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THE
MIRACLES

OF

JESUS

VINDICATED.

Edw. Pearce

PART I.

CONTAINING

The Proofs of Jesus's Resurrection stated,
and the Objections to it answer'd.

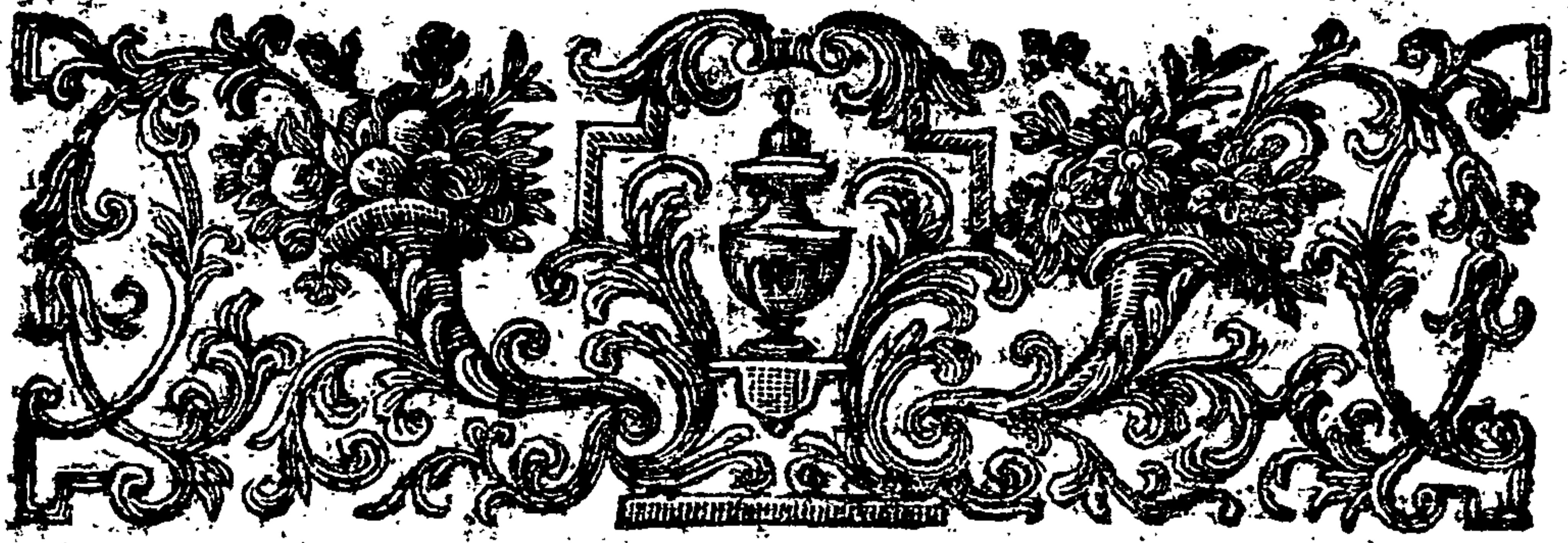
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THE
MIRACLES of JESUS
VINDICATED.

PART I.

THE Resurrection of *Jesus* being a Point of so great Importance, that the whole Weight of Christianity rests upon it, it is very necessary that the Truth of this Fact should be made out Clearly, and for that purpose the following Treatise is offer'd to the Reader, who if he comes to it with Attention and without Prejudice, may (it is hoped) be convinc'd of the Reality of this great Miracle, and be supply'd with a sufficient Answer to the several Objections lately rais'd against it.

The Objections have been formed from the History written by the four Evangelists, and therefore suppose that they wrote the Accounts which we now have under their Names; I

have the same right to make the same supposal in Defence of *Jesus's* Resurrection, as is made in Opposition to it; and therefore shall forbear to prove what is allow'd in the Question; when That comes to be deny'd, it will receive a Satisfactory Answer; but till then it must be taken for granted that the Books of the *New Testament* were written by those whose Names they bear, and are handed down to us the same as they were written.

Having premis'd this, I proceed to the Proof of the Fact in view, the Resurrection of *Jesus*; which is now made matter of Dispute (it seems) in a Christian Country; but since it is, Satisfaction ought to be given to all Enquirers, whether they seek it in Sincerity or not. The Books, which make this Enquiry necessary, are too well known to need to be particularly named. In them the Evangelists and Apostles are sometimes represented as *Fools* and *Credulous* men, sometimes as *Cheats* and *Impostors*: I shall therefore consider the Matter in both these Lights, not regarding upon whom One or Both of the two Characters may fall, if it should appear (as it will) that they don't in the least belong to the Apostles: And for this purpose I must follow the old Distinction (till a better can be found), and say, that, if the account given us by the Apostles be False, it must have been, either because they were Deceived Themselves, or because they knowingly Deceived Mankind.

I. That they could not be Deceived Themselves, in the Case before us, may be proved by the following Arguments.

After

JESUS Vindicated.

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After *Jesus* was risen, and before he was ascended, he shewed himself alive (to his Apostles and several others) by many *Infallible proofs*, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. Acts i. 2.

More particularly, the sacred Writers make mention of twelve different Appearances of *Jesus*, and intimate that he was seen oftner. He Convers'd with them, and gave Answers to their Questions; he Ate and Drank with them, to shew that his Body was a Real one. Luke xxiv. 43. And when they suspected that what they saw might be a *Spirit*, he bad them handle him and see; for a *Spirit* (says he) hath not *Flesh and Bones*, as ye see me have. Luke xxiv. 39.

And beyond all this, he submitted to such a close Examination as his *Scrupulous Apostle Thomas* insisted upon, for he permitted him to feel the Marks of the Wounds, which the Nails had caused in his Hands and Feet, and which the Spear had made in his Side.

And for a still farther Conviction, for a Proof which should pass all Possibility of deceiving, he told them (before he ascended up into Heaven) that they should be endued with *Power from on high*. Luke xxiv. 49. and be baptized with the *Holy Ghost* not many days after. Acts i. 5. Which, according to the Prediction, happen'd to them at the end of ten days, when the *Holy Ghost* fell upon them, and they all spake with Tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

In the Certainty of this Event they could not possibly be mistaken: they felt within them the wonderful Gift, the Power of speaking Languages

Languages till then Unknown to them. They had the same Evidence of their really having This, as they had of their being Alive. And is there any thing in Nature, which a man can be surer of? Even those, whose Scepticism has carried them so far, as to assert, that we cannot be Certain of the Existence of any Objects *without* us, must in this Case allow that the Apostles might be certain of what they felt by *inward* Perception, and had the same sort of Knowledge of, as they had of their own Existence.

Allowing then that they were sure of This, it follows that they were Sure of *Jesus's* having been rais'd from the Dead, and of their having convers'd with him after his Resurrection; for it was in one of their Conversations with him, during that period of time, that he promis'd them this *Gift of Tongues*; and the fulfilling of the Promise was a full Proof of his having been truly present with them, when he made it.

So that this Objection will not stand the Enquiry; But still it is said, that the Apostles and Evangelists were Cheats and Impostors, and that they knowingly Deceived Mankind in the Accounts that they have left in Writing.

II. Yet, as in the former Case it was proved (I think) to be Absolutely Impossible that they should be Deceived in this great Fact, so in This Case it will appear to be Morally Impossible that they should be Deceivers.

For they were at first twelve in Number, one of which Betray'd their Master, and was the cause of his Death; another Deny'd him
thrice

thrice at his Tryal, with Oaths and Curfes declaring that he did not know him; and all of them shew'd so much want of Courage, such an Abject Fear, as that they forsook him and fled for their own Safety: Is it then probable in the least degree, that after such Proofs of the Baseness of some, and of the Weakness of all of them, they should be so far from being Suspicious of one another, nay should so far throw their whole Welfare into each other's hands, as all to agree and unite in carrying on an Imposture? Could they hope to be more Secure against being betray'd by each other than their Master was, who was the Centre of their Union, and for whose sake they had associated together? Could they be sure that there was no *Judas* still left among them? or that *Peter's* Cowardice, or their own strong Fears would not revive again upon some fresh Occasion? In a word, is it not against all Reason and Experience, that a Confederacy among wicked Men, when once broken thro' Treachery and Cowardice, should ever be renew'd among the same persons, and cemented again? so that in this view, if they had been Impostors, they must have been the Weakest of men too; and That (we know) is no part of the Character of such as can carry on a Imposture.

Besides, it is to be consider'd, that no Motive can be assigned for their Combining in such a Falsehood: It is (I think) universally given up, that neither Grandeur, nor Riches, nor Pleasure, were what the Apostles aimed at; the marks of the Contrary are too plain to be denied: but yet there are some who think, that they may fairly ascribe it to Vanity and the

Love

Love of being Singular; a Passion which they well know goes a great way in Themselves, and might therefore (they conclude) be as strong in the Apostles: but even that Vanity and that Singularity cannot be supposed to have a place Here, for this plain reason; because the Doctrine which they taught, they taught not as their Own, but as their Master's: they were only his Messengers; and therefore, if it succeeded to their heart's wish, they could expect no Reputation as the Inventors or first Discoverers of it, and they were too many in Number to affect to be Singular in this point: Here then is a Consideration of great Weight in the Enquiry, for if the Objection be strip'd of this suppos'd Motive, it will be Morally Impossible to assign any other.

But above all things, it must be insisted upon as a Proof of their Sincerity, that the whole Number of the Apostles unanimously asserted this Fact of *Jesus's* Resurrection, and of their having seen him in all the Circumstances before related, in the midst of all kinds of Sufferings and Persecutions, even with their Dying breath, and when expiring under the Cruellest Tortures.

This is naturally as strong a Proof as a Fact is capable of; for Death is the utmost Tryal, the surest Test which human Nature can be expos'd to.

And it is no Abatement to the force of this Proof to say, **“* that many Cheats and Criminals have asserted their Innocence and denied their Guilt in the utmost extremity of *“* Death;*”*

“Death;” for the two Cases are so far from being Parallel, that they are exactly Contrary; such Cheats and Criminals being tempted to this Denial of their Guilt by the hope of *Saving* their Lives; whereas in the Apostles case the Only hope that they could have of *Saving* their Lives was by owning the Falsehood (if it was one,) and acknowledging themselves to be Guilty, which is just the Reverse of what they did.

Nor can the abovementioned Proof be weaken'd by saying, that there are Instances of men, who have dyed for Errors as well as for Truths, and have given up their Lives in a Stubborn defence of Points, which others so heartily Abhorr'd, that they dyed rather than Receive them.

For tho' all this be True, yet of what is it True? of Opinions and Doctrines only, in which men may be fully persuaded Contrary ways: but the Testimony of the Apostles concerning *Christ's* Resurrection is a Testimony concerning a Fact, whereof they declar'd themselves Eye-witnesses; and let any Unbeliever produce one Instance (in all the Records of time) of a single man, much more of Twelve or more, Sober and Serious men, all cheerfully undergoing the most violent Deaths rather than Recant what they Knew to be a direct Falsehood. The Author of the *Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour*, Part I. quotes St. *Austin* as telling us that *such Works as Jesus did might be imputed to, and effected by Magick Art*; but this Author Knows that St. *Austin* says no such thing, and, that we may not doubt of his Knowing it, he has plac'd that Father's

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words

words at the bottom of page 11.* from whence it appears, that he says not one word of the possibility of their being *effected by Magick Art*. Here now is an Attestation of a Fact, which the Author knew to be False; but would Mr. *W.* persist in This, if a Rope were about his Neck, and he going to suffer for This Falsehood? especially, if to Recant, would save his Life, and his Refusal would certainly put his Sentence in Execution? I don't speak this as my Wish, but for Argument's sake only. And we may trust Him to answer the Question, and be Sure that the Reply wou'd be, What? do you take me for a Madman? — And do You take the Apostles for Madmen? Their Writings surely shew it less than His; and therefore we may conclude that Human Courage, or Obstinacy (let them call it which they please) cannot go so far: at least we are sure that the Resurrection has nothing near so Incredible in it, as this Supposition has which some have made against the Belief of it.

Upon the whole it may be said that there is no Fact in Nature, than can be so well proved and supported as This is; for to suppose the Apostles to have been Deceived, is to suppose a thing Absolutely Impossible; and to affirm that they were Deceivers, is to affirm a thing which is Morally impossible, *i. e.* Improbable in the highest Degree.

Thus I have laid before the Reader a direct Proof of this Fact, the Resurrection of *Jesus*; and if a thing be once prov'd in this way, Objections

* *Et si attestabantur Miracula, non desuissent (sicut & nunc missitant) qui Magice potentie cuncta illa tribuerent. Contr. Faust. L. 12. c. 4.*

jections drawn from the Circumstances and Expressions of the History have very little weight against it; because Mens Ignorance or Inattention may be the foundation of these Objections, and plain Proofs are too stubborn to give way to such little Oppositions as these are.

However since Objections have been rais'd against the Reality of our Saviour's Resurrection, and they seem to deserve an answer, because they are drawn from the Circumstances of the Story as related by the Evangelists, I shall endeavour to give a full answer to each of them.

All that has been offer'd on this head, may be reduc'd to these four Objections :

That *Jesus* did not rise at the time that he had foretold.

That some of his Disciples did not Know him when he appear'd to them, or they Knew him by such signs as could be no Sure Marks of its being Him.

That he did not personally appear to the Chief Priests and Elders after his Resurrection, as (they suppose) he ought to have done for their Conviction. And lastly,

That the Stone at the mouth of the Grave being Seal'd, and the Seal being broken open, when the Sealers were not present, here is room to suspect a Fraud and Imposture.

Each of these shall be consider'd in its order.

I. §. First it is said, that *Jesus* did not rise at the time which he had foretold; it was not (say they) *on the third day*, for that would have been *on Monday*, not upon *Sunday* or the *first day of the week*: much leis was it *after three day*.

as one Evangelist expresses it; and least of all is it True (as they pretend) that he was *in the heart of the Earth three Days and three Nights*, which Yet he declar'd he wou'd be, as another Evangelist reports it.

But in answer to all this it may be prov'd (as it often has been) that all these Expressions, which are so many *Jewish* ways of speaking, are exactly agreeable with the Event, when they are rightly explain'd.

For doing which it must be observ'd, that the *Jews* counted their Days (I mean their Natural Days, or Days of 24 hours) very differently from what We do; for We reckon them from 12 o' Clock at night to 12 the next night; but They reckon'd from one Sunset, to the next Sunset, and all the time between them They called a *Day*, just as *Moses* did when he says, *the Evening and the Morning were the first day*, Gen. i. 5. and *from Even unto Even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath*, Lev. xxiii. 32.

Another thing to be observ'd on this head is, that they reckon'd (as indeed all nations do) any Part of a Day of 24 hours for a whole Day: to this purpose an eminent *Jewish* Writer (*Aben-Ezra* on *Levit.* xii. 3.) speaking of the Law for circumcising an Infant on the 8th Day, says, that if the Infant was born but *one* hour before the first Day was ended, it was counted for one Whole Day: And so for the same reason, was the Part of the Day that was pass'd, when it was Circumcis'd, if it was only *one* hour of the Evening with which that Day began. Reckoning then that the first Day began on our *Thursday* at Sunset, and ended upon *Friday* at Sunset; and (because our Lord dyed about three in the afternoon of That Day.)

reckoning that part of a Day for a whole Day, by this means we have *one Day*; and *Saturday* is on all hands allowed to be another Day; and as the third Day began on *Saturday* at Sunset, and our Saviour rose on the morning following, that Part of a Day is fairly computed for the third Day, and thus the Prediction was fully accomplished.

It is no wonder indeed that the Gospel should be contradicted by such Cavillers as these; but there is one, who might have expected better Quarter from them, and that is *Porphyry*, as great an Enemy to Christianity as the Heart of an Unbeliever could wish; and yet this Objection of Theirs against *Sunday's* being the third Day, gives the Lye to their Favourite *Porphyry*, who in his Treatise call'd *de Homericis Questionibus* says, Ὁ ληγέσις ἡμέρας ἐπιδημίας, καὶ τὴν τρίτην ἔωθεν Ἰζιῶν, τῇ τρίτῃ ἀποδημεῖν λέγει· καὶ τοι μίαν τὴν μέσῳ ὅλῳ ἐτέλεσεν. *He that is at home in the Evening, and goes abroad on the Morning of the Third Day, is said to be from home on the Third Day; tho' there be only One Day compleat, which is the Middle one (a).* But we want neither *Porphyry*, nor any other Author to prove the Propriety of this Expression; for it is a way of speaking, which We and all other Nations of the World use: What I have said on this head, was chiefly to lead the way to what follows.

The Expression *on the third Day* is about ten several times us'd in the *New Testament* on this occasion, and therefore must serve for explaining the other Phrases but once or twice at most made use of: such is that of *Christ's* rising *after three*

(a) Quæst. 14. Edit. Argentor.

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Days; the meaning of which expression is fairly shewn by what we read in 2 *Chron.* x. 5. where *Rehoboam* says to the People, *Come again unto me after three Days*, and yet ver. 12. we read that *the People came to Rehoboam on the third Day*, as the King commanded saying, *Come again to me on the third Day*: A plain Instance, you see, that both Phrases mean the same thing. (a)

As to the Expression of our Saviour's being *three Days and three Nights in the heart of the Earth*, *Matt.* xii. 40. from the foregoing Observations the Account of that is very Easy; for the *Jews* (like Us) had no One word by which to express a Day of twenty four hours, or a *ἡμέρας* as the *Greeks* called it, *i. e.* a *Day-night* as We might call it. They sometimes stiled it a *Day*, as We do, but at other times a *Day and a Night*. So that we are to understand by the Expression of *three Days and three Nights* no more than that *Jesus* was to be in the Grave three Days (as We should express it) reckoning inclusively the first and the last for two Days, and counting the pieces of Days for Whole ones. And of this way of speaking there is a remarkable Instance in the book of *Esther*; for tho' in ch. iv. 16. she declares that she would fast with her People the *Jews three Days Night and Day*: yet we find her in ch. v. 1, 4. upon the third Day at a Banquet with the King and *Haman* her Adversary.

Notwithstanding therefore this Objection, it appears that *Jesus* rose from the Grave at the time foretold by him.

(a) So in *Cicero*. *Tusc. Disp.* l. i. we read, *Apollo se id daturum ostendit post ejus diei diem tertium; qui ut illuxit, mortui sunt reverti.*

2. §. The next Objection is, that his Disciples did not always Know him when he appeared to them: or they Knew him by such Signs as could not be Sure Marks of its being Him.

For the obviating of which it may be observed, that, tho' our Lord more than once in his Life time told them that he should be put to Death, and should *rise again on the third Day*, yet they then *understood not these things*; their hopes of a Temporal Deliverer were so strong, and they had built so much upon this false Notion, that, when they saw him Crucify'd, they immediately lost all Heart and all Expectation of ever seeing him again: and in this Consternation, under this Despair of Mind, if he had appear'd to them at Once, in such a manner as to put his Resurrection out of all Doubt, it is Probable that their Joy would have been too Excessive and Tumultuous for them to bear: He seems therefore to have chosen rather to discover himself to them by Degrees.

The first Step towards any Notice of this Miraculous Fact was, that the Grave was found open, and the Body gone.

Next they received an Account of his being risen from two Persons, who had the Shape of Young men, but had at the same time the appearance of a Brightness like that of *Lightning in their Countenances*; which gave reason to those who saw them, to suppose that they were not Men, but Angels.

After this *Jesus* appear'd to some of his Disciples, but it being not yet Day-light (*Matt. xxviii. 1.*) they mistook him for the Gardiner of the Place in which the Grave was, till upon looking more narrowly at him, they saw him
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to be their Master; but *he presently withdrew himself*, leaving them little more than a Glimpse or bare View of his Person, as not designing yet fully to convince them of the Reality of his Resurrection.

At another time he appear'd to *Two of the Disciples*, as they were on their Journey to *Emmaus*; but it was (as the Evangelist says) *in another Form*. Mark xvi. 12. *i. e.* another than what they had been used to see him in, probably in the Dress of a Traveller, for it is said that *he went into the Country with them*. This Circumstance therefore, together with the Dusk of the Evening, (at which time it happened) and the Despair they were in of ever seeing him again, might contribute towards what is said of these two Disciples, that *their Eyes were holden, that they should not know him*, or rather (as it may be rendered) *so as they did not know him*. Luke xxiv. 16. till upon entering with him into an house, and sitting down with him to Supper, *their Eyes were open'd, and they knew him*; which discovery the bringing in of Lights for their Meal may probably have occasion'd; at least this is a better account of the matter than the Fanciful Supposition, which has been advanced, as if *Jesus* was then discover'd by an habitual Motion and Action of his hand in breaking of bread. At this time, tho' he gave the Disciples a farther proof of his being risen, yet they were only Two present, and he chose to stay a very little time with them after he was known to them; for it is said that *he straitway vanished out of their Sight*, or rather (as it is in the Margin of our Bibles) *he ceased to be seen of them*:
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by which no more need be meant than that he left their Company and went away, without doing any thing more than is naturally in the Power of Bodies to do; just as the word *disappear* (an Equivalent one) is us'd by *Milton*, Book VI. 414.

*Satan with his Rebellious disappear'd,
Far in the Dark dislodg'd.*

Where it is not meant that he made himself Invifible, but that he withdrew out of fight.

In all these Appearances of our Saviour to his Disciples, there is no Christian who pretends that he gave them a Full and Satisfactory Proof of his Resurrection: They were but so many Steps to lead them on; they were only the Degrees by which he chose to prepare them for a farther Discovery, and are therefore (I think) a good Reason why more than once they were not aware of his being their Master.

And if, after all this, at another Appearance of his *they supposed that they had seen a Spirit*, ver. 37. he went a greater Length towards convincing them, by *shewing them his Hands, and his Feet, and his Side*; and appealing to them whether a Spirit had *Flesh and Bones*; as *they saw him have*.

The last Satisfaction which he gave them in this particular, and which (as the Story relates) put an entire end to All Doubt among them, was his allowing the Apostle *Thomas* not only to *see*, but to *handle* him, and *feel* the marks in his Side, his Hands, and his

Feet, which the Nails and the Spear had made, when he was on the Cross: Upon This they were All fully convinced; and every time afterwards, when they saw Him, they made no Scruple to own and receive him as *Jesus* risen from the Dead.

If it can be made appear, that, after this ample Discovery, any of the Disciples did *not* know him, when he was Present with them, there will be some weight in the Objection; but at present every Instance that has been given of such Behaviour in the Disciples towards their Master, is taken from those Appearances of his which were prior to the above mentioned one, when *Thomas* (the last of the Apostles who stood out) received such strong Conviction.

And is it fair Dealing to pass over those Latter appearances in which the Apostles declare that they had full evidence, and to object his Former Imperfect appearances as not Satisfactory? Why, the Apostles acknowledge that at First they believ'd not, but the same Writers say that they believed Afterwards, and give us their Reasons for it: and shall the One Story of the Apostles be credited, and the Other not?

I can see no Reason why these Objectors should like their Testimony in the First case better than that in the Last, except that they were then *Unbelievers*; That perhaps They may look on as Merit, and reckon that the less Faith they had, they deserv'd the more Credit. But is it not strange that in such a Case a man's Evidence should be turn'd against himself?

I met an old Acquaintance t'other day in *Westminster-Hall*, whom I did not know at first; I was talking with him for some time, 'till at last recollecting my self I called him by his name, and we immediately knew each other, and fell to discoursing upon several things that had formerly passed between us, and upon the Circumstances and Welfare of several of our Common Friends. Shall any one tell me now, that this man was *not* the old Acquaintance that I took him to be, and use for his Argument, That I did not know him at First? What's that to the purpose? I knew him before we parted, and knew him by such Sure Marks, as I could not be Deceived in. There are few men of so cool Tempers as not to be provok'd at such an Arguer as This; and what He might call a Conclusion of his own Reason, They would look upon as an Affront to Theirs. But I have done with this Objection, and proceed to

3. §. The Third which I mentioned to have been made against the Truth of *Jesus's* Resurrection, and which was, that He did not personally appear to the Chief Priests and Elders, as some say he ought to have done for their Confutation.

But if I shew that This was not only *not necessary to be done*, but that there are good Reasons assignable why it should *not have been done*, a sufficient Answer will be given to this Objection.

It was *not necessary* to be done, because the Chief Priests and Rulers had seen enough to convince them fully that *Jesus* came from God,

if they had not been blinded with the most obstinate Prejudices: They had been Eye-Witnesses to many of his Miracles, and had but very lately (at his Death) seen *the Veil of the Temple rent in twain*, and *Darkness over the whole Land*: This would have been a full Proof to Them, if they had not been resolutely bent against admitting any.

But supposing that *Christ* had appear'd to them, and that they had believed upon seeing him alive after his Resurrection, what would have been the Consequence? Why, all the Proof of this Fact which they could have given to others, would have been their Testimony only; and Testimony We have Now for it, That of the Apostles, Twelve in number, who said that they All saw him, and not only said this, but wrought Miracles, and laid down their Lives in Attestation to the Truth of their Report. And could the Chief Priests and Elders (if they had been convinced) have done more than This for the convincing of Others?

Let us farther suppose, that Their being convinced would have carry'd such Weight along with it, that not only all the Priests and Rulers, but the Body of the *Jewish* People would have been converted upon Their Testimony: And let us suppose that upon this the Apostles or any other *Jews* had set out for foreign Countries, preaching the great Doctrine of *Jesus's* Resurrection, insisting upon This Proof of it, that not only They themselves, but the Chief Priests and Elders had seen him, and that the whole Nation was fully perswaded of the Truth
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of it ; and producing Certificates to that purpose under the Hands and Seals of the great Council or *Sanbedrim*. If This had been the Case, can we think that those who now make Objections to the Testimony of the Apostles, would not have made much Greater and Stronger Objections to the united Testimony of the Nation? Would not they have found more room to suspect an Imposture than they can Now? Would not they have called it a State Trick, a Political Craft, a National Contrivance of the *Jews*, to patch up their Credit after they had so long talk'd of their *Messiah* that was to come? Would not That have been objected (which Now cannot), that a Fraud might easily have been carried on under the Shelter of the *Jewish* Magistracy? If all the Power of Authority in Religion had been on the side of this Fact, might it not be suspected that such as were Curious and Inquisitive to examine things to the Bottom, were intimidated and discourag'd from the Attempt? Would not such a general Union in Belief have passed with These Objectors for a General Conspiracy? and would they not have cry'd down the Fact, because it *had* This Circumstance attending it, much more justly than they now cry it down because it *wanted* it?

Providence takes it own Measures ; we are not to prescribe to it, which way was best or wisest : whatever method it should have pleas'd Heaven to take, it would not have fail'd to put its Designs in Execution ; but in the View wherein I have plac'd things above, there would have been ample Scope for Cavil, a large Field to sow the Tares of Doubts and

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Difficulties in. But will a Rational Man admit that for an Objection which is liable to more and greater Objections? Fie upon such Free-thinking! which Mairs instead of Mending, and like the New piece put into an Old Garment, *makes the Rent worse.* Mat. ix. 16.

So that all things consider'd, it was so far from being Necessary, that *Christ* should have appear'd upon his Resurrection to the Chief Priests and Rulers of the *Jews*, as has been suggested; that (according to all the ways of Thinking which these *Cavillers* are us'd to) he ought *not* to have appear'd to them. And God must be allow'd to have taken a more Unexceptionable Method in making this Fact evident to a Few Men only, and those of no Figure, Character or Reputation in Life, except (as the Event shew'd) for their Courage and Sincerity.

4. §. The last Objection which I mentioned runs thus: the Stone at the Mouth of the Grave being Sealed by the Chief Priests, and the Seal being broken open, when They were not Present, here (say some) is room to suspect a Fraud and Imposture.

But to make this Objection of any Weight, they must suppose that the Apostles, who were the Chosen Witnesses of the Resurrection, as well as the Chief Priests, who were the Denyers of it, were concerned in the Sealing; and that both Parties consented to this method as a Sure way to discover whether *Jesus* would rise or not: and that both likewise had engag'd to be at the Opening of the Grave on some Day and Hour appointed.

But all this Supposal is not only without foundation, but is directly contrary to the History; for the Apostles all fled for their Lives when their Master was Crucified; and when they met afterwards, they did it with the *Doors shut for fear of the Jews*: Nay so far were they from agreeing with the Chief Priests upon This or any other Test of his Rising again, that we are told in Scripture, that they did not expect him to rise again, and that for several days after his Resurrection they were *slow of heart to believe it*. And could This Sealing then be a Covenant enter'd into by the Apostles? Or could their Consent be *reasonably presum'd* to any Test of a Fact which they never expected to happen?

Besides, what Right had the Chief Priests to prescribe any Method for the Divine Power to act in? they *Sealed* the Grave, 'tis true; but the Treasure in it was none of Theirs: it was God's, and might not he open the Door of it, and take out his Own when ever he pleas'd? Where then is the Mark of Fraud, when God, the only Proprietor, was present at the opening of it? There may be Cavil in this, but there is no Argument, till it be made out that a Fact fully prov'd to Some Men is False, because other men have not received all the Proof which they desire. But according to this way of reasoning, it seems to be out of the Power of God himself to make any Fact appear to be True; because while he leaves men Free-will, they may (under the Colour of Free-thinking) make Objections, and insist upon unreasonable Terms of Satisfaction: but These don't influence the nature of Facts, and therefore without any regard

regard to the *Seal* or the *Sealers*, we must assert that *Jesus* did truly *Rise from the Dead on the third Day according to the Scriptures*.

I have now gone thro' every part of what was at first propos'd, having shew'd by direct Proof that *Jesus* did rise, and having answer'd the several Objections against this Fact, which some have drawn from the Writings of the Evangelists.

The Evidence then of this Great and Miraculous Action lies fairly before the Reader. I have plac'd it in the Clearest Light that I could, and have brought the Proofs of it into a Shorter Compass than Usual; Both these are great Helps to any Sincere, Unprejudiced man, who would see the Reason of the Christian's Faith and Hope: It appears Absolutely Impossible (according to the Scripture Story) that the Apostles should have been Deceived in this Point of *Jesus's* Resurrection; which is no less than a Demonstration in their Favour: and it appears to have been Morally Impossible that they should have willfully Deceived Mankind in this Particular: the Circumstances of their Case will not admit of such a Supposition, and the whole Weight of Improbability lies against it, which is the strongest Proof that such a Distant Fact is capable of.

And will a Wise man think a few Cavils sufficient to determine the Point against such Evidence? When the Proofs are so much Stronger on the One side than the Objections on the Other, are there not greater Difficulties to be met with in Disbelieving than in Believing? When the weight is so great in Favour of the Resurrection, must not He that can really

remove it, have a great deal of Credulity, and (in this Sense too) a *Faith able to remove Mountains?*

Here then a Rational Man will take his Stand, and being once convinced that *Jesus* did truly rise from the Dead, from hence he will set out in his Enquiries, and taking this Clue along with him will easily see what Judgment is to be made of some other Particulars in the Gospel, against which Exceptions have been taken: With this Evidence in his hand, he will easily admit all the Miracles wrought by *Jesus*, when Alive, to have been True and Real ones: For the Divine Power (we may be sure) would never have exerted it self in his favour to Raise him again, if during his Abode on Earth he had counterfeited Miracles and imposed on a Credulous Multitude: And if he wrought Undoubted Miracles, will not this Conclusion necessarily follow, That he came from God, teaching the Divine Will, because he made use of his Miracles as so many Proofs of his having a Commission from Heaven?

And the same must be said of the Application of the Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, which *Jesus* and his Apostles declar'd to have been fulfill'd in Him: For however some of them may appear to Us, at this distance of time, not to be expressly determin'd and tyed down to His Person, yet no Sense of them can be clearer than what is given them by one who wrought undoubted Miracles, and thereby prov'd himself to come from that God, *who spake by the Prophets*; and therefore *Jesus's* Explication of them is no other than God's Own; and can we desire a better Interpretation?

In all Enquiries the only way to come at Truth is to set out right at first. There is no Proposition in *Euclid* or *Newton*, tho' never so strictly Demonstrable, but will lose all its Force of Conviction, if a man begins at the wrong end, disjoins the several parts of the Proof, or places them in a wrong and unnatural Order. It is the same thing in Christianity; if a man singles out a Miracle or a Prophecy, and having expos'd as Artfully as he can the Literal Story of either, if from thence he forms an Argument that These don't prove *Jesus* to have come from God or to have been the *Messiah*; he may to weak Understandings seem to say something Material, and may triumph (if he pleases) in the Quaintness of his Objections: For, no doubt, every Miracle of Christ Singly consider'd does not Infallibly prove his Divine Mission, nor does every Prophecy Singly consider'd point him out for the true *Messiah*. Exceptions may be drawn from the Circumstances of some of them by men dispos'd to cavil, and they may say that at best (when taken in this Separate view) they can only make us Wonder, not Believe.

But all this while Truth is Truth, and would appear so, if the Proofs were pursued in their Natural Order: Do but begin aright and follow in the Chain of things; and you have Demonstration: whereas if you Start wrong, or lose the Track, then Doubts and Difficulties meet you at every Turning, and you will soon have Stock enough to set up with, as a Modern Free-thinker.

This Question may fairly be asked, If we give up Christianity, what Religion will they give

give us in the Room of it? Christianity is surely worth something, and a Man would not part with it except to Advantage. Why, *the Golden Religion of Nature* (a) is offer'd us in Exchange: but all is not Gold that glitters; it has been prov'd a thousand times, that Natural Religion is not sufficient for all our Wants, that it had one great Defect at least, which the Gospel remedies by promising Pardon and Forgiveness of Sins. But are they in earnest when they talk of setting up Morality for the Standard? If they were, one would think that their Writings, while they recommend it, should practise it, and the Example should go along with the Doctrine. But is not the Contrary visible in most of their Works? I will instance only in the Author of *the Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour*: one Specimen of his Honesty in Quotations I have given before in Page 10, which I hope will be referr'd to upon this occasion. And thus in *Part I. Pag. 25*, he says that *St. Hilary is plain that there was no such Market kept in the Temple of Jerusalem, i. e. for buying and selling Sheep, Oxen and Doves*: and for this purpose he quotes these words of that Father, *Non habebant Judæi quod venire possent, neque erat quod emere quis posset.* This is but a part of a Sentence, the whole runs thus: *Sed neque emere Judæos in Synagoga, neque vendere Spiritum Sanctum existimandum est; non enim habebant ut vendere possent, neque erat quod quis emere posset: We must not think that the Jews were able to buy and sell the Holy Ghost in the Synagogue; for they had*

(a) Woolston's *Disc.* Part. 6. Pag. 28.

it not to sell, nor was there any one to buy it. Here he deceives his Reader, concealing from him that the *buying* and *selling* mention'd by St. Hilary was that of the *Holy Ghost*, not of *Sheep* and *Oxen*, and the Place spoken of was not the *Temple* but the *Synagogue*. Is this *Morality*?

Again, he makes *Erasmus* say, that *Jesus* could not be zealous against the *Profanation* of that *Temple* of the *Jews*, which was soon to be destroy'd, p. 30. But the words of *Erasmus* have a quite different meaning, and run thus; *Nec enim illum tantopere commovebat Templum illud mercimoniis Boum, Ovium, Hircorum & Columbarum profanatum: Sed ostendere voluit Avaritiam & Quæstum fore capitalem Pestem Ecclesiæ suæ, quam Templum illud, cujus Religio mox erat abolenda, figurabat.* *Jesus* was not so much mov'd at the *Profanation* of the *Temple* by the merchandise of *Oxen*, *Sheep*, *Goats* and *Doves*; but he meant to shew that *Avarice* and *Luxury* would be a fatal *Calamity* to his *Church*, which was figur'd out by that *Temple* whose *Worship* was soon after to be abolished. The Author abovemention'd makes *Erasmus* assign the *Temple's* being soon to be destroy'd, as a *Reason* why he says that *Jesus* could not be *Zealous* against the *Profanation* of it: whereas *Erasmus* does not say this, much less does he assign a *Reason* for it: he only mentions the *Temple's* being soon to be destroy'd, as a *Circumstance* to shew that the *Temple* was a *Figure* of the *Christian Church*, which was to succeed it. — Was there a greater *Difference* between *Erasmus* and the *Monks* of His time,

time, than there is between the True Sense of *Erasmus*, and what this Unfair Author would fix upon him?

Some other opportunity will be taken to add more Instances of the like Behaviour, but these are sufficient to shew that this great Recommender of *the Golden Religion of Nature*, in his attacks upon Christianity, violates the first principles of Natural Religion, and makes a Sacrifice of Common Honesty to his Zeal against Revelation. If his Morality teaches him no better things, I would advise him not to offer it to the World; it is best in his Own keeping, it may be of great use to Him in raising Objections against the Bible; nay it may be a *Golden Religion* to him, if by the help of it he can furnish his Discourses with such bold Falsehoods as shall make them Sell the better. But to all Serious Men, to all who enquire and examine into every Hardy Assertion, his Book is their Antidote; by seeing what He is, they learn what such men as have cast off the Gospel are likely to be: He is the strongest Proof against Himself that Christianity is Necessary to restrain men; and there is nothing in his Writings of so much Weight to incline men to be Unbelievers, as there is in his Example to shew them the Necessity of Believing.

A Man must be much in Love with Variety, and wear his Religion, like his Cloaths, subject to every Change of the Fashion, if he will quit the Christian Faith, and renounce his Creed for an uncertain Something, so ill supported and so ill recommended as the Religion of these Disputers. When they have
demon-

demonstrated the Falseness of Christianity, or shewn us that the Objections against it are of more Force than the Proofs for it, then we may allow them (after great Examples in other cases) to spend their whole Stock of Wit and Drollery upon the Subject. But if they must be under a Restraint till then, it will all dye with them, and the World will lose the Proof of their Abilities in the Great Art of Ridicule: For as yet the Article of *Jesus's* Resurrection (that Foundation-Stone of Christianity) remains unmov'd by any thing that They have offer'd: They have done their Best, it must be owned, and have said all perhaps that the Wit or Malice of man can devise: But still it can no more prevail against this Truth, than Death and the Grave could against our Saviour; it rises like him, and triumphs over all Objections.

It is hoped therefore, that what has been said on this Occasion, will have some Effect to check the increasing Infidelity of the Age; and that men will consider and weigh matters, before they form any Judgment to the Prejudice of that Faith, which can plead Prescription, and (by shewing its Reasonableness) can make that Prescription appear a Good one. If the Proofs that I have brought in its favour are so convincing, as I am persuaded they are, let such men examine their own hearts carefully, and see whether other Motives than those of Reason do not determine them to Unbelief. I pretend not to charge it upon their Vices or their Vanity and Love of Novelty; they Themselves are the best Judges of what that Principle is which

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influences them : But they must give up the Pre-
tence of Reason (I mean of Right Reason) in
this Case; for This lyes directly against them,
it blows full in their Face; and that which
is the Demonstration of our Faith, can never
be the Foundation of Their Infidelity.

F I N I S

