

from the laws of nature, or no evidence of the fact, whatever else may be done which seems to us surprising, certainly, nothing *miraculous* hath taken place.

If there be any thing miraculous wrought on *spiritual* agents, such as the minds of men, this supposes a known, and settled course of depravity in those minds, in consequence of the first man's first offence; and the miracle consists in destroying the dominion of sin in those minds, and introducing there the dominion of grace; so that where sin reigned unto death, grace now reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

But they who are reluctant to magnify that grace which bringeth salvation, deny there is any thing miraculous in *regeneration*; not because it is an event which frequently occurs, but because they believe there is nothing *supernatural* in that important change.

Others, however, as learned, and as pious
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as they, are of opinion, that no adequate cause can be assigned of spiritual life in sinful men, if the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, in quickning those who were dead in trespasses and sins, is denied. They argue thus: that regeneration cannot proceed from the antecedent state of the human mind, since that is enmity to God. They add, it cannot be effected by moral suasion; because, that is of no force when it does not meet with corresponding internal principles, in them that listen to it; and they affirm, that regeneration is represented in such a manner, in the sacred scripture, as will, by no means, allow us to suppose, that it may be attributed to the most swasive speeches of our fellow men. For, in holy writ, regeneration is represented as a new creation, as circumcision made without hands, as taking away an heart of stone, and giving an heart of flesh, and writing in it the laws of God. In the same inspired volume, the efficient cause of regeneration is compared with that mighty power by which our Lord rose from the dead: and
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from all this, they who argue thus, conceive that IT may be called MIRACULOUS.

I would not, however, be anxious for the use of this term in this connection. If it is allowed there is something really *supernatural* in regeneration, sanctification and the perseverance of the saints, the scripture account of our effectual calling will be religiously revered ; but if that is denied, I am apprehensive, it cannot be from any sound principle, and that it is not likely to answer any valuable end.

Some have supposed we should be sufficiently guarded from deceptions on this subject, if the final *cause* of miracles were attentively considered. But whether we are always competent to judge of this, I doubt. If, however, a miracle is wrought as the CREDENTIAL of a messenger coming from God with some general revelation to man, or to SECURE THE VERACITY of God's revealed word, against an impious power employing
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its authority with a declared or professed purpose, to convict the divine declaration of falshood, or if the SUBJECT of the miracle makes so ESSENTIAL a part in the œconomy of the revealed dispensation, as that without the miracle, the whole must fall to the ground*, it must be confessed that such miracles are worthy of the divine Being.

2. Having seen *on what* miracles are wrought, and by that, what a real miracle is, let us now observe *to whom* they may be safely ascribed. For if the existence of miracles is admitted, there must be some agent who is able to produce them, and to whom such stupendous power properly belongs.

Who, then, is HE? Had not folly and prejudice thrown loads of rubbish in our way, the answer might be direct, and plain. And as the case now stands, I shall at present treat all that rubbish as if it had no existence, and say, that the *real* power of per-

* See Bishop Warburton on Miracles.

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forming miracles can only be safely ascribed unto God. As it is God ALONE who spreadeth out the heavens ; so it is God alone who doeth great wonders.

If there are other agents who have an inherent power to perform miracles, they must be angels, good or bad ; men, righteous or wicked ; or the man Christ Jesus.

1. Angels, good or bad, have no inherent power to work miracles. It is said, indeed, of angels, that they excel in strength ; yet if their strength is wholly *intellectual*, as some learned men have supposed, that, it seems, gives them no dominion over the least particle of matter. For, by mere intellectual endowments, we cannot conceive that it would be less difficult for angels to remove a mountain than to remove an atom.

Good angels, it must be acknowledged, have often been employed, as *instruments*, in miraculous operations ; both in a way of judgment, and mercy. So also was Moses ;
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and, for any thing we know to the contrary, Moses contributed as much to the production of his miracles, by stretching out his rod, as the angels did to the performance of any miracle, by their appearance, volition, or by any action that is ascribed unto them.

Evil angels likewise, have sometimes been used, as *instruments*, in miraculous operations; as Satan, in some of the calamities which were brought on Job. But why should we think, from the afflictions of that upright man, that his adversary was the subject of a power sufficient to raise a storm, to produce lightnings, or to strike, at his pleasure, the bodies of men with pestilence, or with any other disease? Job's affliction is no proof of such power in Satan; for that righteous man, more than once, acknowledged, that his great affliction was from the hand of God.

But, the most extravagant notions have been formed of demons, good and bad, and of the doctrines of, or concerning devils;
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and, indeed, of magicians, magnetists, and other impostors; notions, which have been very injurious to those who have given heed to *seducing* spirits. Yet, why all this extravagance? If angels act upon matter, it must be either by *volition*, or in consequence of some *vehicle* they are supposed to assume. Of these vehicles, we *know* nothing; and we do well to *believe* very little of what ingenious men have said of them. As to volition, there is but ONE BEING whose WILL IS POWER: therefore, no man can prove that a thousand volitions of a thousand angels, could raise a feather, or prevent a single atom from falling to the ground*.

Milton's angels, indeed, would tear up mountains by their roots, imitate thunder, and make dreadful havock in the works of God. But Milton was a poet. Fiction, the spirit of poetry, was his delight; yet, however we may admire his invention, we are not, I hope, so enchanted with it, as to

* Rev. Mr. JOHN BRINE.

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think, that imagination and truth ought to be confounded.

After all, since we knew so little of the manner in which angels can, or cannot act, and, as many wonderful things seems to be ascribed unto them in scripture, (miracles excepted, in the strictest sense of that term,) it does not become us positively to assert what, with the divine permission, it is impossible for them to perform.

2. If angels have no inherent power to perform miracles, we may be confident men are not endowed with such ability. Nothing can be more pleasing, or more in point, on this subject, than the artless language of Peter, when, by a miracle, he and John had restored a certain man, lame from his mother's womb, to immediate, and perfect strength.

As the recovered cripple held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them, in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly

ly wondering ; when Peter saw it, he said to the people, ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this ? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power, or holiness, we had made this man to walk ? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus,—and his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know ; yea, the faith which is *by* him, as well as *in* him, hath given him who was born lame, this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

After this declaration, the rulers, elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem ; and asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this ? THEN Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we be this day examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole,

whole, Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by HIM, doth this man stand here before you whole.

It hath been said, Nothing is permanent but truth, and nothing consistent but sincerity* ; and, if the amiable features of sincerity and truth, do not meet the reader's eye in the report of Peter's unpremeditated defence, where, or when he will ever perceive such excellence, I cannot imagine.

As what has been said sufficiently proves that *good* men have no inherent powers to perform a miracle, it would be idle to suppose, that *bad* men are possessed of such endowments.

3. It only remains to be considered whether Christ, AS MAN, had an inherent power to work miracles.

* White's Sermons at Oxford in 1784.

Nothing like this appears from his own testimony of himself; but the reverse. For, to Philip, he said: The words which I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father, that dwelleth in me, HE doth the works. On the day of Pentecost, Peter and others, entered into the spirit of this assertion. Addressing the multitude then at Jerusalem, who were amazed at the gift of tongues, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Peter said, Ye men of Israel hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, wonders, and signs, WHICH GOD DID BY HIM, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know, — This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.

From this account it appears, that the *human will* of Christ, had not sufficient efficacy to produce miraculous operations. His miracles

racles were the effect of the *divine will*. It was his Spirit, or the divine nature, (common to the Father and to himself as the Son of God,) that quickened; his flesh, or human nature, profited nothing. Nicodemus, therefore, argued rightly, when he said to Christ, Rabbi, we know thou art a teacher come from God, for *none*, neither man, nor angel, CAN do these miracles which thou dost, except God be with him.

But, to this view of things, it is objected, that if none have any inherent powers to work miracles, but the ALMIGHTY, how are we to account for those miracles which *seem* to be wrought by other agents; especially those which are ascribed to the magicians who withstood Moses in the land of Egypt?

Were we frankly to say, we are unable to answer this objection to general satisfaction, where would be our disgrace? For, if we may hold, and propagate no position, till we can answer all that is urged against it, to the entire satisfaction of them who are disposed

to dispute what it affirms, we are in an evil situation ; since, if we are to be thus limited, we must give up the greatest part of our sentiments, both civil and religious.

But the case of the magicians may be stated thus : Moses attempting to prove his divine mission by miracles, found, as God had told him he would, that Pharaoh was very slow of heart to admit, that what he did was truly miraculous. When therefore Aaron, at the command of Moses, cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent, THEN Pharaoh called the wise men, and sorcerers, and the magicians of Egypt, and they also did in like manner with their enchantments : that is, that they made use of their enchantments to do as Moses did ; and succeeding, it was natural enough in them to ascribe their success to their own arts. Moses had been brought up amongst them in Egypt ; and though they probably allowed he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and deeds, yet, what could he know which they

they could not understand? What could he perform which they could not effect? This, it seems, was not only the opinion of the magicians themselves, but also of Pharaoh, whose heart was hardened by their success. A second, and a third time, these magicians withstood Moses, and still succeeded. At length, the Lord said to Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice, throughout all the land of Egypt. And THEY did so: for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt: and the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there was lice upon man, and upon beast. THEN the magicians said to Pharaoh, THIS IS THE FINGER OF GOD!

The word which is here translated God, is not JEHOVAH, but ELOHIM. Now, as the word JEHOVAH was that name by which the

Almighty would be known in Israel *after* this event, when the sons of Abraham and Jacob, under their theocratic state, were to look up to him as their God and King, and in that *use* of the term, it was of much later date than the word ELOHIM, which was the *first* name by which God made himself known to man; as this is the fact, it is natural to suppose that the magicians had a greater veneration for the word ELOHIM than for the word JEHOVAH. From this fact, therefore, we may infer, that when they said to Pharaoh, THIS IS THE FINGER OF GOD! they did in effect say to him, This miracle is not wrought by any *tutelary*, local, or inferior deity, (of which they supposed there were many,) but by him who made the heavens and the earth, and before whose almighty power every other Being is compelled to bow.

But there is no reason to restrain the confession of the magicians to the miracle of turning dust into lice, which in truth, is no greater miracle than the preceding two: no, their confession seems to have been as extensive as
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it was sincere. It amounts, in my opinion, to this: We are now convinced, that neither Moses, nor ourselves, have any real power to work miracles; and we believe, that in ALL this business the power of the ELOHIM hath been manifested: it is therefore to no purpose any longer to question the mission of Moses, or to resist the SUPREME AUTHORITY under which *we* are convinced he acts.

Such, I think, were their sentiments. Should you be of a different opinion it is no great matter. If, however, you think it strange, that God should work a miracle at the request of the magicians, or while they were using their enchantments, wherein, I would ask, is this more wonderful than that the Lord should put a word into Balaam's mouth, and say, Return to Balak, and thus shalt thou speak, at the very moment he was using his enchantments to curse the sons of Jacob; and that too, because he loved the wages of unrighteousness? Endeavour, if you please, to distinguish between the request of the magicians, and the *end* to be answered by

the final issue of those mighty works which were done in the presence of Pharaoh. It was not only against that haughty tyrant, but against ALL the *gods* of Egypt that JEHOVAH resolved to execute judgment; and when he had done it, Moses in his song of triumph said, Who is like unto thee, O LORD, amongst the *gods*? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!

In the three first miracles, though the faith and patience of Moses might be tried, yet was he not left without sufficient witness, that even in those miracles, it pleased God to make a clear distinction between what was done at his word, and what followed the enchantments of Jannes and Jambres; or who ever else they were that withstood him to his face. For though upon their enchantments, their rods were changed into serpents, yet Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods; though they, by the power of God, turned water into blood: they were not permitted to reverse the wonder, and turn blood into water;

ter; though, by the power of God, they produced frogs, they were not suffered to remove them from the presence of Pharaoh. Yet notwithstanding these manifest distinctions, however they might relieve the mind of Moses, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them, AS THE LORD HAD SAID.

II. Let us now observe what may be ASSERTED of the miracles of Jesus Christ.

1. We may safely say, they were *real* miracles. If his turning water into wine, his walking on the sea, his feeding five thousand persons with five loaves and two small fishes, his raising up Lazarus and the widow's son from the dead, are not *real* miracles, it is not in the power of any man to say, what should be deemed miraculous.

But, as we have no knowledge of any miracle that Jesus wrought but by TESTIMONY, the question is, Are those WITNESSES whom we credit, worthy of our confidence? They are.

are. Imagine all the reasons which may render witnesses suspected, and you will find the inspired writers unhurt by the widest stretch of your imagination.

We reject a witness if he be alone, though at the bottom, it is less the number, than the quality of the witnesses, which gives certainty to their relations. We reject those witnesses that are vicious; those which contradict themselves; those which retract what they have said; those which bear witness in their own cause; those who are interested to bear false witness; those who are credulous, and full of superstition; those who were distant in time and place; and who only report what others have affirmed; and those also, who are vain and imprudent, and who, in their actions, and discourse, betray a levity of temper and extravagance in their disposition*.

But when all these witnesses are rejected, they who have born witness to the miracles

* SAURIN.

of Jesus Christ, will not only stand their ground, but rise in the estimation of the careful observer; because he perceives in them, not only the reverse of these infirmities, but all that is requisite to them who bear witness to matters of fact; even to facts of the greatest importance.

To this view of those witnesses whom we credit, we may add, the following *presumptions* in favour of the miracles of Jesus Christ. First, they agree with the doctrines of grace which he came to teach. Secondly, they are connected with other facts and events, (as the dispersion of the Jews, and call of the Gentiles,) which vouch for their authenticity. Thirdly, they have not been denied, but confessed, by his greatest adversaries. For they, whether Jews or Gentiles, disputed not the existence of his miracles, but on the contrary, ascribed his miraculous operations either to Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, or to the mysterious powers of magic.

Nay, we may further observe, that miracles
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