

divine nature, or the active force of his will, by which he is able in a moment to produce the most astonishing effects in the natural or moral world.

A weak GOD is the most glaring absurdity to the understanding of man: 'tis a contradictory idea in the human mind, which proclaims itself to be nonsense on the first proposal to our reason and common sense.

The idea of infinite power is essential to all right conceptions of a GOD.

We gain the idea of power by observing an activity, life, and strength in ourselves, and in other creatures all around us; as well as by observing the striking appearances of motion in the heavenly bodies, which must be attributed to a mighty cause full of life, activity, and strength, equal to the grandeur and constancy of the effects.

This active principle of power in GOD must be absolutely unlimited: 'tis a perfection in the divine nature that transcends all its possible effects in our bodies, in our souls, in the bodies and motions of all the animal worlds in the earth and seas, in the planetary worlds, and the starry heavens; and it must infinitely transcend even all miraculous operations.

The laws of nature are nothing else but the stated method of GOD's preserving the existence
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and governing the motions of the natural world ; or, in shorter words, the laws of nature are the usual manner in which God acts through all his works of creation and providence.

“ Law, in its most general and comprehensive sense,* (says the very sagacious judge Blackstone) signifies a rule of action ; and is applied indiscriminately to all kinds of action, whether animate or inanimate, rational or irrational. Thus we say the laws of motion, of gravitation, of optics, or mechanics, as well as the laws of nature and of nations. And it is that rule of action which is prescribed by some superior, and which the inferior is bound to obey.

“ Thus, when the SUPREME BEING formed the universe, and created matter which had no existence before, he impressed certain principles upon that matter, from which it can never depart, and without which it would cease to be. When he put that matter into motion, he established certain laws of motion, to which all moveable bodies must conform. To which laws, as long as this matter conforms, so long it continues in perfection, and answers the end of its formation.

“ If we farther advance, from mere inactive matter to vegetable and animal life, we shall
find

* See his most judicious Commentaries on the Laws of England, Vol. 1. 8vo. Edit. 1773. p. 38. On the *Nature* of LAWS in general.

find them still governed by laws ; more numerous indeed, but equally fixed and invariable.

“ The whole progress of plants, from the seed to the root, and from thence to the seed again, the method of animal nutrition, digestion, secretion, and all other branches of vital œconomy, are not left to chance, or the will of the creature itself, but are performed in a wondrous involuntary manner, and guided by unerring rules laid down by the great creator.

“ This then is the general signification of law, a rule of action dictated by some superior being : and, in those creatures that have neither the power to think, nor to will, such laws must be invariably obeyed so long as the creature itself subsists, for its existence depends on that obedience.”----Thus speaks that oracle of the law, judge Blackstone.

As I write chiefly for young persons, I do suppose that many of them are unacquainted with what are usually stiled Sir Isaac Newton's Laws of Nature ; I will therefore insert them in this place, in order to prepare the way for my main subject.

The first LAW of MOTION is, that all bodies continue in the same state of rest in which they began their being ; or of moving uniformly in a strait line, unless some external force, impressed upon them, makes them alter that state.

The second LAW of MOTION is, that the changes made in the motion of bodies are always proportional to the moving forces impressed, and are produced in the same right line in which those forces act.

The third LAW of MOTION is, that action and re-action are always contrary, and always equal to each other; or the mutual actions of two bodies upon each other are equal, and in contrary directions.

The GRAND LAW which holds our whole visible system together, is this :

That all bodies in our world mutually attract each other, in proportion to their respective quantities of matter; and their attractions diminish or increase in proportion as the square of the distance between them diminishes or increases.

We may farther observe, in a more general manner, "That there is a system of beings round about us, of which we ourselves are a part, which we call the world; and in this world there is a course of nature, or a settled order of causes, effects, antecedents, concomitants, and consequences, from which the God of nature doth not vary, but upon very important occasions."-----
Dr. Watts.

Miracles are sensible changes in the order of nature; or they are such actions of God as are
superior

superior to the usual course and powers of nature, and rise above the common operations in the assemblage of created beings.

Miracles are an address to our senses, in proof of a divine revelation: and, in this point of view, when miracles are viewed in connexion with the goodness of the doctrine and the fulfilment of prophecy, they appear of vast importance and use in the demonstration of the truth and glory of the christian religion, and deserve the utmost attention and regard from every man who is an honest enquirer after truth.

Real miracles are most glorious and striking demonstrations of the life, omnipresence, and power of God; attesting that he is the author of the discoveries, and the grand origin of the sublime ideas conveyed to us in the holy Scriptures.

God has prudently chosen this manner of address to the senses and drowsy powers of mankind, to awaken their stupified faculties, and rouse their attention to affairs of the utmost consequence with respect to God's glory and their own eternal happiness.

By this wise method he sets the broad seal of omnipotence on his own ideas, and shews himself to be the sole author of all those immortal in-

ventions and wonderful discoveries which were hid in God from eternal ages.* Eph. iii. 9.--- There can be no better external evidence devised or thought of by all the rational men in the world, to evince the truth of the Scriptures, and confirm the divine discoveries of the gospel, than
MIRACLES.

This is a vivid and popular demonstration, suited to the lowest capacities of men, as well as to the highest and strongest understandings: 'tis the short and lively reasoning of an omnipotent God; and the mind of man must see, in an instant, the connexion of these two ideas, a miracle and a divine revelation.

This sensible action of God is the grand external advantage of a divine revelation over all rascally impostures of men, and all impudent and artful delusions of the devil. A miracle is the great superior evidence in its favour above all pretended revelations; and the understanding sees in a moment the connexion between God's ideas, or discoveries, and his striking actions, producing a change in the order of nature.

I repeat it again, for the sake of my young readers, (because this argument, drawn from miracles, has been attempted to be discredited, and run down with impudence and virulence by the infidels of the age) that no clearer evidence
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* Apo toon aonioon.

of an external nature can be given, no stronger attestation of a God can be furnished to confirm the truth of a divine discovery in the gospel, than the working of real miracles.

Not a more convincing proof or demonstration of the divine truths, ideas, and discoveries in the Bible, than the exertions of almighty power, or miracles, wrought in confirmation of this God-breathed book!

The voice of God from heaven as loud as ten thousand thunders, or the appearance of God as bright as ten thousand suns, and rapid as the flashes of lightening, declaring some particular truths, or making some special discoveries, would not afford us clearer evidence of those truths, or fuller proof of those discoveries, than the noble and glorious exertions of divine power to produce sensible changes in the order of nature in favour of divine revelation.

The mind of man is almost forced to see the connexion of ideas between miracles and a divine revelation. There is a visible connexion between rational and just discoveries of God, and sensible actions of God. The common sense of every honest man sees the agreement between real miracles and the Bible.

Let any honest man, of common sense, sit down for half an hour with seriousness and attention to the miracles recorded in Scripture, and
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he must unavoidably see the connexion and agreement between miracles and a divine revelation: the agreement between bright displays of the divine perfections, and the sensible actions of God in a miracle---between holy, gracious, and sublime discoveries of God's heart, and the striking and wonderful acts of divine power which were wrought to confirm and attest those discoveries.

Place before your eyes, my dear reader, the display of truths which were hid in God from eternal ages, and the sensible changes in the order of nature, which were effected by an infinite power, with a wise and good design of shewing God's nature in the most illustrious manner, to instruct his reasonable creatures, and promote their eternal happiness.

Place before your eyes the goodness of the doctrine, and a rock spouting into a fountain of water---the discoveries of the gracious and beautiful nature of God, and water turned into generous wine---the discoveries of God's design to save man from ruin, and the expulsion of a legion of devils from one human body---the great master of the world feeding the souls of men with the intellectual provisions of truth and goodness; and, at another time, feeding the bodies of seven thousand with a few loaves and fishes. Observe the convincing agreement between these revelations

tions of the gracious thoughts of God and the wonderful changes in the order and laws of nature, and then say, if you dare, that they are all delusions of the devil, or deceptions of artful and designing men, who lie in wait to cheat and ruin mankind.

But we must give you a compendious view of the principal miracles of the Bible in one continued series, that the mind of the reader may be struck with greater wonder and pleasure; and, by recollecting the goodness of the doctrine displayed in the first volume, he may rise to the fullest evidence and conviction, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.----Let us then take

A VIEW of the MIRACLES recorded in the OLD TESTAMENT.

Ever keep the description of a miracle in your mind, that it is a sensible action of God making astonishing changes in the order of nature: and that by nature we mean the beautiful assemblage of created beings in the heavens, earth, and sea; and especially in the animal and rational world. Give me your honest and best attention whilst I place the miracles of God before your eyes.

You see a flood of water rapidly proceed to rise four miles* high all over the globe, and
swell

* A mile is 1760 yards; let us multiply that by four, and the product will be above seven thousand yards: that is, the waters of the deluge
rose

swell seven yards above the highest mountains in the world. Gen. vii. 20.

You see thousands, yea millions of men change their language into several languages, § almost in a moment. What can this change be ascribed to but the extraordinary hand and miraculous power and wisdom of GOD! Gen. xii.

You see torrents of fire and brimstone pouring from heaven on Sodom and Gommorah in a moment: indeed you see whole rivers and oceans of flame, like hell, rolling from heaven, and mingled with the fiercest wrath and vengeance of an injured GOD. Gen. xix. 24.

You see a bush in a flaming fire, and yet not burnt! How striking a demonstration of the presence and power of GOD. Exod. iii. You see the dry rod of Moses spring into a living crocodile in a moment, and immediately turned back into a dry rod! Exod. iv. 3, 4. You see the healthful hand of Moses totally infected with a virulent leprosy, and again restored to perfect health in a moment. Exod. iv. 6, 7. You likewise see Aaron's rod shoot into a dreadful crocodile, or serpent, before Pharaoh, in a moment; and

rose above twenty-one thousand feet perpendicular height. Behold the hand of GOD, and tremble; and adore the holy justice of GOD, which destroyed, at once, eleven thousand millions of mankind!

§ Bishop Patrick gives a very clear and rational idea of this change of languages.---See his Commentary on Gen. xi. with Mr. Henry and Dr. Gill, in loc.

and you see this serpent devour all the rods of the magicians ! Exod. vii. 10, 12. You see all the river Nile turned into blood. Exod. vii. 20. A world of frogs. Exod. viii. 6. The dust of all the land shoot into lice, in so sudden a manner as to force even the proud magicians to confess it was the FINGER of GOD. Exod. viii. 17, 19. The whole kingdom of Egypt filled with flies. Exod. viii. 24. Murrains and death on the beasts. Exod. ix. 6. Blains and boils on the brutes, and on the Egyptians ; yea, even on the magicians themselves. Exod. ix. 10, 11. You see an hail - storm mingled with thunder and flames of fire. Exod. ix. 23. You see the plague of locusts devouring every vegetable. x. 13--15.---and darkness, like hell, covering the face of the whole land in a moment. x. 21--23.---with the death of all the first-born in the whole kingdom of Egypt. xii. 29, 30.

You see the red sea divide and roll up into mountains ; and, in spite of the grand law of fluids, which press every way, and every way equally, these raving billows stand congealed like solid ice on either side of an army of millions of men. Exod. xiv. 22, 29.* You see bitter
waters

* To give my young reader a more lively and striking idea of this miracle, I would have him consider that the breadth of the sea, at the place where two or three millions of Israelites passed over, is reckoned by some travellers six miles broad, by others ten miles, and by others eighteen miles. Let it be observed, that they were about twelve hours in passing it ;
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waters made sweet in a moment. Exod. xv. 25. The flinty rock gushes into springs of water. Num. xx. 11. You see mount Sinai tremble to its basis, whilst the summit is cloathed with blackness and tempest, thunder and fire. Exod. xix. 18. You see manna provided by the hand of God, for two or three millions of people, every morning for forty years. Exod. xvi. 35. You see fire from God devour two rebels in a moment. Lev. x. 1, 2. And, with a mixture of wonder and terror, you see the earth open her jaws and swallow up hundreds of proud, daring wretches, in the twinkling of an eye. Num. xvi. 32. You see the fiery flying serpents kill with a bite, and a serpent of brass cures the deadly wounds they give. Num. xxi. 9. You see the rod of Aaron bring forth buds, and bloom blossoms, and yield almonds. Num. xvii. 8. You see a dumb and stupid animal, in an instant, endued with reason and speech, to reprove the madness of a wicked magician. Num. xxii. 28. 2 Pet. ii. 16. You see the river of Jordan roll back its current, rise into mountainous heaps, and stand like fixed rocks, whilst three millions of people pass over into the promised land. †
Josh.

and if we allow two miles an hour for the women and children, and their heavy baggage, to march, this will lead us to conclude, that the red sea might be about twenty-four miles broad at the place of their passage.--- See Dr. Gill, in loc.

† The waters below running down to the lake of Sodom, and those above being stopped, made a dry channel for sixteen or eighteen miles. The river was about ninety feet broad and nine feet deep.---See Maundrell and Shaw, and Dr. Gill, in loc.

Josh. iii. 16, You see the sun and moon stand still for a whole day, at the command of a man; and the motions in our system make a solemn pause for twelve hours.* Josh. x. 12--14. You see Gideon's fleece of wool wet, and all the ground dry; again you see the fleece dry, and all the ground wet with dew. Judg. vi. 38. You see the strength of Sampson quite above the order and laws of nature, and was truly a sensible and continued miracle. You see a dry jaw-bone spout into fountains of water. You see immense strength, lost, return to a man in his last prayer. Judg. xiv. 6. xv. 19. xvi. 30. You see the omnipotence of God accelerate the motion, and increase the momentum, or force, of a smooth pebble, flung from the hand of a shepherd boy, so as to pierce the hell-hardened skull of a monster eleven feet high, and bring him in a moment dead to the ground. 1 Sam. xvii. 49. You see meal in a barrel, and oil in a cruse, multiplied to a prodigious quantity, and through a long duration: for you see this barrel of meal fail not, and this cruse of oil increase for three years. 1 Kings xvii. 12--16. You see

* "In the history, this is seriously related, as real matter of fact, and with such circumstances, as manifest them to have been miraculous works of the almighty. In Joshua's case, to stop the diurnal course of the globe for some hours, and then again to give it the same motion, required the same infinite power which at first gave the terraqueous globe its motion."----Dr. Derham's *Physico-Theology*, p. 64, in the note, Edit. xi. 24°.

see the dead son of the widow of Zarephath spring to life in a moment. 1 Kings xvii. 17--24. You see rain withheld from the land of Israel for three years and six months. 1 Kings xviii. You see fire from God consume the sacrifice and the wood, the stones and the dust, and lick up twelve barrels of water which overflowed the trench and the altar. 1 Kings xviii. 38. You see fire rained from heaven on the enemies of the great prophet Elijah. 2 Kings i. 10--12. You see this glorious man of God fly to heaven in a chariot of fire. 2 Kings ii. 11. You see the river of Jordan divide at the stroke of a man. 2 Kings ii. 14. You see the Shunamite's son raised from the dead, and restored to his joyful mother. 2 Kings iv. 35. You see a pot of oil multiplied in so wonderful a manner as to fill many barrels. 2 Kings iv. 1--7. You see Naaman's leprosy cured by washing in the river Jordan. 2 Kings v. 14. You see Gehazi cursed, for covetousness, with a leprosy, which should infect all his posterity. 2 Kings v. 27. You see a dead man spring into life on being laid in Elisha's grave, and touching his bones. 2 Kings xiii. 21. You see that blustering bully, Rabshakeh, with one hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers, struck dead in one single night. 2 Kings xix. 35.---See Rollin's striking reflections on this miracle in his Method of Study,

Study,

Study, vol. iii. 12mo. p. 228, Fr. edit.---You see the sun's shadow go backward ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz.* Isai. xxxviii. 3. You see three noble heroes thrown into a fiery furnace, heated with seven-fold rage, and come out unhurt. Dan. iii. 27. You see a proud rational turned into the resemblance of a beast for seven years, and then restored again to reason by the power of God. Dan. iv. 32--36. You see a glorious statesman and servant of 'God thrown into a den of lions, and wonderfully preserved by the omnipotence of God. Dan. vi. 23. You see a man preserved alive in the belly of a fish for three days, and come out on dry land. Jonah ii. 10.

A VIEW OF THE MIRACLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Here we see the eternal Son of God in our nature, amidst all his outward poverty and apparent meanness of condition; yet, to an eye of faith, he appears arrayed in glory brighter than the beams of the sun, and blazing abroad his omnipotence and majesty through all worlds, visible or invisible; and devils, diseases, men, trees, beasts, fishes, and the dark empire of the king of terrors, own his absolute dominion, and obey his
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* "Instead of being an objection, it is a great argument of the power of God: for, in Hezekiah's case, to wheel the earth itself backward; or, by some extraordinary refractions, to bring the sun backward ten degrees, required the same infinite power which at first gave the terraqueous globe its motion."---Dr. Derham's Physico-Theology, book ii. chap. jii. note (d)

all-commanding nod.---We will, for the sake of method, range our Lord's miracles in the following classes, i. e. those performed on his own body---on the bodies of living men---on diseases---on the passions of men---on winds and waves---on foods---on fishes---on the devils---and on the dead---with human souls in the invisible world.

You first see the astonishing miracle of his INCARNATION without the interposition of a human father! This is such an action of a condescending God as must strike all the saints and angels in glory with the highest adoration and delight to eternity. You see our Lord Jesus suspend the law of GRAVITATION in his own body, and walk on the watry world with as much ease and safety as on dry land. John vi. 19. You see him raise his own body from the dead with the same ease as awaking from a slumber: and these astonishing actions he performed above all the laws of nature, and for ends worthy of the dignity of a God. John x. 18. You see him work miracles on the bodies of living men: he gives bright and beautiful eyes to the blind---ears to the deaf---arms and hands to the maimed---healthful limbs to the cripples---melodious tongues to the dumb, to warble forth his praises and proclaim his glory. Matt. xi. 5. You see all manner of DISEASES fly at his word---fevers depart---palsies are cured in
a moment