Egypt therefore, where
Before we take leave of this subject, I shall just add a word or two concerning the character of Theodoret himself, to whose testimony Dr. Chapman pays so extraordinary a regard, and whose authority he declares to be decisive in the case before us. The learned Mon. Du Pin, in his account of him, extracted from his writings, says, "that he was born at Antioch A.D. 386. that his birth was accompanied by miracles, both before and after it, which he himself relates in his religious history: that, if we may believe him, his mother was healed of an incurable disease in her eye, by one Peter a Monk: that upon the prayers of another Monk, called Macedonius, God granted her to conceive a son, after thirteen years of barrenness, and to bring him safely into the world: that by the prayers of the first of those Monks, Peter, she was preserved also from death after her delivery: and that her husband and her son had often felt the effects of Peter's virtue and sanctity, and were cured of their distempers by touching only his girdle." [1]

This account, I say, is drawn from Theodoret himself; whence we learn, that he was nursed and trained in all the bi-

where this enthusiasm principally reigned, a third part of the people are said to have betaken themselves to the deserts: whence they soon spread themselves through the Christian world, and were the ringleaders in establishing the worship of Saints, and relics, and all those other Superstitions, with which the fourth and all succeeding centuries ever after abounded. Observe on the Proph. of Dan. par. 1. c. xiii.

got try and superstition, with which that age abounded: taught from his very cradle, to venerate Monks and their miracles: and made to believe, with the first knowledge which he received, that he owed his very existence to the efficacy of their prayers. He tells us, "that his mother sent him once every week to beg the blessing of the Monk, Peter; and that he went as often also, to receive the instructions and benediction of the other Monk, Macedonius; who never failed to remind him, of the great pains, which it had cost, to bring him into the world, and how many nights he had spent in praying to God for nothing else, but his birth." And as Theodoret is said to have been very tenacious of the principles, which he had once imbibed, so it was his constant practice through his whole life, to visit the cells and habitations of all the celebrated Monks of those times; with whose lives and miracles he has filled his religious history: from which I shall here transcribe a story or two, out of the great number, which he has recorded, of the same sort, and of his own knowledge, as a specimen both of the judgement and the fidelity of the compiler.

In his life of the Monk Peter, he declares, "that his very garments wrought wonders, like to those of St. Paul:


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" which
which I do not mention, says he, by way of hyperbole, but with the testimony of truth for what I am saying. For his girdle made of coarse linen, being very broad and long, he cut it into two parts, with one of which he girded his own loins, and mine, with the other. This last my mother has often applied to me and to my Father, when we were sick, and driven away our dieters by it; and made use of it also herself, as a remedy for her own health. Many of our acquaintance, who knew this, frequently borrowed the girdle, for the service of other sick people, and always found the same good effects of its virtue: till a certain person, who borrowed it, ungrateful to his benefactors, never restored it, and so we were deprived of the benefit of this gift [1]."

In the life of another Monk, called James, he tells this story, "that the relics of some of the ancient Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles were brought to him in a chest from Phœnicia and Palæstine, and received by a public procession of all the orders of the Clergy and the Layety. But the Monk James did not think fit to assist at this solemnity, having conceived some doubts, it seems, whether the relics, said to be John Baptist's, were really so or not. Upon which, in the night following, as he was praying, there appeared to him a certain person clothed in white, and demanded of him, why he did not come out to meet them? and when James asked, who they were, of whom

"he spake; he replied, those, who came the other day from Phænicia and Palestine. The next night also the same person appeared to him again; and in order to remove all his scruples, brought along with him St. John Baptist, and the Patriarch Joseph, who were severally presented to him, and held discourse with him on the subject of their reliques [1]." With these stories, I shall leave it to the reader to determine, whether a writer of this turn and character can reasonably be thought unprejudiced, and of an authority uncontestable, or worthy indeed of any credit at all, where the honor of Monks, and the reality of their miracles are the points in question.

The same Monf. Du Pin, after he has given us an abstract of Theodoret's religious History, adds the following reflection: "this History contains many things remarkable, concerning the discipline of this time. By it we see, that great honor was given to the Saints; that they were invoked; that men expected to be helped by their prayers; that their reliques were sought after with great earnestness; that people believed very easily in them; attributed great virtue and many miracles to them; and were very credulous &c. [2]." But tho' the whole turn and purpose of Theodoret's sacred History, tends to strengthen the interest of the Romish, and to hurt the credit of the Protestant cause; by celebrating the forged miracles of Monks, and Saints, and

[1] Ibid. c. xxii. p. 862. D.
reliquies, and holy water, and sacred oil, it is curious to observe, with what a different temper, the Popish writer, Mons. Du Pin, and the Protestant writer, Dr. Chapman, have each expressed themselves, on the subject of his testimony. The Papist, candidly intimating his doubts, says; if we may believe Theodoret, such and such miracles were performed. The Protestant on the contrary, contemning all doubts, declares, that we must believe him, that his evidence is uncontestable, that to reject it, is to destroy the faith of history [1]. The fortunes of these two writers were as different also, as their principles: the candor of the Papist being thought too favorable to Protestantism, was cenfured and disgraced by the Popish Bishops; the zeal of the Protestant, tending directly to Popery, was extolled and rewarded by the Protestant Bishops.

We have dwelt already so long on the miracles of the fifth century, that it must be needless, to examine the particular merit of that miracle, which Dr. Berriman has so accurately defended. I shall employ therefore but a very few words upon it. The story is this: "Hunneric the Vandal, a Christian Prince, of the Arian heresy, in his persecution of the orthodox party in Africa, ordered the tongues of a certain society of them to be cut out to the roots: but by a surprizing instance of God's good Providence, they

[1] If we may not admit such evidence as this in proof of a matter of fact, I am afraid, we must shake the evidence of all human testimony, and believe nothing but what we see, feel, and know ourselves. Miscel. Tracts p. 167. It. p. 174, &c.
were enabled to speak articulately and distinctly without their tongues; and so continuing to make open profession of the same doctrine, they became not only the preachers, but living witnesses of its truth; and a perpetual rebuke to the Arian faction [1]. This miracle is attested by several contemporary writers, who affirm, that they had seen and heard some of those Confessors speaking distinctly, after they had lost their tongues.

Now it may not improbably be supposed on this occasion, that tho' their tongues were ordered to be cut to the roots, and are said to have been so cut, yet the sentence might not be so strictly executed, as not to leave in some of them, such a share of that organ, as was sufficient, in a tolerable degree, for the use of speech. It is remarkable also, that two of this company are said to have utterly lost the faculty of speaking; who had been deprived perhaps of their entire tongues: for tho' this be ascribed, to the peculiar judgement of God, for a punishment of the immoralities, of which they were afterwards guilty, yet that seems to be a forced and improbable solution of the matter. We are told likewise, that another of these Confessors, who had been dumb from his birth, yet by losing his tongue with the rest, acquired also the use of speech: which is a circumstance so singular and extraordinary, that it carries with it a suspicion of art and contrivance, to enhance the luster of the miracle:


But
But to come still more close to the point. If we should allow after all, that the tongues of these confessors were cut away to the very roots; what will the learned Doctor say, if this boasted miracle, which he so strenuously defends, should be found at last to be no miracle at all? The tongue indeed has generally been considered, as absolutely necessary to the use of speech: so that to hear men talk without it, might easily pass for a miracle, in that credulous age; especially, when it gave so illustrious a confirmation to the orthodox faith, and so signal an overthrow to the Arian Heresy. Yet the opportunities of examining the truth of the case by experiment, have been so rare in the world, that there was always room to doubt, whether there was any thing miraculous in it or not. But we have an instance in the present century, indisputably attested, and published about thirty years ago, which clears up all our doubts, and entirely decides the question. I mean the case of a Girl, born without a tongue, who yet talked as distinctly and easily, as if she had enjoyed the full benefit of that organ: a particular account of which is given, in the Memoirs of the Academy of Sciences at Paris, drawn up by an eminent Physician, who had carefully examined the mouth of the Girl, and all the several parts of it, in order to discover, by what means her speech was performed without the help of a tongue: which he has there explained with great skill and accuracy. In the same account he refers us likewise to another instance, published about eighty years before, by a Surgeon.
Surgeon of Saumur, of a boy, who at the age of eight or nine years, lost his tongue, by a gangrene or ulcer, occasioned by the small pox, yet retained the faculty of speaking, in the same manner as the Girl [1].

Let our Doctor then defend this miracle with all the power of his zeal and learning: let him urge the testimonies of Senators, Chancellors, Bishops, Archbishops and Popes: of persons, who had too much learning and judgement, he says, to be deceived in so important a fact, tho' they lived an hundred years after it; of Æneas also of Gaza, who opened their very mouths, as he tells us, to make his observations with more exactness [2]. Yet the humble testimony of this single Physician, grounded on real experiment, will overturn at once all his pompous list of dignified authorities, and convince every man of judgement, that this pretended miracle, like all the other fictions, which have been imposed upon the world, under that character, owed its whole credit to our ignorance of the powers of nature.

In short; when we reflect on the corrupt and degenerate state of the Church, in the end of the fourth century, allowed by the most diligent inquirers into Antiquity; and that this age was the pattern to all that succeeded it; in which the same corruptions were not onely practised, but agreeably to the nature of all corruption, carried still to a greater excess, and improved from bad to worse, down to the time of the

Reformation; we may safely conclude, without weighing the particular scruples, which may arise upon each single miracle, that they were all, in the gross, of the same class and species, the mere effects of fraud and imposture. For we can hardly dip into any part of Ecclesiastical History, of what age soever, without being shocked by the attestation of several, which from the mere incredibility of them, appear at first sight to be fabulous. This is confessed on all sides, even by the warmest defenders of the Primitive Fathers, and cannot be accounted for in any other way, than by ascribing it to the experience, which those Fathers had, of the blind credulity and superstition of the ages, in which they lived, and which had been trained by them, to consider the impossibility of a thing, as an argument for the belief of it [1]. But in whatever light we contemplate these stories; whether as believed, or as forged by them, or as affirmed only, and not believed; it necessarily destroys their credit in all other miraculous relations whatsoever. Yet it is surprizing to see, with what ease, the Advocates of these miracles overlook and contenm all reflections of this kind, and think it sufficient to tell us, that the Fathers, tho' honest, were apt to be very credulous: for with these disputants, credulity, it seems, how gross soever, casts not the least slur upon their testimony;

[1] Tertullian, disputing against certain Heretics, who denied the reality of Christ's human nature; reasons thus. "The Son of God was crucified: it is no shame to own it, because it is a thing to be ashamed of. The Son of God died: it is wholly credible, because it is absurd. When buried, he rose again to life: it is certain, because it is impossible. De Carne Christi. § 5. which,
which, in all cases, where it does not confute itself by its own extravagance, they maintain to be convincing and decisive, and superior to all suspicion. Whereas the sole inference, which reason would teach us to draw from an attestation of miracles, so conspicuously fabulous, is; that the same witnesses are not to be trusted in any; as being either incapable, from a weakness of judgement, of discerning the truth and probability of things; or determined by craft and fraud, to defend every thing that was usefull to them. In a word; in all inquiries of this nature, we may take it for a certain rule; that those, who are conscious of the power of working true miracles, can never be tempted either to invent, or to propagate any, which are false; because the detection of any one, would taint the credit of all the rest, and defeat the end proposed by them. But Impostors are naturally drawn, by a long course of success, into a security, which puts them off their guard, and tempts them gradually, out of mere wantonness, and contempt of those, whom they had so frequently deluded, to stretch their frauds beyond the bounds of probability, till by repeated acts of this kind, they tire the patience of the most credulous, and expose their tricks to the scorn even of the populace.

I have now thrown together all, which I had collected for the support of my argument, or as much at least, as I thought sufficient to illustrate the real state of the primitive miracles: and if we cast up the sum of all that boasted evidence, which the unanimity of the Fathers, the tradition of
An Inquiry into

of the Catholic Church, and the faith of history have produced at last on the other side, towards the confirmation of the said miracles, we shall find the whole, to amount in reality to no proof at all. For to run over them all again in short.

The gift of raising the dead, is affirmed only by the single authority of Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons; and was either not known, or not believed at least, in the very same age, by another Bishop, full as venerable, Theophilus of Antioch. The gift of tongues, which rests likewise on the single testimony of the same Irenæus; is confuted even by himself, who complains of his own want of it, in the very work of propagating the Gospel. The gift of expounding the Scriptures, which is reckoned commonly with the rest, and claimed in particular by Justin Martyr, is allowed, to have had no subsistence at all, in any age, or any writer of the primitive Church. The gift of casting out Devils, the most celebrated of them all, is reduced to nothing, by the accounts even of the Ancients themselves, which plainly testify, that it had no effect in many cases, and could not work a perfect cure in any. And as to other diseases, where oil especially was applied, they might probably enough be cured without a miracle; or by the same arts, with which the same cures were performed among the Heathens: which, tho' the undoubted effects of fraud, were yet managed so dexterously, as to be constantly ascribed by the Christians to the power of Demons. Lastly, the gift of Prophetic visions and trances, was of a kind, which could not easily be proved to the satisfaction of any;
was of no service therefore to the propagation of the Gospel, or the conviction of unbelievers; being wholly exercised among the Christians themselves; and owing it's chief credit to Heretics and Enthusiasts; and always suspected by the sober and judicious: so that, after flourishing for a while through a visionary generation or two, it presently after fell into utter contempt.

This then being the real state of the miracles of the primitive Church, I freely commit them once more to the Chapman, the Berriman, and the Stebbings; to defend and enjoy them, as much as they please; happy without doubt, in this sceptical age, to find themselves blessed with that heroic faith, which can remove mountains, and beat down every obstacle, which sense, or reason, or fact can possibly oppose to it. Dr. Chapman has declared beforehand, *that whenever my larger work should appear, the primitive Fathers would find greater friends to their memory, and ablest advocates to their cause, than I would wish to exist.*

That time is now come; and those ablest Advocates expected: but let them appear when they will, I am so far from grudging their help to the Fathers, that I with them the ablest, which Popery itself can afford: for Protestantism, I am sure, can supply none, whom they would chuse to retain in their cause; none, who can defend them, without contradicting their own profession, and disgracing their own character; or produce anything, but what deserves to be laughed at, rather than answered. I must however except one, who acts indeed with

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a better grace and more constancy: for when I had treated him by mistake, as a Protestant, he flatly disowns the name, and calls himself a Catholic Christian [1]; the same title, which a Popish writer had before assumed, in his remarks on my Letter from Rome; and what all these Advocates, who hang, as it were, between the two religions, affect to assume, that they may evade for a while the more invidious name of Papist.

V. All that remains, towards the final confirmation of my argument, is, to refute, as I promised, some of the most plausible objections, which have been made to it by my Antagonists; and which by humouring the prejudices and prepossessions of many pious Christians, seem the most likely, to make an impression to it's disadvantage.

§ 1. In the first place then; It is objected, that by the character, which I have given of the ancient Fathers, the authority of the books of the New Testament, which were transmitted to us through their hands, will be rendered precarious and uncertain.

To which I answer; that the objection is trifling and groundless, and that the authority of those books does not depend upon the faith of the Fathers, or of any particular set of men, but on the general credit and reception which they found, not only in all the Churches, but with all the

private Christians of those ages, who were able to purchase copies of them: among whom, tho' it might perhaps be the desire of a few to corrupt, yet it was the common interest of all, to preserve, and of none, to destroy them. And we find accordingly, that they were guarded by all with the strictest care, so as to be concealed from the knowledge and search of their heathen adversaries, who alone were desirous to extirpate them. After such a publication therefore, and wide dispersion of them from their very origin, it is hardly possible, that they should either be corrupted, or suppressed, or counterfeited by a few, of what character or abilities soever; or that, according to the natural course of things, they should not be handed down from age to age, in the same manner, with the works of all the other ancient writers of Greece and Rome, which, tho' transmitted through the hands of many profligate and faithless generations of men, yet have suffered no diminution of their credit on that account: for tho' in every age there were several perhaps, who, from crafty and selfish motives, might be disposed to deprave, or even to suppress some particular books, yet their malice could reach only to a few copies, and would be restrained therefore from the attempt, or corrected at least after the attempt, by the greater number of the same books, which were out of their reach, and remained still incorrupt. But besides all this, there were some circumstances peculiar to the books of the New Testament, which insured the preservation of them more effectually, than of any other
other ancient books whatsoever; the divinity of their character; and the religious regard, which was paid to them by all the sects and parties of Christians; and above all, the mutual jealousies of those very parties, which were perpetually watching over each other, left any of them should corrupt the sources of that pure doctrine, which they all professed to teach and to deduce from the same books. Let the craft therefore of the ancient Fathers be as great, as we can suppose it to be; let it be capable of adding some of their own forgeries for a while to the Canon of Scripture; yet it was not in the power of any craft, to impose spurious pieces, in the room of those genuine ones, which were actually deposited in all Churches, and preserved with the utmost reverence, in the hands of so many private Christians.

But I may go a step farther, and venture to declare; that if we should allow the objection to be true, it cannot in any manner hurt my argument: for if it be natural and necessary, that the craft and credulity of witnesses should always detract from the credit of their testimony; who can help it? or on what is the consequence to be charged, but on that nature and constitution of things, from which it flows? or if the authority of any books be really weakened, by the character which I have given of the Fathers, will it follow from thence, that the character must necessarily be false, and that the Fathers were neither crafty nor credulous? that surely can never be pretended; because the craft and credulity which are charged upon them must be determined by another sort of evidence; not
not by consequences, but by facts; and if the charge be confirmed by these, it must be admitted as true, how far soever the consequences may reach.

§ 2. It has been alleged, "that all suspicion of fraud in the case of the primitive miracles seems to be precluded, by that public appeal and challenge, which the Christian Apologists make to their enemies the Heathens, to come and see with their own eyes the reality of the facts which they attest." But this objection, tho' it may seem plausible indeed to a common reader, yet to all, who are acquainted with the condition of the Christians in those days, and the difficulty of making their Apologies known to the world, will be found to have no real weight in it. The Gospel indeed soon began to make a considerable progress among the vulgar, and to gain some few also of a more distinguished rank, yet continued to be held in such contempt by the generality of the better sort, through the three first centuries, that they scarce ever thought it worth while to make any inquiry about it, or to examine the merit of its pretensions. The principal writers of Rome, who make any mention of the Christians, about the Time of Trojan, plainly shew, that they knew nothing more of them, or their religion, than what they had picked up, as it were, by chance, from the gross misrepresentation of common fame, and speak of them accordingly, as a set of despicable, stubborn, and even wicked Enthusiasts.

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Suetonius
Suetonius calls them, a race of men of a new and mischievous superstition [1]. And Tacitus, describing the horrible tortures, which they suffered under Nero, for the pretended crime of burning the City of Rome, says; "that they were detected for their flagitious practices; possessed with an abominable superstition; and condemned, not so much for their supposed crime of setting fire to the City, as for the hatred of all mankind; and tho' they deserved the most exemplary punishments, yet it raised some pity towards them, to see them so miserably destroyed, not on the account of the public utility, but to satiate the cruelty of a single man [2]."

Pliny also, when he was the Governor of a Province, in which the Christians were very numerous, and under an actual persecution in the reign of Trajan, yet in his celebrated letter to that Emperor concerning them, declares that he had never been present at any of their examinations, and did not so much as know, for what they were punished, or how far they deserved punishment; that by all the inquiries, which he had since made, he could not discover any practices among them, but what were harmless and innocent. And nothing in short, but a


"wretched
wretched and extravagant superstition, which had spread itself very wide, among persons of both sexes, of every age and condition; which might however be subdued by gentler methods; by moderating the rigor of the persecution, and pardoning the penitent; by which lenity, great numbers of them had already been recalled to their ancient worship" [1].

This is the whole account, which we have of the Primitive Christians, from the best Heathen writers, to the time of Antoninus Pius: in whose reign, and that of his Successor, M. Aurelius, the ancient Apologies, of Justin Martyr, Melito and Athenagoras, were addressed to the Emperor and Senate of Rome: notwithstanding which, their condition, generally speaking, continued much the same, through the following ages, till they were established at last by the civil power: during all which time, they were constantly insulted and calumniated by their Heathen Adversaries, as a stupid, credulous, impious set; the scum of mankind, and the prey of crafty Impostors: calumnies, of which all the ancient Apologists


N. B. Pliny says in this letter, that many of both sexes, and of all ages, ranks or orders of men, had embraced Christianity. Tertullian also gives the same account, about an hundred years later. [Apologet. l. ad Scapul. ver. fin.] but it must be observed, that their accounts were given from the Provinces of Bithynia and Africa, where the dignity even of the most eminent was but very little considered or respected in the great Republic of Rome.
complain, and take great pains to confute. Tertullian ex-
postulates very warmly with the Heathen Magistrates, "that
"they would not give themselves the trouble, to make the
"least inquiry into their manners and doctrines; but con-
demned them for the mere name, without examination
"or trial; treating a Christian of course, as guilty of every
"crime; as an enemy of the Gods, Emperors, laws, customs,
"and even of nature itself—and what, says he, can be more
"unjust than to hate, what you know nothing of, even
"tho’ it deserved to be hated?" [2] Arnobius and Laelian
tius make the same complaint near an hundred years later,
in the beginning of the fourth century, that they were derided
every where by the Gentiles, as a senseless, stupid race of block-
heads and brutes, to whose impieties, all the calamities, which
afflicted the several countries, where they lived, were constandy
imputed [3].

[2] Christianum hominem, omnium Scelerum reum, Deorum, Imperatorum,
legum, morum, nature totius inimicum exitias &c. Apol. §. 1, 2—
p. 8.

[3] Nos hebetes, stolidi, obtusi pronuntiamur & bruti fed pestilentias, in-
quint, & fiсcitates, bella, frugum inopiam— reque alias noxias— Dii nobis
important injuriis vestris, atque offensionibus exasperati—Arnob. l. 1. p. 2, 7.
Cur igitur pro stultis, vanis ineptis habemur? Laeb. l. 4. c. 13. Illud quoque
ortum est vulgare proverbium; pluvia deficiit, fit causa Christiani. Aug. Civ.
D. l. 2. 3.
Si Tiberis ascendet ad mœnia; si Nīlus non ascendit in arva; si cœlum stetit;
terra movit; si fames; si lues; atim, Christianos ad Leonem. Tertull. Apol. 40.
In these circumstances, it cannot be imagined, that men of figure and fortunes would pay any attention to the Apologies or writings of a sect, so utterly despised: especially, when on the one hand, there was no elegance of style or composition, to invite them to read; and on the other, all the discouragements, which the Government could give, to deter them from reading. Much less can we believe, that the Emperor and Senate of Rome, should take any notice of those Apologies, or even know indeed, that any such were addressed to them. For should the like case happen in our own days, that any Methodist, Moravian, or French Prophet, should publish an apology for his brethren, addressed to the King and the Parliament; is it not wholly improbable, that the Government would pay any regard to it, or take it at all into their consideration? How can it then be supposed, that the Emperor and Senate of Rome, who had a worse opinion of the ancient Christians, than we of our modern Fanatics, and instead of tolerating, were using all methods to destroy them, would give themselves the trouble to read, or to consider the merit of their writings?

We must add to all this, the great difficulty of publishing books, or of making them known to the world in those ages. The case, which we now find in providing and dispersing, what number of copies we please, by the opportunity of the press, makes us apt to imagine, without considering the matter, that the publication of books was the same easy affair in all former times, as in the present.
sent. But the case was quite different. For when there were no books in the world, but what were written out by hand, with great labor and expense, the method of publishing them was necessarily very slow and the price very dear; so that the rich only and curious would be disposed or able to purchase them, and to such also, it was often difficult to procure them, or to know even where they were to be bought.

In the Epistle of the Church of Smyrna, mentioned above, concerning the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, there is a passage or two, which will help to confirm, what I am now asserting. For towards the end of it, the Philadelphians, to whom it is addressed, are desired, as soon as they have informed themselves of the contents, to send it forward to all the other brethren, who lived more remote, or beyond Philadelphia, that they also might read it and glorify God. The note likewise, which is annexed to the end of the Epistle, declares, "that the copy of this most valued piece, which had been transcribed from the book of Irenæus, had lain buried and unknown at Corinth for several ages, almost destroyed by time, and in danger of being lost to the world, till it was discovered by a revelation from Polycarp himself, made to one Pionius," from whose transcript, all the copies of it now extant are derived. [1] These passages, I say, plainly intimate, how difficult it must have been to the

[1] Μαθήματα ὑπ' ὑμᾶς, ὃ τοῖς ἱκετεύοντι ἰδίῳ τῆς ἱστορίας διαπιστεύειν, ἵνα ὁ ἱκέτης δοξάζη τὸν κύριον. § xx. it. xxiii, xxiv.

Christians
Christians of those days to provide such books as were wanted even for their own use, and much more to disperse such a number of them, as was sufficient for the information of the public.

Since this then was the condition of publishing books in those primitive ages, in which the Christians were neither able to bear the expense of copying, nor the Heathens disposed to buy them, there is great reason to believe, that their Apologies, how gravely soever addressed to Emperors and Senators, lay concealed and unknown to the public for many years, in a few private hands, and among the faithful only; especially, when the publication of them was not only difficult and expensive, but so criminal also, as to expose them often to danger, and even to capital punishment; and when the books themselves, as oft as they were found by the magistrates, instead of being read, were generally ordered to be burnt. [1]

§. 3. It is urged against me, "that no suspicion of craft can reasonably be entertained against persons of so exalted a piety, who exposed themselves to perdition and even


Nam nostra quidem scripta cur ignibus meruerunt dari? cur immuniter conventicula dirui? Arnol. l. 4. vers. fin.

"to
to Martyrdom, in confirmation of what they taught." But this likewise will appear to have as little solidity in it as the former. For all, who, are conversant with history know, that nothing gives so invincible a prejudice, and so strong a bias to the mind of man, as religious zeal, in favor of every thing, that is thought useful to the object, which excites it. And the several facts, which I have already stated, will enable us to judge, in what manner the extraordinary zeal of those ancients may be presumed to have operated in the case now in question. I shall say nothing more therefore on that head: but since some of those Fathers, to whose testimony I have chiefly appealed, as Papias, Justin, Irenaeus, Cyprian, &c. were not only persons of the greatest piety and zeal, but said to have been Martyrs also for the faith of Christ; it may be proper to add a reflection or two on the particular case of Martyrdom; in order to shew, that this venerable name made no real difference in the personal characters of men, nor ought to give any additional weight to the authority of a Christian witness.

There were various motives of different kinds, as Mr. Dodwell has shewn, which would naturally induce the primitive Christians, not only to indulge, but even to wish and aspire to Martyrdom. He observes, "that among the ancient Jews, the Galileans were remarkable for the obstinacy of their temper and a contempt of death: whose example, he imagines, might have some influence on those first Christians, who drew their origin from that country, and
"and were constantly called Galileans, and charged with "the same spirit of obstinacy by their adversaries [1]." A character, which seems to be particularly verified in the Chris-
tians of Palestine, concerning whom, Tiberianus, the Go-
vernor of Syria, sends the following account to the Empe-
ror Trajan.

"I am quite tired with punishing and destroying the "Galileans, or those of the sect called Christians, accord-
ing to your orders. Yet they never cease to profess volun-
tarily, what they are, and to offer themselves to death. "Wherefore I have labored by exhortations and threats, to "discourage them from daring to confess to me, that they are "of that sect. Yet in spite of all persecution, they con-
tinue still to do it. Be pleased therefore to let me know, "what your Highness thinks proper to be done with "them [2]."

Glory also, or reputation was another great spur to Mar-
tyrdom: for by the principles of those ages, nothing was eftewned more glorious, than the crown of Martyrdom, as it was called. There was an anniversenary festival instituted to the honor of each Martyr: in which their memories were celebrated by panegyrical orations, and a veneration, next to divine, paid to their relics. In their prisons, they were visited by the Christians of all ranks; proud to minister to

[1] Poterat & Judaeorum, praeferint Galileorum obstinata illa inoles in pri-
them in the very lowest offices, and to kill their chains: and if they happened to escape with life from their tortures, as they frequently did, their authority was ever after most highly respected; in the decision of all controversies; in absolving men from the ordinary discipline of the Church; in granting pardon to lapidé Christians; and restoring them to communion, on what terms they thought fit [1].

But the principal incentive to Martyrdom, was the assurance, not onely of an immortality of glory, and happiness in another world, in common with all other pious Christians,

[1] Quis in carcerem ad osculanda vincula Martyris reptare patientur? [Tertull. ad Uxor, 2. 4.] Quam pacem quidam in Ecclesia non habentes, a Martyribus in carcer exorare solent. [Id. ad Martyr. 2.] [Vid. Dodw. Differt. Cyprian. xi. 9, 10.]

Sacrificia pro eis semper, ut meminiitis, offerimus, quotes Martyrum passiones & dies anniveraria commemoratione celebramus. [Cypr. Ep. 34. it. 37.]

Mandant aliquid Martyres fieri? si iusta, si licita, si non contra ipsum Dominum, a Dei Sacerdote facienda sunt. [Cypr. de Lapsis. p. 174.] Ut qui libellum a Martyribus acceperunt, & auxilio eorum adjuvari apud Dominum in delictis suis possunt——cum pace a Martyribus promissa ad Dominum remittantur. [Id. Ep. 13. & 12.]

N. B. Eusebius speaking of the persecution under M. Aurelius and L. Verus, says, "that thofe, who were then racked and tortured for the confession of "their faith, were so humble, that they would not assume the title of Martyr, nor suffer it to be given to them, declaring none to be worthy of that "name, but thofe who were made perfect by suffering death; and praying, "that they also might arrive at that perfection." [Hist. Ecclef. 5. 2.] But we find a contrary practice in Cyprian's time, who freely gives the title of Martyr to all, who had endured tortures for the faith of Christ. Which was so far from being rejected by them, that many, as he complains, were so puffed up with pride on that account, as to give great disturbance to the peace and discipline of the Church. Vid. Epift. x, xi, xii, xiii, &c.

but
but of extraordinary and distinguished rewards, and a degree of happiness, proportionable to the degree of their sufferings. For while the souls of ordinary Christians were to wait their doom in some intermediate state; or pass to their final bliss through a purgation by fire; it was a general belief, that the Martyrs were admitted to the immediate fruition of Paradise, and that the fire of Martyrdom purged all their sins away at once [1]. And the opinion likewise, which commonly prevailed in these days, that this world was near to its end, made them the more eager still to snatch that crown, which would intitle them to such high privileges; give them a power with God, so as to procure benefits for others, and make

Nemo peregrinatus a corpore, statim immoratur penes Dominum, nisi ex Martyrii prærogativa; paradiso scilicet, non inferis diversurus. Tertull. de Refurr. carn. 43.
Quis non—pati exspectat? ut Dei totam gratiam redimat; ut omnem veniam ab eo compenfatione sanguinis sui expeditat? omnia enim huic opere deliciâ donantur. Id. Apolog. ad fin.

N. B. Cyprian, speaking of the different state of the lapsed Christians, tho' restored afterwards to the Church by penance, and of the Martyrs, who had nobly suffered death or torments for the faith of Christ, says; it is one thing, to lie at mercy; another, to arrive at glory: one thing, to be thrown into prison, and not to be discharged, till you have paid the uttermost farthing; another, to receive the immediate reward of your faith and virtue: one thing, to be cleansed from your sins by a long course of torments, and a purgation by fire; another, to have all your sins wiped off at once by martyrdom: in a word, one thing, to hang in suspense about your doom, in the day of judgement; another, to be crowned directly by the Lord. Ep. 51. p. 71. ad fin.
them Assistors and Judges with Christ himself at the last day [1].

There was another notion, diligently inculcated and generally believed at the same time, which was sufficient of itself to efface all the terrors of Martyrdom, *viz.* that under all that dreadful apparatus of racks and fires, and the seeming atrocity of their tortures, the Martyrs were miraculously freed from all sense of pain, nay felt nothing but transports of joy, from the cruelty of their tormentors. All which is expressly affirmed by many of the ecclesiastical writers. *The visible assistance of heaven,* says Dr. Chapman, *relieving the pains of some, extinguishing them in others, and converting them into pleasure and rapture in many——which facts, he declares, to be so well known and so well attested, so plain and so indubitable, that there was no occasion for him to take the trouble of proving them* [2]. Socrates, the Historian, has furnished an instance of them in the case of one Theodore; and the old Martyrologies, as they are published by the Romanists, and especially the Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas, to which the Doctor refers us for the indubitable proof of true miracles, will supply us with many more [3]. This

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[3] As appears beyond all dispute from the acts of Perpetua and Felicitas; &c.

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*N. B.*
Theodorus was a young Christian, of eminent zeal and pieté, who is said to have suffered the most cruel tortures by

N. B. It is strange, that a Protestant Divine should lay so much stress on these Acts, as to make them the unquestionable vouchers of true miracles: which, while they excite our compassion for the sufferings, and our admiration of the courage of these two female Martyrs, yet shock and disgust us at the same time, to see all this virtue and fortitude derived, not from the calm and sober principles of the Gospel, but from the impetuosity of a wild and extravagant enthusiasm. Among many other instances of this, written by Perpetua herself, in her prison, she relates what follows. "That, as she was praying with the rest of her fellow-martyrs, she happened to mention, all of a sudden, and to her own surprize, the name of Dinarates, which had not come into her mind of a long time, till that very moment. It was the name of her brother, who died of a Cancer in his face, when he was but seven years old. This renewed her grief for his unhappy fate; and convinced her, that she ought to pray for him, as being now held worthy to intercede for others: whereupon she began to put up her prayers and sighs for him to the Lord, and in that same night received this vision. She saw Dinarates coming out of a dark place, in which there were many others with him, greatly tormented by heat and thirst; with a forlorn and pale countenance, and the same wound in his face, which he had when he died. There was a pool of water also in the place, but with a brink deeper than the Statue of the boy, who stretched himself out, as desirous to drink, but was not able to reach the water. This grieved Perpetua, who, as soon as she was awake, knew by this vision, that her brother was in an uneasy state: but being assured, that she could relieve him by her prayers, she continued to intercede day and night, with groans and tears, that his punishment might be remitted for her sake. Upon which, she shortly after received another vision, when the place, which before was dark, appeared bright and shining; and Dinarates was now quite clean, well dressed and refreshed; and instead of the wound, with a Scar onely in his face: and the brink of the pool was reduced to the height onely of his navel, whence he instantly drew water: on the brink also stood a vial full of water, out of which he began to drink, yet the water in it never failed: so that the boy, having now
the command of the Emperor Julian; but after he was left for dead by his tormentors, was providentially preserved and restored.

"now satisfied his thirst, went away cheerfully to play, as children usually do, by which Perpetua understood, that her brother was removed from the place of his punishment."

The case of this infant Dinocrates was alledged by an ancient writer, in a controversy with St. Austin, as a proof, that baptism was not absolutely necessary to an admittance into paradise: to which St. Austin answers, "that tho' the boy was but seven years old, he might probably be baptized at that age, and after baptism be guilty of lying or denying Christ; or in the time of persecution might be drawn perhaps by his impious Father, who was an Heathen, into some act of Idolatry, for which he was doomed to a place of torments; till his pardon was obtained by the prayers of his Sister, then going to die for "Christ." [de Origin. anim. lib. 1. c. x. and l. 3. c. 9.] From these and several other visions of the same kind, which are related in the same Acts, the Romanists draw what they take to be a demonstrative and experimental proof of every thing, which they teach with regard to the other world: of an Hell, a Purgatory, a Limbus, or separate place of Infants, and another Limbus of the Ancient Fathers, with a Paradise for the immediate reception of Martyrs: and that the dead may be relieved also from their pains by the prayers of the living. [Vid. Ruinart. Acta Martyr. de SS. Perpet. & Felic. § vii and viii, & notas Holstenii & Poffini.]

Such are the miracles, which Dr. Chapman affirms to be indubitably proved by the Acts of Perpetua and Felicita; and such the doctrines, which are deduced from them: but tho' neither the enthusiasm nor the Popery, with which they abound, could check his Protestant zeal from ascribing a divine authority to them, there is another circumstance still belonging to them, sufficient, one would think, to have destroyed their whole credit with an Advocate of primitive and orthodox Antiquity: for the original Collector and publisher of them appears to have been one of those Heretics and disciples of Montanus, who gave so much disturbance to the Church in the early ages. This is declared to be most certain by the learned Valeius, tho' a Papist; and notwithstanding the pains, which Mr. Rxinart, the Editor of the Martyrologies, takes to confute that imputation, the truth of it seems to be unquestionable. Valeius indeed, like a good
restored to life. "Rufinus happening to meet with him
many years after, took occasion to ask him, whether he
had been sensible of any very sharp pains under the
agony of his torture; to which he answered; that he
had felt but very little, and that a certain young person
flood by him all the time, wiping away the sweat, which
flowed from him, strengthening his mind, and filling

good Catholic, desires, that this circumstance may not detract, either from the
authority of those Acts, or the veneration due to those holy Martyrs, and charges it
as a piece of craft on the Montanists, that they made use of these visions, to
support the credit of their own dreams. But when we reflect on the enthusiastic
spirit of Perpetua, and with what a confidence she relates her wonderful visions and intercourse with the Lord; and when we find her character and revelations mentioned with praise by Tertullian, then a Montanist, it is highly probable, that Perpetua also herself was tainted with the same Heresy; and that St.
Aurin consequentely, as an eminent Critic has observed, was drawn by some false tradition concerning these Martyrs, to honor them as true Saints, when in reality, they were Heretics. [Vid. Itig. Differt. de Hæresiarch. Sect. 2. c.
13. § 28.]

From the same Acts we see likewise, as I have said, how these primitive Martyrs went out to meet their cruel deaths with a firm persuasion, that they should feel no pain from them. Felicitas was eight months gone with child, when their execution drew near, and being afraid, as her companions also were, that, on the account of her pregnancy, she should be left by them alone in the way to their common hope; they all put up their joint prayers to heaven, three days before they suffered, upon which she fell presently into labor, and was delivered of a female child: but in the time of delivery, when she expressed a sharp sense of the pains which she felt; one of the Servants of the prison said to her; if you lament so much now; what will you do, when you are thrown to the beasts, which you despised, when you refused to sacrifice? to which she answered; I now feel, what I suffer; but then, another will be in me, who will feel for me, because I am to suffer for him. Vid. Act. ibid. §
xv.

" him
him with delight rather than torment, during his continuance on the rack [1]."

Lastly, we must add to these several motives, the scandal of flying from persecution, and the infamy, which attended the lapsed Christians; so as to make life hardly supportable to those, who through fear of the rack and a cruel death, had been tempted to deny their faith, or guilty of any compliance with the idolatry of their persecutors. All which topics, when displayed with art and eloquence by their ablest Teachers, were sufficient to inflame the multitude to what pitch of zeal they pleased, so as to make them even provoke, and offer themselves forwardly to the most dreadful torments.

"Who is there," says Cyprian, "who would not strive with all his might, to arrive at so great a glory; to be a friend of God; enter into present joy with Christ; and after earthly torments receive heavenly rewards? If it be glorious to worldly soldiers, after conquering an enemy, to return triumphant into their country, how much greater glory is it, after having vanquished the Devil, to return triumphant into paradise, whence Adam was expelled, and there to erect trophies over that very enemy, who expelled him? to accompany God, when he comes to take vengeance on his enemies; to be placed at his side, when he sits in judgement; to be made coheirs with Christ; equal with Angels; and together with the Apostles, Prophets, and Patriarchs, to rejoice in the possession of an heav-

venly Kingdom? These things you are to bear in your minds
and memories. What persecution can get the better of
such meditations? what torments be superior to them [1]?"

These principles and motives, I say, had such force, as
sometimes to animate even bad men, to induce a Martyr-
dom. for the Heretics also had their Martyrs, as all history
informs us, as well as the Orthodox; who yet in their com-
mon sufferings and death, continued to testify their mutual
aversion, and to refuse all communion with each other [2]. But
by bad men, who became Martyrs, I do not mean such only,
as were called Heretics, for that name was often given even
to the best; but the proud, the contentious, the drunken, and
the lewd, among the orthodox Martyrs themselves: of all
which kinds, there were many, as St. Cyprian complains,
who, after they had nobly sustained the trial of Martyrdom,
and escaped with life from the torments of their persecutors,
yet by a petulant, factious, and profligate behaviour, gave
great scandal and disturbance to the discipline of the Church.

[1] Exhortat. ad Martyr. c. 12. This may serve as a specimen of that true
and noble and genuine eloquence of Cyprian, which, as Dr. Marshall, the Tran-
slator of his works says, resembles an impetuous torrent, which carries away with
it every thing it meets; since he was capable of raising what passions he pleased,
and of persuading us, to do whatever he had a mind to. Pref. to his Transl. p. 17.

[2] Καὶ ἰσπευδός εἰς τὸ τῆς καλῆς ἀληθείας πόσεις μακάμερον καθις ἀπὸ
τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦχαι μὲν των ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν φημῶν αἱρήσεως λεγόμενον μαρ-
τύρων, διαφέροντα τὸ πρὸς αὐτὸς, ὡς καὶ κανανγίας αὐτῶν τιλεύθη. Eus. Hist. l. 5. c. 16. it. c. 18.
This is expressly declared by Cyprian in several of his letters: in one of which, addressed to the whole body of the Confessors, after he has signified his joy, "that the greatest part of them were made the better by the honor of their confession, and preserved their glory, by a quiet and inoffensive carriage, yet he had been informed, he says, of others, who infected their society, and disgraced the laudable name of Confessor by their evil conversation: some of them being drunken and lascivious, some puffed up and swollen with pride: while others, as he had heard with the utmost grief, defiled their bodies, the temples of God, sanctified by their confession, with the promiscuous and infamous use of lewd women [1]." In one of his letters also to the Clergy, he says, I am grieved, when I hear how some of them run about, wickedly and insolently, spending their time in trifles, or in sowing discord; and defiling the members of Christ, and which have already confessed Christ, by the unlawful use of women [2]."

And in another treatise, where he is touching the same subject, "let no man wonder, says he, that some of the Confessors commit such horrible and grievous sins; for confession does not secure them from the snares and temptations of the Devil——otherwise we should never after see any.


"frauds,
frauds, and whoredoms and adulteries in Confessors, which 
I now groan and grieve to see in some of them [1]."


N. B. The name of Martyr was given, as I have said above, to all those, 
who had suffered tortures for the public profession of their faith before the 
Magistrates. And the title of Confessor to those, who, after making the 
same profession, had been committed only to prison, in order to be referred 
to the same tortures, or punished with death. Whence Tertullian calls 
hem, Murtys deflagri1, or Martyrs elect. [ad Martyr. 1. vid. Cypr. Ep. 
8. & Not. Rigalt. 8.]

But with regard to this case of Martyrdom, I cannot forbear observing a 
strange contradiction both of principle and practice in these primitive ages, be-
tween the times of Polycarp and Tertullian. The Martyrdom of Polycarp, in 
the narrative of it, written by the Church of Smyrna, is twice called an Evangelical 
Martyrdom, or performed according to the rules of the Gospel and in 
imitation of Christ: [§ 1, 19.] who did not offer himself forwardly to his 
enemies, but withdrew himself from them, and waited till he was betrayed 
into their hands: and commanded his Apostles also, when they were persecuted 
in one City, to flee into another. [Matt. x. 29.] When the persecution there-
fore grew hot in Smyrna, Polycarp withdrew himself from that City into the 
neighbouring Villages; shifting his quarters still from Village to Village, to 
avoid his pursuers, till he was betrayed by one of his own domestics; [§ 9.] 
and so fulfilled both the example and precept of our Lord. And upon the 
same authority also Clemens of Alexandria declares it to be a sin, and a kind of 
self-murder; not to flee on such an occasion from the malice of their per-
secutors. [Stro. l. 4. c. x.]

Tertullian, on the contrary, about half a century after, wrote a book against 
all flight in persecution, in which he labors to prove, "that our Saviour's pre-
cept was temporary, and peculiar to the circumstances of those times, and 
addressed wholly to the Apostles; who yet afterwards, when those circum-
stances were changed, both practised and prescribed a different conduct. 
That it was safe in private Christians to fly, and much more in Bishops and 
Patriarchs.—That a good Shepherd will lay down his life for his flock, but a bad 
one fly at the sight of the wolf, and leave his sheep to be torn in pieces—

D d 2
It is not my design, by what is said here on the subject of Martyrdom, to detract in any manner from the real merit and just praise of those primitive Martyrs, who with an invincible

"[p. 97, 696.]" He inveighs also against another practice, which seems to have been common among the Christians of those days, of ransoming themselves from their persecutors by a sum of money; and declares it to be "an affront to God to redeem thoe by money, whom Christ had redeemed with his blood: and to make secret bargains with an informer or soldier, or knavish President, for the life of a Christian (whom Christ had purchased and set free in the face of the world) as if it were for a thief. [p. 697, 698.] He exhorts them therefore to commit themselves entirely to God: who could either throw them into the midst of their enemies, while they were flying, or cover them from danger even in the midst of the people: and he shews by an eminent example, that neither flight nor money was effectual to procure their safety. Rutilius says he, a most holy Martyr, after he had oft escaped by flying from place to place, and redeemed himself, as he imagined, from all danger by his money, yet in all this security, was unexpectedly apprehended, carried before the President, and put to a severe torture, for the correction, I believe, of his flight: and being committed at last to the flames, he then ascribed the Martyrdom, which he had been avoiding, to the mercy of God: and what else did the Lord intend to teach us by this example, but that we ought not to fly from perfection? [p. 93.]

There were the principles, which generally prevailed in the Church from the time of Tertullian: to that when two of the most eminent Bishops, who succeeded him, St. Cyprian of Carthage, and St. Dionysius of Alexandria, found it expedient in a time of persecution, to preserve their lives by retiring from their several Sees, they had no other excuse to recur to, but the plea of a divine revelation, and the express command of God for it: the precept and example of our Saviour; the practice of his Apostles; and the Evangelical Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, being no longer of any force, against the Enthusiastic zeal, and visionary temper of that age. Which zeal however, because it happened to be ridiculed by an infidel writer, is strenuously defended by Dr. Chapman, in the very words and reasoning of Tertullian. See Miscell. Tracts, p. 157.
constancy, sustained the cause of Christ, at the expense of their lives. It is reasonable to believe, that, generally speaking, they were the best sort of Christians, distinguished by their exemplary zeal and piety; and the chief ornaments of the Church in their several ages: yet it is certain, that they were subject still to the same passions, prejudices, and errors, which were common to all the other pious Christians of the same age. My sole view therefore is, to expose the vanity of those extravagant honors, and that idolatrous worship, which are paid to them indiscriminately by the Church of Rome; and to shew especially, that the circumstance of their Martyrdom, while it gives the strongest proof of the sincerity of their faith and trust in the promises of the Gospel, adds nothing to the character of their knowledge or their sagacity; nor consequently, any weight to their testimony, in preference to that of any other just and devout Christian whatsoever [1].

§ 4.

[1] Savonarola, a most pious and learned Monk of the fifteenth century, preached with great force and eloquence in Italy, against the corruptions of the Court of Rome, and the flagitious life and practices of Pope Alexander the sixth, who not being able to silence him, condemned him to be hanged: of whom Dr. J. R. Taylor tells the following story.

"Two Franciscan Friars, says he, offered themselves to the fire, to prove Savonarola to be an Heretic. But a certain Jacobin offered himself to the fire, to prove, that Savonarola had true revelations, and was no Heretic. In the mean time, Savonarola preached, but made no such confident offer, nor durst he venture at that new kind of fire ordeal, and put the case, that all four had passed through the fire, and died in the flames: what would that have proved? Had he been a Heretic, or no Heretic, the more or the less..."
§. 4. It has been frequently objected by my Antagonists, that to reject the unanimous testimony of the Fathers, in their reports of the primitive miracles, will destroy the faith and credit of all history.

This was the constant cant of all the zealots, even of the Heathen world, whenever any of their established superstitions were attacked by men of sense. "If these things, they cried, approved by the wisdom of our ancestors, and confirmed by the consent of ages, can be shewn at last to be false, we must burn all our annals, and believe nothing at all." And the same outcry, as Eusebius tells us, was made by them also against the Christians, when the Gospel

"left, for the confidence of these zealous Idiots? If we mark it, a great many arguments, on which many Sects rely, are no better probation than this.


There is another story likewise, somewhat applicable to the present purpose, which I have elsewhere made use of, as it is told by Sir Tho. Roe; "that the house and Church of the Jesuits in India happening to be burnt, the Crucifix was found untouched, which was given out as a miracle. Upon this, the King sent for the Jesuit, and having examined him about the fact, made this proposal to him, that if he would cast the Crucifix into the fire before his face, and it did not burn, he would turn Christian. The Jesuit would not venture the credit of his religion on so hazardous an experiment, yet offered to cast himself into the fire as a proof of his own faith, which the King would not allow." For he had sense enough to know the difference, between the effect of a miracle and a martyrdom; that the last could prove nothing but the Jesuit's sincerity, in what he professed to believe; whereas the first would yield the strongest confirmation to the truth also of what he taught. [See Lett. from Rome, Prefat. Dic. p. 100.]

[1] Negemus omnia; comburamus annales; sicut hæc esse dicamus, &c. Cic. de Divin. l. i. 17.
first began to spread itself among them: "that to reject a belief and worship universally established by Kings, Legislators, and Philosophers of all nations, whether Greeks, or Barbarians, was an impious apostacy from the rites of their ancestors, and a contradiction to the sense and judgement of mankind."

The Christians on the other hand constantly derided this plea, and declared, "that to follow the inventions of their ancestors without any judgement or examinations, and to be led perpetually by others, like brute animals, was to preclude themselves from that search of wisdom and knowledge, which is natural to man."

Yet when it came at last to their own turn, to find the authority of ages on their side, they took up the same plea, which they had before rejected; and urge it at this day, as the principal objection to Protestantism; "that it is a mere novelty, which had no existence in the world before Luther, contradictory to the practice of all the primitive Saints and Martyrs of the Catholic Church, and to the unanimous consent of fifteen centuries."

If this objection therefore had ever been found to have any force in it, the ancient Christians could never have overruled the impostures of Paganism; nor our Reformers, the superfluous of Popery. But in truth, when it comes to be seriously considered, it will appear to have no sense at all in it:


and
and if the Doctors Chapman and Berriman, who now revive and so zealously urge it, were called upon to explain themselves upon it, they would find it difficult, I dare say, to tell us what they mean by it. If they mean, that a contempt of those miracles, which they would persuade us to believe, would necessarily derive the same contempt on History itself; all experience has shewn the contrary: for tho' there have been doubters and contemners of such miracles in all ages, yet history has maintained its ground through them all. During the three first centuries, the whole world in a manner not only doubted, but rejected the miracles of the primitive Christians: yet history was written and read with the same pleasure and profit as before, and applied by the unbelievers themselves to the confirmation of their very doubts. Our commerce with the times past, as they are represented to us in history, is of much the same kind, with our manner of dealing with the present. We find many men in the world, whose fidelity we have just ground to suspect; yet a number of others, whom we can readily trust, sufficient to support that credit and mutual confidence, by which the business of life is carried on: just so in ancient History; we find many things, of which we have cause to doubt; many, which we are obliged to reject; yet it's use still subsists and from real and indisputable facts, supplies sufficient matter both of instruction and entertainment to every judicious reader.

If our Doctors therefore mean any thing by the objection, which we are examining, it must be this; that the same principles,
ciple, which induces us to suspect the primitive miracles and particularly those of Simeon Stylites, when so forcibly and credibly attested, must induce us also, if we are consistent with ourselves, to suspect every thing, that is delivered to us from ancient history. But they widely mistake the matter; and do not at all reflect on what I have intimated above, that the history of miracles is of a kind totally different, from that of common events, the one, to be suspected always of course, without the strongest evidence to confirm it; the other, to be admitted of course, without as strong reason to suspect it. Ordinary facts, related by a credible person, furnish no cause of doubting from the nature of the thing: but if they be strange and extraordinary; doubts naturally arise, and in proportion as they approach towards the marvellous, those doubts still increase and grow stronger: for mere honesty will not warrant them; we require other qualities in the Historian; a degree of knowledge, experience, and discernment, sufficient to judge of the whole nature and circumstances of the case: and if any of these be wanting, we necessarily suspend our belief. A weak man indeed, if honest, may attest common events, as credibly as the wifhest; yet can hardly make any report, that is credible, of such as are miraculous; because a suspicion will always occur, that his weakness, and imperfect knowledge of the extent of human art, had been imposed upon by the craft of cunning Jugglers. On the other hand, should a man of known abilities and judgement relate to us things miraculous, or undertake to perform them himself, the very notion
of his skill, without an assurance also of his integrity, would excite only the greater suspicion of him [1]; especially, if he had any interest to promote, or any favorite opinion to recommend, by the authority of such works: because a pretention to miracles, has, in all ages and nations, been found the most effectual instrument of Impostors, towards deluding the multitude, and gaining their ends upon them.

There is not a single Historian of Antiquity, whether Greek or Latin, who has not recorded Oracles, prodigies, prophecies and miracles, on the occasion of some memorable events, or revolutions of States and Kingdoms. Many of these are attested in the gravest manner and by the gravest writers, and were firmly believed at the time by the populace: yet it is certain, that there is not one of them, which we can reasonably take to be genuine: not one, but what was either wholly forged or from the opportunity of some unusual circumstance attending it, improved and aggravated into something supernatural. This was undoubtedly the case of all the Heathen miracles; and though it may hurt in some measure the general credit of miracles, yet, as experience has plainly shewn, it has not in any degree affected the credit of common history. For example, Dionysius of Halicarnassus is esteemed one of the most faithfull and accurate Historians of Antiquity: we take his word without scruple, and preferably even to the Roman writers; in his account of the civil affairs of Rome; yet we

laugh at the fictitious miracles, which he has interspersed in it. "In the war with the Latins, he tells us, how the Gods, Castor and Pollux, appeared visibly on white horses, and fought on the side of the Romans, who by their assistance gained a complete victory; and that for a perpetual memorial of it, a Temple was publicly erected, and a yearly festival, sacrifice and procession instituted to the honour of those Deities [1]." Now tho' no body at this day, believes a tittle of the miracle, yet the faith of History is not hurt by it. We admit the battle and the victory; and take the miraculous part to be, what it certainly was, the fiction of the Commanders or persons interested; contrived for the sake of some private, as well as public benefit, which the nature of the case will easily suggest.

Thus in the narrative also, above mentioned, of the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, the point of History is, that he was condemned to death at Smyrna, of which he was Bishop, and there actually burnt at the Stake, for his profession of the

N. B. A late Historian of our own Kingdom, in his description of the battle of Worcester, between Charles II. and Oliver Cromwell, has delivered a story to posterity, concerning a certain contract made in form, between Oliver and the Devil, in a personal conference. Which story was so strongly attested, that he thought himself obliged to insert it, as I heard him say, by the advice of some learned Friends. But the faith of History would rest on a very slippery bottom, could it be shaken in any degree by our contempt of so silly a tale: which tho' no man of a sound judgement can think credible, yet none will conceive the least doubt on that account, about the reality of the battle or the other circumstances of it, as they are related by the same Historian. See Echard's Hist. of Engl.
Christian faith. We have no doubt therefore of his Martyrdom, yet may reasonably pause at the miracles, which are said to have attended it. The voice pretended to come from heaven, was heard only by a few; and that in a time of such hurry, in which nothing could be heard distinctly. If such a voice therefore had been uttered by any one in the crowd, as it was hardly possible to discern whence it came, so those whose zeal and imagination were particularly affected by moving an occasion, might easily mistake it for miraculous. The flame also is said to have made an arch around his body, and could not burn it: an appearance, which might easily happen from the common effects of the wind, or something at least so like it as to afford matter enough to a supberstitious fancy, to supply the rest. But the circumstance of a Dove flying out of his body, when pierced by a sword, is beyond all belief: or if a Dove was really seen to fly out of the wood, which was prepared to consume him, it might have been conveyed thither, probably by design, in order to be let loose at a certain moment: as in the funerals of the Roman Emperors, an Eagle was always observed to fly out of the funeral pile, as soon as it began to blaze, which was supposed to convey the soul of the deceased into heaven: of which a solemn deposition was constantly made upon oath, in order to the Deification of those Emperors.[1].

But


Γενεαίος

3
But the case of witchcraft affords the most effectual proof of the truth of what I am advancing. There is not in all history any one miraculous fact, so authentically attested as the existence of witches. All Christian nations whatsoever have consented in the belief of them and provided capital laws against them; in consequence of which, many hundreds of both Sexes have suffered a cruel death. In our own country, great numbers have been condemned to die, at different times, after a public trial, by the most eminent Judges of the Kingdom: and in some places, for a perpetual memorial of their diabolical practices, anniversary sermons and solemnities have been piously instituted, and subsift at this day, to propagate a detestation of them to all posterity[1]. Now to deny the reality

Γνωρίαν ἐπ' ἑνός, ἀδελφὸς ἔσεσθαι ἐν τῇ ἁπάντῃ ἀνείστηκε, ὡς μὲν Περίνας εἶναι ἄναμενεν. Ιδ. de Fun. Pertinac. l. 74. p. 842.


[1] In the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the Court seems to have been greatly alarmed by an imaginary increase of this Infernal Art, and the horrible mischiefs, which it was then actually perpetrating in the Kingdom; and which were loudly proclaimed from the Pulpit, by many of the celebrated Preachers. Among the rest, it is surprizing to perceive, to what a length of superstitition and credulity the great Bishop Jewel was carried on this occasion, by his prejudices and prepossession in favor of this popular delusion: a Prelate as venerable for his piety, learning and judgement, as any, in the earliest ages of the Church: who, in a Sermon preached before the Queen, taking occasion to touch upon this subject, addresseth himself to Her in the following words;
reality of facts so solemnly attested, and so universally believed, seems to give the lie to the sense and experience of all Christendom;

"it may please your Grace to understand, that this kind of People, I mean witches and forcerers, within these few years are marvelously increased within your Grace's realm. These eyes have seen most evident and manifest marks of their wickedness. Your Grace's Subjects pine away, even unto death; their colour fadeth; their flesh roteth; their speech is benumbed; their senses bereft. Wherefore your poor Subject's humble petition to your Highness is, that the laws touching such Malefactors may be put in due execution. For the shoal of them is great, their doings horrible, their malice intolerable, their examples most miserable: and I pray God, they never practise farther than upon the subject." Upon which passage Mr. Strype remarks, that the remonstrances of this kind made by this Bishop and others gave occasion, to bring a Bill into the next Parliament, for making Inchantments and witchcraft Felony. See annals at the Reformat. vol. i. p. 8.

When Tertullian, in proof of the miraculous powers, which were claimed by the Christians of that age, challenges the Heathen Magistrates, to come and see how easily the Christian Exorcists could drive Devils out of the bodies of men, he might be assured probably at the same time, that the notice of his challenge would never reach those Magistrates, or at least, that they would never pay any regard to it: yet pluming himself, as it were, upon it he adds; and what can be more manifest than this operation, what more convincing than this proof? [Apolog. c. 23.] But I would ask the warmest advocates of the primitive miracles, whether this convincing proof of Tertullian, or the express testimony of any other Father, or any number of them can in any manner be compared with that strength of evidence, which, through all ages, affirmed the existence of witches and their direful practices, by the most solemn acts of Kings and Parliaments and whole nations; who, after many public trials and the strictest examinations, have constantly attested the reality of the facts and crimes, with which they were charged, of inflicting horrible pains and diseases, and destroying the lives of many innocent People, by the force of their charms and forceries. See the printed trials of nineteen witches, ten of whom were condemned
Christendom; to the wisest and best of every nation, to public monuments subsisting to our own times: yet the incredibility of the thing prevailed and was found at last too strong for all this force of human testimony: so that the belief of witches is now utterly extinct, and quietly buried without involving history in its ruin, or leaving even the least disgrace or censure upon it.

There is another instance also, within our own times, more directly applicable to our present purpose. I mean the pretended miracles of the late Abbé de Paris, which made such a noise in France a few years ago, and are still believed by a great part of that Kingdom, or by all perhaps, who believe any other miracles of that Church. This Abbé was a zealous Jansenist, and warm opposer of that Bull or Constitution of Pope Clement XI. called Unigenitus, by which all the doctrines of his sect were expressly condemned. He died in 1725, and was buried in the Church-yard of St. Medard in Paris; whither the great reputation of his sanctity drew many People to visit his tomb, and pay their devotions to him, as to a Saint: and this concourse gradually increasing made him soon be considered, as a subject, proper to revive the credit of that party, now utterly depressed by the power of the Jesuits, supported by the authority of the Court. With-

demned together at Lancaster, 1612, where the Judge, in passing sentence of death upon them, speaks of many cruel and barbarous murders, of which they had been found guilty, besides other crimes, of tormenting the bodies and destroying the cattle of their neighbours.
An Inquiry into

in six years therefore after his death the confidant report of miracles, wrought at his tomb, began to alarm not only the City of Paris, but the whole nation: while infinite crowds were perpetually pressing to the place, and proclaiming the benefits received from the Saint: nor could all the power of the Government give a check to the rapidity of this superstitious, till by enclosing the tomb within a wall, they effectually obstructed all access to it [1].

This expedient, tho' it put an end to the external worship of the Saint, could not shake the credit of his miracles: distinct accounts of which were carefully drawn up, and dispersed among the people, with an attestation of them much more strong and authentic, than what has ever been alleged for the miracles of any other age, since the days of the Apostles. Mons. de Montgeron, a person of eminent rank in Paris, [2] published a select number of them, in a pompous volume in quarto, which he dedicated to the King and presented to him in Perfon; being induced to the publication of them, as he declares, by the incontestable evidence of the facts; by which he himself, from a libertin and professed Deist, became a sincere convert to the Christian faith. But besides the collection of Mr. de Montgeron, several other collections were made, containing in the whole above an hundred miracles,

[1] This step gave occasion to the following Epigram, which was fixed upon the inclosure, in the style of the Royal Edicts.

De par le Roy. Defense a Dieu
De faire miracles, en ce lieu.


which
which are all published together in three volumes, with their original vouchers, certificates, affidavits, and letters annexed to each of them at full length.

The greatest part of these miracles were employed in the cures of desperate diseases, in their last and deplored state, and after all human remedies had for many years been tried upon them in vain: but the Patients no sooner addressed themselves to the tomb of this Saint, than the most inveterate cases, and complications of Palsies, Apoplexies and Dropsies, and even blindness and lameness &c. were either instantly cured, or greatly relieved, and within a short time after wholly removed. All which cures were performed in the Churchyard of St. Medard, in the open view of the people, and with so general a belief of the finger of God in them, that many Infidels, Debauched, Schismatics, and Heretics are said to have been converted by them to the Catholic faith. And the reality of them is attested by some of the principal Physicians and Surgeons in France, as well as the Clergy of the first dignity; several of whom were eye-witnesses of them, who presented a verbal process of each to the Archbishops, with a petition signed by above twenty Curés or Rectors of the Parishes of Paris, desiring that they might be authentically registered, and solemnly published to the people, as true miracles.

I have seen an answer to these miracles by a Protestant writer, Mr. Des Voëux; who does not deny the facts, but the miraculous nature of them only, which by many reasons
he endeavours to render suspected. Yet another writer, on the same side, declares, that all his reasons are too weak, to do them any hurt; and that there is no other way of shaking their credit, than by shewing them to be the works of the Devil. Which he undertakes to prove, in three letters to the said Mr. DesPoeux, to be the genuine character of them.

Let our Declamers then on the authority of the Fathers, and the faith of history, produce if they can, any evidence of the primitive miracles, half so strong, as what is alleged for the miracles of the Abbe de Paris: or if they cannot do it, let them give us a reason, why we must receive the one, and reject the other: or if they fail likewise in this, let them be so ingenuous at last, as to confess, that we have no other part left, but either to admit them all, or reject them all; for otherwise, they can never be thought to act consistently. And if, from their avowed principles and blind deference to authority, we may guess at their real sentiments in the present case, they will be as little scrupulous about the modern, as the ancient miracles of the Church, but patiently admit them all; as being more agreeable to that rule, which is prescribed by their primitive Guides; "that the true disciples of Christ, have nothing more to do with curiosity or inquiry, but when they are once become believers, their sole business is to believe on." [1]


Again,
Again, The celebrated Historian, Mr. de Vertot, whose revolutions of Rome, of Sweden and of Portugal, afford so much entertainment to the public, has written a defence also of a certain miracle, which is imagined to do some honor to the Church and Kingdom of France: I mean the miracle of the sacred vial, or sainte Ampoule, as it is called, with which their Kings are anointed at their coronation. [1]

This Vial is said to have been brought from heaven by a Dove, for the baptismalunction of Clovis, the first Christian King of France, and dropped into the hands of St. Remigius, then Bishop of Rheims, about the end of the fifth century: where it has been preserved ever since for the purpose of anointing all succeeding Kings. [2] and it's divine descent is said to be confirmed by this miracle; that as soon as the coronation is over,

[1] The Abbé de Vertot begins his Dissertation on this vial, in the following manner.

"There has scarce ever been a more sensible and illustrious mark of thevisible protection of God, over the Monarchy of France, than the celebrated miracle of the sacred vial. On the day of Great Clovis's baptism, heaven declared itself in favor of that Prince and his successors, in a particular manner; and by way of preference to all the other Sovereigns of Christendom. So that we may justly apply to every one of our Kings, on the day of their coronation, the words of the Royal Prophet. "God, even thy God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows. "Dissertat. au sujet de la sainte Ampoule.—Dans les Memoires De l'Acad. des Inscript. & belLett. Tom. 2. p. 665.

[2]——Idem primus & annes
Post ipsum Reges, Francorum ad speepra vocati,
Quando coronantur, oleo facruntur eodem.—ib. p. 674.

F ‡ 2
the oil in the Vial begins to waste and vanish, but is constantly renewed of itself, for the service of each new Coronation. [1]

The Abbe de Vertot defends the truth of this miracle by the authority of several witnesses, who lived at the time of Remigius or near to it; and of many later writers also, who give testimony to the same, through each succeeding age. Yet a learned Professor at Utrecht, in a dissertation upon this subject, treats it as a mere forgery, or pious fraud, contrived to support the dignity of the Kings and Clergy of France; and ranks it in the same class with the Palladium of Troy; the Ancilia of old Rome; and the Cross, which Constantinus pretended to see in the heavens; and the rest of those political fictions, which we meet with in the histories of all ages. [2]

Now what will our Advocates of the primitive miracles say to this? Will they tell us here, as they have often done on similar occasions, that by rejecting the authority of Mr. Vertot and his witnesses in this story, we destroy the faith of all his other stories, and can no longer take his word for any thing, which he has related of Rome, or Sweden, or Portugal? Let them talk at this silly rate, as long as they please, men of sense.

[1] cujus prece rorem
Mift in ampullam coelestem Rektor Olympi,
Corpus ut hoc lavacro Regis debet inungi,
Deficeretque liquor, ibi corpore Regis inuncto.
Nic. de Braia. De S. Remigio.

Trojan Palladium.—Virgillus lapis Ancilia coele—veneratur. Constantinus, uteras in tūro inūō in coelo legitisse furtur, &c. vid. ibid. will
will always know, how to distinguish in such cases; how to extract all the instruction, which is offered to them, in one part of his writings; yet guard themselves from all the super-
stitious, which is inculcated in the other. They know, that,
on subjects of common history, a writer of sense and credit
can hardly have any other motive of writing, but to please and
instruct; and to illustrate the truth of facts, as far as he was able,
by the perspicuity of his style, and the proper disposition of
his materials: but on subjects of a miraculous kind, they
know likewise, how forcibly the prejudices of education, a
superstitious turn of mind, the interests of a party, or the
views of ambition are apt to operate on a defender of those
miracles, which the government and religion of his country
are engaged to support.

These few instances are sufficient to evince the reasonableness
and prudence of suspending our assent to reports of a mira-
culous kind, tho’ attested by an authority, which might safely be
trusted, in the report of ordinary events. They teach us also
how opinions, wholly absurd and contrary to nature, may gain
credit and establishment through ages and nations, which, by
the force of education, custom, and example, have once con-
tracted a superstitious and credulous turn; till being check-
ed from time to time by the gradual improvements of science,
and the successive efforts of reason, inquiring occasionally into
the uncertain grounds, and reflecting on the certain mischiefs
of them, they have fallen at last into such utter contempt, as
to make us wonder, how it was possible for them, ever to have
obtained any credit.
But whatever be the uncertainty of ancient History, there is one thing at least, which we may certainly learn from it; that human nature has always been the same; agitated by the same appetites and passions, and liable to the same excesses and abuses of them, in all ages and countries of the world; so that our experience of what passes in the present age, will be the best comment, on what is delivered to us concerning the past. To apply it then to the case before us: there is hardly a single fact, which I have charged upon the primitive times, but what we still see performed, in one or other of the sects of Christians, of our own times. Among some we see diseases cured; Devils cast out, and all the other miracles, which are said to have been wrought in the primitive Church: among others, we see the boasted gifts of Tertullian’s and Cyprian’s days; pretended revelations, prophetic visions, and divine impressions: now all these modern pretensions we readily ascribe to their true cause; to the artifices and craft of a few, playing upon the credulity, the superstition, and the enthusiasm of the many, for the sake of some private interest: when we read therefore, that the same things were performed by the ancients, and for the same ends, of acquiring a superiority of credit, or wealth, or power, over their fellow creatures; how can we possibly hesitate, to impute them to the same cause, of fraud and imposture?

In a word; to submit our belief implicitly and indifferently, to the mere force of authority, in all cases, whether miraculous or natural, without any rule of discerning the credible from the incredible, might support indeed the faith,
faith, as it is called, but would certainly destroy the use of all history; by leading us into perpetual errors, and possessing our minds with invincible prejudices, and false notions both of men and things. But to distinguish between things, totally different from each other; between miracle and nature; the extraordinary acts of God, and the ordinary transactions of man; to suspend our belief of the one, while, on the same testimony, we grant it freely to the other; and to require a different degree of evidence for each, in proportion to the different degrees of their credibility; is so far from hurting the credit of history, or of any thing else, which we ought to believe, that it is the only way to purge history from its dross, and render it beneficial to us; and by a right use of our reason and judgement, to raise our minds above the low prejudices, and childish superstitions of the credulous vulgar.

There cannot be a stronger proof of the stupid credulity and superstition of those primitive ages, into which we have been inquiring, and of the facility of imposing any fictions upon them, which their leaders thought fit to inculcate, than what is related by St. Austin, from the report, as he says, of credible persons, "that at Ephesus, where St. John, the Apostle, lay buried, he was "not believed to be dead, but to be sleeping only in the grave, which he had "provided for himself, till our Lord's second coming: in proof of which, they "affirmed, that the earth, under which he lay, was seen to heave up and down "perpetually, in conformity to the motion of his body, in the act of breathing." Which ridiculous conceit was grounded on those words spoken by our Lord to that Apostle, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Whence the other disciples inferred, that St. John should not die. [Jo. 21. 23.]" vid. Augustin, in loc. Oper. T. 3. p. 819, 820.

But
An Inquiry into &c.

But we have another instance, in our own country, of a credulity not less extravagant, than what is just mentioned, in the case of a person believed to be possessed by the Devil; an account of which was printed and published with the following title. "The Surrey Demoniac. Or an Account of Satan's Strange and Dreadful Actions, in and about the body of Richard Dogdale, of Surrey near Whalley in Lancashire. And how he was dispossessed by God's blessing on the Fastings and Prayers of divers Ministers and people. The matter of fact attested by the oaths of several credible persons, before some of his Majesty's Justices of the peace in the said County. London 1697."—These dreadful actions of Satan continued above a year; during which, there was a desperate struggle between him, and nine Ministers of the Gospel, who had undertaken to cast him out; and for that purpose, successively relieved each other in their daily combats with him: while Satan, as in the days of Tertullian, tried all his arts to baffle their attempts; insulting them with scoffs and rillery; puzzling them sometimes, with Latin and Greek, and threatening them with the effects of his vengeance; till he was finally vanquished and put to flight by the persevering prayers and fastings of the said Ministers: the truth of which fact is more substantially attested, than any case of the same kind, in all the primitive ages. Monf. de Fontenelle, a writer justly celebrated for his admirable parts and learning, speaking of the origin and progress of these popular superstititions, says, "Give me but half a dozen persons, whom I can persuade, that it is not the sun, which makes our day light, and I should not despair of drawing whole nations to embrace the false belief. For how ridiculous soever the opinion be, let it be supported only for a certain time, and the business is done: "for when it once becomes ancient, it is sufficiently proved."—Hist. des oracles. C. XI.
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N. B. Pref. stands for Preface, Intr. for Introductory Discourse, Post. for Postscript, N. for Note, the Numerals refer to the Preface and Introduction, and the Figures to the Work.

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A VINDICATION OF THE FREE INQUIRY INTO THE MIRACULOUS POWERS, &c.
A

VINDICATION

OF THE

FREE INQUIRY

INTO THE

MIRACULOUS POWERS,

Which are supposed

To have subsisted in the Christian Church, &c.

From the OBJECTIONS of

Dr. DODWELL and Dr. CHURCH.

By the Late CONYERS MIDDLETON, D.D.

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MDCCLI.
ERRATA

PAGE 3, Line 7 for Bulkly, read Bulkly.

PAGE 12 l. 15, after the Author dele i.e.

13 l. 23, for any of Prook, r. any Proof.

19 l. 23, for begging, r. bega.

27 l. 5, for ἠστάθεια, r. ἠστάθεια καὶ.

l. 17, for Pthia, r. Pthia.

46 In the Greek Note, dele the Points of the Semicolons.

63 l. 16, instead of given and defended by ἴρμανύ, r. given by ἴρμανύ and de-

fended by thele, &c.

65 l. 19, instead of written, r. worked.

78 l. 25, for or, r. on.

88 l. 16, for supplies, r. supply.
A VINDICATION
OF THE
FREE INQUIRY, &c.

Dr. Dodwell takes occasion to acquaint us, in his Preface, that his performance was not intended for the public view, but the perusal only of a private friend; till being communicated to several others, whose judgement he had great reason to value, it was committed to the press by the unanimous advice of them all. Dr. church also, after the example of his partner, could not deny himself the pleasure of declaring; that he likewise had the honor of receiving the approbation of some eminent, learned and judicious persons, who had taken the trouble of revising his papers, and advised him to offer them to the public. This method of puffing their works a priori, so flattering to the generality of our writers, is a sort of pride, which I cannot assume to myself; who have no man's judgement to trust to, but my own; no Clerical Synod to call around me; no Episcopal Oracle to consult. I am acquainted indeed with many of the Clergy, whom I highly esteem; and whose advice might be useful to me on several occasions; if the subjects, which I have chosen to defend, did not forbid me to seek it: for their fakes, I mean, not
not for my own; left the suspicion of any communication with me, might hurt their fame or fortunes, and expose them to the same envy, which I myself have incurred. For heterodox opinions in the Church, like treasonable words in the State, impart a guilt even to the hearer, and make him an accomplice in the crime, unless he purge himself by a discovery, and impeachment of the author.

But to return to our Doctors; it is certainly a mere impertinence, to talk of the approbation given to their books, before they had passed through the press, since their merit can only be ascertained by the success of that passage, and the reception, which they may afterwards find, not from a cabal of private friends, but from the general voice, and judgement of men of sense, unprejudiced, and unbiassed with regard to the point in dispute. And here again, I must own, these Doctors have received an honor, which I can never hope to obtain, from the public testimonial of a great and famous University, to whose judgement I have ever been disposed to pay the highest regard. On this indeed, they have great reason to plume themselves; but would have had much greater, if that learned Body could stamp the truth of opinions by the same seal, with which it stamps diploma's, and confers honors on the Authors of them. For in the present case, it has fallen out very unluckily both to those, who conferred these honors, and to those also, who now wear them; that even before the collation of them, one of the very books, on the account of which
which they were given, was effectually confuted, and, in every article relating to the main question, shewn to be wholly trifling and impertinent; and incapable of adding the least advantage to the cause which it defends, or of doing the least hurt to that which it had undertaken to overthrow. And the confutation of either of the two Doctors may be applied very justly to them both: for in the more bulky volume of the Second, we find nothing more than some little enlargement of the same arguments and objections, the same cavils and evasions, which we meet with in the First.

Now these, I say, are substantially confuted by Mr. Toll; a Clergyman of Hampshire, bred, I suppose, in the same University; and who would have been a credit to any, though not yet honored with any Diploma, nor likely to reap any other reward for his pains, than what an honest mind and honest fame will be sure to give to his disinterested defence, of what he takes to be true; in an Inquiry of no small importance to the Christian Church.

I should have been glad therefore, for the sake of the University, which will ever engage my good wishes, that the zeal, which it has expressed on this occasion, for the primitive Fathers and their miracles, had been a little more patient, and not hurried it on, to crown its champions before the victory; and by giving it's sanction to opinions still in dispute, to make itself a party in a controversy; which may possibly end, as many have done, to the mortification of
of those, who have ventured to give judgement in it, before both sides have been heard.

These Doctors begin with an examination of my Preface; wherein I had laid down a few general principles, which might be of use, as I imagined, to prepare the reader to form a right judgement on the subject of the Free Inquiry. But here, they meet with many passages, which greatly offend and puzzle them; some as carrying a suspicious meaning; others, a dangerous one; and others as wholly unintelligible, and having no meaning at all [1]. Yet these passages, as they own, have no relation to the question in dispute; and the sole use, which they make of them, is, to give them an invidious turn, and charge them with pernicious tendencies, in order to prepossess the reader with an odious opinion of my character and principles, and, by consequence, a favorable one of the zeal and piety in exposing them, and to warn all good Christians of that poison, which I was covertly intending to infuse. Yet the meaning of these very places will appear, I dare say, to every candid reader, to be both clear, and inoffensive; cloathed with no affected obscurity, nor carrying any other sense, than what I shall ever be ready to avow and openly defend.

For instance; I have said, that this question concerning the miraculous powers of the Church, depends on the joint credibility of the facts, pretended to have been produced

by those powers, and of the witnesses, who attest them. Then, after some reasons given, why the credibility of facts ought generally to have more weight with us, than the credibility of witnesses, I conclude the paragraph in these words; "The testimony therefore of facts, as it is offered to our senses, in this wonderful fabric and constitution of worldly things, may properly be called the testimony of God himself; as it carries with it the surest instruction in all cases, and to all nations, which in the ordinary course of his providence, he has thought fit to appoint for the guidance of human life [1]."

There is another passage or two of a similar kind, and of equal offence to these Doctors, in which, after censuring the rashness of forming peremptory arguments, as my adversaries are apt to do, upon the supposed necessity or propriety of a divine interposition, in this or that particular case, I add; "that the whole, which the wit of man can possibly discover, either of the ways or will of the Creator, must be acquired by a contrary method; not by imagining vainly within ourselves, what may be proper or improper for him to do, but by looking abroad, and contemplating what he has actually done, and attending seriously to that revelation, which he has made of himself from the beginning, and placed continually before our eyes, in the wonderful works and beautifull fabric of this visible world [2]." Again, in conformity with this prin-

"ciple, I observe, "how fallacious the judgement even
c" of the wisest men has been, and ever will be, when de-
"serting this path of nature and experience, and giving
"the reins to fancy and conjecture, they attempt to illus-
"trate the secret counsels of Providence [1]."

These are the passages which chiefly offend them, they
declare them to be crude, unguarded, alarming expressions,
big with dangerous insinuations, inconsistent with my own
concessions, that they prove too much, and seem to assert
the impossibility of all miracles; so as to have made one of
my Answerers believe, and all the rest of them suspect me, to
be a Deist, nay that it cannot be excused from open Deism,
from which therefore I ought to purge myself [2]. Since I
am called upon then so solemnly, to explain myself on the
subject of these passages, I shall take this occasion to open
them a little more particularly, and declare my real view
in them, tho' persuaded at the same time, that no explica-
tion of them can be wanted by any disinterested reader, as
well as that none, which I shall give, will ever satisfy these
Doctors, who now demand it.

One of them appears to be scandalized, by the title of
Revelation, which I have given, to that discovery, which
God made of himself in the visible works of his creation.
Yet it is no other, than what the wise in all ages have given
to it: who consider it as the most authentic and indispu-
table revelation, which God has ever given of himself from
the beginning of the world to this day. It was this, by

which the first notice of him was revealed to the inhabitants of the earth; and by which alone it has been kept up ever since, among all the several nations of it. From this the reason of man was enabled, to trace out his nature and attributes, and by a gradual deduction of consequences to learn his own nature also, with all the duties belonging to it, which relate either to God, or his fellow creatures. This constitution of things was ordained by God as an universal Law or rule of conduct to man; the source of all his knowledge; the test of all truth: by which all subsequent revelations, which are supposed to have been given by God in any other manner, must be tried and cannot be received as divine, any farther than as they are found to tally and coincide with this original standard.

It was this divine law, which I referred to, in the passages above recited, being desirous, to excite the readers attention to it, as it would enable him to judge the more clearly and freely of the argument, which I was handling. For by contemplating this law, he would discover the genuine way, which God himself has marked out to us for the acquisition of true knowledge, not from the authority, or the reports of our fellow creatures, but from the information of the facts, and material objects, which, in his providential distribution of worldly things, he hath presented to the perpetual observation of our senses. For as it was from these, that his existence and nature, the most important articles of all knowledge, were first discovered
to man, so, that grand discovery furnished new light to-
wards tracing out the rest, and made all the inferior sub-
jects of human knowledge the more easily discoverable to
us by the same method.

I had another view likewise in the same passages, and
applicable to the same end, of giving the reader a more
inlarged notion of the question in dispute, who, by turn-
ing his thoughts to reflect on the works of the Creator,
as they are manifested to us in this fabric of the world,
could not fail to observe, that they were all of them great,
noble, and suitable to the majesty of his nature; carrying
with them the proofs of their origin, and shewing them-
selves to be the productions of an allwise and allmighty
Being: and by accustoming his mind to these sublime re-
spections, he will be prepared to determine, whether those
miraculous interpositions, so confidently affirmed to us by
the Primitive Fathers, can reasonably be thought to make
a part in the grand scheme of the divine administration;
or whether it be agreeable, that God, who created all
things by his will, and can give what turn to them he
pleases by the same will; should, for the particular purpo-
ses of his Government and the service of the Church, de-
scend to the low expedient of visions, and revelations;
granted sometimes to boys, for the instruction of the El-
ders, and sometimes to women, to settle the fashion and
length of their veils, and sometimes also to the Pastors of
the Church, to injoin them to ordain one man a lecturer,

another
another a Priest; or that he should scatter a profusion of miracles around the stake of a Martyr; yet all of them vain and insignificant, and without the least sensible effect, either of preserving the life, or eas'ing the sufferings of the Saint; or even of mortifying his persecutors, who were always left to enjoy the full triumph of their cruelty, and the poor Martyr to expire by a miserable death. When these facts, I say, are brought to the original test, and compared with the genuine and indisputable works of the Creator; how minute, how trifling, how contemptible must they appear? and how incredible must it be thought, that, for the instruction of his Church, God should employ ministers so precarious, unsatisfactory, and inadequate; as the extasies of women and boys, and the visions of interested Priests; which were derided at the very time by men of sense, to whom they were proposed.

That this universal law was actually reveled to the Heathen world, long before the Gospel was known to it, we learn from all the principal sages of antiquity, who made it the capital subject of their studies and writings. Cicero has given us a short abstract of it, in a fragment still remaining from one of his books on Government, which I shall here transcribe in his own words, as they will illustrate my sense also, in the exceptionable passages above mentioned, which appears so dark and so dangerous to my Antagonists.

"The true law, says he, is right reason, conformable to the nature of things; constant, eternal, diffused through all;"
all; which calls us to duty, by commanding, deterrs us
from sin, by forbidding; which never loses its influence
with the good; nor ever preserves it with the wicked.
This law cannot possibly be over-rulled by any other;
nor abrogated in the whole or in part: nor can we be
absolved from it, either by the Senate, or the people:
nor are we to seek any other comment, or interpreter of
it, but itself: nor can there be one law at Rome, another
at Athens; one now, another hereafter; but the same
eternal, immutable law comprehends all nations, at all
times, under one common Master and Governor of all,
God. He is the inventor, propounder, enactor of this
law: and who ever will not obey it, must first renounce himself and throw off the nature of man: by
doing which, he will suffer the greatest punishment,
tho' he should escape all the other tortments, which are
commonly believed to be prepared for the wicked [ ].

Our Doctors, perhaps will look with horror on all this,
as rank Deism; but let them call it what they please, I shall
ever avow and defend it, as the fundamental, essential and
vital part of all true religion, and what the Gospel itself
must adopt, as it's best foundation and support. The
fragment was preserved to us by Laetantius, who lived in
the third Century, and was the best Christian writer of
his age; who, after the recital of it in his works, makes
this reflection upon it; "what man, tho' already acquainted
with the mysteries of God, could set forth the law of
God
"God with such force as this? who yet was far removed
from the knowledge of the truth. For my part, I look
upon those, who utter such truths without knowing
them, as persons inspired by a divine Spirit. But as he
clearly saw the force and the ground of the holy law,
so, if he had known or could have explained it's precepts
also, he would then have performed the part, not of a
Philosopher, but of a Prophet [1]." Here we see a Christian writer, who lived in the third Century, frankly ac-
knowledging this law, as it is explained by Cicero, to be the
law of God; and which our knowledge, even of the mys-
teries of God, as propounded to us by the Gospel, could
not enable us to illustrate with such force, as the improved
reason of this great and virtuous man: which corresponds
also with what Cicero has elsewhere declared of the same
law, that it was the mind of God, governing all things by etern-
al reason; whose substitute or interpreter on earth was the rea-
son and mind of the wife [2].

This is all the explication which I can give, towards
healing the scruples of those, who are offended with the
passages above mentioned, how far it may satisfy our Doc-
tors, I neither know nor care: for tho' it will ever be my
desire to give all satisfaction to every candid and liberal in-
quirer, yet in the present controversy, these Answerers
have shewn, that they came with no view of inquiring


freely
freely and philosophically, what was true, but to defend with all their skill, what their prepossessions and ambitious views made them resolve to support at any rate, in defiance of all the light and conviction which could possibly be offered on the contrary side. This will clearly appear to all men of sense and candor from the general turn and spirit of their performances, and from their futile, evasive and illiberal manner of treating the most important arguments of the Free Inquiry; which I shall now therefore proceed to examine; without troubling the reader with any more of their prefatory objections, which are all chiefly of the same kind; not relating to the main question, but cavilling only on some incidental points, of little or no moment to it, in order to draw something out of them, that by tainting the credit of the Author; with the weaker part of their readers, may infuse a general distrust of his argument.

Let us enter then into the Free Inquiry; where the first argument which I made use of towards confirming my general position, is the silence of the Apostolic Fathers, with regard to any standing power of working miracles, as residing still in that age for the conversion of the Heathen world. This silence is frankly allowed by the first of my Antagonists, Mr. Jackson, who insists however and endeavours to shew, that the inference, which I draw from it, is vain and groundless. These Doctors however, more stout than their Leader, and resolving to dispute every
inch of ground with me, utterly deny the fact of their silence, and affirm; that tho' they do not indeed enlarge on their miraculous powers, nor make any direct appeal to them as their successors do, yet that many occasional hints and plain references to them are to be found in their writings.

The principal instance, which they produce in proof of this assertion, is from the Epistle of St. Clemens to the Corinthians; which, as it is paraphrased by Archbishop Wake, does expressly assert the subsistence of miraculous powers to that particular age. And upon the authority of this paraphrase, of which I had not taken any notice, they presently reproach me, with the wilful suppression of a testimony, which directly overthrows my argument, and to which I had not attempted to give any answer [1]. And here indeed, I must confess, that the passage, as explained by the Archbishop, is full to their purpose, and contrary to my own, yet knowing it to be such, that I willfully omitted it. But I can plead at the same time, with great truth, that the reasons, which moved me to omit it, were, first, the utter insignificance, which it appeared to have, as to any of proof or evidence, relating to this question, and secondly, a regard also for the character of that venerable Prelate, which made me unwilling to recall into public light, a paraphrase, which I took to be unworthy of him, and of all others that I had ever observed, to be

the most palpably forced and drested up, without any ground 
or color from the text, to serve the point, which he was 
inculcating, concerning the continuance of the miraculous 
powers to the times of these Apostolical Fathers.

The Words of the Text, as they stand in the Epistle, 
clear of the paraphrase, and translated by the Archbishop 
himself, are these, "Let a man be faithful; let him be 
"powerfull in the utterance of knowledge; let him be 
"wise in making an exact judgement of words; let him be 
"pure in all his actions: but still, by how much the more 
"he seems to be above others, by reason of these things, 
"by so much the more will it behove him, to be humble-
"minded, and to seek what is profitable to all men, not 
"his own advantage [1]."

Thus stands the passage in the Archbishop's English Edition 
of the Epistles of these Apostolical Fathers; where no 
man, whose mind was not preposess'd with the same hypo-
thesis, or senses dazzled with the authority [2] of the Arch-
bishop, could find a syllable, which bears any fort of re-
ference to miraculous powers, or suggests the least hint of 
the continuance of them to that age [3]. How is it then, 
that the Archbishop has contrived to give such a turn to 
it? why, not by any critical art, or grammatical rule, but 
by forcibly thrusting his own sense into it; in a manner so 
grofs and arbitrary, as would fix the same sense, or any 
other upon any passage whatsoever. We see, that the 
words of the text unparaphrased, are clear of any miracu-

lous sense; for in his Preliminary Discourse to these very Epistles, he has shewn us, how easily this may be performed on any proper occasion, by the help of a commodious paraphrase.

The passage then, when opened and illustrated by the Archbishops explanatory translation, stands thus;

"Let a man have faith; that is, *says the Archbishop*, such a faith, by which he is able to work miracles: let him be powerfull to utter knowledge; that is, mystical knowledge, *says the Archbishop*, for to that the expression manifestly relates: let him be wise in discerning of speeches; for that was another gift, *says the Archbishop*, common to those times: let him be pure in his actions: but still, by how much the more he seems to excel others, that is, *says the Archbishop*, upon the account of these extraordinary endowments; by so much the more will it behove him to be humble-minded [*]."

The recital of this paraphrase will readily convince every man of sense, that I could have no other reason for omitting it, than what I have already alluded; nor could I ever imagine, that, in a controversy of this kind, which can be determined only by the authentic facts and testimonies of antiquity, any one, who professed to be searching into the real ground of it, would attempt to prove by a paraphrase, what he could not prove from the text, and instead of the positive testimony of an Apostolic Father, which his

cause necessarily required, take up with the arbitrary com-
ment of a modern Prelate. Such are the shifts, to which
these pretended Champions of truth are driven in their
defence of the primitive miracles: on which I shall make
no farther remark, but refer my reader to Mr. Toll, who
has very effectually and particularly exposed the imperti-
nence of all the little arts and sophistry, with which they
labor to extort miraculous senses, out of the dark hints and
equivocal passages of these Apostolic Fathers.

Dr. Dodwell proceeds, in the next place, to defend the
particular proofs, which his Father had formerly alleged
from these same Fathers, to evince the continuance of the
miraculous powers to their days. These proofs, he says,
are recited by me with contempt: yet I am conscious, that in re-
citing them, I never had any such intention; and cannot
see how my words can fairly be interpreted to imply any.
Nor has it ever been my custom, to shew a contempt of any
man, who had not justly deserved it of me by some un-
provoked and contemptible attack upon myself. In the pre-

tent case however, I cannot but applaud the piety of a son,
in expressing so jealous a concern for the reputation, and
such a zeal to defend the opinions of a learned and vir-
tuous Parent.

The first of these proofs is taken from the title or address
of Ignatius's Epistle to the Church of Smyrna; upon which
I have already said what I thought sufficient for my purpose
in the Free Inquiry, and the objections, which Dr. Dodwell
has
has since made to it, are shewn to be wholly insignificant by Mr. Toll [1]. But as his defence of his Father's interpretation wholly turns upon the sense of the word, 
charisma; which he affirms to be a term peculiarly appropriated to denote extraordinary gifts; and as he makes much use of the same observation, towards confirming some other objections, in different parts of his work; so I shall add a word or two on this occasion, to shew this favourite criticism to be vain and groundless, and the imaginary conceit of some minute Critic, who happened to want it, as this Doctor here does, for the support of a particular hypothesis. For the word, 
charisma, as well in its native and proper sense, as in the use, which has ever been made of it both by the sacred, and the Primitive writers, signifies nothing more than a gift, whether it be natural or supernatural; ordinary, or extraordinary: wherefore in order to obviate the application of so silly an observation in our present controversy, I had shewn how one of these Apostolic writers, St. Clemens, had applied the word, 
charismata, or gifts of God, to denote the different talents and abilities, natural and acquired, by which the characters of men are usually distinguished; as strength, riches, wisdom, humility, continence [2]. But Dr. Dodwell declares, that he sees no such thing; and that the very gifts or 
charismata, here recited, may briefly be interpreted of supernatural endowments [3]. What can we say to such perverseness as this? or of what use can it

be to reason with so incorrigible a bigotry, which can reject the clear testimony of our senses, rather than give up a groundless hypothesis?

But my notion of the word, *charisma*, may be confirmed also, as I have said, by many testimonies from the sacred writers, as denoting simply a *gift of God*, of what kind ever it may be; of which it will be sufficient to give an instance or two. The gift of God, or *charisma*, says St. Paul, is eternal life [1], and in other places, where he is speaking of the gifts of God, we find him using the words, *charisma* or *dorema*, indifferently, as terms synonymous, and denoting the same thing [2]. And we sometimes see the same word applied to the gift of worldly riches, or an ability to minister to the necessities of the poor.

On the whole then, as the sole defence, which the Doctor makes of the proof of those numerous miracles, which his Father had drawn out of this passage, is grounded on a mistaken sense of the word *charisma* [3]; so the Father’s proof, and the Son’s defence, must of course fall to the ground. And after all the pains, which they have been taking, to puzzle and confound the obvious sense of the text, it will appear at last to be nothing more than this; that the Church of Smyrna, being blessed with faith and charity, which Ignatius extolls in this very Epistle, as the most excellent of all gifts, and what the Apostles themselves prefer to the whole list of them, was deficient in nothing, which

could be required to the accomplishment and perfection of the Christian Character.

The Doctor leads us on to another of his Father's proofs, on which he observes, that as I am apt to call for facts, so his Father has here presented me one beforehand [1]. But the fact, here referred to, is not of such a sort, as I shall ever be disposed to call for; nor do I find myself to be presented, in this instance, with any thing more, than what had been offered to me in the last; an unnatural and extravagant interpretation of an obscure passage, whence his Father had inferred the existence of a chimerical fact, of which there is not the least example or intimation in all history. But since the Doctor strenuously defends the truth of his Father's interpretation; asserts the words to be incapable of any other sense, and professes a particular contempt of mine; it will be necessary to recur to the passage itself, that by reviewing and comparing the two opposite explications, we may settle at last it's real and unquestionable meaning.

St. Ignatius, in his Epistle to the Romans, written on his journey towards that City, where he was going to be exposed to the wild beasts in the Amphitheater, earnestly begging of them, that they would not shew an unseasonable good will to him, by hindering his martyrdom, but would suffer him to be food for the beasts [2]. The question now is; what were the means, which he referred to on this occasion, and


D 2
which the brethren might apply to the hindrance of his martyrdom? Mr. Dodwell the Father, affirms them to be prayers: which had a power, he says, of disabiling the beasts from assaulting the Martyr, when exposed to them in the Amphitheaters. But if that had been the meaning of Ignatius’s request, it would imply, that the efficacy of such prayers had been tried in other cases of martyrdom, prior to that of Ignatius: yet no such fact is to be found in all history, nor any mention made of it by the Apostles or Apostolic writers, except by a single intimation in this very Epistle, where Ignatius says, that he would encourage the wild beasts, that they might be sure to devour him, and not serve him, as they had done some, whom out of fear, they had not touched [1].

But the whole tenor of the Epistle seems utterly to confute this Dodwellian hypothesis. In which the Martyr acquaints the Romans, that he had written to the other Churches, and signified to them all, that he was willing to die for God, unless they, the Romans, should hinder him [2]. Now if this hindrance was to be effected by their prayers, surely the prayers of every other Church must have been as effectual, and as much to be apprehended by Ignatius, as those of the Romans: yet, tho’ in this journey from Asia, he wrote to the Ephesians; to the Magnesians; to the Trallians; to the Philadelphiens; and to the Smyrneans, as well as to the Romans; yet it was from the Romans alone, that

he feared any obstruction to his martyrdom, and whom he entreats to forbear it; to the rest he signifies no fear of hindrance from them, nor any request, that they would not attempt to give him any: which clearly shews, that the hindrance, which he so much dreaded, was not to arise from prayers, but some other means, which were peculiarly practicable to the Christians of Rome, and of no other Church whatsoever.

I have already explained my sense of the passage in question, in the Free Inquiry, and shewn, that the request of the Martyr, related to the intercession and interest, which the Christian brethren of Rome proposed to make among their friends and fellow citizens to preserve him from his cruel fate. And this I have confirmed by the express testimony of the original narrative of this martyrdom, written by persons, who were present at it, and who for that purpose had accompanied the Martyr from Asia. I have added the authority also of Dr. Cave, a writer in the highest esteem with these admirers of the primitive Fathers, who in the Life, which he has written of this Saint, gives the same interpretation to the case now before us. Yet all this is of no weight with Dr. Dodwell, who contends the notion of any interest or intercession that could be made for the life of the Martyr, as extravagant and impossible, and what will not bear an examination [1], and goes on to observe with great gravity, that Ignatius was sentenced by the Emperor him-

self, who was now absent from Rome, and had left no authority there which could mitigate the punishment: that no interest whatsoever could avail against an Imperial decree, nor, all the power of the Court of Rome prevent the Saint from being thrown to the wild beasts, when Trajan had commanded it: so that the only possible method of saving him, which remained, was a miraculous interposition in his favour to be obtained by the efficacy of prayer. This is the sum of his reasoning, by which he confirms his Father's interpretation: and this the examination, which my account of the matter will not bear: yet it is all trifling and declamatory, grounded on loose conjecture, and an imperfect knowledge of the history of those times, as I shall presently shew, by opening a little more explicitly the real nature and circumstances of the case.

These persecutions of the Church, as the writers observe, were frequently brought on and forced as it were upon the Government, by the rage and clamors of the populace: whose hatred to the Christians, was ever exerting itself by seizing and dragging them to the tribunals of the Magistrates, and calling loudly for vengeance and punishment upon them: and when this spirit was once raised it was not easily appeased till it had drawn on a general persecution. This we may suppose to have been the case under Trajan and his successors the Antonines, the most virtuous and just of all the Roman Emperors, yet all of them successively persecutors of the Church. It was the same fort
sort of indulgence to the humour of the populace, which
obliged all the Emperors on some of the greater Festivals
to entertain them with public shews and sports in the Cir-
cus and Amphitheater, the chief of which were the com-
bats of Gladiators and of wild beasts, and the production
of notorious criminals to be thrown to those beasts. This
at present was the unhappy lot of the Christians, whom the
mob were often demanding to be produced on these oc-
casions for their sport; and for this Ignatius, as the leader
of the Christians in Asia, was now sent to Rome, to be
exposed to the beasts in the Ampitheater, for the delight of
the Roman people, as the Emperor Trajan, who condemned
him, is said to have expressed it [1]. For one of those
Festivals was now approaching, for the celebration of which
the diversions above mentioned were always provided and
supplied from all the provinces of the Empire.

When Ignatius approached towards Rome, guarded all the
way by soldiers, the Christians who came out to meet him,
offered to employ all their interests and endeavours to pre-
vent his execution, by moving the people, when assembled
in the Amphitheater, to join with them in a common cry
and demand to have his life spared. This was agreeable
to the custom of Rome in these very shews; where in the
combats of the Gladiators, tho' the conquered party was
doomed of course to die, yet if he had behaved so, as to
excite the compassion of the people, and raise a general


clamor
clamor in favor of his life, it was always granted to the demand of the assembly: and as the chief end of all these shews was to keep the multitude in good humor, so the case was the same with regard to persons condemned to be thrown to the beasts: where if the mob had taken a fancy to reserve the life of any one in the same manner, they would certainly have been gratified in it.

This was the experiment, which the Christian brethren proposed to try in favour of Ignatius; nor was the proposal improbable: their number was now considerable in Rome, and many of their friends and acquaintance might have been prevailed with to assist in so compassionate an attempt: so that when an infirm old man came to be produced in the Amphitheater, incapable of giving them any diversion, by any sort of resistance to the beasts, the Christians hoped, that the united voice of their whole party, strengthened by the help of particular friends, as well as of many others, whom compassion would naturally join to them on such an occasion, would be of force enough to procure the life of the faint, from the presiding Magistrate: who from the nature of his office was intrusted always of course with a discretionary power of gratifying the people in any demand of that sort.

I shall now leave our Doctor to the quiet possession of his Father's proofs, as he calls them, which he may hang up in his parlor with the escutcheons of his arms, as a record of perpetual honor to his family, by enabling them to boast
of an ancestor, who by his singular skill and sagacity, had recovered to the Christian Church, after a succession of seven centuries an illustrious miracle, wholly unknown and unobserved by all the primitive Fathers. Nor can I omit on this occasion to take notice of the management of Dr. Church, with respect to these Dodwellian proofs, for since they came from his partner's Father, he thought it improper for him to meddle with them, and contented himself with the satisfaction of seeing them defended at large, as he says, by the learned, judicious, and ingenious Jon [1]. In which he gives us a little specimen of the arts and craft of these Answerers: for tho' by dropping the defence of those proofs, he betrays a consciousnes of their weaknesses, yet he excuses that step with such complements to the Defender of them, as may persuade a common reader, that he takes them to be really strong and completely defended, which yet he dares not venture to affirm.

There is another article, or two, relating to the miraculous gifts of this age, which it will be proper to clear up, before I take leave of these Apostolic Fathers. I have observed in the Free Inquiry for the prevention of all unnecessary cavils, that if from any passages which may be found in these Fathers, it should appear probable to any; that they were favored on some occasions, with extraordinary illuminations, visions, or divine impressions, I shall not dispute that point with them, but remind them only, that

the gifts of that sort were merely personal, and did not in any manner relate to the question before us [1]. But in this, my adversaries insist that I have overthrown my whole argument. "Are not these, says Dr. Church, the instances of miraculous powers? and if there were any such after the days of the Apostles, does not the new scheme fall to the ground [2]?") Yes; I own them to be of a miraculous kind, if, as Dr. Dodwell says, they be real [3]. Who, by that expression, seems to entertain some doubt about them himself, but whether they be real or not, it is certain, that they are nothing to the purpose of our present controversy; as not being the effect of any standing power granted to the Church, for the conversion of the Heathens. All that I have allowed or supposed in this case is, that there may be a passage or two in these Apostolic writers, of a dubious signification, which weak and pious minds, persuaded of the frequency of divine impulses and illuminations, indulged to private Christians, in all ages of the Church, may imagine, to denote something of that extraordinary kind. Yet if they should be strictly interpreted to that sense, the very matter of them would render the notion contemptible to all men of judgement. In one of these passages, St. Ignatius intimates, that he had been instructed by the Holy Spirit, concerning the divisions of the Church of Philadelphia [4]. And in another, St. Polycarp, by means of a vision,

[4] He is my witness, for whose sake I am in bonds, that I knew nothing from...
vision, is said to have foretold his own death, and the manner of it, three days before it happened [1]. To which I can

from any man. But the Spirit spake saying on this wise; do nothing without your Bishop. Epift. to the Philad. §. vii.

[1] Socrates also, as Plato relates, had a vision, while he lay in the public prison under sentence of death: in which a beautiful woman appeared to him, and calling him by his name recited this verse of Homer.

"Πρινεί τε χειρα τε ψινε ινειδων ιελιεν. II. IX. v. 363.

Upon this, he declared presently to his friend Crito, that he was certainly to die on the 3d day: which fell out accordingly. His vision therefore was as prophetical as Polycarp's, and equally confirmed by the event: yet they both probably flowed from the common source of all such dreams or visions; the strong impression, which the sense of their uneasy and uncertain condition, perpetually occurring to their waking thoughts, would naturally leave upon the fancy even in sleep. Some Critics of great name seem to have been puzzled to discover, how Socrates could collect from this verse, that he was to die on the 3d day; and have imagined it to be intimated to him by the word Pthia, as being derived from the verb ψινεω or ψινεω, which carries in it the sense of perishing and dissolution. But it was the natural and literal sense of the verse, as it was spoken by Achilles, that gave him the hint; in which Achilles, on account of the affront which he had received in the Grecian camp, declares himself resolved to quit it and return to Pthia, his native home, where a voyage of three days would land him safe and peace. This Socrates took to himself as an admonition, that he likewise should be at his home, in the same time; for his philosophy never considered this earth as his home, but promised him another world, where the souls of the just after death were to enjoy a perpetual state of peace and felicity.

Again: it is said of Polycarp, that he was a prophetic teacher, and that every word that went out of his mouth, either had been fulfilled or would be fulfilled. [See Martyr. §. xvi.] The same is said of Cicero, by Corn. Nepos, who personally knew him, and long survived him. Such was Cicero's prudence, says he, that one would imagine it to be a kind of divination: for he foretold not only those things, which happened, while he himself lived, but gave warning, as a Prophet, of the things, which we now see in common practice. [Vit. Attic. 6.] Now Cicero's predictions are ascribed only to his prudence, Polycarp's to inspiration. But
can apply nothing better than what Mr. Toll has already said in answer to Dr. Dodwell on this very point; where after a brief review of the nature, the subject, and the evidence of these predictions, he adds; to cut off therefore at once all reasonings and inferences about them, let it be understood, that we dispute the facts [1].

But on this article of visions, I am charged by my adversaries with a gross inconsistency: for after I have declared the pretended visions of these Apostolic writers to have no relation to my argument, yet in the progress of my work, I have taken much pains in combating the credit of such visions as having a close connection with it. How are these things reconcilable? says Dr. Church, visions and revelations are one of the few kinds of miracles, which he examines. If such visions, &c. do not at all relate to the present question, then all that part of the Inquiry, where these are considered, no less than sixteen pages, are nothing to his purpose [2]. Yet these things are all consistent, and reconcilable at once to every one, who does not, either willfully or inadvertently, overlook the true state of the fact.

It is allowed on all sides, that the Apostolic Fathers make no mention of any standing miraculous powers, as in-

where's the difference? Polycarp foretold his own death, or some calamity perhaps, which was likely to happen to the Church. Cicero foretold the important events and revolutions, which happened after his death to the greatest Empire in the world: for the defence of whose liberty he sacrificed his life.

dulged to the Church in their days: and that the visions,
which are ascribed to them, are collected only from an
incidental hint or two, of an obscure and precarious mean-
ing: and as such visions also were only of a private and
personal kind, without any use or effect towards the con-
version of the Heathen world; so it is evident, that they
could not in any sort belong to the question in dispute.
But in the following ages, when an appeal was expressly,
constantly, and openly made by all the Fathers, to a per-
petual power of working miracles, as actually subsisting
among them; and to which the Heathens themselves were
invited to come, and be eye-witnesses: and when in the
catalogue of these miracles, visions and prophecy are particu-
larly enumerated, as common in the Church; and
granted to women, and boys, and all sorts of Christians
whatsoever; then visions became the proper subject of my
work, and required an examination of them, as well as
any other gifts, which are claimed by the same Fathers.
This is the genuine state of the case, which clearly shews,
that the inconsistency with which it is charged, flows wholly
from the blunders and inattention of those who charge it.
But there is another argument still for the miraculous
powers of this age, which our Doctors have kept in re-
serve, as their forlorn hope, in order to rally, and renew
the fight, with it, if their first attack should prove unsuccess-
ful. They were aware, that all the positive evidence
of miracles, which could be drawn from the Apostolic Fa-
thers,
thers, would be found too weak at last, to make any impression in favour of their opinion: so that after all the pains, which they have been taking to push that sort of proof as far as it would go, they now change hands; take up the contrary side of the question, and attempt to confute me by that very silence of these Fathers, with which I had been pressing them. Cicero in one of his youthful orations, speaking of certain witnesses, whom he had been examining, says; *tacendo clamant*; he condemns the expression afterwards, as too puerile; but the application of it made here by our Doctors is certainly much more so. No proof of an affirmative kind can reasonably be drawn from mere silence, whatever force it has with regard to facts of history, is chiefly negative, oftener detracting from their credit, than adding any strength to them in the present case; therefore, when we reflect, that immediately before the times of these Apostolic Fathers, miracles are allowed to have subsisted in great abundance; yet that the said miracles have long since been withdrawn, at some time or other which remains still unknown, and unsettled, we cannot be at a loss to determine, whether the silence of half a century, which immediately succeeded to that age of miracles, should incline us rather to believe, that they were continued still to the Church, thro' that silent period, or that they were actually withdrawn at that very time and no other.

Dr.
Dr. Dodwell, on the other hand, reasons thus; "If their silence were as total and uniform, as Doctor M. contends, it might be urged strongly on our side of the question. For it is scarce credible, that they should no where take any notice of so great and sudden an alteration, as must have happened, if the principal leaders of the Christian cause, and Governors of the Church had all at once been deprived, in those times of adversity, of the privileges and succours, which common converts enjoyed in the generation immediately preceding [1]."

Now it is granted by all Protestant Doctors, and in particular by these two: that the Governors of the Church were in some age or other actually deprived of those miraculous succours, which their predecessors had enjoyed, yet the time, when this alteration happened, is a secret, which, as Dr. Church says, it is very difficult and perhaps impossible to us, to discover [2]. And if I should ask the reason, he would tell me presently, because the Fathers, as if ashamed to tell us how they had forfeited those favours, were wholly silent on that article. And thus Dr. Dodwell's argument is utterly confuted by fact and experience as well as their own concessions.

But the most remarkable circumstance in the present question is, that tho' all Protestants are agreed in allowing and believing, that after the third or fourth century at least, all true miracles actually ceased, yet in all the suc-

ceding ages, there is not a single leader or Governor of the Church, who either owns any such cession, or does not in the most grave and solemn manner attest the continuance of them in great abundance to his own age. Wherefore, as the silence of the Apostolic Fathers is singular, and not to be found in any other age whatsoever, from the days of the Apostles, down to the time of the Reformation; so that their circumstances and characters, we may imagine, were singular also, and unlike to those of every other age: by being destitute of those extraordinary powers, which their predecessors the Apostles had enjoyed; yet unwilling to supply them by forgeries as their successors are supposed, and the greatest part of them allowed to have done.

Thus we see, how these Doctors, after all their efforts, to strain and wrest to their purpose, two or three obscure passages of these Apostolic Fathers, have not been able to draw out the least proof, of the subsistence of any miraculous powers among them; especially of those, which are the proper subject of this inquiry. For this is a distinction, which I find myself obliged to repeat, since all these Answerers, who appear to have known nothing of the state of the primitive miracles, but what they learnt from my book, have not yet learnt from it, as in the first place they ought to have done, a right state of the question. The position, which I affirm, is; that, after the days of the Apostles, no standing power of working miracles was continued to the Church.
Church, to which they might perpetually appeal for the conviction of unbelievers. This is what the title of my work implies; what my whole reasoning turns upon; and what I have often signified in the course of it, to be my precise meaning. Yet all my antagonists treat my argument, as if it absolutely rejected every thing of a miraculous kind, whether wrought within the Church by the agency of men, or on any other occasion, by the immediate hand of God. That God can work miracles whenever he pleases, no body, I dare say, will deny; but whether he has wrought any or not, since the days of the Apostles, is an inquiry, which I do not at all enter into: the single point, which I maintain, is, that the Church had no standing power of working any.

This distinction was seen at once by those writers, who have appeared in the defence of my book, and who have justly rebuked these Answerers for their neglect of it; as being necessary to a right management of the dispute, and obvious to every reader [1]. Yet in defiance of this admonition, they still declare it to be a mere evasion and subterfuge, never intended by me at first, but an after thought, contrived to elude the force of some objections, which were found to press me [2].

The distinction however, tho' just and clear, was not marked out by me, for the sake of any advantage, which I might derive from it to my cause, for I know none,

which it could give, but merely to shorten the dispute, and
to prevent unnecessary wranglings, on facts and instances,
which do not belong to it. For tho' I have no better opin-
ion perhaps of the Miracles, said to have been wrought
without the Church, than of those, which are affirmed to
have been performed within it; yet as I confine my argu-
ment entirely to the latter sort; I would not be drawn
away, to an examination of facts, forcin to my purpose,
and but little regarded at present in the Christian world,
from my more important task, of dissolvins a chain of pre-
tended Miracles which at this very day enslaves and ties
down the whole Christian Church, to certain doctrines and
practices, which tend to debase the simplicy of the Gos-
pel, and to give a superstitious turn to the piety and
devotion of it's professors. If my adversaries therefore had
paid a due regard to the distinction just mentioned, it would
have saved them some trouble in many instances, and espe-
cially in the story of Polycarp's Martyrdom, and the Mi-
racles which accompanied it: on the defence of which they
now exert all their zeal, declaring them to be decisive, and
to have utterly overthrown my whole Scheme [1]. Where-
as in truth, whatever be the real character of them, they
are nothing at all to the purpose, as being neither wrought
by any standing power in the Church, nor carrying any sort
of evidence, that any such power was then subsisting in it.


But
But if these Miracles have no relation, as I say, to the present dispute, it is asked, for what reason then did I introduce them into it? To which I answer, that it was for no other, than to expose the trifling and frivolous nature of them; and to shew, how fondly the Christians of this early age were disposed to give a miraculous turn to every unusual incident, which might happen to take place on any important and affecting occasion. My manner of introducing them declares my contempt of them; and I thought, that a bare recital of them would render them as contemptible to others as they appeared to myself [1]. But I have misled my aim with these Answerers, who have the confidence still to affirm, that I do not dispute the reality of them, but leave them in possession of Miracles, as great and wonderful as any in the Christian Church; that I stand convicted by my own concessions and by acknowledging the genuineness of the Epistle, confirm the genuineness of the facts related in it: than which nothing can be more senseless and absurd. For tho' I call that piece one of the most authentic in all antiquity, I shew at the same time, that I am not declaring my own opinion, but that which was generally held of it by the Church: and when I mention the advertisement annexed to the end of it, concerning the miraculous discovery of the same piece by a revelation from Polycarp, will any imagine, that I could believe so silly a fiction, tho' I made no reflection

upon it? No, I took the very mention of it, as I have said, to be a clear detection of its forged character.

Wherefore all, which I now propose to add on the subject of this wonderfull Martyrdom, shall be restrained to the article of the Dove, said to fly out of the wound, that was made in the body of the Saint; this all my Antagonists give up at once as incredible, and consider it either as the blunder of the transcriber, by putting one word for another; or as an interpolation craftily inserted into the text, after the time of Eusebius, who, in the abstract, which he has given of this same narrative, takes no notice of this flight of the Dove. They are all aware, that if this article should be thought genuin it would overthrow the credit of all the other Miracles in the same narrative; which for that reason they take great pains to clear from this fable, as they call it, which yet in defiance of all their efforts, will, upon a fair and critical examination, appear to be as authentic a part of the original piece, as any other miraculous fact related in it.

The first edition of the entire Epistle was published by Archbishop Usher, with the passage of the Dove in it, from a Latin version, the oldest copy, as he tells us, of the whole piece, that was anywhere extant; supposed to have been written soon after the time of Eusebius, and to be the same, which is mentioned to have been publicly read in the Churches of France, till the sixth century: which Copy Archbishop Wace also declares to be so well attested, that
we need no further assurance of the facts which it contains [1]. All the Greek copies are of a later date, than the Latin version, yet all of them retain this article of the Dove: and from a collation of thefe the learned Cotelerius and Ruinart published their several editions of this fame Epiftle; both of them tho' Papiists, very candid and judicious inquirers into the genuin monuments of Christian antiquity: and in the laft edition also, set forth by that eminent and protestant Critic M. Le Clerc, who was never suspected either of superftition or credulity, the Dove still keeps it's place, without any reflection or cenfure upon it by the Editor.

Archbishop Wake indeed has omitted it in his English Translation, for which he makes the following apology: “I confess, I am so little a friend to such kinds of Miracles, that I thought it better with Eusebius, to omit that circumstance, than to mention it from Bishop Ufber's Manuscript. And indeed besides the strangenes of such an adventure, I cannot think, had any such thing truely happened at his death, that not onely Eusebius should be ignorant of it, but that neither St. Hierom, nor Rufinus, nor the Menaia of the Greek Church should not have made the leaft mention of it. Wherefore there must have been either some interpolation, or because that does not appear, it may perhaps be better accounted for by the miftake of a single letter [2].” This miftake M.

Le Moyne has endeavoured to correct by an ingenious emendation; which some of my Antagonists lay hold of, and others reject and prefer the notion of an interpolation as the best solution of the matter \[1\].

There is one reflection however added here by the Archbishop, which might have induced him, one would think, to have given us this story as intire, as he had found it in all the editions; for if it has any weight in it, it refutes at once all the vain conjectures of these minute Critics, and proves the circumstance of the Dove to have been an original part of the manuscript. For he observes, upon the authority of M. Le Moyne, that Lucian, in his raillery on the death of Peregrinus, who voluntarily committed himself to the flames, in the sight of all Greece at the Olympic games; and out of whose funeral pile he makes a Vultur to ascend, is supposed under the character of that frantic Philosopher, and his Vultur, to ridicule the Martyrdom and Pigeon of Polycarp \[2\]. The reflection is allowed by the Archbishop to have something of a foundation: and men of sense, I dare say, will think it to have a good one, when they consider, that the death of Peregrinus happened about the same time with that of Polycarp; and that Lucian was contemporary with them; an Apostate from Christianity, and ever after it's bitter enemy; and taking all occasions, to deride the doctrines, the rites, the credulity and superstition of it's professors. There is a second observation:

\[1\] Ch. p. 277. \[2\] Wake's Prel. Disc. p. 57.
intimated also by the same Archbishop, which seems to give a further confirmation to the genuineness of Polycarp's Dove: for he refers us, in a marginal note, to Prudentius, who celebrating, in one of his hymns, the Martyrdom of a noble Virgin, called Eulalia, makes a Dove to fly out of her mouth, at the very moment, in which she expired. Now a fiction of so strange a kind would hardly have been hazarded, one would think, by so pious a writer, if there had not been a precedent for it, in the more famous Martyrdom of Polycarp.

There is nothing now left, to discredit the story of the Dove, but the silence of Eusebius with regard to it; whose account of this Martyrdom is allowed to be the oldest of any other whatsoever. But it must be observed, that Eusebius does not give us here the entire narrative, but an abstract of it only, or an abridgement, proper to be inserted into his general history; in which the writer, according to his own discretion and judgement, always omits whatever he thinks insignificant, or unnecessary, or of suspicious credit, or improper to be offered to public view. In the abstract then; which was not written by him till about two hundred years after the fact, he has thrown out many passages which he found in all the earlier copies, and which are still found in all the modern editions, and among the rest, even one of the miraculous kind, in which the body of the Saint is said, to have stood in the midst of the flames, not as flesh, which is burnt, but as bread, which is baked.
baked [1]. Now the sentence here omitted, is found in all the editions, in common with the article of the Dove; yet is not imputed to any mistake, or interpolation of a later date, but to the design and choice of the compiler, who might think the comparison of Polycarp's body in the flames with bread baked in an oven, too coarse and unnatural to deserve a place in his History.

But whatever reason Eusebius might have for the omission of this passage, he had certainly a much greater for the omission of the Dove. The copies of this narrative appear to have been very rare, so that the scandal which this particular story might have given, had not yet reached far, but lain dormant as it were and obscure among a few only: but if Eusebius had transcribed it into his History, it would soon have been spread into all hands, and even of the chief persons of the Empire, which was now become Christian. We cannot doubt therefore, but that he willfully dropt it out of his abstracit, as these champions are now endeavouring to throw it out of all the copies: yet not on the account of it's being a mistake or interpolation of any transcriber, but because every body would see it to be a most flagrant and shamefull fiction. In short; as the story is of a kind, which was much more likely to be dropped, when found in any copy, than after it had been dropped to be recalled into it again; so it is not credible, that, after so great a man as Eusebius had published the narrative itself without it, any

one would have the hardines to insert or interpolate it, if it had not been found in all the other copies, which lay dispersed in different hands, and believed to be a genuine part of the original piece. As to the silence of the later writers about it, it is of no weight at all: they followed only the transcript of Eusebius, and were glad to get rid of so ridiculous a fiction, when they had so good an authority to plead for the omission of it.

I shall now dismiss the miracles of Polycarp's martyrdom, on which, tho' they have no relation to the question in dispute, and are in themselves utterly contemptible, my Aniwerers lay the greatest stress, as if they were subversive of my whole argument. They have my leave however, to enjoy them and insult me with them as much as they please; but will find in the end, that the more pains they take to hold them up, the more they will hurt their own cause and strengthen mine. Since men of sense will never be brought to believe that any true Miracles could be subsisting in that age, which has no better specimen of them to give us, than this: nothing but a perplexed and patched up story of a few trifling facts, of a precarious interpretation, which may reasonably be imputed to the fiction of an Enthusiastic piety, ever flattering and deluding itself with a vain persuasion of the present influence and interposition of the Deity.

And that this will certainly be the fate of these Miracles is confirmed to us already in some measure by the authority
rity of a very learned and judicious writer, who, without any respect to the present controversy, treating on the proper credibility of Miracles in general, and taking occasion, in the course of his argument, to confider the narrative of Polycarp's Martyrdom, finds it necessary to declare, from the impertinence and inconsequence of the miraculous facts related in it, that there is great reason to be jealous of the veracity of the compiler, and just ground to suspect the credit of a story, in which we see, that there has been tampering [1].


N. B. The Martyrdom of Bishop Hooper, in the Reign of Queen Mary, is compared by the Compiler of it, J. Fox, to that of Polycarp from a similitude of several circumstances, which are ascribed to them both. I thought it proper therefore to present the reader with a short abstract of it, and a reflection or two to illustrate the comparison.

When this Bishop was fastened to the stake, and the officers were going to bind his neck and legs with hoops of iron, he utterly refused them, as Polycarp is said to have done, and would have none; saying, I am well assured, that I shall not trouble you, and doubt not, but that God will give me strength sufficient to abide the extremity of the fire. The fire did not presently kindle, being made of green faggots, which were mingled with reeds to quicken them; at length however it burned about him, but the wind having full strength in that place, blew the flame from him, so that he was no more but touched by the fire. Within a space after, a few faggots were brought, and a new fire kindled with them, which burned at the nether parts, being driven about by the wind, save that it did burn his hair, and scorch his skin a little.—When the second fire was spent, he wiped both his eyes with his hands, and, beholding the people, said with an indifferent loud voice, for God's love, good people, let me have more fire. All this while his nether parts were burning, but the faggots were so few, that the flame did not strongly burn his upper parts till a third and more vigorous fire being kindled some time after, put an end to his life. Thus he stood three quarters of an hour or more in the fire, even as a lamb, and patient-
As to the testimonies of the succeeding Fathers, which come next to be considered, it is agreed on all sides, that they strongly and explicitly affirm the continuance of many extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers, as constantly exerted in the Church through each succeeding age. On this head, then my answerers allow, that I have fairly and truly abode the extremity thereof, neither moving forwards nor backwards, nor to either side, till his neither parts being burnt, and his bowels fallen out he died as quietly as a child in his bed. See Fox Chronicle, vol. iii. p. 156.

Now there is as much reason to imagine a miraculous interposition in the Martyrdom of this Bishop, as in that of Polycarp. The flame blown all about him by the wind, scorched his skin, yet burnt his hair; which shews, that in some turnings of it, it must have made the resemblance as it were of an arch, as it is said to have done around Polycarp, or it could not have had that effect of burning the hair of his head, while it only scorched his body, which may be said therefore, as truly as Polycarp's, to have stood in the midst of it, not as fish, that is burnt, but as bread that is baked. But when the second fire was found ineffectual to burn him, if the executioner had then dispatched him with a sword, there would have been a better pretence for a Miracle, than in the case of Polycarp: for he suffered the trial only of one fire without being burnt, but this Martyr of two. There is another circumstance observed by the Historian, which made Polycarp's Martyrdom less grievous than this of Hooper, for when the fire did not burn, they minished a quick dispatch to Polycarp by a sword, moved probably by some compassion, but the tormentors of Hooper suffered him without compassion, to stand three quarters of an hour in the fire. As to a voice from heaven to encourage the Martyr, whatever use it might be of in Polycarp's case, there was no occasion for it here: Hooper had an assurance within his own breast, which he accordingly declared, that God would give him strength to endure the extremity of the fire: and the event shewed that such strength was actually given to him, and that his declaration therefore was prophetic: and the patience and fortitude with which he bore his sufferings, may justly be thought as miraculous, as of any the most celebrated Martyrs of the primitive ages.
drawn out all the principal testimonies, which relate to our question, and enumerated all the extraordinary gifts and powers which these Fathers declare to have subsisted among them. Nay instead of charging me with the suppression of any, their sole exception is, that I have added one to the list, which does not belong to it, and which none of the Fathers have any where claimed, *vix.* the gift of expounding the Scriptures. As this therefore is the onely point which these Doctors here dispute with me, and which, as we shall presently find, is a point of no small importance to my main argument, so it will be necessary to employ a little pains in examining and clearing up the truth of it: where by opening the ground and reason of ascribing this gift to the Church, I shall shew the reason also for which my Adveraries so stifly reject it.

*Irenaeus,* speaking of the miraculous powers which were frequent in his time, says; we hear many in the Church indulged with prophetic gifts; speaking with all kinds of tongues; laying open the secrets of men for the public good; and expounding the mysteries of God [1]. Now as by the mysteries of God, which are said here to be expounded in the Church, nothing else can reasonably be understood, but the mysteries proposed to us in the scriptures, so in a recital of this gift in another part of my work, I call it the gift of expounding the scriptures; as I think myself warranted to do, by the manifest sense of the words, which

[1] 2. vi.

seem
seem incapable indeed of any other. Dr. Dodwell on the other hand declares; that in all the passages that I had cited, he does not find any such claim of an extraordinary power of expounding the Holy Scriptures. Irenæus indeed speaks of expounding the mysteries of God, but says not one word of the Holy Scriptures [1]. Dr. Church affirms the same thing, and says; that in looking over the accounts, he finds nothing like any claim to a miraculous gift of expounding the Scriptures [2]. But what a pittyfull way of quibbling is this? the word, scriptures, is not expressly mentioned in the testimony, therefore, the gift of expounding them cannot be implied in it. But if the mysteries of God, do not mean the same thing, I should be glad to know what other meaning they can possibly have: for tho' our Doctors reject this, they give us no other in it's place, but leave the words to shift for themselves, and the reader to take them in what sense he pleases, provided, that he does not take them, for the mysteries of the Gospel, which it is their business to deny.

But besides this passage of Irenæus, from which alone the thing itself may fairly be inferred, we learn from the express and direct testimony of Gregory, called the wonder-worker, that the gift of expounding the Holy Scriptures was actually claimed and reckoned as one of the most esteemed and excellent gifts of those primitive times; and was poured out, in the largest measure, upon his Master Origen.

Vinification of

His words are; Origen has received this greatest gift: from God, with an abundant share of it from heaven; to be the Interpreter of the words of God to men; to understand the things of God, as if God himself were speaking, and to expound them to men, that men also might hear them.

This then is the gift, to which we are referred by Irenaeus, whose words cannot possibly be understood of any other, unless we suppose those early ages to have been entrusted with some secret mysteries, peculiar to themselves, and unknown to their Successors, and which God had not thought fit to reveal to us in the sacred Scriptures.

St. Paul calls himself and his fellow laborers, Apollos and Cephas, the heralds or dispensers of the mysteries of God: and in another place, alluding to the doctrines of the Gospel, great, says he, is the mystery of godliness. God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. Again, speaking of the Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, he calls them, the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. I could mention several other places, where the mysteries of God, or of his will, or of the Gospel, are applied by Christ himself;

to denote the doctrines taught by the Gospel; And surely a divine faculty of expounding the mysteries of God, which run through both the Testaments, and constitute the noblest and most sublime parts of each, must have been one of the most useful and important of those miraculous gifts, which are pretended to have been indulged to those primitive ages. Since the mysteries of God then, as they are mentioned by Irenæus, must be understood to refer to the same mysteries, which are affirmed by Christ and his Apostles, to be revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, the gift of expounding them cannot possibly signify any thing else, than the gift of expounding the most abstruse and difficult passages of the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament.

This point being thus settled, it opens my way to the defence of another, which I had affirmed in consequence of it; that Justin Martyr lays claim to this gift of expounding the Scriptures, as indulged to him in an extraordinary manner, by the special grace of God. In proof of this, I have alleged three several passages from Justin himself, which I took to be strong and express to my point, and which had led several learned men before me into the same opinion. But with these more learned Doctors, my three testimonies from Justin are nothing at all to the purpose, nor imply the least claim to any extraordinary gift; they insist, that I wholly mistake the matter, and through my ignorance of the proper sense of the words, imagine them to signify something divine and supernatural, when they signify nothing more than the
the ordinary grace of God, and the ordinary assistance of the Spirit, common, as they say, to all believers, and what every good Christian was intituled to as well as Justin [1]. And here indeed I must confess the ignorance, with which I am charged by them of the proper sense of these expressions, the ordinary grace, and the ordinary assistance of the Holy Ghost. They are used, I know, frequently among Christians, but chiefly by that sort, who know not what they mean, or rather mean nothing at all by them. But when Doctors of Divinity apply them, in the way of proof or argument, they ought surely to define the precise meaning of them, or otherwise, we cannot judge of the propriety of what they pretend to deduce and infer from them. I looked therefore into Dr. Doddridge's book, to discover, as well as I was able, in what sense I might suppose him to have applied these phrases; but instead of any satisfaction, I found nothing there but perplexity and confusion. He says, "that the word ἁπάξ or grace is never used to describe a supernatural gift, but known to mean that ordinary cooperation of the Holy Spirit with our bent and deavours, which is common to all believers; yet in the next words he treats it as having no meaning at all, but as a common way of speaking, which pious persons accustom themselves to, of ascribing every good thing, which they possess, to the grace of God: and so Justin, he says, when he speaks of his knowledge of the Scrip-

"tutes, as wholly obtained by grace, produces such in-
terpretations of them as appear to have been drawn
from his reason: yet in contradiction to all this, he de-
clares at the same time, that the assistance of the Spirit,
being a power added to our nature, may therefore in
some sense be called supernatural [1]."

Dr. Church is just as confused, as his partner, in his
account also of this ordinary grace: he reasons upon it
through a page or two, without giving us any hint of
what he means by it, and without knowing it, I dare say,
himself. The sole explication which he attempts of it is,
that in general it is necessary to open men's understandings, that
they may understand the Scriptures, and embrace the truths of
the Gospel contained therein, but implies nothing infallible, or mir-
arous, or anything more than what any one might attain by
his own power [2], and enjoy if he would. Now the onely
idea, which I can form of the meaning which these Doctors would have us give to their phrase, of ordinary grace, is,
that we should take it for a principle, neither absolutely
natural, nor supernatural, but of a mixed kind between
both, and partaking alike of each: for under that charac-
ter, it would be of excellent use in Theological controver-
sies, where the disputants might make something or nothing
of it, just as their argument may require; might advance it to supernatural, when it wanted any help of that sort, or when it demanded the contrary, might depress it to the

state of a mere human faculty. Being thus prepared and enlightened by the instruction of these Doctors for a right interpretation of the passages alleged from Justin, I now proceed to a particular review and examination of them.

On the first of these passages, Dr. Dodwell observes, that I have not cited the whole, but referred to it enely, for which reason he thought it necessary to translate the whole at large, which he has accordingly performed in the following words: "I will endeavour, says Justin, in his conference with a Jew, to explain to you the Scriptures, without laboring to shew merely any artificial ornament of language; for I have no talent of that sort, but grace enely is given to me of God, to understand the Scriptures, of which grace I will pray, that all may be freely and fully partakers, that I may not for this, be liable to judgement, in that dispensation of it which God the Creator of all things will exercise by my Lord Jesus Christ [1]."

Now in this passage Justin declares, that in the interpretations of Scripture, which he was going to lay before the Jew, he had no power or faculty of adorning them by any artful or elegant composition of words, but that grace alone was given to him by God, to understand his Scriptures. ... And here I shall once more affirm; that this is the express claim of an extraordinary gift, and that the context also, from which our Doctors labor to draw a contrary sense, clearly

[1] Dod. p. 62, con-
confirms mine. They insist on the other hand, that Justin had not the least thought of claiming any extraordinary endowment in this place, or any thing more, than such a knowledge of the Scriptures, as every good Christian might acquire by his own strength as well as Justin: for he was not obliged to pray, says Dr. Dodwell, that all might be inspired, if he had spoken of his own proficiency in the Scriptures in that sense; but he thought himself bound to pray, that all might be favoured with the knowledge of those sacred writings [1]. But the most surprizing circumstance in this case is, how the notion of Justin's praying, as the translation here makes him to do, could enter into the Doctor's head; or how it was possible, for any man, who has the least tincture of Greek, to translate the word ὑποκάμαξαὶ, by I will pray. A verb, which implies no sort of reference or allusion whatsoever to prayer, or to any act or office, which can be addressed to God, but to man only, in the sense of exhorting, admonishing, and entreating, &c. but besides this blunder; which is of the grossest kind, he makes a second also, and that no slight one, in the same verb, by giving it the sense of a future time, when it absolutely indicates the present. Dr. Church indeed has rightly translated the verb, by I exhort and beseech all, to become partakers, &c. but the turn which he gives to the whole, and the inference which he draws from it, is the same with his Partner's, weak and false. They both rea-

ton upon it in the same manner; the one, that Justin could not have prayed; the other, that he could not have exhorted the Jews, with whom he was discoursing to partake of a gift, which they could not acquire by any endeavours of their own: for to exhort a man to acquire what is not in his power, is a flagrant insult upon him. But Justin's exhortation carries no absurdity of that sort in it, but confirms the sense, which I have given of his claiming here a divine and extraordinary gift: to which he immediately adds, of which grace, thus given to me, I exhort you all, without reward or envy, to become partakers, that I may not be found liable to punishment in the day of judgement. Where the exhortation has no sort of reference to the acquisition of any gift, either ordinary or extraordinary, nor any other meaning than to move them to take the benefit of that gift, which was given peculiarly to Justin, by attending to those interpretations, which he was offering to them, and embracing that true sense of the scriptures, which he was now qualified to teach them. For on what other account could he be apprehensive of any punishment from God at the last day, but for the neglect of imparting and communicating to others the benefit of that extraordinary gift, which had been indulged to himself of unfolding and explaining the mysteries of God; of which duty he was now discharging his con-

science, and throwing the guilt upon those only, who refused to pay a proper regard to it.

There are two other testimonies, which I have produced likewise to the same purposes and from this same dialogue, in one of which Justin says to the Jew; *Do you think, that I could ever have been able to understand these things from the Scriptures, if by the will of their author, I had not received the grace to understand them [1]?* In the other place, speaking of Christ, as the sole revealer of the Father to all those who know him, he says, he has revealed to us therefore all those things, which, by his grace, we have understood from the Scriptures [2]. But to these testimonies our Doctors answer, that Justin is not speaking here of himself, but of the whole body of the Christians. The words ἡμῶν and ἐπισκοπὰς are plural, says Dr. Church, and seem plainly to relate to the Christians in general [3]. And Dr. Dodwell has taken care to distinguish the plural sense in his translations of them. Yet they might have observed, that one of these same testimonies, begins with a plural verb, which yet cannot admit any other interpretation, than of the singular number, as being addressed only to the single person of Trypho. And this indeed is a common custom with all writers, to use the plural terms we and us, when they expect to be understood as speaking only of themselves. Dr. Dodwell himself will supply us with many instances of it. Speaking of my opinion, he says, it appears to us to

be a dangerous error. And in several places we find him saying; if we were disposed to make reprisals; if we interpret strictly; this might strongly be urged on our side, &c. [1]. If I had a mind therefore to trifle here, as these Doctors do, I might contend that Doctor Dodwell could not be the author of this book, but the secretary only of some little Synod, who jointly compiled it, for the plural expressions which he so frequently uses; it appears to us, &c. are the true synodical style, and cannot be applied to a single person; were I disposed therefore, I say, to cavil and divert the reader from the proper subject, I should not be more impertinent than these Doctors have actually been; for as it is nothing to my purpose, whether Dr. Dodwell's book was written by himself or with the assistance of friends; the matter of it being what alone I am concerned with; so it is not more to the purpose of these Doctors, whether Justin speaks here only of himself, or of a number of Christians: for if he affirms either of himself or of all, that they were inspired by God with the right interpretation of his Scriptures, that is the whole, which I contend for: and that he actually does affirm it, will appear, I think, unquestionably to every man unprejudiced, who considers the joint force of the three testimonies, which I have produced in the proof of it: and yet Justin is not talking of any common or ordinary points of the Scriptures, but of the most abstruse and recondite passages of the Old Testament, in which, as in a veil, the chief evidences of the Messiah were

were supposed to have been wrapped up. The same testimonies, as I have already hinted, have ever been understood in the same sense, which I have given to them, by all men of learning, who have any esteem for the Antient Fathers; and especially by those, who were the most eminently acquainted with the principles and monuments of primitive Antiquity. Thus the learned Halloix, in his Life of Justin, affirms; that in his Dialogue with Trypho he several times declares, “that the gift of understanding the Scriptures, was conferred upon him in a divine or extraordinary manner; and that so great and beneficinal a talent, intrusted to his hands, made him extremely solicitous, left it should prove unfruitful, and be kept up by him as an useless and hidden treasure [1].” Mr. Tillemon also, who, of all men, has published the most exact and voluminous collection, of the writings, the doctrines, the characters, and the lives of those primitive Fathers, observes, “that of all the extraordinary graces, which the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the Church in those times, there were few so considerable, as that of understanding the Scriptures, which was communicated by singular favor to Justin [2].

This then will appear at last to be the genuine case of the gift of expounding the Scriptures or the mysteries of God. It is expressly attested by Irenæus; was ever reckoned among the extraordinary gifts of those times; was

A Vindication of

called especially by Justin; and is affirmed to have been largely poured out upon Origen. Yet the most learned and inquisitive of our Protestant Divines, and even those, who pay the greatest reverence to the characters of the Fathers, are forced to confess, that they cannot discover the least instance or trace of any such gift in the writings of those Fathers; but on the contrary, that their interpretations of the Scriptures are generally so unnatural, and extravagant, that instead of being the dictates of a divine inspiration, they seem to be the effects rather of an unfound mind and disordered reason. Wherefore the falsehood and imposture so manifestly discovered, and even confessed in the claim of this particular gift, must needs leave a strong suspicion, upon the authority of all the rest. Yet these shall be heard likewise for themselves, nor be implicitly condemned, till they have had a fair trial. For which purpose I shall proceed to review two or three of the principal of them, and examine, what pretensions they can justly make to that credit and belief which they still generally obtain among Christians.

The next miracle, which I propose to examine is, that of raising the dead. Which Irenæus expressly affirms, to have been frequently performed in those days on necessary occasions, by great fasting and the joint supplications of the Church of the place: and that the persons be raised had lived afterwards among them many years [1]. Now on this article, as Dr. Dod-

well rightly observes, *there is great stress to be laid* [1]. I shall lay as much upon it therefore, as he pleases; shall consent, that the issue of the whole may rest upon it, and that the proofs and evidence of this capital Miracle, may determine the fate of all the rest.

By way of objection to this testimony of *Irenæus*, I had observed, "that if a Miracle of so surprising a nature had been so frequent, as he declares it to have been; performed, as it were in every parish, or place, where there was a Christian Church, it must have made a great noise in the world, and been celebrated not only by the Primitive Fathers, but by all Historians or Writers of those times [2]." But here they cavil a while at the frequency, which I ascribe to this Miracle: To *suppose this Miracle, says Dr. Church, to have been common in every place, where there was a Society of Christians, or a Church, is a mistake grounded on a false construction of Irenæus's words* [3]. Which, tho' confidently affirmed and repeated by him, is utterly false. *Irenæus* attest it, as we have seen, to have been frequently performed on necessary occasions, by the fasting and joint supplication of the Church of the place: which words, as they limit it to no particular place, so they necessarily imply it to have been common alike to all places, wherever there was a proper occasion, and a Society of Christians to pray for it; which is the very sense, that I had given to them. And from the same words, Mr. *Dodwell,* the Father, has inferred, that the instances of this Miracle

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were
were more numerous in this age, than in that even of the Apostles: They raised the dead, says he, in the Apostolic Churches, yet we have few examples of it, in the genuine acts of the Apostles; but in Irenæus's days, they raised not a few, but very often [1].

As to the other part of my objection, that so wonderfull a fact, if it had been frequent, must have made great noise in the world, and been celebrated by all writers, they treat it with much contempt. "Who should be expected to record these instances? says Dr. Dodwell, the Heathen Historians would not, if they had known and believed them, for it would have been an act of self-condemnation in them; neither would Christian Historians, if such there had been; for this would have been drawing down unnecessarily persecution upon those particular persons; when a general assertion of the facts would serve their argument as well [2]." "By what Historians, says Dr. Church, would this gentleman have had these Miracles celebrated? By Jewish or Heathen ones? this was not to be expected. Could they have disproved such accounts, no doubt but they would have been glad to do it, and we may depend upon it, that this had been done; but to celebrate them, was what they were little inclined to, if indeed they gave themselves any trouble to examine them [3]." Another of my Answerers argues also in the same strain: "'Tis not probable, says he, a Heathen Historian would have related such a fact, had he known [1] p. 42. [2] Dod. p. 72. [3] Ch. p. 186."
"it. 'Tis equally improbable, he should know it: "seeing the Christians knew, with whom they had to "do; and that, had such an instance been made publick, "they would not long have enjoyed him, who had been "given back to their prayers [1]." The reader surely must think it strange, that men who know any thing of human nature, or the history of past ages, can reason at so wild a rate, or imagine, that an Heathen, tho' he had seen the fact performed before his eyes, could resolve to stifle the impression, and persists to deny the reality of it. Had the Heathens no curiosity, no love of truth, no desire of knowledge in points of the highest importance? Yes; they possessed those principles in a very great degree. The Superstition and Idolatry of the popular religions, had long been contemned by all the wise and virtuous among them, who were perpetually searching after a more perfect and excellent rule. These searches gave birth to various sects of Philosophy; some of which maintained the existence, the unity, and providence of God; the immortality of the soul, &c. Others also taught the same doctrines, but as probable only, not certain: while some still doubted, and even flatly denied them all. On these points therefore, continual disputes and arguments were carried on, in all the politer parts of the Heathen world; and especially in Greece and Rome; so that, in such circumstances, the sight of a person raised from the dead, offered

[i] p. 114.
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in such a manner, as carried with it a demonstration of its reality, must have been, of all spectacles, the most desirable to a sober and inquisitive Heathen; as it would have settled all their disputes, and corrected their philosophy at once; and convinced them all, not only of the certainty of a resurrection; but of that very sort, which all philosophy had ever held to be impossible, the resurrection of the body.

Mr. Millar, in his History of the propagation of Christianity, a work particularly recommended to his readers by Dr. Church, observes, "that by the good providence of God, philosophy began to flourish among the Heathens, a little before the coming of Christ, which was of great use to refine the minds of men, and render them capable of receiving the celestial and sublime truths of the Gospel." But these narrow minded Answerers, whose thoughts never reach farther, than the contrivance of an expedient, how to clear themselves of a present difficulty, insist; that an Heathen, tho' he had been an eye-witness of so striking a fact, and entirely convinced of its truth, yet, in spite of all conviction, would have been insensible of the force of it, and incited only, to persecute and destroy the particular actors in it. Nay, their whole representation of the matter tends to persuade us, that if the Heathens had been invited to see the Miracle performed in their presence, they would have knocked the man down,

as soon as he began to rise, and smothered him again in his grave, before he was got out of it.

Such nonsense as this, which they would put upon us here for argument, can hardly fail of persuading every intelligent reader, that a claim of Miracles, which wants such a defence, must necessarily be fictitious: yet they proceed with great complacency, to confirm it by several curious observations. "We may observe in the next place, " says Dr. Church, that this Miracle differs from others in one thing; that there is no occasion for it's being openly performed. Because Infidels, who never had an opportunity of seeing it, yet if they have sufficient evidence of it, ought in reason and conscience to believe it. And sufficient evidence of it's reality may easily be had, even tho' no one witnes was present at the working of it [1]."

This observation indeed is new and purely his own; never heard, I dare say before, or thought of by any man, but is so contrary to all the notions, which History and experience have taught us on this article, that I cannot help wondering, whence it could come into this Doctor's head, or what facts and instances he can have to ground it upon. If the end of all Miracles be to create faith and conviction: and if when performed before our eyes, they impart a stronger conviction, than an hundred witneses can give, who had not seen them, it cannot be the peculiar difference of the greatest of all Miracles, that it need

be reported only; not seen; and that, in distinction from all other Miracles, it should require our belief, upon the testimony even of those, who themselves had not seen it:

for surely, the more uncommon and surprising the nature of any miracle may be, the more it will always want to be openly performed.

In the history of the Gospel we find the Miracles of this kind, which were wrought by our Lord, to have been performed by him, in broad day light and the midst of crowds. Thus in the City of Nain, the widow's son was raised from the bier, as they were carrying him to his grave, in the sight of much people: so that the rumor of it went forth through all Judaea, and all the region round about [1]. The daughter also of the Ruler was raised by him in such a manner, that the fame of it is said to have gone abroad into all the land [2].

And in raising Lazarus, Jesus lift up his eyes, and said; Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me. And I knew, that thou always hearest me; but because of the people, which stand by, I said it, that they may believe, that thou hast sent me. Upon which many of the Jews, who had seen the things, which he did, believed on him [3].

What was it then, that could possibly suggest so crude an observation to our Doctor? Why nothing; but the character of this very primitive Miracle, which we are considering as it is stated and described by Irenaeus. With this indeed his observation perfectly tallies: for this, we must

own, was of a kind, which had no occasion to be openly performed: the very report of it rendered it suspected, and the production of it would have blasted it. For as they themselves allow, it was not designed for the public, nor the conversion of the Heathens; but to be performed only in the dark, among a few of the faithfull; on certain necessary occasions; which are neither specified, nor discoverable to any man. All which is so palpably contradictory to the character and effects of this particular Miracle, that it can hardly fail of convincing every reader, that the original claim of it was false; and the instances of it, which are said to have subsisted among the Christians, mere fictions, contrived by the crafty and political, to feed the credulity of the pious and the simple.

But in what ever light we consider the account of this Miracle, as it is given and defended by Irenæus by these Advocates, it will appear to be nothing else but a ridiculous and contemptible tale. For since the conversion of the Heathens, the most important of all ends, and to which all other Miracles were chiefly applied, was not intended by it, what necessary occasion could there be for it, among the private and dispersed Societies of the Christians, or what cause of weight enough, to engage a whole Church in a course of fasting and prayer for the performance of it? The Christians of this age, instead of being fond of life, were longing to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; were thirsting after an immortality of glory,
glory, and offering themselves forwardly to Martyrdom, that they might obtain it a few years the sooner: they wanted no Miracle for the confirmation of their faith; the firmness of which was the ground of God's favour to them, and of their own fortitude, in suffering those persecutions, to which it exposed them: they were persuaded of the resurrection of the body, and to pray therefore, to see an instance of it, would not have been an act of piety, but of levity. And to suppose, that a whole Congregation should be induced to fast and pray, that a departed friend, or parent, or husband should be restored to life, to relieve the present grief, or gratify the fond affection of particular persons or families, cannot be thought a necessary occasion, or an end worthy of the interposition of God.

Then as to the persons, who were so raised; they could not possibly receive any imaginable benefit from a favour so extraordinary: for after they had been delivered from all the troubles of this life, it must have been an occasion of misery and mortification to them, to have been thrown back again into the midst of them: and when they were arrived at their journey's end, and within the reach of that bliss, which had been the object of all their hopes, and the end of all their wishes, to be thrust back from it again at the very moment of fruition, must have been a disappointment, of all others, the most grievous to a pious soul. And for this, what amends could they receive in being restored to so wretched a life, as they must have led from the time
time of their resurrection; seeking perpetually, and hiding themselves among a few friends, since if they happened to be discovered, they were sure, as these Answearers tell us, of being destroyed by the Heathens.

But after all these evasive expedients and senseless conceits of these Doctors, it is not possible, from the nature of the thing, that this Miracle could have been concealed; or that the persons, who were raised, and lived many years after it, could live undiscovered by the Heathens. In every place, where there was a society of Christians, whether in a City, Town, or village, the Heathens were by far the majority, and surrounded them on all sides; so that a Christian could not die, or be carried at least to his grave, without being observed by some or other of his Heathen neighbours, much less could he be called again into life, without astonishing all those, who had ever seen or known him before, and whose astonishment would presently have been communicated through the whole neighbourhood; and as the same miracle is affirmed to have been written indifferently in every place, where there was a necessary occasion, and a number of Christians, to fast and pray for it, so the same of it must needs have reached, as far as the Gospel itself was then spread.

It is allowed however in the present case, that the Heathens knew nothing at all of the matter, but constantly held the fact itself to be impossible, which I have urged as a clear proof, that they had never seen or heard of it's
being performed, except in such a manner, as carried with it a suspicion of fraud and collusion. But *this profession*, says Dr. Dodwell, was the very thing, which prevented their attending to it at all; for they could not think, that they needed particular circumstances to disprove that, which they thought impossible in itself [1]: which, like all the rest of his remarks on this article, has neither sense nor force in it. For let us suppose the claim of this same Miracle to be made by any Christians in our own days; in which there is not a single Protestant of any judgement, who is not as strongly professed, as the Heathens antiently were, with a persuasion, that no mortal now living, nor any number of them, can possibly raise the dead. Yet if he were well informed, that it had been done by any particular congregation, and upon an invitation to see it done by the same, should there receive a full conviction of its reality, by seeing a person actually raised from the grave before his own eyes; he could not help adoring the power and majesty of God, in a work of so wonderfull a nature, and revering at the same time the sanctity of those men and their prayers, by which God was moved to interpose, in so extraordinary a manner. And this the Heathens themselves would certainly have done in the same case; a Miracle of this sort offered to the conviction of their senses, would have stilled all their prejudices at once, how strong soever they had been: for human nature was ever the same in all ages; and it was as impossible, for men of judgement, to with-  

stand the clear evidence of their senses in antient times, as it is, for men of the same character, to reject it in the present.

But I had offered one objection to the reality of this miraculous gift, which, of itself, I take to be decisive, and a sure proof, that the claim of it must have been false. The objection is this; "that in the very same age, in which Irenæus declares this Miracle to be often performed, and that persons so raised had lived afterwards among them many years; yet when Autolycus, an eminent Heathen, challenged his friend Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, to shew him but one, who had been so raised among the Christians, with a promise of turning Christian upon it himself, Theophilus discovered by his answer, that he was not able to give him that satisfaction [1]. Dr. Dodwell allows this objection to be plausible, and the most to my purpose of any in my whole performance [2]. And in order to refute, or at least to weaken its force, recurs to his usual expedient of affirming, that I have mistaken the answer of Theophilus, given a wrong turn to it, and misrepresented it in several points; to confirm which, he gives us a translation of the whole; cooked up to his own sense in the following words.

"Farther, you deny the resurrection of the dead. For you say, shew me even one raised from the dead, on the sight of which I will believe. But in the first place, [1] Free Inq. p. 73. [2] Dod. p. 79. what
"what great thing is it, if you do believe, what you see yourself. Farther, if you can believe, that Hercules, that burned himself, does still live; and that Efulapius, that was killed by lightning, was raised again; can you disbelieve the things, which are reported to you by God himself? In like manner, if I should shew you one raised from the dead and still living, even this you would disbelieve, &c. [1]."

From this passage, as it is here translated, the Doctor attempts to shew, that Autolycus's demand was, not to see a person, who had been raised from the dead among the Christians, but to see one actually raised upon the spot, and in his presence, by Theophilus himself; and that the only point, which he was here speaking of was the general resurrection of the dead; which he at present denied, but owned he would believe, if he could see an instance of it [2]. An interpretation wholly foreign to the purpose, and utterly inconsistent with the genuine sense of the words. For the first part of them, which chiefly relate to the point in question, should be rendered thus: But farther, you deny, that the dead are now raised; for you say, shew me but one, who has been raised from the dead, and by seeing him I will become a believer.

This is the indisputable sense of the words, and exactly conformable to the representation, that I had given of them: in which we see a plain reference to a report, which was then current and affirmed by all the Christians.

of those days, that there were several persons actually living among them, who had been raised from the dead. This was the fact, which Autolycus could not believe, and on which therefore he required satisfaction from his friend Theopilus, by seeing an instance produced before him of any one, who had been so raised: in which Theopilus, how defirous soever he might be, to gratify him, was not able to do it. Every school-boy would readily tell us, that ἔγειρεν ἐγείρεσθαι [1], denotes an action of the present time, ἔγειρθαι one, that is past. Yet our Doctor to support this poultury shift, of putting the general resurrexion upon us, as the sole point here referred to, has quite reversed the matter; and of the two capital words, on which the force of the whole sentence turns, has given a future sense to that, which indicates the present, and a present, to that which indicates the past; and to say the truth, his whole translation betrays either such a bigotry, as will not allow any sense, in any words, which does not tally with his own prejudices; or such an ignorance of the Greek, as is incapable of discovering what their sense really is.

But what surprizes me the more in this translation, is, that it flatly contradicts his Father's exposition of it, from which, as being the same with my own, I hoped to have gained some little authority with him in an argument,

[1] Our Lord uses the same form of expression, in his answer to the message sent to him by John the Baptist; where among the other proofs of his Messiahship he adds ἔγειρεν ἐγείρεσθαι, the dead are raised up. Matt. xi. 5. which
which he owns to be plausible. In other instances, we have found him stiffly adhering to the interpretations of his Father, and strenuously defending them, tho' manifestly erroneous; which I could not help imputing to his piety, and zealous regard for the reputation of a learned and worthy parent. But what shall we say to him now, when we find him rejecting his Father's sense, and declaring it to be wrong, tho' it be demonstrably right, and what he ought to have embraced, if it had come from an adversary. His Father perfectly knew, that the participle, ἐγερθεὶς, could not possibly mean any thing else, in its proper and grammatical sense, but a person, who had already been raised from the dead: but the son affirms it to signify one, who was about to be raised, or in the act of rising, which shews, that he had nothing of that filial tenderness, with which I had imagined him to have been induced, but the true spirit of a controversial zealot, whom neither the authority of Grammar, nor of a Father, nor of truth itself can move, whenever they thwart the System, which he had undertaken to defend.

But that Autolycus's demand wholly relates to a person, who had been actually raised, is proved beyond all doubt by Theophrastus's answer to it, as it stands here translated, even by the Doctor himself: for if I should show you one, says he, raised from the dead, and still living, even this you would disbelieve: which directly corresponds with that sense of it, and cannot possibly do so with any other. As to
the character of Autolycus, we know nothing more of it, than what may be collected from the writings of Theophilus, who addressed three books to him, containing an Apology for the Christian religion, drawn with a particular view of satisfying Autolycus's scruples, and making him also a convert, as Theophilus himself was. From his familiarity and friendship with this eminent Bishop, we may justly infer, that he was of a candid, reasonable, and inquisitive disposition; a contemner of the Idolatry and Superstition of the public religion, and desirous to embrace a more rational worship if he could anywhere find it. In these circumstances Christianity was proposed to him, to which he seems to have been inclined, but the miraculous pretensions of the Christians appear to have shocked him, and infused certain scruples, which were first to be removed. He could not believe, that they had the power, of which they boasted, of raising the dead; or that there were any persons then living among them, who had been so raised: this was the point, in which he required to be satisfied; and if Theophilus would shew him an instance of any such person, so as to convince him of the reality of the fact, he promised to turn Christian upon it [1].

[1] Dr. Dodwell, with his usual obstinacy, flatly denies, that Autolycus makes any such promise, in the passage above recited; yet the words themselves are express, in the sense, and cannot possibly be interpreted to any other sense: and we find the same verb ἀνάμιμως, continually applied in the New Testament, in the same manner, to denote a man's becoming a believer, not of this or that particular point, but of the whole faith of Christ. Mark xv. 32. ἐν τῇ ἀνάμιμως ἀνάμιμως. Matt. xxvii. 42. John ix. 38. ἐν ἑαυτῷ, ἀνάμιμως, &c.

The
The demand was certainly reasonable, and suitable to the character of a discreet, and sober inquirer. And if the claim of this Miracle had been true, as it is affirmed by Irenæus; it could not have been difficult to have produced one; nor could there have been an occasion more worthy of it, than the conversion of an illustrious and virtuous Heathen, who sought and offered to become a believer on that very condition. Nor can we imagine, but that Theophilus, who was taking so much pains to convert him, and addressed three books to him with that very view, would not have been glad to have gratified him in this request, if it had been in his power, and so procured his conversion at once. For it is very remarkable, that Theophilus does not excuse himself from giving the satisfaction, which was desired by alledging, what these modern Advocates take it into their heads to suppose, that the persons who had been raffled some years before were now dead again the second time; nor does he plead any difficulty in the production of an instance, on account of their being all dispersed and removed to any distant countries; and much less, would he have said, what our ingenious Doctors have contrived to say on this occasion, that the production of such a person, would have exposed him anely to perfection, or to have been knocked on the head upon the spot; but he infers only, that if he should produce one, Autolycus would not still believe it. Which shews, that all their pretended instances of this great Miracle were of a kind, that
that could not stand the test of a fair examination, nor give any satisfactory proof of their reality, to a candid and impartial inquirer. And this opinion will be the more clearly confirmed to us, by considering the shuffling, futile, and inconsistent account, which these Doctors have given of the conduct of Theophilus.

Dr. Dodwell, who by a gross mistake contends, that Autolycus's demand was, to see the Miracle of raising the dead, performed before his eyes by Theophilus himself, tells us, "that to ask, why such a power was not granted on this occasion, for the satisfaction of Autolycus, is entering into the counsels of Providence, who might have good reasons for not vouchsafing this method of conviction to him. That after the other evidence, which had been offered to him, it might not be indeed proper to offer a Miracle for his conviction. But that if such a Miracle had been wrote in his presence, he would have found some way or other to evade it; would probably have suggested, that there was a confederacy, between them, or have imputed the recovery to the force of art, or offered some such evasion, as hardened infidelity can always suggest [1]."

Dr. Church observes, "that Mr. Dodwell, the Father, thought this answer of Theophilus a proof, not only that this Miracle had then ceased, or at least was no longer common; but also, that those, who had been raised,

[1] Dod. p. 78. 84.

L "had,
had, in the space of forty years, been dead again.
Which suppositions answer the difficulty, and are neither of them disproved by me. However, it must be owned, adds he, that Autolycus's demand was unreasonable, especially, if the case be, as Mr. Dodwell's son has endeavoured to shew, that Autolycus's demand was to see one raised from the dead in his sight, and not one, who had been raised before; which would have been little or no satisfaction to him. By this way of considering the passage, the foundation of the objection is removed. On the whole therefore, tho' Theophilus did not produce any instance of this Miracle, to gratify the vain humour, and idle curiosity of his Antagonist; this cannot set aside the positive and express testimony of Irenæus [1]."

Such is their way of refuting a positive fact; by a number of suppositions, either wholly vain and fancifull, or grounded on their own blunders and ignorance of the subject, which they are treating. The fact however is incontestable. Autolycus demanded to see a person, who had been raised from the dead; could not be gratified in that demand, for which our Doctors think it a sufficient apology, to say; "that Providence might judge it improper, to give that conviction, to his vain humour and idle curiosity; that there was evidence enough of another sort, which ought to have convinced him; and if a


"Miracle
"Miracle had been wrought for the purpose in his presence; he was such an hardned Infidel, that it would have made no impression upon him." Whereas the whole, which we can fairly collect, either of the nature of the man, or of his demand, is; that he was a candid inquirer after truth, and ready to embrace it, wherever it could be found; and that his demand, instead of being the effect of any idle humor or curiosity, was the result of a serious and deliberate intention, to become a convert to Christianity, if he could be convinced only of this single point, that there were any persons then living among the Christians, who had been raised from the dead. And the sole inference, which we can reasonably draw from the inability of this Bishop to give him that satisfaction is; that there were no such persons then in being: and consequently, no such miraculous gift then subsisting in the Church, how positively for ever it may be attested by Irenæus. Theophilus lived in the same age with him; and tho' we should suppose him to have been somewhat younger, and to have lived some years longer, yet if the Miracle itself had ceased, after it had been exerted for some short time, according to the testimony of Irenæus; or if the persons, who had been raised in the days of Irenæus, were all dead again before Theophilus wrote, it is certain, that he would have mentioned either the one, or the other to excuse his want of power to satisfy his friend. But he had no such excuse to make; and the conceits of this sort, to which our mo-
modern Advocates now recur, are but the vain expedients of men, laboring to prop up a lame cause, unable to support itself, by the help of fictitious circumstances, of their own invention.

Besides all these various improbabilities, which appear upon the very face of this miraculous gift; I have observed, that it stands upon the single testimony of Irenæus [1], and is not mentioned or referred to in any manner, by any of the succeeding Fathers, through the three first centuries: which circumstance alone seems to be sufficient to blast its credit. For it is scarce possible to conceive, if this gift had really subsisted in Irenæus's days, and in so full a measure, as he affirms it to have done, that all the later writers, and the Apologists especially, could have omitted the mention of it, or suffered the memory of a fact, so reputable to their cause, to have been lost and buried in oblivion, when they make it their business to display, in the strongest terms, every other miraculous power, which they pretend to have been indulged to them from heaven; of casting out Devils, curing diseases, prophetic trances, &c. This, I say, might reasonably incline us to suspect, that this attempt of some of the more crafty Christians, to assert and keep up a pretension to this primary Miracle, having been found vain and impracticable, and without any other effect, than of drawing the greater derision and contempt upon them from the Hea-

[1] Free Inq. p. 188.
thens, they prudently chose to drop and bury it for the
future in utter silence.

I have further observed, that in the earlier times also,
after the days of the Apostles, there is no intimation of
the subsistence of this Miracle in the Church, except in a
single instance, found in the writings of Papias, which
Eusebius, who slightly touches it, seems to rank among the
other fabulous stories, recorded by that weak man [1]. But here
my Anfwerers flatly contradict me; "Eusebius, says Dr.
Church, cites Papias as saying, that this Miracle had been
done in his time. Neither can I discern the least doubt
or distrust in the Historian, tho' this Gentleman is
pleased to say, he seems to rank it among the other fabulous
stories, delivered by that weak man. And however weak
Papias was, he may be a good witness of such a fact:
no wisdom was here required [2]." Another of them
says, it is plain, that Eusebius was not diffident about the Mi-
rracle of raising the dead, related by Papias, nor ranks it among
fables [3]. I shall employ a few words therefore to clear
up the state of this fact.

Eusebius, in the chapter of his History here referred to,
sets forth the particular character of Papias and his writ-
ings, of whom he says; "that he was a diligent collec-
tor of unwritten traditions, which he gathered chiefly
from those Elders, who had conversed with the Apost-
tles; especially from John, the Presbyter, and Aripphan:


and.
and besides these, he relates some other wonderfull things on the authority of tradition; particularly a story reported to him by the daughters of Philip, of a dead person, who had been raised to life; and another story, of Jesus, surnamed Barjaban, who happened to drink a cup of deadly poison, yet by the grace of God received no harm from it. After which, he goes on to tell us, how Papias, from the same source of unwritten tradition, had recorded some strange parables and doctrines of our Lord, and several other fabulous tales: especially that, of a corporeal and sensual millennium, in which Christ was to reign with the Saints upon this earth, for a thousand years after the general resurrection; which he describes to the mistake and blunder of Papias, who grossly and literally interpreted, what the Apostles had delivered in a typical or mythical sense. For Papias, says he, was of a very shallow understanding, as is evident from his writings; yet the greatest part of the Ecclesiastical Writers or Fathers, who succeeded him, were led by his authority into the same opinion, on account of the age of the man, as Irenaeus in particular, as well as every other writer, who affirms the like doctrines [1].

Now from this account let any unprejudiced man judge; whether Eusebius can be thought to have laid any sort of stress on an hearsay-story, as it was recorded by Papias, concerning a person unknown; who had been raised from

the dead; and whether he does not put it upon the same rank, with all the other strange parables and tales, which he mentions to have been delivered by the same weak man, and expressly declares to be fabulous, μυθωρία; this at least is certain, and sufficient for my purpose; that after the character here given, of the little understanding, and great credulity of Papias, no man of judgement will think his testimony of any weight in the present case; or venture to affirm, as Dr. Church has done, that bow weak sover he might be, be may still be a good witness of such a fact. For all that can be allowed to such a character is, that he may be a very good believer of an hearsay-story; but to call him a good witness of it, is absurd, and contradictory to the common sense and experience of mankind.

But before I dismiss this instance of Papias, I shall just remind the Doctor once more, of what the learned Mr. Millar, his own favorite writer, has said, concerning the credit of his testimony, in a similar case of a questionable fact. "Tho’ many of the Antients, says he, have given "some ground for this story, yet it flows originally only "from Papias, called Bishop of Hierapolis, as cited by Eu-"sebius, for Papias’s books are lost. But if they were ex-"tant; according to the same Eusebius, the Author of "them was but a person of a mean character; a rude simple "and vain man, who believed and reported things upon common "tradition, even things, that were μυθωρία, like to fables "than truths. He was a millenary, and introduced fabulous
"stories into the Church, which a multitude of writers after him licked up [1]."

Thus we see, how the character of Papias stands between these two Authors, Mr. Millar, and Dr. Church; men of the same principles; of the same reverence for the primitive Fathers; and writers after each other's own heart. Mr. Millar, being led by his argument, to combat the reality of a fact, which was supported chiefly by the testimony of Papias, frankly sets forth the true character of the man, as it is represented by Eusebius, and shews him, to have been utterly void both of judgement and veracity, and unworthy therefore of any credit. Dr. Church, on the other hand, being engaged to defend a system, where the testimony of Papias is of some little use to him, resolves at all adventures to hold up his character, and how many lies ever may have been told, and fables invented by him, affirms him to be a good witness, even of a fact, which, of all others, is in its own nature, the most surprizing and incredible.

But to return to the Miracle, which we have been examining: it not onely stands, as we have shewn, upon the single testimony of Irenæus, but I have shewn also, that this single witness was of a character, on which we cannot reasonably depend for the truth of a report so extraordinary. I have shewn him to of be so credulous, superstitious and enthusiastic a turn of mind, as would dif-

pose him to embrace and asse r t any fab ulous tale, which tended, as he thought, in any manner, to advance the credit of the Gospel, or to confute an Heretic. That he has actually affirmed several facts, doctrines and traditions, as delivered down to him directly from the Apostles, which are allowed even by his advocates, to be absolutely false and groundless; all which I have confirmed by such clear and undeniable instances, as would utterly blast the credit of the most esteemed and eminent writer now living. In short, I have shewn him to be a second Papias, whose scholar he was; and by whom, as Eusebius tells us, he was imposed upon, and drawn to believe, and teach these spurious doctrines and traditions, with which his writings abound, and which his authority continued to impose like wife upon the Fathers, who succeeded him.

To these exceptions urged by me against the credibility of his testimony, our Champions have not attempted to give any particular answer: but since his authority must by all means be supported, or their argument would sink at once, they affirm still with one voice, that his testimony is superior to all exceptions; and they lay it down as an indubitable maxim; that the positive evidence of a witness, so pious and so sincerely devoted to the Christian cause, must necessarily demand our belief in all cases, how extraordinary or incredible soever they may be in their own nature: This is the general answer which they give to all objections of this kind;
kind; and on this maxim, as extravagant as it is, the merit of their cause and reasoning is entirely grounded.

And now I cannot help flattering myself, that every sensible and unprejudiced reader will be of the same mind with me, with regard to the claim of this primary Miracle, as it is set forth by the testimony of Irenæus. For if a strict and impartial examination can qualify me to form a proper judgement of it; or if I have any ability to distinguish between true and false; probable and improbable; I may safely pronounce, that there is not a grain of truth in it, nor a single circumstance belonging to it, which a free Inquirer, or a Free Answerer, if he was sincere, could justly think probable. As to my Antagonists, the impotence of their attempts to confute my argument is a strong confirmation of the truth of it. While they defend these Miracles to be true, their very defences prove them to be false; and while they assume to themselves the title of Free Answerers, their answers shew them to be slaves to systems, and lifted for the perpetual defence of received and established opinions, whether true or false. Lastly, since this is a point, on which, as Dr. Dodwell has observed, great fires ought to be laid; I here freely stake the whole merit and credit of my work upon it; and if this Miracle at last should be adjudged to be true, shall quit the field to my adversaries, and own myself unable, to prove any of the rest to be false.

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The Gift of tongues also, as well as that of raising the dead, stands upon the single testimony of Irenæus, without the least notice or mention of it in any succeeding writer through the three first centuries. I have offered several objections to the reality of it, sufficient to expose the falsehood of that claim, which is made of it by Irenæus, and shall now consider, what my Answerers have offered towards the confutation of those objections. I cannot help observing however in the first place, how ignorant they were of the nature of this particular gift, till they had acquired some little insight into it, from the perusal of my work. Before the publication of my Free Inquiry, the Answerers of my Introductory Discourse, affirm it to have been absolutely necessary to the propagation of the Gospel, and without which no success could be expected; and urge that necessity as a sure proof of its continuance after the days of the Apostles, and consequently, as a confutation of my general argument. And this indeed has ever been the universal sense of all Divines, without exception, from our Archbishops down to our Vicars, as oft as they had occasion to touch upon this subject in their Sermons or other Discourses, of which I could produce many instances, but shall content myself with one for the present.

The late Bishop Burnet, speaking of the Romanish millions of these later ages, among the remote and barbarous nations, says; "It is so sublime a mystery to think " on
on God, and his attributes and works: or to think of
another state, and the way, that leads to it; that till
God furnishes out a new mission of Apostles, with a
measure of those extraordinary gifts, which were poured
out on the great Pentecost, it is not easy to imagine
how the conversion of the Heathen nations should be
made. And since the chief grounds on which we
prove the Christian religion, are taken from the prophecies of the Old Testament, and their accomplishment in
the New—to the Barbarians, who know nothing of this,
and have no way of informing themselves concerning it,
all this proof can signify nothing. So that in order to
the convincing their understandings. I do not see, how
we should expect, that they should yield easily, unless there
were a new power of working Miracles, conferred on
those, who labour in it: for what noise soever their
Missionaries make, with their Miracles in those remote
parts, it is plain, that these are all impostures: for the
most necessary of all Miracles for the conversion of
strange nations being the Gift of tongues, with which the
Apostles were furnished at first; and since they are all
forced to acknowledge, that this is wanting to them, we
have all possible reason to conclude, that God would
not change his method, or qualify men to work wonders,
and not give them that, which is both the most
sensible and most useful of all others, towards that end,
for which he authorizes them [1]."

[1] Bishop Burnet's Pref. to Laërent, p. 12, 13, 14, 15.

This,
This, I say, was the established notion and character of this particular gift of Tongues, among all our Divines till the publication of the Free Inquiry. But since this has taught them, that, how necessary soever this Gift might be, it was either not continued to the Church after the Days of the Apostles, or withdrawn at least within a generation or two after, we now find our Doctors in a quite different tone, from all who wrote before them; and as if the nature of this Miracle had been wholly changed at once, treating it, as of much less use, than any other Miracle, and assigning that, as the very reason, why it was one of the first, which God thought fit to recall. "It might be serviceable, says Dr. Dodwell, in the propagation of the Gospel, yet was the least convincing of any to gain-sayers; and could be no proof antecedently to the unconverted. As soon as this use of it ceased, or was attainable by human means, the supernatural gift itself ceased also, and therefore ceased the first of any [1]." "This gift, says Dr. Church, would enable them to preach the Gospel to people of different nations, but would not evince the authority of their mission. If this be allowed, we shall soon discern the reason, why the gift of tongues might cease before other Miracles. When once a sufficient number of converts was made in any country, and instructed in the nature of our religion, these or at least the principal part of them, were ordained, and sent to teach their countrymen. And as they wanted

no gift of tongues, to enable them to do this, so we have
no reason to think, that God would continue such a Mi-
icole any longer than was necessary: whereas these very
persons might want and did want the assistance of other
Miracles then, not only to confirm the word, but to sup-
port themselves and others, who were eminent sufferers
for the truth [2].” Dr. Dodwell had given the very same
reason before him, and must therefore have the honor of it.
When the Apostles, says he, and others the first Martyrs
of Christianity, qualified with this endowment, had once
propagated the Gospel, and made converts in many places,
the natives of those places were able to carry on the de-
sign, and without any Miracle were qualified to teach
their own countrymen, in the several languages, wherein
they were born [1]."

Thus we see, how readily they can dress up an hypothe-
sis, and apply it presently as an allowed fact, to support the
opinion which they are defending. They suppose, that when
the first and gifted Preachers of the Gospel, had made a
number of Converts in any barbarous country, they imme-
diately left the whole care and administration of it, to those
barbarous Converts, who, by preaching the word to their
countrymen in their own native language, superseded all
farther use of the gift of tongues. A mere imaginary scheme;
without the least foundation in reason, history or experience!
The Jewish converts indeed, who were previously instructed

in all the main principles, on which Christianity is founded, might soon become masters of the mystery of the Gospel, and be qualified to teach it, as it was opened and explained to them by their own scriptures. But to converts of barbarous nations and strange languages, utterly unacquainted with every principle, which bore any relation either to Judaism or Christianity, the case was quite different, and to acquire a competent knowledge of the Christian doctrine must have been a work of much time and great difficulty, so as to be hardly attainable at all in any degree of perfection except to a very few: It is incredible therefore, that any of those Barbarians, though converted to a general belief and profession of faith in Christ, should ever have been intrusted by the primitive planters of the Gospel, with the important charge of converting the rest of their country, by preaching it, and administering its sacred rites and offices. Nay, experience has evinced the contrary, and shewn that either no such custom had ever obtained, or that it was wholly fruitless and ineffectual from the very beginning; since in all the barbarous nations of the world, no footstep has ever been discovered of any succession of native Preachers, nor any remains indeed of Christianity itself, though it is confidently affirmed to have been preached to them all. Nor have I ever read or heard, that any such method has ever been practised, or thought to be practicable, by the Missionaries of these modern ages, for how great soever their harvest may have been found, yet all the labourers in it
have constantly been supplied from time to time from Christian countries.

The first care of all modern Missionaries, in qualifying themselves for a due discharge of their mission, is by great study and pains to acquire a competent skill of the language of that country, to which they are destined, for without this, all their labors, they know, would be vain and fruitless. Francis Xavier, called the Apostle of the Indies, as I have elsewhere observed, complains in one of his letters, that he found himself to be nothing better than a mute statue among the barbarians, till he had learnt the rudiments of their tongue. This previous use of the language, acquired by the modern Missionaries, answers the purpose of the gift of tongues in the primitive Missionaries; and the arts and sciences with which they are commonly well furnished, supplies the place of their Miracles. For in barbarous nations, whatever exceeds that degree of power or skill in man, which they had ever seen exerted before, it will have the same effect as a miraculous gift, in exciting admiration, and a reverence to the persons who perform it. Yet, with all these qualities and endowments, managed with the utmost art and dexterity of Jesuitical policy, the whole, which the Romish Missions have been able to effect in China, where they have long had a sort of establishment, under the protection and encouragement of the Court itself, is, to compound the matter as it were between the two religions, by forming a motley sort of worship out of the rites of them both,
and humoring the genius of the country, so as to admit their Confucius to a partnership of honor with Jesus himself.

But let us return to the state of the primitive Church, in which the gift of tongues, according to the opinion of all Divines, has ever been held the most necessary of all others to the propagation of the Gospel. And this same necessity of it was so far from having been superceded in those primitive ages, that it continued in its full force through all the succeeding ages, and appears to be as much wanted at this day, as it was in the very earliest days, as it is confirmed and declared by the experience of all Missionaries. It is surprizing then, that these two Miracles of raising the dead and of Tongues, so useful and important to the cause of the Gospel, should vanish of a sudden and cease together so early in the Christian Church: and if one of them, as these Doctors contend, was withdrawn, because it was no longer of any use; how will they account for the cessation of the other, which as they themselves own, continued still to be useful and even necessary for those new converts among the Barbarians whom they talk of, and to whom the preaching of the Gospel was committed, tho' they had no occasion for the gift of tongues, yet wanted, as they tell us, the assistance of other Miracles on many accounts? And none surely could be more serviceable to them, than that of raising the dead. On the whole
whole then. After all the real difficulties, which are found on the one side, and all the evasive shifts, which are offered on the other, what can we reasonably think or say of these two Miracles, which are supposed to have been withdrawn, as soon almost as they were clamed, but what I have already intimated of one of them, that they never subsisted at all after the days of the Apostles, but having been rashly clamed by Irenaeus, or imposed upon him by others of more craft, yet found upon trial, too difficult to be maintained, were presently laid aside, and suffered to expire with their Author?

But I have offered one particular objection to the reality of this gift of Tongues, which I take to be of the greatest weight, as it is expressed by me in the following words. "It is very remarkable, that this primitive Bishop, who ascribes it so liberally to others, appears to have been in great want of it himself, for the propagation of the Gospel in his own Diocese among the Celts or Gauls; where, as Dr. Cave interprets his words, It was not the least part of his trouble, that he was forced to learn the language of the country, a rude and barbarous dialect, before he could do any good upon them [1]."

To this Dr. Dodwell answers, "that I mention this objection in such a manner, as betrays a conscientiousness, on my part, that Dr. Cave had here made a mistake, and said more for Irenaeus, than ever he had said for him-"
"self; yet because it founded for my purpose, I could not
pafs it over [1]." And in the next page he adds;
"Dr. Middleton did not chufe to take this interpretation
upon himself, but leaves it upon Dr. Cave, and we muft
place it among the few oversights of that excellent writer.--- But if this be a gross mistake, and nothing to his
purpose, he makes an observation of his own, on this
head, which he thinks important."--- Dr. Church answers also in the fame strain, and fays; "Our Author af-
ferts, that Irenæus wanted this Miracle himfelf for the
propagation of the Gospel among the Gauls--- and Dr.
Cave indeed fays, that this is plainly intimated by Iren-
æus, that he was forced to learn the language of the
country --- but Irenæus's words express onely, that he
was for the moft part employed in a barbarous language [2]."

For my own part, fince my interpretations, how right
and clear foever, are fure to be fuscpted and contradicted
by all writers of the fame zeal and genius with thefe
Doctors, fo I have always been glad, as oft as I have
found it in my power, to confirm them by the testimony
of some more favored Author, whose learning they admire, and whose principles and orthodoxy they reverence.
This I have done in the present cafe, by sheltering myfelf
under the authority of Dr. Cave, a writer after their own
hearts, and whose judgement is ufually decisive with them
in all cafes, and ought certainly to be fo in this, where

it appears to be unquestionably true. For in flat contradiction to these Doctors, I here affirm, that I was so far from being conscious of any mistake made by Doctor Cave, in his exposition of Irenaeus's words, that it then appeared, and still appears to me, as certain and demonstrable, that he has given us the true meaning of them, and the only one indeed, which they will bear.

This sense however, tho' plain and obvious, is rejected by our Doctors, it does not suit with their scheme: and Doctor Dodwell, according to custom, presents us with the whole passage, and his own translation of it, of which I shall here transcribe, as much as relates to our purpose.

"But you will not expect from us, who reside among the Gauls, and are chiefly engaged in a barbarous dialect, any artificial composition of words, which we have not learned; nor the force of an Orator, which we have not aimed at, &c." Now the words with which alone we are concerned, and on which the question wholly turns, are these, νον τοῖς ἑνὶ διάλεκτον τὸ πλεῖστον ἐξολοθρείων, which Dr. Dodwell has rendered, and are chiefly engaged in a barbarous dialect. A translation flat and inexact, and carrying no distinct sense or idea, which a reader will easily perceive; yet the words themselves have a force in them, which evidently declares their proper meaning, and which I translate thus; you will not expect from me, who reside among the Celts, and the greater part of whose leisure is entirely employed, upon a barbarous dialect, any artificial composition of words, &c.

Now
Now the single question arising from this passage is, *in what way could Irenæus’s leisure be so greatly occupied by this barbarous dialect?* to which Dr. Dodwell makes no other Answer but this, “If any man can find out in these words, ‘that Irenæus was put to difficulties in learning the language of the Gauls, he will discover, what I cannot perceive is alluded to. The words have no reference at all to that question; and if we were to draw inferences from them, ‘I think they would rather incline to the contrary [1].’” Dr. Church is somewhat more explicit, and tells us, “that his leisure may full as well be understood to have been taken up in using, and speaking, and writing a barbarous language, as in learning it. Nay the former, says he, is a better excuse, and more to his purpose, than the other would have been, as continually conversing in a rough and unpolished language, is more apt to spoil the style, than the learning it [2].”

But nothing surely can be more weak and frivolous, than this account of the matter. To imagine, that Irenæus’s leisure was taken up by writing this barbarous dialect, is quite ridiculous, for what can we suppose him to have written in it? Our Doctors perhaps would tell us, his Sermons; which they find a talk of some trouble to themselves: but these early Preachers had no such custom: were no slaves to the labor either of writing, or even composing them: they delivered with all simplicity, what they conceived upon the spot,

and poured out those lessons of piety and Christianity, which they themselves practiséd, and were desirous to infuse into the people. Besides; all the works, which Irenæus ever wrote for the public, and which remained after his death, are declared by all the Antients, to have been written in Greek: and the five books against Heresies, his capital work, is still extant in that language, which was his native tongue. So that his leisure could not be so much taken up by writing the Celtic dialect; and much less could the mere use of speaking it, or of preaching in it occasionally to the people, engross so large a share of it, as to be the occasion of that difficulty, and continual employment to him, of which he seems to complain.

But here, another question naturally occurs, in which the reader, by this time, may be impatient to be satisfied,—that is, by what means Irenæus could acquire the use of this barbarous dialect, which gave him so much trouble? On this head our Doctors are wholly silent: they do not chuse to affirm directly, that it was infused into him by inspiration; yet that is the thing, which they propose to insinuate; since they have not suggested the least intimation of any other way. But this notion of it's being the effect of the gift of tongues or of inspiration, is absolutely inconsistent with Irenæus's own account of it. A dialect infused by God could not possibly create any difficulty to him, either in learning, speaking or writing it, since the perfect use of it would be communicated at once, and it would flow from him as freely as his
his native tongue: much less can we imagine, that it would
debase the purity of any other more valuable or usefull
language, of which he was previously possessed, since that
would be a real injury to him, and while it enabled him to
preach the Gospel in one particular place, would render him
less able to preach it with the same force in another.

To sum up this argument therefore in a few words. Since Irenæus expressly declares, that the greatest part of
his leisure was employed upon a barbarous dialect: and the
word ἄχολογώς, which he here uses, implies a leisure particu-
larly devoted to litterary studies; and since he intimates
at the same time, that his continual attention to this dialect
had disqualified him in some degree from writing with any
elegance in the Greek tongue, it is impossible, that he could
be speaking of any language inspired into him, or of any
thing else, but of the necessity, which he was under of learn-
ing this rude dialect, to which he was an utter stranger,
by his own pains and study: a task of much time and la-
bor, and what would not onely create infinite trouble to
him, before he could acquire a free use of it, but would na-
aturally corrupt his stile and manner of writing in any other
language. And thus, after all the silly cavils and evasive
shifts of these answereers, Dr. Cave, we find, has given us the
true interpretation of this passage, where he tells us, that it
was not the least part of Irenæus’s trouble, that he was forced
to learn the language of the Celtæ, a rude and barbarous dialect,
before he could do any good upon them [1].

[1] Cave, p. 120. I have
I have dwelt the longer on this article, because all my antagonists insist, that these very Fathers, who attest the miraculous gifts of their several ages, were, above all other Christians, the most eminently inducted with them, tho' they themselves make not the least claim to them, but ascribe them always, either to the Christian people in general, or to mean and illiterate laymen, women and boys. For these Advocates of the miraculous gifts are very sensible, that it would go a great way towards destroying the general claim of them, if, while the lowest of the Christians are affirmed to have possessed them in a large measure, the Martyrs, Pastors, and Bishops of the Church should appear to have been in want of them, even for the necessary discharge of their pastoral functions; for which reason they attempt, as far as they are able, to invalidate the credit of this fact, or to elude the force of it at least, by several different expedients.

Dr. Dodwell observes, how in a testimony, which I have cited from Irenæus, it is said, "that all, who were true Disciples of Christ, wrought Miracles in his name; in which character Irenæus himself, and the rest of the primitive writers before him must be included, and that there was a plain reason why they should usually lay the stress on the meanest people, as working them, not as excluding their superiors, but because the mention of these, who were the least capable of craft and fraud, must be most convincing to Gainfayers---then he adds what he calls the true reason, why the Primitive Fathers did not mention themselves..."
"selves on this head, which really was, to avoid any offent-
tation, and to do the greater honour to Christianity,
by shewing, that the meanest of the Christian profes-
sors had the same gifts, when they happened to have any
contest with the Heathens [1]." Dr. Church also, accord-
ing to custom, entertains us with the same story, and says;
that tho’ some of these powers are represented as com-
mon to Christians in general, yet we may easily appre-
hend, that they were more eminently vouchsafed to the
Pastors and Governors of the Church, who were under
the greatest difficulty, and to whom the business of con-
verting the Heathen world peculiarly belonged [2]." And
if God was pleased to communicate such divine gifts at
that time to any persons for the benefit of the Church,
he would favor these principal persons with them. Some
indeed are said to have been imparted even to private Laymen.
But ’tis hard to think, while these possessed them, that
the Bishops and Martyrs of the Church should be without
them, and that those who succeeded the Apostles, in the
great work of propagating the Gospel, did not also suc-
cede them in being favored with Miracles. And the rea-
son, as he imagines, why none of these venerable Saints
made any pretension to them, either for themselves or
the Apostolic Fathers before them, was the mere Effect of
their modesty and humility, and to avoid the very appear-
ance of vanity and ostentation [3]."

But from this single passage, which I have been examining, all this refined reasoning is overturned at once; for it clearly informs us, that Irenæus, tho' he affirms this gift of tongues to have been common in his days, and that he had heard many speaking all kinds of languages in the Church, was himself still destitute of it, tho' the Bishop and leader of them all, and obliged with great difficulty to learn the barbarous dialect of the Celtae, among whom he resided, before he could do any good upon them, or was qualified to propagate the Gospel in his own Diocese. Our Doctors however, tho' they think it necessary at present to deny this fact; yet being aware, that they may be driven at last to own it as true, seem to be providing a sort of retreat beforehand, by changing their tone, and reducing their answers to a pitch more conformable to such a concession: for after all which they have been alleging, to prove these Fathers to have been chiefly instructed with the Miraculous Powers of the Church, it is pleasant to observe, with what ease and calmness, Dr. Church seems prepared to give it all up again: for speaking to this very point of Irenæus's want of the gift of tongues, he treats it as a thing of no importance, nor worthy of our inquiry, whether be wanted it or not: and if the whole difficulty were granted, and Irenæus allowed to have been destitute of it; it could not amount, he says, to an objection, nor overthrow his positive testimony, that such a power was really subsisting in the Church, and indulged to many other persons, wholly obscure and unknown [1]."

And now after an impartial review and comparison of all, that has been alleged in this controversy, on the one side or the other, I have laid before the reader the genuine state of three miraculous gifts, the most important, and useful of any, which were claimed by the primitive Church. It will be needless therefore to trouble myself with the examination of any more of them; since the rest, as our Doctors themselves will allow, must follow the fate of these three, and all of them stand or fall together; as being all built upon the same foundation, and supported by the same evidence. But in the article of healing the sick, since Dr. Dodwell seems to lay a singular stress on one particular Miracle, and the clear attestation which is given to it by Tertullian, I shall just add a word or two, which may help to illustrate the true nature of it.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The greatest part of the foregoing work was composed by Dr. Middleton, during his last illness: He died before he could complete, and correct it, and add all the references. It is printed from the only copy, that was left, which is in the Author's own hand writing, and may now be seen at the Booksellers.