A Discourse concerning

PRODIGIES:

WHEREIN

The VANITY of PRESAGES by them is reprehended, and their true and proper Ends asserted and vindicated.

The Second Edition corrected and enlarged.

To which is added a short Treatise concerning Vulgar Prophecies.

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Prodigia multa nunciata sunt, quae quo magis credebat simplices & religiosi homines, etiam plura nunciabantur.

Natura rerum omnibus viventibus indicat metum ac formidinem, vita atque essentia suae conservatrix, ac mala ingruenta vi- tante ac depellentem: Veruntamen eadem Naturammodum tene- re nescia est; sed timoribus salutaribus semper vanos & inanes admiserit; adeo ut Omnia (si intus confici darentur) Panicis terroribus plenissima sint; praevertim humana, & maxime omnium apud vulgum, qui superstitione (qua verè nihil aliud quam Panicus terror est) in immensum laborat & agitat; praecipue temporibus duris, trepidis & adversis.

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THE PREFACE.

The most proper objects of admiration in the Divine wisdom, are 
Rom. 11. 33. the unsearchable depth and rich variety thereof.

That admirable diversity of gifts and abilities of minde, vouchsafed to men to serve the necessities of those times and places to which they are appointed; That elegant variety of Beings in the world; That grateful disparity of occurrences which the history of every age of the world entertains as with, give assurance that there is a riches and plen-command (as of Grace, so) of Wisdom in God: as which (like some full word that cannot be delivered of all that notion and sense with which it is pregnant, without variety of expressions) cannot be understood and made out without the large paraphrase of such a multitude of excellent instances and dissiplines thereof.

And the faithfulness of Nature to its original laws of motion, the continuance of all things as they were from the beginning of the Creation, awaken a considerate mind into
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A quick and lively sense of the depth thereof. Nulla lirura est in libro naturae. God never saw it necessary (as upon maturer thoughts) to correct and amend any thing in this great Volume of the Creation, since the first edition thereof: which sufficiently resolves us, that all things were issued at first by a Mind that doth not look but to a few things, but that was able to look the whole systeme of the Creation quite through, and comprehend at once the several capacities and mutual aspects of secondary Agents, from the beginning of time to the end thereof.

This general constancy and harmony of Nature in its operations, is not so much removed as commended by (those petty discords) prodigious occurrences, whose rarity sometimes commands our notices and regards. These are but the Anomalies of Nature, some temporary exceptions from her more common rules of motion; she runs sometimes against her bias, when the rub of some unusual impediment disturbs her, but quickly recovers into her more easie and native course. No

Heb. 12. 28.

a kingdom is simply ἀκαθάρτιον, but that of heaven, and no law absolutely immutable but that of eternal Righteousness. For Righteousness is the Image of God, a transcript of the Nature of him with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning; but
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Nature is but the Art of God, and so admits Variety.

Now these steppingsof Nature out of its more common road, have been received by the faith (phancy) of most times as God's Heralds to proclaim his purposes of war and vengeance upon men. It hath been concluded that as Nature in its usual freedom, doth declare the glory and power of God; Nature next by Art, and turn'd upon itself by bayting of one piece of the Creation with another, doth discover the art of God couched in the subtile engine of the World; Nature quite conquer'd, as in a miracle, doth report and confirm the truths and counsels of God; so Nature casually disturb'd, as in a Prodigy, doth proclaim his approaching judgments.

The design therefore of the present Discourse, is with freedom and sobriety, to make enquiry how far any kind of Prodigies, Signal or Penal, may be drawn into consequence to conclude the counsels of heaven from them; and whether that Faith and Religion with which the multitude receive them, be not especially owing to those two credulous and superstitious principles Fear and Ignorance, which usually manage and deprave their affections and conclusions.

I readily foresee that as to some persons (more easily infected by the corrupt air of popular
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Religion will seem too much concerned in the Argument, to be dishonored to a question; so to others of more severe and examined principles, it will appear to hold too much of imagination or imposture, to receive the credit of a serious debate; and therefore had I designed no higher in these papers then barely to be publick, I should have made choice of some more obliging theme; and wherein I should be less forc'd to go on trust for my Subject. But that which thus far reconciled me to the Argument, was a regard to the Profitableness, Pleasure; Seasonableness, of a Discourse thereupon.

First, It will, in design at least, be profitable to very great purposes, viz., first, To secure the peace and tranquility of common life. For if when ever the sky is red and bowing, the face of heaven pass on a different color and appearance, from what is usually looks upon us with, we must conclude some approaching storm in the state, every man must needs hold the peace and serenity of his mind, by a very crackt and litigious title. c How can a man, as he is cancel-led, eat his bread with joy, and drink his wine with a cheerfull heart, if every strange accident must perswade him that there is some sword of vengeance hanging over his head (by a thread) ready to fall upon himself, or that common body he relates to, in whose wel-
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fare every good man concerned himself? Mens hearts will be always failing them for fear, and for looking after the things which are coming on the earth, Luke 21. 26.

A sense hereof gave occasion to the Hea then Poet (whose Philosophy or Divinity serv'd him not, to apprehend the superstition of Prodigies,) thus to intrench the Majesty of heaven for alarming the world continually with these direeful Omens of an approaching evil:

Car hanc Tibi, Rector Olympi,
Sollicitis visum mortalis addere curam,
Noscent venturas ut dira per Omina clades;

Which words (that I may the better serve my purpose of them,) I thus make English:

Why doth Heavens Lord foretel mens fate By Omens, and so, antedate Their evils; twice unhappy! must Men take up misery on trust? I'd yeeld extempore my breath; Nor would I dy for fear of death,

And (indeed,) I understand not how many men could reconcile their secure and quiet thoughts to their vain persuasions concerning Prodigies, but that I observe their usage upon any such occurrences to charm down their fears with such like soft and smooth generals.

What these things signify time to come will
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will declare! words, comfortable in the fourth, and frightful but in the first degree.

Secondly, It will also serve the honor of Religion, which the common reverence of Prodigies doth greatly trespass upon; and that,

1. As it detains men under a constant Pedagogie to many servile fears. Whence Religion is easily concluded a great Adversary to (what it mainly designs to bring on upon the world) a true generousness and universal freedom of spirit, and that its whole business is to subdue the spirits of men to some little observances, and servile fears. Hence men quickly grow weary of it, as of a yoke that continually galls them, and conclude themselves gainers if they may but purchase manhood with Atheism. This was that especially which gave Epicurus the confidence of thrusting God and Religion quite out of the world, and salving all the Phcenomenas of Nature without calling in any assistance from the power and providence of any Agent superior to Natural, even that bondage which he observed mens ears bor'd unto by the Religion of his times, which was little besides a servile dismay at, and cold observance of, the signes of heaven, direful Omens, prodigious occurrences, against whose evil abodements men arm'd themselves with (paper against god-guns) a few ineffective Rites and Ceremonies.
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Great fears but especially of God, bind in the powers of the soul, debar it the easie use and enjoyment of it self, and therefore the soul hates that womb of Religion that is conceived to bear them. Religion can never be amiable, till it appear designed not to throw men from themselves by perpetual jealousies of God, but truly to settle and assure them.

2. The superstition of Prodigies commits no small waste upon Religion, as the fears it creates abuse the minds of men. For the fears it gives them are but general for the present, threatening a vengeance to they know not whom, and to fall they know not when, and in the issue wait as the startings of a child before the shadows of the twilight. Now as all the tin-sil-miracles among the Papists most fatally wound Religion, because deriving a suspicion upon the real ones when once detected, so delusive fears introduce upon presences religions, discredit all the true ones, and Religion is in danger to be concluded but a kind of officiously, aiusing the softness and credulity of some men to the service of a design. Religion is too chaste and sacred to be dallied with, non patitur lusum fides. Pious frauds (as strong-waters do the body) may perhaps help Religion in a fit, but, if used familiarly, disable the native heat and strength thereof. Hay and stubble laid upon a good foundation (such I account well-ment forge-
ries in Religion) will catch fire and consume at last, and leave a great stain and soil upon the very foundation.

3. As it reports Religion a Systeme of some Ethnic rites, sneaking and beggerly entertainments of the mind: Now there is nothing more effectually persuades subtle minds to Atheism, then the evaporating of Religion in the Doctrine thereof, into a multitude of perplex questions and doubtful disputations, which make no man wiser or better; and, in the Practice, into a crowd of touchy and critical modes or observations, that cannot command a reverence to themselves before discerning minds, which soon see through them, they are so thin and airy. To dismiss this second particular. If these devouter persuasions concerning Prodigies, produce not in some minds any such sour thoughts of Religion, 'tis solely owing to the power of some happier principles in conjunction with them, by whose activity their malign influence is overpow'd and corrected:

Thirdly, It may be of Use to reprehend a very Vulgar and Pernicious Error.

1. A very vulgar Error. I profess not to know any one Error which all Times and Persons have been so even fatally abus'd withal as the Opinion of presages by Prodigies: whereas there are some false notions which are Errors of the Persons, others which are Er-
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rors of the Age, holding of the peculiar temper, condition, circumstances, of the Person or Age, in which found; this seems to be, in a manner, the Error of the World; having been justifi'd by Jews, Gentiles, Christians, some Ancients, Modern, Learned, Simple, as will more fully appear in the sequel, and may in part by some few instances, which (to serve the necessities of the present Argument) I shall here insert.

As for the Jews, if a good Law be any indication of bad manners, we may conclude them not free of the infection of this Error. God enjoyn'd, & That there should not be found among them any that used divination, or an observer of times, מָה שֵׁמֶן, which the LXX renders by περιονοῦσα, a regarder of prodigies and strange accidents. And whereas we find them upon the appearance of armed troops in the Ayr, a little before the approach of Antiochus, praying that the Omen might be turned to good, methinks their breath smells strongly of the Onyons and garlick of Egypt, those traditional con-seits of Omens and Prodigies derived originally from thence, or some other neighbour-ing Heathens. And perhaps that forward Opinion which the Disciples, being Jews, had already conceived of Earth-quakes, the roaring of the Sea, strange sights in the air, and the like, might occasion our Saviours ap-point-
pointing such things as his signs of the approaching desolation of Hierusalem. It being a noted instance of his goodness, that he never goes further from the Notions, Usages, and thoughts of men in any appointments of his, then necessity obligeth.

How far the Heathen were leaven'd with this fond Notion, the very names and titles Monstra, Oftenta, Prodigia, Portenta, whereby they used to express any anomalous instances of Nature, are but too pregnant a demonstration; all of them carrying in their Original a promise of foreshewing somewhat future. That which perhaps hath betrayed a great many to a like Opinion of them, (most people understanding little besides names and words) not considering, that as there are things without words, so also inapropos, a great many words without things to fill them out.

Among the Fathers (to do them right) I find none so express as m Origen, who speaking concerning Comets, tells us, it hath been observ'd, that so often as any eminent Changes happen in Earth, such stars have been known to arise, foreshewing the translation of Kingdoms, or Wars, or whatever may happen of force sufficient for any great commotions here below.

If we look among the more Modern, it may suffice in this place to take notice that the first Occasion and Original of Rogation week (ob-
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serv'd now upon the religion of greater principles) in the Church, is by Historians, as we are told, refer'd to Claud. Mamertus Bishop of Vienne in France, for the averting of some judgments, which, upon the observation of many inauspicious accidents and prodigies, were sadly fear'd to be approaching.

Amongst the Learned, the height of Gro-Grot. Not. tius calls my eye upon him, who thus expres-seth himself in favor of Prodigies, Solent magnas rerum conversiones præcedere Co-metæ, gladii ardentes, aliisque signa ejusmodi.

As for the common sort of people, Prodi-digy hath alway appear'd to them a word cloth'd about with death, and a Comet cre-ates them more solemn thoughts then Hell doth. A matter of no great wonder, for as they are, by the simplicity of their state, apt to retain a more quick sense of those notions which follow Nature unsubmit't by subtilty, interest, or passion(for the Notices of a God, of a future state, of the Soul's immortality, and of a Providence, as ΒÆlian notes, took fa-ster hold of the popularity, the ruder Indians and Celtæ, then of some of the more discursive Philosophers among the Græcians) So withal are more impressive to those which follow Nature tainted and deprav'd with Guilt and Ignorance, and the many Idols consequent unto both: amongst which, this notion of Pre-
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Sages by Prodigies will appear in due place, to be no small one.

So that the Opinion I contend with may seem, like some weeds in the water, to have a very diffus'd leaf, though growing from a weak and pitiful root; (generally receiv'd, but without any solid reason to support it) and therefore so weak a hand as mine may with hope and apology attempt to pull it up. Why should the old follies of Ethnicism be prefer'd to the Opinion of Christian fore-sights? and when the Sunshine of the Gospel hath discover'd the transparency of all those thin and curious Arts, Capnomancy, Augury, Sooth-saying, Chiromancy, Divination by the Exta, why should their contemporary, Teratoloscopy, survive them all? while we pretend so great an enmity to Superstition, Ethnicism, Popery, shall we not defeat, deal our blows against those airy words, but receive the observation of Prodigies with so much religious kindness, brought forth and cherished, when and where they were most ascendent; and that amidst all this light which shines from heaven about us? It was the doctrine of the Ancients, that the Ghosts assum'd an aery, and therefore dissipable, body to appear in, which was confirm'd by the cold of the night, but attenuated by the light-some heat of the day, in which therefore they could never appear: thus this frightful Mor-
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mo, the Opinion of Prodigies, hath nothing but a condensed body of air (the combin'd voices of the Many) to give it consistence, and therefore, though it might appear formidable in the darkness of Gentilism, methinks the Noon-day of the Gospel should baffle and banish it from the World to that darkness whence it did derive;

2. A very pernicious Error, as having a most malign influence upon the Understanding, upon Philosophy, and upon Divinity.

1. Upon the Understanding it self. No two things do so Usurp upon and Wast the faculty of Reason, as Enthusiasm and Superstition, the one binding a faith, the other a fear upon the Soul to which they mainly intitle some divine discovery: both train a man up to believe beyond possibility of proof: both instruct the Mind to conceive (like the Mares in Pliny) merely by the wind, the vain words of some passionate men, that can but pretend a Revelation or tell a strange story: both teach a man to deliver over himself (in a kind of captivity of Understanding) to the confident dictate of the Sons of Imagination: to determine of things by measures phantastical, rules which cannot maintain themselves in credit by any sober and severe discourses: both injure the mind rather to divine than judge, to dispute from maximes rather vehement then solid: both make a man afraid to believe him-
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...self, to acknowledge that truth which overpowers his mind, and would reward its cordial entertainment with assurance and true freedom of spirit. Both place a man (if he prove so unhappy as to mistake) beyond possibility of conviction, it being in vain to press an argument against him that thinks he can confront a Revelation, a Miracle or some strange judgment from heaven upon his Adversary, to your conclusion. In sum, There is not a greater evil in the State, than wickedness established by a law; nor a greater in the Church, then error by Religion and an ignorant devotion toward God. And therefore no pains and care too much, to remove these two beams from the eye of humane understanding, which render it so insufficient for a just and faithful discovery of Objects in Religion or common Science.

2. Upon Philosophy. For when once Superstition hath prefer’d these Prodigies to the repute of Divine Messengers, it will easily be inferred a necessary respect towards them to keep some distance, and not to approach them too merely by too busy and curious an inquiry into their natural and immediate causes. Among the Grecians of old, those Secretaries of Nature which first made a tender of the natural causes of lightnings and tempests to the ruder Ears of men, were blasted with the reproach of Atheists, and fell under the hatred of the
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untutor'd rabble, because they did not (like them) receive every extraordinary in Nature as an immediate expression of the power and displeasure of the Deity, being able to resolve them into their necessary and immediate causes. The reason whereof, saith Pomponatus) was, because, while assigning these necessary causes of things, they were thought Numen Divinum quibusdam necessitatis ac terminis circumscribere; though they did not appoint but report the necessities to Nature, and those not as binding to the First but Second Causes. An Experience of which honor in the people gave the Philosophers the discretion to sacrifice their honor to their Peace, and to seal up their Mysteries in Symbols, hieroglyphicks and riddles, that only some few which had their own heifer to plough withal, [were initiated by themselves] were able to expound. And amongst themselves, the noble attempt to satisfy the Subtile Phenomena in Nature from causes natural and immediate, is thought by some to have so much of the Philosopher, that it hath the less of the Christian therein, and seems to invite Nature all. As if to show, how many wheels in some great Engine, move in subordination to the production of some great work, were to obscure and eclipse the art of the Artif-

Upon Divinity also: Not only because the
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The Conceit authorizes a liberty for men to bring into it what Divine signs they please without warrant from Scripture or reason; but because it conciliates reverence to a lie, and christens the vain and soft-fears of ignorance by the name of prudent foresights and religious observances of God: whence the soul is brought (like some of the ancient Heathens) to give worship to its very passions and diseases. Stories of Prodigies may perhaps serve to deceive the tedium of a winter night, but when once they advance (a focis ad Aras) from the chimney corner to the Church, and are adopted the measures of a religious faith; or fear, advanced the serious motives of Repentance, 'tis time to throw contempt upon them. A ly never did, never could, serve the interest of truth.

The Church of Rome (whether to serve the interest of Philosophy or Divinity, I shall not here concern my self to enquire) hath sometime express'd herself (fas est & ab hoste doceri) by some of her Wiser Representatives; a great Adversary to this instance of superstition, the observation of portentous accidents. We finde in the Catalogue of books prohibited by Urban, viii. those interdicted among the rest, Author Chronici prodigiorum & ostentorum ab exordio mundi usque ad Annunm 1557. And Gregory the Great (represented to Posterity as one most studious
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of the propagation of the Christian Religion was acted by so great a zeal against it, that we are told he took care for the extirpation of that, otherwise excellent, Historian, Livy, out of all Libraries, ob tam frequentem & accuratam portentorum enumerationem, for his so frequent and critical enumeration of all the Portentata which seemed to attend any great Action and Change in State. Though I think too hastily and severe a judgment past upon that Historian, whom we shall easily perceive not more leavened in mind or writing with this kind of sorer Superstition, than Herodotus, Plutarch, in his lives, Dio-Cæsius, Tacitus, and all other Ethnicks Historians (Polybius only excepted) which stood in no better light then he did. However this eminent Person discovered a great zeal against the abuse of mens minds by such solemn follies as the sacred regards of Prodigies are: and a great zeal carries, in the very Nature and intention thereof, its pardon for a little over-doing. The mind of man was made for Truth and Goodness, and therefore should not in any matter (if the Remedy fell within our compass) be put off with the bare form and idol of either; but where an error hath once seiz'd it, which is (what some say of a comet), both an evil and a pregnant cause of evil, no need then of the voice of thunder to awaken charity to en-

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deavour, as it can, its remedy and removal.

Thirdly, This Discourse may be profita-
ble to serve the just interest of State. And
that

1. As it tends in weaker minds to secure
the honour of Acts of State and the re-
sults of publick Counsel. Prussias being in-
vited by Hannibal, to close within a happy ad-
vantage, then render, to engage the En-
emy, made answer that he durst not. Eo quod
Exta prohiberent, because the Entrails of
the Sacrifice did not speak it a lucky hour.

To whom Hannibal, will you sooner be-
lieve the flesh of a Calf, then an old Expe-
rienced Commander? Certainly some men
(though it be a weakness in them too great
for laughter) seem to give a more easy credit
to a phantasm in the clouds, a castle in the
air, a Man of straw that is too wet or too com-
pact to burn, then the reasonings of wise
men: and to receive a Meteor, thought to fall
upon the Parliament-House, with more awful
regards then all that Authority, Gravity and
wisdom that dwells in that דוד הָעֲבָדָה
House of publick Judgment. Great reason therefore
to endeavor to disabuse their minds, and to
shew that such Prodigies (like some terrible
dreams) are frightful to them only because
they are asleep, (either do not understand, or do
not well consider) and that nor Kingdoms nor
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men are to be governed by Phanesies but by
Counsel.

2. As it tends to make men more man-
ageable to the commands of Authority.
How mean a regard shall the issues of the se-
verest debates, and the commands of Author-
ity find, if every pitiful Prodigy-monger
have credit enough with the People to blaf
them, by telling them that heaven frowns
upon the laws, and that God writes his dis-
pleasure against them in black and visible
Characters when some sad accident befals
the complying with them. Easy men will
quickly be frightened from obedience by such
images of straw, as the relations of Mon-
sters, and strange sights are, unless we lead
them up to them and shew them to be de-
vaid of life and power, truth or signifi-
cation. And certainly that man is strangely
commanded by Religion, that heartily com-
plies with the present Laws and Governors
while he thinks some Prophecy or Prodigy
encourage the sudden expectation of some
strange change of affairs in the state.

Of what evil consequence the Romans at
last found the observation of Signs and
Omens to be, in war especially, appears from
what Tully hath left recorded, viz., that
howsoever they were in his time ab Urbani
tota, retained for some reasons of State,
in some repute with the Citizens, yet they
were
were à bellicis sublata, quite banished the Camp, because they found that the ignorant multitude, like beasts, would not drive well, if any such bug-bears were suffered to ly before them, nor ever cheerfully attempt where any unlucky Omen gave them the opinion that they were not likely to succeed. Now where weak men (like the horse of Alexander) are ready to start and fly off from their Rulers, because frighted with shadows, then charity to them, and the Publick to turn them to the Sun, to lead them to the light by a faithful information of their Judgments.

3. As it ministers to the quiet and tranquillity of the State. That man that hath already incircled his own head with a Glory, and is strongly persuaded that God's honor, and the Gospel stand or fall with his private Party and Opinion, will need no great Rhetoric to persuade him to receive a Prodigy (upon the credit of the Vulgar notion thereof) as a sign from heaven to encourage any seditious endeavours to advance it. Prophecies concerning the deaths of some great persons or alteration in State (though a kind of weak air which carries about but the more light and chaffy minds) the Wisdom of the State hath judged of such evil consequence as by several Acts of Parliament, under severe penalties, to interdict the publi-
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of them. Now Prodigies have ever been proposed and received as a kind of types and real Prophecies of some black daisies and strange alterations and judgments just upon the wheel of Providence and at hand: and therefore may easily be presumed to have as malign an influence upon the people (apt to be mightily moved with whatever comes toward them with any shadow and promise of Divine and Sacred) as the former.

Among the Ancient Romans, subtle States-men made use of that Superstitious observati-
on of Omens and Prodigies, to which they saw the people (in the ruder ages especially) so invincibly addicted, to manage them to what persuasions might best serve the present ne-
necessities of State; to which purpose they had their Collegia Vatium, Publick Diviners, who knew to bend these lesser accidents (as the Mufti can the Alcoran) to such a sense and signification as might make the ease multitude manageable to the purposes and de-
signs of their Rulers. And there to be wisht that some Christians had not since transcri-
bled the copy of this Ethnick example, and endeavoured to serve some secular ends upon the credulity and superstition of the multi-
tude, by the tending of any such Prodigies to their hopes or fears. But let men beware how any dark Providence tempt them to the breach of a clear Command, He that alled-
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The Spirit of God to justify an Opinion in Religion, may thank himself if he perish in the other world, and he that quotes, only, a Prodigy on Nature to encourage any sedition in State, may thank himself if he perish in this.

Secondly. This Discourse (without owing much to the Author) will be pregnant with pleasure and delight. For things rare and unusual (the subject, thereof) call forth the Soul to a very quick and grateful attendance, whilst matters of greater worth and moment, of more familiar occurrence, (like things often handled and blown upon) lose their value and luster in its eye. Now the contemplation of things new and strange, gives the Soul so high a pleasure, because they prove the occasions of wonder and admiration, which the Philosopher ranks among the new ideas, things pleasant and delightful; because (saith He) admiration comes attended with a tacit desire of learning more fully the nature and causes of its object: though I rather think, because Admiration is (as the Lord Verulam well fides it) abrupta quædam Scientia, an Essay to knowledge. Besides, we shall observe that the acts of the Soul which are intense, and cut it much off from itself, as profound contemplations, great joys, ecstacies, a great love, and so, high admirations, create it a most shafte and refined plea-
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pleasure. Moreover objects not as yet fully known (as objects rare and strange are), keep the soul in a state of hope and expectation of some huge satisfaction in a greater intimacy and acquaintance with them. Now, as to this World's heaven, the Viatores (because improving their felicities by an active fancy) are usually more happy then the comprehenders. Again, the soul of man affects a kind of infinity in its objects. The affections are always reaching after new pleasures, the desires are carried forth after new possessions, phantasy is perpetually entertaining the mind with new Ideas that never took pattern from the World; the understanding is continually calling for a new Scene of contemplations & the eye is never satisfied with seeing; b Sca-b Mens nostra

liger alledged this reason of the delight men naturally take in fables, the pictures of Anticks and Monsters, (things rare and extra-

ordinary,) even because they exceed the common limits of truth, and mend the prospect of the soul; which by its unconfined de-
sires and motions gives it self to understand, that it is of higher extraction then that of a beast, and cannot truly compose and enjoy itself but in union with God the infinite Ocean of Truth and Goodness.

Thirdly. That which further engaged my thoughts upon the Argument was a considera-
tion of the Seemableness thereof; We have
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The Poets feign the Giants, the sons of Earth, to have hidden battle to the Gods; and to have perished by a thunderbolt in the confidence of that attempt; and the Earth their Mother, to avenge the death of her Sons, to have brought forth their last Sister, Fame. A fable expounded by the excellent Vernier, of unquiet and seditionous persons (a kind of Filii Terrae, the creatures of the People, usually envious against their Rulers, and soon weary of the present State of things) who when once set on, destroy in their attempts against...
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against the Gods on earth, their rightful Gou-

dors; their fall is avenged by a familiar querula & sedition, (a feminine Sedition) popular clamors, libels, odious representations of them to derive upon them the common enemy, with which may be numbered the reports of strange prodigies or Prophecies giving hopes of some approaching change of affairs: (an observation which I am sure will afford none that are swallows of that sacred character, Persons which are quiet in the Land.)

It all that has been hitherto discoursed concerning the profit, pleasure, reasonableness of the Argument before us, I shall superadd this one consideration more to excuse the trouble the papers give the reader. An hasty and ignorant rejection of things which obtain, though unworthy, the place and repute of Divine and sacred, as prodigies do, is both a Cause of Atheism, and a Sign thereof. A Cause, for men without due information, will be forward to suspect (as we always are, where we do not love) that the other parts of Religion do as much abuse the faith of the World, as that which they now see rejected; and that Religion is nothing but a mere solemn kind of Custom, (like a bubble) made and broken by the same common Airs. And therefore an overhasty pulling off, even the Wens and excrescencies from the body of 
Religion, may prove of as evil consequence, as a permitting them still to grow upon it. A Sign too; He that without light and resolution, sights and neglects things, but presumed Sacred, is but a more fortunate Atheist, and more harmlessly profane. As our Saviour would not be called Good in an ignorant courtesy, so neither should these Prodigies, vain, in an ignorant Scorn. Look therefore as Persons once sacred, found guilty of Capital crimes, are sometimes solemnly degraded: and all the characters of Dignity, and Sanctity stamped upon them, deface, and blotted out, before they are executed. So things once preferred to the repute of Sacred, should be first degraded by a due information of mens judgments, from that Opinion and high degree of respect they obtained with them, before they be thrown off, and delivered to their just neglect and disregard.

And this is that which I thought necessary to premise, to level the way to a fairer reception and interpretation of the ensuing Discourse.
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A DISCOURSE Concerning PRODIGIES:
Wherein the Vanity of Presages by them is reprehended, and their true and proper Ends asserted and vindicated.

CHAP. I.
Concerning the several kinds of Prodigies.

Great Wonders of divine efficiency alone: these divided into Ordinary and Extraordinary. The kinds of the former touch upon. Wonders extraordinary (comprised under the general name of Prodigies) divided into Signal and Penal. The use of that phrase excused. Prodigies Signal, Natural, Praternatural, Supernatural, what. Most of the Prodigies related in the Ethnicks Stories, excluded this number; and why. A conjecture concerning the occasion of some of them. Prodigies Penal described.

T is the Prerogative Royal of the King of Heaven, that He only doth great wonders, commands Nature to what actions, in
Of the several kinds of Prodigies.

to what posture, may best serve the ends of
his own honor and wisdom. The biggest
works the Devil doeth, have but a tympany
of greatness, are a kind of practical fallacies;
as he is but Simia Dei, so the greatest work
which falls within his compass, is but Simia
Miraculi, and owes the wonder it meets with,
not to its own real greatness, but our Ignor-
ance.

Now these wonders are either Ordinary or
Extraordinary.

First, There are some of his wonders of
Ordinary and constant residence (a kind of
more remarkable passages in the Book of
Nature) such as are,

1. The Monadica Natura, By which I
take leave to understand at present, those
works in Nature which are of so private and
peculiar a make and character, that they
stand almost alone, and hardly admit their
pattern in the whole Systeme of the Creati-
on, such as are boiling Springs, flaming
Mountains, petrifying Waters, vast chasms
and hiatus in the Earth, &c. the instances
whereof are so various, that there is no
Country but hath its miranda, which call
upon it to pay the constant tribute of a deli-
berate and judicious admiration to him, who
seems to inscribe his own name Wonderful
upon all these works of his.

2. The Lusus Natura, (as I may stile
them)
of the several kinds of Prodigies.

them) the disports of Nature; such works wherein the hand of Nature breaks and divides, as it were, the plain ground of some common nature into an elegant variety of Individuals, different in shape and temper; as is seen in Dogs and Roses, &c. as also those works wherein (because delighted as much with consent as variety) *se sequiturque fugitque*, she seems to follow and fly from her self both at once, aping and imitating her own works, in one element, by some similar figures or dispositions; in different pieces of the Creation, in another: (which serve as a kind of grateful repeats in the harmony of the world.)

3. The *Varietates Nature*, elegant and copious varieties of Nature, appearing in the various *species* of things, which different Countries so entertain the curiosities of each other with, that one appears a kind of constant Prodigy to another. All these have imploied the hours of other men, and besides are more properly entred among the rarities then the Prodigies of Nature, and so fall not within the lines of our present Argument.

Secondly, There are *Wonders Extraordinary*, such are they which happen but now and then, and are a kind of short and transient discords, stepping in sometimes to recommend the general harmony and evenness
In the motions of Nature, and the Government of the World, comprised under the general name of Prodigies.

Now that division of these, which I shall premise to the ensuing discourse, shall be such as the necessity and design thereof, rather than such as the laws of Logick, do prompt me to; which I conceive may be best serv'd, by dividing them into Prodigies (barely) Signal and Penal: for though I have no faith nor favor for the former, yet while I indite them at the bar of Reason, I am forc'd to take notice of them under such names and titles, as common opinion hath affix'd upon them.

Those which are (barely) Signal (such, I mean, in vulgar account) are of three sorts:

1. Prodigies Natural, such I reckon all those of whose particular and immediate causes (though rarely occurring) we are sufficiently resolv'd: such as are, to speak with the people, falling Stars, Earthquakes, Extraordinary Eclipses, the appearance of two or three Suns at once, some kind of monstrous births. With these I number all Events, beside the common road of Nature, owing to some accidental, though to us unknown, assistance or interruption of Agents purely natural, or some secret and reserved Law in Nature: as Comets, New Stars, some extraordinary alteration in the heavenly Bodies, [as that...
Of the several kinds of Prodigies.

that in the Planet Venus, both as to color and figure, before the times of Christ, often mention'd by Astronomers from Varro and S. Austin, and the strange deliquium of Light in the Sun about the death of Caesar, some irregular ebbings and flowings of the Sea. These I reckon Prodigies Natural, all being but Nature acting of its part in different habits and appearances, and giving us to know how it will exert itself when such Actives and Passives chance to meet, and that it intends, the more private and common Laws of Motion appointed to some particular & inferior Agents, shall obtain and bind, except where some more catholick and indispensible Laws of operation given to Causes of greater force and value shall chance to interpose and suspend them for a time; as the Statutes and Customs of private Corporations take place, till their power be suspended by some more catholick and enforcing Law of State.

2. Prodigies Præternatural, such I account all strange Events, which hold of no steady causes, but are to us solely casual and uncertain: as the firing of houses or temples by Lightning, the coming to shore of some strange kind of fish, Spots as of blood appearing upon Stones or Statues, Messages deliver'd by Spirits, strange Voices in the night, apparitions of Ghosts, fearful sights in the Air, as of Armies, and instruments of War; in short,
Of the several kinds of Prodigies.
all the odd accidents anciently distinguished by the name of Omens. All or most of these, being effects without a constant and Natural, and yet not requiring the special presence and power of a Supernatural, cause.

3. Supernatural. Under which head I comprize all those Miracles which ignorance of causes is the maker of, as also all those Events of which Reason is sufficiently resolved that they exceed the powers and sufficiencies of all Natural Causes. For as in Religion there are some things according to the reason of all men; viz. the doctrines of temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, &c. Some things beside Reason, those divine discoveries in Scripture, which Reason readily apprehends and seals unto, as just and true, which it could not by its own powers rise up to the knowledge of, such are all the historical reports, and the wise methods of Salvation, contained therein. Other things above Reason; the great Articles of Faith, transcendent to the Capacity as well as light of common reason, in the modes and circumstances of them. So in the compass of divine providence, there are three sorts of works; Some, according to Nature, and the more common laws and rules of operation given to it. Some, beside common Nature, such are the Events we call Prodigies, which though according to nature, as considered
Of the several kinds of Prodigies.

Considered in such circumstances and coincidence of causes, yet are beside it, if considered solely with regard to its more usual and familiar methods of action. Other things above Nature, such are the alterations therein which exceed the capacities of second causes. In a Prodigy strictly taken, Nature suffers from itself, and is in a sort both Victor and Captive to itself; but in a Miracle, Nature is solely passive to that Original Mind and Power, who first gave, and who alone can suspend, its original Laws of Motion.

These Supernatural Prodigies (though I know not to believe any such now hapning) must find a place in this discourse, not only because some such have, as Embassadors extraordinary, been dispatch'd heretofore upon some great errand, [as the fearful Eclipse at our Saviors death, the hailstones mentioned Josh, 10. 11. so hugely exceeding the common standard of Nature, and perhaps the fiery Sword which hung over Jerusalem so long, before its final desolation:] but because our Adveraries are so prone to over-value occurrences, and to intitle an immediate hand of Heaven to all objects of wonder.

As for those stories, with which the Ethnique Legends abound, of the speaking of Children out of their Mothers wombs, the raining of Stones, the speaking of Oxen, their being
Of the several kinds of Prodigies.

being found without hearts or livers when
brought to the Altars, Fountains running real
blood for a long time together, the bloody sweats
of Armor, (which may seem to enter a fair
plea for the honor of being marshal'd under
this head) I am greatly inclinable, with Tul-
ly, to reject them all as fables and impo-
stures, with which the World hath ever
been abused. (Rome Pagan was as good at
inventing stories of Prodigies, and Appariti-
ons of the Gods, as Rome Christian of Mi-
racles and Apparitions of Saints.) Except,
to salve the credit of Historians, we believe
that the Devil, while the noise of Miracles
was so loud in the World, might with these
and the like antick and lying Wonders, ape
the true Miracles of God, whose worship and
attributes he had usurp'd; so to maintain
his reputation with his besoool'd Votaries.
With a like faith, though better affection;
(because found in a Poem) I receive many
of those Portenta which Virgil tells us at-
tended the fall of Cæsar:

--- Simulachra miris pallentia modis
Virgil. Georg. 
Visa sub obscurum noctis, pecudesque locuta.
Infandum, fistunt amnes, terraque dehiscent,
Et mœstû illa crymat templis ebur, eraq; sudat.
Nec puteis manare cruor cessavit. ---

'Twas proper for a Poet to hang the whole
frame of Nature, as it were with mourning
and
Of the several kinds of Prodigies.

and astonishment, upon the fall of so great a Person as Caesar was. Gods Miracles carried majesty in those visible characters of Power; Greatness Wisdom, stamp’d upon them; (they were never vain and ludicrous) and they came forth upon some errand of importance: like a broad Seal they carried Majesty in their aspect, and came to derive credit and authority upon some matter of great weight and moment.

Secondly, There are a sort of Penal Prodigies (for I take the word in the latitude of its sense) such as are judgments upon Persons or Nations of a dreadful and unusual figure and condition: sudden arrests by death, strange diseases, death by lightning, or the fall of a tower, unusual plagues, defeats of Armies at huge odds and disadvantages, murrain of cattle, very unseasonable years, &c.

These distinctions premised, I shall offer the best service I can, toward the deciphering of these dark characters of divine Providence; and make inquiry (in the order they now lie before us) into the intent and meaning of these new and unwonted occurrences. In which Essay, I shall assume the liberty which I readily allow another of advising freely with Reason; for we cannot in this Argument take to any other Oracle to resolve us, if we intend to be wise to sobriety. It is but a just valuation of our selves, to let

no
Of Natural Prodigies

no vulgar notions commence our persuasions, before they have past the scrutiny of our Reason, and appear to merit our assent.

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CHAP. II.

Concerning Prodigies, Signal, Natural,

I shall descend now to a close and distinct discourse concerning the forementioned Prodigies Signal; and amongst them, first concerning those which more immediately resolve into causes Natural. Concerning all which, I offer this general Thesis to proof: Prodigies Natural are not intended, nor to be expounded the Prognosticks of judgments, suddenly to ensue upon whole Nations or particular persons. It is especially ignorance of their causes and ends which hath preferred some of these Natural Prodigies to so great a veneration and regard in many mens mind. As Ethnecism of old made the gods it worship'd, to Ignorance oft makes the Furies it dreads.

This Thesis I shall endeavor to preswade,

1. By some general Reasons and Arguments.

2. By a particular Induction and Survey of such as seem most plausibly pretended the silent
§. I. Of Natural Prodigies.

Silent Monitors of some approaching vengeance.

First, By some general Reasons.

SECT. I.

Reasons to prove Prodigies Natural no Signs of a future judgement.

The first Argument taken from their doubtful and uncertain indications. That proved from the confessions of their ablest Expositors. Cornel. Gemma. the first and only undertaker to teach the Art of interpreting them: his attempts fruitless: further proved from their different Expositions in all times. The Etruscan vanity in putting contrary constructions upon them at several times, noted: different conjectures of Papists and Protestants upon the finding of the heart of Zuunglius intire when his body was burnt: the sober speech of Thuanus upon that occasion. Molinus, while contending for Prodigies, acknowledged as much. The Interpreters of them banish'd the Jewish commonwealth of old, upon this account. Philb. All Gods Signs express; the vanity of those which are not. Nothing in a Prodigy to direct its interpretation.

2. From a consideration of the times when first attended to. Great regard to be had to the times when any Laws or Usages first commenced, with the reason thereof, noted from King James. The times when Prodigies were first and most attended to, noted especially for gross ignorance in matters of Religion and Philosophy. The custom of the Egyptians to keep Registers of Prodigies, with the reason thereof, imitated by the Romans. Four observations upon the remaining Registers, as restored by Lycothenes. Prodigies most regarded in times of distraction and motion, noted from Livy and Seneca, with the reason thereof. Gods institutions opposite to the Devils.

3. The Thesis further proved from a consideration of the Natural, and necessary causes of such things. More of Nature observable in a Prodigy then common Occurrences: that cleared in several instances.

4. From
Of Natural Prodigies. § 1.

4. From the nature and temper of the Oeconomy we are now under: things managed in it, in gentle, rational, and silent manners. A conjecture upon the Wonders at our Saviors death, and at Pentecost. What kind of Reasons to be expected in this Argument, and others of like nature.

**Argum. I.**

The Argument which I shall first offer to reprehend the common vanity of receiving them as a kind of indications in Bodies Politick, is this: Their (pretended) indications are so hugely perplex'd, doubtful and uncertain, that it cannot be concluded what judgment they portend, or when to ensue, or whether private persons or whole Nations be alarm'd by them.

If God do write *Fata hominum* in these mystick characters, there is none on earth found able to read the writing, and (with any certainty) to make known the interpretation thereof. Most of their Expositors (like those upon Aristotle) are rather *Vates quam Interpretes*. Concerning that prodigious Comet which shone in our Hemisphere, Ann. 1618. *one that pretended himself as much an intimate with the Stars as other men, yet thus freely delivers himself; Deum immortalem! quanto ille plures de se se ferme Opiniones quam crines Sparsit. To a like purpose Tycho Brahe (discourſing de Nova Stella Cygni, Ann. 1600.) *Decreta Phænomenon caelitus illucscendentium, ab is qui artem astrologica profinentur, præsagiri, satis evidentibus experimento.*
perimo, nequeunt: but yet (so hard it is even for wise men to discard their opinions as Origen calls them, Opinions brought up with them, and woven into the very first contexture of their minds;) he adds, Non idcirco statuendum deum & naturam talibus noviter formatis corporibus inaniter illudere, nihilque praesagii mundo offendere: as if they must needs be in vain, unless they assist presages (which yet no man is able to reach the certain knowledge of,) I question not, but amidst the many Contenders for the sacred regards of the singularities in Nature, there would not have wanted some to direct the interpretation of them by some steady rules and maxims, had not a secret conviction of the vanity and giddiness of the attempt, shamed and discouraged it. But I never had the hap to meet with above one of courage enough to pretend to teach the World the art of expounding such prodigious Events: And he (speaking concerning them) confidently tells his Reader, Nos horum notitiam corn. Gemma, qualem cuncte ad usum vitæ ac felicitatis humanae referentes, apto titulo artem, quam piam, Κόσμου. five de Divin. Nat. Chra. c. i. crises atque mutationes ingentes in humana Republ. quam reliquis universi partibus deceat praesagire. And left the honor of the Undertaking should not fall intire upon his own
Of Natural Prodigies. § 1.

Of Natural Prodigies. § 1.

own head, he adds, That many have written of Monsters, strange sights, Prodigies of all sorts; *opus vero quo communissima quaedam, ex rebus divinis, praesagiendi ratio tradetur, a nemine haetenus exaratum est.* A work in which the common art and way of presaging by these divine Works and Signs, might be laid forth, is as yet unattempted by any man. I shall not wrong him or other men so far as to deny him the first Undertaker in this work: that he was no more, will, I easily persuade my self, appear to the capable peruser of his writings: Nor was it possible for him to build up this pretended Art, wanting the even rule and line of assured principles of Reason or uniform experience to lay out the Maxims and conclusions of it by.

A truth which the different purposes and significations to which these Prodigies have been (in all times) expounded, make faith of. In the more ancient times of the world, when they had their *Collegia vaturn*, publick Professors of the Art of Divination, by any unusual *Phænomena* in Nature, we shall observe *Earthquakes, Comets, Lightnings, &c.* expounded sometimes *lata, sometimes finit Insert.* All these images (like some among the Papists) were made to look upon the people with a frown or a smile, according as

*Quis non ridet amenti-<n>um, insulsa-rum, & imper-scientiam veterum, ut unus terræ-motus, unus fulmen, unus cæleste signum, rem secundam; alter terræ-motus, alterum fulmen, alterum signum, rem adversam portenderet? Pol'y. Virg. de Prodig. 1. 3.*
Of Natural Prodigies.

the Priests of old (for State-reasons) were pleased to manage them by their subtle interpretations. Thus, in latter times, they have always (like bells) sounded to such a tune and sense, as the passengers phancy would impose upon them: That *pluvia purpurea*, purpled rain falling at Brussels, Ann. 1646, (concerning the reason of which there are extant the several judgments of Learned men) was no doubt received by timorous and foster phancies, as a presage of a bloody war suddenly to ensue; whereas others owned it as an *Omen* of a pacific covenant, and a Sign that Heaven would sooner rain blood, then there should be any further effusion thereof on Earth or Sea, as the Poet expresseth himself upon that occasion;

*Fam satis effusum terrae, maris, cruris,*

*Ipsa testantur queis pluit axis aqua.*

Thus when the heart of Zwinglius (who was burnt, being found among the flain) was found intire in the ashes, when his body was consumed, his friends, from this *Ordeel* trial, concluded the stoutness and sincerity, but his adversaries the obdurateness thereof. But the grave Historian makes a more sober gloss upon this providence, then either, in those words, *Adoe turbatis odio aut amore animis, ut fit religionis dissenzionibus, pro se quisque omnia superstitione interpretatur.* Mens minds disturbed with love or hatred (as it falls out
in religious differences) each party super-
fittiously interprets all accidents in favour of it self. And Molinesis (while contending for a regard of Comets, and other occasions of wonder, as a kind of Signs from Heaven) with greater faithfulness to the truth then his own Opinion, confesseth as much; vere-
runtamen hac signa homines solent varie inter-
pretari, & trahere ad sua vota, aut fpes, aut metus.

In the interim we may safely infer, the va-
nity of trusting too much to these Prodigies, which (like mercenary soldiers) may be easi-
ly brought to fight on either side in any case. Accordingly Philo tells us, that the Law of Moses banish'd from the Jewish Na-
tion πάντας οἰωνοσκότας, πεξιοσκότας, all
the observers of Birds, and regarders of Pro-
digies, because these Diviners were led but by specious and plausible conjectures, entar-
tained different phancies of the same things, both because their subjects had no steady and fix'd Nature, and themselves were unprovi-
ded of any sure Maxims, by which to measure and prove the conceits of their own minds in reference to them.

Can it now be reasonably imagined, that God (all whose ways are judgment) ever in-
tended these portentous occurrences as his trumpets to alarm a drowsy world, which give forth ἀδηλον φωνη, so obscure and un-
certain
§ 1. Of Natural Prodigies.

Can it possibly be presumed, that anything is there signified where nothing ever was or will be certainly understood? If these be the signs of the gods (said Tully, discoursing upon this argument) why have they always been so dark and obscure? For if they come forth that we might understand things future, they ought to declare them more openly and plainly; aut ne occulte quidem, si ea scire nolebant, or not so much as darkly, if they would not have them understood. Did God ever in all the Scripture, foretel an evil by any such winding and squint-eyed Oracles as the Old Serpent made use of, which used to work men to some confused and pannick fears, or to insnare them, while seeming to warn them? When he spake to Egypt by the words of his signs, Psal. 105. 27. they were such as were clearly expressive of his mind and purpose, they were such as (like Arrows shot into a Town with letters bound about them) did bear upon them their own signification, and gave very intelligible intimations of their end and intention; whereas all these signs, as commonly reputed, give forth no certain notices of the Events they point unto: For they are not Hieroglyphicks of the judgments (as bearing no likeness and resemblance of them) nor effective causes of them, nor succeeded alway by them; nor
yet did Scripture (a consideration in stead of all arguments) ever warrant us to receive any of them with those religious and awful regards which are owing to the Monitors of the Divine displeasure, which certainly it would have done, had the honor of God and the good of men been so hugely concerned in them, as some would have us to imagine.

Secondly, The times wherein these Prodigies have been received with their first and most religious regards, were such as sufficiently lessen their repute with all persons that use not to trust their faith without some security. Excellent that speech of K. James; A good Crisis of a President or Custom may be made by an attendance to the condition of the times wherein they first obtained, which if remarkable, either for their ignorance or confusions, they greatly render the things to suspicion and challenge, which received their first birth and original in them.

Now then, if, as the Astrologers use, we calculate the Nativity of this Opinion of Prodigies, we shall find nothing promised and signified of force enough to oblige our affections, because (as truth obtains most in times of greatest knowledge and peace, when men have most ability and leisure to judge, so) the times wherein this first and principally prevailed, Stand blemish'd with these two great evils; Ignorance and Distraction.
§I. Of Natural Prodigies.

First, They were times of greatest ignorance both in matters of Religion and Learning.

In matters of Religion: Who more critically observant of all such unusual accidents, then the Heathen who knew not God? whose whole Religion, in the practice of it, was but the Systeme of ridiculous, obscene, and inhumane Rites; and, in the speculat

ion thereof, but an endless observation of Omens, and Prodigies, and a pretended skill of interpreting dreams and strange accidents. It was among the Egyptians (as we learn from Strabo) a great instance of Religion, áναφήσεις παίεις γενεμένωσι to enter into their sacred Records all the Errata Nature; and, perhaps in an imitation of them, the Romans kept their annual Registers of the several anomalous Occurrences in the World; some fragments of which have reach'd our own times: Upon a deliberate perusal whereof, four things (not unserviceable to our general Discourse) offer themselves to our observation:

1. That the Events succeeding them were as often happy, as unfortunate: the truth whereof the curious Reader may soon resolve himself of, by a short survey.

2. That they generally concluded in superstition; the people being readily wrought on to institute novas Ferias, to consecrate new
Of Natural Prodigies. § 1.

new Temples to the gods, to institute new Rites, expiare prodigia, & procurare monstra (as their phrase was) to divert the unlucky Omen.

3. That there hardly passeth a year or two in that Register, wherein there are not recorded several of these Portenta.

4. That a vain opinion of these things held the people under a perpetual Pedagogy to base and ignoble fears of God, and impenent evils.

Upon which accounts I do more then incline to believe, That the Devil (who hath the posse aeris at his command) did often, by divine permission, procure many strange impressions on Nature, thereby to fright those to his Altars, which he could never persuade, and to subdue the minds of men to, his own image, a perpetual fear and trembling before the sense of a Deity. But God (who useth to make the Devils mines to fall in upon himself) made no doubt this happy use of these flaviſh fears in the minds of the Gentiles, even the ushering in of the Gospel Jubilee with the greater acceptance among them; as, by the fears and terrors of the Law, he also levelled the way to its more ready and cheerful reception among the Jews. But to return,

As ignorant were the times in Philosophy, as Religion; perfect strangers to the Rea-
§ 1. Of Natural Prodigies.

fons of things: For (as it is well observed) as the knowledge of the natural causes of Earthquakes, Eclipses, Lightnings, Meteors, &c. obtained, amongst the Gentiles of old; so all their ominous fears, their libri fulgurales, interpretations of Prodigies, fell into contempt and dis-repute: The more men advanc’d into the Light, the less apt were they to start. They then began to smile at their former superstitions, as men in the day laugh at those Dreams and Visions which frightened them in the night.

Besides, secondly, They were Times of publick fears, troubles, confusions (generally) when men were most impresive to a fear of these prodigious accidents. Thus Livy notes, Turbido aliquo tempore, versis in Religionem animis, multa visa creditaq; prodigiaque non erant: And else where tells us, (Hist. 1. 28. xi.) In civitate, tanto discrimine belli sollicita, quum omnium secundorum adversorum que causas in Deos verterent, multa prodigia nunciabantur.

Men, when they think God displeased, (as they deal by a man they conceive their adversary) look upon all his actions through the black medium of suspicion and jealousy, and therefore they all seem to carry terrors and afflictments with them. All strange Accidents, like strange Passengers, in times of discomposure are suspected and examined.
which freely pass without our notices when peace and love spread their gentle wings over a Nation: When fear hath once tinctured the eye of the mind with black (dreadful) apprehensions, it easily sees everything of its own colour; it either finds its object, or creates it in every occurrence: The Sun shines not upon the water or a cloud, but (like the Moabites) men conclude signs of blood from the redness of the colour, when fear hath once softened the spirits, and disabled the mind for a cool and sedate judgment and valuation of things. Besides, in such times, Religion knows not to keep its mean, but quickly runs over into superstition, a servile flattery of God, and an observance of him in little, weak, feminine instances of devotion.

Now the Religion of Prodigies being conceived thus in the womb of gross ignorance, and nourish'd by the soft and easie fears of men in affliction, when their fancy, like metal in the fire, refuseth no figure, we cannot entertain any great Opinion of its strength and goodness, without a forfeiture of our credit, with more considerate and serious persons. Can it be ever thought that God should advance an observation of these things into so necessary a part of our Religion, adopt it a great instance of our regards of his superintendence and presidency over the
The affairs of the World, when (we see) the Devil made choice of it to entertain the devout fears of his Votaries withal? Did God ever take sacrifice from the Devils altars? The Devil indeed hath alway been Gods Ape, but God will alway be found the Devils Opposite, and to tread counter to him perpetually. Many of the critical Rites and Usages appointed the Jewish Nation, will be found to resolve into the divine purpose to cross and thwart, by his commands, the Rites of the Zabii, the Egyptians, and other neighboring Nations, which had the Devil for the Great Master of their religious Ceremonies. When our Saviour came into the World, the Religion of the greatest part of it, through the Agency of the Devil, ran out into a multitude of little rites, weak observances, bodily postures; and he appoints a Religion directly opposite, plain, simple, rational, life and spirit; whose main design was to imploy and perfect the mind and spirit of a man. And can it be thought that Heaven and Hell now touch each other so far, that we must borrow the measures of our biggest fears and hopes, and motives to Repentance, from the Ethnick Divinity? (in which if there had been any thing found and valuable, to be sure the Devil would have hindred its gaining so great a regard as it did among his Votaries.)
we now look for such a Jewel, as the intimations of the counsels of infinite Wisdom are, in the dunghill of obscene and monstrous Births, Apparitions of lying Spirits, strange Voices in the Air, mighty Winds, alterations in the face of Heaven, &c. from which the Gentiles in the times of their ignorance (to benighted men rotten wood shines) thought to receive the light of some heavenly counsel and direction?

Thirdly, Prodigies Natural are not to be regarded as Prognosticks of Events arbitrary, even because they are Natural, are owing to as necessary causes in Nature as the more common and easie productions thereof: no need to call in the extraordinary assistances of Heaven to salve these unusual Phænomena, for as Nature is but a constant and durable Prodigy, so a Prodigy but a more rare and unusual Nature, as hath been shewn by many Writers, to which I remit the capable Reader.

Nay, upon a due judgment of things, there will perhaps appear more of Nature in a Prodigy, then in the more harmonious consort of Uniform Agents, to which common usage hath appropriated that name. That Nature, in its production of the several kinds of Creatures, should (as if they were all stamp'd with one common seal) give them forth in such equal and similar figures;
§1. Of Natural Prodigies.

Figures and proportions, is a more just object of wonder, then to see the natural Arches sometimes to play the bungler, and to leave its work (in some parts thereof) rude and mis-shapen. That the Earth should generally be delivered of the many vapors and winds within its bowels, without the pangs and throes of an Earthquake; and that all the host of Heaven should march every one in his way, and not to break their ranks, neither thrust one another, but walk every one on his path (to borrow the language of the Prophet) are Prodigies beyond an Earthquake, New-star, or Monster sometime discovered to the World; and therefore more justly chosen to be the constant instances of the divine Wisdom and Power: and to see some strange fires, breaking forth sometimes from the caverns of the Earth, is so much beneath wonder, that Pliny tells us, It exceeds all wonder, that there should be any day wherein all the things in the World, so pregnant with fiery principles, do not break forth into one mighty flame, and lay the World in ashes. The fall of some prodigious showers upon the Earth, upon a due judgment of things, will appear very Natural, and accountable to our thoughts; whereas the binding of the Waters above, that they distil in such soft and gentle Rains as usually toucheth so near upon a Miracle, that the
Of Natural Prodigies. § 1.

Same Pliny breaks out, *Quid esse mirabilium potest aquis in caelo stantibus?*

Now then, what sober Reason can warrant us to conclude any necessary and natural occurrences the prophetick signs of Events (to us) purely arbitrary and contingent? Either all such irregular accidents shall be allow'd presages of future judgments, and then every Nation will become a *Major Missabib*, and (what was threatened upon the Jews) our lives shall always hang in doubt before us, we shall then fear night and day, and have no assurance (at least, no comfort) of our lives; or else some onely of these Prodigious Events shall be so acknowledg'd: But then, at whose feet must we sit to learn which are only the Interpreters of the power of Nature, and which are *Διὸς ἀξιόλοις*, Gods Messengers to proclaim to a Nation that the *days of its visitation* are approaching? Certainly signs of judgments extraordinary must themselves be such, they must (as the Prophet speaks in another case) be their own witnesses, and, like Heralds which proclaim a War, bear upon them if possible that badg and cognizance whereby their office may be known, all may understand to what end and purpose they come forth from God. We find in Scripture, that Gods real signs were generally great and mighty, transcendent to the powers and possibilities of

*Jer. 20. 3.*

*Deut. 28. 66.*

*Lai. 44. 9.*
Of Natural Prodigies.

Natural Agents, that it might appear his power was greatly concern'd in them, and that they came forth upon a greater purpose then the bare service of the laws of Nature, and the powers of some second Causes.

Fourthly, The condition and temper of the Argument. The economy we are now under, admits not our expectation of any Signs from Heaven, either to witness against the practices or opinions of any party of men, or to give notice of an approaching mercy or judgment, [to all which purposes they ministred heretofore.]

God was pleas'd heretofore, suitable to the non-age of the Church, to address himself very much to the lower faculties of the Soul, phantasy and imagination; accordingly we find Prophecies delivered in vehement and pompous schemes of speech, such as are apt greatly to strike and affect the imagination: Christ was promised (as one speaks) sub magnificis & admirationem facientibus ideis: the mysteries of the Gospel were held forth in most splendid types and symbols: the Law of God forc'd upon the spirits of men heretofore by the terrors of a thundring Heaven and a burning Mountain, and a speedy vengeance threatened upon the despisers thereof: the spirits of good men were carried out to actions and tempers beyond their natural capacities, by the pregnant and vigorous impresses of the divine Spirit: the
fears of the Church excited, and her faith assisted by mighty signs and wonders; (the withdrawing whereof the Church bewails, they all vanishing as the light of divine Revelation, prevailed, as Stars do upon the approaching of day-light.)

But they which talk of and look for any such vehement expressions of Divinity now, mistake the temper and condition of that Oeconomy which the appearance of our Savior hath put us under; wherein all things are to be managed in a more sedate, cool, and silent manner, in a way suited to, and expressive of the temper our Savior discover'd in the world, Who caused not his voice to be heard in the streets; and to the condition of a Reasonable Being made apt to be managed by steady and calm arguments, and the words of Wisdom heard in quiet, in a smooth and serene temper. The mysteries of the Gospel come forth clothed in sedate and intelligible forms of speech: the minds of men are not now drawn into ecstasie by any such vehement and great examples of Divine Power and Justice as attended the lower and more servile state of the World. The Miracles our Savior wrought were of a calm and gentle nature curing the blind, restoring the sick and lame; not causing of thunder and storms, as Samuel, but appeasing them] none of them such as the Jews called for,
§ 1. Of Natural Prodigies.

for, ὁμιλεῖ δὲ ἐν τῷ ἔχαρῳ, signs from Heaven, such prodigious and affrighting thunders and fires which attended the delivery of the Law and the Spirit of Elijah. Indeed the Vail of the Temple was rent, the Sun dreadfully eclipsed, the Earth terribly shaken at his death; but these astonishing Wonders were made use of as his last reserve to conquer the prejudices of an obdurate people, upon whom his more gentle and obliging instances of Divine Majesty made no impression: and perhaps these prodigious changes in Nature were intended as prophetick Emblems of the great change shortly to ensue in Heaven [the way of Worship and Religion] and Earth [the Powers and Kingdoms of the World] by the Power and Doctrine of that Person who then died upon the Cross.

That mighty rushing Wind at Pentecost, which was issued in a loth and lambent fire upon the heads of the first Preachers of the Gospel, was possibly a figure of that more vehement and terrible State of the Law, which usher'd the way for, and determined in the more sedate and gentle Dispensation of the Gospel. God hath now, in a great measure, left frightening of men to Heaven by visible terrors: the Law of the Mesías was delivered upon the Mount in the small and still voice, and is set home upon the hearts of
of men by the terror only of a πείρασμον 

τὸν 

κόμον 

a more heavy vengeance in another 

World, then what overtook the despisers of 

Moses Law: God expects now that we 

should be judiciously religious, and acted to 

his service by a 

spirit of love and of a sound 

mind, to fear his threatnings more then the 

burnings of Sinai; to look upon a bad man 

( since the appearance of Christ to take a- 

way sin ) as the greatest Prodigy; and to 

expect the signs of an approaching judg- 

ment, not in the Errors of Nature, but of 

the Age.

Thus have I endeavored the proof of the 

Thesis proposed; by some general Reasons 

and Arguments: Others there are of as 

great moment, which ( that Loverlay not the 

Readers patience ) shall be reserved as to 

many nerves and sinews to run through, and 

hold together the main body of the ensuing 

Discourse. All which, that they may not 

be thought too little for their end, I must, 

by the way, mind the Reader, that in mat- 

ters of a moral nature ( as the just value of 

Prodigies is ) Arguments, which appear be-

fore the mind in an high degree of probabi-

lity, are sufficient rules of faith and practice. 

In all matters we are to consider, not what 

Arguments we would require, but what the 

subject will bear. For neither Religion nor 

Reason require men to believe more strongly 

then
§2. Of Natural Prodigies.

then the premisses conclude, or to look for premisses of greater strength then the condition of the subject will admit. Too great a facility and remissness in taking up in flight and insufficient proofs in some, and too great a rigor and severity in exacting them beyond the capacity of the matter in others, have been of equal prejudice to truth. It is therefore a justice the Reader owes the Argument and himself, not to expect clear demonstration but high probabilities therein; a title, which I am not without some hope that the Reasons already, or hereafter alleged, may deserve.

· S E C T. I. ·

Some particular Prodigies proved no Signs of ensuing Evils.

Comets commonly thought presages of Evils, and why. A difference between Comets and some luminous Bodies in the Heavens like them. A great occasion of mistake in the Doctrine of Comets, noted. Proved not to be Signs operative of any Evils in Earth. The difficulty of determining the specific nature of a Comet: Proved no incens'd exhalation by four considerations: further evinc'd no effective cause of Evil, from the dimension and the acknowledged altitude thereof. Three Arguments to prove them not to be Signs indicative of any Evils. The difficulty of reprehending any Error which bottoms in phancy and imagination. The Omission of a particular discourse concerning some other Prodigies, excused.

That which the law of our intended method lays next before us, is the
proof of the Thesis proposed by a particular Induction. I shall therefore direct my thoughts upon some (it were to over-value the Argument to speak to many) Prodigies, which have been thought the most plausible pretenders to the honor of being Prophetick Symbols. Amongst which, Comets are of more especial regard, and have been receiv'd, by the faith or fears of most times, as a kind of Beacon fired from Heaven to alarm the World, and to give intimation of an approaching evil: The luminous tail or train of a Comet especially, seems to the eye of ignorance the emblem of a flaming sword, or fiery rod, and to carry the dreadful images of some mighty scourge prepared to correct a froward World withal. With the Poet it passeth as a ruled case,

---Nunquam cælo spectatu impune Cometam.

A Comet never shun from Heaven to give the World any pannick fears. The Astrologers (as confident of the final, as the Peripatetic of the formal cause of any such unusual lights) take themselves upon the appearance of them, to be the Filii cænaculi which are to expound to the World these mystick characters of Heaven. Indeed any alteration and unwonted wrinkle in the face of Heaven, is thought (like a frown) a presage of anger, and some intended evil, partly because Heaven is conceived the

Throne
Of Natural Prodigies.

Throne of Justice, whence it is most proper to expect the Signs of Vengeance; but especially because the general harmony of its motions and constancy of its parts (whereby it reproacheth the Lunacies and irregularities of this lower World) seem to assure that Anomalies at any time therein cannot issue from the nature of the subject, but the wise purpose of God, by these to warn before he strike, and (as by a flaming sword) to drive the World out of its fools paradise, a flattering peace and security.

To encounter the vanity of so specious and obstinate an imagination, I shall endeavor to evince these strange Phenomena in Heaven no Prognosticks of any ensuing Evils, as being neither the effective nor the indicative Signs of them. Onely, before I proceed, I must let the Reader know, that by Comets I mean Comets, truly so called, luminous Bodies, which are carried with a great sobriety and uniformity of motion, and extend their continuance oft to the space of several Weeks or Months. For (as in all orders of things of remark there is the Truth and the Counterfeit) there are real Comets, and Cometo-eion (as a more accurate attendance to the appearances of Nature, hath of late taught men to distinguish) formal and counterfeit ones; some luminous and fiery impressions in the Elementary Region, which only...
only ape and resemble them; the motion
whereof is sometimes more desultory and
uncertain, where the Exhalation which feeds
them is of a more fiery and sulphureous tem-
per; sometimes more quiet and even, where
the vapor is more subtil and aereous, and the
Air lets ruffled and disturbed; their dura-
ton commonly determines with a day, seldom
exceeds a week. These rarer appearances in
the Elementary Region, seem the last en-
deavors of fire, to imitate and copy out the
Glories of the Celestial Region; upon which
the common suffrage of Philosophers hath
(to the creating of infinite confusions in this
Doctrine) conferred the title of Comets:
whereas they are a kind of Participia Natu-
ra, partaking somewhat of the nature of a
Comet, in their light, bigness, and duration;
but more of the condition of a fiery Meteor
in their Earthy matter, turbulent motion,
and vanishing nature. The necessity and
usefulness of this distinction will appear
more fully in the sequel. This premised, I
assert,

First, Comets are not to be owned the ef-
ffective signs of any evils ensuing; for thus
it is vulgarly concluded, that they are; and
upon this presumption, that they are a kind
of hot and sulphureous Exhalations set on
fire, which (as it were the Feaver of Na-
ture) prey upon the humdam, the moisture
Of Natural Prodigies.

§ 2. Of Natural Prodigies.

of it, and so suddenly dry and exhaust it: whence ensue great droughts, death, famines, pestilences: And by attending the heat of the Air, they are thought to incline to Fevers, to promote choler in Princes and Nations, and so to lay that fuel in men, which will soon break forth into the flames of publick wars and confusions.

The Reasons I shall tender to persuade the contrary shall not be many, because I design not a triumph but a victory, and would not that this part should swell beyond its just measures and proportions. I shall content myself with some few taken from this threefold Topick. The Nature, the Dimension, the Altitude of a Comet;

1. I argue it to be no operative sign of Evil in this lower World, from the general Nature thereof. As for its more specific and distinct Nature, it is that which many Philosophers have shot their bolt at, but it is hard to say at this distance who hath hit the mark. Enquiries about heavenly Bodies usually conclude, in wonder and doubt, but especially about Comets, because appearing so rarely, that the Superstition of Men in reference to them hath much out-grown the Philosophy. Accordingly, in this Argument, we shall find all sorts of Philosophers Ancient and Modern profess themselves unresolved, and modest, but only some

Miraculum Natura Cometas, idoneum ingenis no-
flris torquen-
dis, quod ad-
mirari debe-
mus, cognosce-
re, nunquam
poterimus.
Elen. de Co-
met. p. 18.
Res seplexis-
sima est &
omnem ferè
corantum ctri-
dit. From. de
Com. l. 3. c. 9.
A. 7.
some avowed Followers of Aristotle, whose usage is too often in Divinity to make a great deal of nothing; and in Philosophy nothing of a great deal. However those weaker notices we can arrive to of the general Nature of a Comet, will sufficiently serve the apprehension of that vulgar conceit now before our consideration, that it is a cause of evil. For it appears to us in an evidence as great as the matter will bear, That a Comet is no exhalation set on fire; (the great hinge which the Opinion turns upon) That it is a kind of heavenly body.

First, It is no exhalation incens’d. This is now become so judged a case in Philosophy, that all I shall say to it, will with the most reach but the repute of a diligent impertinence. Yet, because an Ancient Opinion may merit the respect of at least a civil rejection, and it still retains in some minds a great credit, I shall endeavor to persuade the truth of the Proposition from a fourfold Topick: First, From the constant equality and evenness of its light and figures; the main body of a Comet is observed to maintain an even and constant rotundity, and to send forth a direct and uniform ray of light in the tail or train thereof: whereas if it were a fire, it would shift its figures according as the necessity of that Pabulum, whereby it is maintained, did require; and its ap-
Of Natural Prodigies,

Appearances would sometimes be greater, sometimes less, according as it had more or less subdued and prevailed upon the matter which it spent its force upon. Besides, Comets, as they are (like the Planets) in their motion a kind of erratic Stars, so also like them in the nature and condition of their light; they do not scintillate, and provoke the eye to more intense notices by any new and uneven vibrations of light, whereas fire sparkles, & is always in motions, direct or circular.

2. From the clear and constant visibility thereof. Nothing checks and intercepts our full and free view of an appearing Comet, but (what may also obscure the Sun) the interpose of a cloud: Whereas, were they incens'd exhalations, and of such vast dimensions, a Comet must necessarily carry its own Earth about with it to eclipse it sometimes from our sight, because it is supposed, like a torch, in the pursuit of its Pabulum to burn downward, (though it be apparent that Comets extinguish and become invisible by moving higher into the Heavens) and by consequence the more gross and uninflamed parts must sometimes needs interrupt our sight of that fire which hath seized the parts which lie next the Sun, or the supposed Elementary fire, which the vulgar Doctrine afferts the occasion of these prodigious fires in Heaven.
38

Of Natural Prodigies. §2.

3. From the uniformity and steadiness of its motions. Comets, though not all subject to one and the same law of motion (because observed indifferent in their motions to any quarter of Heaven) yet are all noted to proceed with a very great constancy and uniformity, to describe exactly a segment of a great Circle, and not to be acted to any such giddy and casual courses, as fire, which is (in the Elementary Region) determined by the Air, or the circumstances of the matter which feeds it, which way it shall move and incline it self.

4. And lastly, From the dimensions of a Comet. Tycho measured in the tail or train of his Comet, An.1577. ninety six semi-diameters of the Earth; and some Astronomers found in the beard of that which shone An.1618. the extent of 382700. German miles: (in short) if we trust the measures of Astronomy, they have been oft found much to exceed the proportions of the Earth. Now it seems greatly improbable, that such huge volumes of vapors should be drawn together so long and so high, nay impossible; the whole Earth (if but one vast exhalation) being insufficient for their make and supply. It's here return'd, that it were indeed impossible it should appear so great, if the body of a Comet were solely of a Spherical figure; but a Comet (lay our Adversaries) may be
§. 2. **Of Natural Prodigies,**

expanded to a plain, like a cloud, and so maintain the Opinion of its dimensions; To which we answer, That although in some Position, a plain figure may give the vast shew and appearance of a Comet, yet it cannot in every motion and site, and every Position of Beholders, unless it be of a Spherical figure.

I proceed next to a more positive description of the Nature of a Comet, by proving it to be some heavenly Body. What kind of heavenly Body it is (whether condensed eather, or some Planetical Exhalation, or a descending Star) is as difficult as unnecessary in this place largely to define. That such an one it is, was a truth credited by the joint suffrages of the more Ancient Philosophers. *Aristotle* seems the first, who presumed against the sense of Antiquity to degrade Comets from Heaven to the degree and place of Meteors, set on fire by his *ignis elementaris*: He had one Philosophy *pro Musais*, and another *pro Scholis*, which latter, because recommended to the Populacy, his chief care was to make, like Reeds and Canes, generally smooth and facile in the surface (onely interposing here and there a few knots to exercise the subtler sort of his auditors) not much caring though it were hollow, and filled out with little besides airy words and
Of Natural Prodigies: § 2.

Of Natural Prodigies: § 2.

Of Natural Prodigies: § 2.

Of Natural Prodigies: § 2.

 Of Natural Prodigies: § 2.

Of Natural Prodigies: § 2.

Of Natural Prodigies: § 2.

Of Natural Prodigies: § 2.

easie speculations, beyond which the most never take care to search and inquire.

Largely to endeavor the proof of this (now so acknowledged a) truth; would be to undervalue the pains of more able Undertakers in this Argument, and to over-do the end to which this discourse is level'd. In short (to omit the consideration of its regular rise and setting) the Parallax of a Comet is found much less then that of the Moon; which gives the most undoubted report of its exceeding it in Altitude. Besides, if it were not much above our Atmosphere (which exceeds not the distance of fourscore miles) its arcus apparentie would be so strait and inconsiderable, that, as hath been proved, it would in two or three hours quite run out of the compass of our sensible Horizon, nor could possibly continue so long together visible to us as Comets are generally known to do.

Our second Argument, to evince, That no Evil in this lower World owes it self to the malign Aspects of a Comet, is taken from the dimensions thereof. Should it be granted (though, in its just and true dimensions, known to fall far short of the Moon) to equal the measures of a Star of the first magnitude; yet, at such huge removes, how little a force could the beams thereof be suppos'd to have upon the Earth, little touch-
ed and affected (for ought we know) with the most vigorous influences of the biggest Star in Heaven? The truth is, *pars minima est ipse Cometa sui*, the true and real Comet is the least part of its formal and appearing self, in regard the tail thereof is not *σφενός*, *sed ἐµφανές*, not any real and substantial part thereof (as commonly presumed) flaming forth as the condition of the matter doth invite the fire to follow, but caused by some refraction of light, or (as some conceive) by the shining of the Solar beams through the more porous and spongy parts of the head thereof; some imitation whereof we sometimes have in the beams of the setting Sun darted through a disposed cloud, or through some small crevisë in a wall, which, after the figure of a rod, first close and knit together, and then spread and dilate themselves according as they advance further from the *ἀνγουστία* of the matter whereat they enter: (for it's observed, that still as the Sun circles in its diurnal motion in the Heavens, so doth a Comets tail veer, and respect, though with some flexure sometimes, an opposite point in the Heavens) so that these mighty vibrations of light from its luminous body, put a great fallacy upon the eye, and report it much larger then in truth it is. Now then can it be presumed by any man, that will ow any account of his Opinions to Reason, that
Of Natural Prodigies. § 2.

(in it self) a so small a body, and at so vast a distance, and lasting so inconsiderable a time, and moving so fast a way, can be sufficient for any such notable effects as some easie men intitile it unto? What History almost is there of Comets, but what arrives at us stained and defiled by the superstition of the Writers, able to support the confidence of this persuasion? How little able are we, after the observation of so many hundred years, to assign the Effects of the most noted Stars in Heaven, except the Sun and Moon?

3. Our last Argument was taken from the acknowledged altitude of these unwonted appearances. They which marshal them lowest, assign them place very near the Orb of fire. Now how weak and feeble an impression can a few exhalations kindled at so vast a distance make upon this lower World? especially considering there is the middle Region interposed, by its coldness fitted to temper and qualify the heated and exsiccate Air, before it mingle with that which we here breathe in. Besides, how little able must those weaker impressions upon the Air be, to stand before those more sensible and vigorous alterations which the succeeding feasons of the year continually make upon it?

The Opinion which asserts Comets to be incens'd Exhalations, would carry (in my
§.2. Of Natural Prodigies.

(eye) more fair appearances of truth, if owning them rather the prelages of seasons healthful, and desirable, in regard it supposeth so many noxious and impure Exhalations consumed (at so vast a distance from Earth) by fire, the most potent corrective of an infectious Air.

These Reasons seem sufficient to reach the proof of our first assertion [That Comets are not the operative Signs of Evils:] I am next to prove them not be the indicative Signs of them; which I shall endeavor, (1) From the indifferency and universality of their Aspects and Motions. They often pass over the heads of many and different Countries, as that in 1618, was successively vertical to Arabia, Persia, Turkey, Barbary, Morocco, China, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Muscovy, &c. Now which of these can it be presumed to level its malign Aspects at? Which of these was most concerned in its prelages? Surely none of them. But as the Sun and Moon being designed to declare the glory of God to the World, their line therefore is gone forth through all the Earth; so (possibly) God intending these wonderful appearances in Heaven, not so much the Monitors of his anger, as of his glory, would have them thus catholick in their Motions, and shew themselves to such variety of people and languages.
(2) I argue against them from the airy weakness of that foundation, the art of presaging by them is bottom'd upon; which we may take in the words of a great Master in all curious Arts: Portendunt Cometa juxta Saturnum pestes & prodigiones, & sterilitatem; circa Fovem, legum mutationem, mortem Pontificum; juxta Martem, bella; juxta Solem, toti orbi magnam cladem; juxta Lunam, magnas inundationes, aliquando sic citates, &c. juxta Coronam & in Tropicis Equinociisque, Regum interitum, &c. The cracks and flaws of which discourse appear so wide and visible, that it is needless to strike it with any argument to make a more full discovery of them. The Astrologers (like children) set up in their soft imagination some phantastical images of things, and then fear them as if they were great realities. Very solicitous they have ever appeared, to lengthen their cords, (to draw all kind of Persons and Events within the lines and limits of their Art) but very careless to strengthen their stakes (to borrow the expression of the Prophet) to ratifie and make good the Principles upon which they do proceed. All the images they speak of in Heaven, and the significations applied to them, ow all their credit soly to the courtefie of imagination.

(3) From the contradiction of Experience...
Of Natural Prodigies.

How many sore Evils hath the World travailed under, which were never signified by any fore-going Comet: (sometimes not hapning for many years together:) and how many Comets have there hapned sometimes in a short compass, not seconed by any notable alterations in the places, to which they seemed especially to have respect? Com­ mendable herein is the diligence of Gemma Frisius, in taking notice of as many good as bad Events con Quentin to the appearance of them. Particularly so happy was that Comet which hapned under Nero, that Seneca tells us, Cometis detraxit infamiam, it clear­ ed the credit of Comets, and brought them into good thoughts. They seem indeed the presages of approaching Evils, either because their Interpreters are so well advised as to assign them a competent period of time to produce their Effects in, and to take in whole Kingdoms as the Scene to act their Tragedies upon, and commonly put into their Al­ manack, onely dies nefastos, days marked with some black and sad accidents (which we naturally retain a very quick sense and remembrance of) after the appearance of them; or else the World would appear to treat its inhabitants with as much cour­ tesie after, as before the appearance of a Comet.

The Opinion I now contest, is so recep­
tive of Argument against it, that there is the less need of any to press it further, especially considering the great Advocates thereof are so much under the command of a mighty imagination, which delights in easy conjugates, parallels, and symbolizing instances so much, that it quickly makes them or finds them in Nature. Now we shall ever find, that all Persons, which take up Opinions from their own Poetical Genius and busie phancy, are impregnable to all the assaults of Reason: The Rosicrucians acted so hugely by imagination in Philosophy, some kind of Chymists in Medicins, the Cabalists in Scripture-Expositions, Enthusiasts in Religion, Figure-Casters in Astrology, are so invincibly resolved upon their hypotheses, that (like him in the story) when their hands, those little reasonings wherewith they hold them, are cut off, they will mordicus defendere, hold them with their teeth, biting and reviling language, thrown upon their opposers and neglecters. They are entertained with pleasant and easie dreams, and therefore are angry with those which attempt to awaiken and discompose them. As for our selves, let us be content rather to sit down in the darkness of an humble ignorance, than to follow an ignis fatuus, the pretending light of Divination by a Comet, which leads but to the bog and precipice of a superstitious fear

Pufilla res mundus est, nisi in illo, quod quaerat omnis mundus, habeat. Sen.
§ 2. Of Natural Prodigies.

fear and an abused mind. God hath sealed up the natures and ends of some things in the World in a ἕκαστον τὸ κεφάλαιον, to hide pride from man: He will have some mysteries in every Science past our search, to assure us, That there is one First Mind, from whom these depths came forth, and who is able to fathom and comprehend them all.

This part of the main body of my Argument, concerning Comets, exceeding thus its just measures and proportions, must necessarily starve and shrink those which (in my first thoughts) grew next unto it [concerning Earthquakes], the apparition of two or three Suns at once, and monstrous productions;] for, to redeem my former prolixity, I shall choose to speak to them b parsim, as the necessary returns of the argument shall give occasion: Adding in this onely concerning births, which go off from the common figures of their kinds. That as the assistance of God the Spirit, with our holy endeavors, doth not take away the ἄμαρτηντα πεπλήρωσι, the weaknesses attendant on Christian practice, because he acts us ad modum nostrum; so, neither doth the co-assistance of God the Father, with all Natural Agents, quite remove the ἀμαρτητ配偶 (in the phrase of the Philosopher) the Errors of Nature; all things being assisted according to their proper measures, powers and capacities, and
With due regard to the Laws of action appointed to some other intervening second causes. The beautiful ideas of things (as lodged in the Divine Mind) are half forc'd to put on deformity, and to appear (like the beams of Heaven stain'd by a bad medium) half disguised by that stiff and surly matter upon which they sometimes fall. As the Divine Motions catch some soil, and ta'ft a little of the quality of those Earthen Vessels in which they are lodged.

Sect. III.

An Answer to the Objections against the precedent Discourse.

The first Objection taken from the common sense and persuasion of men, proposed. Some general Answers returned unto it. An inquiry made into the Reasons of it, and resolved: 1. Into an ignorance of causes. Ignorance noted to beget confidence in the head, and diflidence in the heart. 2. Into guilt, quickly awakened into a fear of an approaching evil, and why. 3. The application of an humane measure to the divine affings. The commonness and evil of this usage noted in Philosophy and Divinity. 4. A great propension in men to close with any flattering medium to arrive at the knowledge of things future. This noted in all Nations, some account given thereof. 5. The Agency of the Devil. The advantages this persuasion gives him. His design to work base and servile fears in men, noted. 6. The authority of a traditional superstition. Prodigies observed in our times, observed in former. 7. The private Opinions of some contemplative persons, inclining to this persuasion. Some of them touch'd upon. 8. The Nature of the Soul, greatly impressive to a conceit of Parallels,
§ 3. Objections answered.

Parallels, Equalities, and Similitudes in the Government of the World, Strange judgments and changes in Earth, described by Poets and Prophets usually, by some mighty changes in Nature. The natural aptness of the Soul to entertain things vehement and extraordinary, with great Opinions. The peculiar tempers of some men noted to influence this persuasion. Arguments from general consent, when considerable.

Before we can have peaceable possession of the truth, for which so much evidence of Reason hath been given in, it will be necessary to remove those Objections with which our title thereunto is a little incumbered. Now these are taken from a fivefold Topick:

1. From the common sense and persuasion of men.
2. The Authority and Testimony of learned Writers.
3. The attestation of common Experience.
4. The seeming evidence of Reason.
5. The Testimony of Sacred Writ.

The four former have weight enough to incline the scale the other way, the latter seems to weigh it quite down.

First. We are urged with the common sense and persuasion of the World in all ages. He that hath but looked into the Histories of times past, shall readily observe all Ages greatly propense to observe Natures strayings from her more usual law and rule of operation, and to entertain all strange occurrences with a kind of Prophetick fear of some
some great evils impending, of which they are presumed but the harbingers and prodigies. And surely this alone might serve sufficiently to vindicate the observation of prodigies, at least, from all suspicion of vanity and superstition.

To deal plainly, there is more of truth in this objection, then I could wish there were, to which to return Magister errorum populus, and that it is the office of learning not to lead us to the multitude but from it, and that a wise man is the greatest of prodigies, would be thought but the best of evasions, and the worst of answers: Though a wiser man then my self, when prest with the same objection in a like case [At omnes Populi, Nationes, utuntur Auspiciis, &c.] judg'd it beneath any better answer, then this, quasi vero quidquam sit tam valde, quàm nihil sapere, vulgare: I shall choose rather to inquire into the grounds and reasons of this so catholick a persuasion, for truth is best strengthened, and error refuted, per reductionem ad principia, by calling men to a view of those principles and grounds from which they grow, and into which they finally do resolve.

Now then, the reasons of this so general usage and persuasion, are (I conceive) some or all of these following: 1. Men (for the greater part) are wholly
Objections answered.

Strangers to the causes of these prodigious accidents. Now as fear hath torment, so ignorance hath fear. It is a certain rule, 

\[ \text{Nihil accidit hominum multa suspicari ac nihil scire} \]

Where we are unprovided of any prenotions of the qualities of objects or persons, Nature hath made us all very suspicious, and fearful to touch, talk, and trust. Persons in the dark are full of monstrous conceits, every shadow is a devil, and every bush a thief to them: And the more men are in the dark as to the knowledge of causes, the more jealous and fearful of Events. Now the most of men are very ignorant, and therefore superstitiously fearful upon any such irregular Events in Nature.

\[ \text{---Pueri trepidant, atque omnia caecis} \]

\[ \text{In senebris metuant---} \]

The Fools Purgatory is as familiar as the Fools Paradise; Ignorance calls every unaccountable symptom in the Patient witchcraft, and every strange accident a Prodigy. Besides, it is the usage of ignorance, especially where the objects are great, vehement, and extraordinary, which fall before it, to conceive a kind of Divinity dwelling in them; and to regard them as examples of some virtue and power superior to Natural. 

\[ \text{Hipocrates tells us, that had disease, in Phylik} \]
Objections answered. § 3.

Tò μὴ ὑπόθετε, μὴ δὲ κοινὲς ἀποδιδόν ἃ τεταγμένας ἔχεις, καὶ ἰδίᾳ φαρασαί, εἰς ἡμῖν ὁ διάκοπτης ἄναγνωστος ἐπιστήμης καὶ σιδηρομέταλλος. Πλαταρκ. ἀδελφὸς ἡμῶν. 

Hippocrates. 

de morb. sacro.

stiled morbus sacer, the holy or divine disease, took its appellation hence, Ἀνθρωπον ἰδομένας θεον εἶναι ὑπὸ ἀπειρίας καὶ θαυμαστήματι. Men called it divine, from ignorance, and a blind wonderment at the strange and vehement symptoms thereof. Moreover, it is the nature of Ignorance to produce (as diffidence in the heart, so withal) confidence in the head; for those which know least of things past or present, are usually the most confident determiners upon any mean occasions concerning things future.

Upon this account the multitude, to which knowledge was never very friendly, cannot but be greatly impressive to any great and religious persuasions concerning Prodigies, especially if much forc'd upon them by the importunity of bold men.

2. It is the nature of Guilt to be quickly awakened into a fear of an approaching evil: It sleeps, as they say of the Hare, with its eyes open; is quickly awake to see or phantazie an impendent evil, how secure ever it may commonly seem to itself or others. Guilt is upon every slight occasion μὴν ξέχασθαι, never prophesying good concerning men, but evil; it will fly when none pursues. There go usually along with a guilty breast (when fair colors hang out in the face) black jealousies and fears, φόβων τοὺς ἰδιϊστικοὺς, a fearful expectation of
Objections answered.

vengeance; and therefore like Belshazzar where it cannot distinctly expound Gods strange characters, it yet concludes the general intention to be wrath and judgment. The Author of the Book of Wisdom hath therefore well express the nature of Guilt; thus; Wickedness condemned of her own witness, is very timorous; and being pressed with conscience, always forecasteth terrible things.

Guilt hath an injured God always presented to it: now where our lives and fortunes are in the hand of offended greatness, we are apt to conclude what it will do with us from what it may. Where men mistrust (as Guilt generally doth) every natus, words good or bad, all actions, but especially such as are to us obscure and unaccountable, are the seed of jealousy. Guilt can spell death out of Gods sweetest Promises, much more out of his dark and intricate Providences. The words of a late learned Writer, being so full and pregnant in this Argument, it will be a sufficient service thereof, to lay them before the Reader: Unhallowed minds, that have no inward foundations of true holiness to fix themselves upon, are easily shaken, and tossed from all inward peace and tranquillity: And as the thoughts of some supreme Power above them seize upon them, so they are struck with the lightning thereof into inward.
ward affrightments, which are further increased by a vulgar observation of those strange, stupendous, and terrifying Effects in Nature, whereof they can give no certain reason, as Earthquakes, Thunders and Lightnings, blazing Comets, and other Meteors of like nature, which are apt to terrify those especially who are already unsettled and chased with an inward sense of guilt, and, as Seneca speaks, Inevitabilem metum ut supra nos aliquid timentem incutiant. Petronius Arbiter hath well described this business for us: Primus in orbe Deos, secit timor, ardua coelo Fulmina cum caderent, discellique mania flammas.

Atque ictus flagraret Athos From hence it was that the Libri fulgurales among the Romans, and other such like Volumes of Superstition, swelled so much, and that the pulvinaria Deorum were so often frequented, as will easily appear to any one a little conversant in Livy, who every where sets forth this Devotion so largely, as if he himself had been too passionately in love with it.

3. The strict observation of Prodigies hath risen from the application of an humane measure to the divine acts. All actions of consequence done in the World by humane
§3. Objections answered.

Mane Agents, come forth μετά παρευρεσιων, with observation, they are usually pre-fac'd with somewhat which may raise expectation, and give notice. Seneca speaks of a pompa mortis; there is also pompa vita: Men use not to fall into business, but descend; and their actions of moment, though they have sometimes abrupt conclusions, yet it is seldom that they have abrupt beginnings. Now it is accordingly thought, that all Gods actions of remark, judgments especially, must be stamp'd with an humane signature, be ushered with the pomp and solemnity of some prodigious and preternatural occurrences: Whereas God hath threatened not onely to destroy bad men by his judgments, but to surprize them, to storm them without a precedent Summons. We read of nothing in the Revel. to be conceal'd from men, but what judgments the seven thunders uttered. God often by Prophecies and mighty Signs warned former Ages, and expects now that former Ages should warn us.

There is no one thing which hath set up such a multitude of idols, vain and fantastical conceits (as the excellent Verulam observes) in Philosophy, quam naturalium operationem ad similitudinem actionum humanarum redux; the reducing of all natural operations to a likeness with the acts of men; and
Objections answered. 
§ 3.

the preferring of Man, the lesser World, the great Glass of Nature, in whose fabric and actions, the similar images and imitations of all things in the greater World should be represented. And to as many vain imaginations in Divinity have men been exposed, by making, as it were, of God after their own image, and fastening upon him either έιδος or πέθος, or θεός ανθρωπινον, and proposing of the customs, reasonings, passions, and counsels of a man, as the Jacob's staff, to estimate the height and extent of the counsels and actions of God, whose ways and thoughts, as we are told, are not laid out by any of those short lines which ours are.

4. Men are greatly propense to close with any flattering medium to arrive at the much desired knowledge of things to come. The more the fruit of the Tree of knowledge is placed beyond our reach, the more impatient desires after it use to rise up in our minds: now such is the knowledge of things wrapt up in futurity. Hence Astrology (which feeds men with the airy hopes of this knowledge) so valuable a Science with the Chaldeans; Oracles, so much attended to by the Grecians; Auguries, by the Romans; any kind of Prophets by the Hebrews; the έννομένη σημαία, auspicious Signs amongst the ruder Heathens. Men have raked in the bowels of sacrifice[d] men, women and chil-
Objections answered.

dren for this knowledge, as Phorius tells us; Gentes olim Mithrae Sacrificia facientes, viros, feminas & pueros maclabant : extis in spectis divinantes, &c. Among the Romans, the more the Sword of Authority mow'd down those weeds, Astrologers, Chaldeans, &c. the faster and thicker they grew.

In short, Tully hath noted, that no King nor People ever was there, with whom some presumed divine Predictions were not in use and credit: to which I further add, That it is hard to mention that thing (necessary or contingent) upon which the Ethnick vanity had not affix'd some signification and presage or other. Nay, and even in very good men in sacred Writ, we find not this itch after the knowledge of the condition of future times sufficiently kill'd.

This desire of knowing things future, is owing partly to that mighty thirst in the Soul after knowledge in the latitude thereof; partly to a secret distrust of Providence, which we cannot endure to follow even blindfold, like Abraham, not knowing whether we go; partly to our natural restlessness in uncertainties, and the Souls not enduring a perpetual crucifixion between hopes and fears; partly to that impressiveness of spirit which times of action and change (for in such, Prodigies and Prophecies are most critically recorded) are generally attended with.
Objections answered. § 3.

with; as also to that nauseae which the tedious repetition of things present and familiar creates in the Soul of man. For these Reasons, men are very ready to attend to a Prodigy as to a kind of silent Oracle, to resolve them in their inquiries de futuro, which is indeed but profanely to go to God, whose work it is, as they would to a common Fortune-teller.

To dismiss this particular, There are especially two sorts of things which command our minds to the most quick and serious attendances; viz. Things rare and extraordinary, Oracles, Mysteries, new Notions, curious Arts, Secrets, Stories of Apparitions: And Predictions and Divinations; (for we shall observe the Soul especially delighted in its inquiries into times far past, and long hence to come; whereby it grasps in a kind of petty infinity both the ends of time at once.) Now then, Prodigies may quickly call forth the serious notices and regards of the most, as being mira, matters in themselves rare and wonderful, and also, in common opinion, monstra, things which can shew them what is to come, and so lift the Soul above the narrow Horizon of things present and sensible, which it hath so often suffered and cloy'd it self withal.

5. The hand of Joab, the Agency of the Devil, seems not a little engaged in this busi-ness,
Objections answered.

ness, the strengthening of this Opinion of Prodigies, with which the minds of men are so much possess’d: for he serves no small ends upon Persons entertained with such Observances. By such curious, he calls men off from more necessary, searches and inquiries. Humble ignorance he knows, in matters too high for us, is a fruitful mother of devotion: it is his usage to tempt men, like the fire, into the fire, by setting the appearances and hopes of a greater light before them. Besides, he works men hereby into servile and superstitious apprehensions of God; (for the Opinion of such Prodigies represents him before the Soul with a Rod of Vengeance perpetually in his hand) then which, there is not a more fatal cause of Atheism in the World. A Belief of a God, is that force by any direct temptation; and therefore he designs, by such terrible and servile conceits wrought in the hearts of men, to undermine it: For perpetual jealousies and slavish fears of God, like over-heated waters, boil over at last, and extinguish that fire, that faith and sense of God, which first produc’d them. When the Notion of a Deity stands always before the mind, like a Gorgon’s head, pregnant with nothing but horrors and dismay, it quickly works and turns it to a (stony) stupid neglect of Him.
Objections answered.

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so to get rid of that ὁμοίως ἄμφοτερος, that mighty fear, which was its continual Executioner.

Moreover, the Devil (no doubt) loves to bring men off from a noble and generous temper: And as it is the design of Religion to cast out flaviush fear, and to introduce a spirit of true freedom and confidence toward God, so it is the work of the Devil to call on a spirit of bondage and a perpetual fear, that so he may see in men the more lively and express images and portraiture of himself, who believes and trembles. He would have his Rites of worship of old, προσωπολογία, frightful and amazing mysteries: the Idols wherein he was worship'd bear in their very names and titles a remembrance of that base-ness and servility of spirit which attended his Votaries in the service of so absolute a Tyrant, being stiled sometimes γῆρας horrors (as it is rended in the margin, 2 Chro. 15. 16.) sometimes עין and נים, signifying trouble and terror, and the Devil's are stiled שָרַי, coming from a word which signifies horrere, because usually rendring themselves to view in the most frightful forms.

Now this superstitious Persuasion of Prodigies doth hugely minister to this bondage of spirit, and tends to seal men with the mark of Cain (according to the Jews) a perpetual
petual trembling and astonishment. The observation of Prodigies proving so serviceable to the dark Kingdom, if the experience of former times seem at all to credit and recommend it, I should be ready to assert that of them which St. Bernard doth of Dreams; Ex astra Diaboli, aliquando vera pronunciatur, Serm. 68. De ut totes in multis fallant; Through the subtil agency of the Devil, they appear to declare truth sometimes, that they may the oftner abuse men with vain hopes or fears, with the less suspicion afterward.

6. This common Persuasion in men, is owing very much to the power and magisterial authority of a traditional Superstition, handed down from the very first times of Gentile ignorance. There may very easily be a Cabala Errorum, though hardly a Cabala Veritatum; Our Nature in this lapsed state (as the ground to weeds) being a Mother to Error, but (as that to good corn) a Stepmother to Truth. How apt our Nature is to catch and propagate the infection of a superstitious Tradition, may appear from that ancient and modern usage of praying for a Person upon need; the vulgar Presages consequent to the approach of any strange fish to our shore; the regarding of any casual stops and breaches in any known Rivers; any odd noises heard in the silences of the night, and Births seal'd with the odd figures of an ungoverned imagination.
Objections answered. §.3.

nation: All which, and many more (too mouldy with age to set before the Reader) were received of old among the Heathens, and at this day among too many Christians, as Divine Monitors, and as Natures starting out of its usual road, like the A$ in sacred Writ, because some destroying Angel stands just before it.

We shall find several strange alterations in Nature, consequent to the barbarous murder of Caesar, and precedent to the battle at Philippi, recorded with the most solemn regards of the Heathen Poet:

Virgil. Georg. Tempore quamquam illo Tellus quoque & quora Ponti,
Obscanique Canes, importunaque Volucres
Signa dabant ; qui quies Cyclopum effervere in
agros
Vidimus undarem ruptis fornicibus Aetnam,
Flamma rumque globos, liquefactaque volvere
saxa?
Armorum sanitum tuto Germania calo
Audist: insolitis tremuerunt motibus Alpes
Vox quoque per lucos vulgo exaudita silentes
Ingens : & simulachra modis pallentia miris
Visa sub obscurum noctis : pecudesque locatae,
Infandum! sistunt annes, terraque debiscunt:
Et mens illacryanat templis ebur, araq, Judiæ,
Nec putetis manare eruir cessauit.—

Upon which plain Song of the Poets, to


§. 3. Objections answered.

Serve the perspicuity of this Paragraph, I thus descant:

Natures distorted face, while Caesar's slain,
Seem'd but the index of some hidden pain.
The trembling Earth, loud Seas, the Birds of
Night,
And howling Dogs, the guilty World affright,
As tokens of some plague, that fatal wound
Struck Nature to a fever, all the ground.
The Cyclops held, was burnt by Sulphur
thrown
From Ætna, of all bounds impatient grown:
Whence globes of flame and heated stones took
birth,
As if the Gods would thunder from the Earth.
The horrid noise of arms in Heav'n (most us'd
To softer musick) Germany amuz'd.
The Alps look'd white, and trembled to appear
But the Prophetick images of Fear.
Each Grove, more Vocal then Dodona's, bears
Not Whispers, but loud Voices, to the Ears.
The Ghosts, more pale then He, appear'd in
flight,
While the World mourn'd with Sabre's of the
Night.
Beasts spake, while Sorrow struck Men dumb;
and then
The Rivers stood as much amaz'd as Men:
The Earth appear'd to gasp, it cleft so deep,
And Marble Pillars, without figure, weep.
And we shall observe these Prodigies, and others which the Poet there enumerates, as much commanding the serious fears and solemn observations of many Christians now, as of the more benighted Heathens heretofore. A matter which the great power and authority of a traditional Superstition (to which men are by their own guilty minds, and ignorance of the Nature of God, so naturally inclined) gives us the most easie and natural account of. Thus Gerson, inquiring the reason of the vulgar observation of days and hours, the regard of Omens, the pretended Signs of good or bad luck, concludes them to grow ex Gentilium & Paganorum & aliorum infidelium, derelicta, in principio conversionis ad fidem Christianam, superstitione.

But that which might possibly much assist this Tradition, was the succeeding of Rome Christian, as into the place, so into very many of the Rites and Usages of Rome Pagan, (as might be easily made appear at large, were that our business) and into as large a power over the Faiths and Consciences of Men, as Rome Pagan had over their Bodies; and so was enabled to mold them into what Opinions and Practices they might best serve them-
§3. Objections answered.

themselves upon. Sure I am, we find in the Romish Writers frequent mention of the sweating and weeping, the sad and direful aspects of the Statues of their Saints (especially * Frans. Xaverius) to suit some more solemn and sad Occasions.

7. The private Opinions of some contemplative Persons, may (possibly) not a little encourage and strengthen the Persuasion of Presages by Prodigies.

Those which conceive the Angels, as a kind of Heavenly Intelligencers always at hand to admonish and inform us, when (through the sagacity of their Nature) they espy a cloud of vengeance (as yet but as big as a mans hand) ready to overspread Heaven, and to fall down upon men, may (without much forcing) persuade themselves that all these unusual occurrences are owing to their courteous Agency, designing by them to warn men to repentance to fly from the wrath approaching. And accordingly I find several Writers, Pomponatius, Machiavel, Kircher, Cornel. Gemma, (to derive a reputation upon the Opinion of Presages by Prodigies) intitling the Angels to those strange voices and stranger sights in the Air, the voluntary tolling of Bells in steeples, some strangely monstrous Births, dreadful Apparitions forerunning some great Mortalities, which stories are abundant in; de-
sighing by these and the like silent nods and
becks to awaken the more heedful and ob-
servant part of the World to a sense of the
Divine Providence, and to provide against
a shower of vengeance ready to fall down
upon a guilty people: They tell us that the
Angels limn forth, in as lively figures as they
can, those images and ideas of approaching
judgments (in the things of Nature) which
they have received from the Divine Mind,
that so a timely Repentance may possibly
scatter the clouds, and renew their expiring
lease of peace and tranquillity.

Others again seem to me to apprehend the
World, as a kind of Great Animal, informed
by a very subtil and apprehensive Spirit,
which out of an hidden and inexplicable
sense of an impendent evil (as many crea-
tures have of an approaching storm) starts
as it were, and shrinks in, and in its several
parts suffers mighty emotions and disturban-
ces. But this notion will perhaps look more
temptingly, when presented to us as the Pa-
rents thereof are pleased to dress it forth:
There is (saith a late Writer) that sympathy
and fellow-feeling which God hath put in his
whole Creation, whereby each part hath a care
of the whole, and according to its measure
dothe endeavor its preservation. As in the bo-
dy natural of man, upon the next and imme-
diate approach of death, some parts are put
§ 3. Objections answered.

Into sudden tremblings and convulsions, whereby they discover the nearness, and, as far as they can, labor to prevent the danger of that Enemy: So God hath ordered it in the Great Body of the World, that Earthquakes like convulsions, Eclipses like fallings of the eyes, and such other unusual Prodigies (which have an analogy and resemblance to the accidents of the body of man) should commonly precede that time, wherein any one State or Nation is finally to be involved. As when our Savior died, the Sun was darkned, the Rocks were rent, the Earth shook, by a kind of natural sympathy and compassionate horror, as so dreadful and amazing a spectacle: So when Jerusalem was to be destroyed, our Savior himself foretells, that there should be Earthquakes, and Faminies, and Pestilences, and fearful Sights, and great Signs, as the Van-carriers and Omen-guard to that more terrible desolation which was to follow them. What the Apostle therefore says elegantly concerning future Glory, that the whole Creation was made subject to vanity and misery for man's sin, doth groan, and, as it were, travail in pain, until it be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and man-mitted or set free to partake of the glorious liberty of the sons of God; so, while it is in the state of vanity, God hath put into it such a quick sense, that not one part can grieve, but it will
after a sort grieve together, and discover by its tremblings, shakings, Eclipses, and extraordinary changes, that there is some great judgments a coming.

The pretty Allegories and Allusions of which Discourse (but the watering of weak and worthless stuff) might possibly shew not unhandsomely in an Oration, but are too airy and thin for a Sermon; as the honey under the Law might be of use at the Table, but was too frothy and luscious for the Altar. As for that vanity now upon the Creation, it is soly passive therein, and subject to it; and as for that vizard upon the face of Nature, those direful and amazing alterations in the whole frame of the World, which attended our Saviors Passion, and the fates of Jerusalem, they are instances concluded miraculous and extraordinary, (whose return may be expected with their occasions) and so are so far from coming up to, that they scarce look towards our present case, as shall appear more fully in due place.

As for the Opinion itself, though (at least as some explain it) it hath appeared to the most too fine and subtil to bear the weight of any such serious Doctrines as our Adversaries hang upon it; yet allow it as much strength and assurance as Fancy can create it, it will appear too common and unhallowed a Ground to build any Sacred
§ 3. **Objections answered.**

Sacred and Religious Doctrine and Practice on; the ancient Peruswions of Prefages by the Exta, by Auguries, by Omens, by Dreams, proceeding upon the same hypothesis. Thus we find the Patrons of such kind of Divinations endeavoring to procure reputation to their Opinion, by alleging, that there was *Cognatio Natura*, *Concentus* & *summa rerum*, a kind of common sense in Nature, a secret consent and sympathy between the parts of this Great Animal, the World; and that therefore nothing could happen in one part, without some touch and passion in another: And *Synesius* prefers Dreams and portentous Events to the regards of men, ὥσ τῶν ἐσώμοιν ἐξίδηλα γεάμυξα, as the evident letters and symbols of things to come, because there is (saith He) ἠδυμέρῳ τὸ κόσμῳ συγκέντρα, a great affinity and common feeling between the several parts of the World; and that in the World "Ελλεί αἷλο δὲ ἀλλ' ἔχων σνέκυρα παρόντα τῶν πλείστων αἵματων, χ' φωνάς χ' σχίματι, &c. one thing draws and affects through another, carrying the present pledges, voices, figures and images of most distant objects. But this antick notion gives not onely sense to the World, but Prophecy, makes it but one great Oracle, a kind of State-Weather-glass, reporting in its own motions and variations the approaching changes in a Nation.
Objections answered. § 3.

a conceit which I shall deliver to those which are better at believing than I am.

8. It is the nature of the Soul to be greatly impressive to a Persuasion of Parallels, Equalities, Similitudes, in the frame and Government of the World: and that (indeed) so far, as to make them (by the poesie of Fancy) where it cannot really discover them; that so it may please and solace itself in some supposed lines and figures of its own uniform and harmonious nature portray'd upon the World; and it were easie to shew how this temper hath betrayed it to a great many pretty dreams, both in science and common life: * To this among the rest, that there is a very rigid and strict analogy and conformity between the Macrocosm and the Microcosm, the World and Man, that he is a kind of Terella, containing lines, natures, conditions and necessities correspondent to those which display themselves in the World with greater pomp and observation, (a conceit as dear to some Ancient and Modern Writers as their very eyes:) upon this assurance, they prettily tell us, that what Catarhs and Rheums are in the lesser World, that are immoderate Rains and Snows in the greater: that to Epilepsies, Vertigo's, and Inflammations in Man, there answer some faintings of light in the Sun, Whirlwinds, and Vulcanos's in the
the World; to Apoplexies, Dropfies, Lethargies, there are Analogous Eclipses, Inundations of Waters; that the Stone and the Gout in us are but the Antitypes of Monstrous Births and Preternatural Generations in the World: and (because when Men have said thus much, they may say what they please) they add, *Quemadmodum morbo acuto laborantibus, certi sunt indices,* &c. As to those which labor of some acute disease, there are certain signs appointed by Nature to give notice of an approaching death or recovery, (as there are also signs of the disease approaching;) so God hath appointed all tumors and swellings, all the labors of Nature, as a kind of Indices to this great Volume of the World, to declare what Desolations and Plagues are to be expected therein.

This general temper of the Soul easily inclines it to believe great and mighty changes in States, usher'd with the solemnity of some mighty and analogous changes in Nature, and that all terrible evils are preface'd or attended with some prodigious and amazing alterations in the Creation; that so the black and dreadful dress of the Stage may be correspondent to the Tragical part shortly to be acted thereupon. The mind readily apprehends it a great *Decorum,* to imagine the Children of the Creation trembling,
looking gaily, and running out of their places, when their Father is just a taking of the Rod of vengeance into his hand. Hence perhaps it is, that we generally find great troubles and judgments on Earth, described especially by Persons Ecstatical, Prophets and Poets (whose speeches usually rather follow the easie sense of the Soul, then the rigid truth of things) by all the examples of horror and confusion in the frame of the Creation. The Prophet David describes Gods going forth to judgment, thus, 

The Earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the Hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth, &c. And the Apocryphal Prophet Esdras characterizes the horrors of an approaching judgment by Predictions of (the most proper glusses to represent them) dreadful Accidents in the World; Blood shall drop out of the wood, and the stone shall give his voice, the Sea of Sodom shall cast out fish, and make a noise in the night, &c. So the day of Gods vengeance upon Jerusalem, and in that, as its type, upon the whole World, is described (as some think) but figuratively, in the phrase of turning the Sun into darkness, and the Moon into blood; such expressions being correspondent to the sense of the Soul, which conceives it most proper that there appear no smiles in the face of Nature, but that she come forth clothed with terror and amaze-
§. 3. **Objections answered.**

amazement, when some great vengeance and destruction is present or at hand.

This disposition of the Soul doth never more strongly exert itself, then when the Prodigies (being no unseemly emblems of the judgment) do impregnate imagination, and offer a mighty assistance thereunto: Thus, as it is called, the raining of blood (which is but water tinctured by the condition of the soil whence it ariseth, or rather where it falls) shall strongly sollicit the fear of some great effusion of blood in the State; the appearance of two Suns at once (which is but the figure and glory of the Sun drawn by its own beams upon a disposed cloud) shall greatly encourage the Fancy of two Competitors for Royalty in a Nation; some great Eclipse seems (to a soft imagination) to hang the World with black against the approaching Funerals of some great Person; the casual parting of the River Ouse in Bedfordshire seemed (after the event) a Presage of the succeeding division between the House of York and Lancaster. These, and many more, where they meet with an imagination strong enough to supply and relieve their weakness, shall prove an event beyond Geometry, and the Reasons and experience of all men and times.

9. **Humane Nature is greatly propense to entertain things vehement and extraordinary.**
Objections answered. § 3.

with an opinion of a more then ordinary sacredness in, and presence of God with them.

Pliny, upon the mention of some Works in Nature of a very strange and singular make and figure, entered by him under the head of *Miracula terrarum*, he adds, *Quibus in rebus, quid possit aliquid causa efferre mortalium quissiam, quam diffusa per omne Nature subinde aliter atq; aliter Nemen erumpens?* and this because it is so natural to man to receive such instances with very great Opinions: for otherwise a due estimate of things would intitle a Gnat or a Flea, though a less Being, a greater Miracle then *Aetna* or a *Firy Meteor*. In the Old Testament, things more vulgar and accommodate to an humane size and measure, have the name of Man called upon them: thus we read of the Rod of a Man, 2 Sam. 7. 14. the Cords of a Man, Hos. 11. 4. the Pen of a Man, Isai. 8. 1. that is, gentle and usual: On the other side, things rare, and which hardly admit their pattern, are attributed unto God; *Horeb* the Mount of God, Exod. 3. 1. the River of God, Psa. 65. 9. the Trees of God, Psa. 104. 16. the Fire of God, Job 1. 6. that is, great and extraordinary. Now the ancient Hebrews (to whose law of speaking the Holy Ghost accommodates himself) in their customs and language, seem to make the truest report of the easie sentiments of simple Nature.

 Accord—
§.3. Objections answered.

Accordingly, these strange and prodigious Alterations in Nature appear to men (because not of familiar occurrence) stamp’d with some characters and touches of Divinity; and so apt to raise a great Opinion of themselves in men, as if sent forth upon no less errand then to call them to an expectation of some strange work from God. These Reasons offer some probable account of the enormous growth and strength of this Perswasion: to all which might be added (as the reason of all the other) the great power and vigor of an undisciplin’d imagination in most men: this makes them receive any strange Occurrences with great Opinions. We shall accordingly observe Omens, the falling of the Salt, a Dream of a Funeral, an unlucky day or hour, the voice of the Screech-Owl, odd noises in the night, to command the most solemn regards of Persons whose Imagination is more busie and active then their Reason, Heathens, Women, young Persons, Melancholicks, superstitious or infirm Persons, the illiterate multitude. To a soft and impressive Fancy, Comets, strange Sights in the Air, &c.

Nomina sunt ipso pene tremenda sono.

From what hath been hitherto discoursed, it is easy to infer the fallacy of that first Argument against us, taken from the common Perswasions of men: For it is a Perswasion

verv
very general indeed, but growing not from natural, but casual or abusive Principles: and in such a case, the more common and prevalent the Persuasion be, the more dangerous, because it derives a great credit upon Error, and gives it the color of an Oracle. *Vox populi is a fallacious Topick to conclude from, except the Opinion generally maintained cross the ease and interest of the World, and men, like Uriah, carry the letters, the Principles, which judge and condemn themselves, [as the common Notions concerning Good and Evil, of the Existence of a Deity, a future Judgment, the Souls immortality, &c. do ;] it is in this case a sign that the truth is sealed upon the Natures of men, and rather lays hold of them, then they of it.

And this in Answer to that first Obje-

sion.
SECT. IV.

The Objection grounded on Humane Authority answered.

The Testimonies of Heathens, Fathers, Modern Writers, alleged against the truth contended for, answered; first, more generally, some account given why so many learned men have given countenance to the contrary Persuasion. A particular return to the testimony of Herodotus. Heathens greatly fond of this notion, and why. The Fathers no great Favorers of this Doctrine. The testimony of Tertullian unserviceable to our Adversaries. S. Austin express against them. The testimony of Machiavel disabled by a threefold consideration. Atheism and Superstition mutually assistant to each other. Machiavel and Pomponatus remarkable for Atheism, and their great regard of Prodigies in the full latitude of them. Dr. Jackson, whence (in probability) so inclinable to the regard of Prodigies; some probable account of his lost Book of Prodigies. The ill use the Heathens made of Prodigies. The observation of them unbecoming our Religion, and a dishonor to God.

Arguments from Humane Authority generally shew better in Rhetorick then Logick, and press the modesties of men more then their judgments. Yet, because the most judg altogether by their Proxies, and are apt to suspect fallacies in strong Reasons, but none in great Names, I shall next make Answer to a second Objection with which this Truth is assaulted, viz. the Testimony of learned Writers [Heathens, Fathers, Modern Authors] to the contrary: where two of each kind it may suffice to take
Objections answered. § 4.

Among Heathen Writers, Herodotus seems to our Adversaries of especial remark in this Argument, entering it as a tried case, *Quoties ingentes eventura sunt calamitates vel civitati, vel nationi, solent signis praenunciari.* And Valerius Maximus seems to subscribe the Opinion in that whole Chapter which he hath written *De Prodigis,* and the Regards due to them.

Among the Fathers, we find Tertullian telling the Heathens, deriding the Christian Doctrine of an Everlasting fire, of some prodigious Mountains always burning; upon occasion whereof He adds, *Hoc erit testimonium ignis aeterni, hoc exemplum judicij, paenam nutrientes Montes uruntur & durant.* And S. Austin having noted, that a little before the *Bellum Societatis* in the Roman Empire, Dogs, Horses, Oxen, Asses, and such like creatures (usually the most submissive subjects to their imposed law of obedience to Man) all on a sudden, put off their gentle and tractable Natures, ran away from their owners, grew fierce and hurtful, and approach’d as near to Lions and Wolves as their shapes and figures would permit: of which strange occurrence He thus delivers his sense, *Quod si hoc signum fuit quid non? tum malum fuit, quantum malum fuit...*
§.4. Objections answered.

Cujus hoc signum fuit! Amongst Modern Writers, Machiavel (a Person generally thought a more fast retainer to Atheism then Superstition) hath thus abettet the observation of Prodigies, Ut causam facile confiteri, omnes magnos moetus quinque aut urbibus, vel a revelatione aliqua, prodigii aut caelestibus signis praeedit & praununciati solere: To whom may be added (to pass by Luther, Melancton, Camerarius and others) the Testimony of the reverend Dr. Jackson; The maner (saith He) of Gods forewarning is very various; sometimes he forewarns by Signs in the Sun and Moon, sometimes by Apparitions in the Air, sometimes by Monstrous Births, sometimes He makes the Murrain of Cattel, and Mortality of Beasts of the field, or Birds of the air, fore-runners of Plagues and Wars, &c. And so far received he them, as Θεός ὑπὸ γῆς (as Ensebius stiles the Portenta preceding the overthrow of Jerusalem) as God's visible Sermons of Repentance, that, as we are informed, He wrote a just Treatise (lost in his life-time) concerning Prodigies or Divine Forewarnings betokening Blood.

To all which Testimonies my Answer shall be first, more general, That it is no wonder...
§. 4.

wonder to see this Opinion credited by some great Names, in regard, that as in Heresie the People usually follow the Learned, being (prompted thereto by a secret sense of their own insufficiencies) in a matter more abstract and subtil, more apt to believe then to judge: so in Superstition, the Learned are not seldom observed to follow the People; because easily surprized into an Opinion that can enter so valuable a plea for it self as common consent. This Notion of Presages by Prodigies being so popular and catholick, wise men in their first and unwary years (when they are the Disciples of the People) may entertain conceits thereof which shall prescribe against the strongest Reasons to dispossess them. As Iron, in a greater and more massie body, follows the law of common Nature in all heavy bodies, and moves to the Earth: but in Smaller pieces it serves the law of its own private nature, and directs itself to the Loadstone: Thus Learned men, where they are presst by the force and weight of Education, and a common prejudice, generally follow common Nature in men (which inclines to imbrace Society) and therefore move in judgment after the way of the Earth; but in matters out of vulgar ken, and where they cannot be tempted by a common Agreement, they move after the way of counsel, and pursue
Objections answered.

the dictates of their own private light and understanding. Even wise men, in many instances, hold Aras & focos, their Faith and their Estates, by the same Tenure, Tradition from Ancestors; and therefore we may receive their judgments (tanquam ex Cathedra) as engagements to consider, not always (tanquam ex Tripode) as obligations to believe.

I proceed next to a more distinct and particular Answer to the several Authorities alleged: And first, to the Testimony of Heathens. The many places of Scripture, wherein God hath threatened to issue out a speedy Arrest upon Persons deeply indebted to his Justice, without so much as warning them by any lesser judgments and signs of Vengeance to agree with him while in the way, do sufficiently resolve me of the vanity of that forementioned Assertion of Herodotus: Yet, because it is delivered upon the seeming faith of a great Experience, and our Adversaries build so much upon it, I return to it.

1. It is a conclusion which proceeds upon the credit of a single instance; that of the People of Chios there mentioned, whose final desolation was usher'd by two very affecting Examples; One, That of an hundred Young-men whom they sent to Delphos, two onely returned, the rest being consumed
sumed by Pestilence: the other, That the roof of the publick School-house fell so suddenly, that of an hundred and twenty Children but one escaped with life: Of which he saith, "ταῦτα μὴ σει σημεῖα ὅ τις ἀναλησθεῖς;" these Signs God fore-shewed their approaching fate and desolation withal.

Now, with this so shallow and contracted a foundation, he ventures the building of this catholic Assertion, Quoties ingentes, &c. A thing not much to be wondered at, because where men are very fond of an assumed Principle, any single Example, which speaks favor for it, shall be more attended unto, then an hundred which disparage and refute it. Besides, one Affirmative (especially if plausible, as this is) doth far more affect and engage our minds, then many more evident Negatives; because these are infinite, disperse our sight, and deliver us to uncertainty.

2. It is no wonder at all to meet with such an Assertion amongst Heathens, and any little Accidents blown out, by a superstitious Fancy, into the shew and appearance of strange Omens, if we consider,

1. That they looked upon their Gods as a kind of Fayries, which would throw fire-brands and furies about the house for the omission of some petty criticisms in their Rites; and that therefore they gave forth frequent
§.4. Objections answered.

frequent intimations of these impotencies and distastes. They thought they were lost with a trifle, and won again to a good Opinion of them by paying them some ammonitae deoratione, uncouth adorations (as Plutarch stiles them) the homage of a little crouching and circumstantial Devotion.

2. The hopes and fortunes of the Heathens were laid up generally in this World, and therefore their fears in reference to it were easily awakened. The Heathen Casilinus truly acknowledged, That all the Religious Rites instituted by their Ancestors were tended to no higher an end than the good of this lower life; being either intended as grateful returns to the Divine Bounty for some temporal favors received, or devout addresses to divert a feared, or appease a felt displeasure of the Deity: And therefore no wonder they were soon awakened into a great fear, when any strange occurrence, of whose end and cause they were unresolved, fell before their notice, lest it should abide the running of that Vessel upon rocks, wherein their hopes and happiness were imbarked. Men are apt to entertain great fears in reference to that wherein they apprehend themselves greatly concerned. Besides, the whole Ethnicks Religion was nothing but a perpetual banishment of all true generosities and freedom of mind; their peace fled
Objections answered.

§ 43

before the chipping of a Bird, and they were more frightened then the Hare which sometimes crossed their way: anything was an omen with them;

Angimus, si fersnutavenit, si male loquatur,
Frascimus, si quis viderit anfomnium valde
Metuimus, si nobis clamaverit quaepiam,

As Meander expresseth himself in the Person of the Heathens.

To the Testimony of the Fathers I answer in general: That it were no wonder to find them (living so near the times of Gentilism) speaking in favor sometimes for some of the Doctrines thereof; the main trunk and body of the Gentile superstitious was indeed hewn down in their minds, but still there was some small roots and fibres remaining, which are observed to spring up ever and anon, and trouble their Writings. But however, we shall (I believe) seldom find them expressing any great regard to this grand Doctrine of the Gentile Theology.

As for Tertullian, howsoever he may seem, like some carved images about houses, to support and grace our Adversaries building, yet he will prove in truth to be, like them, barely forc'd and fastned on, and to lend no strength at all thenceunto: For,

1. The Father writing to the Heathens
there, might lawfully discourse with them, upon the common hypothesis of the Ethnic Theology; for they regarded those mighty Vulsanos, as the Courts of Pluto, and a kind of testimony or fit emblem of the fires and vengeance in another state: 2. He styles these fiery eruptions but testimonium & exemplum, a testimony and example of the Divine judgment, which in a lax sense he might well do, these seeming to be set forth by the Divine Wisdom, as Glasses and Pictures to convey to the dullest World some weak images of the horrors of those everlasting burnings in another World. 3. These durable fires are alleged not as any signs of an everlasting burning, but as the best argument Nature afforded to prove the possibility of such a burning against the Sons of Nature, who thought a fire which neither consumes nor expires to be a great contradiction. And to a like purpose we find the very same instances alleged against them by another of the Ancients: Sicut ignes fulminum corpora tangunt nec absunt, sicut ignes Aetna & Vesuvii & ardentium ubique terrarum flagrant nec erogantur, ita paenale fess illud incendium non damnis ardentium paseitur, sed inexesa corporum laceratione nutritur. Minut. Fel.

To the Testimony of S. Austin, I answer, 1. That strange occurrence by him...
mentioned might possibly appear to him clothed in more significant circumstances then to us it doth; who cannot but look at the sudden Mania of so many Creatures but as the natural, though more unusual effect, which in those hotter Climates the unsitting season of the year might possibly have upon them.

2. He speaks but doubtfully thereof, Hoc si signum fuit. 3. But if our Adversaries appeal to S. Austin, to S. Austin shall they go: who (in his more awakened thoughts) thus delivereth himself in defiance of all such Ominous Observations;

Monstra dicta sunt à Monstrando, quod nihil significando demonstrant, & Ostenta ab Ostendendo, Portenta à Portendendo, id est, praostendendo; & Prodigia, quod portendant, id est, futura predicant. Sed vide rint eorum conjectures quomodo ex ipsis five fallantur, five instinctu Spirituum (quibus cura est, tali pæna dignos animos hominum noxia curiositatis retibus implicare) vera predicant, five multa dicendo aliquando in aliquid veritatis incurrant.

As for the Testimony of Machiavel alleged by Dr. Jackson, our Adversaries, and other Patrons of the Opinion I contend against, so little is his credit and reputation with many men, in matters especially of a religious concern, that perhaps it might suffice to return the Jewish Proverb upon our
Our adversary, Fidejussor tuus Fidejussor eget. It will (I think) appear to the most of no great value in this Argument, if it be considered.

1. Those Signs, which he hath noted in the same Chapter as the Præcursores of some great Evils, are vain, beyond the visions of a Feaver, and the whispers of the wind: for he there tells us, That the death of Lorenzo de Médices, the Founder of the Dukedom of Tuscany in his Family, was portended by the defacing of their great Temple in Florence by fire from Heaven; and the Banishmed of Petrus Soderinins, one of the Pillars of State, by the burning of the Senate-house by Lightning. [Tenterden Steeple and Goodwin Sands!] We may conclude by these wither’d and thin ears, that the whole harvest of his other Observations, he grounded his fore-mentioned speech upon, was little besides chaff and husk.

2. The suspicion of Atheism renders him also not a little to the suspicion of Superstition. The Heathens of old, stiled ("Αθεοὶ ἄνθρωποι) Atheists in the World, were the most superstitious Observers of Presages and Omens. They which live most in neglect of God, think they see tokens of a divine Nemesis in every strange accident they behold. Superstition and Atheism (like Water and Ice) produce one another; flaviush and superstitious.
Objections answered. §. 4.

Lev. 26. 36.

Tul. de Nat.
Deor. I. 3.
c. 86.

persuasive fears of God leading to Atheism as their cure, and Atheism leading to greater fears of him as its deserved punishment. Of Epicurus, all whose Doctrines were level'd to the beating down of all fears of God or Death, Tully hath left this upon record, Nec quenquam vidi, qui magis ea quae timenda esse negaret, timent, Mortem dico & Deos. It is a great justice, that that wickedness should be punished with false fears, which hath discarded the true. They which will not fear God, and Hell, and Sin, shall fear a Prodigy, being therein like the horse (to which they stand compared, Jer. 8. 6.) which will start at its own shadow, and yet rash furiously and without fear into the battle.

3. Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. The wheel of Providence is continually going over Kingdoms and Persons. The World, like Mount Calvary, presents us with nothing almost but Crosses, Deaths, and Spectacles of Misery. Heaven only is a Kingdom that cannot be shaken: no wonder then if any unusual Accidents be soon seconded by some Tragedy or other, though never intended its Prologue and precedent Monitors. As the Philosopher therefore said upon another occasion, Οὐ διὰ τὸ βασιλείαν ἐπαθαν ἀλλὰ σουδέν ταῦτα. It lightened, not because I walked, but it so happened: so we
Objections answered.
may in the present case; Not because such
a Comet appeared, such a Steeple was burnt
with Lightning, such a strange Sight in the
Air, or monstrous Birth was seen, therefore
such a Prince's death, War or Heresie ensued
(as the Antitype thereof;) but that such a
contexture and succession of Events was ca-
sual and without design. Upon occasion of
this Objection, I cannot but further add,
That it seems not much to raise the reputa-
tion of the vulgar Doctrine of Prodigies,
that it is so much abetted by Machiavel and
Pomponatus, commonly look'd at as two
Atheists higher by the head and shoulders
then the rest. How far Machiavel was ad-
dicted to the regard of them, even in the
Ethnick latitude, will appear from a perusal
of the fore-cited Chapter of his: And
what Pomponatus (who intituled the Hea-
vens to the Miracles and Religion of the
Messiah) thought of them, let himself de-
clare: Discurrenti per omnes historias & an-
De Incant. siguas & recentes, apparebit quantum corpora
caelestia sollicita sint de Regibus, regnis, urbi-
bus, & universaliter de magnis mutationibus:
de quibus non solum quando sunt & proxima
sunt, dant ipsa corpora caelestia in coelo, in
quatuor elementis, in bestiis, & in hominibus,
diversa prodigia & signa, verum & per mul-
ta ante tempora, &c.

The Error (as I doubt not to stile it) of
the
Objections answered. § 4.

the reverend Dr. Jackson in this Argument may be easily pardoned, to his singular piety and learning; the light and luster of which, like that of the Sun, may easily hide any of his spots and blemishes from the severer eyes and notices of the World. Great Minds, like the heavenly Bodies, though they are moved, for the main with the force of the Primum Mobile, the weight and evidence of Truth; yet they appear sometimes to have their declinationes proprias, some private motions and declinations of their own, to which their peculiar Genius, impressions from the Age, or their Education, may very fatally betray them. This Opinion of Prodigies, and signs of Events future (which the general strain of his Writings speaks his mind hugely possest and dy'd withal) I am ready to reckon amongst those Idola specus, false notions, which the black and melancholy Mansion, his excellent Soul appears to have dwelt in, did abuse his mind withal. Any Events extraordinary in the World, seem all along to have had a great impression upon his Soul, and seem expounded sometimes with a little more solemnity then their just value and moments will well warrant and allow. Melancholy is of a very impressive temper, and Poetick nature, and is apt (like a dark room) to receive in the images of objects without, in very
Objections answered.

very monstrous and antique figures and representations: The Greek Physician hath noted of Persons acted by it, that **incant.** they are easily turned to **Superstition.**

As for his Book of Prodigies mentioned, I profess myself not greatly tempted to follow its casual loss with any deep sighs, and that not only because men's understandings have been too much undervalued by Books of that nature, already extant to a number sufficient to a cure of the most troublesome curiosity in such inquiries; but...

1. Because the few Prodigies and Signs of Times commended, with a great seriousness to our notices, in his Sermons on Luke (taken for the most part out of Herodatus, Livy, Valer. Max. and Machiavel) will appear to any man, that doth not use to start at shadows, too thin and weak to bear up any such weighty & serious Conclusions, as he teacheth his Reader to build upon them, (the knowledge whereof I had rather should be owing to the Readers' curiosity, then to my rehearsal.) Now I think we may make some judgment of the value of the whole piece, by the coarseness of a remnant thereof.

2. Because it designed an **Errorum Apo- theosis,** a kind of consecration of the great part of the Errors and Follies of the Gentile superstition; as appears in an high degree
degree of probability from those words which fall from him in the fore-cited Papers; where (speaking of such kind of Por-
tenta and Signs of Heaven, at which the Heathens used to be dismayed) he thus delivers himself: Though to believe as much concerning the Signs of the Times as the Heathens did, though to make as good or better use of them then they did; be not suffici-
ent to acquit us from ruine and destruction fore-signified, yet, not to believe as much as they did; not to make so good use as they did; not to be so much affected as they were, is enough and more than enough to condemn us, enough to bring that ruine and calamity, which they portend or fore-signifie, inevitably and in full measure upon us. A strange speech! What is this at best but to let
+ Christians aurum colligere ex percore (as Vir-
gil said he did, when reading of Ennius) to
gather the gold of devout fears, and Chri-
stian fore-lights, from the dung and dross
of all the Ethnick ostenta, and auspicious Observations, where-ever occurring? For
my own part, were I under the Religion of
any such Perswasion, That all strange Acci-
dents are the Warnings of Heaven, I should
conclude it a great Service to God and the
good of men; to exhort, as opportunity in-
vited, the Christian Magistrate to institute
some such Colleges as the Romans had (who
received
§ 4: Objections answered.

received them all as the Signs of Heaven, which should profess themselves Prodigia- 
sum Interpretes; and should be ready to of-
fer to the World the most trusty Rules and 
Principles I were Master of, to manage their Interpreta-
tions so, that we might with some assurance conclude the intent and meaning of 
God in them. As for that good use the Heathens made of these things (wherein 
they are recommended to our imitation,) what was it? Did they not receive any 
strange Accidents as the Indications whence 
to proceed to a Crisis of Times, and to put 
difference between lucky or inauspicious 
hours and days? (as if any Times were de-
levered out of the thoughts and regards of 
Heaven.) Did they not use, upon any pro-
digious Event, to consult those νοστρι 
θεᾶς, the Devils Oracles (a matter pardonable 
to their hypothesis,) to understand the intent 
and meaning of the Gods in them? Did they 
not approach the Altars of their angry Dei-
ties in a nicer Observation of all the Criti-
cisms of Superstition, and the Arbitrary In-
junctions of their Religion? Did they not 
sometimes hold up some other devoted Per-
son to bear off that unlucky blow, which 
the Omen told them was level'd at their 
own heads by their touchy Deities? For 
so Suetonius tells us, That Nero, to secure 
himself from the envious Aspect of a Co-

crer
met then appearing, attempted the death of some of his Nobles, as having learn'd so-
lore Reges talia Oftenta cade aliquia illustri expiare, & a fret in capita procerum depel-
lore. Did they not increase to such a body and bulk at last, as to disturb the Peace of
common life, where observed and retained, and to work some men to a discarding of all
thoughts of Religion and a Deity, as a kind of Furies perpetually haunting their inward
house, and bereaving them of all true gener-
rousness, peace and freedom of spirit? But
where do we ever find that these pretended
Alarms from Heaven did awaken men out
of that profound sleep, which in the darker
times of Gentilism they were fallen into, and
perswade them, or any others, into a cor-
rection of their lives and manners? To re-

3. Because such Signs as these are suppo-
sed to be, appear greatly unworthy the Majesty,
Wisdom and Goodness of God. That Scripture
might appear to be מִרְכָּז (in the
language of Moses) the Writing of God, he
hath been pleased to imprint such characters
of Divinity both upon the matter and style
thereof, that those weak prenotions we have
of infinite Wisdom, Goodness, Majesty, do
attest and bear witness to it, as worthy and
befitting God. And surely, were these Pro-
digies intended Διὸς Κήρυκας, the Heralds of
Heaven.
Objections answered.

Heaven, there would appear in them, to severe and knowing Persons, somewhat able to fill out their name and title, somewhat correspondent to those anticipations which the Soul of Man hath of what is becoming the Wisdom, Majesty, and Holiness of God. For as God cannot be loved but by appearing before the Soul big with what-ever he hath framed it to embrace, and open it self unto; so neither can he be reverenced and observed, but in such displays of himself, which he knows the Soul apt to receive with the most awful expressions of observance and regard.

Now then, what man that hath any great thoughts of the Majesty, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, can once imagine he ever intended any base and deformed Monsters the Interpreters of any of his great Counsels and Purposes? Did God generally, under the weak and worldly state of the Jewish Church, send forth those Prophets, whose learning, education, holy lives, great works, admirable gifts, commanded even profane men to a reverence of their Persons and Message; and doth he now make use of Monsters, Comets, Meteors, or the Apparitions of unclean spirits, as his Praetores publici? Can we ever think that the wise God would have men to understand his meaning, when speaking to them by Signs, which, like
like Pictures, look to any way, speak to any sense and purpose, the differing fancies of men please? or that he speaks to men, like the old Ethnick Idols, by mystical nods and becks? All the Signs God ever spake to men by, gave forth (either by their own nature, or his own exposition) λόγον διόνυσίου, a significant speech: the Wonders in Egypt, the Rites of the Passover, the Elements in the Sacrament, are all signa vocalia; and the Signs and Wonders, which, as commonly thought, were Gods Trumpets, before he fell upon Jerusalem, were all (to speak with Eusebius) ὑπερποντομέλακεν ζωμα τελα, Wonders big with energy, and clearly significative of the approaching Desolation. Besides, can it be imagined that infinite Goodness, having appointed us a Religion, pregnant with Contemplations fit to entertain an Angel, levelled to the lifting up of the spirits of men to that way of life which is above, that comes forth to give us ὑπνοιαν ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, freedom of speech and approach unto God, and to chase before it all those pale fears and jealousies of himself (the dreadful Apparitions which astonish'd men heretofore while sitting in darkness and the shadow of death) should now task us to a devout Observation of the familiar miscarriages of Nature in one kind or other, and to debase ourselves to the
Objections answered.

the bondage of some blind and confused fears of his vengeance, upon the news of a Monster, some ludicrous pranks of vile Spirits, or a fiery Exhalation.

Upon an account of the Premises, were inclined to an Observation of Omens and Prodigies, I should (as Prodigies use to be differently interpreted) make an inverted use of the words of the Reverend Publisher of this Great Author's works; [Reader, write this a Prodigy, That this Treatise alone concerning Prodigies should be lost, and that in the Author's life-time,] and conclude, That God, in favor to the understandings of men, provided, that, like the dead body of Moses, it should lie buried, none knowing where, that so it might not be made an Idol of, which perhaps the Reverence of so great a Name might have inclined some unto.

I should not have spoken so much, not to his; but my own prejudice, of so Reverend a Person, but that I am desirous to cut off all the locks, wherein I can but conceive the strength of this superstitious Perswasion may lie, which (as weeds do by good ground) tends but to eat out the heart and strength of that devout fear, from which it seems to spring.
Objections answered. § 5.

SECT. V.

An Answer to the Objection fetch’d from Experience.

The Objection proceeding upon the credit of Experience proposed: further confirmed from Lucan, Pliny, the French History, Others. The Plea evinc’d; 1. Unsafe: opening a door for all the ancient Egyptick ways of Divination, especially by Dreams. Artemidorus. The Contenders for Prodigies commonly zealous for all sorts and kinds of them. Pomponatius and Nehusius noted to this purpose. 2. False: by Experience of former Times and our own. Men prone to conclude catholick Maxims from a few Examples, with the reason thereof. 3. Fallacious, upon many accounts. Some Prodigies mentioned in History originally Apalogues. The Prodigies related by Lucan and Virgil, of what moment: the power of a perverse Faith to bring an evil, noted from Gerion. A judgment upon Vesplanian his lighting a Comet, which shone in his time. The Argument from Experience of no force, though granted true, and why. The danger of being led by Experience without Rule, shewn from Maimonides and Reason.

Thirdly, It is further opposed, That common Experience (the surest Corrector of all Idol Notions and hasty Reasonings) seems to support this Perfwasion concerning Prodigies. They have always been known succeeded by great evils, and those generally such as they seemed the most natural Symbols and representations of. Lucan, speaking of the Tragedies of Pompey's fall, and the changes consequent thereunto, describes them ushered by the direful Prologues of many prodigious altera-
§ 5. Objections answered.

... in the face of the Creation:

Pejoris, manifesta fides, Supercilique minaces
Prodigiis terras implerunt, athera, pontum, Sal. 1. 1.
Ignota obscure viderunt sydera noctes,
Ardentemq; polum flammis, caeloq; volantes
Oblique per inane faces, crinemq; tremendi
Syderis, & terris mutantem regna Cometen,
&c.

Which words, because the Objection is a little concerned in them, I shall crave leave of the more serious Reader thus to paraphrase upon them:

Nature miscarries with a fright, and starts
Quite out of order, in her several parts
At fates foreseen: new Stars shone in the skies,
(The Torches to attend his Obsequies)
Nature was backward rung, whilst heav'ly ire
Had set the very Firmament on fire.
A curled Star appear'd; and Mortals quake,
Whose fear had turn'd each hair into a Snake.
A burning Comet did sad fates portend,
Heaven Kingdoms sells by such a candles end.

And the Poet goes on there to give in such a catalogue of amazing Accidents, which I think will hardly obtain the Readers pardon, much less his faith, but by extending his Patent of Poetica licentia beyond a bare liberty in reference to the quantity of his words.
Objections answered.


c Histoire de Henry le Grand, p. 585.

I answer, 1. This plea is very unsafe; in regard it can hardly (like besieged men) open a gate to let in those it favors, but a great troop of enemies to all sobriety will crowd in after: All the follies of Observation of Dreams, Predictions by the Stars, Divination by Inspection of Beasts, Auguries, pretending to be the Dictates of long Experience, and of Tradition, handed to the World from the very first times thereof. Thus he in d Tully attempts the justification of the Observation of all the Auspicia, Presages by the Intrails of the Sacrifices, Dreams, &c. saying, Hac auspicia, ostenta, vetere...
§ 5. Objections answered.

vetere rerum magis eventis moniti, quam ratione duæi probaverunt: And Artemidorus tells his Reader, That he doubted not effectually to reprehend all the Deniers of any Divination by Dreams, χέων είς μεσον εκ των ἄτοξεμάτων μαρτυρίων, by bringing before them the evident testimony of Events succeeding: And elsewhere tells us, That he hath sufficiently assured the Art of interpreting Dreams, because ἐτέρα, εἴπερα, αἰτιη περὶ των ἀτομεθαμάτων μαρτυρίων πεδήρυγω, not trusting to some weak Similarities, but to Experience, and the steady testimony of Events: So that men must be forc'd to quit this Argument as concluding nothing, for fear it conclude any thing. But I perceive this dart is counted as stubble by Job 41.29, our Adversaries, and they are ready to laugh at the shaking of this spear, looking at it as a great service to God, and the common good, to regard any odd Occurrences whatsoever as Presages and ominous, which seem to have the credit of Experience to recommend their observation: Thus Pomponatus expressly; Dicimus Deum curam generem humani generis, non solum Oraculis & Prodigiis, genus humanum admonere, verum & auguriis & ominibus: And a late Writer calls men to an observation of all kind of (Divine Types, as he stiles them) Dreams, Prodigies of all kinds in the four Elements, prodigious
prodigious Tempests, Earthquakes, Inundations, Breakings forth of strange Fires, monstrous Births, all kind of Monstrosities in Stones, Metals, Floods, Fatidical Voices delivered by none knows whom, Apparitions of Ghosts, Ominations by Words, Names, Places, Times, in so many several Chapters full of elaborate vanity, and all under the specious and inviting title of Fatidica Sacra.

I add therefore secondly, This Plea is very false; for there have hapned many deaths of Princes never honored with the solemnity of any precedent Comet, or other object of wonder; and many Comets which never seemed to blast the Affairs of the World, by any envious and malignant Aspect thereupon. Almost four years and an half are past from us, since the Nation was first alarm'd with the dreadful news of strange Sights in Heaven and Earth, and yet (with all due thankfulness to God be it spoken) never did those three National Felicities, Peace, Health, Plenty, more bless our habitations in any much longer period of time: so that we have almost seen the Annum miraculæ happily refuted by a Seculum miraculæ. The cause of mistake here is, that when folly hath often shot its bolt, and casually hit the mark (the Event seeming to smile upon and commend its Presages) there is a
mighty notice taken thereof; and that especially because, as it is well noted by the Lord Bacon, *Natura intellectus humani*, magis afficitur affirmativis & activis, quam negativis & privativis: And accordingly, where a Rule or Observation holds, or hits in some one, it makes a more lively impression than the failing thereof in an hundred instances; that which is, as he well observes, *Omnis superstitionis & vana credulitatis radix*, The root of all Superstition and vain credulity in Astrology, Dreams, Omens, Prodigies, &c. When men see so little jarring between Events, and Prophecies Dreams or Prodigies, the pretended Presages of them, they conceive it very natural to conclude there was some hand of Art and counsel which tuned them to so marvelous an harmony and correspondence; and that on purpose to invite men to attend, and for the future to meet such strange Examples with serious and devout thoughts: whereas it were in truth a greater marvel if those (though) blind Archers (Diviners, Dreamers, Observers of Prodigies) should not sometimes hit, which are continually letting fly, and have so many marks before them, so great a variety of Evils falling out every year, any of which may (if they please) be pretended the accomplishment and commendation of their Prophetick Wonders or Speeches, Onely

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the Mind is apt to entertain great Opinions and a lasting Memory of such Objects as strike upon it strongly and unawares, as all kind of pretty Equalities and Uniformities, especially between Signs and Events, use to do: and besides, any great Evils (like some harsher Passages in Musick) make deep impressions on our Memories, and are generally made use of as a kind of little Epochas in life, whence to compute our Times; while great and easie Blessings slide off from our minds, and are soon delivered to silence and forgetfulness: or else such prodigious Accidents would soon appear to prophesie (if at all) as oft smooth as harsh and evil things concerning us.

Thirdly, (Nam pluribus exceptionibus uti, nemo prohibetur,) This Plea is at best but very fallacious and uncertain; and that upon many accounts:

1. As many and great Evils have been consequent to Prodigies; so also are they to many and great Evils: There is a perpetual circulation of Prodigies Signal and Penal: The World is acquainted with any thing better then consistence; its nature seems emblem'd in its figure, it is round, and accordingly in perpetual motion, and turning from one side, state, and condition, to another. And therefore, as the Disciples said to our Savior (in that great crowd, Luk.8:45,) when
§. 5. Objections answered.

when demanding who touched him, Seest thou the multitude thronging thee, and say'st thou, Who toucheth me? so say I, when we see such a multitude of Changes and Evils in the World, thronging of Prodigies before and after, shall we be so vain as to ask, what Persons death, or what Event is touched upon, and pointed unto, in their meaning and signification?

2. This plea builds upon a most unfaithful and sinking foundation, viz. the credit of all those Prodigious Narrations which Books and common discourse are stuffed out withal; which will shrink to a very mean account, if held to the fire, search'd into by a severe examination. There is a natural vanity in some Persons to pretend to nothing beneath Extraordinary, and to relate no story which shall not a little task men's Faith to gratifie their Fancy: this humor in Historians hath made the body of ancient History in some parts so gouty and monstrous; Ὑφοθέτει τις ἡμῖν μεθασίες ἑνσαρκωμένες, οὕτως ἐκ τοῦ πανομοιωτίου τοῖς ἀξιώμασίσις ἐντοῦ μεταφωσώντας, (as Herodian faith of them;) They trusting that if they delivered something fabulous and antick, they should reap the sweet fruit of so delightful a Narration in the wonder and acceptance of the People: being otherwise conscious, ἡμιοίᾳ εἰς τὸν πολυομήλον ἀειθυμικών, that they had lain obscured, buddled up in the common talk.
Objections answered. 

§. 5.

talk of the Many. As long as the leaves of Books present the eyes and minds of Men with antick Pictures and Stories, they will be gazed upon. We have even naturally a very prone faith and fancy for such kind of Relations as these; for our minds finding themselves too great and large to be contentedly entertained with the dry and scanty contemplation of things little and vulgar, do readily encourage the relations of things new and rare, and that have some touches and umbrages of more wonderful and magnificent, then this σχήμα τῆς κόμης common Scene of the World can present them with. Again, some of these recorded Prodigies were in all likelihood Apologues at first, translated in time by the easie multitude into the repute of real Histories: That of a Mare bringing forth an Hare, recorded by Herodotus as a Prodigy presaging the overthrow of Xerxes his great Army, was no doubt the defeat of that Army (appearing to the eye at first in the strength and pride of an Horse, but concluding in the fears and flight of an Hare) related originally in a Parable. As for the many Prodigies related by Heathen Poets Lucan, Virgil, as also Ovid, it shall suffice in this place to return, That they are related by Heathen Poets: By Heathen] whose misery it was, by the subtilty of the Devil and their Priests, to be abused
§. 5. Objections answered.

with the faith of a great many vainly reputed or falsely reported Prodigies. By Poets whose privileged it is, without the reproach of a lye, ingeniously to abuse their Readers with the relation of things (apt to move wonder, and raise affection) never acted but upon the stage of imagination. Strabo notes that the Ancient Poets used to put into their Poems τὰ μάγια τὴς μνήμης, somewhat wonderful and prodigious; any such things being ὧδε μανθάνεις φιλάργυρος, a kind of love-potion to induce an affection to learning (and to themselves) in that rude and childish Age.

3. God may possibly sometimes in judgment bring an evil upon men, but falsely conceived presaged by a Prodigy. It is not unlikely, that the Evils thought portended by Prodigies are often consequent to them, because God will punish, as in some, a superstitious credulity, and timorous distrust of his Providence; so in others, a bold and blind neglect thereof, express in a scornful rejection of any such supposed signs and intimations of a Divine displeasure. Many times imaginatio facit casum, the distrustful Opinion conceiv'd of a Prophecy, Dream, or Prodigy, brings the Event, and not any appointed significancy of either. God some-...
Objections answered. § 5.

Omen to succeed according to their easie jealousies, and some great Evil to befall them upon such a day or hour, (unhappy, onely because abused by their superstitious and soft imaginations:) For (as Gerson well) Sicut vera & Christiana fides mirabilia operatur in bene credentibus, sic & falsa & mala credulitas Deo permittente eventus malos operatur, vel potius demeretur. A perverse Faith will produce perverse Wonders: And as pregnant a womb of Evils is the neglect of any such Prodigies, when founded onely in a Giant-like mind (as some Copies read it, Ecclus. 23. 4.) apt to bid defiance to God in what ways soever he display himself. Superstition oft brings the Evils it fears, and Atheism the Evils it fligths; for Divine Providence justly reacheth not its wings to those Persons which either distrust it by vain fears, or dare and challenge it by bold and ignorant hopes.

That which may possibly pass with some for no rash example to abet this Assertion, is the instance of Vespasian's death, of whom it is recorded, that when notice was given him of a Comet then appearing as a Presage of his death, He bad the Relaters to deliver this message to the King of Parthia, to whom they were Retainers, Ille comatus, ego antem calvus; meaning, that seeing that King wore long hair, it seemed most probable,
§.5. Objections answered.

Bable, that this *stella crinita* (as the *Romans* called it) did portend his death rather than the Emperor *Vespasian* who was bald. But the Emperor died before the extinction of this Comet, and that King survived both. Now though I incline not (with that reverend Person) to attribute his sudden death to a disregard of this Prodigy as *his summons to the Divine Tribunal*, (for how could he possibly understand it to be such?) yet to conclude this profane neglect of a matter, then supposed religious and sacred, to have influenced his death, is, perhaps, neither to be uncharitable nor superstitious. [I question not the truth of, at least some of, those Observations the Heathens made of a Divine *Nemesis*, often asserting the honor of Religion by avenging the neglect and scorn of their (though) superstitious Rites upon Principles of Atheism.] Otherwise, had that speech of the Emperor been the issue of a duly informed judgment, it had been, for the matter, as allowable a Sarcasm, as that therewith *Elijah* reprehended the Religion of the Image of *Baal*. So then, till our Adversaries can prove a greater safety, truth and faithfulness in this Argument, their cause will be very little assured and established by it.

But lest I be thought uncivil, by tasking them to an impossibility, to ease them, I shall
shall suppose for the present somewhat more of truth and faithfulness therein then I am willing to grant; but even then, except it be made appear withal that all these strange instances in Nature are signs of divine efficiency and appointment, for ought I know we should but offer the sacrifice of fools, while receiving them as the great instruments of Religion, the warnings of Providence, as Biblia Laicorum, the Books in which the men of a more dull and heavy sense might read the purposes of wrath, and the images of an approaching judgment. The Devils Oracles were sometimes credited by experience of Events, (or else no doubt he had not had so much custom,) were they therefore divine Manifesto's? Some kind of Hebrew words, written and worn about the body, have been succeeded by strange alterations therein; shall we therefore conclude (as some have done) that the Word of God's Blessing is as much affixed to them to cure, as to meat and drink to nourish the body? Maimonides tells us, that the application of any thing, or the use of any Rite, for the production of any effect in Plants or Bodies, where Reason cannot discover the least shadow of any natural connexion between Cause and Effect, their Masters used to stile Viam Amorhæorum, the way of the Amorites, thought to be interdicted.


§. Objections answered.

Terdicted, Levit. 18. 3. and 20. 23. Sure I am, An attendance to Experience, without some Rules of Reason or Revelation to assure us, is Via Ethnorum, the way of the Heathens, in which they walked to a justification of most of their religious Vanities: we are here out of God's way, and we do but tempt the Tempter to put eternal fallacies upon us, and to amuse and scare us with one Prodigy or other perpetually, as he did the Heathens. Experience is then alone a proper Guide, when it hath the eye of Revelation, or some steady Principle of Reason, to credit and conduct it: without that, it is a blind, confused, infinite, giddy thing.

To all that hath been said, I further add, that I doubt not but, as many pretended Prophecies, so many prodigious Relations were set together after some great Event; and that Writers (to make the recorded Prodigy the more worthy of a great Opinion) have been easily tempted to blow out with their quills a lean and lank occurrence, and by the addition of some odd circumstances to swell it out to a very monstrous and frightful shew. Besides, there is not a Year but, in the compass of a Kingdom, will present a curious Observer with an hundred Singularities, which presented in one intire view (like Trees combined in a Grove) will give a very sacred and solemn Aspect, and
Objections answered. § 6.

charm a soft and childish imagination into a strong persuasion of their being divine Monitors of the Vengeance which they see ensued. The * Historian well notes, That Dreams, Oracles, κ' ὃσα εἰς ἑργάζων τῶν θεομοί τε κ' μελόν των σύμβωλα φαίνεται, and what ever seem prophetick Symbols to men, are thought to have nothing of falshood or forgery lodged in them, when ever they have the luck to hit, and to seem fulfilled.

And thus, I hope, I have cut off the head of this Goliah-Argument, which appeared to defe all that ever could be opposed unto it.

SECT. VI.

An Answer to the Objections proceeding up on the more immediate Principles of Reason.

The first Objection, God must be supposed to warn before He strike: Answered in severall particulars. The Rational intimations of a Judgment, what. Second Objection, That the disparaging of this Opinion of Prodigies weakens the Faith of a Divine Providence: Answered. the Opinion evinced rather to invalidate the Article. Third Objection, It appears not to what end they can minifter, but that of Prelages. The weakness of this Objection noted: the alleging of this end proved vain by assigning ends more valuable and excellent! viz. i. They may serve to awaken more gross and heavy minds into a sense of the Being, Providence, and Greatness of the God of Nature: the irregularities in Nature and the Uni-


§.6.  **Objections answered.**

Formities of Providence very serviceable to the sense of a God. 2. The petty alterations in Nature serve as types and assurances of the great and final alteration thereof. 3. The Soul of Man is supplied in them with objects it was made most apt and ready to contemplate. Men of all tempers have somewhat suitable in Nature to entertain them. 4. They discover the evil effect of Sin even upon the frame of Nature. The cause of the vanity noted in the creation not understood by the Heathens. 5. They lead to an understanding of several mysteries in Nature. Prodigies, the occasions of Philosophy, and the assistants. 6. To a right notion also of the Laws of Nature. 7. The prodigies in Nature foil and set off the more beautiful and regular productions thereof. Fourth Objection, The Monstrosities in Nature can be intituled but to the immediate Power of God; and if so, only that they may be signs and tokens to the World. Answered: by conception of the necessity of a general assistance of the Divine Power to Nature; with the reason thereof. This proved not to take away a native power and sufficiency in second causes. Infinities, first principles of motion in animals, and the plastic power, hard to explain. Plotinus. The power of Nature disturbed, the cause of irregular effects: the great vanity of giving more serious regards to the Monstrosities then the uniformities of Nature, noted. Aristotle commended; his opinion in reference to Providence noted from Maimonides.

The next Objections which expect our Answer, proceed upon the more immediate principles of reason: whereof the first is this;

*It seems greatly to jutile the notions of goodness and justice in God, to believe he warns not before he strikes: now what warnings more proper and proportioned to their end, then Prodigies, which speak to the senses, and so are most likely to make the dullest multitude start and reflect?* There are
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Objections answered: §6.

are some ἐποιήσας ἡμῖν διώκοντος τιμῶν τε χριστιανῶν: times of visitation and vengeance, times wherein the cup of vengeance in the hand of God is become brim-full, and ready to run over, when his repentings are come to an end, when his three Worthies, Noah, Daniel and Job, should not prevail for the pardon or reprieve of a condemned Nation. Now then surely it is but reasonable to presume that infinite Goodness hath so provided that there should be some signs of such times, that the repentance of good men might, at least, break the fall of that talent of Lead, which it cannot altogether prevent: surely an Earthquake would now be a seasonable Monitor, and (like a shaking before a burning fit) be a very significant fore-runner of some fury indignation shortly to break forth.

I answer, 1. Such warnings, if given, would not work so kindly upon the ill-natur'd World, as it is presumed: for some evil men would, like vermine, soon quit that house, that Nation, of whose sudden ruines they had such sure Presages; and others would fight against Heaven the more desperately, as expecting no quarter from it; few would express the good spirit of Josiah, who though he knew that evil was determined upon Jerusalem, yet reformed he with all his might. We see that God often warns men by his lighter afflictions: The language of his lesser judgments

Luk. 19.41. Jer. 50.27.

Amat benignitas Numinis seu quod merentur homines, seu quod tangitur eorum affecti

one, huj quoq rationibus [prodigis] prodere qua impendent.

Ammian. Marcel. 1.21.

Solut.

King. 22. 17. c.23.
Never a worse thing come upon you. He usually escapes the infected house, before one stone be not left upon another, and makes the corrections of his Monitors of his approaching scorpions.

Now it is seldom these reach their intended ends, much less would a Prodigy. We have already the terrible threatenings contained in Scripture, the frequent disciplines of God's Rod, and (aliena pericula) the great examples of divine justice, in his Word, always presented to our fear and caution: and would they, which regard not the thunders of these, ever be much moved with the squibs of a few Prodigies? None greater expectants of Signs from Heaven then the Jews; but when God gave them and others fearful sights and great signs from Heaven, none so stupidly regardless and inobservant.

2. There are other kind of Prodigies, by which wise men may receive more certain notices of an approaching Evil in a State. As there is a natural Divination, whereby the Birds can preface an approaching Storm and tempest, (that which gave birth to the Opinion that they were Divorum interpretes;) so there is an artificial one, appropriate to every Art and Mystery almost. The Physician hath his Prognosticks of Death, the Natural Philosopher his Prefages of Winds and Seasons, the Mariner of Storms and
Calms; the Husbandman many of fruitfulness and plenty, elegantly described by the Poet: so also the prudent States-man hath his Prospective of many rational signs, by which he can spy a trouble and change in the State, as yet a great way off:

--- Ille etiam cacos instare tumultus. 
Sape monet, fraudesque & operta tumescre bella.

Such had that Politician, who, upon a view of the maners of the City where he came brake out, Ourbem venalem & cito peritus ram, si emptorem invenerit!

Now the Signs and Prodigies which thus fore-warn him, are such as these: 1. Monsters of Vices and Opinions generally obtaining in a State. When the old man is grown too big for the girdle of shame or fear, and the hand of publack Justice neglects to rub off that rust which is growing upon the Iron Age, it may quickly be expected that God should do his own work himself, assert his own righteousness, by throwing it into the fire of some terrible judgment, to refine and purifie it. So also, such monstrous Doctrines as these, grown bold and publick, are a Presage of some great distempers growing upon the common Body; That there are some inward and extraordinary Calls to an Office, which on an account of their truth and reality only to that spirit which feels them: That...
§6. Objections answered.

Only Christ in Person is the lawful and rightful Governor of the Earth: That Magistracy stands not with Christian liberty: That Nullus est Dominus Civilis dum est in peccato mortali: Where the Magistrate will not reform the Church, the People may: That to comply with such counsels as the present bent of Mind within, and Dispensation without, suggest and encourage, is to follow God. Every such Doctrine, as dull and wooden as it may seem, contains (like the Trojan horse) armed men in the belly thereof.

2. Extraordinary Eclipses of the Superior Luminaries, the Governors in Church and State, either as to the light of wisdom and counsel, or respect and reverence before the People. Before God's petty day of Judgment in a State, the Sun usually is turned into darkness, and the Moon into blood: there is great contempt thrown upon the Person or Government of the Ruler, by libels and seditious speeches, and his chief Ministers are required as sacrifices to appease some popular fury and discontent.

3. Earthquakes in divers places: I mean, a great many commotions and petty tumults among the Populacy: These argue high dissatisfactions. Such frequent breakings out in the Body Politick are indications of many noxious and dangerous humors therein, which, without the wise interpose of State Physicians,
Objections answered.

Physicians, presage ruine to the whole. These and more Signs (not proper for this place) are there, which are sufficient to the Mind that hath wisdom: as for Folly, it would not receive instruction, though one arose from the dead.

Secondly, It is further opposed, That the removal of this received Opinion of Prodigies and Signs, is the removing of a main Pillar, whereupon standeth the Faith of a Divine Providence, of a God concerned in, and observant of all the Affairs of the World, and evil Maners of Men: and that hereby we break off a great seal and assurance of the Divine Presence; That no Evils rise up out of the dust, but come to pass, &c. &c. Eph. 2. 23. by the counsel and foreknowledge of God determined to this particular object, and issue of time. And by consequence we hereby strengthen the hands of Atheists, and few pillows under the elbows of secure and sleepy wickedness.

I answer; Admit the common notion of Prodigies as God's Signs, serviceable to this end as it is pretended; yet, while devoid of truth, I may return the excellent words of Job upon the Objectors; Will you speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully, for him? will ye accept his person? Will you serve Truth in self with a hey will you break
break his commands to do him a courtesy: Perhaps, God would not have his Providence and Predestination stand in so clear a light, that our faith thereof might be found the more unto praise, while receiving it upon the credit of Reason and Scripture, without any such testimony of our sense. Nor would the Opinion of Prodigies prove so effectual an Amandicute against the poison of Atheism as it is supposed: for who greater Observers of them than Machiavel and Pomponatus, commonly reputed the Heads, one of the Political, and the other of the Philosophical Atheists? If an Atheist can believe that the World came by chance into all this beauty and elegant order, and the several spheres of Beings maintain so grateful and harmony in their motions, without some great Intelligence to give law and measure to them; He will more easily persuade himself, that things run by chance sometimes into discord, monstrosity, and deformity. Nay further, it is rather the way to make men Atheists, to tell them, these are Gods Signs of things which they see seldom or never come to pass, And therefore it is safer to quit this way of proof: for all Arguments brought in defence of a Truth men are willing to free their minds of, if they do not fully prove, do hugely weaken and disparage it. Like weak Physick, which if it drive not
forth the ill humor, doth by accident frustrate it, and make the Patient worse; and therefore it is no way safe to trust to great and important an Article of our Faith with so feeble and airy a proof as this is.

Thirdly, It is further objected, That all the common and more familiar methods of action appointed the Creatures, giving for excellent an account of themselves to a wise and considerate mind, it cannot readily be conceived to what end any of these Extraordinarys in Nature can minister, but to that of Divination of Events future.

Though this be a most inconsequent and presumptuous reasoning, [things must be for this end, for I know no other that they can serve,] yet, because where the mind of man reacheth not the true causes or proper ends of any thing, it is easily tempted to take up in such vain and cheap resolves, as a superstitious multitude or a guilty fear may tender to it: and because most men are such Gloriarimalia, as, like Proteus, to shift into any odd shape and form of opinion and conceit, to free themselves when held with the know of any difficult and perplex Phenomenon laid before them; I shall therefore propose those higher and more excellent ends of these irregular accidents, which may satisfy mens minds, and (as a real Diamond doth its counterfeit) most effectually detect and disparage
§8. Objections answered.

disparage that little and mean end which vulgar Opinion makes them serve unto, that of so unnecessary and often hurtful curiosity in the knowledge of times reserved solely in God's power and counsel.

First, then, They serve to awaken more gross and heavy minds into a sense of the Being, Providence, and Greatness of God.

Of his Being. One account why Atheists live in a constant neglect and inobservance of the God of Nature, is this, All things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation; the constant and even harmony which Nature makes, lulls men into a dull and sleepy inadvertency; whereas some harshness and discords now and then in the parts thereof (new and unwonted occurrences) are apt to awaken their dull and sleepy minds into a sense of some mighty Power, which runs through the World, and commands the Forces of Nature which way he pleaseth.

Since we lost the favor of God, we are greatly propense to lose the sense of Him: for if He observe a constant method in the Works of Creation, the God of Nature shall be lost and forgotten in the Power of Nature: if, as in the Works of Providence, He proceed by no ruled cases, never prescribe to himself, then He shall be eclipsed in Chance and Fortune: and therefore perhaps sometimes
times. He acts so accountably, and confor-
mantly to our Notions, in the Works of His
Providence, that men are forced to say, Ver-
rity there is a God which judges in the
Earth: and sometimes so irregularly in the
Works of Nature, that men are forced to
cry out, The Finger of God! Were the
Works in Nature always laid out by the line
of an even, and every way immutable Law,
and Order, men would be apt to think
(though they could not make sense of that
thought) that all was done by Nature, and
a kind of absolute necessity and fatality of
Causes: and should: Monsters, Comets,
Earthquakes, &c. turn quotidian, men
would be tempted to conclude the World
a great Lottery, and all Effects owing only
to the blind and casual concourse of Second
Causes: Whereas a wise intermixture of
some irregularities puts men upon reflection,
and gives them to understand, that Nature's
ill-shaped letters at one time, are an affir-
rance that she could not write so fairly and
evenly as generally, had she not some Great
Master to guide her hand, and bind in the
powers of some Causes apt to exorbitate:
and fly out.

2. Of his Providence. Should not Ri-
ers sometimes stand, and Springs fail, men
would not be so fully assured that it is God
who sends the Springs into the Valleys, that
Objections answered.

it is Humbly proposed, the Hills. Should there not happen some terrible Volcano's, and fiery eruptions, we should not awaken into a sense of that mighty Power, which keeps all that natural tinder in the bowels of the Earth from catching fire before its appointed time. Did there not new Springs break forth sometimes from the usually driest breasts of our common Mother [Deserts and Wildernesses] we could not, with the Psalmist, adore the Power of God discovered in Psal. 107. 35.

ing the Wilderness into a standing water, and dry grounds into water-springs. Besides, the exorbitances of Natural Causes at times, and their running like unruly Horses out of their way (those lines which common Nature hath prescribed them) resolve us, that their general stillness and order is owing to Him who rides upon the Heavens, whose Psal. 68. 4. Wisdom and Power moderates all their blind and impetuous forces: A truth which the Ancients couched'd in their Fable of the Giant Typhon (which signifies swelling one); bidding baste all their most ancient Deity Pan, or Nature, but bound up and restrained by him in Nets, as it were of Adamantine.

3. Of his admirable Greatness. The Holy Ghost, when designing to awaken the minds of men to a quick sense of the Majesty and Greatness of God, calls them to an
an attendance to those Works in Nature, which we distinguish, by the peculiar name and title of Prodigies, from the rest: As the withholding of the Waters till they dry up, and sending them out to overturn the Earth; Job 12.15. the making of a way for the Thunder, stiled the Voice of his Excellency, chap. 37.4. the directing of the Lightning to the ends of the Earth, the sealing up the Lights of Heaven, the causing of the Winds to blow, that the Waters flow; [sometimes without measure, in Inundations; sometimes without method, as in irregular Tides.] The Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapor, are stiled Creatures that fulfil [not so much the Law of Nature, as] the Word of God, Pla. 148.8. Though the οἶνεῖοι φιλοσοφίας (as Strabo phraseth it) the Domesticks of Philosophy, and the Intimates of Nature, discover more clearly the Greatness and Majesty of God in some Natural Agents which work with less pomp and noise; yet others of a more heavy sense would never send their thoughts beyond this Engine of the World to the wise Contriver thereof, never reflect upon the Power and Art displayed therein, did not these Extraordinarys in Nature force them sometimes out of their heedless and drowsy temper: as the Alarm in the Watch will awaken those men to a reflection upon the Art of its Contriver.
§ 6. Objections answered.

trier, which sleep by its more silent and even pulses and motions, which yet are instances of greater art and skill. Upon the occurrence of any matters strange and extraordinary, Nature hath taught us to cast up our eyes and hands to Heaven, in a kind of tacit acknowledgment that matters rare and wonderful ow themselves to Him who is \( \text{Σωματικός} \), the great Wonder-worker, who is accordingly to be acknowledged in them all. And therefore though we fear not a Comet or an Earthquake, yet may we thence take occasion to quicken our selves to a reverence and fear of that Greatness which did appoint them. The true spirit of Religion will not receive \( \text{Metum}, \) a fear of distrust, though \( \text{the Earth remove, and the Mountains be carried into the midst of the Sea} \); but yet readily entertains \( \text{Timorem,} \) a fear of reverence, when it perceives the Earth to be but shaken by an Earthquake, or the Mountains to break forth into a flame.

Secondly, Some of these petty alterations in Nature serve as a kind of Types, Essays, Assurances of that greater and more universal Alteration thereof, at the Consummation of the World. That we might not distrust a Resurrection, God hath vouchsafed us (as \( \text{Theodoret notes} \)) \( \text{πολλα της αναστησις μενα,} \) \( \text{μητα και κηρυ} \) \( \text{μητα,} \) many pretty imitati-
one and natural Sermons thereof; as the rising again of decayed Plants from their roots in the Spring, the return of Herbs and Trees from their dying seeds into life again. Thus the frightful eruptions of fire from the Earth, wonderful Eclipses of the Lights of Heaven, the strange fires sometimes discovered in the Air, the mighty tremblings of the Earth, may serve (like Jeremiah portray'd by the Prophet upon a Tile) as little Maps and imitations of that more dreadful confusion which shall cover the whole face of Nature at the last day; and as a kind of preludia to that time when the Sun shall be clothed with darkness, the Heavens shall be on fire, the Elements melt with fervent heat, and the Earth, with all the works therein, shall be burnt up.

Cæcilias the Heathen (as others of his Cloth used to do) derided the Christian Doctrine of a final Dissolution of the Works of Nature at the last day, with his quasi Natura divinis legisbus constitutus ordo æternissimorum; as if ever the perpetual Order of Nature, which hath received its seal and sanction from the Counsels of Heaven, can ever be ruffled and disturbed: Now these strange Alterations in Nature are but Prefaces to much stranger; and the breakings forth of mighty fires out of the Earth sometimes, give assurance that (like Brink)
§ 6. Objections answered.

It carries its own force about it, such fay materials as will quickly reduce it to a condition beneath its first Chaos, in that day of vengeance wherein God will destroy the murderers and abusers of his servants, and burn up their polluted City.

Thirdly, God in them supplies the Soul with such Objects as he made it most apt to contemplate and admire. In a Work of Art (as Longinus observes) Man admires the curiosity and accurateness; in a Work of Nature, the vastness and magnificence thereof: because in the former he looks for but a 

περίσσειον ἀπόθεμα, somewhat like Man (the measure and subject of Art;) but in the latter somewhat worthy of God: and further, that if anything occur which is τῶν ὀποίων, Id. Sect. 31. μέγα, as in the οὐσίας τῶν πολυποτρόπων, strange, vast, and (in compare with our selves) big with a kind of Divinity, ὄμοιος τῶν ὄξι-κων. for, as it carried with a kind of native instinct, we readily consider and attend unto it: And he instanceth accordingly in the Eclipses of Heaven, the vast Ocean, the Vulcano's of Aetna; as objects which usually command the mind to wonder and ecstacy. [The Soul hereby gives silent testimony to itself, that it was made to contemplate & admire that God, with whom all the first Exemplars of Greatness, Power, Glory, Beauty, dwell together, or whatsoever there
there is in the Works of Art or Nature in which there appear any rude touches and shadows of wonderful and admirable.]

Now then, as there are in Nature (the Art of God) those admirable curiosities appearing in the elegant fabric of the Creatures, the mysterious anatomy of parts, and those more subtil and cryptick ways which Nature walks in toward her designed ends, which affect not the duller and more heedless part of the World, but supply the Sons of Art with fresh and repeated Wonders, so in these prodigious instances, the ruder sort of men (which carry their Souls in their eyes) find somewhat to ingage them to contemplate and admire. These Works go off from the common figures and measures of Nature, are great and vehement, and therefore proper objects to call forth the Soul into contemplation and admiration, which, whilst it stands thus at gaze, doth tacitly and interpretatively venerate that God, who in all these strange Events appears wonderful in counsel, and mighty in working.

Fourthly, Many of these Errata in the Book of the Creature lead us to an understanding of the evil of Sin, which hath made the Creatures thus subject to vanity and miscarriage. Theophrastus hath noted, that in the matter whereof natural things consist, there is...
much of it which is disobedient and unwieldy, too stiff and stubborn to be turned to the seal of Nature, to receive those signatures and impresses, which are best, and primarily intended to be stamp'd upon it: A defect which escaped not the notices of many contemplative Heathens, who could not resolve themselves of the proper cause thereof. [Divine malédiction laid upon the Creatures for the sin of Man.]

Fifthly, They lead us into a more distinct knowledge of the Works of Nature: Nature is the best Interpreter of itself; now (like tortur'd men) she then discovers her secrets, either when vex'd by Art in lesser Bodies, or disturb'd by Accident in greater. Comets, new Stars, monstrous Eclipses, Earthquakes, Meteors, Thunders, prov'd the first happy occasions of Philosophy (calling men to wonder and consider) and the great Assistants to it, all serving the knowledge of one mystery in Nature or other. And it is not without remark, that when God had sent Man into this World, ὡς εἰς πίνακα μεγάλων πανηγυρεῖν (as Longinus phraseth it) as into a great Theater, to contemplate the elegant varieties of his Works, and to combat the most difficult and daring mysteries in Nature, ἀµφοῖν ἵππους ἐνέφυσεν πεῖστὶ δυνάμεις παντὸς ἀεὶ τῷ μεγάλῳ, ὥστε ἡ εὐθυμία τῆς ζωῆς οὐδὲν ἔχει θυμόνα. He hath seat-ed in our Souls an invincible affection for an intima-r
Objections answered.

intimate and acquaintance with any object great, and sealed with some special characters of Divinity; whence the Soul is at once excited, refreshed, directed and assisted in the study of Nature. These Extraordinaries therein are the Objects it is most naturally biaff'd to a notice of; and which most assist the true interpretation of Nature; they first set our inquiries on work, and then reward them.

The Knowledge of Nature is greatly ab-solved by our understanding what is done therein, and how it is done, (the amplitude of Effects, and the truth of Causes;) the former Knowledge we advance to especially by an attendance to Nature in its constant and more easy freedom of Operation: but the latter we fairly arrive at by a regard to Prodigies Artificial, Nature as demeaning it self under the constraints of Art; and to Prodigies Natural, Nature's voluntary errors and steppings out of her more common road of Operation. We see in these some rude and unfinish'd pieces in Nature, the Essays of some excellent work, which therefore serve (like a Ship half built) to discover her silent processes and more cryptick methods in the building up and compleating of her Works. The Errors in Nature often repres-hend the Errors in Philosophy growing from a lazy and scanty contemplation thereof.
§ 8. Objections answered.  

The Soul is easily abused with Idols in Science, when it shapes out its Notions by Images in its own Fancy, or when it takes up (as it is prone to do) in some scanty Maxims proceeding upon an easy attendance to Nature, as tended to view solely in her more quiet and familiar postures.

And therefore if we had a more faithful History of the Animals in Nature (the want whereof is owing not a little to the superstition of men, which stains all it toucheth) we might be soon able to see beyond the surface of those things, which as yet seem placed in the World but to confound and pose us. But the evil is, that as the History of Times is usually drawn up, so as it may minister not to Truth but Faction; the History of Nature, so as to gratifie either Interest or Curiosity: So the History of P坦urnal Occurrences, as it may serve Wonder or Superstition; not in so judicious and faithful a Relation of the critical circumstances of Accidents, as to make a square Basis whereupon to erect the steady Principles of Philosophy.

Sixthly, Such insolencies in Nature give us to understand, that the most common rules of Natural Operation are not without exception, nor her most known Laws simply immutable. God is able to overthrow Nature by itself, by appointing one Natural Cause
Objections answered. §. 62

to disturb and countermand the weaker efforts of another: He can cause that ρηκήσις γενέως (in St. James's phrase) wheel of Nature to fire and destroy itself, by delivering it to the violent and disorderly motion of its several parts. All the Creatures are at God's steps, all their Orders and Motions, but the temporary Laws which his infinite Wisdom appointed them unto. Accordingly S. Austin, speaking of the forementioned prodigious Phasis of the Planet Venus, tells us, God would have men thence learn, Deo non debere praescribere, that they ought not to prescribe to God; and that He is able, Naturam in longe aliud quam nobis cognitum est vertere & mutare, to command Nature into a quite different order and posture from what our shorter thoughts can reach unto; and that Voluntas Conditoris condita rei cuiusque naturae est, that the nature of every thing is but the present will of its Maker. As all arbitrary and contingent Agents and Events have a kind of certainty, considered with respect to the knowledge of God; so all Agents (as to us) necessary, are mutable and arbitrary, considered with reference to the power and pleasure of God. All the Creatures are but so many earthen vessels, bearing upon them the arbitrary figures and impressions of their mighty Former.

Seventhly,
§ 6. Objections answered.

Seventhly, It is usually added, That all these exorbitances in Nature serve to foil and set off the general beauty and elegancy of its Works. All that ὑλὴ νεαμθεῖσα ἐδεί (in the language of Plotinus) matter not fully subdued and laid hold upon by form, doth but enhance the value of all those elegant proportions elsewhere discovered in the Creation. Every thing of name and value in the World [Prosperity, Health, Wisdom, Light, Beauty] hath its contrary set over against it, to recommend the more obliging and comely issues of Divine Providence to our notices and affections.

These great ends (and greater no doubt are some of those which lie hidden in the recesses of the Divine Mind) offering so fair and easie an account of these irregular Accidents (if at least we may so term Events falling out by as necessary, though less known and common a rule and law of Nature, as its daily labors) to receive them, and that without any Interpreter to explain their language, as a kind of Divine Messengers to bring us news from Heaven, and (as the Angel to Daniel) to make us understand what shall befall our people hereafter, is to weary our selves to catch a shadow, and, like Adonis, to fall in love onely with the reflections of our own face, fancy and abused imagination, and to be vain with-
Object's answer.

There is but one Objection more that I know of, which appears to merit a place under this head of rational considerations: It is this: All the Errors in Nature can give no rational account of themselves but by supposing the more then ordinary Power and Presence of God with them. Nature is a blind and fatal Agent, it hath neither design nor power of itself, turns not to the right hand or to the left, but as it is passive to the arbitrary impressions of an Almighty conduct. If then Θεός ὁ μεγάς, the immediate Presence of God to Nature must be called in to salve these irregular appearances therein, what more pretending Reason can be alleged of any such temporary Suspensions of the common Laws and Rules of Nature, then the Divine Purpose to draw some sad Scheams of an approaching judgment in the frightful disguizes and monstrously of things sensible, and to give notice that God is intent upon some strange work, that He seems to neglect the conduct of Nature, and to abandon it to its own blind and unruly powers.

To this I answer; I am not so afraid of Superstition as to take shelter from it in Atheism, an utter denial of the Power and Presence of God with Agents Natural; To cure a superstitious fear by a profane neglect of
of God, is to burn an Idol with fire taken from the Altar. All the powers of Second Causes are derived from, moderated, and, when ready to faint and languish, restored by the Great Fountain of Power and Being. Our common Mother, Earth, would not, after so many labors, appear fruitful and beautiful as in her greener years, did not God continually renew the face of the Earth, reinforce its feeble and exhausted Powers. Scripture (as if Nature were nothing but the more regular, visible, and Mechanical Explanations of his Power and Wisdom) intitles his Agency to all the Ordinaries and Extraordinaries therein: It attributes the Thunder, not to the contest and jumble of contraries in a cloud, but to the God of Glory, and not the dew of Heaven, but the special blessing thereof, is said to make the grass to grow for the Cattle. There are three terms of familiar occurrence in the Ethnicks, Writers, of which (in the sense they use them) we have not the least air in Sacred Writ; viz. Virtue in their Ethnicks, Fortune in their Politicks, and Nature in their Physicks; the excellent endowments of the mind being stiled Graces therein, and attributed to the Divine Spirit, good and evil Events to the Divine Providence; and Physical Productions to the Divine Power, This great Machine of the World, like a
Watch, though it contain very strong and powerful Springs of action within it self, and such Wheels, Causes Natural, whose elaborate figures and contrivance speaks them to the first view, designed and fitted for some uniform and equal motions; yet these blind and decaying Powers must be managed and perpetually wound up by an Hand of Power and Counsel, or they will either stand still, or perform their motions without time and method. It is an assured Truth, That πάν ἐνόθησιν [ὁ Θεὸς] ἐμπέλεος, ἥ τοὺς φιλοχείων τῷ δισαφανίαν ἐσ ταξιν ἐπετειν ἐπερωτής, ἵνα δὴ ὁ λόγῳ δ' ἡμῶν τῶν ἀρμονίας ἡμεῖς νιναί. God hath very musically contrived the Universe, and so ordered and disposed the discordant sounds of the Elements, that the whole World is become a very lovely harmony. But yet this harmony would not last long, did not the Chief Musician strike time and measure, moderate and direct those parts, which are apt to be too quick and loud, to move so impetuously and unreasonably as to disturb the harmony of the whole.

Now this general presence and assistance, whereby God appears to acknowledge and succor his own Productions, stands very well with a sufficiency (in its kind) in all natural Agents to exert those operations, to pursue those ends, to hold such place in the Universe, to maintain such regular figures and colors,
Objections answered.

colors; as given their Νόμοι, γένεσις, Law originally sealed upon their several Species and Orders appointed them unto. There is a great deal of imbodyed Art in Nature, and innate skill in Second Causes, to work after the pattern of those primitive impresses made upon the several ranks of Being. O λόγος ἐν υλή, ποιεῖ, κύ το ποιεῖν φυσικὸς ἀνάγκης, ἀλλὰ ἡμῶν ἡ σπείρα ὁλός, ἑνετέλους αἵῳ ὁδὸν μόνον διὸν τύπον κύ σύνειται ἐν οὐδείς, faith Plotinus: For the seminal Reason operates in the matter, and that which works thus naturally is neither Understanding nor Sense, but only a fatal power to transform the Matter, not knowing what it self doth, but making only a print or form as in water. That general constancy and uniformity of Agents Natural in their Productions and Operations, and that Power which Art hath, by application of some more potent, to bind and countermand the weaker efforts of some more feeble and passive causes, proclaim some native and methodick powers and springs of motion in things, though (like the wheels of a Watch) these Principles do exert themselves according as some contingent and varying circumstances and occasions may determine. And therefore in Scripture we find the Power of God intitled to that effect in one place, which seems wholly resolved.

Jo. 4.8. 
Psa. 147.1
Deut. 8.3.
Psa. 104.1
Mark 4.2
resolved into the force of Nature in another. If there were not some intrinsic fitness and capacity in Second Causes for the production of the Effects we see them delivered of, God's blessings would seem to be derived upon us but by disguised Miracles, and by idle and needless circuits, while conveyed to us in such multifarious subordinations of them; God first hearing the Heavens, and then they the Earth, and the Earth the Corn, and the Wine, and they, through many intermediate preparations and digestions, the cravings of indigent Nature. Besides, the skill of the Great Artificer would be rendred to reproach, if after all those Criticisms of Subtil Art, observable in the several parts of this Great Engine, the World, they should be thought so unwieldy and ill-contrived, as to be sufficient for no motion without the extraordinary presence of some Intelligence to excite and manage them.

What it is which instructs the Stone to move to the great Center of heavy Bodies, and in the directest way it can; what Natural Instinct is (a thing which Art could never imitate) whereby brute Creatures, before the discipline of Experience, are instructed to serve the ends, pleasures, necessities of their lower life, and to observe the customs and usages of their several Orders; what the native Archaus is, and whence emp.
§ 6: Objections answered.

able to beat out the matter into such uniform and elegant figures, even blindfold, are tedious, perhaps desperate inquiries, things which though a wise man think to know, yet shall be not be able readily to find. It may suffice to our purpose to say, that there are powers and measures of Operation originally impressed upon the distinct Orders of things, which exert themselves according as the capacity of matter, and other mutable occasions may determine and allow: and that therefore it may be as suitable to General Nature, that upon the interpose of such impediments, the motions of Causes be eccentric, and Productions monstrous, as that a Stone, glancing against a wall in its descent, should forsake its more natural and direct, and take to an oblique and slanting motion; or that a Seal should make rude and imperfect images when it meets with clay too little or too churlish to answer its just proportions. Nor, because we distinctly apprehend not what those potent and methodick Principles of Operation in Second Causes are immediately to be resolved into, nor how the Plastick Power in Plants and Animals is enabled without the discipline of Art to direct itself with so general a constancy to such comely and equal figures and motions, are these to be denied; any more then the natural Principle of all those swift and
Objections answered: § 63

and subtil motions in the fingers of the Lut.
ranist, because they give a Philosopher so
many perplex'd and troublesome Speculati-
ons. The sum of all is this; As there is a
very necessary connexion between the spirit
of a Man, and the inspiration of the Almigh-
ty, in Wisdom; between the planting of
Paul, and the increase of God, in the Church;
between the waking of the Watchman, and
God's keeping of the City, in the State; be-
tween the diligent hand, and God's blessing,
in our Callings; between the Sword of the
Lord, and of Gideon, in War: So between:
the Spirit of Nature, and of God, in the Cre-
atation; (and therefore the Poet, as men of
his Profession anciently were, was at once;
Divine and Philosopher, when attributing
the equal Motions and Powers in this Great
Body to a Spiritus intus ales:) nor are ei-
ther to be denied, because the assistances of
the one, and the native powers of the other,
are in their natures and connexion so subtil
and mysterious. Now, as any default in those
moral Causes may occasion ignorance in the
Mind, non-proficiency in the Church, sur-
prizal in the City, poverty in the Family;
defeat in the Battel; so the weakness or in-
terruption of physical may be as soon re-
ported by a Prodigy in Nature.

To all that hath been said (that I may
shame this Argument as well as answer it) I
further
Objections answered.

further add; That it cannot but seem to a due valuation of things a strange vanity in those we contend against, that they seem so to sequester and ingross the sacred regards of men, and the Providence of God, to all anomalous Productions in Nature, as to leave very little to conduct and honor its more comely and regular issues; which yet make the most quick and vigorous report thereof; as those Tables which shew the elegantest features, and most natural imitations, do far more inha:nce the art and reputation of the Limner, then the more monstrous and neglected labors of his Pencil. What cheap thoughts the great Philosopher had for this humor in men, appears sufficiently from what Maimonides hath recorded as the sum of his Perswasion in reference to Divine Providence: Quicquid videt in corporibus caelestibus esse ordinariam, consuetum, frequentem, immutabile & incorruptibile & quicquid item in rebus naturae ordinariae fieri, neque nisi raro & extra ordinariae mutari aut cessare, in illis omnibus Providentiam Divinam agnoscit. Quicquid autem videt, non semper, neque ordinariae fieri in individuis species, tum vegetabilium, tum animalium, eorumque iterum vel rationalium vel irrationalium, de eo dicit quod per accidentem fiat & sine Providentia Divina, quin imo opinatur Providentiam in

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istiusmodi rebus esse impossibilem. The force of which words is this; That whatsoever, in the whole compass of heavenly or sublunary Beings, was common, ordinary, immutable, a Divine Providence was to be acknowledged in: but in all irregular and exorbitant issues, it was impossible to conceive a Providence concerned, but that they were wholly to be attributed to Chance and Fortune. Which Opinion (if it were Aristotle’s) contains a far more judicious Error, than that which teacheth men to start and stare onely at the Monstrosities and Singularities of Nature, as the famous Instances of Divine Providence, and that upon pain and peril of a brand of Atheism, if they value their Understandings so far as first to ask a solid Reason why.
Having thus driven this Opinion from all its little Holds, it remains now that we beat it from its Fort-Royal [the Authority of sacred Scripture, which seems to speak favor for it.] Now the first place of Scripture I take notice of, preset to the service thereof, is that speech of our Savior, 

Mat. 16. 3.

Ye Hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the Sky; and can ye not discern the Signs of the Times?

In which words our Savior intimates, that
as God in the Works of Nature hath consulted the conveniencies of common life, by appointing some certain Signs of the Seasons ensuing; so hath he also in his Providence assisted the happiness and advantage of our Civil and Spiritual life, by ordaining some Signs of the Times, whence we may be able to make a Crisis of the issue of things: and that it is a great instance of folly in men, that they are such able Interpreters of the various lines in the face of Heaven, but very uncapable, and stupidly inobservant of those rational signs and intimations of the state and condition of the present or future times of the Church. Now then what Signs of Times can more plausibly and rationally be assigned then Prodigies, which the heaviest men can observe, and the wisest cannot readily define to what end some of them (Comets especially and new Stars) can serve, unless to point out to the World a difference of Times.

I answer; Scripture (like over-presst Grapes) gives a very ungrateful taft and sense, when press beyond its easie and native intent and purpose: that so the present Text is, will appear, if these four particulars be duly attended unto;

First, The great disparity of Signs: The Signs whereof the Text is understood, were Signs of a Moral nature, such as were the
§.7. Objections answered.

Lapsing of that People to the grossest ignorance and most general profaneness, the general expectation of the Messiah about that time raised up in the minds of men, Luk. 19.11. the gradual lessening of the lustre and glory of the Jewish Polity and Pedagogy, by the ceasing of Prophecy, the absence of the Heavenly Fire, the Ark of the Covenant, the Cherubims, the Shechinah, the Oracles by Urim and Thummim, from the second Temple; the lapsing of the Government from Kings to Dukes, from Dukes to the Sanhedrim, from them to the Romans; there having been no Kings types of Christ after David and Solomon (except Hezekiah be admitted a candidate for that honor.) This vanishing splendor of the face of Moses (that Oeconomy whereof he was the Minister) was a sign that the Sun of Righteousness was now arising, under whom a state of more spiritual and inward Glory was shortly to obtain. Besides, they were Signs long before spoken of, and of sacred and scriptural institution, such as were the departing (in a good degree at least) of the Scepter from Judah, the near expiring of Daniel's Weeks, the coming of John the Baptist in the spirit of Elias, To which I add, they were Signs miraculous, mighty Wonders (every way equal to those upon which the credit of the Mosaical Dispensation...
Objections answered. § 7.

Joh. 10. 25.
Mat. 11. 5.

tion was built) which attended the Person and Doctrine of our Savior, raising of the dead, cleansing the lepers, the healing the naturally deaf and blind; to which, as his visible witnesses, he sometimes made his appeal, and directs the serious notices of his Hearers.

Whereas the Signs of Times I contend against, are neither of any Moral nature, (speaking not to the Reason, but the Fancy of men,) neither were they ever foretold, (God doth not now appear so far to value the World, as to promise the Presages of a Prodigy to usher any change in the Affairs thereof,) nor are they Miraculous, the power of Nature, in such a coincidence of Causes, being able to reach the production of any of these prodigious Signs.

2. The disparity of things signified. All the fore-mentioned signs were tokens for good, but as the blushings of the Evening before the dawning of that happy day, wherein a state big and good enough for the title of the Kingdom of Heaven was to take place. Besides, they were matters of no narrow and private reference (the fall of some great Person, or the commencing of some petty War) but of a catholick concern, such wherein the felicities of Jew and Gentile were bound up, matters big enough for the solemnity of a sign to preface and bring on.
The things signified were also matters of huge importance; as, That Jesus was the promised Messiah; that all the shadows and Rites of the Law were to expire and conclude (like the Phoenix in a nest of Spices) in the Graces, Truths and Glories of the Gospel-State; that the wall of partition was now to be taken away, and all Nations to own themselves Brethren under one common Father. These things all men were concerned to know and believe; and therefore God taught them by great Signs, as well as excellent Preachers. Whereas Prodigies are supposed the signs onely of wrath and judgments, which yet often surprize men (not unfitly therefore stiled Gods arrows, which give a fatal, but withal a sudden and a silent wound,) and besides are presumed to come forth to serve some worldly and little ends, interests, and Opinions, which men easily perswade themselves Heaven hath espoused with as much passion as themselves.

3. The disparity between the Times spoken of in that Text and our own: The Times there intended were Times rather present then future; Times wherein the Mosaical Oeconomy, brought on with mighty signs and wonders, was to determine; Times wherein the Church was to be put under an immutable form of Administration (stiled therefore the last Times in Scripture. Now,
necessary it was that some remarkable Signs of those Times should be given forth in Scripture, that so the Age wherein that mighty change should fall might the better acquiesce therein, and rest assured from the sacred Characters of the Time, that they did not antedate the promised Gospel-jubilee: and succeeding generations might have the more secure a faith of the exhibition of the true Messiah, because observing all the Signs of the Times to which he was promised, exactly conspiring in those wherein he was exhibited. Whereas all the changes, which chequer and vary the Times of the World now, are of no name and reckoning, in compare with this famous Period: And besides, are of frequent occurrence; for the World is so acquainted with Civil changes, that I should expect a Prodigy rather to give notice of some days of settled Tranquillity, to which the World is the greatest stranger: But the Times the Text speaks of are such as never shall return again.

4. The disparity between the Persons to whom those words were spoken, and our selves. The Jews were a people so used to Signs, that the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor.1.22. The Jews require a Sign: And it was the vulgar Opinion amongst them, that as all extraordinary Prophets were to seal their Commission with a Miracle, so all Events
extraordinary were to be foreshewn by a Sign. Hence the Jews come to our Savior with that confident demand, What Sign shewest thou unto us; seeing that thou dost all these things? John 2:18. And the Disciples (upon the credit of this common conceit) no sooner hear our Savior foretell strange Events in reference to Jerusalem and the Temple, but they presently ask him, What shall be the Sign when all these things shall come to pass? God perhaps gave them Signs, to assure them that the Evils which befell them arose not out of the dust, but came upon them from the fore-appointing Counsels of God, whose favor they had ingrossed; and to awaken their dull and worldly minds to a lively sense of his Justice and Providence. But now, in the broad daylight of the Gospel, it is expected that we should not need awakening by any such Monitors into a sense and awe of the Divine Majesty. We must now believe without a Miracle, possess our selves in peace without a Sign, and derive our Repentance not from mighty Earthquakes and Prodigies, but from an ingenuous and understanding sense of Sin. To all this we may superadd, that (admitting S. Luke to expound S. Matthew) our Savior's speech plainly appears to have had no reference at all to Times in general, but to that famous Season of Time then current.
rent: *Luk. 12. 56.* Ye can discern the face of the Sky, but how is it that ye discern not τὸν καιρὸν, this eminent season? as the words import. I suppose now that the light of what hath been said upon this Text of Scripture, is sufficient to chase away all shadow of argument from it, to abet any such Signs of Times as our Adversaries plead it in favor of.

And what though (as the Objection further urgeth) we should be forc'd to return a non liquet in reference to the true ends of Comets and new Stars, or any other Prodigies, sometimes discovered to the World: must we therefore conclude them but a sort of more glorious impertinencies in Nature, unless they serve our curiosity, by being made Signs of Times? Is it such news to hear so short a Creature as Man is, past his depth? We find the Almighty posing of *Job,* almost through every Science; In Geometry; *Knowest thou the ballancings of the clouds? whereupon are the foundations of the Earth fastned? or who hath laid the corner-stone thereof?* In Natural Philosophy; *Hast thou entred into the Springs of the Sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the deep? Hast thou entred into the treasures of the Snow?* In Opticks; *Where is the way where Light dwelleth, and as for Darkness, where is the place thereof? By what way is the Light parted,*
§ 7. Objections answered.

parted, which scattereth the East-wind upon the Earth? In Astronomy; Canſt thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his sea-
son, or canſt thou guide Arcturus with his Sons? Knoweſt thou the Ordinances of Hea-
ven, canſt thou set the dominion there-
of in the Earth? In Arithmetick; Who can number the Clouds in wisdom? In Na-
tural History; Knoweſt thou the time when the wild Goats of the Rock bring forth? or canſt thou mark when the Hinds do calve? God will have some things in Nature un-
searchable, as to hide pride from man, so to discover himself to him: for it must needs be presumed that all these Mysteries came forth from, and are comprehended by some First Mind and Mighty Wisdom.

We are urged next with the words of the Prophet Joel, Chap. 2. 30, 31.

I will ſhow Wonders in the Heavens, and in the Earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke:

The Sun ſhall be turned into darkness, and the Moon into blood, before the great and terrible Day of the Lord come.

The Day of the Lord is near, the Sun and the Moon ſhall be darkened, and the Stars ſhall withdraw their ſhining: From which words those Acts 2. 19, 20. are borrowed.

To which may be added, because of a likeness
Objections answered. § 7.


And there shall be Signs in the Sun and in the Moon, upon Earth distress of Nations; with perplexity, the Sea and the Waves roaring,

Mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the Earth, for the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken.

In which former Scripture, by the Day of the Lord we must understand some special day of vengeance, it being usual in sacred Writ (as some of the Hebrew Doctors observe) to intitle days eminent for any unusual expressions of divine favor or displeasure, *Days of the Lord* : whereas we find this day prefac’d and foretold by such prodigious Occurrences as easily resolve themselves into Causes Natural.

I answer, Learned Expositors generally understand those places not in any literal sense, but receive them all as so many Prophetical Schemes of speech (instances whereof are of most familiar occurrence in the Prophets) expressive of some wonderful Evils shortly to affect the World: as they do also, on the contrary, the Promises of a new Heaven and a new Earth, the increase of the light of the Sun and of the Moon, of planting of the Heavens, and laying the
§.7. Objections answered.

foundations of the Earth, Isai.51.16. but as so many figurative expressions of some white, and glad som days shortly to succeed, Isai. 65. 17, 18. Particularly the learned

Grotius is so secure of a figurative senfe of such places, that he tells us, they are never to be expounded in all Scripture to any other.

And Maimonides (one of the most learned and sober Doctors of the circumcised Na tion) upon occasion of such kind of Pro phetical Scheams of speech occurring in Isaiah; foretelling the ruine of the Babylo nish Kingdom, expresseth himself to my senfe in language which would be thought too peremptory and rude for my lips: No que quenquam puto ita ignorantem, cœcum, literaque parabolæram, & narrationum-his to ricram, vel Oratoriarum, additum esse, ut existimet, stellas, cœlam, lucem Solis & Luna, mutata esse, vel terram de centro suo motam, quando destructum fuit regnum Babel. Verum represen tat nobiis tota hac narratio statum & conditionem Hominis victi, cui lux omnis atra, dulce amarum, immi terrâ nimi; angusta, & cœlam ruinam minitari vi detur. The Translation whereof must, for brevity, be omitted. And indeed should we expound them literally, we should soon ho nor the falls of great men, or destruction of Cities, with greater or as great Wonders as attended the Crucifixion of our Savior. Be fides,
Objections answered. § 7.

fides, what Histories ever mention any such astonishing Alterations in the frame of Nature, as the literal sense of these places would introduce a faith of?

Now the Prophets chose thus to deliver themselves, for some or all of these Reasons;

1. Because it was the custom of the Eastern Nations to describe great and mighty storms and troubles in a State in such phrases as these, *The darkning of the Heavens, falling of the Stars, shaking of the Earth, flying away of the Mountains, &c.* So Maimonides assures us, in those words, *Apud Arabes, de eo, cui singulare aliquod infortunium accidit, dicitur, quod caelum ipsius in terram conversum sit, vel super terram ejus ceciderit.* And *Artemidorus* (whose interpretations of the various images and figures the Fancies of Men are seal'd with in Dreams, are usually measured and directed by the received Opinions, Customs, Phrases, Traditions, common Hieroglyphicks in those elder Times, the knowledge whereof is the biggest end, that Book of Vanity can minister unto) tells us, "Ἡλιός ἀμωμοῦς, ἦν ὡς φανερός, ἦν μεμερισμένος, ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἐκ τῶν ὄντων γίγνεται." *The Sun represented in a Dream as obscured, or somewhat bloody, or making through beat a kind of murmur, is an image which succeeds very unhappily to all men.*

And
§ 7. Objections answered.

And elsewhere, *Oυτος προσωποποιηθη έσται γλω του θεου* (Cap. 38, e-οι αιτησεις εισην αραις, ημι ανεπηγερμον. Πολ. 7d. l. η Αλβημνου Μαγδαν. Not the Stars represented as falling to the Earth, or vanishing away, good indications; but rather foretell the destruction of many men. And this, because the ancient Eastern Nations (from whose Books he professeth to have borrowed his pretended Rules to instruct the Interpretation of Dreams) used to express great Plagues and Calamities in the World by such kind of vehement and Parabolical Expressions.

2. Because these being the most remarkable and glorious Bodies in the World, terrible alterations in them seem the most proper representatives of mighty changes and alterations in Kingdoms.

3. Because the terrible judgments of God upon the Babylonians, Egyptians, Jews and obstinate Gentiles (set forth in such expressions) were but little images and schemes of the last and dreadful judgment; and therefore not unfitly character'd by such horrors in the several parts of the Creation, as shall really usher that last and great Day of which they were the Types.

4. Because these are expressions mighty and vehement, and so, very expressive of, and suitable unto, that hot and vigorous impression which the Spirit of Prophecy made upon
upon the minds and imaginations of those holy men which were acted by it.

5. Because that anxiety and perplexity of mind, which should attend the plagues coming on men, was to be as great almost, as if they saw the Eye of Heaven, the Sun, put out, and the Earth to tremble under them, and the whole Creation become but one great Prodigy.

Now, in this figurative sense, the words (it is thought) were accomplished in their first and original intention, when that great misery was brought upon the Earth by Na-buchodonosor; and they received a further degree of accomplishment (as S. Peter intimates Acts 2.19.) under the Romans, when the Land, which was but shaven before by God's hired Razors, had an utter baldness brought upon it (to use the expression of the Prophet) and it shall have its fulfilling in the utmost latitude of its sense at the Day of Judgment (of which some Interpreters sloy understand it.) Prophecies have their gradus & scalas complementi per diversas mundi atates, (as the Lord Bacon speaks;) the last day onely is that true πλήρωμα τῆς χρόνου, fulness of time, wherein they shall be compleatly fulfilled. God often draws similar and parallel lines of confusion over different Times and Places, whips many stubborn Children with the same Rod. As there are
are in Nature, *una eademque Natura vesti-* 

*prod. Verul. de gia aut signacula diversis materiis & subje-

*ctis impressa*, symbolizing impreses and 

seals stamp'd upon very different subjects; 

so, in Providence, similar Blessings and Judg-
ments upon very distant Times: and there-
fore Prophecies of the same Mercy or Judg-
ment may have their repeated accomplish-
ments.

There is one place of Scripture more 

which may seem to some to require, perhaps 
to refuse an Answer; *viz. that Luk. 21. 11.* where our Blessed Savior, foretelling that 
large line of confusion to be stretched out 
upon the Holy City, and whole Nation of 
the Jews, as a precedent sign thereof, tells 
his Disciples, *Great Earthquakes shall be in 
divers places, and Famines, and Pestilen-
ces, &c.* Now Earthquakes have been num-
bred with Prodigies Natural.

I answer, First, *When God hath once seal-
ed them by his sanction and institution, Pro-
digies natural may be regarded as the signs of 
Events arbitrary and supernatural. Gods + 

Bow (without a string) in the Heavens, is 
to us a Sign, that the World need never fear 
perishing by any such fatal Arrow as once 
was shot out of the Clouds, *An universal 
Deluge*, although it be owing to a natural 
and necessary cause; as being, by Gods in-
stitution, advanced to the dignity of a Sign.
of Grace and Favor. Thus when God had told the People, that, as an expression of his great displeasure against them for asking of a King, He would send Thunder and Rain (things in themselves natural, except it be said that the peculiar condition of that Season and Climate made them approach to a Miracle) it was a religious fear with which the People entertained their coming. God may appoint the crowing of a Cock (at such an instant of time) to be one of his Signs. So, when the Disciples had asked a Sign of their Lord, when all his Predictions concerning the Temple and Nation should come to pass, and he had mentioned amongst others great Earthquakes, they were then preferred a kind of Sacraments and Prophetick Symbols of the terrible shaking of the Jewish Worship and Polity now approaching. And indeed when the great wickedness and security of that generation had merited, that that fatal time should fall as a snare upon all them that then dwelt on the Earth, such Signs as seemed to have a natural cause (as Earthquakes, Faminies, Pestilences, and the Xiphias which hung over Jerusalem) appeared the most proper indications thereof, as which (because happening at that time, and in that order) might sufficiently warn and alarm the observant Christians, and lull faster asleep the more Atheistical and incredulous part of
§.7. Objections answered.

that Age; appearing to them but the more unusual Works of interrupted Nature. To conclude now, that because some Earthquakes of Gods appointing were once his Signs, therefore all are, is as inconsequent an inference as this; The Bread and Wine are Signs and Seals in the Sacrament, because stamp'd with a divine institution; therefore all Bread and Wine may challenge the same degree of reverence and regard from us.

Secondly, These Earthquakes had such characters upon them, as might sufficiently inclose and distinguish them from the common issues of disturbed Nature: As,

1. Their Greatness: The Text stiles them great Earthquakes. It is likely there appeared in them more then the bare force and impatience of some crude and imprisoned vapor. We read of an Earthquake in the days of Uzziah, so great and terrible, that it was preferred an * Epocha in the Jewish Histories. *Josephus reports that some fur- longs of the Mountains about Jerusatem were rent asunder, and Cities swallowed up by it. If *Aristotle stiled the Celta mad men, because an Earthquake would sooner make a Mountain tremble then them; certainly the title is too little for those which were not impressive to some fear of God, when they saw him let loose the powers and forces
of natural Agents upon them, perhaps in some such dreadful manner.

2. Their Multitude: [there were Earthquakes in divers places.] Nature ran often against her bias in the same instances, that so the effect might not be intituled to the rub of some casual impediment, but to the hand of Heaven over-ruling and directing it. And should I here grant (which I see no reason to do) that many and great Earthquakes, in a Continent especially, are a sign of some approaching Evil, our Adversaries could advance little upon the concession, both because the example will, I believe, be found an Heteroclite, and to stand alone in the History of Nature; as also because I conceive they would not adventure to compare a Monster or fiery Meteor with the terrors of so many Earthquakes (generally singled out in Scripture, as the Monitors of the Divine Power and Majesty.)

3. Their dismal Attendants: The Creatures would not nourish such Rebels against Heaven as were then upon Earth; there were Famines; the Air refused to cherish and refresh them, there were Pestilences; the Eyes of Heaven shrunk away from such hated Objects, the Lights of Heaven were darkned; the Earth groaned and staggered in a sort under her yile burden, there were Earthquakes in divers places; so that these signs
§.7. Objections answered.

Signs might, as letters do, speak that to a pious fear, in conjunction, which they could not so well have done in separation.

4. Their Divine Prediction: There shall be Earthquakes, and each Earthquake was a Sign, not as an Event wonderful, but as an Event foretold. Saul his meeting of three men, carrying three Kids, and three loaves, and a bottle of wine, when he parted from Samuel, might have been received with the slight and passing notices of a casual and common accident, had it not been foretold by the Prophet as a sign of God's presence with him. And thus any one of these Earthquakes might perhaps have been received but with the common wonder which any rare and prodigious Occurrence calls forth; but because foretold, it was a sign, when it came to pass, that that Eye of Prescience which could foresee an Event which held of no steady cause, did with as much truth and certainty foresee that fearful desolation approaching, whereof it was appointed a sign and symbol. So that this place of Scripture appears to lend as little strength and assurance to that weak and falling cause, which catcheth at it for support, as the foregoing.

From what hath been hitherto spoken concerning Prodigies Signal Natural, it may appear, that, howsoever they may possibly serve
Objections answered. § 7.

Serve as a pretty ground for the Fancy of a Poet or an Orator to descant upon, which are to apply themselves to those Powers of the Soul Affection and Imagination which understand but little, they are too hollow and sinking a foundation to build any Religious Conclusions upon. We must not bring the Stage into life by mimical gestures and affectations, nor yet into Religion by cunningly devised Fables, and very affecting Nothings. Pious frauds are a kind of weak and impure feet of clay, which will at last deceive and sink under that weighty Body of Religion, which ever relies upon them for support.
Concerning Prodigies Praternatural, and the several kinds of them.

All the Extraordinaries in the World, which fall out by no steady Rules and Cautes (to serve, as I can, the distinctness of this Discourse) I stile Prodigies Praternatural. Now these Omens are either of a more narrow and confined reference, thought to come forth onely to the Service of some private Persons and little Occasions, being in themselves of a more private make and character; as the falling of the Salt, the tingling of the Ear, the casual rupture of the Shoelatchet, the voice of the Screech-Owl, neezing to the right or left, odd voices or noises heard about the house in the silences of the night. Or of a more catholick and publick reference, such as are the approach of some strange kind of Fish to the Shoar, unknown noises in the Air, the Apparitions of Spirits in frightful forms, the figures of Armies and military appointments discovered in the Air, and many more of the same cast. These were ancietly and are still conceived the dreadful harbingers of some common calamity by Wars, Plagues, or the Funerals of Princes. Superstition being a fretting Ie-
Of Prodigies Preternatural. §.I.

The Doctrine of private Omens, vain: they strictly forbidden in Scripture. A double account given of: the Original of them among the Heathens. The Design of the Devil to dishonor humane Nature, and of Christ to advance it, in all his institutions, noted. The impure Rites of the Euchites, to what end subservient. Piellus. The occasion of the use of some Omens in the Jewish Nation. The instances of Eleazer, Gideon, Jonathan, considered. The use of Lots by Joshua and Saul for Divination then warrantable. A water of jealousy, why allowed the Jews. No such Omens allowed the Jews as the Heathens used. The sin and vanity of all regards of them now. Omens a kind of sign between the Devil and his Votaries of old. The observation of Omens of a more publick reference judged an hurtful vanity. The profane Opinion the Heathens had of God upon the presence of any of them, noted from several Writers of theirs. The evil influence they have upon the minds of men now. A double account of the great Opinion men have of them. The greatest part of the Ethnicks Divinity grounded upon Experience without rule. The conceit of God’s giving forth some shadows and pictures of his great Works before he set about them touch’d upon. A double Example, suitable to that Persuasion, instanced in.

The Doctrine of private Omens, as soon as fastening upon my hand, I should
Of Prodigies Praternatural.

should shake off (as the Apostle did the venemous Beast) and deliver the Observation of them to that smoke and darkness whence it did at first arise: But for fear lest some weaker constitutions be poisoned by it, I conceive it a charity to kill it before I throw it off my hand.

How ancient the Usage of Divining by such petty occasions was, may appear from that inhibition Levit. 19.26. Ye shall not use any Divinations, nor observe Times: where the Hebrew word שָׁמַע, as also its correspondents, oiωνίς and augurari, do import, though not in their Original, in their use (the best standard of the true value of words) Omen qualectunque captare, puta ex vid. Grot. in sternutatione, ex Oculi subsulta, ex corrigia rupta, ex nomine hominis qui occurrit nobis. And again Deuter. 18.10. we find all kind of Divinations but by immediate application to Gods Prophets, banish'd the Jewish Nation, both sought and tended, in those words; There shall not be found among you שָׁמַע, that is (faith Munster) Experimentator, qui sortilegio aut stipulatione investigat num bonum sit iter arripere, aut opus aliquod inchoare; as by the falling of an erected Staff this way or that, the opening of a Book upon such or such words, and many such like, of which Maimonides at large. And that word שָׁמַע there used, prohibits the
Of Prodigies Præternatural. § 1.

the seeking the knowledge of any thing future by a curious attendance to any singular and unusual occurrence in common life.

Now the solemn regard of any such singularities in life, as Presages, might grow from the subtil Agency of the Great Father of imposture, who by influencing the minds of men, and sometimes Events of things, might easily (especially when the general blindness of men made them apt to swallow any gnats and filth) work them to great Opinions of such Accidents, χ’ συνηθεὶς θοε ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢν αἰτιαθετεῖν ἢ κεραυνὸν φέναι ἢ

To this very end and purpose that Man might easily be abused and cheated by Devils, at any time, and his mind might be drawn off from Heaven and God to Earth, and things yet lower than that: as Origen assigns the reason of his appointing Divination by the chirping or motion of Birds. But I conceive the more catholic end he aimed at in those Auguries, and these Omens, was the making of Man as much a slave and a fool as possible, and to deface all the remaining characters of the Divine Image upon him. For as all our Savior's Institutes were directly level'd to the advancement of that Nature himself had united to his own, and to bless man with liberty, peace, largeness of heart, soundness of
§ 1. Of Prodigies Præternatural.

of mind, power, and majesty; On the contrary, the Devils Rites & Sanctions aimed at the robbing him of the very shadow of these great things, and therefore they were all either arbitrary, idle, slavish, frightful, cruel, obscene, or dark and irrational; so to render the Observers of them as abject and cheap, as unworthy of God and themselves, as he could. *Psellus,* speaking of those *ἀναταφέροντες* ἀνθρώποις, Beasts disguised in the shapes of Men, the Ancient *Euchites,* tells us, among other impure Rites, that they were reported to eat the Excrements of a man, conceiving that thereby they procured *διηγομένα τὰ κακά* daimônia, the Demons to be kind and conversable to them, that which he inclines to believe, there being (as he adds) nothing so grateful to those so opposite Beings, as that envied Man, graced with the Divine Image, should lapse into so great a contumely. This so grateful end of his (the reproaching the living Images of God) he very much served upon these Omens, which tended onely to dishonor the minds of men with poor thoughts, silly notions, childish fears, sorry speculations, and such perpetual jealousies of Events as often cow’d them out of all use of Reason and Courage in a civil business.

When the Devil had once planted this Opinion of Omens, it is likely it received a
Of Prodigies Prternatural, § 1.

great increase from that vulgar Notion among the Heathens, That besides One great Cause and Source of Good, there was an Anti-Principle of Evil, of as great force and activity in the World, who had under him several black Officers to be sent upon hurtful and mischievous dispatches. So Plutarch delivers their sense, ἐγενέσθαι μεγάλας μη κλοπεῖς, δισσώμεθα μη κακῶς, ἐκπονεῖς, καὶ χαίροι τοις τούτοις, &c. That there were in the encompassing Air some great and potent Natures, tetrack and morose, which rejoice in such things, those severe Fastings and Penances, Woundings, Whippings, and the like bodily severities which men endeavored to appease them with, which he was then speaking of. Now they might readily perhaps conceive, that when ever this Evil Principle was about to serve its envious and unhappy Nature by some ill turn, the Good One did by such odd accidents, as by some secret and friendly nods and becks, give men notice of its malign purposes and intentions.

But what ever the ground was this Opinion grew from, certain it is that it spread and grew extreamly; no Times, Places, Sounds, Voices, Occasions, Names, Persons, but retained a tincture of it. The Heathens used to go (what Tully relines of Metellus) to their Temples, in dedication of
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Of a Sign and Omen in a matter of concern, to receive one from the Gods: And it is not unlikely that this might be the true occasion why God (who in many other instances, not proper for this place, ἡγούμενος, did bear with their manners and customs) indulged the People of Israel the use of Signs and Lots and Omens, to assure and resolve their anxious and solicitous minds about the issue of some worldly affairs. Joshua and Joshua and

Saul took to a Divination by Lot to find out Achan and Jonathan; and Gideon received the Dream and the interpretation of the Midianitish Soldier as an assured Omen of success; and Jonathan appointed such words spoken by the Enemy, as a Sign to him and his Armor-bearer of an happy hour to attempt upon them in; and the Servant of Abraham the coming forth of Rachel in such circumstances, as a token for good to him of the happy issue of his journey. All which were not (as some conceive) Examples extraordinary, and proceeding upon some immediate instinct of the Divine Spirit, but in that Age warrantable and usual ways of Divination, at least for Persons of Place, and in matters of greater moment. And this because God was graciously pleased (as the Fathers speak upon like occasions) to stoop and condescend to the weakness and peevishness of that People, long
long used to such kind of Lots and Omens amongst those Idolatrous Persons they were mingled with, and as much touch'd with care and passion in reference to the issue of worldly matters as they, and (in all likelihood) would have been tempted to apostate to them, if not provided of some Omens and Signs and Oracles to arrest their anxieties, and resolve their doubts as well as the Heathen were: To this purpose therefore a learned man, speaking of Lots and Signs, faith well, In veteri lege non infrequens fuit talium fortior exercitium, ut ille populus [Judaicus] ad Gentium mores proelvis averteretur. Thus the use of a water of jealouſie was permitted by God as a Sign to that People above measure jealous, in compliance with them who had been long accustomed and hugely prone to this and other Ordeels in use among the Heathens; to whose Rites and ways of Worship, by for-bidding some and tolerating others, he would not leave them any temptation to approach. However we find not that God ever allowed his People the use of any such common and standing Signs and Omens as the Heathens attended to, as the falling of the Salt, the neezing to the left, the crossing of the way by an Hare, the motion of Smoke, the erection of a Staff, the colors and figures of the in-trails of the Sacrifice, and the like, but the
the Omens and Signs made use of at any time among them, were either of God's own appointing, or the Persons choosing, for that particular turn and occasion; and never used again as an abiding Sign of any such Event as it once pointed to.

As for our selves now, we have no reason why we should (nay, much why we should not) vouchsafe the honor of a solemn notice to any such little incidencies as these. Me-thinks a very little light of Reason and Consideration might serve to discover them all to be of too beggarly and abject an appearance to be preferred to the reputation of God's Monitors. Certainly any serious Opinions of such chances must needs tempt a man to sacrifice the peace and tranquillity of his mind; and a calm and easy repose upon the Providence of God, an hundred times in a week: And by these we shall tempt the Great Enemy of our Peace and all right apprehension of things, by odd noises, voices and tumults in the night, perpetually to abuse and fright us. To all this I add, That such Omens as I now contend against were anciently (besides other uses he made of them) a kind of Signs and Sacraments between the Devil and his Votaries. For as the Devil, having usurped the Worship of God, appointed such kind of Rites and Ceremonies, the performance whereof was a sign...
sign that his Worship was intended, by whom those Rites were appointed; and having arrogated the honor of Trust, and Expectation of Help in a Strait and Recovery in a Sickness, he appointed such Images, Charms, Ligatures, Critical Postures, Words and Sounds, the use whereof was an interpretative trust in, and tacite invocation of that Power from whom those Signs received their institution: so also having assumed the honor of a constant fear, aw, and observance from men (that so he might leave nothing for God) the observation of all kind of Omens was of his ordaining to be a standing Sign of their continual fear and dread of his Power to bring upon them the Evil aboded, and to engage them to all endeavors possible to reconcile his peevish and touchy Greatness by some Februations, idle and arbitrary Rites and Usages which himself had appointed them unto. So that I presume no clean and chast hands will be forward to touch and take up any such Ominous Observations, so extremely soil'd and polluted by so unhallowed an end and institution. But lest more words about this famous instance of Ethnick Superstition should be interpreted not so much a design to inform, as to reproach the present Time, and not so much to kill it, as to take it out of its forgotten dust, I shall afford
it no further place in this Discourse.

As for those Signs and Omens of a more common and publick make and reference, I assert, without further ceremony, the Observation of them all a very hurtful and headless vanity.

1. I stile the Observation of such things a very hurtful vanity. The regarding of these and the like Occurrences as Prelages of Evil, served heretofore but to cherish in men this deformed thought of God, That (all things being subject to the law of an insuperable Fate and a blind necessity) all He could do was only to foresee an Evil, and then (to piece out his Power with his courtesie) by these and the like Accidents to awaken men to shift for themselves, and as they could to get out of the way, or to strengthen themselves by resolution when any blind and fatal Causes were ready to rush furiously upon them. A matter which may appear from the words of Ovid, where (speaking of Venus) he thus delivers himself:

*Verba jacit, Superosque movet, qui rumpere quanquam.*

_Ferrea non possunt veterum decreta Sororum,
Signa tamen lucus dant haud incerta futuri: Arma ferunt inter, &c._

_Her warmer Speeches melt the Gods, who stand
And hold their finger up, although their hand._

Ovid. **Metam.** l. 15.
Can't bend those Iron Laws th'old Sisters make.
The noise of Arms ('tis said) was heard, &c.

And to a like purpose Silius Italicus, in those words;

Heu vani monitus, frustra rep, morantia Parcae Prodigia! heu Supers fata certasse minores!

Vain Prodigies! that come to stay
His death whom Destinies will slay.
Alas, between the Softer Gods
And sullen Fates, there's too great odds!

Now Poets (though in a matter of History they usually follow their own humor, and stretch out by the force of imagination a matter which shrinks of itself to a short and simple narration, yet) in a matter of Opinion commonly follow the humor of the Times, and take liberty to express freely the manners and thoughts of the Age wherein they live. That this was one of those Fanatics which abus'd the minds of men in the darkness of Gentilism, may appear more fully from the words of a more severe and serious Writer, Valerius Maximus, who having told us of the several strange Prodigies, as the finger of God held up to warn Pompey before his encounter with Cesar, or to declare his fall; he infers from them, That the Deity evidenced...
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peti errorem inhibere voluisse,] a great wil-
ingness to have prevented the error and rash-
ness of Pompey, but only the insuperable
Laws of Fate would not permit him (though
otherwise a Person sober and advised enough)
to weigh all those forewarnings in the balances
of counsel and consideration.

And if the Opinion concerning Prefages
by these or the like Occurrences do not now
comfort and abet any such base Persuasions
concerning God, in some minds, it is well:
sure I am, if they do not give men to think
that God is under the Power of Fate, yet
they little less then assure that Events are:
For either the intimations by such kind of
Signs are (as the shadows of the Mountains)
ineffectual, movable, and vain; and then
why do men at all regard them? or they are
certain and immovable; and if so, they sup-
pose the Event to be fatal, and placed be-
yond the redress of counsel and endeavor,
and call upon men only to despair gallant-
ly, and to ride out the tempest approaching
with as much courage and resolution as they
can; (The Evils both to the State and Re-
ligion, in the womb of which Opinion, swell
so visibly out, that it is needless by argu-
ment to rip it up and lay them forth to com-
mon view and notice.)

Besides, the Opinion greatly tends to
lesser and degrade the Majesty of Heaven,
in our thoughts, while it prefers any such weak and pitiful occasions to the repute of
Gods trumpets, to give notice that he is now going forth to some great act of Justice
upon the World: it aims also directly to a lessening of our Faith of the Divine Good-
ness and Kindness, while it teacheth us to imagine we discover a Fury in every strange
issue of Providence; and to conclude, it is Mercy rather which is Gods strange work,
(the black Ensigns of Wrath and Veng-
ance being continually supposed hung out
in one unusual Accident or other.) It tends
also to leaven the minds of men with four
thoughts of Providence, as if designed to
bereave them, not only of Happines, but
the very hopes and shadows thereof; and
(as Benjamin did his Mother) first to pain
and torture them by mighty fears, and then
to kill them by some great evil, of which,
if inevitable, it is better not to be aware.

---Sit caca futuri
Mens hominum fati, liceat sperare timenti.

Let me be blind as Fortune to receive
Its fatal stroke, may hope my fears deceive.

Finally, the Opinion doth make even good
men too much to concern themselves in the
affairs and issues of things in this worthless
and giddy World, to stretch themselves in-
Of Prodigies Præternatural.

1. Gods line, by inquiries after things wrapt up in futurity, and fills them too full of vain hopes or fears, to take up with composed and thankful minds in that present portion which the hand of Providence deals out to them.

2. The Observation of any such Objects of common Wonder, as Prefages, is also a groundless, headless vanity. The Person that entertains his thoughts and studies much with them, gives (like those in that famine, 2 King. 6.) a great price for an Asses head: For the Opinion (like the Image of Nebuchadnezzar) while it pretends to an head of gold, and seems to promise Oracles and the knowledge of Futurities, it stands, for ought I can discover, but upon these two weak feet of clay:

1. Narrow and scanty Observation: Men (it may be) have heretofore observed some few Evils to tread close upon the heels of these or the like Prodigies, and therefore are easily persuaded that they were ushered by them, and they can never after them themselves, but it is presumed they come forth to deliver some sad and ungrateful message. It is this also hath given credit to the regard of some as auspicious, others as inauspicious days, in the life of some great Persons especially, viz. the Observation of some happy or unhappy Events which the
womb of such a morning hath perhaps twice or thrice brought forth unto men. As there are the disports of Nature, of which before; so (be it spoken with reverence) there are the disports of Providence: As God is pleased to display his multifarious Wisdom in the many pretty varieties in Nature; so He seems delighted with some pleasant constancies and uniformities in the Works of Providence; whereof the sending of many great blessings or afflictions upon a Person, just on such a day of the week or returning year, is an especial instance; and this perhaps to try whether we be such men in understanding as not to suffer any distrust of his Providence to break in upon us upon such a day, or after such accidents, because of some little disasters formerly befalling us then, more than at another time. As for that Observation and Experience here alleged, though we have already found it a very dry breast, and unable to cherish this Opinion; yet, because it still runs with so much passion and expectation to it, I shall endeavor to imbitter it, by shewing that the whole Ethnicks Divinity supported itself mainly by the credit of a great Experience: this appears by that Plea which Celsus in Origcn enters for his cause; To what purpose (faith he) is it to relate at large what strange things our Prophets and Prophetesses have foretold.

Orig. cont. Cels. 1.8. p. 407.
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foretold from the Oracles? what strange foresights the inspection of the Sacrifice hath blest many withal?...what strange things have been discovered by other prodigious symbols?

All humane affairs are full of instances, &c. In sum: There is not a more giddy or dangerous Rule to judge or practice by, than Experience, without good Maxims to direct and assure it: without these, Men may quickly credit the Devil's appointments in the shew and disguise of God's.

2. Weak and childish dislikes of things: Objects and Persons we conceive a kind and courteous Opinion of, we can easily persuade ourselves come forth with good tidings; we can readily look for an emblem of Peace from the lovely Dove. But where matters ungrateful fall before us, we usually serve our little hatreds, by deriving upon them the Opinion of being ill abode. And we quickly conceive that they come about us (like the hated Birds of night) against a time of mourning. For we may observe that the Occurrences to which Imagination hath affixed the Opinion of their being ill Omens, are generally such as we shrink from, and follow with dislike; as the firing of Houses by Lightning, monstrous and deformed Births, dreadful Eclipses, Apparitions in the Air, strange Voices heard in the night, Earth-
quakes, bloody Waters, fry Impressions, &c.

We hate these things, and therefore avenge our selves of them, as we can, by a vain conceit, that they prophesse onely evil things concerning us. This Opinion then having no better support to trust unto, it were to over-value it to put forth any great strength of Reason to throw it down.

Onely perhaps some contemplative Persons may perswade themselves, that the foundation of this Opinion is not laid so much upon the surface, as I would make my Reader to believe: for as there was a pretty conceit among some of the Ancient and more mystical sort of Philosophers, That all things in the upper and intelligible World were limned forth in some parallel instances and simular figures here below, and that matters intelligible were but the true fillings up of things sensible, which carry but some general and rude lines and images of them; thus some Persons seem strongly perswaded, That all the greater Works of God are first portrayed in some little Pictures and Images of them, and that therefore many strange Accidents are to be received as a kind of shadows of things to come, and a sort of exemplars and types of some great and unusual Work to follow after. Thus the sinking of the Lambeth
§ 1. Of Prodigies Praternatural.

Ferry-boat, with the Arch-Bishops Coach-horses and Coach-men, to the bottom of the Thames, Septemb. 19. 1633. the very first day he removed from Fulham to Lambeth, was (saith one) no doubt a Presage of his own and the Arch-Bishoppricks sinking through his pride and violence: (With as good reason may I add, that their swimming again at last was a sign that the Function, which the proud waters had so long gone over, should at last rise above them all.) Thus when William the Conqueror first leapt out of his Boat, and his feet sunk somewhat deep into the soft and yielding shoar, the accident was received as an Omen that he and his party should take a very deep and firm footing on English ground. But I believe it will appear to the most, altogether unnecessary to bestow much breath to break this pretty bubble, which hath nothing but wind therein, and will break and refute itself by its own airy and transparent Principles; though perhaps with some (that know not to distinguish between an Argument and a Similitude) the conceit may appear of some value and moment.
Concerning strange Sights in the Air.

To discourse of strange Sights in the Air, with certainty, difficult, and why. The truth in reference to them probably delivered in three Conclusions. The Apparitions in the Air precedent to the destruction of Jerusalem concluded certain and significative, upon several accounts. Luk. 21.11. explained. The Destruction of Jerusalem a fit Type of the final Destruction of the World. The Prodigies in the Sibylline Oracles whence taken: they concluded counterfeit. God's usage to usher his greater Works by some prelusive Essays, noted in several instances. The hasty reception of Bar-Chosba, a great instance of the strange infatuation of the Jews. What the Jews intended when demanding a Sign from Heaven. Dan.7.10. and Mat.26.64. explained. The prodigious Appearance in the Air before the Destruction of Jerusalem, a typical Sign of the Son of man: proved by several Reasons. What meant by the coming of the Son of man in the Clouds. An especial difference noted between Divine and Vulgar Prophecies. The especial significance and the excellent dispo-sure of the words of our Savior's Prophecy, Mat.24.30. noted.

Apparitions, whether in the Air, of Armies Castles, Dragons, Military Engines, and the like; or on Earth, of Spirits, in monstrous forms and disguizes, or in a way of particular address to counsel or terrifie, (nimbred with Prodigies Preternatural) may perhaps appear Argument big enough to merit a more serious Disquisition then the foregoing Particulars: In which undertaking I may presume of Pardon, if (standing in no better light) I hit the But, though not the
Of Prodigies Præternatural.

the White, and deliver what may seem to approach nearest to the truth. And the better to serve distinctness of apprehension in this subject, I shall consider all the wonderful Impressions of the Airy Region, apart from the Apparitions of Spirits; though commonly inclosed under one and the same general title.

He that considers on the one hand, how common discourse and the Histories of all Times are stuffed out with Relations of what strange forms the Clouds have been sealed withal in several Ages, and the Tragical Events successive to such things; and on the other, that there is no one Argument wherein all the common causes of deceit, Superstition, Melancholy, natural weakness of sight, softness of imagination, grossness of medium, fearfulness of temper, levity of Relators, may more easily conspire to abuse his trust; will see some cause to assert concerning Presages by such Airy Visions, what the Philosopher doth in the case of Divination by Dreams: Πρεσῆ ἐὰν μονήν ἐν τοῖς ὕπνοις ἔρμηνεις, ἐν ἀερομοῖς προμαχίνῃ ἅπαν τῆς ἐνυπνίας, ἦτε καὶ συνεφόνητη πάθει, ἦτε πειθοῖς. Concerning Divination made in sleep, and said to happen by Dreams; it is a matter neither easy to despise, nor yet to be (upon good grounds) persuaded of; And thus the pretended attestation of a great experience, and
and those lively and even speaking images of a War, on the one hand; and the several counter-reasons hereafter alleged, on the other, may seem, to first thoughts, sufficient to keep the Mind (like the Needle between two equal Magnets) from approaching the extrems of a forward faith or a very hasty distrust of Presages by any such Fantasms as these. I shall endeavor to divide the light from the darkness, Truth from Error in this matter, in these ensuing Propositions:

First, It is very probable that there have been some such Warlike Appearances in the Air, precedent to some great Desolations of Countries and Cities by Plagues or Wars. One example whereof we have tended to our faith by an Author credited by a Apostolical citation, the c Writer of the Book of Maccabees, who speaking of Jerusalem, thus delivers himself:

*It hapned, that through all the City, for the space of almost forty days, there were seen Horsemen running in the Air, in cloth of Gold, and armed with Lances, like a band of Soldiers;* 

*And Troops of Horsemen in array, encoun-
tring one against another, with shaking of Shields, and multitude of Pikes, drawing of Swords, and casting of Darts, and glittering of golden ornaments, and harness of all sorts.*

Upon
§ 2. Of Prodigies Preternatural.

Upon the mention of which Apparition, we there read what a sad Scene of Tragedies and Woes the City was made by the Armies of Antiochus. Upon which Apocryphal writing Cornel. à Lapide commenting, takes occasion to tell his Reader, that he remembred that when he was a Boy in the Low-Countries, some Ostenta of like condition were shewn him about the beginning of the Belgick Wars, 

\[\text{Ex iisque sapientes jam tum prænunciæ; qua Belgio instarent, &c.}\]

And that from them wiser men did even then foretell what calamities were approaching there; the truth of whose Predictions was justified by the issue of those Signs. \(^d\) Writers are so abundant in this Argument, that it is harder to be short then prolix therein; as appears from the words of a great Trader in such kind of flight wares, who having entertained his Reader with several examples of Spectres of Armies, and other Martial Images in the Firmament, given forth by God (as he speaks) \(\text{tanguam ira sua indices,}\) \(^e\) as Monitors of his wrath, he adds; \(\text{Multa alia que in assertionis proposita confirmationem afferre ex variis Authoribus possem, omitto, quoniam præter Athenos vix est qui de veritate hac ambigat.}\) A speech that proves little besides the Assertor's confidence, (the usual attendant of Opinions which have the Authority of a multitude to bear themselves upon.)

However
However, all this wind shakes none of our corn; we can allow what credit such Relations as these may in reason merit, without consulting shame to our Cause: all the pretended Experience being a covering much narrower then that the Opinion contended against can wrap it self therein. For Dreams, Oracles, Predictions of Augurs, Prophecies, had some shew of Experience (no doubt) to recommend their Observation, or else it is not easie to conceive how they could ever obtain such sacred regards among the Heathens of old, as it is evident they did amongst the most; were they therefore to be acknowledged Signs of God’s institution? Let men first produce their strong Reasons or evident Scriptures to assure this title to them, and then they may be allowed to alleged Experience ad corroborandum titulum, further to strengthen this great title. Without such proof first produc’d, men may quickly worship the Devil in the mantle of Samuel, give the reverence of a divine Sign to some delusive Images of his setting up, except we should be so fond as to think that he may put fallacies upon us in our hearts, in our houses, upon Earth, but none by any such Pictures portrayed in the Airy Region, his proper Principality. All Experience that is utterly destitute of any solid Reason or Scripture to credit its observation, is a delusion.
Of Prodigies Praternatural.

Ilusion of our own Fancy or the Devil.

Secondly, it seems highly probable that Propos. 2.
some airy apparitions were truly and really
precedent to the destruction of Jerusalem,
and given by God as the intended monitors of
its near approach. For thus Josephus relates,
that a little before the stones of empti-
ness were stretch'd out upon that city and
nation of the Jews, there appeared amongst
other prodigies ἄρματα ἵππον ἑρωικά ἐνοταῖς,
ἵππας ἔφεσαν, chariots and armed troops
of horsemen issuing out of the clouds, and
intercepting the heavens with their numer-
rours companies: which was received by
himself, and others not so drunk with pride
and opinion as the rest, a representation
(ὡς ἐν τοῖς) of the marching forth of the
Great Lord of Hosts with all warlike ap-
pointments to take vengeance of that re-
bellious people. Nor do we trust the credit
of so weighty a relation with the single
twine of Josephus his report, Tacitus hav-
ing seconded his testimony with the like
story, though omitting some other con-
temporary prodigies extant in Josephus. Be-
sides, he relates this (as he doth none of the
rest) with a peculiar remark, telling his Rea-
der, the relation would seem too great for
belief, if it had not been related by several eye-
 witnesses. But besides this,
Of Prodigies Praternal. §. 2.

fold Consideration which persuades me to receive this Relation, both as to the history and mystery thereof, with the favor of an high probability.

First, Our Blessed Savior prophesied that the Desolation of that People should be ushered by θόνησκα αʹ γενεία μεγάλη, at once frightful Sights and great Signs from Heaven. Luk. 21.11. a Prediction which Expositors conceive expounded and fulfilled in this and some other Prodigious Accidents related by Josephus (and after him by Eusebius) as the black and terrible Monitors of that unparallel Destruction which ensued. Sure I am this was a Sight in Heaven, and a fearful Sight, (for what more terrible than an Army in a warlike equipage? Cant. 6.4.) and a great Sign it was, in it self, (Josephus calls it Δαυδον φάσμα. an Apparition that had some characters of Divinity upon it, and which extended it self ἐξεχωρόν where χωραν, about all the Region,) and greater in its significatiOn, as will appear before we dismiss the Consideration thereof.

2. The fearful Destruction of Jerusalem was a kind of visible Prophecy and Type of the final Destruction of the World. For we find Christ's coming to judg the wicked Nation of the Jews call'd his coming in Glory, and coming in the Clouds, Dan. 7.10, 13.
§ 2. Of Prodigies Præternatural.

Of Prodigies Præternatural.

The Day of the Lord, Mal. 3. 1, 2. Joel 2. 31.
And his coming in his Kingdom, Mat. 16. 28.

Phrases which often character the Judgment of the Great Day. Now then, that the Sign and the thing signified might the more exactly touch, as at the last Day, the Heavens shall be on fire, the Earth with all its Works be burnt up, and the whole Creation feel its final and most dreadful pangs; so fit it was that the Destruction of Jerusalem should be ushered by its fearful Sights, mighty Earthquakes, a fiery Sword, the Sea and the Waves roaring, &c. And as at the last Day the Angels shall be the Ministers of his Justice, and increase the terrors of his coming, by attending the Judge of quick and dead; so this Judgment upon Jerusalem came with the solemnity of Angelical Apparitions represented in this Vision as in Scripture, by Chariots and mighty Hosts. And as Christ's second coming shall be personal ly in the Clouds, attended with Angels and the voice of a Trumpet; so (that the Type may carry the more lively figures of the Antitype) it seems not unreasonable to believe, that He came to the Destruction of Jerusalem in the Clouds of Heaven, with that Heavenly Host, either really or in effigie, and probably with the solemnity of the voice of that Military Instrument, the Trumpet. In short, some of the Prodigies preceding
Of Prodigies Præternatural. § 2.

preceding the fates of Jerusalem, seem such equal and proportioned representatives of those more terrible disguizes which the face of Nature must put on at that last and great Day, that the so called Sibylline Oracles make choice of many of them to describe and foreshew the horrors of it by: telling us we may know the end of all things to be at hand.

Cum vix fuerint caeli stellantis in oris
Nocturni gladii, casus ad solis & ortus,
Pulvis & e caelo terram descendet in omnem,
Protinus & medio cursu lux aurea Solem
Deseret, & terram fulgenti lumine Luna
Sanguineis guttis stellantibus irradiabit,
Signaque saxa dabunt,& in alta pralia nube
Cernetis pediumque equitantibus auris.

And Lib. 4.

Ensæ atque tubæ simul, & Sole exoriente
Terribilem sonitum, mugitumq; audiet omnis
Mundus------

Which words I find thus rendered by one of our own Poets:

Swords in the spangled Heav'ns shall then by night
In the East and West extend their blazing light.

Ashes in show'rs upon the Earth shall fall,
Luster desert the Sun in height of all.
§. 2. Of Prodigies Praternatural.

His towering pitch; the Moon shall then look red,
And tears of Blood from her dark Chariot shed.

Hard Rocks shall groan: Arm'd Troops of Foot and Horse
Incounter in the Air with horrid force.
Arms, Trumpets, fearful fragors, yelling cries,
All Ears shall hear about the Sun's uprise.

Of which and the like Passages therein occurring, some (presuming upon the pretended Antiquity of those Oracles) conceive the strange Prodigies related by Ovid (not as an Historian but a Poet) to be but an imitation; so great the agreement between them both in phrase and matter.

Whereas there is a much greater probability that the Author of these pretended Oracles plundred Ovid; these having been written (as many other spurious Pieces pretending to Inspiration, in the first Ages of the Church) about three or fourscore years after the Destruction of Jerusalem; as appears past the air of a Question from what Blondellus, Opsopaus, and others have written concerning them: though the Authors of them had put the often halting feet of their Oracular Verses into such old clout-ed shoes, the disguise of such antick names, phrases, times, and places, that they were
verily thought by some of the less suspicous Ancients (as the Gibeonites by the Israelites) to have come from far, even from beyond the Times of Moses. As for the Verses already cited, they plainly appear to owe themselves to the rude jumbling together of the Prodigies precedent to the Destruction of Jerusalem, the words of S. Peter, Act. 2. 20. concerning the turning of the Sun into darkness, and the Moon into blood, not being rightly understood; and some Ethnick Ostenta intermix’d, to render the forgery the less transparent. As for the mention of Trumpets, together with Arms, heard about the Sun’s arise, I am apt to believe it might grow from a circumstance in that Airy Spectre (the noise of Trumpets) omitted by Josephus, who tells us indeed that it appeared ἔστιν ἄνω, before the setting of the Sun, (which, for a disguise; the Oracles have altered into the rising of it,) but without any notice given of any such new character of terror attendant thereupon.

Thirdly, God’s Works of a more publick and catholick concern, have been generally ushered by some lighter Essays and representations of them. Thus the several appearances of God of old in the figures of a Man, are commonly received as the Praludia, and a kind of μικραί τελεταί to that great Mystery of
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Of God really manifest in flesh. The general Conversion of the Gentiles seems essay'd in the particular Conversions, now of a Person and then of a Family, to the Jewish Church. Those Sacrifices made by fire to the Divine Justice, Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other Cities, are laid us, J ud. ep. forth an Exemplar, wherein the conflagration of the World and the vengeance of Eternal fire are limned forth. That mighty storm of Vengeance which fell upon Jerusalem and the Jewish Polity, was prefac'd by (some lesser drops) the many miseries which our Savior stiles the beginnings of Sorrows. And those Judgments of an unusual figure, which sometimes overtake more notorious Criminals, seem a kind of prejudicia judicis, and assurances that God hath appointed one great Day wherein he will judge the whole World in Righteousness. Our Savior's long and earnest praying for his Church was (as a learned man well stiles it) t. S. Joh. 17.

Intercessionis ipsius aeterna quaedam et veluti prolusio. The many petty Captivities of the Jews under the Judges, and greater Calamities under the Kings, seem but introductions to that more obstinate Captivity which they now labor under. These instances encourage us to receive this Relation of the Apparition of such numerous Troops in the Air, as probable, that so there may he
be (according to the methods of Divine Providence) some slender scheme and representation of (the strangest work, considered in all its circumstances, God ever did) the final Destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman Armies, and in that, of the solemnity of that Day when the Thrones of Judgment shall be set, and the Judge with ten thousand times ten thousand ministers unto him, proceed to his last. Act of Justice upon the unrighteous World.

Fourthly, The peculiar circumstances of those Times, if duly considered, will give this Prodigy, together with the supposed significance of it, the appearance of a very great probability: Into a right understanding whereof, that we may leap with the greater advantage, our rising ground must be a little the higher.

It is a strange instance of the Perverseness of the Jewish Nation, and of that judicial, with which God punish’d their affected, blindness, that Bar-Chasba should in the Times of Adrian meet with so forward an acknowledgment and assistance from them, as the true Messiah, while yet (as Maimonides tells us) they their Wise-men his followers never asked a Sign or Miracle from him to bear testimony to him. They greedily swallowed him without any chewing.
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But though the true Messias had given them repeated Signs and Wonders, (but such as sorted but to that gentle Oeconomy he was to introduce) they were still unsatisfied, and oft came requesting requiring a Sign from Heaven of Him, to assure them that He was the Person the Prophecies and Expectations of that Nation were so much upon: Where, by a Sign from Heaven, they might possibly mean some immediate Manifestation from, or miraculous Impression upon Heaven above; as thinking perhaps either that then the reputation of the Miracle would come the more unstained by any suspicion of Witchcraft, Art, Power of Imagination, or any Collusion whatsoever to assist it; or that the Person and Kingdom of the true Messiah ought in reason to come attested by Signs of as great lustre as those with which the former Prophets and present Oeconomy had been heretofore; viz. the speaking of God from Heaven, the descent of the fire from Heaven upon the holy Offering, Bread given from Heaven (which they tacitly require our Savior to give them,) mighty Thundrings and Lightnings from Heaven, or the stoping of the Sun in Heaven. But I conceive that they had some further aim in those words, requiring (in short) to see Him (if the true Messiah) coming to them,
not in that humility and weakness, but with Power and Glory in the Clouds of Heaven, and the Thrones of Majesty ready placed to receive his approach, so that Sign from Heaven with which they would sit down resolved: commonly grounding the Persuasion of some such Sign to distinguish the Messiah by, upon the words of Daniel: I beheld till the Thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, &c. I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the Clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of days; and there was given to him Dominion and Glory, and a Kingdom.

That the Jews in our Savior's time generally understood that Prophecy of the Messiah, appears from his own frequent use of that Expression Son of Man as of a Phrase familiarly known amongst that People. And that it was the Persuasion of the most, that his Coming should be solemn and pompous, *in the Clouds of Heaven*, appears probable from the gloss of one of their ancient Masters upon that Text, cited by Raymundus;

that is (as Raymundus explains his words) If the Jews deserved that the Messias should come, He shall come gloriously according to
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the Prophecy of Daniel. And then He tells us further, Ideo Moderni Judæi dicunt Messiam non venisse, quia nondum viderunt eum venire in nubibus caeli: a Prejudice against our Savior derived from their Ancestors, in all likelihood, down to Posterity among many other Traditional Errors. And perhaps we may discover some footsteps of this vulgar Notion in that Speech of our Savior to the High-Priest, who adjuring him to tell him whether He were the Christ the Son of God, answered, Thou hast said. Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power & coming in the Clouds of Heaven. Of which words the most natural and unforc'd sense seems to be this; That I am the Christ the Son of God, is a great Truth, and assured sufficiently already by my own mighty works, serious acknowledgments, and the secret persuasions of your own minds: Nevertheless, as a further sanction thereof, I tell you, you shall very suddenly see that Sign (without which you will not sit down persuaded) spoken of by Daniel, Me the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and Majesty. Moreover, we may observe that when the Disciples demanded of our Savior a Sign of his Coming (by which it is more then probable that they understood only some such pompous appearance.
first in Heaven, and then on Earth, as the Jews commonly dream'd of.) He tells them,

Immediately after the tribulation of those days (of which he had even now prophesied) the Sun shall be darkned, &c. and then shall appear some Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall all the Tribes of the Earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory. In which words our Savior seems to express himself suitably to the common Opinions and Phrases of that People, and to acknowledg such a glorious Coming of the Son of Man in the Clouds of Heaven (as his great sign) was foretold, and had a great truth therein, but onely the Jews had very much mis-timed and mis-reported the maner and season of it.

Add to this, that it can scarce seem probable that all those mighty Wonders which our Savior wrought, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers with a word, &c. should not be thought by the Jews, in some general sense, Signs from Heaven; that is, wrought by the Power of God, perhaps to try their constancy: Onely they had reserved the title of a Sign from Heaven, by way of eminence, for this which their hearts were so much upon; a Sign which never any of the old Prophets were dignified by, and in compare with which all other Signs were but as populus.
lus terra, of no name and reckoning in their childish thoughts. From all this it is a probable inference, That the Jewish Nation expected some such splendid Sign as this, and that in some sense and season it was to be given as the Sign of the Messias his glorious Exaltation in Heaven, of which the World had received but one particular Sign, in The Mission of the Holy Ghost.

The great Question then depending is, When this Sign of the Son of Man was given, and when the frequent Prediction of his Coming in the Clouds received its full accomplishment? I answer, It was probably fulfilled typically, in the literal sense thereof, in this glorious representation of a Captain with his numerous Legions issuing out of the Clouds a little before the Destruction of Jerusalem. For the visible characters of Majesty stamped upon that Airy Fantasim speak it big enough for the honor of being received at least as the umbratile Sign and Coming of the Son of Man. So vast the numbers of these Chariots and armed Troops in the Air, that they appeared (saith Josephus) αἱ πόλεις ἐν τοῖς πύλαις, encompassing the Cities of Judea, and the whole Heaven seemed for a time but a kind of Campus Martius to receive them. And whereas it is foretold that his Coming should be with Power and great Glory, [where, by ἰδία τις Θεότης, under-
understands the Host of Angels, and by nome fulgorem spectabilem some visible luftre and splendor, where can we find a more lively Portraiture of both then in this Divine Impression: those numerous Troops fitly representing the Power; and the rustiantia arma (the expression of o Tacitus describing this Airy Vision) glittering Arms and splendid equipage in which they appeared, the great Glory of his coming to judg Jerusalem, the Prince of this World, and all the Earth at the last Day. Besides, The special circumstance of time by which this Sign and Coming of the Son of Man is character'd doth somewhat encourage our Opinion of this appearance: for our Savior speaking thereof to the High-Priest and the Jews, tells them, ἄνω με τήν ἡμέραν αὕτην. From this moment, or as S. Luke renders it, ἀνώ τῆς ἡμέρας, from this very Now shall ye see the Son of Man, &c. Expressions surely denoting a very near approach of that glorious Sign, and not to be totally deferred (as many Expositors contend) till the Day of his second Coming. And S. Matthew doth more distinctly determine the time thereof in those words; Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the Sun be darkned, and the Moon shall not give her light, &c. that is, Very suddenly after those lesser and prelatory Judgments in those days of the not yet expired.

n 2 Thel. 1.7
Mat. 16.27.

o Tacit. Hist. l.5.

p Joh. 16.11.

q Mat. 26.64.

r Luk. 22.69.

s Chap. 24.29.
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expired Jewish Oconomy (of which I have now forewarned you) which were but as the eclipsing and clouding of the Sun and Moon, shall ensue a final Desolation (like the total blotting out of the Lights of Heaven.) And then, about that unhappy juncture, as that word in this Chapter, and other Prophetick Writings, signifies: shall appear the Sign, the pledg of his Exaltation in Heaven, and the visible representation of his coming forth in the Clouds of Vengeance to execute the sentence of Justice past upon that condemned Nation. A time that suits very well with that in which this Divine Fantasm is supposed to have hapned. Moreover it seems a decorum to conceive that this Prophecy of the Coming of the Son of Man in Power was fulfilled once in the type and letter, and again in the virtue and substance thereof (which I am immediately to shew,) because the Prophecy of his coming in weakneſs [A Star shall come out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall arise out of Israel] had its typical and literal accomplishment, in that New Star which was the Index of Heaven to the place of his Birth, and of which the Wise-men seemed solely to understand; and also its substantial One in the type of Him who was the bright and morning Star.

The contexture of this Discourse will, perhaps,
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Perhaps be the less subject to ravel out, if I hem it with the Speech of our learned and pious Annotator upon those words, the Sign of the Son of Man: This ousov (faith He) may possibly signifie some special Prodigy that should fall about that time, attending on that Destruction of Jerusalem. Josephus mentions many, &c. But unwilling he seems to abide by the Conjecture, because this Sign is said to have hapned after the tribulation of those days; that is (faith he) the distress and siege of Jerusalem. But here, eadem manus Vulnus opemque, his Paraphrase understanding that word παραπτωματος to refer to those lesser tribulations forementioned, which ushered the darkning of the Sun, &c. that is (as he rightly expounds) the total Destruction of the Temple, City, and whole Jewish Government Civil and Ecclesiastical.

I intend not in these words to determine this Prediction of the Sign and Coming of the Son of Man in the Clouds, within the scanty limits of this ineffective Type in the Air; For it had a more pompous accomplishment in the mystical sense thereof, when went forth to that most eminent Act of Royalty after his solemn inauguration to his Instructory Kingdom, the judging of that Rebel People: for (as Grotius notes from Maimonides) Descensus Dei in nube, solet in pluris iram & vindictam significare.
And besides, the Prophet Daniel, to whose words our Savior's Prophecy hath an apparent reference (though our learned Criticks take no notice thereof) w prophesies of this Coming of the Son of Man in the Clouds, together with the mention of a Judgment set, and the Books opened, and Thrones cast down. But the Prediction shall have its full and perfect accomplishment at the last Day, when the Son of Man shall come (as he went) literally in the Clouds of Heaven, and mystically too, because appearing in storms of vengeance against those which obeyed not his righteous Laws. It is the peculiar excellency of Divine Prophecies, that they come down into the World (as the Chaldee Oracle saith the Souls of good and wise men do) πολυ εντιμήθη και, clothed about with a great deal of mind and sense, and therefore have their repeated accomplishments, whereby they are divinely distinguishing'd from vulgar Prophecies (which vain men run after as Children after a gaudy Butterfly) which are delivered without more of mystery then the necessary obscurity of their Phrase may intitle them unto.

As for the Prophecy now before our consideration, Τὸν φῶς τὸν Ἰωάννην καὶ τὸν Χριστὸν, καὶ τὸν Χριστὸν ἁγιάζων ἔναν καὶ ἐκκαθαρίζων, καὶ ὅτι ἐστὶν, &c. as it hath (I conceive) this treble accomplishment, so the words wherein it is delivered, are so wisely
Of Prodigies Praternatural. § 2.

wisely chosen and disposed, that they may without straining be construed in favor of them all: for that word φαντασμός signifies a fantastical and real appearing, ζημίσων both a representation and a token, and ζήσων sup-
posed sometimes for bodily sometimes for mental sight; (three words made use of by Euseb.) and therefore very fitly expressive both of the typical and substantial accomplishment of this Prophecy. And as happily will the order of the words serve the Persuasion of this treble accomplishment: for if ἐν ἔσεσθαι be construed with ζημίσων thus, then
shall appear the Sign in Heaven, of the Son, they carry a fair aspect toward the Prodigious Appearance in Heaven, the typical accomplishment of them: If with γῶ ἐν
σεῖων, thus, then shall appear the Sign, of the Son of Man in Heaven, they refer to his coming in judgment against Jerusalem, the great Sign of his Exaltation, as a Prince as well as a Savior, in Heaven. But if in the Heaven be referred equally to Sign and Son of Man, the words will carry a clear reference to his last Appearance, which shall be really in the Heaven, and the last Sign of his being that true Son of Man mentioned by the Prophets.

I shall dismiss this a Prophetick Text when I have noted, how it presents to us (in

1 Thess. 4. 16, 17.

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the latitude wherein expounded) our Blessed Savior at once satisfying and chastising the perverse humor of the Jews: for he gave them a visible Sign of the Son of Man from Heaven, but a Sign of him not so much as a glorious Savior, as of a revengeful Judge being dealt withal herein as God with the nicer Israelites, who would not be satisfied with Manna from Heaven, but would have flesh from thence too: He gave them their request, but sent leanness withal into their Soul. From all this it appears, that this Prodigious Sign which was given, and the season when, are hugely singular and extraordinary, and that therefore it is unnatural to conclude anything thence in favor of the Opinion to which I oppose myself. It is a good Maxim, Examples extraordinary neither break a Rule nor make one.
SECT. III.

Strange Sights in the Air, proved no Divine Signs.

Five Considerations to evince strange Forms in the Air, no Divine Signs. 1. We have no warrant from the Scriptures so to receive them. Negative proofs from Scripture when considerable. What kind of Signs of old made choice of by God. 2. Such supposed Signs would expose men to perpetual delusion. That made appear upon many accounts. God alway careful to have that fully proved which he would have strongly believed. 3. Such Fantasms have been sometimes known not succeeded by any Tragical Events. Negative instances to be especially attended to in the foundings of Maxims, and why. 4. Many of these Appearances salvable by a natural cause: the cause proposed: asserted against Cabeus. 5. Some of the more artificial Impressions in the Air seem effected by the Devil. The end of them, assigned by Cabeus, proved absurd and unworthy of God. Good Angels avow'd no causes of these things. All God's extraordinary Works carry unquestionable Characters of Divinity: the ends the Devil' hath to serve upon such Prodigies. Lawater's judgment of them rejected.

Proceed now more closely to press the Opinion I am contending with, in this third Proposition: There appears not now any ground at all to receive any such Apparitions in the Air as the Divine Monitors of any Calamities to ensue upon a Nation. And that,

First, Because we have no warrant from the Book of God so to regard them, or any other Prodigy. Let our Adversaries shew us the least air of Precept or Example therein to oblige us hereunto, and we will be con-
§. 3. Of Prodigies Præternatural.

We find indeed some Signs of future Events mentioned therein, but they were either purely miraculous, as the going back of the Sun in the days of Hezekiah as a sign of his deliverance from sickness and enemies; or particularly instituted, as Saul's meeting of three men carrying Kids and Wine and Bread as the sign of his being appointed by God to the Kingdom: and ad placitum, such arbitrary Signs as carried no similitudes of the things whereof they were the Signs (as the Apparitions of Armies do of some succeeding War) that none might be encouraged afterward to regard them as Ominous when again occurring. But hath it anywhere so far inhaunc'd the reputation of a Monster, or the antick shapes of the Clouds, as to prefer them a kind of civil Sacraments, the outward and visible Signs, of some (as yet) invisible Judgment? Herodotus and Machiavel have been quoted, but where the Scripture? Now a negative Argument from Scripture is conclusive enough in a matter wherein the faith of a Divine Prescience and Providence, Man's dutiful observance of God in the way of his Judgments, Religion and the great good of Men, are so much assisted and concerned as we are told they are in the Religious Observation of such things as these. It cannot easily be imagined how much Peace,
Of Prodigies Prataetural. §. 3.

and Truth would bless the World, if men would resolve once in Philosophy not to believe beyond what is proved; and in Divinity not be wise above what is written.

Secondly, Such kind of Signs would lay men naked and exposed to perpetual delusions and impostures: For how oft do the odd figures of the Clouds serve the imaginations of Dragons, Castles or Armies in the Air? Can any serious Person then believe that God would have us apply our selves to such a Proteus as a Cloud is for a solution of any doubt concerning the future, which can so easily shift into any odd shapes of things? Moreover great Affections (which govern the most) are hugely Poetical, and quickly enchant the inward house, making things appear there in the Opinion of realities, which are nothing but shadow and air. The Philosopher well notes, That we are easily deceived about the objects of sense, when in the power of any great passion, one in this and others in another, the timorous person in fear, and the enamored by love: So that from a very slender resemblance one shall fancy he sees armed men, and the other that he sees his Mistress, and conceal any rude lines upon the wall to carry some airs of her face. Now how full of passion doth ignorance, guilt, and the want of discipline, make the far greater part of those Spectators upon whose testi-
mony the credit of such Relations are generally built. Besides, a very busie and impressive *Imagination* may so prepossess the rays of our eyes, that they shall represent things but according as instructed by *that* to do: it is with Sights as with Sounds, they are oftentimes but *when* and *what* men think. That word מִרְעָא Zech. 10.1, which we render *Clouds*, the *LXX*, by a *verbal* mistake of the true * radix*, translate φαντασίας Apparitions or Visions: and a melancholy Fancy is as subject to this real mistake, the translating of Clouds into Apparitions and Visions of Dragons, Churches, or Armies. But if the Fancy should not put any such fallacy upon the Eye, yet the Air, the Scene of such Airy Visions, often will: for the many vapors and exhalations therein, through the unequal disposition of their parts, occasion various refractions of the light falling from the Heavenly Bodies upon them, and by consequence give the Eye a great variety of rude Images: for so we find upon Earth, that in the Twilight or Moon-shine strange figures of things will appear to us, which are but the delusive issues of the various commixtures of lights and shadows. And therefore I question not but a little skill in Opticks would have enabled men to give a very consistent account of many of those strange *Idolat* in the Air, which from
the attestation of a few gross and ignorant Spectators have been entred with so much solemnity in the many Registers of Prodigious Occurrences. Now then can any man easily believe that God hath obliged us to a devout attendance to these things as his Signs, of the truth whereof it is (upon all these accounts) so extremly difficult to arrive at full assurance. Hath he not all along appeared to value our Understandings at an higher rate, then to require them to a religious regard of things at all exposed to the suspicion of some imposture? These are matters wherein a knowing man will not easily trust his own eyes, which may quickly report their own Passions to him, but (for ought he knows) nothing with certainty besides; much less can he safely trust his Faith with the relation of another, whose weakness of eyes or mind may possibly be greater then his own.

Thirdly, Such kind of Airy Fantasms have been known not succeeded by any black and tragical Event. The truth is, Wisdom (which useth to draw her lines by the steady and even Rule of some well-assumed Principles) hath not appeared so critical an Observer of such Accidents and their Events, as Folly hath been; and therefore we are not so well provided of Examples to apprehend this vanity, as otherwise we might be.

I must
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I must therefore satisfy my self with a single instance which occurs in a learned and sober Writer, who delivers it as matter reported to him by Persons of good credit, how that in the year before he recorded that Relation, there were seen two opposite Battalions in the Ann. 1629, Air dashing out their Spears, and discharging and were their Muskets, victory now reeling, and in the end one side giving chase to the other. Whereas all these things proved but a vitru fulgura, flash without shot, being followed only with the voice of joy and peace in our dwellings for many years. Nor can they be with any color of Reason presumed to foreshew our succeeding Civil Wars, being removed by the distance of so many years: so little of truth is there in that Speech of a late curious Writer, dis coursw of such Military Images in the Air: This is most certain, that we never fail of seeing the Event to answer the Sign.

Now one Negative instance will appear (if duly weighed) of far more force to unfix a pretending Rule, then two Affirmative to establish it: because the latter (the World being so full of evils and changes) may fall out by an easie chance, or by the Agency of seducing Spirits upon an easie foresight of some approaching Battel; whereas the Negative seems to proclaim some necessity of the Event in Nature, and the no Purpose at
all of God to prefer any such emergencies the Signs of any of his Counsels; the Signs of his appointing being never tinkling cymbals, that make only a noise in the World, and nothing else. In all Knowledge which bottoms upon Experience Men should be so faithful to themselves and Truth as to attend indifferently to any kind of Instances before they offer to advance a Maxim. This is the cause of that obstinate dotage upon Astrology, Dreams, Prophecies, Palmistry, Presages by this and other Prodigies, even a custom to observe when they hit, but never when they miss; growing from a resolution in men to be blind and deaf to what ever disparageth a Proposition that hath pleasure or a great prejudice to endear it to them, or from that stillness and silence which attends all Events which have nothing of rarity and uniformity to call the eyes of men upon them.

Fourthly, I doubt not but many of these Airy Apparitions might be salved by a natural Cause. Some assign the natural Cause only the reflexion of the figures of Armies fighting or marching here on Earth, reflected from the smooth surface of a Cloud as from a Looking-glass; but because the angles of incidence and reflexion must necessarily be often varied by the giddy figures and motions of the Clouds, we cannot easily
§. 3. Of Prodigies Praternatural.

fily understand how they can serve to reflect so evenly and so long together the same equal Images; and because, though a Cloud could at such a distance reflect the military figures of an Army, yet not the terrible noises thereof, we shall dismiss this conceit as at best but an ingenious vanity. It carries a fairer shew of probability, that the supposed firing of Ordnance and Muskets is nothing but the coruscation of some incensed Exhalations breaking forth by pauses and intervals from the Clouds, and (as Thunder doth) with the noises and terrors of those Military Engines. The running to and fro of Horsemen and armed Companies may be represented to an active Fancy by the Clouds of differing colors carried by the uncertain force of the Winds to very unequal figures. The stands of Pikes and Spears may possibly be but the ragged and deformed protuberances of the disturbed Clouds. Onely I am apt to believe the representations of these things are in themselves so rude, that men are forc'd much to quicken the deadness of the Types by the fictions of Imagination: for those odd noises in the Air, which the Ancients called but the sounding of Trumpets, and the rattling of Armor, have (since the Invention of Guns hath suborned their Fancies) been thought the discharging of Muskets and great Pieces.
Now that these Apparitions in the Air arise from the figures of condens'd Vapors (as those on Earth of condens'd Air) appears very probable from the Relation of Pomponatius concerning them, That they are observed but in the night, or early in the morning, or toward the close of the day: the Reason whereof seems to be this: The Air at those seasons is more replete with gross Vapors, which by the uneven disposure of their parts send varieties of odd Images to the Eye, which all vanish when once the light and heat of the Sun grow strong enough to banish from the Air all those impostious shadows and vapors which did produce them.

I am well aware that this account of these terrible Forms in the Heavens carries no more color of likelihood in the eye of some men, than that which Aron gave of the original of the Idol; o I cast it (the gold) into the fire, and out came this Calf. They readily acknowledg the matter whereof those Images are made to be such coarse Vapors and Clouds as have been mentioned; but the difficulty (say they) is, what hand formed them into such lively figures? For that movable vapors should by chance con-"
§32 Of Prodigies Praternal.

by chance, but without any due use and application of mind in this matter. I answer, The Forms of these Heavenly Impressions are not always drawn upon the Clouds with that distinctness and fulness of resemblance as it is pretended: the figures of the Clouds oft carry but, some dull and rude representations of Armies or Ships which Fancy quickly lifts into more comely shapes: and many of the Prodigious Forms in the Heavens are (like the monstrous issues of Ixion in the Poet) begotten between a Man and a Cloud, the Poetical Imagination of the Beholder, and some more general and heavy resemblances in the Cloud. But because there are someAppearances in the Air, which stories make faith of, whose singularities of figure, season, continuance, this Philosophical account may seem unable to salve, I further add,

Fifthly, It is very probable that some of these strange impressions and noises in the Air are owing to the power and operation of the Airy Principality. Many of them are managed with that method and artifice, carry that life of imitation, come forth in such chosen seasons, and continue for so many hours (if the importunity of Historians in this matter be of any consideration) that any blind and fatal causes seem greatly disproportioned for such Effects carrying so many
plain characters of counsel and design. God therefore (faith our fore-cited Author) can only in reason be intitled to them; to the end that by such ludicrous Sights he may instruct us to Piety, and may give those that fear him a Sign that they may fly from the hurtful Sword, and so his Elect may be delivered. But certainly this is (to return to his own re-proach) casu dictum, if ever speech were. For I would demand; Are the Elect to whom the Sign is given always known to others or to themselves? Are they distinguish'd by their cause in civil differences? Are they here (as at the last Day) all on a side? Or if they be known, would he have them run away and leave the wicked, the World can better spare, to fight it out till they may come again? Would he have men desert their stations, and (under color of being warned of God) not to assist their King and Country, when any such ludicrous fights (as he calls them) should appear from Heaven? Doth not this speech not only excuse, but sanctifie Cowardise, and even supply the Coward with an holy Ephod to hide his Sword in: for he is supposed, in flying from the hurtful Sword, to be at God's beck, and to serve the dispensation. Besides, suppose it be a Sign of an approaching War, is it a Sign of a Defeat too? if not, the Elect may chance to run away rather from Honor.
§ 3. Of Prodigies Præternatural.

Honor then Danger: or if it do presage a Defeat, whose fatal sentence doth it pronounce? Need we not some other Prodigy to ummuddle the dark and perplex'd meaning of this? The Historian mentions several Prodigious Events just before Caesar and Pompey join'd Battel, amongst others he relates, that there were heard "νομοευ" spæcovicis, the Sounds of Armies in the Air: but after all he adds, "Caes _ROM.HISL. 43. p. 262. ..." it could not certainly be known from them to which of the two destruction was foreshewn. It is not therefore to speak of God by chance and without aim, to attribute such Signs to him as signify nothing with certainty to those for whose sake they are supposed to be given: To ascribe an insignificant Sign to God, is to blaspheme Him by a contradiction.

And how solid soever it may seem to the first touch, that Opinion will appear as transparent, if brought to the light, which attributes all these Military Forms in the Air to the courtesie of good Angels, designing (in imitation of the Divine Philanthropy) to warn Mankind of some approaching Desolation; that so they may arm themselves with Patience to entertain its coming. We never find in the Book of God, that Heavenly Host, sent forth but to wait upon some very important services, the protection of a Pa-
Of Prodigies Preternatural.

triarch, or a great Prophet, the declaration of the Birth of the Son of God, or perhaps to solemnize (as his first coming in weakness, so) his second coming in Power, against Jerusalem and the other Enemies of his Kingdom. Can we then approach any such cheap and little thoughts concerning them as to imagine they are sent forth to run a-tilt in the Air to find the vain World talk, and to tell it news: or that God would ever confer the honor of so solemn a Presage upon so mean an occasion as a paltry Battle at Sea or Land? too often intended but a service to the lusts and passions of men which have broken all those cords of love, precepts of charity, whereby they are bound one unto another.

Now then, except men will say (as some incline) that there are in the Air the Spirits of all natural things, of Horses, Men, Dragons, in which (as in the ashes of the flower in the Chymist's glass) there remains a formative Power of those shapes in which they once dwelt, (which conceit yet gives no account of the artificial Forms in the Air, of Arms, Castles, Ships, &c.) what more probable account of those Indecent Forms in the Air can be given then the operation of apostate Spirits, ready to make a lie as well as to tell one? Sure I am, we find the Appearances
§. 3. Of Prodigies Præternatural.

Appearances of Armies and the noise of Trumpets in the Air, found among such bad company (so many hateful Omens and Prodigies observed by the Heathen) as is sufficient to blemish their reputation, and to give suspicion that the observation and production of both was owing to the same Father of lies. Ovid having mentioned the noise of Arms and Trumpets heard from the Clouds, relates (as Presages of equal place and repute with him) the weeping of the Statues, the wandering of the Ghosts, the odd figures and colors of the Sacrifice, Voices in Groves; and the like doth Virgil in that place so often cited. Besides, All God's Works (those especially which come to seal some Truths, or to declare some purposes of import) ever carry with them some undoubted testimony of their Divine Original. All those divine Dreams, Visions, Impulses, Intellectual Impressions, Revelations, by which holy men of old were taught of God, left (like the Sun-beams) no place for a Dispute about their Cause: there was that unexpressible peculiarity in them which satisfied the Persons which received them that they arose not from the energy of fancy or black choler. And if these were the special Works of God to signify any great Purpose of his, the Characters of their Divine Original would be so legible upon them.
that he that runs might read them. Whereas the most zealous Assertors of the significance of these and the like Prodigious Effects appear wholly unresolved whether to intitle the Power of God or the Devil to their production: How then can a wise and judicious Christian understand whether he be to receive them with a devout fear or a great suspicion?

Impure Spirits, like Juglers, may oft do very strange tricks to call upon themselves the Observation of the World, or (as S. Austin speaks) noxie curiositatis retibus implicare, to fly-blow the minds of men with curious and impertinent inquiries into times to come, or to abuse that faith and fear whereby God alone is to be honored. Or perhaps when they see Causes big with some sad Effects, they may by such Signs forewarn them, to derive upon themselves the Opinion of Prescience, or of some great affection to Man, whom they awaken, though indeed it be but as Delilah did Samson, when, the Philistines, some great Evils are just upon him; for I observe many of these Airy Forms bearing equal date almost with the Evils emblem'd in them. Or finally, some impure Spirits may possibly in these antick figures serve that impostrous and sportive humor, thought to be in them as well as in some w men.
§ 3. Of Prodigies Preternatural.

Now then when we have all the high probabilities (beyond which to expect in this Argument, is a sign men understand not the Laws of Discourse) to perswade us that the more artificial of these delusive Images are of the Devil's erecting, what worship and reverence can any sober Christian imagine due to them? No man will give regard to any signs or words which fall from him in houses or persons possesst, and is he become as soon as he mounts the Air (like the Pope once gotten into his Chair) God's Oracle, and worthy of all faith and observance? Surely no. The more strange it is to find some learned men, while they acknowledg these and the like Prodigious Appearances in the World effected by the Great Father of impostures, receiving them notwithstanding, as the Signs of God's Fatherly Care and Providence over the Affairs of Men. For so Lavater, speaking of Spectres, the Appearance of Armies in the Air, and odd noises in the Clouds and the like, tells us, although it is very likely that the most of these Prodigies are of Diabolical efficiency, yet we may discover in these things the Paternal care and good-will of God towards us, and the defence he makes us against the treacheries of the Devil. The nakedness of which Opinion will not permit me to look any longer thereupon.
SECT. IV.

Concerning Apparitions of Spirits:

Aristotle his general silence in matters where he could not be well resolved, commended: and imitated in this Theme. Three Conclusions in reference to Apparitions laid down. Men subject to a double extremity to Religion and Providence. The Resolution of some Philosophers in Lucian as to matters of difficulty noted, and imitated by some men. Some Relations of Apparitions concluded creditable, and why. Spirits noted to have appeared sometimes in strange Forms before some great Desolations, and why. No Signs to be credited given by unclean spirits. The Ethnical Doctrine of two sorts of Demons, a fetch of the Devil. Two marks proposed to distinguish bad Apparitions from good.

There is nothing more dreadful to the sight, nor yet more grateful to the ears of the most, then Apparitions of Ghosts and Spirits: Concerning which therefore I should endeavor to serve the curiosity of the Reader in a more full and distinct Discourse then I now intend, if that demand of Archimedes upon another occasion, Αἴσθασις, could first be satisfied. But this I am under a despair of finding, while the Philosophy of their Nature is so full of uncertainty, the History of their Appearings so big with Legend, and the account of the consequents of their Signs so steep’d in Affection and Superstition. It is noted by some of his Disciples.
§. 4. Of Prodigies Praternatural.

Principles, much to the commendation of their Master Aristotle, that he hath said so very little concerning God and Providence: it being a great instance of modesty and sobriety of mind, in Divine matters especially, προτεστατικῶς καὶ φωτιῶς (as the Pythagoreans direct) not to speak without sufficient light in the case; which He could not have amidst the darkness of Gentilism. I shall herein imitate him, not intending to write much by dark, and to be very bulie in a Theam where I am unprovided of any sure Principles to measure my conceptions by. All that I shall offer on this subject shall be comprised in these three Propositions:

First, There have been some such Apparitions of Spirits as Books commonly make faith of. I readily grant that this Argument (like an enchanted House) is full of Fantasms and delusive Images, and that many stories of this nature there are, which like Spectres are filled out in shew, with reality and substance, but when we come to handle and examine them by making search into their truth and evidence, we find them vanishing into the air of common report, or the single testimony of some superstitious and melancholy Imaginants. And therefore, I know many men are not at all impressive to any such Relations, but look upon them all but as (Apparitions indeed) things which never ad-
Of Prodigies Preternatural. § 4.

advanced nearer to Realities then the Images of a Dream.

Look as in Religion, some men (to present God with a flattering faith) take great pleasure to invent new mysteries therein, to fancy a μαθηματικός, somewhat inexplicable in every article thereof, till they have made it a contradiction to the most natural Maxims and ease in sense of our minds, and a scandal to men that can discourse; so others are very busy in filling up every depth, and removing every real mystery therein, till they have left no image or footprint of its unsearchable Author thereupon. Thus it comes to pass in the matters of Providence, some men are hugely taken with mysteries therein, delighted to hear and relate somewhat new and strange; their Pia Mater is always big with some Religious Legend or Prophecy to obtrude upon the easy World as a divine discovery: Others again would remove all Prodigies, Apparitions, and what ever goes off from the figures and measures of common and ordinary, and know not to admit a Persuasion of any thing, of whose Causes, Ends or Examples they are not aware.

In Alexander,

Lucian commends this temper in Epicurus, Democritus, Metrodorus, That if any thing rare and wonderful fell before their consideration, they had put on ἀπαρχαίον, a Resolution as inflexible as Adamantium.
Of Prodigies Preternatural.

want to endeavor a Solution thereof, and its reduction to the proper ends and causes: which if they were able to do, well and good; but if not, to arrest all further search and wonder with this sentence, ἔστω δὲ εἰ ἐγγίζεις ἀδικία, it is a lie, and impossible to be at all. (An easy art to maintain the repute of understanding men!) And we shall not seldom find men (especially such as are arrived at no great experience of themselves or things) advancing the length of their own Understanding and Experience (as our English King did his arm) the common standard and measure of the truth or falsehood of things; an instance of which temper appears in their slow and heavy motion to a faith of such things (Apparitions among the rest) whose natures, causes, ends or patterns fall not within their compass. But certainly, as to be of a waxen faith, impressive to any Narrations of this nature, is an instance of softness and superstition; so an obstinate and pertinacious incredulity retains a little to Atheism, because removing one of the greatest and most pregnant Arguments of a Deity, and giving cause of suspicion that the Person hath a temper scarce curable by Religion, which (as we may observe) is so managed, as to suppose men candid and ingenuous, such as will sit down with high probabilities, where the condition of the
things to believed admits not evidence and demonstration. The Stories of all Times are full of Relations of such things as these, and therefore Unbelief in this particular is guilty of the rudeness of giving the lie to the World and besides, some of these Relations are delivered with such circumstances of time, place, words spoken, Events succeeding, Secrets discovered, strange Passions in Men and Beasts, upon the presence of such Apparitions, as secure them (as much as can be expected) from all suspicion of deceit of sight or imagination in the Testimons. They which have itching ears for such stories, may have them sufficiently scratched by Cardanus, Grosins, and other Undertakers in this curious Argument.

Secondly, The Apparitions of evil Angels in what places, forms, companies, and their Premonitions by what voices and signs for ever, ought not to be attended unto as the Prognosticks of any Events whatsoever. Many Relations there are current in Writers and common converse of such Apparitions in very terrible Forms, and that before some great Plagues and Wars: and I shall not once attempt to build my Cause upon the ruins of the Credit of them all. (We find in Scripture the fall of Saul and Jonathan, though ambiguously, foretold by the Apparition of an evil Angel.) Such Apparitions
54. Of Prodigies Preternatural.

Provisions have happened (though generally in times and places of greatest Ignorance and Superstition) and that perhaps, as was said, that these lying Spirits may maintain an Opinion of their foresight of things (though the matters signified by them be such as might easily be discovered in their Natural or Moral Causes) or to get such a stock of credit whereby they may set up Cheaters with the less suspicion for the future, or in a petty triumph over men, whose sins, together with their temptations, have betrayed them to such approaching deaths and miseries (the Reason alleged by some why they appear so much among Tombs and and Charnel-houses,) or to extort from men some fantastick Rites and Februations to chase away Moros's and Spectres, and to make them infinitely Superstitious and distrustful of God and Providence. Or perhaps God will have these Apollions seen, as it were, upon the Stage, before Execution, that men may know and consider into whose hands, in all likelihood, their iniquities have betrayed them.

But admit Satan to be in these Apparitions (as in other matters) ἐξαντλήσαι (as S. Basil stiles him) an Enemy not easily scented out, and his depths past our fathom-ing, sure I am we have no warrant at all to give any evil Spirit the honor of the least credit.
credit and regard, by an observance of any word, action, or sign of his. God would disown one of his Royal Titles, when once blacked and profaned by the Devil's usurpation. Our Savior refuseth a just and true testimony to his Divinity, when given in by the Father of lies. God's Servants refuse his good Creatures, when once set upon the Devil's Table. No Groves must be placed near God's Altar, nor Pillars erected as formerly, when once profaned by diabolical imitation. We are allowed no fellowship with Devils, by whom truth is never told but to serve some delusion and imposture. And therefore though we read that God sometimes made use of evil Angels as the Executioners of his Judgments, yet never that he commissioned any of them to be Denouncers of them.

To receive therefore the evident or but suspected Apparitions, Voices, Drummings, Noises of evil Spirits in the Heavens or Earth, as Presages of some approaching Evils (as if like some strange Creatures in the Sea they used to play in sight against a storm) is to consult shame to our selves and to our Religion: To our selves] because rendring our selves thereby to the suspicion of having an huge credulity and curiosity (pregnant arguments of a vain and unfurnish'd mind) that will advise with the Devil.
54, of Prodigies Praternal.
to know what God will do hereafter. To our
Religion, deriving upon it an appearance of
falseness in the many assurances it renders
us of the treacheries and impostures of those
forsaken Spirits. Such Apparitions report
nothing to us with faithfulness; but (what
they usually tempt men least to believe) the
Being of God; and so (as the Vipers flesh is
said to cure its own biting) enable us to quote
the Devil against Satan, and to cast him out
by himself. The Chaldee Oracle long ago
advised men against an attendance to any
verbal or real Sign given them by χωρτες ἡ
 Golovai terrestrial Dogs (as they called their
more material and coarser sort of Demons,
conceived the Worriers of Souls,) because
Out' αληθες σῆμα βετος δικαιως, never μωρίς ἡ
shewing any true Sign to Man; παροι δέ θείας
πέλαγόνι ζώνης, καὶ νοεῖς Θεοῖς ἀκουμι-
πνομικοί (as k Psel. Schol. paraphraseth the O-
rlace) being placed at huge distances from the
Divine Life, and lapsed from all intellectual
Contemplation: and so neither willing nor
able to give any creditable notices of a fu-
ture time. In which, both Text and Para-
phrase, there may be much of truth, though
I think the common Ethnick Doctrine of
some more cruel and cheating, and others
more kind and trusty Demons, was a fetch of
the Devil's much like that of our common
Cheats, which cavea with much seriousness
Of Prodigies Præternatural. § 4.

against Thieves and Cutpurses, that the light of this pretended honesty may so dazzle men's eyes, that themselves may practise their art the less suspected and discovered.

It is our wisdom not to invite the Devil so far to be our Oracle, as to vouchsafe the least credit to any of his prophetick speeches, postures, actions; but to resolve to take the Goodness and Providence of God as security sufficient for the peace and composure of our minds; and not to put our selves out of his keeping (and so make way for the accomplishment of any of them) by any distrustful fears, arising from an observance of any Signs whatsoever given forth by so sworn an Enemy, to God, Truth, and the Peace of Man.

Thirdly, The Appearances of good Angels are now rarely given, hardly discovered, never to be expected. I say, Rarely given] Oracles, Revelations, Miracles, Visions, Apparitions, were a kind of extraordinary Manna from Heaven, whereby God supplied the necessities of that more desert state of his Church under the old Law; all which, the more plentiful provision, and more silent and gentle temper of this new Economy, hath rendered less suitable and expedient; And therefore are seldom vouchsafed now: I do not say Never, lest I speak without book. To omit some very probable Relations of this
§ 4. Of Prodigies Praternatural.

this nature, that an Apparition is usually thought an Herald from Heaven, which a-midst a great attendance came and advised James the fourth of Scotland (in whose Counsels at that time the concerns of a Nation were wrapt up) to forbear some evil practices, but especially the fighting of his intended Battel with the English, in those words, Rex, ego ad te missus sum, ut te admonem, ne quo instituisti progrediaris; quam admonitionem si neglexeris, non erit e re tua, nec eorum quires comitabantur. Which counsel He neglecting, Himself, most of his Nobles and Army, fell in that fatal Battel. Hardly discovered] for how easily may the Devil impose upon our Simplicity in the Livery of an Angel of light? Though I think there are two more trustworthy Characters to distinguish the Apparition of an evil from a good Angel, then the cloven-foot vulgar Opinion affixeth to the Devil: One is, the impertinency and frivolousness of the end and occasion thereof. Apparitions, Miracles and Revelations (by Dreams, Oracles, Impressions) were the three ways whereby God anciently discovered and assured his Truths and Counsels to Mankind. Now as the Ancients often distinguish true Revelations and Miracles from pretending ones, by calling men to consider whether they were directed to the future, or to the past, or to the present.
Of Prodigies Præternatural. § 4.

ritual and eternal health and safety of Souls, and whether they were profitable and really useful to mankind: all true Miracles and Revelations being (like God) great, good, and holy, in themselves and ends: so we may by the same standard prove the truth of Apparitions: if the ends and occasions they come to serve be mean, cheap, vain, we may arrest them upon suspicion of forgery and imposition: God never sent an Angel from Heaven upon a sleeveless errand. The other character is the monstrous form and shape thereof. The Sons of God never debase themselves by such brutish shapes, ludicrous postures, which evil Spirits usually do; designing to get to themselves the homage of some great fear from men, or to abuse their imaginations, or to dishonor the image and figure of Man (whom they so much hate) or to appear rather ridiculous then abominable. Never to be expected] because never promised [to counsel us, though they are to protect us.] Converse with Angels is a dignity which our state of infirmity cannot well bear, nor our follies admit: it is reserved to that blessed time when we shall be equal to the Angels, and so more fit company for them then we are while carrying about us these coats of matter and dust.
And this I hope may suffice to tender concerning these second kind of prodigies signal.

CHAP. IV.

Concerning prodigies supernatural.

There are some events, which the history of times presents us with, of so peculiar a make and character, that they stand alone in nature, and their causes stand so much in the dark, that they seem to enter a very fair and plausible plea for the repute of a miracle: such as are the turning of ponds and lakes (in appearance) into blood; swords as of fire seen to hang over cities (as that over Jerusalem) for several days together; the removal of mountains or other parts of the earth for several furlongs from their natural places; the falling of hail or snow sealed with some unusual figures; some strange alterations observed in the motions and tempers of the birds or beasts, or colors and figures of the heavenly bodies; the weeping or sweating of statues, stains as of blood discovered upon stones, or the images of great men; new stars discovered in the heavens. With these must be reckoned some sudden intercisions of the light of
Of Prodigies Supernatural. Cap. 4.

of the Sun, occasioned not by the vail of an Eclipse cast before it, but some unaccountable passion of the luminous Body itself. Such a deliquium we read of immediately subsequent to the death of Caesar, concluded by the Ethnick Poet, a kind of prodigious shrinking of the Eye of Heaven from the view of so black a wickedness as the Assas-

sination of so excellent a Person; p who upon occasion thereof thus expresseth him-

self:

Ille etiam extincto miseratus Caesar Romam Cum caput obscura nitidum ferrugine tinxit,
Impiaque aeternam timuerunt secula noctem.

The Sun eclips'd it self when Caesar dy'd,
And all its Glories did in Sables hide:
To mourn Rome's loss; while guilt receiv'd
the Sight
As Pledge or Picture of Eternal Night.

A like instance whereunto (in another kind) is the sudden torpor and standing still of great Currents, and the parting of their Waters in so wonderful a manner, that they carry some weaker imitations of those miraculous divisions of Waters in sacred Writ. Such was that which hapned Ann. 1399, when the River of Ouse in Bedfordshire parted a-

bout Harold in that County, the Waters from the Fountain standing still, and those toward
Cap. 4. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

Now though I am far from giving to all these Effects the repute of a Miracle, much less of a Sign; yet because Nature seems not in these, as in other Prodigies, to err by any known Law, and some of them at least are so wonderful, that they appear to stand in the confines of a Miracle, I thought good to discourse them inclosed under another name and notion: And the rather, because if our Adversaries should chance to call a knub an horn, to stile these or some other of the fore-mentioned Prodigies, Supernatural and Miraculous, they may seem (like Prætens) to avoid all the knots they cannot unloose, Reasons they cannot answer, by shifting forms; and that Event which they cannot advance a Sign of the time under the name of a Prodigy, they may possibly assay to do under the color of a Miracle.

That therefore which I shall offer concerning Prodigies Supernatural (whether in truth or pretence I shall not much inquire) shall be couch’d in these few ensuing Propositions.

Sect.
Of Prodigies Supernatural. § I.

SECT. I.

Three Propositions concerning Prodigies Supernatural.

No extraordinary work to be hastily judged a Miracle, for four Reasons. Our Saviour why especially frequent in cleansing the Lepers and raising the dead. Lying Oracles and Miracles much used by the Devil to the purposes of imposture. Three Ages of Miracles. Miracles wrought very sparingly as to number and measure. Why Miracles came attended heretofore with instruction. The Sword as of Fire which hung over Jerusalem, an intended Sign of Desolation: the special fitness of that Sign to the end thereof. Some other Prodigies related in Josephus, why not of equal credit with this. What to be thought of the voice in the Temple by him recorded, and of the sudden opening of the Gates thereof. The Temples usually the Scene of Prodigies among the Heathens, proved from their Writers. The policy of the Devil in that, noted.

Our first Proposition is this: It is a great example of rashness, easily to intitle any strange Effect, whole cause stands not in a good light, Supernatural and Miraculous: and that upon a fourfold account:

1. We understand not the just compass of that sphere of activity assigned to bare Natural Powers, and how far they may (in some circumstances) exceed the lines of common and ordinary Operation. How many Works of Art are there, scarce the wonder of our days, the performance whereof, in the rudeness of former times, would have preferred a man to the repute of Simon Magus, the great Power.
§ 1. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

Power of God? Who would not two or three hundred years ago have y'oud the breaking down of mighty walls by the powers of a little black dust as great an im-possibility, as the Indians did the communicating by Letters at so great a distance? We understand not fully how far our Notions of possible and impossible (when we are in view of Agents Natural) are fix'd and faithful. Some things we well understand to be impossible in Nature, or else we were not capable of being persuaded by a real Mi-racle; but other things we onely think to be impossibles in Nature, or else we were not capable of being deluded by an appearing one. As for the Miracles wrought by our Savior, lest any shadow of natural Power might seem to affit and so to dispa-rage them, he usually exerted his Divinity in restoring of men born blind to sight, in curing of the woman whom Art had given for desperate, in commanding the waves and storms into silence with a word: but especially frequent was he in raising of the dead and cleansing of the Lepers: the former all the World would acknowledge a Work that lay perfectly out of the ways of Nature; and the latter the Jews commonly stiled the "finger of God, and therefore this Miracle especially (of which they had such a great Opinion) is said to be wrought for a testi-
mony unto them. These were Works where-
of no Magician ever attempted the counter-
feit: otherwise his Miracles had left open a
wide door for Infidelity to get out at. And no
question, if God intended that the fore-men-
tioned Prodigies should be received with the
Opinion of Miracles, there should not ap-
pear the least shadow of natural Power in
them to obscure the lustre of his Divine
Power immediately exerted in the produc-
tion of them.

2. We understand not fully how far the
Dominion of the Prince of the Powers of
the Air extends, and how far he is able to ape
a Miracle by those wonderful impressions he
can make upon natural bodies. We read of a
Beast to whom the Dragon had given his

\[ \text{Rev. 13:13.} \]

Power, doing great Wonders, and causing
Fire to come down from Heaven, as it were in
imitation of Elias: & so much to the life had
the Devil's false Prophets imitated the true
ones in their great Works, that they are said
to arise and shew great Signs and Wonders,
where the very same Greek words are
used which express the real Miracles of S.
Stephen. The two ways whereby God hath
advanced his Kingdom, are Oracles and Mi-
racles: and we shall find Lucifer his ambi-
tion of being like the Most High, express in
his (though lying) Oracles and Miracles.

\[ \text{Mat. 24:24.} \]

\[ \text{Acts 6:8.} \]
Of Prodigies Supernatural.

A f ore t o l d as immediately subsequent to our Savior's Ascension. And some expound those two horns of Prophecies and Miracles, whereby the Devil in his Emis saries did heretofore ape and resemble the Lamb and his followers.

And so fair a stamp had he set upon them that they long past current in the World, according as it was foretold. Nay Hierocles (who yet had the Touchstone of Philosophy to discover them by) was so far enchanted by those lying Wonders wrought by that Arch-Magician Apollonius, that (as appears from what Eusebius wrote against him) he durst vie them with the mighty Miracles wrought by our Blessed Savior. To assert therefore the fore-mentioned or the like extraordinary Works, transcendent to the Powers of the infernal Kingdom, or that evil Spirits can serve no ends of imposture in them at some times, is an Assertion which seems to have more of heat then light therein.

3. We ever find the wise God setting great store by his Miracles, reserving them always to the service of some great occasions: so great, that the Person and service of John the Baptist seemed not great enough to re-
Of Prodigies Supernatural. § 1.

receive the honor of a Miracle. We read but of three Ages of Miracles: 1. When the Law was to be given, and the Jewish Oeconomy to be settled, and that among a People too dull and heavy to be wrought upon by subtil Arguments. 2. When the Law was to be restored to its just reverence amongst that Apostate People, the ten Tribes, who were fallen into so Lethargick a sleep, that there was no awakening of them into a sense of God and Duty, but by the loud voice of some mighty Signs and Wonders. 3. When that Oeconomy which was founded in Signs and Wonders was now to expire and to give place to the Kingdom of the Messiah. And we may observe, that when God did work a Miracle, yet he did it very sparingly, and usually as much in the use of natural Agents as their capacities would allow. When he would divide the Sea, he did it by causing an East-wind to blow all night upon the Waters: and when he would destroy the Egyptians, he first disordered their Chariots and broke their Wheels, ut quasi rerum naturalium aut artificiosarum vitio non divina potentia miraculo corruiisse viderentur; as Pineda notes upon that occasion: when our Savior was to ascend Miraculously to Heaven, he went as far as he could on foot thither, even to the top of Mount Olivet: and when Elijah was to fast forty days, that
§ 1. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

there might be no waste of Miraculous Power, God would have him eat a double meal before it: It would therefore speak us greatly ignorant of the extraordinary sacredness of a Miracle, to give the honor thereof to every strange Accident of which our Philosophy can give no very smooth and consistent account, and to imagine Heaven is grown so lavish of them now, as to throw them out upon every cheap and unknown occasion. The Laws of Nature proceed upon a more excellent counsel than that we may presume them rescinded upon any little or unaccountable ends.

God's Miracles came forth heretofore attended generally with instruction: Being usually wrought by great Prophets, who could teach the People, and point to their intended significations. Miracles are commonly God's Seal to some great Truth, and therefore some writing they must be affix'd to; for as the writing without the seal wants authority, so the seal without the writing significancy. God's Miraculous Works never come forth (like a Jugler's tricks) solely to make men stare and wonder; nor are they level'd onely to the advancement of his own Power and Divinity (sufficiently reported, as the Apostle tells us, by the things which are made) but generally to some humane benefit, the curing of some desperate disease.
the supplying men in some urgent strait, the affrighting of them from some destructive practice, or the confirmation of them in some important truth (the ultimate end of them all.) And therefore it is necessary that we understand what errand this or that supposed Miracle comes forth upon, and upon what account we are concerned therein. Where Men understand not the meaning of the loud voice of a Miracle, it speaks but into the Air. Now what Prophet have we able to lead us, to the true meaning of any such great Wonder? If it be God's Embassador, where is the Interpreter that can expound its language, and resolve us whether it confirm a Truth, or declare a Judgment, or refute an Error, or foretel a Funeral? Without some instruction attending it, every strange Event in the World will (to the most) be like the Wind, they may hear the sound thereof, but not know whence it comes, nor whether it goes, what cause it proceeds from, nor what end it is directed to.

Upon a Consideration of the Premises, I understand not how any hasty Conclusions now concerning the Miraculousness of any strange Event can reconcile themselves to counsel and sobriety.

Secondly, That flaming Sword (as both figure and form may intitle it) which hung...
over Jerusalem for the space of a year together before the Roman Eagles prey'd upon it, was probably intended a Sign of an ensuing vengeance. For our Savior prophesied of some fearful Sights, and great Signs from Heaven, as the fore-runners of the Desolation of that City; and perhaps upon a due Judgment of the several circumstances of this Heavenly phænomenon, it will appear big enough to fill out that Expression. What more fearful Sight then a Sword hanging just over our heads, and a flaming Sword too in the resemblance thereof: God made choice of a flaming Sword as one of the first expressions of his displeasure to strike a fear of his Justice into fallen Man. And a great Sign it was; for as that Star which was the Conductor of the Wise-men to the place of our Savior's Birth, so this wonderful Appearance declar'd by its peculiar Accidents, that it was of no common make, nor came forth upon a common errand. It appears by the story to have descended so low in the Air, that it was evidently vertical to the City, which if it had been a natural Comet it could not have done: and it lasted so long, and maintained so fix'd a Position, that it cannot well be numbered among those la Cometaarum, in the Elementary Region, mentioned before, whose subtil and dispersable matter serves them not to any such
Of Prodigies Supernatural. § 1.

long continuance, at least not to so settled a posture of appearance. Moreover, our Savior’s Prophecy runs in the plural number, [There shall be fearful SIGHTS and great SIGNS from Heaven,] which therefore cannot well be salved by that single Sight and Sign from thence of Chariots and armed Companies issuing out of the Clouds, of which at large before. But both together proclaim it very fully and wisely accomplished: for the first sight of a fiery Sword was but an indicative Sign, an Hieroglyphick and obscurer Image of a War; but the latter a representative Sign thereof, being a lively setting forth of one Battel and Army by another.

Now most fit it was that a Nation long deaf to the Voice of the many great Signs from Heaven to proclaim an approaching Salvation, should receive some from thence of an approaching Desolation. Amongst which none seems more proper then a flaming Sword, being an expressive emblem of War and Justice, and a kind of imitation and remembrance of that flaming Sword, which drove the first Parents of that disobedient People (upon their rejection of the Tree of Life, a type of the Lord of Life and Glory) from the Paradise of God.

They which shall endeavor to sink the price and value of this and the other Pro-
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...of Prodigies Supernatural, in the Air, beneath the esteem I receive them with, by laying beside them some other parallel Examples of them occurring in the Writers concerning Meteors, shall find me no difficult Auditor of them, if they can first fix the accomplishment of our Savior's Prophecy in some instances which may be more plausibly pretended fearful Sights and great Signs from Heaven; which I shall take confidence to say, I am sure they are unable to do, or to produce the Examples of any airy impressions able to equal or to come near all the great circumstances of these two.

Nor doth the receiving of these two Signs with such serious thoughts, impose any necessity of entertaining with like Persuasion the many other Prodigies related upon the same occasion by Josephus; Particularly, the story there of an Heifer, which being brought by the Priest to the Altar, brought forth a Lamb, is a dead fly sufficient almost to some nicer noses to make the whole Relation of his other Prodigies to smell strongly of an imposture: this was rather a ridiculous then a fearful Sight: and besides, Can any man think God would ever work so sportive, so cheap, so insignificant a Miracle? It is probable therefore that this Prodigy might be originally coined in some Ethnick mint: for it is sufficiently known...
Of Prodigies Supernatural §.1

how much it is figured like many other Legends related in the Gentile stories, where the mention of Prodigies occurs. Herodotus relates that a little before the defeat of Xerxes, a Mare brought forth an Hare. Dio Cassius among other Prodigies, That a Sow brought forth a birth every way like that of an Elephant but only in the fact. And whereas Josephus there also relates the story of the Priests their going into the Temple about Pentecost to attend the holy offices of the Evening, and hearing that voice therein, μεταξύ διάνων ἠκούσαν, Let us go hence, the whole matter seems but a fable originally invented by some superstitious Heathen (a little disguised by Josephus) whose usual Doctrine was, that the Gods, when their Temples and Altars were defiled or taken, used to take pet, and adytum arisque reliquis to betake themselves to some more hallowed and magnificent shrines. Sure I am, Tacitus seems to believe and understand this Relation in some such sense as this: and whereas he calls this Voice which was heard Major humana, there is a perfect reference to a common Ethnick notion, That all Appearances of the Gods were managed in figures, voices, and other circumstances transcendent to an humane measure: to which Notion Virgil had a respect in that Verse,
And whereas both Tacitus and Josephus relate the sudden opening of the doors of the Temple, a strange voice in the Temple, and a light as of fire seen in the Temple before the Destruction of Jerusalem, they appear to me very much to Ethnicize in all these stories. For before the Lacedemonians were overthrown at the Battle of Leuctra, it is storied that the Arms in the Temple were heard to make a noise of their own accord; and about the same time at Thebes, the Gates of the Temple are reported to have opened of themselves. And Dio Cassius, among other Prodigies, takes special notice of an Ape seen to enter the Temple of Ceres, and of the Bird of night her flying first to the Temple of Concord, and then to many other consecrate places; and (to omit other instances) he records, that the death of Claudius was foretold by the spontaneous opening of the Temple of Jupiter Conqueror: And Plutarch tells us how the Adrianians timely opened their Gates to Timoleon and his Armies, declaring with horror and amazement that the sacred Doors of the Temple were open of their own accord in the midst of the fight, which some of their party had with some of his; and that the face of their Idol-God ...
Of Prodigies Supernatural. § 1.

God was seen to flow with a great sweat. And Polybius, upon the expectations of an encounter with Hannibal, tells us (a matter not usual with him) that every Temple was full of Signs and Prodigies. The Ethnick Temples were, thus usually, the Scene of Prodigies, perhaps because the Devil thought the Sacredness of the Place might give Reputation to the Sign, and prefer the Gods to the Opinion of the Foreseers and Effecters of all the Evils which succeeded.

Now the cutting off these dead and rotten branches from the main Stock of Josephus his story, will prove no prejudice at all to those two found ones fore-mentioned: for these latter were neither very fearful Sights nor great Signs, nor yet from Heaven, nor had they that publick notice and long continuance which these two had, which are therefore the less exposed to suspicion of imposture. But I think I need not much concern my self to throw out Relations which have had peaceable possession of the common Faith for so many Ages. For admit them Truths, they are Examples extraordinary in themselves and in their occasions, and (to use the words of Josephus) matters that would seem altogether too great for credit, but that succeeded by them ffs Cn-

μείων ἡδίω, calamities big enough for the so-

lemnity
§. I. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

Mensity of some Signs and Presages: and therefore (these Examples, exempted by their peculiar considerations from all capacity of making common rules, let aside) I assert,

Thirdly, None of the fore-mentioned Pro-Propos. digies, when ever occurring, are now to be received as the indications of the condition of any future time. To a proof of which Proposition I shall proceed in the use of the same facile and perspicuous method which was observed while discoursing of Prodigies Natural: endeavoring to build it up,

1. By some general Reasons.

2. By a particular Induction.

S E C T.
SECT. II.

General Reasons against the Significancy of Prodigies Supernatural.

(1) Reason. We have no solid ground to receive these as the significant Signs of any future Event. The Vanity of all Opinions in Religion which bottom on Imagination. Men apt to neglect the use of Reason in the choice of Opinions in Religion, and why. The danger of so doing. The pretending Reasons of the contrary Opinions answered. (2) We are unprovided of any sure Rules of Interpretation in reference to them. Similitude and Experience attended to by the Interpreters of Dreams and Prodigies. The vanity of both in this business evinced. The Egyptians of old why in probability such critical Observers of Prodigies. Ælian. The great unreasonablebleness of asserting unintelligible Signs. (3) A natural account may be given of some of these supposed Miracles. Strange changes in the Heavens owing to some cause in Nature. The Opinion of Petavius in reference to that Deliquium of the Solar light hapning upon the death of Constantine the seventh, rejected. The judgment of Plutarch of the natural cause of some strange Spots sometimes discovered upon Stones. (4) Many of them of Diabolical efficiency. The Reasons of that Assertion. The ends the Devil served upon Prodigies: they noted more serviceable to him of old than his Oracles. The Opinion of Fate among the Heathens encouraged by Prodigies. Appian. Plutarch. Lactantius his judgment in reference to them. (5) Many of these Prodigies minister to greater ends then Presages: those touch'd upon.

That Argument which well deserves the leading place among rational Considerations against this Opinion, is this: We have no sufficient grounds and reasons to persuade our reception of any of these (so called) Super-
§.2. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

Supernatural Prodigies as the Signs of the Times. Without Reason we cannot, ought not, to receive the Scripture itself; much less a Prodigious Event, as an intimation of the Divine Counsels. There are some men which can hang their most weighty Principles, like the Earth, upon nothing. 7 Job 26.7.

Reasons and Demonstrations are look'd upon by them (where Religion appears concerned) not onely as uselesse, but dangerous, and as cold dull things proper onely for Atheists and Hereticks to measure their conceptions by: Their Discourses and Practices speak them Proselites to that Maxim of the old Heathens; About Doctrines concerning the Gods, or any matters Divine, we must never expect Science and Demonstration, but receive them all, how strange soever, with the Religion of a very passive Soul and submissive Faith. Objects hot and vehement, and that do not much task and employ their weaker faculties, as pretended Oracles, Revelations, strong and inexplicable impressions upon their Spirits, mighty Prodigies, some turgent Imaginations and pretty Fantasms, Traditional Persuasions, they use (as silly Birds in the night to that which glares most) to fly about and admire. But these measures of understanding (like the Bed of Procrustes) bring all men to an equal length, and quickly proportion the mind that hath wisdom.
Of Prodigies Supernatural.

Wisdom to that which hath none; and therefore can be acceptable to those onely, whose sloth and self-neglect gives them a fear of the curse of Reuben, never to excel.

If once Right Reason, the Door-keeper of the Soul, be put by its office, our inward house will soon lie open and free for every vile and vagrant Opinion to take up and dwell therein. It is indeed the great Doctrine of those Sons of Mystery, the Cabalists and some Chymists, that Intellectus perficitur patiendo, the mind of Man, like matter, is rendered most capable of being well informed by becoming pura potentia, a perfectly passive power to what forms of knowledge may casually come upon it from abroad, or the activity of imagination; and that Truth offers her self soly to such passionate and humble Suiters as can be content even to forego themselves to gain her. But we know the men and their communication: God, I am sure, hath no where required us to a Faith which cannot satisfy the Reason of a Man which searcheth into the grounds and evidence thereof. He hath commanded us to prove before we hold fast, to sound as well as sail. And therefore till we see some better reason offered to acquit our owning of them as the Signs of God's Counsels, besides the imaginations and dictates of dogmatical men (which
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(which will venture to break open God's Cabinet while they want any sure Key to unlock it) it is but a just respect to our selves to maintain our freedom of dissent, and to believe such strange Works level'd to some other White then what they imagine.

As for the seeming Reasons which this Opinion leans unto, they will appear (like the Staff of Egypt) either to break under, or, by an easier retortion, to pierce and wound it self. For whereas it is urged, that Except we admit this end of these Semi-miracles, the most quick-scented will be at a fault, wholly at a loss what end of them to assign and pitch upon: I answer, Is it so great an inconvenience to admit of Some Passages in the Book of the Creature, of which we are not Scholars good enough to make a right and proper construction? Are there not some Works of Providence which God hath made deep and mystical, on set purpose, that Man might be humbled by them into a sense of his own ignorance and shortness? See Eccles. 8.17. 48.7. Eccles. 7.14. And is it a strange thing to hear of some Works in the compass of Nature out of our reach, such as we must behold (as Children do the Moon) only with an ignorant Wonderment? Ye, but the World will be alway surprized by Judgments, if we admit not such Prodigies the Signs of them: And hath not God told,
even those whose Profession it is to look after and expound the pretended Signs of Times, the Monthly Prognosticators, that Desolation shall come upon them suddenly, and they shall not know? And is not Man expressly said not to know his time, but to be snared in an evil time falling suddenly upon him? Tea, but many strange Judgments have come after such strange Events: What is this but to put the same fallacy upon Men which we sometimes do upon Children, when we tell them, Many people have been known to die after cutting of their fingers? Let it appear that Judgments come Constantly, Immediately, Designedly, after them, and the Caution is yielded. In sum; The great confidence of the Opinion we contend with, seems to lie (for ought I can perceive) but in a series of many Assertors, which, like persons in the dark, shut their eyes, and take care only to hold fast by those which went before them; shall we then entertain an Opinion that hath so little to say for itself? That man that can believe without Reason, is in next capacity to believe against it.

Secondly, We are utterly unprovided of any trusty Rules to direct the Interpretation of these pretended Signs of Heaven. They are a Nose of Wax which may be wry’d to what figure, expounded to what sense Fancy shall impose upon them. The Ancient Onei-
§. 2. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

Horriticks used to plow with a double Heifer to unriddle the mystick meaning of Dreams, Similitude and Experience. They considered either what the Images of the Dream proposed did most fitly represent, or how in former Experience they had succeeded: and I never heard that the Interpreters of Prodigies took aim to hit the right sense and intention of them by any other level than that of these two. 1. Similitude: That they tell us shall succeed of which the Prodigy may be conceived the most natural type and representative. As, three Suns in the Firmament shall be received as a Prefiguration of three Rivals for the Throne in a State.

A breach in some noted River shall be an indication of some civil breaches in the Nation. A seeming Combatte among Crows, a figure of one amongst Men. Thus the common people, upon occasion of that strange sweating Sickness hapning at the beginning of the Reign of Henry the Seventh, used to say,

That it was a Sign that his Reign should be with much labor, because it began with a Sickness of Sweat. Another (learnedly) tells us, That a Monster made up of Man and Dog in the body thereof, did foreshew that the City, in which it was born, should be vexed Canis morsibus & clandestinis proditionibus. But because the Prodigies sometimes (like the head of Time behind) yield no answer,
nothing for Fancy to take hold of, they be-
take them to Experience, concluding what
will now from an Observation of what hath
heretofore followed upon such Anomalies in
Nature: 

Herodotus tells us, that there were
more Prodigies found out and observed by the
Egyptians (perhaps because of a Traditional
Reverence of Signs and Wonders continued
among them from the very Times of Moses
wherein so many hapned) then by any other
 Nation whatsoever. And that their usage
was, when any Prodigy fell, to write it down,
and to observe the Event succeeding; and if
ever any like Prodigy hapned, they easily con-
cluded it would be issued in a Similar Event.
The mind of Man is easily invited to believe
that other Prodigies will fall out like those
few with which it is so strongly affected and
prepossessed; because both to be dodged and
abused with endless uncertainties and dissi-
mitudes, especially among things it hath a
great Opinion of, and would fain reduce to
some steady Rules.

But how specious soever these Rules may
seem to the first view, they will vanish into
smoke and dust, if not touch'd by the hand
of Reason. For how many Prodigies are
there, which the strongest Fancy cannot bend
and mold to any similitude: As there are
πολλοὶ ναζαεῖς; & ὄσοις ἐν ἑρυτεῖς ἑλαῖς
οὐκεῖς (as Artemidorus not unhandsomely
phrased

Oneirocritico.
c. 12.
§ 2. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

Phraseth it) many dry and withered Dreams, and as it were having no handles; so there are Prodigies of like condition, such as imagination cannot take hold of: For what hath a Comet in common with any Event here below, and what can a Monstrous Birth presage? except some will be so witty as to say it represents some monstrous Evils. As for those which carry some faint imitations of things here on Earth, how many ways may Fancy easily make those Images look? How many senses [Historical, Moral, Political, Theological, Philosophical] are put upon the Ethnicks Fables (which are but a kind of speaking Prodigies) by the different Fancies of the Writers upon them? And as for those Prodigies which carry the resemblance of some one Judgment, against whom do they threaten it, or when to fall? While the Armies of Alexander distrest the Thebans with a strait Siege, it is storied that a Fountain near the City ran blood: what was the issue of this ambiguous Sign? Macedonians, the Thebans believed the Deity threatened their Enemies the Macedonians: so uncertain a sound was given by this loud Trumpet of the Gods, as it was supposed. Nor will Experience much better assist the Interpretation of Prodigies; for sometimes none, sometimes different, sometime Per-
fominal, otherwhile National Evils, and sometimes great Blessings, have been noted to succeed Comets, Monsters, and the like, as the Registers of them (as kept especially by the Heathens) will attest. And this was the reason why such things were anciently received, sometimes with the Opinion of their being good, sometimes of their being unlucky Omens.

Can any man then (that will lay out his thoughts of God by any rules) imagine that these Signs are his Text, whose Exposition is intrusted with such giddy and uncertain Interpreters as Similitude and Experience are; or that he would have us understand his meaning when speaking to us by Signs which borrow all their Signification from Conceit and Fancy? What eternal jealousies of Heaven must such random Signs necessarily create: for if a Judgment do ensue, we are uncertain whether it were the very judgment portended yes or no; but we shall have reason to bespeak it in the language of the Jews to our Savior, 'Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Besides, Men not knowing the kind or season of the Evil portended, will, in all likelihood, be as much surprized by it when it comes, as if never warned thereof at all.

Thirdly, A very consistent account may be given of the Causes of most of these suppo-
§ 2. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

Of Miracles. The strange Passions sometimes observed in the Heavenly Bodies, seem necessarily to resolve into some natural Principles of mutability seated as well in the Heavenly as Sublunary Bodies, though at such vast distances less subject to our notices.

Several Examples of such Celestial Anomalies in the Philosophick Registers present us with, of which it may suffice to our purpose to take notice of two: The one happening about the year 790, when the Sun in a clear and serene Air, and without the incidence of an Eclipse, lost its usual splendor, and for seventeen days became of a black and darkish hue. Which Prodigy, because falling immediately upon the death of Constantine the seventh, procured by his Mother Irene, is concluded by Petavius a kind of Voice from Heaven to protest the horridness of the fact against some Grecians who appeared very ready to applaud it. But I think it very unsafe to weigh the extreme evil of such an example at so unfaithful a beam as this: we have a more sure word of Prophecy, and a more terrible darkness (that at Mount Sinai) to proclaim the hainousness of the Sin of Murder, but especially that of Princes, to the World. Besides, what shadow of Reason had Petavius to justify the confidence of this Assertion? Certainly, to imagine that Comets, Earth-
quakes, the Deliquia in the Sun, or any other Anomalies in the World, are owing to the private occasions of particular Kingdoms, is, with the Flie upon the Axletree in the Fable, to conceit we raise all this dust, which indeed ariseth from that 

"Evity of the Wheels of Nature."

The other Example parallel hereunto, is related by P. Lavater, who reports that in the year 1585, Mar. 12, such a darkness suddenly covered the Earth, that the Birds went to roost at noon, and the guilty fears of men antedated the Day of Judgment. These instances teach us, that the Heavens may wax old like a garment, and be changed as a vesture; that God only is the same (without shadow of change) and his years without end. As for those other Prodigies, the Water of Ponds or Fountains turned as it is pretended into blood, the interruption of the current of Rivers, some spots as of blood discovered upon Stones or Statues, and some other of like condition, their Causes are so various, and Relations so romantick, it is very difficult to make any steady judgment of them, without an actual presence to them: nor can their Causes be hit with any certainty by Persons which stand at a great distance, and understand not the condition of the Season, Climate, Water, Earth, and other circumstances,
Of Prodigies Supernatural.

stances, when, where and how the Events fell out. He that shall blindly task himself to salve all the Phænomena which the ignorance of some and the vanity of others may stuff out some Prodigious Relations with, may quickly have work enough to do. In matters of so doubtful faith and original, I shall choose rather to deliver Plutarch's Judgment then my own; idιον & γον αναλ-μετα φωλιαγ και διακοπαμαν. It is not impossible (faith he) for the Images of the Gods or Men to seem to sweat, or weep, or to have some drops as of blood upon them: For Wood and Stones do oft contract a kind of rust and soil productive of moisture; and of themselves oft give forth several colors, and receive βαφας εκ, and tinctures and stains from the ambient Air.

Fourthly, It seems greatly reasonable to intitle the Subtil Agency of the Devil to very many of the Prodigies occurring in Ethnicks Writers, and marshal'd by some under this head: Such as are, the throwing down or transposing the sacred Images in Temples, sacrificed Beasts found without Hearts or Livers, the raining of Stones, Armor and Statues flowing blood or sweat for several days, some very artificial Impressions in the Air, the Appearance of Ghosts in terrible forms, some extravagantly monstrous Births, and the like, mentioned up and down in Dio Cassius, Livy.
Of Prodigies Supernatural. § 2.

and others. These are (supposing them true) Effects quite out of the compass of Natural, and too cheap, little and ludicrous for a Supernatural Power. And besides, they served not the least benefit of humane life; for either they were followed with nothing but the vain talk and jealousies of the People, or else came forth so just as the Evil was almost in view, that they seemed rather to solemnize the occasion, then to foreshew it. Thus Polybius notes when the Armies of the Romans and Carthaginians just lay incamp'd one against another, and the issue of the Battel continually expected, then the Temples and Houses were full of Prodigies and strange Sights.

Several ends the Devil might serve upon such fearful Sights among the ignorant Gentiles: as the Opinion of Fatality of Events, That Evils might be a little foreseen, but were impossible to prevent: and therefore Plutarch, upon the mention of some strange Accidents which ushered the fall of Caesar (which the Devil might easily foresee in the contrivance thereof) makes this judgment upon the occasion, as αἰτία δικαίως αὐτοῦ ὕποκουλόν, ὡς ἀφίλὴ γενέσις ὧν ἐπέστρεψαν; The Fate seemed not so much impossible to be foreseen as to be prevented: And so Appian, speaking of the Warnings given to
Caesar, tells his Reader, that they served magis ut videret quam ut vitaret interitum, rather that he might foresee his determined ruine then avoid it. Besides, the Devils having a very subtil foresight of some approaching good or evil, would interpose and declare it by Oracles, Dreams, Prodigies; that (as Lactantius well conjectures) they might be thought the Effectors of what they were the Foreshewers, and their favor be courted, or displeasure attuned, in new Temples, Sacrifices, and such Religious Addresses.

Moreover, by these he extorted from men the homage of some servile fears, and when he could not rob them of their happiness, deprived them of the comfortable sense thereof: As appears from Dio Cassius, who upon the mention of several Prodigies, tells us, τατία, μὲν ἐντὸς τῶν Ὁριον ὕπηχθήντας ἐντεράκτες ἄιδε τρυφείς; these Prodigious Signs fore-shown by the Deity did much trouble the Romans: and in the midst of a great serenity of affairs, he notes of in the Pomp of his Conquest, 1.43, p.242., they of the City of Rome were frightened by strange Signs: And elsewhere, upon the mention of another Prodigy, reports, ἢ δ' ὄντες ταῖς Πολιτείας τῆς Καπανίδος τοῦ τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἡμῖν καταργήσων, they of the Romans upon occasion of this Wonder, And when once, Fear had deprived Men of their Peace and their Reason both at once, they
they sometimes went to his Augurs and Diviners to understand the meaning of these Signs (which had more windings and turnings than the old Serpent,) otherwise to his Altars to expiate the Prodigy, and to bribe their displeased Deity into reconciliation. But the greatest service these Prodigies did him, was the maintaining of some Opinion of his Prescience in the minds of men, without which he well knew the fires on his Altars would quickly go out. For having appointed all the singularities in the Exta, in the face of Heaven, in the Births of Creatures, in the flying of Birds, the weeping of Statues, &c. as a kind of Signs from the Gods of some strange Effects; when ever he saw their Causes to swell out with them, and just ready to be delivered of them, he easily could and often did occasion such Signs (these little changes in the Creation falling within his compass) that on which side soever the Die of Affairs fell, were the success of a Battel, or a Council on this side or that, he might still secure the repute of his Prescience, by holding his easie Votaries in hand, that the preceding Prodigies were the notices of what fell out. Upon an easie foresight of an approaching Battel, he could readily give forth a Prophetick Emblem thereof in some Martial Images in the Airy Region, his proper Principality.
§2. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

Of Prodigies Supernatural, or in the bloody tinctures of a Fountain: and that side which was worsted should be always concluded warned by the precedent Sign. Thus Dio Cassius, speaking of the many Prodigies happening before the Battle between Caesar and Pompey, tells us, Men could not before the issue of things conclude by those Signs to whom Destruction was determined; but he (relating those Signs after Pompey's overthrow) tells us, that being forsaken of Understanding he resolved to engage Caesar, καὶ ἔλησεν λέγοντα, although the Deity did so clearly foreshew his overthrow. A speech that intimates the Heathens thought the Gods to express that in their Signs which did succeed them. And therefore the Devil served his purposes of imposition much better upon these dumb than his speaking Oracles; wherein he exposed his reputation greatly by returning doubtful or false Solutions to Questions proposed to him concerning the future. And for some such reason perhaps was the reputation of Dreams so hugely raised above other ways of Divinations among the Heathen; it being as easie for his Prophets to make the Images of a Dream, as a Prodigy, to look very fairly upon the Event which fell out: for so we find in Artemidorus one and the same Dream thought fulfilled by eight or nine
nine very different and disagreeing Events.

Fifthly, These Heteroclites, Events which fall off from the Rule of common and usual Nature, minister to bigger ends than Presages. For they teach us to pay the tribute of admiration to Him, who (though by the Ministry of Second Causes) doth such Wonders. Deliberate wondering (when the Soul is not suddenly surprized) being raised up to an height, is, as one faith, part of Adoration, and cannot be given to any Creature without some sacrileg. Such wondering consists of reverence and ignorance, which best becometh even the wisiest of men in their searches after God his ways. God hath his Wonders of Justice, such wherein he causeth a strange coincidence of blind and contingent Agents, so to work together for the detection and punishment of some great Criminals, that men may easily see that the Wheel brought over them was full of eyes, conducted by some great Intelligence. He hath also his Wonders of Mercy, such wherein he walks in ways not cast up to accomplish the well-being and preservation of those which honor him by a great Faith; such, whereof every pious breast is the Office wherein they are registred and recorded. To these He hath been pleased to add his Wonders in Nature; the common handling of his other Works being apt to foil them,
§. 2. Of Prodigies Supernatural.
and to keep men from attending to all thatWisdom and unsearchable Greatness displayed in them. Moreover, Some of these things shew us all the Creatures to be in God's hand, and easily commanded (like the Clay in the hand of the Potter) to what figures and uses he shall think fit at any time to appoint them unto. According to that of Job: Who removeth the Mountains, and they know not, which overturneth them in his Anger: which shaketh the Earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble: Which commandeth the Sun and it riseth not, and sealeth up the Stars.

The other Ends of these strange Examples, and Arguments against or for the Observation of them as Ominous, being the same which fill out the foregoing Papers, I shall not here offer the Reader the tedium of any repetition.
Prodigies Supernatural proved no Divine Signs, by Induction.

The first fiery Eruption of Vesuvius asserted a Divine Sign by Dr. Jackson. The Reasons of his Opinion thereof fully proposed, and particularly considered. The true application of the parts of our Savior's Prophecy Mat. 24. proposed, and asserted against Grotius. Dr. Jackson and others. The Sign of the Son of Man, and hisComing substantially the same thing. Reasons alleged against the pretended significance of Vesuvius. Blazing Stars commonly thought Divine Signs, with the occasion of that conceit: The weakness of the Opinion, and the ground it stands on, discovered. Three heads of inquiry touching the late Blazing-Star, touch'd upon. The Opinion of the significance thereof discovered to be frivolous in itself, and dishonest to God.

I am next to endeavor the proof of the Proposition by Induction: And here I shall not task my self to a refute of all the Prodigies mentioned under this head, which would engage me to lanch out εἰς τινὰ φλυ- 

στιγματα ἄνυσυν (as Plato upon another occasion) into an abyss of prating, and make my Book become a Prodigy by the monstrous bulk to which it would swell. It may suffice to disparage all the rest, by disabling the significance of two the most pretending Signs; one in Earth, That dreadful Eruption of fire from Mount Vesuvius in Campania, first hapning in the second year of Titus: the other
§ 3. Of Prodigies Supernatural, other in Heaven. The appearance of New or Blazing-Stars.

Where the eye of the mind is tinctured with any odd Notion, it is very apt to see every thing of its own color: Thus it fared with the reverend Dr. Jackson, whose mind was so possest by the Opinion of Prodigies and divine Signs, that he was apt to imagine he discovered one in all the more monstrous Births of Time which fell before his notice; but especially in the flames of Vesuvius. For having made mention of the particular characters of horror enumerated by Historians, attending their first Eruption, he adds, These questionless were the Signs of the Son of Man, that made all the Kindreds of the Earth to mourn. And as the many false Christs arising, the Earthquakes in divers places, the general hatred of Men, the fearful Signs from Heaven, were given by our Savior Mat. 24. as the black tokens fore-shewing the Fates of the Jewish Church; so this dreadful Occurrent he contends was given as a Sign fore-running the Fates of the Roman Empire (the other deadly Enemy of Christianity) which from that time began to feel its toes of clay, and to sink under its own weight, and the many calamities which soon after fell upon it.

Now that I may not appear (as Simeon and Levi dealt by the Sichemites) to make
that Opinion weak and fore, by any partial report thereof, which I would overcome, I shall present it in its full strength, consisting (so far as I can perceive) especially in that exact correspondence observable between the Scripture-Prophecy and the dreadful circumstances of that flaming Mountain; which will appear if we take a little pains to compare God’s Text, and his or the Historians Comment both together. And indeed, the ingenuity of the Conjecture merits its representing to the Reader in all the probable appearances which the words of the Writers of those times can derive upon it.

 Isa. ver. 14. 

Viri multis magnis omnem naturam humanam excederant, quales exprimuntur: Gigantes, partim in ipso monte, partim in agro circumjacentes, ac in oppidis interdum nascentes, terram obire, ac aer permeare visibantur. Posthaec consecuta est maxima siccitas, ac repente inae gravissimam terramotis facta, &c. Dio. Hist. l. 66.

Audire igitur faminam, infantium querelas, clamores viatorum, atque parentum, atque liberorum, atque canitorum, requiescens. Plin. de rebus naturalibus, &c. 

Nubes ex ardente Vesuvio oricitarum, cuius similitudinem et formam non alia magis habet quam pinus expresseras. [A tree much imitating a Pillar in its shape and figure.] Idem l. 6. Ep. 16.


Jo. E. 2. 30. 

I will shew Wonders in the Heavens, and in the Earth; 

Blood and fire, and pillars of smoke. 

The Sun shall be turned into darkness, and the Moon into blood. 

Lux.
And there shall be Signs in the Sun and in the Moon, upon Earth distress of nations, The Sea and the Waves roaring; Mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after the things which are coming on the Earth.

The fitting of the several circumstances of this pretending Sign so handsomely about the body of the Text, seem to assure that they were purposely made and fitted to it by the hand of Providence: Especially considering that natural fitness in the Sign itself; for what Sign more proper then a burning Mountain to give the Gentile World to understand that God would shew himself as severe a Judge upon the despisers of his Gospel, as he had before upon the despisers of his Law; against whom at the promulgation thereof he proclaimed the terrors of the Lord in blackness and darkness, in a Mountain that quaked greatly, and that burnt with fire to the midst of Heaven.

Add to all this; the special Season to which our
our Blessed Savior affixeth the fulfilling this Prediction (of the darkning the Sun, &c.) seems to add some further strength and confidence to this literal Exposition: now that was the time immediately succeeding to that wherein the black cloud of vengeance (character'd by the signs and condition thereof in the Verses precedent) fell upon the Jewish State: As appears from those words of his recorded by S. Matthew, chap. 24. v. 29. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the Sun be darkned, &c. i.e. (saith the Doctor) those days spoken of before, wherein such unexampled Evils fell upon the Jewish Church. And accordingly this unparallel'd Eruption of fire from Vesuvius first hapned in the second year of Titus, very suddenly after the Destruction of Jerusalem by his Armies.

But there are several things to be pleaded in bar of this specious Exposition: First, That Prophecy of the darkning of the Sun and of the Moon, &c. was fulfilled before the inflammation of Vesuvius, in the final desolation of the Jewish Nation: for those words of S. Matthew, Immediately after the tribulation of those days (which occasioned the Doctor's mistake) do not refer to the days of the last and consummating calamities befalling the Jews, but to the pure Spoken of vers. 19, and 20: and to the
§.3. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

the many lesser tribulations in them, [Famines, Seditions, Wars, Necessities, Jewish Persecutions, false Prophets,] 1stiled agenda 7

Now, the beginnings of travaile, (in allusion to a woman whose hour is come, that hath her lesser pangs and griefs to usher the greater sorrows of the birth) being the harbingers of much greater, and as a kind of dimness which concluded in an horrid night, a total extinction of the light of Israel. That which will more fully appear from the infallible Paraphrase of m S. Mark upon this Text, who useth some accuracy of expression on purpose to prevent mis-application of the parts of our Savior's prophetick discourse: In those days [of the not yet quite expired Jewish Oeconomy] after that [prelatory] tribulation, shall the Sun be darkened, that was as it were but clouded before. Besides, n Joel (of whose words our Savior's are but the transcript) prophesied that God would shew Wonders in the Heavens and in the Earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke, and that the Sun should be turned into darkness, and the Moon into blood, before the great and terrible Day of the Lord came. Where, whether we understand some Prodigy in Heaven or Earth, or some pangs of misery which introduc'd the death and ruine of the Body of that Nation, yet all were to fall Before the great and terrible Day of the Lord.
Of Prodigies Supernatural. § 3.

Lord; that is (as most expound) that terrible Day of Visitation upon Jerusalem (a Scream of the terrors of that last and great Day,) and in compare with which, all the Evils which fell upon the Gentile World afterward, were of no name and consideration.

The truth of this will yet appear in a fuller light, if we take (as it very well deserves) a little pains to consider the excellent contrivance of our Savior's prophetick discourse as laid before us in S. Matthew, who deliver it in greater exactness than the other Evangelists. The Disciples had proposed to their great Oracle a threefold Question: When shall these things, the Destruction of the City and Temple, be? (or, as P.S. Luke records their Question, What shall be the Sign when these things shall come to pass?) and what shall be the Sign of thy Coming, and of the End of the World? Now (as Grotius well notes) to these distinct Questions of his Disciples our Savior frames a distinct Answer: The not observing whereof at all hath put some Expositors, and the rash application of Answers, himself; upon so many false or uncertain glosses and conjectures.

That application of Answers to Questions, which upon due consideration of the circumstances of the Text, seems to give the most easie and natural account of it self,
§ 3. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

is this! From vers. 4. to vers. 29. in answer to their first demand, he gives in a large catalogue of Signs of the approaching De-

dolation of the City and Temple; viz. the arising of false Christ's, and false Prophets, 
calamities (in themselves considered) very

great, and the like: And then from vers.

29. to vers. 36. he satisfies their second

Question concerning the Signs of his Com-
ing, saying, Immediately after the lesser tri-
bulations of those days shall the Sun be dark-

ned, the very dregs of that cup of venge-

ance shall be given to that People who tatt-

ed but some lesser drops thereof before:

And then shall appear the Son of Man coming

in the Clouds of Heaven, coming to the De-

struction of this Temple and Nation, the

Sign of his being appointed King of a larger

Kingdom, and to rule in a more spiritual Oc-

donomy then the Mosaical was: And then

shall all the Tribes of the Earth mourn, then

shall the voice of peace and joy be heard no

more among the Families of Judaea, often

expected in Scripture and Jewish Writers by

the Earth: And he shall send his Ang-
gels with the sound of a Trumpet, [his inspi-

red Ministers, plainly to warn ] his Elect [his

believing followers, as he did Lot and his Fa-

mily: ] to escape and secure themselves from

the approaching ruines of that City and Na-

tion, as a Sign of his being impower'd to
save as well as to destroy. And then adds, When you see these things come past, know that it [my coming in my Mediator Kingdom, and your Redemption from all further subjection to the Jewish Rites or Persecutions] is near, even at the door, as indeed it was. And then applies himself; ver. 36. to ver. 42. in Answer to their third Question, saying, But of That Day, the Day of Judgment (stiled so, because of the eminency of it) knoweth no man; look for no such particular Signs of its coming, God having sealed up the particular time thereof amongst those other Mysteries he doth not communicate with the Angels.

I know that Grotius, Dr. Jackson and other Expositors give the several parts of our Saviors Prophecy a very different pointing and application; receiving those words of our Savior. [Immediately after, &c.] as the Preface to a (very different) Prophecy of some terrible plagues shortly to fall upon the Gentile World, of which the foretold miseries of Jerusalem were the pledge and pattern: that which renders them utterly unable to make any other then a Fanciful Exposition of those phrases, darkning of the Sun, falling of the Stars, Sign of the Son of Man, &c. and to give any tolerable account when and where the Elect were gathered by the Ministry of Angels, and those other
Of Prodigies Supernatural.

Other things fell out, foretold by our Savior to come to pass immediately, and before the passing of that Generation. For this Prophecy of our Savior is, like a skain of silk, which runs all into knots and intricacies, if the right ends be not first hit upon to unfold and lay it open.

Having thus made it appear that the root of our Author's Exposition is rottenness (a corrupt gloss upon Scripture) all the pretty blossom, parallels between the words of Scripture and the circumstances of this flaming Mountain, would, without bestowing more breath upon them, quickly go up as the dust. But yet, as a farther assurance of the vanity thereof, I add.

Secondly, the Sign of the Son of Man, and his Coming, are substantially the same thing (his very Coming being his Sign) as appears by w S. Matthew, who makes one expression exegetical of the other: Then shall appear the Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory. And therefore when the same Prophecy is elsewhere recorded, Christ's coming in the Clouds of Heaven is mentioned, but that expression (then shall appear the Sign) is wholly omitted, because all might understand with ease what end this Coming was a sign and assurance of. Now

\[ \text{Luk. 21, 27; Mark 13, 26.} \]
then, if this were the Sign of the Son of Man, what Coming of his was there in conjunction with it? Did all the Tribes of the Earth see this Sign, and himself in the Clouds of Heaven through all that smoke and ashes? Besides, is there the least air in the Writers of the first Ages to cherish this Opinion of Vesuvius? Do any of them bestow any such serious considerations upon it? Surely if they had understood it to be so great a Sign, they would somewhere have quoted it in conviction of the Ethnick World, they are so frequent in their disputes against. And have not the fiery forces in that Mountain, in all likelihood, fallen forth since upon men in as dreadful and destruc-
tive a manner as upon their first eruption? Moreover, no Sign could be so improper, and so little suited to that sweet and gentle Oeconomy then to be introduced, under which (except in the singular instance of Je-
rusalem) all the Signs our Savior made choice of to seal his Mission and Doctrine with, were stamp'd with the characters of Love and Grace and Good-will. The Apostle tells us, We are not come unto the Mount that might not be touch'd, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and terrible sights, either in the letter, or in the spirit and mystery of them.

Finally, the words of the Text and of the Historians
Of Prodigies Supernatural.

Historians, (as the Reader may easily observe,) will not touch one another without some bended and wrestling in some of the instances proposed. Upon a consideration of the premises, I am forc'd upon a conclusion quite counter to that of this learned Person, questionless these Terrors of Vesuvius were not the Scripture-Sign of the Son of Man; no more than some fearful Earthquake, or inundation of the Sea upon any Country is now, or ever was, mentioned or written of.

The mote words have been bestowed to prove this flaming Mountain no intended Sign to the Age wherein it fell, not because I affect a glory in opposing my self to so great a Name, but because I perceive that little favor conferred upon the Doctor's conjectures concerning it, in the first Edition, to have proved some disservice to the Cause I designed to build.

It rests now that we make inquiry into the value of those reputed Miracles, New or Blazing-Stars, (for I must not contend about words or method, while speaking to the People who are too gross for criticisms.) These have been entertained in all times with great Opinions, growing chiefly from a fond valuation of our selves and the little concerns of common life. We first conceit Man the great measure of things, that the greater World is but a larger Paraphrase upon
Of Prodigies Supernatural. 63.

Upon these facts, carrying nothing but perpetual Analogies to former parts and faculties of his Body or Soul; and next, that he is the great End of things, and (though we are told, God made all things for himself) we imagine all things were made for Men, but to minister some way or other to an humane benefit. Hence, we easily fancy new New Star or Comet shines from Heaven, but we are extremely concerned in the occasion, and therefore behold it presently with a great composedness. [* ignorant: utrum mirare debeat: *as Sonata speaks] with thoughts divided between, those daughters of Ignorance, Wonder, and Fear. Now because we cannot divine to what end of humane life these insolencies in Nature can be subservient beside that of Prolegomenes, we take up here, and the rather, because apt curiosity that the Deaths of great Men; Wars, and mighty Changes in Government, create as great thoughts and passions in the Mind of God as of a Man: we conceive it a great decorum that no Person of name be born without observation, nor fall without some sympathy in Heaven and Earth; and what impose out pedagogical measures of things upon God. And as we thus think our affairs great enough, so our selves valuable enough, for...
Of Prodigies Supernatural.

which makes God should be continually alter-
ing of the ordinances of Heaven, which pro-
tected upon such excellent and mysterious
Wisdom.

But all these are only the shining thoughts (as the word import) of
him that cares not how strong his Fancy, and
how weak his Reason be. What solid Reason
have we to prefer Man the great End of
things; when there are so many millions of
Creatures in the Heavens and Earth, and Sea
whose Manners and Uses are wholly hidden
from him? Is it not End-great enough that
God (who is Theacter sufficient to himself)
be satisfied to behold in them all some dis-
plays of his own Wisdom and Goodness?

Or, if these new Glories in the Heavens do
serve Man, why must they serve the worst
part of him, his Curiosity, and not rather
his Piety, by teaching him to admire Him
who doth great things pass out finding out,
Job 9:10, yes, and Wonders without number? What
keth any man to do to call these or any o-
ther Prodigies the Signs of God, without
special commission from himself? Is it not
looked upon as an high Usurpation in the
Pope to coin more Sacraments then ever
God warranted; and shall we obtrude upon
him, as Divine Signs, what ever may seem
worthy of the title to our shallow thoughts?
Both not the attributing of such ambiguous
Signs
Signs to God, expose him to a suspicion, either that He dare not be more express for fear he should prove mistaken, or that He will not, lest men should understand him.

Notwithstanding what hath been said both here and elsewhere upon the Argument before us, it would (I doubt) be interpreted a neglect, if not of my Cause, of Expectation and the great singularity of the occasion, if I should not be a little particular in reference to this: New Star (to speak with the People) which hath of late so much ingrossed the common talk. Concerning it there are but these three heads of Inquiry: This Nature, the History, the Signification thereof. As to its particular Nature, the more advised Philosophy of a Comet returns a Nov us invent us, it is not yet found out. And it need not be reputed a Wonder that there are some blanks in the Philosophy of Heavenly Bodies, when we are so much posled in the things that are before us, that even Paracelsus wrote a Treatise De mysteriorum veritatis; there are Mysteries in Religion, Depths in Providence, Inscrutables in Nature, intended perhaps as the more equal Objects of Angelical then Humane Contemplation. As for the History thereof in reference to its motion, height, figure, colour, duration, and the like, it is that which like a Picture might somewhat grace, but not as all
§. 3. Of Prodigies Supernatural.

all strengthen the Cause I am building up: and so would in this place be but a curious impertinence. It is only the Signification thereof which is a pertinent consideration in this Argument; the Opinion whereof I am sure to have nothing but Fancy and a great prejudice to bear it self upon. For where is the Interpreter that can tell us what Events it foreshews, or to what Kingdom, or Persons, or when to succeed? Can any man then (that believes he ought not to think of speak of God at random) imagine that He speaks to Men by a Sign which signifies any thing, or nothing, as men please? Ask now a Wise-man whether he would express himself by a Sign that should signify with certainty neither time, nor place, not thing, not person? And shall Wisdom it self be thought to make use of such Cheeveren Signs, that may be stretch'd or strained in their significations at pleasure? When God would awaken Men by his Predictions of a Judgment, the Vision was made plain that he that ran might read it; the Prophet was appointed to proclaim the Burden of such a place, of such a nature, (for what is spoken to every body is spoken to none;) and why should we think that God speaks now by Signs of which no humane Wisdom can make sense? It was indeed noted of old of the Oracle at Delphi, that 'ere long, &c.
Of Prodigies Supernatural. § 3

...it neither plainly expresseth nor perfectly concealeth, but onely intimateth by some obscure signs and hints; now this was one of the Depths of Satan, who because he could not clearly foresee, and therefore durst not be express, chose to deliver himself oft-times by doubtful Signs, calculated so indifferently for the Meridian of any Event of things, that what- ever succeeded might be thought foreshewn in the Oracular Sign. But the God of Wisdom hath no need to take to such sorry shifts to secure himself in our Opinion of his Prescience. He clearly foresees, and therefore can and would clearly foreshew any great Event, if he judged it convenient for us to know it before it came to pass. But though we should give a significancy to this or such like insolencies in the Heavens, why must they be thought to prophesie onely evil things concerning us? Sure I am, they which have taken pains to review the Histories of such things with the Events succeeding, make a fairer report of them, representing them followed by as many fair as stormy days in Kingdoms; and the Heathens (whose Religion it was to observe such things) received them oftner as auspicious then inauspicious Omens; (the onely thing wherein our Modern Interpreters of Prodigies different...
§ 13: Of Prodigies Supernatural.

from them, whose sourer humor admits them only to the Opinion of Signs of Wrath and Messengers of Death.) But admit this Comet an indication of Good or Evil, to confine its Prophesy to our Affairs, whicheth a little upon the Humor of those Men that will needs fulfill Daniel and the Revelation only in England.

And thus we dismiss the Consideration of Prodigies Supernatural.
Remedies advised against the Superstition of Prodigies Signal.

There are a company of men in the World, whose Melancholy fancies (like the Cyclops in the Poet) are perpetually improled in flaming thunder-bolts for heaven to throw down upon that world themselves are fallen out with. Never doth the face of the sky appear mantled up in the clouds, but their timorous imaginations mold them into such antick figures, that they appear to them άγοβλακ οις τη χαμην ενειμάλα (as the Apostle upon another occasion) a kind of visible parables, fitted for the season present, expressive of some approaching vengeance. There is scarce a night passeth them wherein they have not και σειματικον νεωστην και νεατα, dreadful imaginations and monstrous visions (as Plutarch phraseth it) which tell them the fortunes of Kingdoms, or the fate of some great Persons. The vanity of which sort of men, the Cynick chastiseth in a tart and true Sarcasm, They are very regardless of what they do when awake, but are largely busy and solicitous about what fancies come into their heads when they are asleep.
infelicities of temper or education have betrayed some men to such singular measures of judgment and practice, that their souls scarce seem to come out of the same Limbus with those of other men. In matters of religious reference, Revelations, vigorous impressions of Spirit, extasies, pretty allegories, parables, sabbalisms, in matters Civil, some old prophecy, mystick passages in Daniel and the Apocalypse, new and impracticable Ideas of government; strange Omens and Prodigies (which like bladders shew bigger or less according as an airy Fancy swells and blows them up) are the great Compass by which they steer their judgments: and some of the men have (what is said of birds) a language by themselves, intelligible only by those of their own kind.

But what mean regards shall Scripture, Laws, sober counsels, and a prudential understanding of the times and what is fit to be done, be entertained withal, if the light of knowledge in matters Sacred or Civil, be once thought to shine most clearly into such crackt and crazy brains, as are not seldom the most curious attenders of such things as these? And as Reason would suffer so would Religion, for the true fears thereof would be ready to fly away (like the Spirits of over-heated liquors) if overacted by such strong and continued jealousies of heaven.
heaven, as the observation of Prodigies (in the latitude contended for) would certainly subdue the minds of men unto. Besides, no man (that believes himself) shall ever be able to possess himself in peace, while his inward house is haunted by such Spirits of fear as a Superstitious persuasion of Prodigies would be alway raising up within him.

In order therefore to a more perfect cure of so obstinate and dangerous a distemper of Mind, as the Opinion of Prodigies is, I shall advise the ensuing Remedies.
SECT. I.

Five Remedies proposed.

1. The discarding of all four jealousies of God. The Divine goodness a Catholic acknowledgment shown from Synesius; but contradicted by the doctrine of an enemy in God and a delight to do evil, among the heathens, and too much countenanced by some Christians. This noted to influence the Opinion of Prodigies. The true end of Divine judgments. The advantage which right notions of God give to Piety: Plutarch. 2. The avoiding of any great feats or hopes in reference to things future. Men full of hope or fear desirous of Predictions and why: the vanity of that desire. 3. The study of Natural Philosophy: that effectual against the Superstition of Prodigies; because discovering the nature and end of them; and probably the Original of their observation: A conjecture concerning the first occasion of Chiromancy, Capnomancy, Oneiromancy, Augury, Haruspicia; Teratopsi. The value of Semantick Philosophy among the Ancients. The roaring of the Sea why appointed by our Saviour as a sign of desolation, to the Jews. 4. A great indifferency of mind as to this world. Persons solicitous in reference to this world most desirous to know its fortune. 5. The use of reason to judge the grounds of this and other Doctrine before we receive them. Who noted to declaim most against reason: the present Opinion noted to have none to support it.

The first Sovereign remedy against this disease of the Mind is, The discarding of all four jealousies concerning God. Syd. Synes. de Renessus hath observed that however the Nations were διάς ξενογνώσεως μεταξύς διστασσεν from each other (like the lines in the circumference) by very different Sentiments in Reference unto God and Religion,
Remedies against in other Matters; yet still ἀρχαῖον Ἠσυχίαν, ὑμνών ἀπότρυς ἀναθεμάτωρ, δομοί δήμου ἡ ἀποφοίτως, all centured and met in this great doctrine, both wise and unwise, that God was a good, bountiful, and benign Being. The greater wonder it is that so many Doctrines among the Heathens and Christians too (which I am not here to take notice of) should be received with a non obstante to this native and easy fence of the Divine goodness and Philanthropy lodged in their Minds. That which my present Argument leads me to observe is, how apt the minds of men are to be leavened with this four conceit (which cannot dwell with a belief of God’s goodness) which Plutarch justly challengeth in Herodotus, that ὅ ὁ Θεός ἄνθρωπον ἄνθρωπον ἀφεῖνας, The Deity is of an envious and troublesome disposition; that his counsels are especially taken up with the contrivances of new miseries for the hated world; then which, never did a more pestilential air breathe from the bottomless pit, seizing the very vitals of Religion, and corrupting the earliest notions rising up in the Soul when conceiving of a God.

Hence grows this easy conclusion, that all Prodigies are a kind of Van-guard to give notice of the many troops of furies and miseries marching after; so that hated man may
may be tortured before he be killed, and may not have so much as the airy hopes of Felicity to refresh his laboring spirits with, nor be able to deceive his present pains so much as with a Dream. Among the Heathens, the observation and Expiation of all manner of Omens and Prodigies, was a sower fruit growing from this evil root especially, perpetual jealousies of God. For they thought he had an evil Eye, and could not behold a little good Fortune in the World, without a touch of Envy. And therefore Camillus, upon the taking of a rich City in Hetruria, makes this sudden address to the Gods, * & Plut. in Vit. *

If we on the revenge of this happy Action to the divine envy, I pray that some misfortune of mine may commute for that of my Country. And among our selves, some men (like the ancient Idolaters) shape out the God they worship in such dreadful forms as fright and amaze themselves; they phancy he is never so well satisfied as when some scenes of misery are before him; and therefore all strange events are readily interpreted the Angels of death, and the world thought to be hung round with the ensigns of Vengeance.

Whereas if men did not look upon God through the gross medium of those impati-
ent and envious humors which command themselves, it were not possible but he must be represented to them in more lovely colors: and they might easily understand all the evils sent down sometimes upon the World, to be (in the language of the Moralist) ὅτι ἐπὶ τῶν ἄραστῶν θεοῦ, only a Divine testimony given in against sin; and not intended the instances of ill-will, but to discipline the mad world into some sober and wise thoughts; and they would believe the fairer reports which Scripture makes of God, when telling us, He doth not willingly grieve the children of men, that fury dwells not with him; that judgment is his strange work, &c. And then would be easily persuaded that Prodigies come forth upon some other errand than to let them understand they must look to be speedily miserable. Did men once believe the Goodness, Patience and long-suffering of God, they could not imagine he lets his creatures (as Moses did the Tables) fall out of his hands and break into disorder, as a discovery of his frequent anger. I shall dismiss this particular with that pertinent speech of Plutarch: Let a man (faith he) set it down with himself, that he cannot present God with a more grateful sacrifice or more excellent service then to entertain true and good Opinions concerning him; whereby he shall avoid Superstition.
§. 1. **Prodigies Signal.**

persuasion, an evil not much inferior to Atheism.

Secondly, The avoiding of any great fears or hopes in reference to things future. Lucretian well notes, that to a man big with any great fears or hopes, a foreknowledge of Events appears very necessary and desirable, because this brings his distracted thoughts to a point, and delivers him from the tedium attending all doubtful expectations of the future. Hence such a man is easily persuaded to attend to a Prophecy or Prodigy that offers him a promise of resolution. Besides, where the Soul is under the power of some great affection (as it always is when solicitous about the issue of things) any odd accident is apt to make great impressions upon it; for when Reason is over-born, it is apt to measure things by prejudice and the Maxims of the people. Fear (like a rackt Glass) represents every strange event in very frightful forms to the eye of the mind, and will create its object where it cannot really find it. Moreover, when men will usurp upon God’s Province, and charge their thoughts with the Future, he justly takes their sin in their punishment, by delivering them to the observation of Prodigies and Omens, which fill them with more anxious and unquiet thoughts.

'Tis both our duty and our wisdom to attend...
tend the business of the day, and to leave the issue of affairs with infinite Wisdom and goodness; and the rather, because if the Event shall be prosperous, there will be time enough to enjoy our happiness when it shall be present; we need not deflour it by a precocious joy, before we are espoused unto it. If adverse, what need we chew pills, and feel our miseries twice over: once in fear and again in presence. Sufficient to each day is the present evil thereof, it need not borrow from to morrow. It should be our care that Death do not surprise us to the eternity of another world, while staring after the futurity of this.

Thirdly, The study of Natural Philos- phy. It is the nature of all knowledge to give a kind of strength and presence of mind to a man, but especially of Philosophy. This will secure us, as from the rocks of Atheism; because leading us into a notice of some First Cause, into which all the second do gradually ascend and finally resolve: so also from the shelves of Superstition, because acquainting us with the Second causes. For Fancy is apt to suggest very monstrous notions of those things of whole causes and natures we are unresolved; all which fly, like the shadows of the twilight before the approaching beams of knowledge. Philo- phy leads us, as men do horses, close up to

\[\text{Es religio propaganda est qua conjuncta est cum cognitione Naturae; sic superstitiosi nis stirpes omnes elidenda sunt.} \quad \text{Tul. De Divin. 1. 2.}\]
the things we start at, and gives us a distinct view of what frightened us before, and
do Shame the weakness of our former fears.
He that knows what slow conquests a flame makes upon any humid viscous matter, will not easily account every gentle fire continuing for some time in the air, a kind of flaming sword, miraculously appointed by God to drive the secure world out of this fool's paradise. Who so considers how possible it is for Springs sometimes to fail (nay how wonderful it is that they fail no oftner) cannot readily receive any breaches in the streams which hold of them, as the preludes of some civil breaches in a State. Besides, Philosophy informs us of the methods of Nature, in preserving immutability to the more retired parts of Heaven and Earth, but banishing the great instances of variation to the inferior parts of Earth, and inferior of Heaven. Accordingly, to the Earth-quake's, eruptions of strange fires, new fountain's, preternatural generations (in which the more central parts of this vast globe are not at all touched and concerned) here correspond in the superficial parts of heaven, mighty thunders, Comets, new stars appearing now and then, alteration in the figures of the planets, variety of new spots observed to rise and set in the body of the Sun, some, though rarer, failings of its usual splendor.
Moreover, Philosophy will very probably direct us to the true Original of Divination by Prodigies, and the other Species thereof, Chiromancy, Capnomancy, Oneiro-mancy, Haruspicina, Augury, in use among the Ancient Heathens: which was (if I mistake not) a Philosophick Divination (much studied of old) stretcht by Ignorance and Superstition beyond the limits of Sobriety: for all these curious arts, however they are froth at the top, contain under them the good liquor of a useful Philosophy. There is a sober and Physical Chiromancy, for as the figures of the face carry some rude indications of those passions or dispositions of the mind, which subtility would dissemble, so the figures and colors of the lines in the hand make some general reports of the temperament of the body, and by consequence in what likelihood of life the person stands: which being exposed to common view and of more ready inspection, observation became more curious about it then other parts, otherwise perhaps as proper subjects of Art as that. In like manner, the Air having so subtile a perception of Wind rising, drought or moisture approaching, and quickly growing (though imperceptibly to our grosser senses) more or less quiet or condenset; these subtile varieties therein could be reported by nothing so rea-
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duly as by so soft and dissipable a body as smok, which might occasion a sober *cap- nomancy*, whereby the experienced Artist upon an observation of the inclination, color and consistence of the smok made judgment of the condition of the approaching season. And thus, after reason and observation had assured the Ancients that the Soul in sleep was *σωφρον* ἕρμην, *κύριή τοῦ τοιχίου*, as *Arist.* *De Di- it were forsaken and empty of all its own rational motions *κύριή τοῦ τοιχίου* & υ- νι, easily moved according as some contingent mover (disposition of the ambient air without, or of the humors and spirits within) might determine, and that therefore some strange diseases of body, and sometimes alterations of Season, had been foreseen in dreams, these rude observations were at last licked into an Art [*Physical Oneiromancy*] in which Physicians from a consideration of the dreams proceeded to a *Crisis* of the disposition of the person: and many of the Maxims which instructed that Art are yet extant in *Hippocrates* his little treatise *de Insomniiis*. Thus likewise when reason gave men this persuasion that Creatures living in the open air, must needs have a quicker impression from it then men that live within doors; but especially birds who live in the air freest and clearest, and therefore by their voices and motion of flight more apt
apt to express what they find; they advanced the Art of Natural Augury, to make presages of weather from an attendance to the voices, high or low flight, and other motions of the birds of the air. Many of the rules whereof are delivered by ancient and modern writers. In like manner, the Ancients considering that beasts conversing so much in the air, and living always upon food ready dressed, and that hath no noxious quality, derived from the corrupted air or earth, corrected by the fire as ours hath, might easily conceive that some signs of wholesome or pestilential seasons, of scarcity and plenty ensuing, might be discovered in the unusual colors and figures of their entrails: and therefore *Democritus used to commend the wisdom of the Ancients in appointing a diligent inspection of the inwards of all sacrificed beasts; upon a long and critical observation of which, they advanced a Physical Haruspicina, by which they were enabled (no doubt) to a more exact judgment of the temper of the Earth and Air, and the healthfulness of the season ensuing then we can possibly make. And as long observation gave birth to these (as to other) Arts, so to Teratocopy, which was ancienly only a rational attendance to those affecting signs with which the Providence of Nature (that men might not suffer
§.1. _Prodigies Signal._

(suffer by surprise) was noted to preface her works of greater note. A taste of which Art we may receive from the Masters thereof.

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_Ventis surgentibus, aut freta ponti_ **[Virg. loc. cit.]**

_Incipiunt agitata tumescere; & aridus altis_

_Montibus audiri fragor; aut resonantia longe_

_Littora misceri, & nemorum increbescere_

_murmur._

Most of the sense and all the reason of which Verses (that the Reader and my self may be eased and benefited both at once). I shall deliver in the words of the Lord Bacon. The resounding of the Sea upon the shore, and the murmur of winds in the woods, without apparent winds, show mind to follow. For such winds breathing chiefly out of the Earth, are not at the first perceived, except they be pent by water or Wood. Mountains also have a quick perception of the disposition of the air to tempests, standing so near the Middle Region, the place in which, for the most part, they are bred. To Virgil (though indeed but Aratus made Latine, in this Argument) I shall add, the prognosticks of Aratus.

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Kai ζηγ νυκτα μελανδρου τη ασηρες αεισνιου...

**[Diogenes. m.p. 426]**
The frequent falls of Stars, by night,
Drawing white trains of streaming light
Receive as signs of winds to come
That way they fall —

Thus Castor and Pollux (those twin-lights, so called, seen sometimes about ships in the silences of the night) were anciently received as the indications of a quiet passage; because any disposition in the air to motion would soon have divorced those gentle fires.

'Twere easy to shew how much this Semantick Philosophy, in all the parts of it, was studied by the more ancient Philosophers, being so much recommended to them by the subtilty, pleasure and singular usefulness thereof to the ends of common life, but this would prove an impertinence in this place.

Now when some airs of this Doctrine of natural Prognosticks came among the rude multitude, it became as a parable in the mouth of a fool, which loseth much of its honor by being imperfectly propounded or impertinently applied. They not understanding the rational connexion between sign and thing signified, thought the lines in the hand as proper indications of the Fortune of the person as of his temper: and wanting the maximes of Phyloſophy to measure their conceptions by, in reference to dreams,
Prodigies Signall

some difficult men thought they signified nothing, so some easie persons thought they might signify any thing: to the same rudeness of the people we may probably intitle the sober madness of seeking with that seriousness the presages of contingences in the motion of smoke, the chirping and flying of birds, the colors and figures of the Extar also that solemn Opinion of Prodigies as of the extraordinary signs from the Gods of some extraordinary events. They received the roaring of the waves of the sea as a very significant emblem of some doleful disaster in the state, [which common Opinion might perhaps occasion our Saviour to point the Sea and the waves roaring among other prodigies, as his sign of the approaching desolation of Jerusalem.] And the hollow murmurs in groves and caves were thought the prophetick voices of some calamity approaching: (as appears from the recited verse in Virgil, Vox quoque pericas, &c.) And they looked upon obliuas per inane faces (as Lucan assures us:) the flanting Meteors in the air, the water landing upon statues, (ignorantly stiled the veating of them) and such like natural indications of a change in the Air, as the arbitrary signs of some mighty alterations in the state: and this (in all likelihood) because anting the line of Philosophy to lay out their
their Notions aright in reference to those Signs by. Now when ignorance and mistake had once planted these wild conceits, it is easy to imagine how extremely they would grow, even beyond their first occasions, in so rank a foil as the common people (the great Master of Superstition.)

The Orders and Causes of Nature, and the first Original of Divining by such insolencies thereof, well understood, would quickly chase away all those Mormon's (superstitious imaginations) which fright men in the night of their ignorance.

Fourthly, A generous indifferency and deafness of mind as to the good or evil things of this World. The more the heart of a man out-grows the joys and fears of this World, the more will all things therein appear to him much; too little: for the solemnity of a Prodigy, the more will he think nothing here of value enough to have its fall come with pomp and observation, and the less will he concern himself to know the future condition of such a vanity as this World is. It is only when Men over-rate the World, and their hopes and felicities are much imarked therein, that they are solicitous to know its fortune, and are impressive to any great fears in reference to its future state. The Gentiles of old, that could never lift up their heavy minds above the
The greatest Professors of the Arts of Divination, by all manner of strange and unusual Accidents. And the Jews (to whom God had promised an Heaven on this side thereof in the liberal enjoyment of this World's Blessings) were very solicitous about the meaning of strange Providences, Signs of Times, and the issue of affairs: and God was pleased, by many Oracles, Signs and Prophecies, to accommodate himself to this low and worldly temper of theirs. But since the introduction of a better hope, the tenders of such spiritual Promises, we have scarce any notices given us of things future, by Oracles, Signs, or Prophecies (except some very dark ones in the Revelation, which some learned men conceive in a great measure already fulfilled) God hereby supposing our eyes now to be so fixed upon the more clearly revealed felicities of another World, as not much to look down to the futurities of this.

Fifthly, Another effectual Remedy against this distemper of mind, is a Catholicon, a serious application of our Understandings to make search into the Reasons of this or any other pretending Doctrine of Religion. Before we venture our whole weight upon an Opinion, let us make trial whether it have strength enough to bear us. That man that
is cow'd and baffled out of all use of himself by those fashionable Socoeisims, Carnal Reason, private Spirit, corrupt Wisdom, proud Reason, considers not that these are phrases which will fit any bodies mouth that thinks fit to use them; and that they can prevail with no man, but in some use of that very Reason which they tend to deter him from; and that it is the usage of Persons in Error, when Judgment is likely to pass against them, to plead that their Causes are placita forinseca, matters that belong to the cognizance of some other bar then that of Reason: that their Doctrines, being matters of Revelation, are to be tried only per pares, the express Revelations contained in the great Rule of Faith, the sacred Scriptures, (which they have first suborned, by a false gloss, to give sentence for themselves,) or else, that being the publick sense, they owe no account to a private spirit. But when God hath commanded us to search and prove, and made us reasonable creatures, and so, habitually able and naturally desirous to understand the Grounds and Reasons of Doctrines tendered to us, and because implicit Faith is an honor due only to God who is infallible, we ought (with all humble intentions not to impose our Judgments, but to satisfy them) to require the Reasons of them, and be able to make apology for the
several branches of our Faith. Truth hath lost more by persons which would not consider, than that would not believe.

And if men would once be persuaded so far to honor themselves as not to take up their Faith upon trust, I question not but this Opinion of Prodigies would quickly sink in the World, which hath nothing to trust to but the tyranny of a great prejudice. Men have long received it, and the Pope in their bellies is very desirous to be thought infallible. The great strength of the Patrons thereof I have all along perceived to be like that of Samson; for it was harder to find where it lay then to cut it off, harder to find Objections then Answers.
Remedies against § 2.

S E C T. II.

No Signs of Times now to be expected.

The discarding of that rash Principle, That God hath appointed to all Ages some extraordinary Signs of succeeding Times, a Remedy against the Superstition of Prodigies. There is a variety of Times, and why. Some Signs of these supposed by the Adversaries. This conceit a foundation of the Opinion of Prodigies. Two sorts of Signs noted. Why prudential conjectures of the state of future Times so full of uncertainty. Prodigies further proved no Signs of the Time. Vulgar Prophecies, Heavenly Aspects, and the pretended Sultans of the iniquity of a Land, proved no divine indications. Why some Signs given of the Desolation of Jerusalem. Reasons why the Signs given do the Jews cannot encourage the expectation of any such now. Times hidden even from good men, and why. The evil of the common Doctrine of Signs of Times discovered in many particulars. The vanity of having a regard only to Times past, or to Times to come.

Left all the fore-mentioned Remedies should fail of success, the last (which I am sure will reach the cure) which I shall advise is, The discarding of that rash Principle, That God hath appointed to all Ages some extraordinary Signs of succeeding Times.

There is a variety of Times and Seasons, Times of temptation, Luk. 8.13. Times of refreshment, Act. 3.19. Times of visitation, Luk. 19.44. There is in divine Dispensations a kind of chequer-work of black and white days taking place by turns. This

*Eccles. 7.14. * Cor. 7.31. Scena of this World is thus shifted and varied, that both the various At-
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tributes of God, and Graces of his Divine Spirit in his Servants, may appear and act their parts by turns. Now Men are very impression to this Persuasion. That as God in * V. Paul. Nature hath ordained * Signs of the Seasons ensuing, [for * when the Trees put forth, we conclude that Summer is nigh; and that it will be weeping weather, when we see redness and lowring to sit upon the eye-lids of the, Job 41. 18. morning; ] so, that He hath in his Providence given us * Снда * γεφων, Signs of the Seasons approaching, some tokens for good or evil, whereby we may know, as it were, what clothes to put on, whether we must prepare the garments of praise to entertain the joys, or cloath our selves with a great sorrow and humility to prevent or prepare for the evils which a few days may bring forth. And before they have rammed this Ground, they hastily advance this Conclusion, That Prodigies are a very great and proper Sign of the Times; because the dullest Eye may easily foresee an Evil in such Signs, though the Sons of Wisdom alone are able to foresee it in the probable Causes thereof.

That this is a very sinking and deceitful Ground to build this Opinion of Prodigies upon, will appear upon a brief Resolution of this Question [Whether or no, Now under the Times of the Gospel, God woulsafe pa-
Remedies against particular Kingdoms any such extraordinary Signs of the Times as are contended for? Particular Kingdoms, I say; For as for those Signs some speak so much of, of the fall of Antichrist, of the last Times, of the binding of Satan, of the last Judgment, &c., they are all of a very catholic concern, and are so loose and general, that (like the Heavenly Bodies) it is hard to determine their Aspects to any particular time or place: and if any such Signs, as they speak of, hereafter appear, they will serve rather as Arguments of God's Providence and Prescience, then as the Monitors of that just distance of time by which they are removed from those great Events of which they are (at large) the fore-runners: and therefore we dismiss the consideration of them as wholly foreign to our present Inquiry.

In order to a more distinct Answer to the Question proposed, I must necessarily premise this distinction of the supposed Signs of Times. There are, 1. Some barely indicative Signs, such as have no effective influence upon the Event succeeding, but serve as a kind of Bath Col, onely as some softer voice from Heaven to declare it to Persons of more purged and attentive ears: Such as are Prodigies of all sorts, the Aspects of Heaven, the fulness of the Iniquity of a Land, some old Prophecies, plau-
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Fible Parallels (in many instances) between the Occurrences in former Times and our own; some stated Periods of Time beyond which some Bodies politic have not been observed to continue without some gray hairs (as the Prophet speaks,) some great decays and alterations, some mystical Prophecies or general Promises in Scripture, forced by a strong Fancy to the narrow sense and interest of some private times and occasions. Many such kind of Signs there are, which (because my business now is not to feed Curiosity but to kill it) I purposely omit. There are two other Signs spoken of (of better name and credit) which we may call operative Signs, such as seem to carry their Effects in the womb of their own powers and sufficiencies, having an active influence thereupon, as the general bias and inclination of a Nation, the precipitate Counsels of Men in trust, and many such like; which Politick Discourses, the History of Times, and a Mind much practised in Civil matters, will best lead Men to a knowledge of.

This premised, I return an Answer to the Question proposed, in these three Conclusions:

First, There are some operative Signs of particular Events, upon a view whereof a very probable Judgment may be sometimes made.
made by a wise Person, of the issue of affairs. Sometimes indeed Second Causes, which seem most pregnant with such Effects, shall have miscarrying wombs, and the most probable Counsels of the great Oracles of State (especially when owning no Power nor Providence superior to their own) shall be turned into foolishness, to give the World Arguments of a Divine Providence concerned in the affairs of men. But yet oft-times God permits things, as trees do, to fall that way to which, in the judgment of prudence, they seem to incline, that so humane Prudence (the image of Providence) may appear valuable to men, and the wise-man and the fool may not be thought to stand upon a level, and all things to run upon a Die.

Howsoever the World hath been so weak and wicked together as to give the Opinion of Divination to persons eminent for little besides ignorance and impudence, yet we find God in Scripture so far securing the honor of true Divination, as to confer the gift thereof generally upon men, and those of a pious and learned Education; and all the shadows thereof which may be yet found in the World, Solomon tells us dwell in a wise heart: b The prudent man foresaeth the evil, and hideth himself; and that, not by consulting of Prodigies, but observing the feeds and causes in which it lies hid. As all other
other gifts and abilities, once miraculous and extraordinary, of healing the sick, of speaking with tongues, of interpreting the Scriptures, of discerning of spirits, to this also, of foreseeing Events future, so far as they remain yet in the World, are reserved solely as the reward and honor of the diligent, observant, and understanding Person. And many Examples in History there are of this prudential foresight, and these so strange, that by men, whose thoughts scarce reach beyond the entertainments of an hour, they would be concluded Prophecies.

Secondly, No operative Signs can be received as the unquestionable Intelligencers of the condition of succeeding Times: as the unquestionable Intelligencers, I say, And that,

(1) Because God often accomplisheth his biggest Ends by means unpromising and almost invisible. He sometimes rows his purposes to harbor, while the means seem to look quite another way: and what is observed of the methods of God in Nature, holds true generally in the methods of his Providence; the greatest Works are performed by the least and most insensible Agents. He usually brings his biggest Ends to birth by the Midwifery of seeming casualties, which taken at first are weak and vulgar; but viewed in comfort, speak excel-...
lent art and wisdom. The Historian hath well observed, the originals of the greatest Wars which have hapned seem to have been very contemptible: and the like might have been observed of many other great Events and Changes in the World, which have been brought about (like a great Ship by a very small helm) by some very contemptible and unpromising occasions. We find in History great Kingdoms commencing suddenly (like a Snowball) from an handful, increasing to a greatness in the eye of sense immovable, and at last concluding in soil and dirt, But especially observable is this Mystery of Divine Providence in the management of the Affairs of the Church, which (like Christ the Head thereof) springs as a root out of a dry ground, grows from most unpromising beginnings, and ows neither its planting nor increase to the Arms of Princes. The observation of which Secret in Providence drew forth that Christian Speech in an Ethnick dress from Machiavel: Fatorum vis & rationes producendorum effectuum; obscuriores sunt, quam ut nobis intelligi queant. God thus hangs the greatest weights upon the smallest wires, that things may slide off sweetly and without noise, and Men may admire the depths of his Wisdom when they see some matters effected.
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effected before they could think they were doing. And therefore much of the wisdom of Divine providence is obscured by those Historians which shew only the face of business, and the pomp of some great Actions, but take no notice of those subtil and almost insensible occasions from whence they did arise.

2. God usually advanceth his greatest works and ends by circuits and pauses. Providence, especially in the advancement of the Church, hath several abrupt endings, and though in the works of Nature, God goeth the nearest way to his ends, in the works of Providence he usually goeth about, and his work advanceth by such slow and silent progresses, that in the issue it seems to any but a prudent and severe observer the issue of time and chance, rather than any steady and well advised Understanding. And for this reason the Ancients are conceived in their fable of Pan to have attributed a rod or staff to him crooked at the upper end, because all the works of Divine Providence are effected by circuits and oblique ways, so that one thing seems to be done, but some other is really done: as in the whole story of Joseph is especially observable. And perhaps this mystery of Providence was emblemed in the prophetick vision of a wheel that moved within a wheel.
the ends God mainly intends being gradually and secretly promoted under the pretext and covert of some more visible and unsuspected turns, in Kingdoms or the lives of private persons.

3. God sometimes makes use of means great and pompous, to some ends weak and little in the eie of man. To what great actions all on the sudden, did he strengthen the hands of the King of Sweden? His victories drew the eies of the world upon him, and 'twas concluded by some that Providence designed him the Apocalyptick Angel which should pour out one of the Vials upon the Beast; when behold, unexpectedly the current of his successes runs under ground, and men engaged to believe God had ends more reserved and Spiritual to accomplish by his arms then their shorter thoughts could reach unto. And the successes (beyond the examples of History) of the forces lately on foot in these Nations, gave some to think them intended the instruments of some strange work, when all on the sudden a fire not blown did consume them: and men were taught not to lay out their thoughts of God by their own little and shallow models. He acts sometimes without, but often beyond, second Causes, and hath usually ends to serve upon their motions and counsels, which they reach
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reach no more then a beast doth the intention of his Rider.

Thirdly, *There are no such indicative Signs of any changes in States and times as mention hath been made of.* None, I say, that God ever appointed or man may safely trust unto. A truth which I shall presume evinced, if I can degrade (the most pretending signs) Prodigies, Prophecies, Heavenly Aspects, and the fulness of the sin of a Nation, from the honor of being Gods signs, and make it evident that men do but call upon their fancies to divine unto them and please themselves in the visions of their heads when they trust to such indications; neither Scripture nor solid reason warranting the reception of the instances mentioned as God's tokens of any great plague or change in a State suddenly to ensue.

First therefore, I assert Prodigies are none of God's designed Tokens. The credit of which assertion I might perhaps without presumption trust with the evidence of the precedent Discourse. But because I would not that this branch of our Method should be fruitless, I add this further consideration to assure it; They are extremly disproportioned to those ends and purposes, for the service whereof they are so received. For, whereas they are pretended the warnings of heaven; I would demand, Is it at all likely that
that those men which will not be warned by all the great examples of Divine Justice extant in Sacred Writ, (in which they may see themselves executed in effigie) would ever learn wisdom from Prodigies, and those attested generally but upon the faith of two or three ignorant Spectators: or can it reasonably be imagined that those strong holds in the hearts of Men usually impregnable to all the batteries of Sermons and afflictions should ever yield upon the summons of any such supposed warning pieces whole bullets fly so much over them, whose threatened evils stay in airy and loose generals and point not to any particular persons, time, nature or condition of the judgment: certainly no. And therefore as good men need no such warnings, so bad men do not deserve them: so little good use in probability would they make of them if they were afforded. More sober therefore and advised the Doctrine couch'd in those Ethnick fables, wherein the Poets feign Nemesis (Divine vengeance) the Daughter of Oceanus and Nox, the strange Vicissitude of Affairs in this world, and the dark and inscrutable counsels of heaven: and the Fates (supposed to deal out the destinies of men) to have had their habitation in a deep cave, (an Emblem of the depth of Providence) whence they oft issued forth
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suddenly upon the secure and unwary world. But much more insufficient are these Prodigies for that other pretended end, 'the securing the faith of God's foresight of events. For should I foretell that there shall fall down upon the world some very great judgment, and neither tell where nor when, nor by what instruments, nor why nor what judgment, (and Prodigies forethrew no such circumstances) would not every advised person certainly conclude, I had nothing of Divine foresight in me, besides the affectation thereof? And therefore 'tis much safer to let brutish persons (take this Ark of God) (the Attribute of his Prescience) as they please, then that the unhallowed hand of a Prodigy should be made use of, which doth but profane what it seems to assist.

2. Vulgar Prophecies are not to be received as any Signs of future times. The world hath always swarmed with such things especially in times of some publick heats and contentions. Thus we read that during the civil Wars between Cæsar and Pompey, neither side wanted Prophets which gave them courage to proceed and hope to prevail. And that when the civil wars were hottest between York & Lancaster, books of beasts and babies were exceeding rise and currant in every quarter and corner of the Realm, either side applying and interpreting these prophetick emblems.
emblems as they stood affected to the title. And this is a sign that most of these predictions derive not from the Spirit of truth, but are the conjectures or the wishes of subtil men disguised in the dress of Prophecy, to gain reverence and confidence to that Cause themselves have a kindness for. It is yet a greater ground of Suspicion that these prophecies come not forth from God, who alone is able to declare the end from the beginning, that they are delivered generally by persons which have none of those great qualities which made the faces of the true Prophets of old, to shine before men. It is with me a pregnant argument that Wisdom was never very friendly to the World, that it hath been so prone in all times to receive pretended Enthusiasm and preiscience with more sacred regards then laws and wise men, and yet at the same time have given the glory of these gifts to men of the weakest heads or worst lives, to Madmen, Persons transported by the heats of a fever, men in furies and ecstacies, star-gazers, fortune-tellers, Women (for such were the Sibylline Oracles delivered by) critical observers of Omens and Prodigies, Wizards, persons that declaim with much earnestness against (what they cannot value) Humane learning; and such as (like old men) see and know least of things
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near and present, have been often thought to see things at distance and in futurity, most exactly and distinctly. Nor if we should admit these Prophecies to the opinion of Divine Enthusiasms, are they therefore to be attended and trusted to as the distinct signs of the future or present time, both because many of them give an uncertain sound as to the particular time of accomplishment, and besides are generally very perplexed and winding in their terms. Even of the Divine Prophecies a Learned man hath ventured to say, Si usque ab illis temporibus qua Christi adventum aliquot sacerulis antecessorum, ad hanc etatem nostram rerum memoriam repetas, repeties neminem unquam extitisse, qui tantum se in tempus futurum immiserit, quia sed aures e Vatum scriptis divinare quid esset futurum, qui non lapsus sit in falsos errores quos res ipsa aliquando confutarent. These lapses of the learned, that ventured to be particular about the sense and season of Divine Prophecies, may serve to discourage the curiosity of Inquiries into times to come, and to assure us that Events are the best Interpreters of Prophecies, and that God intended them especially for the benefit of the Ages wherein they should appear fulfilled, to whom they serve as the Seals of his Providence, Prescience, and Divine Authority of those Scriptures.
wherein they are delivered.

3. The Various aspects of heaven are no intended signs of times: for the contrary Events of things do generally make or prove the Diviners by them mad; and the greatest and most wonderful change in state that ever hapned, in the restauration of His Sacred Majesty in Peace and honor, was not so much as dreamed of by all the Privy-Councillers to the stars; and the heavenly bodies are so disposed as not to make by their order of placing any one equal figure or image, as it were on set purpose to discompose the fancies of Idolaters and Diviners by them; and the presages by them of the weather are so generally false, that the Astrologers hinc gloriam captans si omnipiam mendacia pauciora quam alterius fuerint (as Maimonides smartly) seek a glory from hence, if the lies of one be fewer then of some other. Besides, the supposed signs in heaven are the meer creatures of necessity and fancy. For (as the Greek Poet tells us) when men could not give nor learn a name for so vast a number of stars, they thought fit to throw a great many into some constellation, that one being thus, with as much order as Nature would allow, added to another,
they might signify some kind of forms, and so the stars might become distinguishable by their names. Besides, those titles of Mercury, Saturn, and Mars, &c., whereby the Planets are distinguished, are not originally owing to any distinct Understanding of the Specific virtues and influences of those stars (for what experience could teach them?) but to an ancient usage among the Eastern people, first to honor, and at last to worship their departed Hercules, in some star or constellation dedicated to them and carrying their names. Now then can it with reason be conceived that these planets and signs indicate any futurity, which men, had they so pleased, might have molded into other figures, and which borrowed their names not from philosophy, but because this Subject Astrology scarce dwells within the suburbs of my present Argument, and my pains have been lately happily superseded, I shall dismiss this particular with a conjecture concerning the original of this Specious vanity, which seems to have been, a despair in some vain minds to reach the name and eminence of some former Masters in Astronomy, and to gain reputation by any new and more
more solid notions in that Science then they had delivered: and therefore endeavored to draw the eyes of men upon them by a Romantick Astronomy: An Art of presaging by the stars, set off with the pomp of new terms and phrases. Thus when the more Modern Rabbins were under a despair of exceeding or equalling the Traditional and Talmudical Commentators upon their Law, they started a Grammatical Cabbala to serve their ambition upon, wherein their criticisms about the form, cohaesion, disruption, shutting, opening, tortuosity, length, shortness, defect, eminence, coronation, order, numeral value of the letters, are infinite. Thus when a more simple and practical Divinity, and the literal way of expounding Scriptures, (most in use in the first Ages of the Church) became a field so beaten that no new game could well be started therein, after times endeavored to serve Opinion upon some witty allegories upon the Text, and the Subtilties of the School. But to return.

4. Neither is the pretended fulness of the iniquity of a land, a sign of the times. The iniquity of the times is a theme which Discontent useth to sanctifie it discourses with, and men think themselves wise and religious both at once, when they have laid down some signs to declare the fulness of it
§ 2. Prodigies Signal.

But certainly for men to determine of this fulness is to intrude into God's counsels; the Euphr…stands by him alone, and he only knows how near it is to filling. Besides, men are very apt to estimate the fulness of the iniquity of a land, by false measures, for the wicked and the godly are terms of distinction (with some) not so much of the manners of men as of their party; and all shall be delivered by them to the Devil, that sit out of their little circle of Opinions. Not but that I think some Ages of a more coarse and unhappy metal then others; and the iniquity of some more gross and daring then of other times; and when they are so indeed, God's Ministers are not to permit men like swine to sleep in their mire, without denouncing God's judgments against them. But I say, men ought not to prescribe bounds to the long-suffering of God, or time and manner to his Justice, or to measure his patience by their own; not to tell the world when God's repentings are just come to an end.

The truth hitherto contended for, stands incumbred with a double objection which I must endeavour to free it from. (1.) We obj. are told that God gave the Jews some signs of the time, and particularly fearful sights and great signs from heaven as his Monitors of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem.
remedies against § 2.

Jerusalem and the Jewish Polity: and therefore why may not some signs be now expected, and such sights to acknowledged when ever happening? I answer: Although enough hath been already said concerning those signs and sights, yet because where mens ears are obstructed with a great prejudice, that man must speak once, yea twice; that expects to be heard, to this forked Objection I return these five considerations.

1. The peculiar circumstances of those times seemed to require some such signs. For the Jews required signs from heaven, and God would not be wanting to any probable means and motives of their repentance; and the Jewish Oeconomy commenced in fearful sights at Mount Sinai, and great signs from heaven, now fit it was its conclusion should somewhat resemble the solemnity of its beginning. Besides, these signs served as merciful warnings to Christ's followers to hasten their escape from that house (that City) which was ready to fall upon them, and involve them in its ruins: and which therefore they made such a prudent use of that at Titus's besieging of the City, there was not a one Christian left in it. Moreover, they served gradually to wean the hearts of his Disciples from Jerusalem (once the light of their eyes) of whose determined desola-
tion the many signs our Savior foretold, gave them such full and repeated assurances. But the chief reason of these signs was (I conceive) our Saviour's purpose to satisfy that demand of his Disciples, what shall be the sign when all these things shall come to pass? which demand proceeded upon the usage of the Prophets, when foretelling some matter which it did much import the people to believe, presently, to confirm that particular prophecy by some sign, to come to pass in a lesser compass of time than their principal prediction: Accordingly our Saviour gave them the signs and seals of his present prophecy, which signs when they saw come to pass, they might rest assured that his principal prophecy was certainly and suddenly to be accomplished. And prodigies seem'd very proper signs (as was noted before) of this foretold desolation, because of that Opinion which men in that Age had of such Errors of Nature.

3. The Calamities foretold by those signs were great, without example. Josephus calls them μηδεὶς ναβικὸν αἰγία, miseries worthy of some signs. These signs came not forth as the Heralds of some petty war, or to precede the funerals of some great Personage, but (as it is called) a great tribulation, such as was not since the world began, nor ever shall be.
Exemplique carens, & nulli cognitus aequor
Luctus erat.

Now Divine Providence, having thus preferred Prodigies as the prelages of so wonderful a defolution, seems to assure that they are not to be expected nor expounded the real prophecies of any common burdens.

3. The destruction of Jerusalem was a type and picture of the final destruction of the World. Now for it was that the fearful alterations in the frame of Nature attendant on the latter, should be a little shadowed out in the fearful sights and prodigies which ushered the former. Besides, the conterations of soul and saylings of heart which these foregoing signs wrought in some men, before the decree brake forth, made the destruction of Jerusalem (in all the circumstances thereof) the more lively type not only of the terrors of the last judgment, but of those horrors and sinking of spirit in bad men, which no question shall go before it.

4. These Prodigies were expressly foretold, and particularly appointed by God as his signs to that Age. Our Saviour foretold that strange sights and great signs from heaven would be the fore-runners of that defolation which he had prophesied of. And 'tis the
conjecture of some learned Jewish and Christian Expositors, that the opening of the gates of the Temple (some time before its ruins) of their own accord, though of such massive brass, that they could not be shut or opened (if we credit Josephus) without the twisted strength of twenty men, and though secured with great bars of iron, was the accomplishment of the prophecy of Zechariah, chap. xi. 1. *Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy Cedars.* Where by Lebanon they understand the Temple built especially of the Cedars there growing, as it is elsewhere in the Prophets used to signify. And *Munster upon the place tells us that one of the Jewish Doctors upon the occasion of this Spontaneous opening of its doors, thus rebukes the Temple: Ego cognosco imminere tui desolationem, juxta Vaticinium Zachariae, qui dixit, Aperi Libane portas tuas.* Which conjecture upon the foregoing part of the verse, if it could be thought valuable, would encourage us to fix the accomplishment of the latter part thereof *[that the fire may devour thy Cedars]* in that other Prodigy mentioned in *Tacitus* together with this, the strange flashings of fire into the Temple from the clouds. But to leave these conjectures to shift as they can; certain it is some Prodigies were of divine appointment; but whence?
what patent can be shewn from the Book of God, whereby any much less all the fore-
mentioned Prodigies, hold the place and ho-
nor of Divine signs now? Besides, our Ble-
fed Saviour's extraordinary prediction of
those Prodigies as his signs to that Genera-
tion, seems rather to assure them not inten-
ded the common fore-runners of any great
plagues and wars, and that no good crisis
can be ordinarily made of the future condi-
tion of a State by a regard to any such, in
themselves doubtfull, indications: For
what need of his predictions of such signs,
if they were to fall out by a kind of com-
mon rule and law of Providence? and how
unnecessary had it been to appoint such ac-
cidents for signs of evil, which are suppo-
sed to draw after them a Series of evils with
so great a constancy, that they seem (with-
out a prophet) to appoint themselves the
signs of the times?

But (2) It is further objected in the
words of Job: Why seeing times are not
hidden from the Almighty, do they that
know him not see his daies? that is, why
at least do not wise and good men (stiled in
Scripture the persons which know God) see
the times of great mercies or judgments
(usually call'd God's daies, as was noted
before) when as yet at distance and ap-
proaching.
§ 2. **Prodigies Signal.**

I answer, Even good men (like men in a mist) though they can see their way, yet cannot see far before them, for very good Reasons: *viz.* *That so the knowledge of the good or evil of the time to come may not disturb the duty of the time present: *That not knowing in what time or manner our Master will come unto us, we might be alway upon our watch: *That we might honor God with an heroical Faith, following of him, like Abraham, not knowing whither we go. It is a sign we have great Opinions of our Pilot's skill and integrity, when we can sleep securely, not knowing particularly what course he steers: *That God might teach us to walk by the Rules of his Word and the Maxims of Prudence, and not the issue of things. *Besides, the knowledge of God's Counsels is the Prerogative onely of our Savior; He onely is the great Numberer of Secrets (as the word signifies Dan.8.13.) It is honor great enough for us to be the Children of the Bride-chamber to the King of Heaven, He onely must be the Companion of his Counsels. Finally, This knowledge is a curious and unnecessary knowledge; serves not our real benefit at all, and God (as Vives notes) hath so appointed, ut ad minime necessaria minimum lucis acciperemus. Scripture acquaints us not with the figures of our Savior's person, nor the usages
of his life before his publick Ministry, nor the methods of the Divine Decrees, nor the orders of the Angelical Hierarchy: and multitudes of Questions referring to the future state, it remits to the Solution of our Great Elias at his second Coming. So unnecessary did our Savior seem to judge this knowledge, that his Prophecies, if all put together, would not much exceed the Writings of the least of the Minor Prophets, though himself the Great Prophet of his Church. God will recommend to us the plainness of his Precepts which we must know, by the obscurity of his Providences which we need not.

From all this it appears that Times and Seasons are especially reserved in God's Power and Counsel, and that it is our wisdom to study rather how we may redeem the present time, then understand the future. As for that three-d-bare Argument therefore, Signs of future Times, I could heartily wish it might be worn no longer in Writings and Sermons, because (like a bladder) it is full of nothing but air and vanity; and present things shew of color, and are valued but according to the light men stand in, and this shall be a sign of Mercy to one, which to another shall be a sign of a Judgment: and because the men whom these pretended Signs are intended to deter from any course
of Sin, start at them possibly at first (as birds do at the images of a man in the fields) but afterward, sit down upon them and neglect them, perceiving in the issue of things, that they are devoid of (life and motion) truth and certainty: and so these false fears in Religion may chance to discredit the true, as the adventitious heat in bodies oft-times supplants and betrays the natural. Moreover, all such Signs of Times do but tender the short and narrow thoughts of a Man as the Standard of God's, and to make men think the thoughts of occasions which are in their mind are but the counter-part of those which are in his; and they tend to detain people always in a gazing and expecting posture, so that they compose not to the work and duty of the day. And besides, may encourage rash and seditious purposes in them; and therefore perhaps the Wisdom of the State may in time see reason to interdict the superstitious publication of Prodigies, under as severe a penalty as it hath old Prophecies; all being but the ignes fatui leading to the bogs of Sedition, by amusing men with a false light, the pretended knowledge of the signs and state of future Times.

The more hath been said against this common Doctrine of Signs, because I know how extremly some weaker heads have been
been intoxicated with it: the Signs of the
Fall of Antichrist, of the Personal Reign,
of the Saints ruling the Earth, of where
God will be next, are the things that dwell
upon their thoughts and lips: and as it is
the vanity of some men that the studies of
times long past do so wholly ingross them and
command their admirations, that they will
scarce look upon a Book, reverence a Per-
son, value a Notion, understand an Opinion,
consider the genius, use the phrases, which
the Time present affords; so others are as
much taken up with the Times to come,
and live altogether upon reversion: what a
gusto have they for a Prophecy, and for some
spiritual person that pretends to have got-
ten the understanding of the Revelation up-
on his knees! In the mean while opportu-
nities for Wisdom fly away from them, their
thoughts are taken up with fine Nothings,
and a plain Discourse about Charity and
Justice hath no relish to their palats used to
such luscious food, and the men are always
in doubt whether it be yet a good hour to
begin to fear God and honor their Prince
in.
CHAP. VI.

Prejudices against the precedent Discourse removed.

1 Prejudice. That it takes off the force of that Argument to Piety the People are most capable of. Answered in three particulars. The great evil of pious frauds noted in several instances. An account from Reason of the sudden Reformation of men from Gentilism and Popery. Prodigies noted more prejudicial to the ends of Religion than serviceable. The common custom of training up the People to Religion by childish ways: The great evil thereof noted. No man to be cheated into Truth or Error.

2 Prejud. That the Discourse encourageth practical Atheism, answered. Superstition and Atheism nearly related. What there is in this common Opinion of Prodigies commendable, and to be still admitted.

Having tendered these Reasons, satisfied these Objections, advised those Remedies, which I conceived of greatest consideration in the present Argument, rather to take a further occasion of serving Truth then Opinion, I shall endeavor the Vindication of the precedent Undertaking from a double Charge which I perceive drawn up against it:

1. It stands challenged as an attempt greatly prejudicial to the just Interest of Religion and good life.

2. That (as a necessary consequent hereof) it gives a great confidence to Atheism.
First, It is urged against it, that admit the truth on my side, yet the declaring thereof thus on the house tops is a great disservice to Religion; because it takes off the edg of that argument to virtue and repentance which the heavy multitude are the most capable hearers of. Let the fears of a Comet or a Monster be as vain as they are pretended, and admit these Signs (like Idols) to have no more of Divine in them then Opinion gives them, yet while the imaginations of men concerning them are strong and serious, and they receive them as the Monitors of some vengeance, they may in virtue of that Opinion hugely influence good life. The greatest part of Men (what is said of some Insects) carry their brains in their eyes, and can entertain no fear towards God, but what their senses tutor them into. Arguments are things too fine and abstract to touch upon their coarser Souls. Children in understanding must be frighted from the pit by fantastick tears.

I doubt not to rub off the guilt of this specious Objection, by opposing to it these three Considerations:

1. Religion hath no need of any such fineness to procure its reception in the minds of men. Christian Religion is a soil productive enough of all the fruits of righteousness by its own native heat and strength, so that
Cap. 6. Discourse reviewed.

to throw upon it the dung of any Relations of dreadful Prodigies, Legends of Apparitions and Castles in the Air, is not to assist it, but disparage it. Let us call men to a serious attendance to those mighty Arguments to Piety wrapt up in the Life, Miracles, Death and Resurrection of our Lord; the rewards of Virtue bigger then their thoughts laid before their hopes in Scripture, the certainty and severity of Judgment, the follies wrapt up in every sinful choice, the great correspondence of all the Duties incumbent on us, to all our Notions of fit and just; and we shall find these consecrated weapons of infinite more force against the powers of the dark Kingdom, then the stories of a Peartree that blossom'd out of season, the drumming of a Spirit, a scuffle among Crows, and the bloody tinctures of a Pond, which some laugh at, and others entertain with some confused or flight fears, as conceiving they declare the death of Kings or Nobles, or the execution of that party of Men which stand branded already in their thoughts with the title of the Wicked and Ungodly. And therefore let us persuade our selves it is to be wise and pious both at once to cast about for no other instruments to advance Religion, then these God hath already supplied it with; and not to think his interest might be managed with greater
greater advantage, if he would be advised by us, and not trust it solely with those unpromising means of his own appointment. But it hath been the sin and folly of most Ages to think the cords whereby God would draw men to himself had not strength enough for their end, and therefore would be always twisting their own Fancies and Inventions about them; and have thought it fitter to teach the Fear of the Lord by the Doctrines of Men, than the sacred Principles of Religion. But how well those little arts have succeeded, will appear from our next Consideration.

2. All pious frauds have even concluded at last in Superstition or Atheism, or the ruins of that Cause and Party that used them, or in all these. Whenever men have come with their new pieces (new fetches and subtleties) to fill up some supposed rent in the old garment of Religion, the rent hath perpetually been made worse. Were it pertinent, it were easy to justify this truth with a cloud of instances: one or two, of many, that will best suit my present Argument I shall take notice of. The ancient Heathens, in fear lest the traditional notices they had of the mighty Works of God in the Ages before them, and those native seeds of Virtue sown in the hearts of men by the hand of Nature, would not, if they did not suffer some manner of

(in
Cap. 6. Discourse. removed.

(in the language of Eusebius), well husband and cultivate those seeds of God by good precept and education, grow (with the blessing of Heaven) into a competent harvest of piety towards God, and in good measure secure his honor and acknowledgment in the World: they cast about for Engines of greater force and power to move the heavy multitude withal. They thought there was not Majesty enough in the face of God, if duly represented, to awe Men into a fear and reverence of Him, and therefore they put a vizard upon his face, reported him as false & base-born, a foul, hurtful, touchy Being, and set him forth encompassed with Thunderbolts, Tridents, Dragons, Firebands, Furies, and whatever is apt to make sad and solemn thoughts in a soft and vulgar imagination. Thus Strabo tells us, that their ancient Professors of Divinity used ἀνάγκη & ἀπατηματική, to land and regulate the rude multitude by relating ἀγαθὰ ἡμῖν ἡμῖν ἡμῖν ἡμῖν ἡμῖν videos ἐκ τῆς καινοτομίας ταῦτα ἐν ἡμῖν. The dogmatists, using the vengeance with the Gods, horrors, and threats by words or some invisible types of terror: Now the Reason he gives of this usage is much of color with that of our Adversaries (so Logick allows) χαίρεισ ἡμῖν ἡμῖν ἡμῖν ἡμῖν ἡμῖν videos ἐκ τοῦ κολοσσίου λόγος.
Prejudices against the Care of

It is matter impossible to draw and call over a crowd of Women, and the mixt populace, to Religion, Piety, and a sober belief, by a Philosophical Discourse: but this must be effected by Superstition: a Principle not to be laid without the relating of Fables and Prodigies.

But what was the issue of all this juggling in Religion? In some, Superstition, a dry infipid and heartless devotion toward God, express in an infinity of Februations and empty forms: in others, Atheism, and a tacit scorn of all Religion; as appears from what Strabo further adds: "All the Thunderbolts, Tridents, Firebrands, Serpents, and the other Artillery which the ease multitude supposeth in the hands of the Gods, are mere Legends, and so is all the ancient Divinity: but made use of as wizards and bug-bears medς τις ημιοφερας, to fright fools and children with into Government and Religion.

If then Strabo, and other men as sharp-sighted as he, could see through the Religion of their Times, and had not another of a more solid composure to fix upon, what did they but cast out the Devil of Superstition by the worse Devil of Atheism?

Thus Superstition and Atheism were the immediate consequents of these religious Sophisms, but the final was the total overthrow of the Gentile Worship: for the cheats which were used to aw the people with,
were all so coarse a thread, that a little light was sufficient for the discovery; whereupon they were so suddenly and almost universally thrown off by them with an infinite impatience, mauger all the powers of States and subtleties of Philosophers to the contrary. For though I doubt not but the mighty prevalence of Christianity, upon the first publication thereof in the World, was owing to the Power of God which did assist it, yet I think this partial account thereof may be given to Reason, viz. The forgeries with which men had been long abused, were too gross to bear the light which came among them, and therefore were forsaken with the highest avetations by the people, who because they trust too much, have the greatest abhorrence of a cheat when once it is detected. One of the Ancients therefore speaking of those dreadful images and stories of the Gods, with which foolish persons endeavored to fright those of the Religion (then in fashion) they despaired to persuade, thus delivers himself. *Hoc

Vulgarum cum esset male composita, terrori pri

minum fuerer mortalibus, debinc consumpta

notitate, quasi ex longa agrindine consuade-

sequecitibus hominibus, natus est quidam ex ad-

miracione contemptum. Sis paulatim quod sus-

pectat animus ausus est diligenter inquirere,

& statim in arcana sitarum & vanarum
Prejudices against the

Superstitionum sagax mist ingenium. Tune ex assiduis tractatibus, latentium ratione collecta, pervenit ad causas, at profanarum religionum miseranda commenta, humanum genus primum discernet, deinde contemneret, tertio recusaret. And that sudden and almost general consent of people in the last Age (like the breaking forth of many waters) to bear down Popery before them, is very much salvable by some such rational consideration as this: They had been long imposed upon by cheats almost gross enough to be felt, the sweating and moving of Images, spurious Reliques, impudent Legends of Miracles and Apparitions of Saints, empty and idle Shews and Forms, the coarse Doctrines of Indulgences and Transubstantiation, and the like; and men quickly hated this blear-ey'd Religion, when a little light came among them, which they hugged in the night of their ignorance. For it cannot reasonably be presumed, that the hundred part of the men that turned from Gentilism or Popery, did it upon principles of understanding, and a sincere love of truth. And therefore I think the fall of the Papal Interest may with greater certainty be foreseen, in the continuance of these heaviest of impostures, then in all the unanswerable Arguments of the Learned used against them (which are seldom understoold against Education and In-
Cap. 6. Discourse removed.

(If not in the intention of the Assertors thereof, yet) in it self, a pious fraud; for they have been thought a kind of blunter wedges provided by divine Wisdom to work upon those knotty tempers, upon which those instruments of a finer edg, Arguments and Moral Discourses, can do no good. But what an evil influence they had upon the principles and practices of the Heathens of old, hath been already observed. And what do they tend to among our selves, but to make men begin to think the beard of a Comet, or the tail of a Meteor, to speak as fully the evil of sin as Scripture, and all those mouths which the spear and nails made in our Savior's body: and to tempt men, having been often abused by the false fears they give them, to out-face and despise the true, and so to grow (like Iron often heated and quench'd) churlish and unmanageable by the hammer of the Divine threatenings? Besides, these cryptick Signs give men to think that God gives them warning, but that he is very loath they should take it, that He gives them an Interpreter of his...
Counsels, but so obscure, *as interprete* (as Cotta in Tully laid off the Oracle of Apollo; ) that He is willing to speak to them by his Signs, but very shy of being understood, and that He is so severe as to be always levelling his arrows at them; But at the same time so kind as to bid men beware of him, and stand out of his way, which are the silliest sort of blasphemies that we can dishonor infinite Goodness and Wisdom by.

3. If men be such children in understanding as it is pretended, the greater reason to instruct them in the solid foundations of Religion, that so they may out-grow their childish state, and be Christians, not upon Echnick but Scripture-principles. To say the People are not capable of Reasons, and therefore must be governed by Fallacies, is to make one misery an apology for another. This hath been the great Error of most Times, that because men saw the people to be weak and easie, therefore they chose to instruct them to Piety by Pictures, Rites, fantastical Fears, Legends, pathetical Ora-
tions, odious or fashionable phrases, tones and gestures; all which made them worse fools then they found them, giving them furious Zeals, ungovernable Spirits, facet-
lent Religions, varietive tempers, giddy and unsetted heads. The World can never ou
grow the dwarfish stature of its more childish years in point of knowledge, while the Learned are taught nothing but Faith, and the People nothing but Affection. The real principles of Religion are rational, and offer themselves (like the beams of Heaven) to the weakest Eye that is but a little open to view them, and where these dwell they produce an understanding, an abiding and an equal piety; they do not (like a Prodigy) fright a man, but reform him: and besides, are the truths of God, and so, the only natural instruments to build up Goodness with: whereas Prodigies are lies, often in themselves, always in their supposed ends, and it is ignoble to put a fallacy upon any man, and to cheat him, though it be into Truth or Virtue.

But (secondly,) This Undertaking stands impleaded as the encouragement of practical Atheism. Bad men may sleep on now, and take their rest, for they are so used to the noise of the divine Threatnings that they cannot awaken them, and they are told that Prodigies must not. And besides, the detection of these false fears in Religion may possibly give them a suspicion of the truth, and a persuasion that all religious fears hold more of the softness of the person than the value of the occasion. And therefore the interest of piety had been more consulted.
if the truth contended for had been publicly served as a Cudgel amongst men reached by the virtue and wisdom from some other thereof. 

I answer: If Superstition must not be removed for fear Atheism take its place, certainly that Speech of the Apostle, 'The men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious,' had a real meaning, but not according to knowledge; and the Chief Preachers of the Gospel among the Superstitious Gentiles acted extremity against Reason of Divine State, because tempting them to Atheism while calling them off from the vills and fears of Superstition.

Besides, Superstition (what ever false thoughts men conceive thereof) is it self but a more specious and disguised Atheism, for it dehons the God it worships, takes him itcoucheth to, cloaths Him with such passions as it were a sin to imitate, and hath reverence for nothing in God but a power to do an ill turn; and therefore as good almost let the one continue as the other.

But for my part I know not to disparage my Reader so far as to imagine that he hath such a weak and cropted piety, that it would fall to the ground, if wanting the wooden churches of Prodigies to support it; or that he will fail the dangers of the pit ever the Jels, because grown too much man to be frightened.
frightened from it by bugbears; or that the terrors of the Lord will appear to him the less obliging motives of repentance because not assisted now with the fanatical fears of a Monster or a fiery Meteor: or that his true fears of God will be ever the less, but the more when he may come to inquire and undisturbed by the false ones to entertain the true; however, because even weak jealousies (where the interest of piety seems taught) and in that regard, I seriously profess that I intend not in all that hath been said, to encourage men to promote themselves peace and impunity in a way that is not good; or to dispute the rational and well-grounded fears in Religion; and therefore affirm, that as the bugbears skin died not, might be offered to God under the Law, while its body was unclean, so while the body of this superstitious observation and opinion is too impure to be offered as an instance of our fear and observance of Him, yet the skin wherein it is vesture, the faith of a divine Providence and Prescience, the most acknowledgment of our continual obnoxiousness to his displeasure, the fears of his judgments while in a course of sin, ought still to be dedicated to him but so as the color and complexion be altered, and all these proceed from more solid principles, and be found in conjunction with a more filial temper then in the ancient observers of prodigies they were. CAP.
Having thus (in a method as much required to the rules of Logick, as the uncertain and doubtful color and condition of the Subject would allow) discussed the first part of my Argument, Prodigies barely signal, that which the order proposed lays next before us, is the consideration of Prodigies penal. By which I understand penarum monstros, judgments of an unusual make and more dreadful aspect. Now these are either Personal, befalling some particular members of the common body, who (to use the significant language of Scripture) have not died the common death of all men, nor been visited after the visitation of all men, or National, when the whole body of a Nation, or the greater part thereof, is smitten with a rod of an unusual size. These also may easily be conceived by men as a kind of hand out of the clouds to write Tsekel upon persons or causes distasteful to themselves; and therefore I shall (as I can) direct to a sober notion concerning them both in the ensuing Conclusions.
A seeming inconsistency of expressions in Sacred Scripture in reference to Divine judgments, these, an accidental occasion of mistake in this subject. Judgments extraordinary no conclusive arguments of the Extraordinary sinfulness of Persons. Men prone to think them so. The Jewish notion in reference to them, what. Why so commonly thought the evidences of a great guilt. Scripture and Experience alleged to correct that mistake. The Original of Heroick poetry. Why no certain rules here observed in the distribution of punishments. What affects great judgments upon our neighbors are to be entertained with. Judgments extraordinary no signs of the sinfulness of Causes Civil or Sacred, proved by six considerations. A controversy concerning the true occasion of that Apostolical punishment. Delivering to Satan. The true ground of mistake in this argument discovered, and reproved.

Scripture when speaking concerning the Divine judgments, seems to deliver ה כי מְשִלָּהֶנָּה (as some of the Masters say of those verses in the Prov. 26.4, verbs) words that overthrow one another, sometimes blaming men for not understanding the meaning of them, sometimes for venturing to interpret it; sometimes for a curious looking down into those great depths, and elsewhere for a careless looking off. It tells us in one place, God sees Pl. 9. 16, known by the judgment which he executeth in another, that neither love or hatred is known
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-known by all that is before us. Which diversity of expressions hath been an accidental occasion of some confusion of thoughts in reference to the Divine judgments: for a remedy whereof, the first Conclusion I propose is this.

Judgments extraordinary are not without further evidence concluding arguments of the more than ordinary sinfulness of Persons. Men are generally prone to find their own virtues in Fortune blanditis (to weigh their own merits at the deceitful beam of outward blessings and successes) and their brothers faults in Parcarum tabulis, the sad destinies and evils which fall upon his lot. Job's friends judged the dimensions of his iniquities by the shadow of the sufferings which were laid upon him, and presumed the form became great because, the latter were so. Shimei concluded David to be a man of blood, because evil was raised up to him out of his own house. The Barbarians that the Apostle was deeply indebted to the divine Justice, because his hand was arrested by the Viper. Thus the Orator mainly inferred that God had no great love, for his children of old; the Jewish Nation, because he severely corrected them so often. And as generally among the Hebrews of old, if a person was smitten by lightning, he was thought (like the sacrifice

Job. 2. 13.

1 Sam. 16. 8.
1 Act. 28. 4.
2 Quam chara

Diis immortaliibus esse

Gens Judz

docuit

quod est uita,
quod elocata,
quod servata

tories. Ora

pro Flacco.
2 Oudeis, ne

eu auxi vel

paterle

Artmjid. 1. 2.
Oneiroc. 8.
Casab. in Pers.
lat. 2.

orat. min-

thems of old, if a person was smitten by lightning, he was thought (like the sacrifice con-
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Consumed by a divine fire, more sacred and venerable; \( \text{C} \) on the contrary, Christians look at him as prophane to the Opinion of men, and conceive his crimes as black as his smitten body, and that God judged him good for nothing but to make an example of to the rest of men. Thus also if the fire of God fall and consume their Neighbors dwelling, if he break his neck by a fall from his horse, if he fill not up the number of his daies nor be gathered to, his grave in peace, many are apt to hasten to a rash sentence, and to write in his ashes Forsaken of God. And it seems to have been the common maxim of the Jews in our Saviours time, that there were no chastisements of love, but that all afflictions were the express of displeasure, and the constant indications of some correspondent, though hidden, guilt in the suffering person. In confidence whereof the Disciples demanded of our Savior who had sinned, that man, or \( \text{b} \) John 9.2.3. his parents, who was born blind? and supposed that those persons to whom the Tower of 

Siloam became both monument and executioner were Sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem. And perhaps therefore was Christ coming down from the cross, so often and so universally demanded by the Jews as the Sign of his being the Son of God; because of this fond conceit, that a death of such
Concerning Prædication Penal.  § 4.

Shame and pain could not possibly befall a person of that sanctity, and favor with God, which his Son must needs be supposed to have: that which also made the cross of Christ such an offence both to Jew and Gentile for so many years. Suitably to this Jewish notion, Maimonides tells us, that not the least evil befalls a man, but is an instance of Divine displeasure, and that if he hurt but his hand with a thorn which he presently pulls out again, he is to regard it as a divine punishment, and on the contrary, if the least good befall him, it is to be owned a retribution and part of payment for his service. And therefore perhaps is the Apostle, when writing to the Hebrews so large to shew that the principle of their afflictions was love and the end was peace and righteousness. Least their common notion of them [that their Original was wrath and their end only punishment] should make their burdens more galling and uneasy.

Now the reason why Men under any heavy pressures, have suffered almost as much from the hard thoughts of man, as the hand of God, and been thought as wicked as miserable, is, because we frame to ourselves a pleasantly notion of good and evil, we are apt to over-rate our bodies and estates, and then to estimate the favor of God by the references and respects his Providences.
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Vindicences bear towards them. Besides, we conclude, that all punishments extraordinary must be the undoubted reporters of a correspondent guilt, because the great Canon of Justice is this, that all punishments be adjusted to the merits of the Person.

Whereas God's distributions of rewards and punishments in this life are not directed by any of our short and scanty maxims and notions. Scripture tells us, there is one Event to the righteous and to the wicked, to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not. And that there are just men to whom it happeneth according to the works of the wicked, and there are wicked to whom it happeneth according to the works of the righteous; and assures us God's servants privileged from some sin, but from no punishment; while a Josiah may fall in a battle, Uziah be smitten for an error of love and zeal, and a daughter of Abraham be bound by Satan, a Job delivered to the power of the Devil both in body and estate, and fire came out of the bramble and devoured the Cedar. But had Scripture been wholly silent in this Argument, the History of times, may the experience of a day would have shown us this knowledge, that this world is not intended the place of distinction between the good and bad: they shew us the Ax laid as often to the green tree as to the
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...dry, and men surprized by some heavy plague in the midst of pious, as well as profane purposes. Ciminari relates of Charles the eighth of France, that in discourse one day with his Queen and other persons of quality, among other things, He said that He hoped that he should do nothing hereafter whereby he should offend God: and that immediately upon the uttering of those words he fell down, became speechless, and died within few hours after in the place where he fell (as many other have done in an apoplestick fit.)

This was it which gave occasion to some men of old to reproach Divine Providence under the terms of Fate and blind Fortune, even the non-observance of any steady laws which directed the rewards and punishments which they saw before them; and oft. filled the minds even of wise men with wild and impatient thoughts. Surely oppression of innocence by the hand of wickedness maketh a wise man mad; it offered such violence to his notions of fit and just. This was it which gave birth to Heroick Poesie: for when the Souls of men had been long grieved to hear the groans of depressed virtue and the loud laughter of exalted folly, and to see successes so seldom measured by the merits of the cause or person; they began to set up the pretty images of some more for-
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Hitherto it stands wherein Vertue reigned, and the rod was laid only on the back of Folly, and they eased their thoughts by retreating sometimes but to the contemplation of this imaginary unanimity between merit and success.

God will have things carried thus in a way quite counter to our Maxims and notions, that so the world may have a standing argument to confirm the faith of some other day wherein the cause of vertue shall have a fairer hearing than now it hath; or perhaps that these things, matters scarce accountable to our reason (in providence) may be the constant exercise of our faith and wisdom. For look as in some Prodigies signal, things seem so delivered to the powers and forces of secondary Agents, that the world appears but a kind of great Engine moved solely by certain weights and springs within it self, and all effects resolvable into bare and single Nature; so in Prodigies penal, Gods Arrows seem so to fly by dark, and heavy plagues to fall with so little choice and distinction, that the world seems a great lottery, and time and chance to happen to all events and persons. God intending this cryptick management of affairs, as a kind of Divine temptation, to prove whether we be such men in understanding as to stand by the doctrine of a Providence, while the necessity
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Fury and wisdom thereof are rendered so much to dispute by the great appearances of Nature and Fortune, and whether we be quick sighted enough to discover that the living creatures have the hands of a man, though half hidden under the covert of their wings, that all causes and events are managed by a hand of Wisdom and reason, though they may seem to fly at random, to our first and more unwary thoughts.

Excellent therefore the advice of Solomon, who having told us that there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and a wicked man who prolongeth his life in his wickedness, thus directs in the following words, *Be not righteous over-much, i.e. Do not in thy fond thoughts acquit thyself more righteous than the person upon whom thou seest such a judgment fall; neither make thyself over-wise, by arrogating an understanding sufficient to expound this riddle of Providence, God's dealing out such hard measures to such a person: we are to judge nothing before the time. If it be but (in the phrase of the Apostle) such a trial as some man hath undergone, and any may, let us not by any censorious speeches poison our brother's wounds, which call for the oyl of our comforts and prayers. A person may (like the Leper under the Law) be smitten with a very black and dark plague and
and yet be pronounc'd clean before men; God often puts that mettal into the hottest fire which he intends shall bear his own image in most lively figures. When therefore we read of Antioch (where the Disciples were first called Christians) and the Churches of the Colossians and Laodicea (to which the Holy Ghost directeth particular letters by the hands of S. Paul, and S. John) their perishing by an Earthquake, of God's forsaking the Levantine Churches, of the Seas sudden breaking of its sandy girdle, and overwhelming Cities or Countrés, of the many thousands which perished upon the second terrible eruption of fire from mount Vesuvius, or the like judgments great enough for an Epocha: We ought not to afflict their miseries, by charging a greater guilt upon their persons and memories then on other men; but rather (with the Apostle) Stand and behold the severity of God upon them which fell, and adore his Goodness to us who are not thus surprized in our wickedness, or visited with some strange affliction which might make us infamous as well as miserable, and encourage uncharitable men to clap their hands at us, and to hiss us out of our places.

Secondly, No such extraordinary judgments (in destitution of any other evidence) are to be received as conclusive arguments of the
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Sinfulness of causes, civil or sacred. Doctrines and causes change color and appearance in the eye of the multitude, according as heaven shines more or less upon them by successes. Our histories make mention of a very hot contest about the marriage of Priests, whether were more acceptable with God, they which vowed single life, or they which were married. At last the Contenders agree to remit the controversy to the debate of a Synod, where they which asserted the marriage of Priests, placed themselves on one side of the room, and they which appeared against it, on the other: and so it happened that the side of the house, whereon the defendants of the marriage of Clergy-men sat, fell down, and many of them were hurt, and many lost their lives. Which accident was construed God's determination in the dispute, and received as a sign that he was better pleased with those which vowed single life: and the arguments of their adversaries were hereby, long after knock'd at head, as well as themselves.

Baronius (to infer the piety of that payment) takes notice that the Church of England was overspread with schisms and heresies, simul ac denarium Petri solvere deserunt, as soon as ever the people left off to pay Peter-pence. And thus the Armies lately on foot amongst us, used to quote the
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the signal Victories (as they loved to speak) in their vindication, and to tell the world that God had given judgment against the adverse cause when they had made appeal to him in the high places of the field: and so (in effect) told us that just and unjust were but more handsom terms for prosperous and unsuccessful; and that Treason (like bells) when once at full height, ceaseth to make any noise in the ears of Justice. And of late, if any distemper incident to humanity, have befallen persons in attendance on the publick Service, it hath been rashly urged as a caveat from heaven against the very prayers. And thus (in common life) where men are at variance, and see the rod of God lying upon the back of their adversaries, they are ready to say, God hath espoused their cause and avenged their quarrel; and so, to kill their brother with Gods sword, and make him a party in all their petty quarrels and animosities.

Against all such unclean proofs, which (like the Crab) go backward; from events to rules, I offer these considerations,

1. God often blasts the cause of truth and goodness by adverse Providences. For as God in his word, hath recorded some actions of very eminent persons [as the equivocating of Abraham with Abimelech, Rachel her defeating of Laban with a falsehood, the incest of...
of Lot with his daughters, some actions of Samson, &c. not noted (like the Jewish Sepulchers) with any visible sign, of reproof and dislike, that so men might not unwittingly defile themselves by copying out the example (in which he doth but prove our constancy to his even and undoubted precepts, and try whether we have understanding to put a difference between the bright and darker side of that cloud of witnesses we are to eye in our way to heaven;) so also in his providence there are tentations divine; the cloud often rests upon the tabernacles of the righteous, the fire of heaven sometimes strikes a religious house, the chief witnesses of truth shall be forced to know themselves by the title of victus Dei populus. God hereby makes tryal whether we will believe the Spirit of the living creatures to move in the wheels, whiles they describe such involved and perplexed circles and motions; whether we love truth and vertue, or rather their fortunes and felicities. Besides, the divine relation and light of righteousness and truth, never make such clear reports of themselves, as when they break out and shine forth at last, through all the clouds of persecution and heresies, God often permits them for a time to be obscured withal.

2. Prodigious evils upon its Adversaries.
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is a plea which almost any cause is able to enter for itself at one time or other. The Israelites fell twice before the Benjamites though engaged in a war (f seldom unprosperous) intended only as a publick revenge. We find the Heathens often mentioning the judgments which befell the despisers of the Gods and religion among them. And Herodotus tells us that several Barbarians (as he stiles them) adventuring to rush rudely upon the Temple of Minerva, had the religion of the attempt avenged upon them by a fire from heaven. An event to which I incline to intitle the especial agency of the Devil (amongst whose stranger works, the causing of fire to come down from heaven, is particularly instanced in, Revel. 13. 13.) to maintain thereby a reverence in the minds of men to his altars and rites, and perhaps to imitate the fire which came forth from God under the old Law, to avenge the irreverent and unhallowed approaches to his altars, or which fell from heaven to chastise the rude and violent addresses of the captains and their fifties to a Man of God. And Justin relates that Brennus the Leader of the Gauls, attempting to ride the Delphick Temple, was by some rallyed forces of his defeated enemy, quite vanquished, and those of his wounded army which survived the battle were killed with hail and lightning.

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And Celsus in O. I. gen thus endeavours the vindication of his Cause, πιστος, ο ανδρος τους Ιερους Ιησους Ιωαννες Ευαγγελιστας άντίκα έλαιων, οι μη τσπερενες, &c. how many (faith he) upon the contempt and violation of holy things, have been immediately punished: some have run distracted, some have been forced to publish their own wickedness, some have laid violent hands upon themselves, some have been taken with incurable diseases, &c. which relation is not unlikely, because the same Father elsewhere tells us that the Egyptians and other Heathens had their διημένα βασιλείους τοις δούλοις τι μελετεύειν και τις πυρέναν βεβαιώσες, &c. Demons which tortured those which seemed but a little to trespass in the observation of their Superstitions, as in the eating of some forbidden meats, in touching the dead body of a man, and the like: and that they used to do honor to them, εν τοις τόποις, in some places peculiarly separated to them: and to which they used to deliver the offending person. And this Ethnical usage was (I conceive) the occasion of that Apostolical punishment among the Gentiles, of a delivering to Satan eis ολεσιον τον Σατανα, for the temporary torture of the flesh, in the case

case of open contempt of holy things; this
being a punishment which the Heathens (to
whose Rites the Apostle sometimes con-
formed) no doubt, well understood and
greatly dreaded, and which look'd so per-
fectly like the delivery of the offender to
all the Evils of his former Gentile state.
But to return: These few Examples assure
us, that we consult not the interest of Truth,
when we endeavor to serve it upon such
proofs as Error may alledg, as well as that.
Extraordinary Judgments may in some cases
be alledged, to second and credit a Rule, but
never to create it.

3. God hath supplied us with more even
and steady Rules to estimate the streightness or
crookedness of any Cause by, then Prodigies
Penal, which an active Fancy may easily
tune to the air of any Opinion and practice
whatsoever. We have the Oracles of God,
the Councils of wise and good men, the
common Principles which manage the Dis-
courses of the World, the Laws of a State,
and our own exercised Reason, which is (in
the language of Plutarch) ἄληθέως ἔστω θ.,
the great Oracle of Truth to resolve us in the
emergent doubts of life. And it is especial-
ly because men are under a quick sense, how
exact an Eye is requisite to discern how near-
ly any of these Rules touch the building,
any Cause or Doctrine of whose evennels
there
there may be a doubt, and that this method of knowledge ingageth them to dig for understanding, and requires them to an industrious use of themselves in the acqiiest of true resolutions in a case, and perhaps may detain them some time but in the place of Candidates and Probationers for Truth, that they are so easily inclined to attend to the supposed intimations of a Revelation, some strange Prodigy, Prophecy, or mighty impulse, which give them the conclusion without tasking them to a tedious consideration of the value of the premises, and lift them up into the Tree of Knowledge, without any industrious climbing of their own. But certainly God, who bad us buy the Truth, never intended it should be got, upon such cheap and easy terms: men may suspect their wares to be nought, if they cost no more then an idle attendance to such fantastical measures as these generally are.

4. Neither Scripture nor Reason warrant us to receive God's Judgments as his determinations in any sacred or civil differences. We have now no more warrant to infer the goodness or badness of the Causes and Opinions men espouse, onely from the Judgments which sometimes overtake the Assertors of them, then to make judgment of the loyalty of a Wife by a water of jealousy. It is onely because we commonly set too high
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high a price upon our Causes parties and opinions, that we so easily imagine the biggest End God’s Judgments can be directed to, is the bearing witness to the truth and righteousness of them. By which Fancy we become a kind of spiritual *Anthropomorphites*, shaping out God like our selves, and laying out the Counsels of Heaven by the poor, short, and often peevish, thoughts and models of a man. If we consult Scripture we shall seldom or never find a person onely of a corrupt Judgment in reference to some Doctrine of Religion (if otherwise of a blameless life) smitten with any great plague from Heaven, but often persons of corrupt and depraved maners: because all the laws of righteousness carry οἰκεῖον ἐλάφιον, a demonstration within themselves, and stand in so full a light, that (like the Sun-beams) they bear testimony to themselves: whereas matters of Faith and Doctrine appear not before the mind in so great an evidence. Men indeed are apt to follow a little difference of Opinion from themselves (in Religion especially) with thick Anathema’s, and quickly to blow it out into a Schism or Heresie (because such differences seem to dispute the strength of their Arguments,) but are easily inclined to look upon even a great miscarriage in life, through the other end of the Prospective, and to think it to an
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Integra, a bare humane infirmity, (God’s honor onely being concerned in that:) Whereas, on the other side, Divine Goodness makes a large allowance for a wel-meant Error, because the Understanding, like the Eye, cannot so easily fee its own blemishes, but is severe against even a little crime, men being more enabled for a discovery of that.

To say therefore, that dying Arius (who in the maner of his death seem’d the Antitype of Judas, his bowels gushing out when he went to serve the necessitities of Nature) proclaimed the displeasure of God against his Doctrine; or that that House in Black-Friers, which sunk down under the weight of those many Papists there assembled with their Priest to attend the offices of their Religion, and buried them in its ruines Octob. 26. 1623. was God’s warning against Poverty: or that the Births (though granted monstrous beyond the possibilities of Nature) which Mrs. Hutchinson and Mrs. Dyer (the two great Prophetesses and Leaders to the Anabaptistical Faction in New-England) were delivered of, singled out their Opinion, and were visible Reproofs from Heaven of Anabaptism itself, is to interpret the voice of Gods Rods by blind & uncertain guesses, and to repeat the vanity of that Emperor who would fetter the Sea; for we hereby determine the large and deep thoughts of infinite

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See the story at large in Dr. Gouge his Treat. of the Extent of Divine Provid.
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infinite Wisdom by those little maxims, short thoughts and ends, our selves usually attend unto. God never menaced any such reproachful Judgment against any such Errors as these in Scripture; and if he had, if found in conjunction with great crimes, it may be more reasonably presumed that it was directed rather against the wickedness of the heart then the weakness of the head.

If I would advise with my Eyes in the choice of my Party or Opinion, I should rather observe (as I could) what parties of men are most delivered to the judgment of a cruel and unquiet spirit, to a giddy motion from one fond notion to another, who they are which seem most forsaken of virtue and true goodness: For these are spiritual judgments, and so more suitable to the condition of that spiritual Oeconomy the appearance of our Savior hath now put us under. Besides, the Spirit of truth may (nay, e usually doth) dwell with great sufferings, but great sins give suspicion of its departure. But even this also, upon trial, will approve it self but the best of bad Rules to proceed by in the judgment of Causes: for the enormity of mens lives (like dirty hands) may soil and blemish the jewel of a good Cause, not lessen and sink its intrinsic worth and value; and indifferent men will be ready to conclude it a falling Cause which catcheth
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catcheth at such weak and unfaithful holds. A good Cause, like a Soldier not well appointed, receives more hurt from the rega of its own rotten armor, than the bullet of an Adversary; is more disparaged (I mean) by a weak and insufficient Defence, than a strong and subtil Argument, (which is often thought to hold more of the pregnancy of the Disputant then the Cause.)

5. God's judgments are a great deep: the line of humane wisdom is too short to found the Ends and Reasons of them: τινα με τα ρέγε, why are some particular Evils, is often as desperate an inquiry among wise Christians, as ποισι πετασε, whence are Evils, was among the Ancient Heathens. In the Works of Creation, we better apprehend the final than the formal Cause of things; but in the Works of Providence, better the formal then the final, [what and whence the Evils are, then why:] and therefore some of the Ancients defined Providence (though under another name) motus ab occulto in occultum, a motion from an hidden Agent to an hidden End. Sometimes perhaps the Person shall fall in the Cause, because that is displeasing to God; thus Josiah fell in the Expedition against the King of Egypt: sometimes the Cause may fall in the Person, because he is displeasing to God; as the Israelites in the Controversie with the Men.
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Men of Benjamin: sometimes neither Cause nor Person are offensive to him, but perhaps his hour for its prevalency is not yet come; or perhaps he intends to succeed it by some means more proper to serve his honor and the happiness of his servants upon, then any they have yet thought of. The Ends of the Divine Judgments being thus various and unsearchable, they cannot be preferred Rules of trial in any sacred or civil differences, but must be alway thought and discours'd of with all severity and devout caution. It's a Maxim at Rome, *Sura Pontificum Romanorum sunt reverenter glossanda*, no bold and hasty Comment must be put upon the Text of the Papal Laws. Certainly it is an instance both of wisdom and piety to gloss upon all acts of Divine Providence with all fear and reverence, which turn upon such dark and mysterious Counsels; And the rather because,

6. The trial of Causes by the Rule of outward Blessings or Evils, hath betrayed Men to very vain imaginations. The 8 Idolaters in the Prophet concluded their burning In- cense to the Queen of Heaven was very grateful to the King thereof, because then they had plenty of victuals, were well and saw no evil; but while they neglected so to do, they wanted all things, had been consumed by the sword and by the famine. And it seems
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It seems it was the usage of the great Masters of Superstition of old, to build their Cause by such kind of Arguments: For that learned h Rabbi tells us, The Patrons of those idolatrous Customs, which have neither foundation nor profit, to confirm their Superstitions; and to conciliate credit to them, cunningly use this craft, to tell the people that all they which did not do this or that action which confirmed their Superstition, should always be smitten with such or such a plague. Quod vero plaga illa per accidens alicui forte subsequatur, &c. And if that threatened plague chance to follow upon any man which neglects such a superstitious practice, then that Superstition is magnified, and the Opinion presently subscribed unto. Thus, He tells us, the Idolatrous usage of waving their new-born Children through the flames, arose from an Observation among the Heathen that some quickly died that had not been so made to pass through the fire. And an Observation that some Evils had befallen them on such a day oftner then on some other, gave men of old to imagine some days inauspicious, and not to share so much in God's favor as others did. In like manner, all those fearful plagues, wherewith God punish'd the obstinate Idolatry of the Roman Empire, were concluded the Examples of divine displeasure against the Christians, and they were always presumed...
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Formed the Foma's which raised all the storms in the State: A common Opinion, the re-prehenion whereof was a great occasion of S. Austin his Book De Civit. Dei. An over-value of this crooked Rule drew forth that Speech from a Modern Papist: *The Greeks* (faith he) excommunicated us, and account _de sign. Ecclesiae._ Lib. 6. c. 2.

Constantinople was taken: now this number is given to the expiation and remission of sins. So that we may know (faith he) therefore the Grecians were delivered by God in vassalage to the Turks, because they had not expiated that crime committed against the Catholic Church within the time appointed by the sacred Scripture. To all these Examples, I shall superadd, but this one more:

Comenius tells us, that he could not obtain of himself to publish that Book of Prophecies intituled *Lux in tenebris,* till God had chastised his backwardness by afflictions, and that he saw those who derided or hindered its publication punished with death. But when contrary Events had refuted them, he seems to retract their hasty publication within a few lines, saying, *Videmur sane obsequii precipitantia peccasse.*

All these Considerations assure us, that Men are never in greater danger of *lying against the Truth,* and God the Father there...
Concerning Prodigies Penal. § 1.
of, then when they make to themselves such measures thereof as he never sealed, and prefer his Providences to the Opinion of more fit standards of right and wrong then his Precepts, and the commands of his Vicegerents. It were therefore heartily to be wish'd, that men had that largeness of heart, as not to think Heaven and Earth concerned in the standing or falling of their little Interests, Forms and Opinions; that they would leave off (that worst kind of enclosure) the intailing Salvation solely upon their own party, and not go about to hedge in the Holy Dove, by appropriating the graces and influences thereof to themselves. For then they would not be so prone to believe God's Judgments design no higher then the service of their sorry passions, parties and persuasions; that He is as angry as they are when discountenanced, and as little able to forbear and make allowance for the supposed mistakes and infirmities of men as themselves.
SECT. II.

Four positive Conclusions more about Judgments Extraordinary.

Judgments in what cases singularly observable. God often noted to punish men in the way they sinned, and why. Four instances of God’s Extraordinary Judgments upon the Adversaries of his Gospel. Most of the Gentile Temples destroyed by fire. The singularity of God’s Judgments upon the Jewish Nation, noted. The Example of the Galileans considered: their extraordinary death, no sign of the Time to that Age. Lesser National Judgments, how to be valued. Religious Controversies to be managed without bitterness.

Having thus endeavored to rectifie the Errors on the left hand, in reference to Prodigies Penal; in these two Negative Conclusions, I shall endeavor next to rectifie those on the right, in these four ensuing Positive: whereof the first is this;

Judgments extraordinary overtaking persons evidently guilty of extraordinary crimes, are to be regarded as the evidences of God’s Providence, and high displeasure against those sins. God generally commits all spiritual Judgment to his Son, and all temporal Judgment to the Magistrate (who therefore hath God’s title; and is said to judg in his stead.) But sometimes (as Kings, who yet have their Vicegerents) he is pleased to sit as it were in open Judicature himself, and to correct an high and daring crime with his own
Concerning Prodigies. 

immediate stroke: Which he doth either when the Sword of Justice is permitted to rust in its scabbard, and the Magistrate neglects to put open wickedness to shame; or when perhaps he is unable, through a want of knowledge or power to reach the criminal; or is interpretatively absent: thus in the primitive Times when the Magistrate, being Heathen, thought not any sin against the Gospel to be fori sui, he invested his public Ministers with a power which reached to the infliction or destruction of the flesh upon darning or hopeless offenders.

Now these Judgments Extraordinary age Vocal and Emphatical, and call for our more serious notices in three Cases especially:  

1. When the Judgment bears upon it the evident portraits and figures of the sin. The cross men bear (like that of our Savior) often carries the inscription of the crime in such plain and legible characters, that he that runs may read it. There are some herbs which bear upon them the signatures of Nature, certain marks stamp'd upon them by the hand of Nature, serving as a kind of native labels; to tell us what virtues they contain, and whereby it may be known, even upon sight, to what diseases or parts of the body ill-affected they are proper and useful, because
Concerning Prodigies.Penal.

because bearing some figures or colors analogous to them; thus punishment sometimes carries the signatures of sin, and proclaims by its very make and fashion, what sin it is intended to discover and cure in us: And this it doth either when there is a rudiment of a suffering in the very same ways wherein men sinned, and the cross is (as it were) shaped out of the forbidden tree whereby they offended. Thus David's adultery was published in Absalom's incest; Pharaoh, who would have all the males drowned, was himself drowned, and the wickedness of Abimelech in slaying his seventy brethren was returned upon his own head in that strange and violent death whereby he perished. God is pleased to frequently to punish men thus, that the Prophets often seem to foretell a Judgment rather by a rational attendance to the condition of the sin, than by a divine affliction. Now God thus frequently deals out to men such measure as they deal to him or their neighbor, because (the great end of punishment being to bear witness to righteousness) he doth hereby eminently attest the fundamental Law of all Righteousness, That we do to others as we would they should do to us; which Law, Divine Justice will fulfill upon men when it is not fulfilled by them, and give them (as the Jews proverbially speak) mensuras mensura. In

\[ 1 \text{ Kings} 21, 19. \]
\[ \text{Isai.} 33,1. \]
\[ \text{Joel} 3,6,7,8. \]
\[ \text{1 Sam.} 15,33. \]
\[ \text{Hab.} 2,8. \]
\[ \text{Obad.} 15,16. \]
\[ \text{Mic.} 1,7. \]
\[ \text{Jer.} 4,8,26,27. \]
\[ \text{Isai.} 62,6. \]
all such great Examples therefore of Divine Justice, God's Rod hath a voice as well as a smart, and it becomes us to be his notice-takers, and not (with the Philistines: 1 Sam. 6:17) to nickname the most apparent hand of God a chance which hath happened; and that we may not be thought to censure our Brother, turn charitable Atheists. Or, secondly, the judgment may proclaim the sin when there is an Opponent, in which the judgment seems the symbol of the sin, and Justice pays men in value though not in kind. Thus God threatened the Israelites that as they had served strange Gods in their own Land, so should they serve strangers in a Land not their own. Solomon served God with a divided heart, and half half his Kingdom goes to his posterity. When we see the scandalous Sinner corrected thus by his own wickedness, and made even to drink the dust of his own Idol, we should make a pious meditation on the occasion.

2. When the Judgment surprizeth the Sinner in the very act of his wickedness and sin the offspring destroys its parent (as it is laid of the Viper) in the very production. When the false Swearer is immediately stricken by God, and the blasphemer's tongue suddenly cut into silence, and Death sent to make the Oppressor vomit up his newly stoln morsels; when Herod and
Concerning Prodigies Penal.

Nebuchadnezzar have their sin and punishment bearing an equal date; (in short) when Justice thus lays aside its leaden feet, and treads close upon the heels of the offender; God intends to learn us some great lesson in such notorious Examples; and it is a sign we are past feeling, if we can see him thus cutting off now one and then another member of our common body, without some shrinking and religious sense thereof in our selves.

3. When the Judgment is such as the general Experience of Times proves the usual consequent of such a crime. As a sudden and untimely death of Sedition, the ruine of Estates ofSacred, an antedated and diseased old age of riot and drunkennes, an almost general impenitency of uncleanness, a naked and exposed posterity of oppression and unrighteous gain, strange discoveries and an infamous death of blood-sed, neglect and scorn of men of a great ambition, the blasting of designs which proceed upon the violation of the Religion of National compacts, an untimely and Strange death of cruel and bloody Persecutors. God's judgments are generally a great deep (the Reasons of them past our sounding) but his righteousness is sometimes as the great mountains visible to the dullest Eye, in the Judgments wherewith he corrects those sins especially which fall most directly into theross.
Concerning Prodigies Resolved

It will become us now to own ourselves God's Recorder; to register in a pious remembrance all such great displays of his Justice in the World. Such Extraordinary Judgments are intended to cover God's testimonies to his Providence and Righteousness, and the writing of them in the dust is none of the least causes of Atheism in the World. And therefore a learned Personage (not without good reason) reports it as a great defect, that there is not yet extant an Historia Nemesews, a judicious, impartial and well-attested History of the Divine Vengeance, containing the most remarkable monuments of God's Justice, in which it might appear how Evil hath strangely hunted (as it were through many turnings of affairs and mazes of life) the violent person, and at last overthrew him. A dull and stupid inobservance of such Examples of Divine Justice (a looking at them all but as the casual drops of milky falling from that common cup in the hand of God. Psal. 75.8. indifferently upon good and bad) stands often arraigned in Scripture as a very great sin.

What hath been spoken (to prevent any corruption of judgment or practice) must be taken with a grain or two of Salt.

x 1. Where
Concerning Prodigies Penal.

Where no particular sin of any blacker die appears in the life of our afflicted Brother, we must not presume from an inspection of the condition and figures of the judgment, to draw up any particular charge against him. We are not as soon as ever God writes bitter things against our neighbour (as Job phraseth it) rashly to undertake to expound the particular sense and meaning of the writing; least we call that a scorpion, which God intends a rod, and that an instance of wrath, which is intended but an exercise of grace. As we are not to conclude the punishment from the Sin, saying, Thus and thus hath such a man done and it will come home by him, this is to prescribe time and measure to the Divine Justice; so neither may we infer the sin from the punishment intitling some great evil of sin to such a great evil of suffering. For God may give a good man his evil, as to a bad man his good things in this world. Besides, there are (though the great Doctor of the Jews contend against them) the corrections of Divine love: Such I call some evils upon good men (as those upon Job) intended not directly the punishment of some great sin, but the exercise of some eminent virtue (though I do not think that all, or the greatest part of the evils upon the lot even of good men, merit that name, but...
but are properly punishments, evil of suffering inflicted by a displeased God for some evil of sin) and therefore we ought, not to talk to the grief nor shame of those whom God hath wounded, by charging the guilt of some great sin presently upon them; the Prophets indeed would sometimes point to the particular sin which was the cause of some particular judgment, but they were persons God made of his Counsel. God's judgments often come forth upon errands which they to whom they are sent, may better understand than persons unconcerned. The sum of all is, we must not conclude the Sin great because the judgment is so, nor yet that the judgment shall (in this time or way) be great, because the Sin is so, but where we are as sure from Scripture (not fancy, apt to abuse us where our selves are concerned) that the Sin is extraordinary, as we are from sense that the judgment is such, we may then cry out with the followers of the Lamb, Rev. 15. 4. All Nations shall worship before thee, O Lord, for thy judgments are made manifest.

2. Care must be had that no such observations be leavened with any uncharitable sentence upon our brothers final estate. A great judgment on his body, may be intended a great mercy to his soul, and perhaps the shame and misery of this life may commute for hell.

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Concerning Prodigies Perish.

When zeal might further the salvation of his soul, while the indiscrimination thereof brought a faithful destruction upon his body.

The second Conclusion so direct to a right understanding, in reference to Prodigies Perish, is this: Judgments singular and miraculous, surprising persons in defence of a cause, evidently devoted in Scripture to deception, may be regarded as partial testimonies from heaven against it. It is readily acknowledged that there is light enough in Scripture to distinguish doctrines and causes by; but yet where God hath been pleased by any such mighty judgments to open the eyes of men to a clearer perception of it, and to hold them in a more serious attendance thereunto, they are not to over-look it, for fear they appear to seek a sign from heaven, or to offer weak men an encouragement to write the darker works of Providence, as they do the words of Scripture, to the ends of Superstition and some little interest and opinions to which they engross the favors of Heaven.

To serve the more distinct understanding of this conclusion, I shall propose these few examples:

1. When the Jews, in the assistance of Julian the Emperor, aslayed the restorers of their ruined Temple and so to oppose wo...
Concerning Prodigies. B.c. 67.

Concerning Prodigies. 6:23


2 That terrible fire which issued out of the ground, in the second year of Titus (not long after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple) and laid in ashes the temples of Jupiter, Capitoline, Neptune, Isis, Serapis, the Pantheon, and their other devoted places, was so strange an instance, that the Etruscan Historian makes this judgment thereupon, Malum id divinum potius quam humanam visum fuisset, and was (in all likelihood) regarded by the Christians of that time, as a sign that no Cause of Reli...
Concerning Prodigies. Penal.

Section. (Ethnicks or Jewish) should be able to stand before the Christian; and that the day foretold, wherein God would famish all the gods of the earth, and men should worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen, was just now a dawning. And this prodigious example became the more observable afterward, & most of the Ethnicks Temples and devoted places at Rome, and elsewhere being ruined by some unaccountable fires or terrible Earthquakes: that which Clem. Alexand. also takes special notice of in his Discourse with the idola
trous Gentile, who thereupon ingeniously tells him, Ode εν τῷ τῷ ἐλέγχεσθαι τῷ Νεολύμ
cιος επιθυμώ: εἰ βολεί προελεθήν τις νοείς τω
ταχύνουσα τῷ πόσι τῷ: I know the fire to be suf
ficiently convulsive, and fanative of Supersti
tion. If you would but cease a little your mad
ness, the very fire would lead you to the light.

3. That almost constant succession of
Roman Emperours, whose robes (for the
space of three hundred years) were dyed in
their own blood shed by the hand of vio
lence, seems an instantia manadica in Provi
dence, and to carry much of a miracle with
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der their bloody government: (though
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Concerning Prodigies Penal. § 2.

perhaps some will entertain the example but with common thoughts; because of the circumstances the Empire was then in.

4. There is no Nation under heaven whose sins God hath visited upon them with a judgment of to private and reserved a condition, as that of the Jews, whether respect be had, to the nature or season thereof.

1. There is a singularity therein in regard of the nature of it. Jews become throughout the whole world, rather a name of hatred then of a Nation. They are now as much scattered over the World, as before impal'd and distinguished from it. They alone live in banishment, wheresoever they come. Now their becoming thus, like Cain vagabonds and fugitives upon earth, (which no Nation besides is) speaks them like him gone out of God's presence, and guilty of some horrible murder, even no less then that of the Lord of life; which the Scripture chargeth upon them.

2. There is a singularity in the judgment upon them, in regard of the season thereof. For before they had stained their hands in the blood of the Lord of the Temple, their Temple (though sometimes defaced) was never made vile and contemptible by any abomination of the heathen, set up in the most Holy. No war, no sedition, no ca-
§ 3. Concerning Prodigies Penal.

priority, no satisfaction, nor any other sad occasion whatever, made so great a waste upon the religion and reverence of that place, that no idol or image (against the essential sanctity thereof) should be tended to worship there in (as Agrippa in his Embassy to Caesar the Emperor largely tells him) for that the very heathens had been tutored into a reverence thereof, and by those fearful judgments, which (as he there tells him) they had observed the King of heaven always avenging any lesser indignities offered to that his chamber of special presence; but no sooner had they committed that wonderful and horrible thing, but God delivers the place of his ancient habitation, the desire of their eyes, to the desolations and dishonor of an image that the Emperor erected in the Holy of Holies, as a sign that place should no longer be the place of his rest because it was polluted, and that he had forsaken both it and them. Moreover most constant were the judgments which at last befell the enemies of the Jewish Nation, before their great sin of rejecting the Son of God. Israel was then holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase; all that devoured him did offend; evil came upon them from the Lord. Whereas afterward so constant their successes, when attempting upon them, as to no fight against that nation, were the
Concerning Prodigies Penal. 

only way of obliging victory, and the ad- stances of God. Which singularity in the de vine judgments, was a sign that God had now put a period to the Jewish worship, and that their putting of Christ to death, look'd of a blacker color in the eyes of Justice, as procuring more dreadful evils upon them than all their other sins could ever do.

I easily foresee how ready some persons may be to build hay and stubble upon this foundation, and to conclude such a cause on party branded from heaven, if any judgment (like an executioner in a vizard) frightful as well as fatal, befal the persons appearing in defence thereof. And therefore I must here mind them, how inconsequent any such reasonings can be, not only because I more than doubt whether any of the judgments they can instance in, touch in any points and angles of similitude those already mentioned, and because they came not forth to decide causes collaterally, but diametri- cally opposed (not differences between Paul and Cephas, but God and Belial;) but because Judaism and Gentilism were causes evidently devoted in sacred Scripture, and the Judgments following them, were but the accom- plishments of its predictions, and the exe- cutions of a Scripture sentence upon them. Besides, we are not to presume that God speaks to us more plainly by his Providence.
Concerning Prodigies Penal.

Then by his word, wherein he hath permitted some lesser matters to stand in a very doubtful light, to ingage us to an exercice of our Understandings to find the truth, and of our Charities to those who (having not such strong and exercised senses as our selves) chance to mistake it.

3. Personal judgments extraordinary, are to be regarded as Gods visible sermons of repentance to a multitude under the guilt of the same or greater sin: The great Lord of Hosts, sometimes decimates a multitude of offenders, and discovers in the personal sufferings of a few what all deserve, and may (without repentance), expect: Now as the ends of brands are noted to shed forth their tears in a kind of sad sense of the loss of those parts which the fire hath already seiz'd, thus they which are (in the phrase of scripture) as brands plucked for the present out of the fire, should express a Christian sense of the falls and of the sins of those persons which God was pleased to make their proxies in correction. Great judgments are not to be interpreted so much the signs of our brothers sins, as the reproofs of our own. Because the pregnant example of the Galileans [occurring Luk. 13.] may lend a great light and strength both to the particular conclusion before us, and our general argument, it will be no undervaluing of our
Concerning Prodigies Penal. § 2.

pains to paraphrase a little upon our Saviors words upon the occasion.

Ver. 1. There were present at that time, some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

2. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things?

3. I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Оνομάζεσθαι, which words I choose (with Grotius) to render not also or likewise, but ad modum eundem, after the very same manner, for I conceive our Savior doth not vary his speech ver. 5. when discoursing of those eighteen which perished by the fall of the tower of Siloam, thus, οὐνόμαζεσθαι, ye shall perish, ad modum similem, in a manner like them, but upon some reason of moment, which I thus explain.

These Galileans were a faction of Juda of Galilee (of whom we read Act. 5. 37.) whose great doctrine it was, that it was unlawful ο ουνομαζεσθαι Παναίοις τελειν, to pay tribute to the Romans, or to acknowledge μη ο ουνομαζεσθαι θεον ἀνέντωτες, any mortal lords after God had been their King, or to offer sacrifice for the Roman Governors: Now Pilate (provoked by the dishonors or the
Concerning Prodigies Penal.

\[\text{\textit{\textbf{\S 4.}}}\]

Dangers wrapped up in this doctrine) stains the Altar with the blood of these seditious sacrificers, setting upon them now come to Jerusalem to attend the religion of the paschal rites. And the men upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell, were persons standing near it, or employed by some civil business in it; and so perished in the casual ruins thereof. Now this double personal judgment was a kind of double Map, wherein the lines and figures of that terrible calamity which afterward fell upon the whole Nation, were excellently represented: some of them perishing \textit{ad modum eundem}, and others \textit{ad modum similum}. For as these Galileans perished in the Temple, on the feast of Passover, and in a sedition varnished over with the specious colors and pretences of religion and conscience: so did a great part of the Nation afterward fall in a rebellion against Cæsar, for God's sake. Pious pretences that they especially were Abraham's children, God's free people, and to pay no sanctuary shkel to an Heathen Ruler. And that on the very Passover day in the Temple, the time and place of Sacrifice, so that they perished as two, after the very same manner that the Galileans did. And the persons upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell, were a kind of type of the many thousands besides, which perished in the ruins of the whole City (of which
Concerning Prodigies Penal. § 2.

that Tower carried the image and representation in which they were surprized, and even buried alive, by the Roman army; so that they did perish omgios in a manner similar unto them.

Concerning which strange examples, I must confess, I see no reason to receive them (with the Reverend D. Jackson) absolutely and in themselves con sidered, as any intended signs of the time to that generation: nor do I think the Jews had any ground to think those sad accidents ὑπὸ σωματικὸν ἔργον ἐνείροις happened unto them as any true and proper types and figures of an analogous destruction to fall upon themselves in the revolution of a few years: for could any meet man certainly foresee, or but suspect, that any such storms and showers of evils would suddenly fall upon the Jewish state, upon the rising of this cloud no bigger than a man’s hand (the death of a few private and inconsiderable persons?) For as a foreign Divine speaking of the English art of preaching said truly, plus est in Artifice quam in arte, it derives more from the Artist, then any set rules of art, so we may lay upon our Savior’s prophecy and foresight express upon this occasion, plus fuit in significante quam in signo: His prophetick paraphrase upon that sign, gave it that significancy and expressiveness, which of itself it had
Concerning Prodigies Penal.

not; the type speaking no more (without the divine gloss and sanction) then the smiting of any King upon the ground three times with an arrow, now, signifies that he shall smite his enemies three times, because the instance was once, by God’s appointment, an happy omen of such a blessing to a King 2 King 18. of Israel.

But however, the Jews ought to have seen the sword of God in the hand of Pilate, in that sad example, and to have considered that while he (like the leech) drew all this blood to serve his own bloody and revengeful Nature, the great Physician intended it as medicinal to the body of the Nation, to teach them the wisdom of a speedy repentance therein, lest a like or greater judgment should surprize themselves: and the rather, because so guilty of the same sin [the hiding of the sword of sedition in the Ephod of religion and conscience toward God] and not seeing their fellows secured from the arrest of Judgment by the religion of an Altar, and the prerogative of a Temple. All Gods judgments upon others, Jer. 3.8, come forth upon purposes of grace, and are intended but as the cutting and lancing of one member, to draw away the corrupt humors from the rest.

Fifthly, lesser national judgments are to be regarded as the signs of Gods present displeasure.
Concerning Prodigies: Beneath,

[...] to Christ, God miraculously determined the controversy for the fire (which used before to come forth from him to consume the sacrifice, now) came and consumed their intended Temple, and Altars, destroyed the workmen above it, and their several instruments, and the whole design was blasted by such terrible appearances of God against it, that many Jews were persuaded by that visible argument against Judaism, to entertain the faith of Christ. And about the same time was the Temple at Delphi quite ruined by means not much unlike; Earthquakes, thunder and lightning; though in former Ages the Devil had secured the religion of that place by Earthquakes and thunders, when some men began to profane it by digging about his Altar and Oracle there, in hopes to find treasure. That terrible fire which issued out of the ground, in the second year of Titus (not long after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple) and laid in ashes the temples of Jupiter Capitolinus, Neptune, Isis, Serapis, the Pantheon, and their other devoted places, was so strange an instance, that the Eichhick Historian makes this judgment thereupon, Malum id divinum poenis quam hominum videtur esse, and was (in all likelihood) regarded by the Christians of that time, as a sign that no Cause of Reli...
Concerning Prodigies. Penat.

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I know the fire to be sufficiently convulsive, and sanative of Superstition. If you would but cease a little your madness, the very fire would lead you to the light.

3. That almost constant succession of Roman Emperours, whose robes (for the space of three hundred years) were dyed in their own blood shed by the hand of violence, seems an instantia monadica in Providence, and to carry much of a miracle with it; and may be received as an argument of Gods controversy with them for the butchering of so many of his innocent sheep, under their bloody government: (though perhaps...

Herod. Hist. lib. i. lib. ii. Zoph. 2. 11.

Concerning Prodigies Penal. (The) perhaps some will entertain the example but with common thoughts; because of the circumstances the Empire was then in.

1. There is no Nation under heaven whose sins God hath visited upon them with a judgment of to private and reserved a condition, as that of the Jews, whether respect be had to the nature or season thereof.

2. There is a singularity therein in regard of the nature of it. Few is become throughout the whole world, rather a name of hatred then of a Nation. They are now as much scattered over the World, as before impal’d and distinguished from it. They alone live in banishment, wheresoever they come. Now their becoming thus, like Cain vagabonds and fugitives upon earth, (which no Nation besides is) speaks them like him goe out of Gods presence, and guilty of some horrible murder, even no less then that of the Lord of Life; which the Scripture chargeth upon them.

3. There is a singularity in the judgment upon them, in regard of the season thereof. For before they had stained their hands in the blood of the Lord of the Temple, their Temple (though sometimes defaced) was never made vile and contemptible by any abomination of the heathen, set up in the most Holy. 1. No war, no sedition, no ca-
Concerning Prodigies Penal.

privy, no devastation, nor any other sad occasion whatsoever, made so great a waste upon the religion and reverence of that place, that an idol or image (against the essential sanctity thereof) should be tended to worship therein (as Agrippa in his Embassy to Caes. the Emperor largely tells him) for that the very heathens had been tutored into a reverence thereof, and by those fearful judgments, which (as he there tells him) they had observed the King of heaven alway avenging any lesser indignities offered to that his chamber of special presence; But no sooner had they committed that wonderful and horrible thing, but God delivers the place of his ancient habitation, the desire of their eyes, to the desolations and dishonor of an image that the Emperor erected in the Holy of Holies, as a sign that place should no longer be the place of his rest because it was polluted, and that he had forsaken both it and them. Moreover most constant were the judgments which at last befell the enemies of the Jewish Nation, before their great sin of rejecting the Son of God. Israel was then whilom to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase, all that devoured him died off and evil came upon them from the Lord. Whereas afterward so constant their successes, when attempting upon them, as if no fight against that nation, were the
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pains to paraphrase a little upon our Saviour's words upon the occasion.

Ver. 1. There were present at that time, some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

2. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things?

3. I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

ἐν αὐτῶν ἀπέλαθα, which words I choose (with Grotius) to render not also or likewise, but ad modum eundem, after the very same manner, for I conceive our Savior doth not vary his speech ver. 5. when discoursing of those eighteen which perished by the fall of the tower of Siloam, thus, ἐν αὐτῶν ἀπέλαθα, ye shall perish, ad modum eundem, in a manner like them, but upon some reason of moment, which I thus explain.

These Galileans were a faction of Judea of Galilee (of whom we read Act. 5. 37.) whose great doctrine it was, that it was unlawful ἐν οἷς Παῦλος ῥέων, to pay tribute to the Romans, or to acknowledge μύριοι δοῦναι τινὰς δούλους, any mortal lords after God had been their King, or to offer sacrifice for the Roman Governors. Now Pilate (provoked by the dishonors of the
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Dangers wrapt up in this doctrine stains the Altar with the blood of these seditious sacrificers, setting upon them now come to Jerusalem to attend the religion of the paschal rites. And the men upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell, were persons standing near it, or employed by some civil business in it; and so perished in the casual ruins thereof. Now this double personal judgement was a kind of double Map, wherein the lines and figures of that terrible calamity which afterward fell upon the whole Nation, were excellently represented: some of them perishing ad modum eundem, and others ad modum similem. For as these Galileans perished in the Temple, on the feast of Passover, and in a sedition varnish'd over with the specious colors and pretences of religion and conscience: so did a great part of the Nation afterward fall in a rebellion against Caesar for God's sake. Pious pretences that they especially were Abraham's children, God's loc. free people, and to pay no sanctuary shekel to an Heathen Ruler. And that on the very Pasover day in the Temple, the time and place of Sacrifice, so that they perished copiously, after the very same manner that the Galileans did. And the persons upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell, were a kind of type of the many thousands besides, which perished in the ruins of the whole City (of which...
Concerning Prodigies Penal. § 2.

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Concerning which strange examples, I must confess, I see no reason to receive them (with the Reverend D. Jackson) absolutely and in themselves considered, as any intended signs of the time to that Generation: nor do I think the Jews had any ground to think those sad accidents ὑπὸ τοὺς οἰκείους ἔνειδοις happened unto them as any true and proper types and figures of an analogous destruction to fall upon themselves in the revolution of a few years: for could any other man certainly foresee, or but suspect, that any such storms and showers of evils would suddenly fall upon the Jewish state, upon the rising of this cloud, no bigger then a man's hand (the death of a few private and inconsiderable persons? For as a foreign Divine speaking of the English art of preaching said truly, plus est in Artifice quam in arte, it derives more from the Artift, then any set rules of art; so we may lay upon our Savior's prophecy and foresight express upon this occasion, plus fuit in significante quam in signo: His prophetick paraphrase upon that sign, gave it that significancy and expressiveness, which of itself it had

In Serm. on Luk. 13.1, 2, 3.
Concerning Prodigies Penal.

not: the type speaking no more (without the divine gloss and sanction) then the smiting of any King upon the ground three times with an arrow, now, signifies that he shall smite his enemies three times, because the instance was once, by God's appointment, an happy Omen of such a blessing to a King of Israel.

But however, the Jews ought to have seen the sword of God in the hand of Pilate, in that sad example, and to have considered that while he (like the leech) drew all this blood to serve his own bloody and revengeful Nature, the great Physician intended it as medicinal to the body of the Nation, to teach them the wisdom of a speedy repentance therein, lest a like or greater judgment should surprize themselves: and the rather, because so guilty of the same sin [the hiding of the sword of sedition in the Ephod of religion and conscience toward God] and not seeing their fellows secured from the arrest of Judgment by the religion of an Altar, and the prerogative of a Temple. All God's judgments upon others, Jer. 31. come forth upon purposes of grace, and are intended but as the cutting and lancing of one member, to draw away the corrupt humors from the rest.

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Concerning Prodigies, &c.

God miraculously determined the controversy for the fire (which used before to come forth from him to consume the sacrifice; now) came and consumed their intended Temple and Altar, destroyed the workmen above it, and their several instruments, and the whole design was blasted by such terrible appearances of God against it; that many Jews were persuaded by that visible argument against Judaism, to entertain the faith of Christ. And about the same time was the Temple at Delphios quitted ruined by means not much unlike Earthquakes, thunder and lightning, though in former Ages the Devil had secured the religion of that place by Earthquakes and thunders, when some men began to profane it by digging about his Altar, and Oracle, there, in hopes to find treasure.

That terrible fire which issued out of the ground, in the second year of Titus (not long after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple) and laid in ashes the temples of Jupiter Capitolineus, Neptune, Isis, Serapis, the Pantheon, and their other devoted places, was so strange an instance, that the Ethnck Historian makes this Judgment thereupon, Malum id divinum posuit quam humanae videtur frusta, and was (in all likelihood) regarded by the Christians of that time, as a sign that no Cause of Reli...
Concerning Prodigies. Persecution (Ethnical or Jewish) should be able to stand before the Christian, and that the day foretold, wherein God would furnish all the gods of the earth, and men should worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen, was just now a dawning. And this prodigious example became the more obserable afterward, most of the Ethnical Temples and devoted places at Rome and elsewhere being ruined by some unaccountable fires or terrible Earthquakes; that which Clem. Alexander also takes special notice of in his Discourse, with the idolatrous Gentile, who thereupon ingeniously tells him, that in their eleemosynary, they should not be a public blemish but a public ornament. I know the fire to be sufficiently convulsive, and fanative of Superstition. If you would but cease a little your madness, the very fire would lead you to the light.

3. That almost constant succession of Roman Emperors, whose robes (for the space of three hundred years) were dyed in their own blood shed by the hand of violence, seems an instantia monadica in Providence, and to carry much of a miracle with it; and may be received as an argument of Gods controversy with them for the butchering of so many of his innocent sheep, under their bloody government: (though perhaps...
Concerning Prodigies Penal. Ch. 2.

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Pointing, no occasion, nor any other sad occasion whatsoever, made so great a waste upon the religion and reverence of that place, that an idol or image (against the essential sanctity thereof) should be tended to worship therein (as Agrippa in his Embassy to Caesar the Emperor largely tells him) for that the very heathens had been tutored into a reverence thereof, and by those fearful judgments, which (as he there tells him) they had observed the King of heaven alway avenging any lesser indignities offered to that his chamber of special presence; But no sooner had they committed that wonderful and horrible thing, but God delivers the place of his ancient habitation, the desire of their eyes, to the desolations and dishonor of an image that the Emperor erected in the Holy of Holies, as a sign that place should no longer be the place of his rest because it was polluted, and that he had forsaken both it and them. Moreover, most constant were the judgments which at last befel the enemies of the Jewish Nation, before their great sin of rejecting the son of God. Israel was then holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase; all that devoured him did offend; evil came upon them from the Lord. Whereas afterward so constant their successes, when attempting upon them as it to fight against that nation, were the

\[\text{\textsuperscript{3}85}\]

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§. 2. Concerning Prodigies Penal.

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But however, the Jews ought to have seen the sword of God in the hand of Pilate, in that sad example, and to have considered that while he (like the leech) drew all this blood to serve his own bloody and revengeful Nature, the great Physician intended it as medicinal to the body of the Nation, to teach them the wisdom of a speedy repentance therein, lest a like or greater judgment should surprize themselves: and the rather, because so guilty of the same sin [the hiding of the sword of sedition in the Ephod of religion and conscience toward God] and not seeing their fellows secured from the arrest of Judgment by the religion of an Altar, and the prerogative of a Temple. All God's judgments upon others, Jer. 3:14, come forth upon purposes of grace, and are intended but as the cutting and lancing of one member, to draw away the corrupt humors from the rest.

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Concerning Prodigies Penal.

Scripture makes mention of God's cutting off a Nation short, and his cutting off the instruments whereby he doth the former, are very intertemporal seasons, murrains of cattle, epidemic diseases, long earths, great defeats of Armies, &c. For as there are the vices of Men, and the vices of the Times, so there are the evils of private men, and the evils of the Times, the Judgments which seize and touch men as united and meeting in one common body and interest and under the guilt of some publick and National impiety.

Now these are (I say) to be received by the common sense of a Nation, as God's warning pieces to come in and submit themselves to him, by repentance, lest he storm them by some more black and terrible judgment, or (which is worse) grow weary of correcting them. God sometimes deals by Nations as with persons, who are first brought to a Council, next to a Judgment, then to hell fire. The great day of destruction from the Almighty (foretold by the Prophet) was ushered by those lesser evils, the cutting off the meat from before their eyes, the rotting of the seeds under the clods, &c. And before God laid the axe to the root of that fair tree [the Jewish Church] he was pleased many years to chop and prune.
§ 2. Concerning Prodigies Peculii.

It may be by those (separatly, many little, and prelatory judgments, that its unfruitfulness might be corrected. And that shower of vengeance which at last overwhelmed the Roman Empire, was prefaced by some smaller drops. It lay long in the fire of many heavy afflictions; but (like the clay whereby it is emblem'd Dan. 2: 42.) it lost nothing of its impure and drossy nature; and at last this incorrigibleness brought on its final ruin and execution by the Barbarous Nations of the North.

I say not, that these instances can warrant us alway to receive all such lesser judgments, as the tokens and harbingers of much greater, and (to borrow the language of the Prophet) as the swellings out in an high wall, whose breaking is coming suddenly: For God often makes great sins the triumphs of his goodness, and lays a very sad groundwork (in some lesser evils) when he purposeth to lay on his fair colors of peace and happiness. He causeth it sometime, at even (when darker and blacker times were expected) to become light. Besides, the unpeopling or unpeopling of a Nation (his greater judgments) are ways which under this spiritual Deconomy, the Divine Justice seldom walks in. God, indeed heretofore, (when the world, in the greener years thereof, was most under the conduct of its lower
conservative

lower duties, and modestly to be drawn or driven by rewards or punishments temporally sungled out the Jewish Nation in whose outward state of prosperity or adversity, no read visible Lectures of Divinity and obedi- ence to the Nations round about, and that the Nations might take the fairer view of their state. God tells them, Ezek. 5: 5, 6, 7, 8, that he had placed Jerusalem in the midst of the Nations round about her, and that they might call the eyes of the world the more upon them, their plagues were such as scarce admitted their parallel instances. But God chooseth now generally to punish incorrigibleness under temporal by spiritual judgments. He sometimes delivers a people (like Samson) to blindness and stupidity, who having been often bound by the cords of their Dalilahs, would never take warning. But however we are not to presume upon Acts of Grace, or to think no judgment terrible but what falls upon the body: When ever therefore the smoke of Gods lesser judgments, speaks his anger to be kindled but a little, we are to express a quick fence thereof, and endeavor its quenching by a speedy removal of the fuel, those National sins which may continue and increase it. k God will account with men one day, not only for the abuse of National mercies, but National judgments.

And
Concerning Prodigies Penal.

And thus (by God's assistance) have I illused my Meditations upon both parts of the Argument, and offered the best Defence I could to the Cause I undertook (too just and good to be lost upon a Nihil dicit.)

Upon a review whereof, I am not conscious to my self of having trespassed against the Apostolical Precept, by returning upon our 1 Pet. 3.9. Adversaries railing for railing, and of giving any suspicion of the weakness of my Cause or Arguments, by calling in my Passion or Reproaches to their relief and assistance. They which think an Argument pierceth the ears, because not managed with some neatness of Stile, may as well think a Razor cuts the worse for having its rough and grating edge a little taken off. The truth is, I apprehended not any such mountainous difficulties at any time in my way, that I should need (like Hannibal in the Alps) to force a passage through them with fire and vinegar, any hot and tart expressions and reflexions, &c.

CHAP.
CHAP. VIII.

The Conclusion.

The Omission of a particular inquiry into the truth and consequence of some late strange Relations, excited. The undertaking proved needful, difficult, unprofitable. Relations of matters wonderful, why greatly liable to suspicion. The caution of the superstitious Heathens, in receiving such stories, noted. Men most apt to be abused with such Relations, where Religion is concerned in them. The excellent manner of relating Wonders in Sacred Writ: The conviction of an Enthusiast or a Superstitious Person, why greatly difficult. Projectors almost in every Science: Why so readily attended to. The Philosophical study and truly Religious use of Prodigies commended. An acquiescence in the present Dispensations of Providence, an effectual Remedy against Curiosity.

It might possibly be expected that this Discourse should have touched more closely upon the Occasion, and have descended to a more particular Examination of both the truth and significance of, at least, some of those strange Relations which lately have been prest upon the Faith of the Nation with so great a confidence, and for troublesome an importunity: An undertaking which I purposely declined, looking at it as Needleless, Difficult, and Unprofitable.

First, As in it self Needleless: For besides that I think it hard to find a Faith that can swallow any such Camel-stories, as many of them, in all the circumstances with which they are swel’d out, appear to be, there
there are no Relations in the World, which we may with greater reason arrest upon suspicion of imposture, and which discredit themselves, then such as these are: And that,

1. Because of the ignorance of the greater part of their Attestors in Natural Philosophy. Now where men look upon Objects strange and prodigious, through so gross a medium, it is no trespass against Charity to believe they sometimes report them beyond their just figures and dimensions. For an ignorant man is not aware how extremely a circumstance added or omitted may vary a Relation; nor what gross fallacies the various commixtures of lights and shadows may put upon his Eyes, and tempt him to call things that are not as though they were; and like in Gaal to vouch the shadows in Judg. 9.36. of the mountains an Army of men. Besides, there is a perpetual softness in the head of Ignorance, which makes it impressee to any odd conceit and relation; accordingly it was long ago noted of the multitude, that they are prone fingere simul & credere, to believe and to increase any strange story. And therefore the Signs God made use of were too great for hyperbole's, as raising the dead; cleansing the Lepers with his Word, commanding the stormy Winds into stillness, &c. Works which Ignorance might
sooner lessen than increase by any romantick additions.

2. Religion seems much concerned in such Relations. Now men, like Jacob, will be ready to venture upon a lie for a great blessing, and such the advancement of Religion, though by false means, is conceived to be. Besides, as Atheism gives all Events to the second, so Superstition (Religion scar'd out of its wits) gives all slyly to the first Cause, and is therefore quickly persuaded to fill out its Relations with all the Examples of Wonderful and Extraordinary, that Effects may appear the more worthy of the immediate Power of God to which it doth intitle them. Moreover, blind and ignorant fears of God make the mind impresive to any kind of Religious Legends; for never was the World more truly Ἰσακαρας καὶ Ἐφραίμαρας λέγει (as Philo stiles it) a Region of lies and fallacies, then in the more dark and ruder Times of Gentilism and Popery, when an ignorant Devotion toward God had made Religion almost nothing but a continued History of Prodigies, Apparitions, Miracles, Voices from the Clouds, and the like: and therefore the Lord Bacon, advising a just History of Prodigies to direct to the true interpretation of Nature and knowledge of Causes, gives in this prudent Ca-

Nov. Organ. 1.2. Aphor. 29.
The Conclusion.

qua pendent quomodo unque a Religione, ut prodigia Livii. For Superstition (the Religion of the people) as it is laid of the Viper, bites off that head, weakens and softens that faculty of Reason, by which it did at first conceive, and makes it receptive of any odd fancies and impressions; and besides we have great reason to suspect imposture in any story which is told to serve a design, but especially one so sacred as Religion is.

3. The strength of these Relations (like that of Nisus in the Poet) lies generally in the weak hair of some single or double testimony. Now as there is little reason to conceive a whole Nation concerned in the Visions of one or two private persons, if they were true, (Gods Signs and Wonders, which were intended as lessons to a Nation, or posterity, being generally attested by numbers;) so as little reason to hang the weight of so serious a Faith and great affections in Religion upon so slender a wire, as the testimony of one, perhaps two or three men, in such matters, is. The Romans of old, though as apt to swallow such prodigious stories as any, yet used to chew them first by a serious examination (sometimes made by the publick Magistrate) of the credit of the Attestors, and truth of the Relations. And we shall find in Livy prodigious Accidents sometimes past by without any
The Conclusion.  

p Acts 17. 21.  

4. Some men are of an Athenian humor, even naturally delighted to hear or tell παραστάσεις, somewhat more new and strange. The former out of a native vanity and lightness of mind, whereby, like the Caneleon, they are better pleased with airy than substantial nourishment. To gratifie which vain humor, the ancient Grecian Historians and more Modern Legends studied onely to make their Relations miraculous enough. They saw there was in men errandi non necessitas tantum sed amor, and they would be sure to fit them. The latter, either out of a mean ambition to become observable to the ruder multitude, who in all likelihood would neglect them, if their Books and Discourses were not a little turgent and extraordinary; or a natural slightness of temper whereby they are not severe enough to value truth, and therefore will scarce relate any matter (especially if going a little off from common and quotidian) but it shall look big, and borrow somewhat of a Romance.

Very observable therefore the manner of the relation of any great Wonders in sacred Writ; wherein we shall find the most glo-
The Conclusion.

Various displays of the Divine Power delivered in that simplicity and coolness of style in that tac and general way, with as little of ecstasy and emotion of mind appearing in the Relator, as if some vulgar occurrence had fallen before him: that so there might not appear any symptoms of that common itch in men to tell strange stories, or any affection of the common wonder, or a great solicitude to raise the esteem of that cause or party, to which they were an honorable testimony from Heaven in the minds of men.

Secondly, such an undertaking would have proved exceeding difficult: it being much more easy to believe many a strange story, then to attempt its refutation; especially where the Scene thereof is laid at a great distance off; and besides, the Attestors of the Affirmative are wholly unknown to my self, and scarce any man is able to attest a Negative in such matters.

Thirdly, the undertaking would have proved very unserviceable to my main purpose: For,

1. My design was not the disparagement of the Persons of my Adversaries (of which any attempt upon their credit would have been indicted) but of their Cause.

2. A solicitous inquiry into the truth of the Relations, would have been concluded a
The Conclusion.

3. Having cut off the neck of this Opinion, those precarious Principles it holds of, a cutting off the particular heads, monstrous Relations, which grow upon it, would be needless, nay endless; for others would quickly rise up in their places.

4. We have (as Tarquinius did the heads of the taller Poppies) directly struck at the credit and significance of the most eminent and pretending Prodigies, Comets, Apparitions, Strange Sights in the Air, Mount Vesuvius; and New Stars.

5. I conceived that more words would have been but lost upon persons, which (after all that hath been said) have a great devotion for this ancient Idol, the Opinion of Presages by Prodigies: of which kind, I doubt not but, should I say as much more, there would still be numbers. For Speculative Errors generally scorn the Truth, Practical Errors hate it; but it is the usage of Superstition and Enthusiasm to fear it: because, in the two former, Self only, but in the latter God is presumed especially concerned: All the images and fictions of the brain (like those in the Fancies of Poets) being translated presently into Heaven, and God's honor and counsels thought...
Cap. 3. The Conclusion.

6. Because as for persons of more free and un-engaged minds, and that use not to believe without asking themselves why, I am not without some hopes, that what hath been already discoursed of in this Argument, may suffice to their resolution and satisfaction. Upon all which accounts, I did not conceive it necessary to concern myself in any solicitous inquiries into the truth or falsity of particular Relations; or a tedious discovery of the lightness and insignificance of them singly and apart, and so to kill this Superstition (as they do some kind of vermin) by parts and pieces.

After all that hath been already said, before I conclude the Readers’ task and my own, I conceive it necessary to call him to a notice of that strong and almost catholic proposition in our nature (against the reproaches even of our understanding part, and that loud voice of a great experience) to entertain, with a kind of sacred regard, persons who assume to themselves an ability to do or know hugely beyond the common standard of humane attainments: Of which kind of Mointments, there never wanted Examples in all Arts and Sciences. In Astro-
Princes, the issues of any great Actions, written upon the scroll of Heaven, and plainly legible by the Sons of Art: of a way and method of deriving down and continuing the virtues of Planets and Constellations in certain Images prepared according to Art. In Natural Philosophy, we are as much abused by others, which tell us of a way to procure Prophetical Dreams, to exalt all Bodies into Gold, to make mighty Impressions upon the Air, to advance Imagination to a capacity of working Wonders, both upon the minds of Men, and (even greatly distant) Bodies; of an Art to read and expound all the Cryptick lines in your hand and face. In Medicks, we have some confidant Undertakers to rescue the Science from all its reproaches and dishonors, to cure all Diseases by understanding the Analogies between the parts of the greater and lesser World; nay, to cut off the very intail of death from mankind. In Science in general, we meet with some of the Sons of Pride, which tell us of an Ars magna, a Pansophia, a method to bless Man with the real substance of that happiness [An universal Knowledge] the catching at whose vain and flying shadow cost him the loss of Paradise. In Divinity, Gad, behold a troop cometh of persons which begin their inquiries where all wise-men make an end; Cabbalists, Pretenders...
Cap. 8. The Conclusion.

tenders to Revelations, to an understanding of Signs and mysterious Prophecies, strange Providences, things to come; the pretended Mysteries wrapt up in some sacred numbers and names, the intent and meaning of Prodigies, some more spiritual Discoveries and mysterious Notions in Religion, &c.

All which Pretenders to a παραδείσος, somewhat beyond the common size of humane ability, men are easily persuaded into great thoughts of, either because in magnis, vel voluisses mirandum; or because all these pretences are but the many and various repeats of that first and most inviting temptation, the promise of a more raised and excellent knowledge then we have already; or because the general ignorance of such pretenders helps them to set off their wares and themselves with a great confidence, which hath the power of fascination upon weaker minds, persons not secured by the countercharm of a great knowledge and resolution.

And therefore I think it not safe to trust the constancy of our minds against all Opinion of Prophecies, Omens, Signs of Times, Presages by Prodigies, as also those other splendidæ nuga (nearly related to them) now mentioned, solely with Reason and Argument; it is a little necessary to confront a kind of fullen resolution against, to an almost obsti
The Conclusion.  

...rate propulsion of mind towards them. And if Men would once value their Understandings so far, as to call all such husky and curious Arts and Studies (as the Chaldean Oracle doth all Divinations by the Extas, the motions of birds, smoke, &c.)

...the recreations and entertainments of children, and the weak supports of the gainful trade of cheating and imposture, they would all (like Fables which want Auditors) quickly sink into darkness and silence: but as long as there are any Persons in the World troubled with the fits of the first Mother (Curiosity and Pride), there will never be wanting some that will thrust any such rotten and unsavory stuff under their noses.

If men were once persuaded into a great resolution against all such subtil vanities, the price of real and substantial wisdom would quickly rise in the World; and the Tree of Knowledge (these suckers, which are ready to starve it, being once thrown off) would thrive and spread: men, when they came to discourse, would be more sure of each others Principles; and Religion would be no longer rendered to the neglect and scorn of subtil men, because appearing to them but a cold form of some pious modes and observations, a systeme of blind fears,
CAP. 8. The Conclusion.

or lean and ignorant imaginations.

What hath been hitherto discours'd (if it anywhere seem to hit) hath not been at all level'd against the Philosophical study of Prodigies, or intended any disparagement of all sober inquiries into, or history of the Heteroalita Natura, Preternatural Generations, either in Heaven or Earth. It is to be wished that there were a kind of Philosophy-Office, wherein all such unusual Occurrences were registered; not in such fabulous and antick circumstances wherein they stand recorded in the Writers of Natural Magic (designing nothing but wonder in their Readers,) nor with a superstitious observation of any such dreadful Events with which such Relations are usually stained, in the Writers which intend a service to Religion in them: But in such faithful and sober notices of their several circumstances, as might assist the understanding to make a true Judgment of their Natures and Occasions. Such an History would serve the reprehension of several Maxims in Philosophy, delivered upon a scanty and hasty inspection of Nature, as presented to view but in some one posture; and would give Religion a freedom from its more dangerous (because less suspected) Adversary Superstition. For as a distinct and full view of Second Causes begets Religion (because necessarily directing the Eye, at last,
The Conclusion. Cap. 8.

upon the First: a superficial and imperfect notice, Atheism, (which, like the Bat, is so noted to fly abroad in the twi-light, in a kind of middle state between the darkness of ignorance and light of knowledge;) so, an utter ignorance of Causes Natural leads (in more soft and impressive minds especially) to Superstition, a flavish observance of; and blind devotion toward God.

Nor yet would I have one word constru'd the disparagement of that religious use which an understanding Piety may make of any more unusual work in Nature: which, by the rarity thereof, seems designed and fitted to awaken men to a more lively sense of the Wisdom and a Power of God, displayed in restraining some more violent, and assisting some more faint and languishing causes there-in. The whole 29 Psalm was (as some learned men conceive) pen'd as a pious Meditation upon occasion of some extraordinary Thunder and lightning which had newly hapned. Every monstrous Birth we see, may recommend to us the goodness of God who hath so curiously wrought that Tabernacle which our own Souls inhabit. All the words therefore which have been bestowed upon this Argument, have been directed solely to the discouraging of a servile and superstitious study of the singularities in Nature, and all regards of them as Progessicks of any future
Cap. 8. The Conclusion.

future Evils, and approaching Alterations in the State. Which that they may take the reader hold of the Reader (even blunt nails will enter a soft and yielding matter) I do with a great seriousness recommend to his affections and endeavors, A perfect complacency and acquiescence in all the present allotments of Divine Providence. For it is onely when men are sick of things present, that they long for variety, and therefore have a very forward faith and affection for whatsoever Prophecies or Signs seem to give them the hopes and promises thereof. As Nature hath planted in some bodies a kind of restless desire of change, and motion from their present state; so human, or interest, hath placed in some minds a kind of perpetual motion, an eternal desire of change and alteration: And therefore, Prophecies, Omens, Stories of Prodigies, shall be readily attended to and contended for, for these things feed that humor; because encouraging in losers the hopes of a better game by some new shuffling and cutting, and in all persons not pleased with what pleaseth God, of a great change of Affairs in State.

It is the property of a true son of wisdom, as the Moralist speaks) heartily to kiss and embrace all the issues of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness: for he is not so vain as to measure the Wisdom
dom and Goodness of all the results of God's Counsels by the reference they bear to the little Ends, Interests or Opinions of so inconsiderable a piece of the World as himself, or to think his two Eyes can see more then those many in the Wheels of Providence. He believes all Events to be either good in themselves, or in their ends and issues: And therefore he can live quietly extempore, and possess himself in peace, though in destitution of any Signs and tokens, common Prophecies or Prodigies to tell him news, and to read to him the History of a future time. Sollicitous inquiries into the condition of Times to come are planted by Curiosity, moved by a great disgust of things before us, and receive increase from distrustful fears in reference to hereafter; against all which plagues of the mind, a quick and active persuasion that the most High reighneth in the Kingdoms of Men, and his Wisdom and Goodness preside in all Affairs of the World, is an ease and perfect Antidote; and by consequence, against all regards to Prodigies, Prophecies, Omens, both the tokens and formenters of them.

FINIS.
A DISCOURSE
Concerning
Vulgar Prophecies.
WHEREIN
The Vanity of receiving them as the certain Indications of any future Event is discovered;
And some
CHARACTERS
of Distinction between true and pretend- ing Prophets are laid down.

By JOHN SPENCER, B.D.

ISAI. 44. 24, 25.
I am the Lord, that stretcheth forth the Heavens alone,--that frustrateth the tokens of the Lyars, and maketh Dis- winers mad.

EZEK. 13. 9.
My hand shall be upon the Prophets that see Vanity, and that divine Lies; they shall not be in the Assembly of my People.

LONDON,
Printed by J. Field for Timothy Garthwaite at the Kings head in S. Pauls Church-yard, 1665.
T
he Soul of Man was made for inti
macy and converse with God;
and therefore, in a tacit sense
thereof, is continually reaching
and aspiring after it. But Lust and Pride
having blinded its Eyes, it is apt to affect
and seek it in fond and fantastick ways.
Whereas good men are (as Antoninus
speaks) of every age, according to the 
prophets, become familiar with God by
holy practices; by profound Humility, by
abstractions from the World and Lust;
Men have conceived it is procured and
maintained by going off from Reason; by
Raptures, Fisions, Prophecies, Enthu-
siastic, but and vigorous impressions of 
spirit; and have verily thought (as the An-
cient Heathens by their Prophets) that
they are scarce ever full of God, till they
are half beside themselves. And therefore
the Lives of the Romish Saints are stuffed...
out with perpetual Stories of such things as these, which do but render them to the contempt of men that have a true and sober Notion of Religion.

In confidence of this conceit, such numbers of Devoto's in all Times have pretended Enthusiasm and extraordinary il-lapse from Heaven, though to different ends and purposes, according as a different habit of mind or body and some mutable circumstances of the Age or course of life might determine an hot Humor and busie Fancy (for it is little else) to exert it self.

Among the many giddy Fancies and Errors of the late Times, bred, like the Worms in the Manna, out of the Body of our corrupted Government and Discipline, this was that , leading impo-sure, That the true Seculum Spiritus Sancti was now coming on upon the World, wherein the immediate Teachings of God should antiquate the more dead and obscure Teachings of the Gospel, as those did the more weak and cloudy Instructions of the Law; that the Minds of Holy Men should conceive (like the Virgin Mary) by the sole overshadowings of the Holy Ghost, without any Assisstances from Man or Hu-mane Literature. That Men should be au-torized and assisted to the due performance
of the Duties of publick Preaching and Praying by the incitements of God upon the place. That God was about no new Work, but his Secrets were still made known unto the Faithful. That the mighty impressions and propensions upon the spirit of the Faithful, was an interpretative Voice from Heaven, a kind of Bath Col to supply the defect of Scripture Prophecy in Dispensations more dark and enigmatical. Whence it came to pass that every morbid heat of Passion and blind Zeal was christened by the name of an Ignis facer, the sacred impress, and discovery of the Holy Ghost, and every crazy Fancy and Dream dub'd d a Prophetick Vision.

Now as Storms and Tempests at Sea, though they prove the Evils of many a private man, yet are the good things of Catholick Nature, because serving as a kind of natural Exercise to keep that vast Body of Waters from putrefaction: Thus however the bold Pretences to Revelations, Prophecy, and a greater intimacy with the Divine Spirit, proved the great Evils of those particular Times, causing many (weaker vessels especially) to make ship-wrack of Conscience and a sound Mind, and betrayed them to gross and shameful Notions in Religion and Policy; yet to the Church of God in general this hath proved
THE PREFACE.

The happy issue of this Ignis Fatuus of Enthusiasm (in all the express thereof) even for effectual Discovery of it, both in its Effects, those Dogs of Sedition, Blasphemy, Profaneness, Giddiness, it leads unto, and in its Cause, only a Natural fervor and pregnancy of spirit in some more refined, and An In heated Melancholy in other greater Enthusiasts; they have been for truly mad; and such as might effectually secure the Person that can do more than believe; from being easily abused by such shining Vanities as any pretended Enthusiasts make a profession of. So that the present Undertaking to lay forth the improvised wrapt up in this most famous instance of Enthusiasm, supposed Prophecy, may seem to have nothing to justify us, but an honest intention: Especially considering that there are Penal Statutes provided to prevent the spreading of Seditions Prophecies, by the severities of which those may be whipt into their wits, whom the Physick of an Argument cannot cure of their Propheticke Excesses.

These Considerations would easily have persuaded me to have spared the Reader and my self a further trouble; but that I saw so great an affinity between the present and precedent Subject, that the Discourses upon both would (like both the feet)
feet) derive a mutual strength and assurance upon each other; and that the Prophecies which are the issues of an hot head and disturbed imagination, are but the one half of those which abuse the Faith of the People: I considered withal that Prophecy is the most obstinate piece of Enthusiasm, having our innate Curiosity and an Experience as great as Prodigies to make it considerable. Besides, while good Laws are the best Security of the Peace, sober Principles laid in the Minds of the People are the best Security of the Laws.
A DISCOURSE
Of the Vanity of
VULGAR PROPHECIES.

CHAP. I.

Some general accounts given of the Argument.

Counterfeits in Art, Nature and Religion. False prophecy one instance of them. What kind of false Prophets the times of the New Testament are freed from. The miscarriage of states oft by occasions contemptible, noted. The present argument suitable to the age, because an age of affiaon, of intellectual improvement, gold jet, in many, of Enthusiasm. Several confedent pretenders to prophecy of late, taken notice of. The affinity between Prodigies and Propheters to the general pends of both. Propheters of evil consequence in states and why. Our Nation extremely inclined toward them in former times. The ancient Ethnics Statesmen how they secured themselves against the prophethic humor of the people. Judges of Prophecy in Plato, who. The Sibylline Oracles of what use among the Romans. The Opinions the ancients had of Prophecy, touched in the fable of Terestia. Religion a great sufferer by them in the Practice, Credit, Doctrine and Foundation thereof. These noted prejudicial to the mind, and why: And to common life. Two examples to evince that, taken notice of: Propheters as universally ascribed to as Prodigies, amongst Heathens, Jews, Christians, with a threefold account thereof.

The hypocrifies of things are as familiar as those of men, for as there is a great deal of reprobate Silver which carries the
The Vanity of

The image of the King and looks like Sterling, so there are in Art, in Nature, in Religion the many instances of things that do only a outwardly carry a fair face, bear a title and garb beyond their true and real value. As there is a true Masculine Rhetoric wherein the golden apes of some rich conceptions are set in the silver pictures of some 

Words of desire, expressions chosen and fitly set, so there is a μιθανολογία, the charm of some soft and fire words and periods which (like a tinkling cimbal) make a pretty sound in the ear for a time, and rather enchant the mind than inform it.

In Nature also there are the real Diamonds, and Angels of light, and others, which by Sophistry are only transformed into their likeness and whirm their tide. Religion also (through the Arts of evil) is forced to carry two different faces of things under the hood of one and the same name and outward appearance; in which we find lying wonders, fantastical depths, a knowledge falsely so called, a Spirit of error, and so false Prophecies disguised in the titles and images of the true.

It is indeed the great blessing promised to the times of the New Testament, that we should be delivered from all those Apothegms (as the Targums states them) Prophets of the Spirit of Aby, which should call
call men to the worship of Images: and God hath fulfilled the same unto us, there being now none of those lying Prophets among us that the minds of the Heathens were abused withal, who used to erect some Idols themselves had devised, telling the people they were the Images of such a star or constellation which was made known to them by Prophecy. Yet there are still left among us (that there may be an exercise of Christian prudence as well as of other Virtues) some Prophets of a ly, which call men to a reverence of the images of their own busy Fancy, some who are out of possession of their minds: (as Theodoret of the Enthusiasts of his Age) call the idle phantasms of their dreams, prophetick visions.

Our present business therefore is, to rub off the gilt of these shining vanities: Supposed Prophecies, and to discover the folly of that faith and affection with which they are so generally entertained; and in order thereto to lay down some characters of distinction between real and pretending Prophets, and to inquire (as we can) whether the Sun be quite gone down over the Prophets, and the minds of men never visited now with any beams of Prophe t i c k light, so familiar in the former Ages of the World.
The Argument, I know, is as fruitful a field of imposture as the foregoing, and the persons to whom I oppose myself therein, are men of a more exercised faith than understanding, and there is nothing more reverenced by some, and exploded by others than Prophecying; and therefore I easily foresee that I shall (like the candle) prelucendo perire, suffer greatly myself in the prepossession thoughts of the most, while attempting to give light to others in so impostrous and litigious an Argument as this is. But when bodies Politick have been often choked (like Adrian) with gnats, ruined by some occasions they despised and thought most beneath their caution, (Prophecies and Enthusiasms among the rest) and because if all men of more improved intel- lake should value themselves so far, as never to stoop to a notice of those contemptible errors which the people are abuses with all, no body would be informed, (as no body fore cured if all should be nice:) I have the intentions and hopes of a publick service to balance the prejudices of some severer persons.

But that which more effectually reconciled me to this attempt, was a regard to the special suitableness thereof to the present Age: and the great Affinity between this and the foregoing Argument.
The Age wherein our lot is fallen, is an Age of Action and Expectation, and in such times, prophecies generally take confidence to become publick, being then most grateful to men, usually very impatient of uncertainties where they are hugely concerned. Among the Jews we find Prophets and Oracles especially consulted in times of some publick distraction, and Polybius tells us that when the Armies of the Romans and Carthaginians were ready every day to join battle, every body's mouth was full of Oracles and Prophecies. Men upon such occasions are apt to believe as they affect, and then to presage as they believe. Besides, 'tis a time of improvement in all humane and divine knowledge, and that happy day seems risen upon us to which God hath promised an increase of Knowledge: Nature begins now to be studied more than Aristotle, and men are resolved upon a Philosophy that bottometh not upon phancy but experience, a Philosophy that they can prove and use, not that which commenceth in faith and concludes in talk. And considerate men are too much themselves now to be brought (like bees) to hive under any odd form of Opinion and party of men, by the confused noise and dinn of Carnal reason, the Spirit of God, Superstition, Reformation, and the coming in of Popery. Now while Wisdom...
seems thus to have been out her seven pillars and her house is going up so fast, it is a duty to assist her work by removing all the rubbish of Prodigies, Vulgar Prophecies, and whatever Doctrine makes the minds of men soft and easy (by teaching men to believe without evidence) and so, unfit to make a due judgment of things. Moreover, 'Tis a time wherein (as 'tis usual) Folly is as busy as Wisdom. Never greater talk of terrible Signs, Revelations, new-lights, Prophecies and Visions in our own and other Kingdoms than now. We have had Volumes of Prophecies and Visions lately tended to the World, and that by men of no common name, and with a confidence, I think, beyond the examples of History. For as many amongst ourselves, disbelieve the Writing of God though sealed with so many mighty signs, martyrdoms, accomplished predictions, a resurrection from the dead, and the attestation of millions of wise and good men, so they protest their visions in the face of the Sun, without any considerable signs, and notwithstanding the contempt of all sober Christians, and those contrary events, whereby God hath frustrated the tokens of these liars and made these Diviners mad. And some of them stick not to tell the World, that by how much the nearer that Great day of the Lord is, the
Cap. I. Vulgar Prophecies.

more evidently and familiarly doth the exa-
cept his Prophets; and that they under-
stand the frequent possessions, Witchcrafts,
and fanatical Enthusiasms of the Quakers.

Satanicas esse praestigias, quibus opera Dei
obfuscantur, ut olim Jannes & Jam-
bres Mosti restitueré, to be the delusions of
the Devil, whereby they endeavor to obscure
the works of God, as Jannes and Jambres
with Bood Moses of old.

As for that Affinity noted between this
Argument and the foregoing, it will appear
in the correspondence observable between
Prodigies and Prophecies in the General Na-
ture, evil Consequences, and common acceptance
of them both.

1. In their General Nature. For as Pro-
digies are received (as the reason of the name
intimates) as a kind of Real Prophecies, (pre-
dictions, as in a figure, of some great
plague or change in State.) So Prophecies
as a kind of Oral Propagies, wonderful
indications of the fortunes of Kingdoms or
private persons: both feed the curiosities
of men by the pretended notices of the fu-
ture, and have always gone undivided in
the Opinions and regards of ease men, both
among Heathens and Christians. Having
therefore imbibed, and dried up that one
breast, the Opinion of Prophecies, which used
to suckle this childish humor of curiosity in
men: I shall endeavour to do as much to that other of common Prophecies, that so the minds of men may be forced to take to some more substantial nourishment and may come the more entire and undisturbed to sober and wise thoughts.

2. In their evil consequents. These Vulgar Prophecies having as malign an influence upon the State, Religion, the Understanding, and Common life as Prodigies.

1. They are of very evil consequence in the State. The monuments of our own and foreign Nations assure us that there is not a more fruitful womb of seditions and confusions in States than the Opinion of such predictions is. He that shall read our Histories (saith our great Lawyer) shall find what lamentable and fatal events have fallen out upon vain prophecies, carried out of the inventions of wicked men; pretended to be ancient, but newly framed to deceive true men: and withall, how credulous and inclinable to them our Country-men in former times have been. The reason why the publickation of any such evil prophecies (as he tells us) hath been made felony without clergy by some ancient Statutes in our Kingdom; and still interdicted under severe penalties both in our own and * foreign Countries. What attempt will not take confi-
Cap. I. Vulgar Prophecies.

dence from a persuasion that God will succeed it, and that it is the accomplishment of some divine predictions; and besides, how certainly will the best cause fall to the ground, where the hands which are to support it, are weakened by an Opinion of some unpromising Omen or Prophecy?  

The Ancient Ethnicks State-men seem very sensible what a ready weapon of Seditious this sacred Opinion of Prophecies in the people was, and therefore being unable to wrest it from them, they endeavoured as much as they could to blunt its edge, by subtil maxims, such as these, in idioth γνώσεις εἰς ἐκατον ὁμορρομαντικούς, Persons very simple or very poor, never saw any dreams in which the publick was concerned. And that none but a King or a General was Maximus, &c., so that they were preferred by the Gods the Prophet of a City: Or by appointing some prudent Over-seers and Interpreters of Prophecies. Their Doctrine (as we learn from Plato) was τὰ μυθόθε, ἐπὶ τὸ πότε μυθόθε, τὸ ἐξ ἐρωτευόμενον, ἐπὶ τὸ πότε μυθόθε, τὸ προφητεύεται τὸ ἐπὶ τὸ πρὶστίνον, οἷ' ἀκούσας, οἷ' ἀκούσας, οἷ' ἀκούσας, οἷ' ἀκούσας, οἷ' ἀκούσας, οἷ' ἀκούσας, οἷ' ἀκούσας, οἷ' ἀκούσας. It is not for the person acted by a prophetic fury, whether he continue in it still or not, of himself to judge his Prophectic Visions or Speeches: for (as it is commonly and truly said) to speak and do things becoming, belongs solely to a wise person.
Wherefore the law provides that an order of Prophets be set Judges over all Enthusiastick Divinations, which Prophets some by mistake call Diviners. Where indeed the Order of Prophets to whom He gives the pre-beminence, were none else but wise and prudent Men (as a late Writer, truly) but whereas he adds, who by reason of the Sagacity of their Understandings were able so judge of those things which were uttered by this dull spirit of Divination, which resided only in faculties inferior to Reason, I conceive the misapprehends the end and office of these prudent Persons, who were indeed Judges, but not to interpret but to moderate these prophetick furies. For if these Enthusiasms were really divine, no wise man would, and if really phrenetical, no wise man could judge them, so as to expound and interpret them, for can any man make any sober judgment of the phantasms and heats of distraction, or find any reason in that which never approached the faculty of Reason? These Wise Men therefore seem a kind of Ethnicks Sanhedrim to judge of pretended prophecy in an authoritative way, and to expunge or expound according as might best comport with the occasions of State. And the better to blanch over their Sentences and
and to make them look like Oracle, they were themselves reported and verily thought by the people, really prophetick persons. Answerable to which subtil men among the Grecians, the Romans had constantly chosen out of the City, their sole Keepers and Interpreters of the Sibylline prophecies, which served as a kind of Ethnack Alcoran, expounded alway, by those Mysteries according as the circumstances of State might require: and 'tis not unlikely that Cæsar had been tampering with one of them, who told the Romans in open Senate, as from the Oracles of Sibylla that he that they had now their King in reality, must have the title of King too, if they would be in a safe condition.

I incline to believe that this political Sophism in reference to Prophecy, was couched by the Poets in the table of their Hermaphrodite Prophets Thamyris, whom they feign stricken with blindness by Juno, but in recompense of that ill turn, blest by Jupiter with prophecy: and further that this person had the forms of both Sexes, and was often instrumental to accord many differences and strifes among the Gods. Wherein they seem to intimate that prophecy (as found among them) was given only to persons bereft of the use of Wisdom, as in a dream or in the eclipse of reason by a madman, i.e., of the Roman school. Quæ scriptæ sunt aliis adhuc omisso.
The Vanity of

(as Plutarch calls it)  Prophetick efflux,
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{\textit{Vid. Botium Eugub. de Signis Eccles. I. 6 c. 2.}}

{\textit{Dan. 3.16.}}
seems thus to have been out her seven pillars and her house is going up so fast, it is a duty to assist her work by removing all the rubbish of Prodigies, Vulgar Prophecies, and whatever Doctrine makes the minds of men soft and easy (by teaching men to believe without evidence) and so, unfit to make a due judgment of things. More over, 'Tis a time wherein (as 'tis usual) Folly is as busy as Wisdom. Never greater talk of terrible Signi, Revelations, new-lights, Prophecies, and Visions in our own and other Kingdoms. Then now. We have had Volumes of Prophecies and Visions lately tendred to the World, and that by men of no common name, and with a confidence, I think, beyond the examples of History. For as many amongst ourselves, disbelieve the Writing of God though sealed with so many mighty signs, martyrdoms, accomplished predictions, a resurrection from the dead, and the attestation of millions of wise and good men; so they protest their visions in the face of the Sun, without any considerable signs, and notwithstanding the contempt of all sober Christians, and those contrary events whereby God hath frustrated the tokens of these liars and made these Diviners mad. And some of them stick not to tell the World, that by how much the nearer that Great day of the Lord is, the
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more evidently and familiarly doth he esteem his Prophets, and that they understand the frequent possessions, Witchcrafts, and fanatical Enthusiasms of the Quakers. 

Saracinas esse praetigias, quibus opera Dei obscuresse nituntur, ut olim James & Jambres Most reterere, to be the delusions of the Devil, whereby they endeavor to obscure the works of God, as James and Jambres withstood Moses of old.

As for that Affinity noted between this Argument and the foregoing, it will appear in the correspondence observable between Prodigies and Prodigies in the General Nature, evil Consequences, and common acceptance of them both.

1. In their General Nature. For as Prodigies are received (as the reason of the name intimates) as a kind of Real Prophecies, (predictions, as in a figure, of some great plague or change in State.) So Prophecies as a kind of Verbal Prodigies, wonderful indications of the fortunes of Kingdoms or private persons: both feed the curiosities of men by the pretended notices of the future, and have always gone undivided in the Opinions and regards of ease men, both among Heathens and Christians. Having therefore imbittered, and dried up that one breast, the Opinion of Prodigies, which used to suckle this childish humor of curiosity in
men: I shall endeavour to do as much to that other of common Prophecies, that so the minds of men may be forced to take to some more substantial nourishment and may come the more entire and undisturbed to sober and wise thoughts.

2. In their evil consequents. These Vulgar Prophecies having as malign an influence upon the State, Religion, the Understanding, and Common Life as Prodigies.

1. They are of very evil consequence in the State. The monuments of our own and foreign Nations assure us that there is not a more fruitful womb of seditions and confusions in States than the Opinion of such predictions is. He that shall read our Histories (saith our great Lawyer) shall find what lamentable and fatal events have fallen out upon vain prophecies, carried out of the inventions of wicked men; pretended to be ancient, but newly framed to deceive true men: and withall, how credulous and inclined to them our Country-men in former times have been. The reason why the publication of any such evil prophecies (as he tells us) hath been made felony without clergy by some ancient Statutes in our Kingdom; and still interdicted under severe penalties both in our own and foreign Countries. What attempt will not take confi-
Vulgar Prophecies.

dence from a persuasion that God will succeed it, and that it is the accomplishment of some divine predictions; and besides, how certainly will the best cause fall to the ground, where the hands which are to support it, are weakened by an Opinion of some unpromising Omen or Prophecy.

The Ancient Ethnicks seem very sensible what a ready weapon of Sedition this sacred Opinion of Prophecies in the people was, and therefore being unable to wrest it from them, they endeavoured as much as they could to blunt its edge by subtil maxims, such as these, in idoneo et nwnmis ex eis quippe deplorant. Persons, very simple or very poor, never saw any dreams in which the publick was concerned. And that none but a King or a General was suitable to prophesies preferred by the Gods, the Prophet of a City: Or by appointing some prudent Over-seers and Interpreters of Prophecies. Their Doctrine (as we learn from Plato) was the μυθα των εκ της αληθευτης και των εν της φαντασιας των ουρανων. It is not for the person acted by a prophetic fury, whether he continue in it still or no, of himself to judge his Prophecies, Visions, or Speeches: for (as it is commonly and truly said) to speak and do things becoming, belongs solely to a wise person.
The Vanity of prophecy.

Wherefore the law provides that an order of Prophets be set Judges over all Enthusiastic Divinations, which Prophets some by mistake call Diviners. Where indeed the Order of Prophets to whom He gives the preheminence, were none else but wise and prudent Men (as a late Writer, truly) but whereas he adds, who by reason of the Saggacity of their Understandings were able to judge of those things which were uttered by this dull spirit of Divination, which resided only in faculties inferior to Reason, I conceive he misapprehends the end and office of these prudent Persons, who were indeed Judges, but not to interpret but to moderate these prophetick furies. For if these Enthusiasms were really divine, no wise man would, and if really phrenetical, no wise man could judge them, so as to expound and interpret them; for can any man make any sober judgment of the phantasms and heats of distraction, or find any reason in that which never approached the faculty of Reason? These Wise Men therefore seem a kind of Ethnlick Sanhedrim to judg of pretended prophecy in an authoritative way, and to expunge or expound according as might best comport with the occasions of State. And the better to blanch over their Sentences, and
and to make them look like Oracle, they were themselves reported and verily thought by the people, really prophetick persons. Answerable to which subttil men among the Grecians, the Romans had constantly chosen out of the City, their sole Keepers and Interpreters of the Sibylin prophacies, which served as a kind of Ethnack Alcoran, expounded alway, by those Masters according as the circumstances of State might require: and 'tis not unlikely that Caesar had been tampering with one of them, who told the Romans in open Senate, as from the Oracles of Sibylla that he that they bad now their King in reality, must have the title of Kingsius, if they would be in a safe condition.

I incline to believe that this political Sophism in reference to Prophecy, was couched by the Poets in the fable of their Hermaphrodite Prophet Teresia, whom they steecklen with blindness by Sibyls, but instead compensing of that ill run, blest by Sibyls with prophecy: and further that this person had the forms of both sexes, and was often instrumental to accord many differences and Arises among the Gods, Wherein they seem to intimate that prophecy (as found among them) was given only to persons benefit of the use of Wisdom, as in a dream, or in the eclipse of reason by a meditative mood.
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intended to sink the value and credit of all divine prophecies and illusions, then the multitude of those sordid Enthusiasms which are in the World, Men will quickly grow coy, and loth to trust themselves with a Revelation, when they see so much imposition breaking in upon the world that usurps that name. The Ethnical world had been for many ages imposed upon by Enthusiasms, Dreams, Oracles, Prophecies, Apparitions of the Gods, till Socrates (in a discovery of the Vanity of them) called men to an use of judgment, and taught them to entertain no doctrine without, or against apparent reason. And the many abuses formerly put upon them, made them not only readily entertain his doctrine, but so prejudiced them against the very air of a Revelation, that as the Jewish masters were perpetually demanding of Jews, so the Gentile Philosophers, Demonstrations, of the first preachers of the Gospel, and upbraiding them that their doctrine was Κατάληγος, a paradoxical doctrine, and altogether impossible to be demonstrated. And amongst our selves, while some must have an Enthusiasm in all the great turns of life, and must be fed, like the Patriarchs, with Visions and Prophecy, others (seeing the impostures wrap up in them) hate such light meat, and
and begin to look upon a Revelation as a matter un-intelligible, both in the manner of conveyance, and the way of discovery and discrimination, and to think no man can answer the taking up of any Opinion upon the credit of a prophetick testimony, to his cool and advised thoughts. But if the more fortunate credulity and simplicity of the persons to whom these Visions and prophetick Raptures happen, make them impregnable by a temptation to any such subtil Atheism, yet still Scripture is disparaged, while the affections of men are divided between an old Prophecy and a new, and that sickly humor in some men of longing after something new in Religion, is fed, mens gadding Fancies are gratified, and Religion is exposed to the danger of being evaporated into air and rapture.

3. These pretended Prophecies do as much usurp upon the mind and understanding: because instructing both Deliverers and Receivers onely to a bold and forward Faith. For they that deliver them presume, it were not to believe but to dispute, if they should (like a Gideon) desire a sign of God that it is *Judg. 6.17.* be indeed that talketh with them: these impressions they conceive are both writing and seal to themselves, and proclaim by their own mighty force and vivacity that they are set on by a divine hand: the mind of man
man (as they) under the Divine Visitations, is only to be made, to attend, in an humble passiveness and silence, to God, while instructing it by the whispers of his Spirit. A Doctrine which is virtually an infinite imposture, and which brings a man into the Wilderness a desert of wandering, where he may run for ever from one wild imagination to another, and contains as much Reason therein, as the conceit of that Mariner that should think his Ship ran a right course only because driven with a fierce wind. And as much do these Prophecies usurp upon the Understandings of those to whom they are tendred; we must trust our Faith with these things, but never offer to demand first the security of some divine Sign; we must believe them of divine inspiration only because we are told they are so; and if we demur, as thinking the condition unreasonable, we are bidden to have a care we be not found to fight against God, and so must become fools for fear we prove knaves. But when our Blessed Savior himself would not so far controul the Law of reasonable Nature in Man, as to require him to a Faith of his Prophecies before sufficient assurance given of their Divinity; we know not to value ourselves, if we suffer a Faith of these common Prophecies to be forc'd
for'cd upon us, which offer nothing to assure them but solemn looks and Verily verily. The World swarms with pretended Prophecies and Revelations; we have not only our monthly but our daily Prognosticators, and therefore the honest looks of the prophets are not sufficient grounds of trust in this business. That proposition, Intellecut patiens recipit phantasmata, is a truth also in Divinity; the holy passive intellect, that is impressive and easy, that doth not use it itself to discourse and judge; receives Fantasms into it self, little besides the airy Visions of its own or other mens vain imaginations.

4. These Prophecies are of very evil consequence in common life. They give silly men to conceive they are never Gods favorites till they are half mad, and have constant intelligence from Heaven by some new Vision. They torture mens minds with infinite anxieties, and lay upon their thoughts the Evils of an Age to lament at once. They encourage them in very evil purposes, by the confidence they give them of success. They keep men from possessing themselves in peace by a secure reposè on the wisdom and goodness of God. They tempt them to a neglect of those faithful and acknowledged Rules of life, Scripture, and the Maxims of Reason, to attend to measures fantastical and never proved.
proved. They cow mens spirits, and betray
those succors which Reason affords and com-
mmands the use of: Thus the ^ Historian tells
us the Senate of Florence would by no means
make opposition to the French King Charls
the eight, because advised to the contrary
by the reputed Prophecies of Savanarola.
The Examples of men which have run
themselves: upon strange Precipices by fol-
lowing these foolish fires, are infinite: I shall
instance but two, to stop, if it were possible,
the mouths of my two Adversaries in this
Argument, the Papist and the Enthusiast.
The first shall be the strange Example of
Pope Gregory the ninth, who was persuaded
by the pretended Visions and Prophecies of
Gualterina de Senis to go from Avenion to
Rome, against the Reasons and Persuasions
of his Cardinals and Friends; whereby he
became the occasion of that Schism which
lasted for about forty years in that Church.
* In an easie foresight whereof, a few hours
before his death, (which hapned within half a
year after his coming thither) having the ho-
ly Eucharist in his hands, he protested before
them all, that they should beware of either
Men or Women delivering, under a shew of
Religion, the Visions of their own head; be-
cause himself, being seduced by such, had, in
a neglect of the sober counsels of his Friends,
drawn himself and the whole Church into
danger.
danger of imminent Schism, except the mercy of Christ interposed. The other Example toucheth closer upon our present Times; that of Comenius (a person whose other works praise him, so that I need say nothing) who was so enchanted by the simplicity of manners, solemn asseverations, frequent exaltations, rapturous speeches, devout language, pompous visions, unaccountable passions; some casualty accomplished Predictions of those three pretending Prophets, Christophorus Katermus, Christina Pontanius, Nicholas Draibicus; as greatly to reverence their persons, to record and at last to publish their Visions and Prophecies under the specious title of *Lux in Tenebris*, to write the History of their Lives and prophetick Raptures, to attempt to reconcile the contradictions in their Predictions: and where their deformity appeared through the finest colors he could disseminate it with, He ventures to bring himself off, thus; *Sapientiam Dei varie nobis & Histor. Dabiscum hodie, & in re, has audent, &c.* And elsewhere, *Non invenio quid disendum resect, nisi aut hac prophetica non esse divina, aut hypothesis Theologia vestra (de omnimoda, Immutabilitate, Dei, etiam nostri & temporalium respectu) vacillare. Utrum patiorem suspicandum sit, quid si pronunciare ne festinemus?* and the like: which is to make God a deceiver (I speak as a man).
that so silly men may speak truth.

Thirdly, Prophecies and Prodigies touch and agree in the universal reception of them both. Prophecy never wanted Professors or Auditors in any Age or place in the World. It was the Opinion of some of the Jews, and most of the Grecian Philosophers of old, that the Soul came down into the Body, pregnant with 

* A perpetually sends up such a thick mist of Phantasms before its Eyes, that it cannot now see after off. A Doctrine, which the deport of the Soul, while a prisoner to its own house, seems a little to encourage: for as the Bush in the Fable, having sustained a great loss of cloth, is fancied to stand ever since by the high-way catching hold of every man's clothes, in hopes to recover its own lost goods; so the Souls of men seem to express a tacit sense of a great loss in regard of the knowledge of things future, in this embodied state, in that they stand (as it were) in ruins, and hardly catch at any pretending Prophecy and Shadow of Divination; and indeed I have nothing (in this matter) more to accuse my own Nation then others of; it being an argument of the blindness of

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* Plutarch. de Defect. Orac.
most Ages and Nations, that they readily swallow down such Flies as these when tendered to them.

What place and repute Prophecy held among the Cannibals of old, those words ἐνυστατή, ἁράβαις, ἑαυτοῦ, ἔδω, ἔμενον ἡταιρεῖ, φοιβολεῖται, ἐπορεύεσθαι, and the like, and that vast babble of Chaldeans, Astrologers, Soothsayers, Necromancers, Interpreters of Dreams and Prodigies, Diviners by the Smoke, the Exta, the Incense on the Altar, by a Staff, the chirping of Birds, all of familiar occurrence in their Writings, are a sufficient assurance. Particularly the Eastern Nations were so mad upon Divination, that they are full of the East Isaiah 2.6.

It seems used proverbially by the Prophet, to set forth that mighty passion with which the Jews were carried after Divination and the knowledge of Futurities. And with how ease a Faith the Jews used to meet any pretenders to Prophecy, though calling them (to the most open defiance of Reason and Religion) Idolatry, the Writings of the Old Testament will sufficiently resolve us. And Christians (though these Vulgar Prophecies have been proved, by an infinite Experience, a dead catch, devoid of the life of truth and perspicuity) stoop as greedily to them, when ever thrown before them, as if they were all Oracle. For they easily believe.
believe no man to be so projectedly Atheistical, as to intitle God to the Visions of his own brain: not considering that the Spirit of heated Melancholy may inspire these Prophets, and abuse them with some vigorous impressions as much as they do other men.

Now it cannot but seem strange to our first thoughts, that while all other Sects and impostures suited to the present gusto of the people, have had their peculiar times and places of acceptance, and the Wheel of Fortune (as it is called) hath gone over them all and crush’d them in the dust, Enthusiasts and pretences to Prophecy should prove an obstinate cheat which all Ages and Nations have been thus gull’d withal; especially considering that the hiding of Events from us is so great a security to the quiet of our minds, and felicities are always greater, and Evils (because they then afflict us but once) the lighter, which do surprize us. This so strange and catholick a Vanity must determine our Inquiries after some catholick and immutable Causes in humane Nature which may give us some probable account thereof. They are (I conceive) especially these three:

1. A catholick presumption of the singular readiness of God to communicate with Man, especially if a more refined person.
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and separate from all the ways of the people (as the Masters say a Prophet must be.) This persuasion may grow either from a kind of tacit sense in the Soul that it was made for converse with God; to refer to him, to derive light and law from him. A remembrance of which birthright of the Soul remained a while in the more simple and innocent years of the World, in that frequent intercourse between God and Man, by the mission of Angels, vouchsafing of divine Visions and Prophecies, immediate Oracles, and that administration of civil affairs in the Jewish Kingdom by the immediate direction of God himself. Or else (which is more explicable) it might possibly arise from a fantastical measure of goodness in God. Men have thought it could not stand with the goodness of God to suppose him reserved, and to leave them in the dark in some very doubtful and perplexed circumstances of life: and therefore si Dii sint, divinitio est was thought by Tully and others a very natural consequence. And a late Writer, to prove Prophecy not yet ceased, placeth this in the front of his demonstrations (so he calls them) the eternal duration of the Divine Goodness and Bounty, which will oblige him (saith he) to as free a communication of this prophetick light now, as in the years of old: and therefore concludes
concludes his Argument with a brand upon the inexcusable wickedness and rashness of those men who would have this Fountain of Divine Grace dried up, while denying Prophecy. But who art thou, O vain man, that wilt thus mete out the Heavens with thy span? prefer thy short thoughts of what is fit and good the measures of infinite Bounty and Goodness? Doth not the Papist conclude an infallible spirit in the Church, from the same topick the Enthusiast doth a prophetical spirit therein, even because God's goodness will not permit him to withhold so great a Blessing? Certainly if God's goodness prove the spirit of Prophecy to be at all in the Church, it will prove it also as plentifully poured out now, as in the primitive Times, God being as rich in goodness now as then.

2. Opinions of this World vast and unmetered, is another great support of the credit of Vulgar Prophecies. Men in all times have been apt to value the concerns of this World amiss, to think persons and affairs hold the same place in the thoughts of God as of a man, and could not imagine that what was a great reality to their enchanted minds, was but οὐκόμη φαντασία, a great Fancy in the account of Heaven: and therefore easily conceived that all Events of greater note came with observation, and had
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had the harbinger of a Prodigy or Prophecy to run before and give notice when ever they are coming after. This Vulgar Judgment of things drew forth that speech from the Roman Historian, Kai μη παραλαμενε ετελει ζωθινον χρονιαν. etc. It hath often occurred to my thoughts as a Wonder, that when the City of Byzantium hath risen so exceedingly, that no City besides can vie fortunes or greatness with it, Deum etsi Heliopolita, Prophesy was ever given our Ancestors from the Gods of its singular felicities and increase. And my thoughts (as he goes on) of running upon this strange Instance, that as the Sibylla Erythrea's &Sibyl's singular Apotropaic, having turned over many Volumes of History and Collections of Oracles, scarce at last have light upon an Oracle of Sibylla Erythrea, which seems to carry some prophetick airs of the succeeding grandeur of this City. But yet after a full recital of the Oracle, he concludes (as he had reason to loose and general the words are) If the Oracle shall seem to any one to speak a different sense, let him take so it if he please.

3. There is in the minds of men an infinite thirst after the knowledge of Futurities. What purchase would be thought (by many men) too great for the knowledge of such things as these, How long such a King shall reign, who shall succeed to the Throne, when
Antichrist shall fall, how long they shall live, whom they shall marry, what shall be the issue of such a War, when such a cloud of affliction shall go off from their Tabernacle: this thirst made the Religion of the Gentiles (that thought there was nothing beyond the Horizon of Sense) almost nothing but a continued Divination, an unwearied pursuit of this knowledge, in Oracles, in Omens, in Prophecies, in Prodigies, in Auguries, in the Signs of Heaven, in the Guts of the Sacrifice, and the like; and so far besoiled them that they oft preferred the ravings of a mad-man, the chirpings of a Bird, the babble of an Astrologer, and the Dreams of an old woman, to greater veneration then the words of the wise; and made the smoke of his house appear a better Oracle then the man of counsel that dwelt in it. And an impatience of the ignorance of things to come, fooled the Jews as well as the Gentiles out of their Reason and Religion both at once, tempting them to ask counsel at their stocks, and to seek to their Staff to declare futurities unto them. Amongst ourselves a like affection for this knowledge betrays so many men to such Opinions of Astrologers, Fortune-tellers, the predictions of Enthusiasts, and men upon a death-bed. Look as those gross vapors, which, while here below, are of no name and consideration, but
as soon as they mount the Heavens, and carry light and fire with them, draw the eyes of men upon them, and are thought Divine presages. Thus those persons, whose grossness and dulness in all matters referring to Religion, Learning or common life, rendered them to the neglect or pity of sober men, as soon as that black humor in them takes fire, and the men seem to speak from Heaven, and to carry a prophetick light with them, they presently become considerable, are advanced the common Subjects of Discourse, their Prophecies are studied more than the Bible, and men wonder to see how little those fools-bolts mist of the mark they were level'd unto.

Now the teeth of men have thus water'd for this forbidden fruit, the knowledge of things to come, partly from a weakness and childishness of temper whereby they cannot relish and digest the strong meat of substantial Doctrine and solid argument; partly from some present uneasiness of condition, the duration whereof looks like an Eternity to their short spirits, while they know no end thereof; partly in a vain hope that according as a good or an evil is prophesied concerning them, so their diligence may be applied to promote it or prevent it.

In consideration of all the premises, I have applied my self with the greater se-
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ridiness to sink the reputation of those
pretending Prophecies which so much in-
gross the studies and affections of many
men, and to evince that pretenders to
Predictions now are, in all likelihood,
Prophets onely of the deceit of their own
heart, and that none of their Prophecies
are to be attended to, as the certain in-
dications of a future time.

CHAP.
CHAP. II.
The Vanity of Vulgar Prophecies detected from the unworthiness of the Pretenders to them.

All things and Persons thought by the Heathens to partake somewhat of a Prophetick Power. Wisdom only excluded by them from any share in that gift. The Persuasion too much abetted by some Christians. To reprehend which, the first Consideration is proposed. That Prophetick Maxim, That Prophecy rests not but upon a wise, a valiant and a rich man, how understood by the Modern Jews; A conjecture concerning the Reason of it, in their sense. How understood by the more Ancient Jews, shewn at large from their Writings. God's Prophets never mad in a Prophetick fit. Wise-men an ancient addition of the Prophets: the title usurped by the Ancient Philosophers and Magicians. Jews, Christians and Heathens required Sanctity in order to true Prophecy. None born Prophets of the Jews, and why. Our pretended Prophets largely proved devoid of all true Prophetical qualifications, and therefore not creditable. The Church of Rome why so fruitful in such Prophets.

How much a fond affection for Prophecy had blinded the Minds of the Ethnick World, appears by their conceiting the Prophetick light as much diffused as the natural; and that as every thing did, according to its measure, participate of the Goodness, so of the Prescience of God. They regarded the whole World, and all the parts thereof, but as so many fofter...
Oracles: not a Star or Comet in the Firmament, not a Monster on Earth, not a Staff in the Wood, not a Gut in the Sacrifice, not a Line in the Hand, but was thought prophetical. The Earth was thought pregnant with a kind of Prophetick efflux and most Divine Spirit, able to inspire the Pythia which stood over it. The Souls of all men were thought continually uttering some softer voices of Prophecy, but could not be heard till a Dream, or an Ecstasy, or a Frenzy had hush'd the clamors of an obstreperous Reason; and therefore even persons which could not speak sense, yet were presumed able to speak a Prophecy. In short, every thing was thought pregnant with some Presage, but only Reason and the Mind that had wisdom; for as to that, their Doctrine was mortal wisdom (stylo novo, corrupt Reason) diverts and extinguisheth that Enthusiasm which would otherwise rise upon the Soul. And I am sorry to see, that amidst all this light which falls upon us from Heaven, men should yet be so little awakened out of the Dreams of Gentilism, as to think Divination almost as familiar a thing as the Heathens did; and that while we profess Miracles the Seal of Faith, and Prophecy the Rule, and Prophet the
great title of the Lord thereof, we should be so lavish of these sacred names, as to throw them away upon every prodigy which our Philosophy cannot Salve; and should still conceive a monster, a Comet, a great wind, the falling of the salt, or the tingling of the ears as prophetic as they did; and profane the sacred title of prophecy by bestowing it upon the crazy fancies of every idle visionist; and be ready to call him a Prophet, that hath scarce reason or morality enough to intitle him Man.

That this is no scandal may in part appear from the fore-going Treatise, but will more fully by what time we dismiss our first Consideration to reprend the vanity of receiving these Vulgar Prophecies as God's signs of the condition of a future time; which is this, The Prophets which deliver them are generally devoid of all the Prophetic qualifications necessary to conciliate reverence to their Persons and Prophecies. What these are we may best learn from the Jewish Masters; now with them, 'tis a ruling Maxim

Prophecy rests not but upon a wise, a valiant and a rich man: where by the Wise man, they understand a Man of prudence, and well practiced especially in their Cabbalistical and traditional learning, in great price with them: the other words
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words they expound in the rigid and usual sense and meaning of them, because observing in Scripture so much courage attending the prophetick Spirit, and generally great riches, excepting (say they) in the instances of Moses, Samuel, Amos and Jonah; who yet did not conflict with extreme necessities, nor yet (I think) any of the Prophets, except in a time of some common calamity, when their straits and indigencies were rather a testimony to their office then a scandal. But I think the most rational account that can be given of this Maxim thus expounded, is this; The greatest assurances which Faith can require in the Prophet himself, are these two: that he appear a person not apt to be deceived himself (by taking the impressions of a strong Fancy for the hand of God upon him) which therefore, that first requisite of wisdom secures him from the Suspicion of: and that he appear a person not apt to deceive others. Now all aptness to deceive others grows either from a fear of displeasing by some grievous, or hope of reward by some grateful prediction; and therefore that he may be proof against temptation from fear or hope, they make him armed with valor and riches. And perhaps that Maxim we met with before among the heathens (somewhat like this among the present Jews)
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might carry some respects to some such considerations as these.

But I conceive the more Ancient Rabbanies intended some richer Sense in this Maxim, understanding in the Wise man, in a more lax and general signification: so as to comprehend a person furnished with all the kinds of wisdom: with Natural wisdom, that is, Soundness of mind both before and in the time of the prophetick affection. Accordingly, Vorstius tells us from the writings of the Jews, that among many other preparatory requisites to prophecy, the first they lay down is a Natural disposition, an ευγεγοδια, a firm and sound constitution of body, that there appear no shew of a person crazy and sunk into phantasms. And all writers ancient and modern have been careful to secure the Divine Prophets in the Opinion of being sober and rational, even while acted by the Prophetick Spirit, fully able to conceive and express what was sealed upon their minds by the hand of God upon them. God sometimes sent his Servants (as Epiphanius distinguisheth) ἐκσευον τῷ ὀρνῷ, the Ecstasy of Sleep (in the silence and composure whereof, the Soul might best attend the softer whisperings of the Spirit) ὕπ' ἐκσευον ὑπερέστη, not an Ecstasy of mind, whereby the Understanding became useless, and
The language confused and inconsequent: whereas the Ethnick Prophet was ὀργανον, the Organ of the Devil, sounding forth such discordant and rude airs as he inspired him with, of which the person scarce retained the remembrance when the fit was over. 'Tis noted of the Idol-Prophet, that he used not to prophecy till in the previous use of some extatical solemnities, he became frantic and epileptical.

To this Natural was superadded a Divine Wisdom, great skill in the Law of God, and the mysteries relating to the person and Kingdom of the Messiah, in conjunction with a divine Philosophy, the knowledge of the works of Nature, with reference to piety and virtue, (the most valued learning of those whiter Ages of the World.) God did not wse to hazard the reputation of his Oracles by trusting them with such Prophets, whose rudenes would have rendered their persons and Message to the common scorn; but the prophetick Spirit found them or made them wise and understanding men: and that in so eminent a degree, that the title of וֹיָימִים wise men seems to have been anciently the peculiar addition of Prophets and used characteristically, as Scribe was originally the distinctive title of a Son of the Prophets, and an expectant of that sacred...
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sacred function: and therefore an ancient Doctor Y of the Jewish Nation tells us... after 40 years (the time they assign to prophecy after the second Temple) all the Wise-men were called the Men of the great Synagogue: as conceiving that title now too August and sacred for them to wear, as the Primitive Bishops did the title of Apostles, to whose places but not to their measures of the Spirit they did succeed; and from hence it came to pass, that all the Devils prophets that assumed the skill, usurpt also the stile of God's Prophets, and were intitled Wise men; and perhaps the more ancient Philosophers amongst the Gentiles, as they borrowed their Wisdom, so also the stile of or Wise men, from the prophe...

By the rich man there, they understand (as Maimonides expounds the word) the man that rejoiceth in his portion, of riches, honor, health, pleasure, which his father hath allotted to him, that is of a contented and cheerful Spirit: for as that water which is not muddied with Earth nor ruffled with the wind, is most apt to receive and reflect an image, so that Minde which is not soiled with co...
vetous desires as with earth, nor discompos
ed with anger or sorrow, as with wind, is
most receptive of a prophetick image and
impression. Accordingly we find none of
Gods Prophets (nay none of his servants)
blemished in Scripture for an inordinate love
to this worlds goods; and so far did they
stand from a morose and sour humor, that
we scarce read of any inspired persons but
were frequent in the use of the instruments
of Musick, that by the soft and gentle airs
thereof they might allay all undue beats,
and charm their unquiet thoughts into stil
ness and silence.

By that third word they under
stood (I conceive) these three excellen
cies: (1.) Great courage and presence of
mind: that which we may find all the
Prophets in Scripture eminent for: Upon
which account perhaps, the title of יְחֶזֶק יְאֶבֶן
stout or valiant, became the almost distin
cutive Epitite of a Prophet. Our foremen
tioned d Master, speaking of Abraham, de
scribes him by the character of יְחֶזֶק יְאֶבֶן,
this stout one. And some of the Rabbins
conjecture, that the Moneth Tisri or Sep
tember is styled יְחֶזֶק יְאֶבֶן, 1 Kings 8.2,
the moneth of the Valiant, because (say
they) three great Prophets were born there
in. But this e singular presence of mind, I
conceive rather an effect of then a disposi
tion to the prophetick Spirit. (2.) Power over inordinate affections, for so Maimonides having asked (upon occasion of this Maxim) who is the strong man makes answer, הרוביש מעין ייעור, the man that subdues his concupiscence; for herein the true strength and vigor of the Soul reports it self, that it can maintain its supremacy, and give check to all its rebel-passions: and therefore ἐγκεφαλία (a word used in Scripture for temperance) signifies a having somewhat in ones power, and holding it within the compass of ones strength. All inordinate passions the Jews used to stile the vails of the Prophets, which intercepted the light of Prophecy, ready otherwise to fall upon them; and therefore rightly judged, a power over the motions of the lower Soul essential to the Prophetick State. (3.) Singular gravity and severity of life and manners: for in such a fence the word occurs, 2 Sam. 22.26. נבורה with the strongerly or heroically perfect, thou wilt shew thy self perfect. And a late learned Papist conceives that the title of נבורה Gen. 6.4. was anciently the distinctive character of the Prophets, and that we are not there and in other places to understand (as we translate it) Gigans, sed homines virtute & sanctitate ad mirum-lum usque potentes, & quasi Gigan tes, for
which he gives several reasons: It hath been the acknowledged doctrine both of Jews, Christians, yea Heathens, that God never sets up a prophetick light but in golden candlesticks, persons of most refined minds and manners. Amongst the Jews in obtained so much, that & Maimonides tells us that

b hither to there was never the man that would say that God did use the Divine Majesty to dwell in a bad man, but then only when he had reformed his life: nay, so affirm'd were they in this Doctrine, that the same Master tells us elsewhere, that if a prophetise and show them a sign or a wonder, yet they believe him not, if not found to have walked

in the state of prophecy, in holiness and separation from the world, in the study of Wisdom, &c. And as much was this doctrine subscribed unto by the Christians: Origen takes notice that the Prophets God ever spoke by, were eminent "prophetae sion dupliciter unde Godex solvar, for the inimitable sanctity and incomparable settledness of life and manners; and many more besides, himself cited by a Modern writer concerning Prophecy. And the very Heathens thought the Divine Majesty did so hate to touch any unclean thing, that the prophetick lapses could never grace an impure Soul: Aristotle (speaking of prophetick dreams) tells
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us to suppose that they are ever sent from God, & μη θελειν και φερουμενων, ἀλλὰ
ὃς ὕπατος ἄνων, and that he sends them not to the best and wisest of men, but indif-
ferently and as it happens, is an absurd con-
ceit: and therefore the wiser heathens pre-
pared themselves for the reception of any di-
vine communications by abstinencies, wash-
ings, some fantastical separations and san-
curities; which proceeded upon a tacit sense
of this truth, that the light of heaven cannot
shine through dirt and filth, nor God ever
make an unhallowed place or person, his
Oracle. And if we consult Scripture, we
shall find that howsoever the order of Kings
by whom the Judicial, and of Priests by
whom the Ceremonial law was administered,
was maintained by a natural and hereditary
succession of persons in the families of Da-
vid and Aron; yet the order of Prophets
(by whose care the Moral law was especial-
ly secured) was always elective: never any
born Prophet of the Jews, but the office
was served by such persons as God found
qualified, generally with wisdom, always
with piety. And therefore our Savior tells
us we may know false-Prophets by their
fruits: by some evil manners, or some do-
crine which directly tends to encourage
them. As for the instances of Amos, Ba-
laam and Caiaphas, which may be opposed
to what hath been said, I shall return but this (for brevity's sake) that they are examples singular, and in their occasions extraordinary and therefore (like the jogging of young trees) do but more fully confirm and settle the rule they seem to make.

Having thus fitted our prophetic balance, if we proceed now to weigh our pretending Prophets therein they will be found greatly wanting. For the greater part of our little Prophets appear devoid of that natural wisdom, and soundness of mind of which the true prophets of God gave such undoubted evidences. That word 

Prophets (deriving from 

madness) carries in the Original thereof a remembrance what kind of crack'd mettal, the Ethenick Prophets of old were generally made of: and it derives a great suspicion upon our modern Prophets of some such crazy temper, that so great a part of these ignes fatui have risen from the boggs of the Romish cells and hermitages, where the strict separations from Company and honest business, the high applauses of an abstract and ecstetical devotion, the severe disciplines of the body by excessive fastings and scourgings, the strict forbidding of Marriage to persons not capable of that doctrine, the common Opinion of the frequent visits of the 

V. Mary and other Saints vouchsafed to more severe
severe livers, together with a strong opinion of meriting, by such devout singularities, the highest favors and intimacies with God; cannot easily fail of intoxicating, weaker heads especially, with the consent of some extraordinary visions, and prophetick inspirations. Accordingly such swarms of prophets and rapturists have flown out of those hives in some ages, that the Council of Constance, A.D. 1415, was convened (as P. Germon tells us) especially to determine which should pass for Canonical and which for Apocryphal prophets in that Church: and the many grossfallacies put, even upon wise men, by such frequent visionists, put him upon writing those learned and pious pieces extant in the collection of his works, De probatione Spirituum, De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis, De examine Doctrinarum, and that Epistle intituled, Doctrine ad quemdam Eremitam, in all which he doth with great Sobriety and Christian zeal advise against the spreading infection of these more solemn and demoniacal fancies, visions and pretended Prophecies. Nor perhaps will that term be thought a bolt less fly without aim, if the Reader consider further how frequent such prophetick visions and illapses are with these persons, Revelations usually are as familiar with them as Arguments with other men;
The Vanity of

those three Prophets, Kotterus, Christi-
na, and Drabicius, which of late years have
made such a noise in Germany (as fruitful in
Enthusiasts as Africa in monsters) had their
weekly or daily Visions, and heard from
God almost every day: and the Visions of
any one of them may compare numbers with
all that the prophetick writings make men-
tion of. A consideration that will give us
a great jealousy that the most of them were
but the visions of a disturbed Fancy, and
the spurious issues of that enchanting humor
of Melancholy, which will present as many
delusive images to a man as a conjurer's glafs.
And perhaps, therefore did the holy Pro-
phets record the year and the month when
they received the divine illapses, that so
their Visions and Prophecies might not be
thought the fatal and therefore frequent
workings of that black humor in them,
but the arbitrary, and therefore oft interrup-
ted, Visits of the true prophetick Spirit.

If we proceed next to make search into
their acquired Wisdom, we shall soon per-
ceive them greatly unworthy the title they
assume: Is the hundredth part of them (as
formerly) improved by any ingenuous edu-
cation? are they not persons generally
whose grossness and ignorance gives them a
great confidence, credulity, and talkative-
ness, three gifts of singular use to men of
their profession? are they not silly women, S. Brigit, S. Hildegardis, S. Catharin Sensis, S. Teresia, S. Matild, S. Elizabeth, which are of greatest name for Prophecy in the Roman Church? Who were the men in the late times that most affected the Opinion of Prophecy and inspiration, but they which (like the Lyon in sacred writ) would gladly tear God's learned Prophets in pieces, but had a kindness for the Ass? The Ebionites (a sort of ancient Enthusiasts) * Eusebius tells took their name originally from the Hebrew word יִבְיִשׁ signifyng poor, יִבְיִשָּׁה יִנְּפָה יִנְּפָא תִּנְּפָא, because of the poverty of their understanding; and Calvin speaking of the Enthusiasts of his time, faith of them, ignari sunt super quam dicit posita, and as vast as that number of pretenders to revelation was in Germany, (even 40000) the Historian relates, int. Sleid. Com- tanta hominum colluvie, ne unus quidem inventus traditur qui littera didicerit: in such a rout of people, the followers of their Prophet Muncer, not a man was found that could read; and of a David George (that famous new New-light of Germany in the last Age) tis recorded, that He was a man of little Learning, but of an extraordinary self-love. Tis only because the men are in the dark, that every rotten imagination shines to them and looks like Prophecy. p. 47.
They are easily imposed upon by a hasty fancy, because their undisciplin’d mind is unable to disabuse itself by an appeal to some sober and enduring principles.

And their Morals will appear as unworthy of the Prophetick dignity as their intellectual. Are they not persons generally discontented with the present state of things, and therefore clap the mantle of Samuel over the devil of Sedition, and disguise the wishes of or encouragements some sudden change, in the sacred livery of a Prophecy: are they not persons generally extremely indigent and therefore have their eyes much upon the rewards of Disimulation? are they not persons commonly of a very morose and sour humor, especially where they perceive themselves neglected? is there any shadow of that unforc’d gravity, real sanctity, contempt of the profits and applauses of this world which made the faces of God’s Prophets to shine before men? What indifferency to the Opinions of men discovers itself in them? How much the notices of men affect them, appears from the many Ecees’ and Selah’s they affix to their prophetick Speeches if ever they chance to hit. Whereas we may observe that howsoever there be a very critical notice taken in the Gospels how all the lines both of typical and verbal prophecy centred
Vulgar Prophecies.

red in the person of our Savior, and how all were exactly fulfilled which referred to him (the more to assure our faith in so concerning an article as his being the true Messiah) yet there is so little intimation given when and how those other prophecies (in Daniel especially and the Revelations) of a more common and worldly reference, had their accomplishments, that there is scarce any argument wherein Divines more labor then in determining the places and seasons of them: and this, that God's Prophets might appear satisfied from themselves, and nothing solicitous about the Opinion of a vain man. But especially notorious shall we find these pretending Prophets for Sensuality and Sedition? The Gnosticks which arrogated such an intimacy with God stand branded with Sensuality and opposition to Magistrates, in a Sacred writ. Mahomet was a most unclean and turbulent Prophet, the chief Doctrines taught and practiced by the Munsterians in Germany, were Multiplicity of Wives, and No necessity of Magistracy: and that false prophetess (whether person or Society) in the Revelation is called Zelzeel, who was a very turbulent and a very lascivious Woman. Whereas when the true Spirit of Prophecy was powred out upon men in the Primitive times, it made them famous especially for purity, and a perfect submissi...
on to the most inhuman Magistrates, **but**

To think now that the prophetick Spirit 
(if yet found in the world) builds all those more 
lively images of God therein, all those persons 
whose singular lives and learning were 
most likely to derive a reputation upon their 
message, and dwells with those which have 
scarce any thing of man, besides speech and 
figure, is to approach very near the judgment 
of the old Heathens subscribed by 
Celsus, that brut beasts were not only wiser 
than Man-kind, but more dear to God's 
conceit easily pardonable to their hypothesis, 
that God conveyed the knowledge of sub-

turities to man, through them. The Fathers 
thought it sufficiently to reproach the faith 
of all the Ethnick Prophecies and Oracles, 
that they were delivered by persons notori-

uous for nothing but the grossness of their 
minds or manners. It will here perhaps be 
opposed that very many modern Prophets 
have been persons of unstained lives, per-
sons whose piety and prophecy reflected 
a mutual grace upon each other. To which 
I answer, That we scarce ever met with a 
false prophet in Scripture but challenged 
for some enormity of life or doctrine, and 
therefore the Spirits which came out of the 
mouth of the False Prophet are well em-
blem'd by b frogs, which as they can only 
croke and make a noise, so they live in the
Vulgar Prophecies.

mud, and are impure creatures. And as it was thing so it is generally now; Paracelsus (several of whose Prophecies are extant) was a walking Dunghill (so offensive and corrupt his life): if a story do not misreport him.

Savonarola (the Italian Prophet) was condemned by the Senate of Florence, to the fire, for raising Seditious in the State. Dra-Bel. Neapol-

Bicanus (so much the discourse of late) was excommunicate for his scandalous manners not long before he fell a prophesying. As for the Piety of the rest, it usually keeps pace with their Prophecy, being as fantastical as that, consisting in some pathetical Prayers, vehement expressions, bodily severities, affected anomalies and aversions from the innocent usages of men, not in a profound Humility and universal Charity. But if any of these persons were so really religious as it is pretended, I cannot weaken their title to Prophecy by this first Consideration, but may possibly effect it by some that shall succeed.

Chap.
Vulgar Prophecies proved vain from the intrinsic circumstances of them.

Several circumstances in the matter and style of those Prophecies instance in, which make them unworthy of credit. Their being generally delivered in numbers, noted as a character of Vanity, and why. The Devil's Oracles are old, delivered usually in Perse. Why afterward in more natural and familiar forms. Tully's exception against the pretended Oracles of the Sibyls justified. What appearance of Poetry in the Prophecies Writings. These Prophecies not to be delivered without any or a very long time prefixed for their accomplishment: Useless up on that account to any good end. Why Scripture Prophecies may be allowed along time to be accomplished, but not Vulgar. The Devil concluded to influence these Vulgar Prophecies, and therefore not to be credited.

Our second Consideration, to evince the Vanity of these petty Oracles, is this: Their very shape and character speak them greatly unworthy of God, who alone is able to declare the things that are to come. For they seem not at all level'd (what was noted of old of all the Devil's Predictions) peri ἀνθρωπες ζήσεις ἄρετος ἐργασίᾳ τῆς ἰδικρατίας ἐν σέβαι, to the bettering and correction of men's lives and manners, but rather to Curiosity and Sedition in the State. * God is seldom owned in them as the Author of the Evils foretold, nor Repentance as the remedy. * They frequently betray men (by some ambiguous expression)
Vulgar Prophecies.

expression) to the Evils they seem to warn them of. * They commonly come forth, and are most attended to in times of action and expectation, and therefore most likely to be then invented. * They are generally found (as lines drawn by no rule) to cross and thwart one another. * The stile they are delivered in, commonly wears the Devil's livery, being so full of darkness and perplexity, that it may serve to any interpretation. * The knowledge they pretend to give, is profitable to no great end, whereas all the gifts of the Spirit are bestowed to some common benefit. * They are generally delivered in such affected barbarisms, halting meeters, fantastical pictures and emblems, which carry nothing of that grace and majesty which attends the breathings of the true Spirit of Prophecy in Scripture. * Events are oft foretold in them, without those circumstances of time, place, persons, and the like, which might assure the Events to be as well foreseen as foretold when they come to pass. * The matters foretold in them are cheap and trivial, and such as it were infinitely better for men not to know. * The pretended Visions, often monstrous beyond the fictions of Bætham, the stile fluttering and uneven, like the heated spirits which conduct it. In short, Let but any wise man read over the Prophecies of Scrip-
ture, and then those of Merlin or Nostredame, and I believe he will scarce need an Argument to perswade him that they were never both inspired by the same Spirit.

But there are two things of more especial note in these Vulgar Prophecies, which are the Characters of Vanity: (1.) Those Poetical numbers in which they are frequently delivered: For whereas all the great Prophets of God delivered themselves in a natural and unforc'd order of words, the far greater part of these pretended Oracles of elder and later times are delivered in Verse, the better to enchant the fancies of the people, and to become observable; for an Oracle in Verse at once commands and courts the Soul to a regard thereof. The Devil's Oracles of old were so generally clothed in numbers, and those enamelled with all the curiosities of art, that when they became about the times of Plutarch more familiar and simple, it was so much observed, that he wrote a Discourse upon the occasion, intitled Μεταξία γεγονός ἡ Πυθία, Why the Pythia doth not now as heretofore use Poetry in her Oracular Speeches. To satisfy which Question, among other things, he tells his Reader, That God had now removed from his Oracles, Poetry, and variety of dialect, and circumlocution, and obscurity, and ordered them to speak to those which consult them,
Vulgar Prophecies.

As kings to their People, and Masters to their Scholars, in language intelligible and persuasive. But this rather shews the knot then unties it. The true Reason of this change of language was (I conceive) either because men began to suspect that where there was so much of man appearing in the Oracle there could not be much of God, and that Inspiration is too hot and active a thing to move the sober and cool pace of a Poem: or else because the tempers of men were grown more sedate, their minds & discourses not so urgent and ecstatical as heretofore; or because he saw the clouds began to break, and God address him to men in more natural and familiar ways, and therefore the Devil (who would never be out of fashion) came nearer to the minds of men, and laid aside the state and solemnity he formerly spake to them with. Or perhaps because the true Oracles of God, delivered in more common and neglected language, began to lie more exposed to the common view, and he would not have his to differ from them, but to imitate them. There is that coolness and seriousness in a Verse, which speaks it greatly unsuitable to the vehemence and seriousness of the Prophetick Spirit. It useth to beget transports of mind, which cannot bear the flowness and nicety of a Poem: for, as common and quotidian thoughts are be-
neath the grace of a Verse; so great and vehement are above the strictures thereof, they are impatient of borrowing feet, that are fit to fly. And therefore Tully enters this judicious exception against the Sibylline Oracles of his time, that they were delivered in Verses, and many of those Acrosticks, and carried the evident tokens of art and contrivance: and therefore (saith he) magis oris & obligatrix cura, quam incursiorum & morae, they were rather the issue of Art and diligence, than Enthusiasm and divine motion. Nor is the Exception entered by a late learned Writer against this Exception of Tully. That the Book of Job is Poetical, and some of the Psalms Acrosticks, of any great moment; those writings being inspired by מֵרוֹמֵי הָאָדָם the Holy Ghost (as the Jews distinguish) a more gentle and calm afflatus, that was still and sedate, and approached very near to the more rational and divine actings of a well-disposed mind. Whereas the motions of the Prophetick Spirit (strictly so called) are quick and vehement, and such as the flow feet of a Verse cannot hold pace withal. And as for the Poetry in those Books; it is rather in the phrase and matter of them then in the measure. For if there be any set numbers observed in them, they are generally so mysteriously couch’d that none of the learned have
been able yet to make any certain report of them. And therefore, upon this score, I should make no great doubt to throw out the vast rabble of rhyming, clinching, verling Prophets, as persons that tell the word lies in the best manner.

Another thing which proclaims the Vanity of these Vulgar Prophecies, is, the circumstance of time with which they are generally delivered: For either they prefix no time at all, or a very long period thereof to be accomplish'd in, whereby they can minister neither to the honor of God nor the good of man. For they can give no testimony to his Providence or Prescience, because they will be thought to be fulfilled by chance, or the Prophecy (because long ago delivered) will be forgotten, and the Event, when it comes, be thought to have stood in no relation at all to the Prophecy; and therefore it may perhaps, by the singularity thereof, beget wonder in men, but not piety. Nor can any man be warned by them to avoid an Evil, which may come (for ought he knows) not till his head be laid, nor can they give check to the sins of the time, for men will be ready to say, like the scorners in the Prophet, The days are prolonged, and every Vision faileth. Nor (if the Prophecy fail) shall the Prophet be alive to bear the shame of his impostures. The condition of those Pro-

Ezek. 12, 22.
Prophecies in sacred Writ, which take Ages to be accomplished in, is quite different; for they stand perpetuated in Scripture, and therefore fall under the daily notices of men, so that when the Events foretold come to pass, they may readily be compared with the Prophecies, which, the more ancient date they bear, the more wonderful will they appear when accomplished, and the more full reports will they make of their divine Original, and of the Scripture wherein they are found. For there is nothing done to seal the Faith of the divine Inspiration of Scripture, as the various Predictions there-in, delivered at such distant times and places, exactly accomplish'd in their seasons. But these Vulgar Prophecies are either not delivered to writing at all, or the writings forgotten, or look'd into but by a few curious persons, and therefore easily altered and varied (as the Prophecies of Merlin have been) as might suit occasions, or mens humors. Besides, though even those Scripture-Prophecies, which are of a more catholic concern (as those relating to the Messiah and his Kingdom) received a slow accomplishment, yet the Prophecies of a more confined reference did not use to go long before they were delivered of the Evils they were pregnant with, especially after men grew so wicked as to deprive the patience
Vulgar Prophecies.

of God, and to think they lived the longer for being threatened by his Prophets.

From all this it appears, in a great degree of probability, that the Father of Lies gave being to very many of these spurious Prophecies, that by these false he might derive a suspicion upon the true ones, or abuse the minds of men with vain hopes, panic fears, or curious impertinences. And will any man, that owns his Savior for his Prophet, receive the Devil for his Oracle? or when he is sick of things present, go to the God of Ekron (by attending to any Prophecy of his incitation) for quiet and resolution? Shall we value our Faith at so cheap a rate as to trust it with the Oracles of the Father of Lies? Can the Devil be presumed able to give us true resolutions to any questions concerning the future? (Did God ever make him of his Counsel, or deliver Times and Seasons into his power?) or willing, if able, to do it with any fair and single intentions? Have the beams of the Sun of Righteousness put out all the fires on his Altars, the Glory and Power of the Divine Oracles and Miracles spoiled his great trade of lying Oracles and Wonders, and shall our easiness and vanity encourage him to drive this more secret and little trade of Prophecies and Prodigies? Certainly that man is strangely desirous of news that will go to the Devil for intelligence.
The vanity of these Prophecies evinced by their coming unattended with Signs.

The difference between a Sign and a wonder. Of what kind of Prophets no Sign was to be required. What method the Jews observed in the trial of Prophets. Miracles not a Sign required of all Prophets. Six Prophetical Signs taken notice of. Our Savior's Prophecy confirmed by them all. Signs of the Prophet and of the Prophecy. None of these Vulgar Prophets give a Sign. Their pretended Sanctity no sufficient Sign. Their admired gift of Prayer of as little credit as that. Natural ardor how effectual to enable the power of speaking freely on the sudden: that confirmed by the example of the ancient Roman Orators. Quintilian. 3. 14. How of old, what: Why some men fluently before company. The great efficacy of excited imagination to assist an extemporary Rhetorick. Why vehement Speeches so mightily move men. What kind of heats commendable in Religion. The powerful impression of these Prophecies no Sign of their Divinity. Divine impressions not distinguishable solely by their power and evidence, asserted against some Jewish Rabbins. Artemidorus. Some accomplished Prophecies, no safe Sign of the inspiration of our Modern Prophets.

The Vanity of receiving these Prophecies as the certain indications of any future Event further appears from hence. The Deliverers of them shew neither Sign nor Wonder to derive authority upon their persons and prophecies. Signs and Wonders so often coupled together, & sometimes used indifferently in the Writings of the Old and New Testament, are not alway the same thing; every Wonder
Now all persons that pretended of old to speak immediately from God, came attested with some Sign or Wonder; except they only called men to obedience to some acknowledged Precept in the Law of Moses: for then (as Grotius, I think, truly notes), no Sign or Wonder was required of them, because the condition of that Economy, in which God had promised and the people more wanted such extraordinary Teachers, was a competent security to their Faith, that they were not imposed upon by any such pretender, especially if the forementioned prophetick qualifications were found about him. But if the inspired man required them to a faith of some Prediction or Doctrine, really or in appearance, new, he came always authorized by some divine Sign or Wonder. It is therefore a Maxim with the Masters.
Masters, that whenever God sends a Prophet to a People, he gives him a Sign or a Wonder that the people may know God hath truly sent him. Accordingly we meet with the Jews often demanding a Sign of our Savior as the Seal of his divine Mission and Prophecy; and what a singular respect they had to some Sign in the trial of Prophets, may appear, as from the sacred, so also, from the Jewish monuments. In consideration whereof, all the Impostors anciently, which usurped the title of Prophets, pretended to Signs, without which counterfeit Seal they and their Doctrine could never have past unsuspected among the people: and the better to ape a Miracle, most of those pretenders to Enthusiasm among the Jews, Christians, and Heathens, were Magicians, as might be made appear were it here pertinent. He that was Truth it self was content to borrow credit and authority (before men) to his Prophecy, from Signs and Wonders, Act. 2.22.

Now Miracles were generally reserved to seal the person and message of such inspired persons as were to introduce a way of Worship, in truth or common Opinion, new: and therefore were never wrought (familiarly at least) but by Moses the Deliverer, Elijah, and Elisha the Restorers, and our Savior the Fulfiler and Finisher of the Law, and his Disciples,
Disciples, the Preachers of a Gospel which was a novel Doctrine in the opinion of men at that time. Scarce any Prophet was a worker of Paradoxes (as Josephus faith of our Savior) but he that was a Preacher of them. But however, all the Heralds of Heaven had the best some divine Signs, whereby unpossess might easily distinguish them from Impostors. Of these, it will suffice to my present purpose briefly to point to some few, which the Ages, to which Prophecy was promised, seem to have made the greatest reckoning of.

As (1.) The discovery of some present matter, evidently out of the compass of all humane knowledge: as the secrets of the heart, the counsels of the bed-chamber, matters done at distance and with all possible secrecy, and the like. Such wonderful discoveries were of great consideration with the people (in that time to which God had promised Prophecy) to assure the divine Mission of the Prophets; accordingly our Savior was frequent in the use of such divine Signs, and so were the other Prophets it is likely: and therefore the Jews, which looked upon our Savior but as a Mock-Prophet, required him to a discovery of a Mock-Secret, the person who smote him on the face while he was blindfolded; the
The Vanity of

revealing whereof they called Prophecy, the
discovery of such kind of Secrets being re-
ceived as the Seals of a Prophetick Spirit.

(2.) The constant coming to pass of Events
foretold in very critical and contingent cir-
cumstances. Many things the Prophets fore-
to fall but within the compass of a few
months or days, that so their Prophecies of
a longer time might have the greater credit,
and men might quickly understand that they
were established Prophets of the Lord. Thus
it is said, they knew Samuel to be, when
they saw none of his prophetick words to fall
to the ground: and Ezekiel having de-
ivered his Prediction, adds, And when this
cometh to pass, then shall they know that a
Prophet hath been among them. And God
himself, in the trial of Prophets, appointed
the Jews to look to the issues of their Pre-
dictions, Deut. 18, 21, 22. Upon which
Text, e Maimonides lets fall this gloss: Cum
quis, ipsum munus propheticum sibi vendi-
coverit, dicemus si, ede nobis promissa, & re-
fer nobis aliqua eorum qua nota facti tibi Do-
minus; quo referente, si verae evasenit pro-
missa ejus omnia, hinc prophetia ejus verita-
tem percipiemus. Quod si in aliquo ipsorum vel
minutissimo, inadvertex fuerit, hinc mendacem
cum esse cognoscamus. Atque hoc est expressa
legis de hujusmodi probatione sententia. So
that it seems probable that the Jews re-
Cap. 4. Vulgar Prophecies.

required but the Sign of some accomplish’d Prediction (not always a Miracle) from the more common sort of Prophets: and therefore some derive the Hebrew word מִן הָאָרֶץ a Sign, from מְנַחַת venit, because the most frequent Sign of Prophecy the Prophets gave, and the people required, was the coming to pass of some Prediction, delivered in such circumstances as no Eye of humane prudence could possibly foresee. (3.) Some gifts and abilities extraordinary gotten suddenly and without humane industry, and abiding with them, (for many possess persons have for some time) spoken languages, and made shew of singular abilities to discredit this prophetick Sign,) as to deliver himself ex tempore in very weighty sentences, to sing praises to God with singular art and dexterity upon the place, to interpret Scripture with great evidence of truth. All which were comprised by the Jewish Doctors, in that degree of Prophecy they held (for distinction’s sake) Spiritus Sanctus. This prophetick Sign our Savior and his followers did seal the truth of their Enthusiasm withal, as other Ancient Prophets had done before them. It is God only that can make his way to the Soul immediately and seal it with the abiding characters of Wisdom. (4.) The attestation of some Person, of whose Prophetick Spirit there is no question, according...
The Vanity of Matters.

According to that Maxim of the Prophet, who, among other undoubted Prophet witnesseth that he is a Prophet, is assured by a Prophet. Accordingly, they note, that the testimony of Moses to the divine Mission of Joshua procured him the Faith of the People before his conduct was credited from Heaven by any Miracle. Which rule I take to have a truth therein, though I demur upon that other they sometimes superadded to it,  

"Every Prophet which arase, speak in testimony of his companion in Prophecy. It is likely some did. And therefore perhaps would our Savior have his Prophecy attested by John the Baptist (generally reputed a Prophet by the people) that so this, as well as all other prophetick Signs, which ever singly and apart derived credit upon the person and message of any other insensible Prophet, might conspire in the Person and Prophecy of him the great Prophet of his Church. (5.) The immediate voice of God from Heaven to him, before witnesses, was another Sign of a Prophet in ancient times, especially before the building of the Tabernacle: but when Prophecy became more common, God chose to speak to holy men by Dreams and Visions: and perhaps the ceasing of that more usual way of divine Manifestation under the second Temple, might
might occasion some to think he might possibly return to the more ancient way of revealing himself, by a {Barb Kol}, a voice from heaven. However, with this also Sign God signified our Savior. (6.) The general prevalence of their prayers, especially in matters of a more publick reference, was a very probable sign of true Prophets anciently. God assigns this as the Characteristic note between false and true Prophets, that one had great interest and power in the Court of heaven, and the other none at all. But if they be Prophets, and if the word of the Lord be with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of Hosts, &c. This was a sign of a Prophet, because it was a sign he prayed by a special instinct from God; whereby he knew what blessings God was ready to bestow; and besides, it was a sign of that singular favor he had with God: and therefore we shall find an high value set upon the prayers of a Prophet both by God and men, in Scripture. And perhaps in confidence of the prevalence of his prayers; some people that held our Savior for a great Prophet though not the Messiah, brought their young children to him that he might lay his hands upon them and pray; and this prophetick sign also attested the Prophecy of our Bl. Savior, Joh. 11. 42.
These were some of those more general signs which gave testimony to the Divine Mission of a Prophet: but besides these, there were also frequently added some particular signs of the truth of this or that extraordinary prediction, especially if of some matter of greater import, of the truth whereof it was somewhat necessary the people should have a full assurance: the instances whereof are of familiar occurrence 2 in the Book of God, and therefore the Disciples, when our Savior had foretold an Event so great, as the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, demanded of him a sign both of the truth and time of the accomplishment of that Prophecy. a Master when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when all these things shall come to pass? These particular and almost present signs, gave assurance that the Prophet did not deliver conjectures but Prophecies, and the doubting thus of his Prophecy was a sign that the thing was certain with God, and not foretold conditionally only, (as judgments and blessings often were) and that the agreement between the Prediction and the Event when coming to pass, was not a chance but a Providence. So that these were more immediately the signs of the Prophecy, as the other six of the Prophet.

From all this, it seems more than prob-
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hable, that all true Prophets came distingui-
shed by some divine sign, although it ap-
pear not now from Scripture, what particu-
lar sign it was which gave credit to each Pro-
pher therein mentioned; and that anciently
Men were wiser then to let every prophecy
pass current, as soon as ever it had the image
of the King of heaven stamped upon it, car-
ried the face of an inspiration from God.
Men then understood Prophecy, upon
many accounts, too much exposed to suspi-
cion of imposture to be credited upon the
single testimony of every zealous pretender
thereunto; and therefore all Prophets
though they came not recommended by
equal testimony (the occasions they were
to serve not being of equal moment) yet
still with what might suffice to place their di-
vine Mission beyond a question. Some were
attested by Wonders, some by signs, some
by both. If then (to apply all this to the
occasion) Men would once be so advised
as to demand some such divine sign as used
heretofore to credit the Prophetick function
of these pretended Prophets, they would
certainly all sneak away like Jugglers when
called to shew a Miracle. What have they
generally beyond Ordinary besides ignorance
and confidence? What Miracle or Sign doth
God bear witness to their Mission by? What
have all the great Swelling words of
Enthusiasts been at last delivered of, beside the crude air of some flatulent imagination: have they, after all the noise they have made, blessed the world with the discovery of any useful secret in Philosophy or Divinity? are not Scripture prophecies as dark, diseases as desperate, nature vail'd as much now as in former Ages? do not all their books (like the barren fig-tree) bear leaves only, a few rampant Metaphors, and some higher straines of prophetick Scripture, jumbled together like the images of a dream? shall we then appear so unworthy of the title we carry: as to think a few exstatical looks and Scripture phrases sufficient to intitle a man to the Opinion of a Master of light? as the Jews use to stile a Prophet: It is not to be imagined that God would send Prophecy into the world, and not have it regarded, or that it can be regarded, if it come attended with nothing whereby it can be known. When the Apostles had such an extraordinary measure of the Spirit, there was a manifestation of the Spirit, as the extraordinary Measure of the Spirit then poured out gave testimony to the Gospel, so the mighty signs and wonders which attended it gave testimony to the Spirit.

To all this, I know, it will be opposed that many of these modern Prophets come
attended with signs sufficient to the man who is of an humble and teachable temper, whom alone God seeks to satisfy: viz. these four, Eminent Sanctity. A very liberal and powerful gift of Prayer. The mighty energy and impression of their Visions and Prophecies. The accomplishment of very many of their Predictions. To all which I shall return a few words.

First, We are told that they are persons of very eminent Sanctity, that are wholly abstract from the pleasures and honors of this world, and have no fleshly relishes appearing in them, and therefore 'tis most unlikely that they would deceive others or should be deceived themselves by a false Prophecy.

To which I answer, There is nothing more misjudged then Sanctity, 'tis too commonly thought to stand in some more solemn looks at a Sacrament, in visiting of an holy shrine, in some extatical devotions, in the use of some surpreting garbs, faces and Phrases, in caressing of Christ by some pretty attributes, in declaiming with much zeal against some odious names, heresie, Antichrist and Superstition, in carrying it very morosely towards men of a different form from ones self, in some severer disciplines and neglects of the body: and therefore 'tis unsafe trusting our faith with a prophecy upon a report of the sanctity of the Prophet. Besides, no men
The Vanity of

men more subject to such delusions, then men 
of devout affections, if of strong fancies, 
impressive tempers, and weak intellectual, 
for in such persons, an indifferent use of Re-
ligion by very pensive and solemn thoughts, 
affected retirements and Silences, too in-
tense Meditations, continual fervors, and 
endeavored heats, unreasonable fastings and 
watchings, the neglect of innocent diversi-
bons and relaxations, especially if joyn'd with 
the continual study of some dark prophecies 
and visions in Scripture (more proper enter-
tainments for Men of great learning,) can-
not easily fail of intoxicating the mind with 
wild and extravagant imaginations. The 
overstraining of them by such intense devo-
tions and perpetual fervors, hath produ-
ced so many crack'd brains, pretended Pro-
phets and visionists in the Religious hour-
ies of the Romish Church; who is yet so ill 
advised as to cite them as the proofs of that 
prophetick Spirit she laies claim unto. 
Moreover, It hath ever been the Policy of 
the Devil to do the Church the greatest 
Mischief by men of greatest name for Reli-
gion. He knows good men are soonest de-
cloyed by those which seem of a feather with 
themselves, and that error will sooner be 
entertained from a pious then truth from a 
profane person. And therefore the Jews 
among the four things which they say de-
stroy
Gay/32; Vulgar Prophecies.

A religious man that is a fool. God perhaps permits it thus to be, that men might learn to make him only Lord of their faith; and not to give an absolute trust (his due alone) to the wisest or best of men. Good men are no more exempt from mistakes and lunacies than they are from a fever or the infirmities of age.

But we are further told that many of these prophetick persons are sealed by the singular gift of praying in the Holy Ghost. Their lips seem touch'd by a coal from the altar, so fervent and so scripture-like are the expressions they bespeak. God withall upon the sudden. Nature useth to be eloquent, indeed in its own concerns, but lips and is a child in the things of heaven, useth to speak to God in language of ice, words that freeze and even by between the lips; and besides, where words come without forcing, and fit handsomely about the matter, dang a in illa hora, 'tis (surely) not they which speak but the Holy Ghost which speaketh in them. Nature seems not sufficient for such singular performances upon the place. Moreover, their words (like arrows pointed and fired) make a very deep and abiding impression upon the hearts of the hearers, the souls of men become half unbodyed, while they hang upon the lips of these extraordinary
troumary persons, and therefore surely non vox hominem sonat; there is more in these words than the voice of a Man, and the charms of a little fervent and Pathetical language.

I answer, This devout ardor with the effects consequent thereunto, doth extremely enchant the minds of men with great Opinions of the Men in whom it appears; and is readily received (like the divine fire that came down upon the Sacrifice) as the testimony of God to the person and to all he offers. David George obtained the repute of a Prophet chiefly c.assiduo ac ardent

iti in speciem preces ad Deum fundendi studio. Whereas all these strange phænomena may be salved by mere mechanical principles, all generally being but the issue of a natural pregnancy and fervor of temper, exerting it self in fluent words tinctured with religion and Scripture phrases. Where there is naturalis quadam animi mobilitas (which Quintilian requires in order to speaking well ex tempore) a natural moveable-ness of Soul, whereby it is enabled to turn it self nimbly and with ease to new thoughts and words, and this assisted (or rather created) by some more brisk and active spirits, it may equal, perhaps exceed the performances of more advised thoughts. A moderate heat, wherein all the Spirits flow
flow to their proper principles and fountains, the vital to the heart, and the animal to the brain, and are put into quick, but manageable motions, doth raise in a man a more fine and exquisite power of perception, and cause the images of things to appear more distinct, and to come faster upon his mind, then otherwise they would, and by consequence make the Understanding more pregnant, and the expressions more fluent and easy. And therefore when the Orators of old attributed their more fortunate performances and rhetorical enlargements in their extempore declamations before the people, (then much in use) to the special assistance and incitement of God; Quintilian judiciously gives them to the present heat and fermentation of spirits, the great instruments whereby the Soul performs all its works in this embodied state. His words are these, *Si quern calor ac Spiritus tuliit frequenter accidit, ut successam extempore lam consequi durum non pasit. Deum tunco ademis, Vateres Oratores aiebant, sed ratio manifesta est, nam bene concepti affectus et recentes rerum images continuo impetu feruntur, quot nonnullum mora styli resfrigescit, et dilata non reverteuntur.* Which words I shall dismiss untranslated, left (like liquors put into another vessel) they should contract a flatness and loose Spirits. 

Now
The Vanity of

Now these words of Quintilian give a good account of the extemporaneous felicities of the Orators of those times, which themselves had such great thoughts of, that they were ready to speak divinely or by inspiration. It was the usual phrase whereby they expressed speaking fluently, pathetically and with coherence, without more thoughts than just ushered the words they spake. And that Spirit which generally inspires our Divine Orators and makes them run-over with such winning rhetoric, is much of kind with that which incited those civil ones; viz. a natural fervor of temper, excited by some superficial affection, and assisted by a plenty of fit expressions made familiar to them by study and custom. For we find men of very evil lives Ignatius, Hacket, and others eminent for this religious Rhetoric and fervor; and many of these Orators have confessed themselves greatly strained and bound up (as the phrase is) when in their closets, who are carried with full sails when to act before a Company; because desire of Opinion makes them more concerned, excites affection, and consequently that ardor so essential to a smooth performance. They are (in the Phrase of Plato) gratia quae ful of the Theater.
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are touched with applause, and therefore act to the height of themselves in publick, but are cold and indifferent where the breath of man is wanting to excite and blow them up.

Now our admired Prophets having this natural terrors and pregnancy of Spirit to wing their Fancies, and this heat intended by the new forces of an (as Longinus stifles the Earthy vapor which inspired the Pythia) an enthusiastic vapor of heated Melancholy arising from the hypochondria, it cannot fail of displaying itself in such rapturous and lofty strains of divine rhetoric, as shall be verily thought to flow from the inspired Prophets, when the persons are but heightened by a fume somewhat more gross and unruly then that which inspires our common Poets, whose more happy heats and sprucer fancies have been thought the issue of borrowed Spirits, and therefore the blood of the grape been generally vouched by them the most natural exciter of the poetick vein. Besides, these Prophets are much advantaged for a more lively imitation of Enthusiasm above the more Vulgar pretenders to it, by an exalted Imagination. For the most vehement Objects of Religion, God, Heaven, Hell, the glories of the New Jerusalem, some
prophetick Scheams, being made familiar to their foster fancies, stand before their minds in very distinct and affecting ideas. Now where imagination is thus boiled up and often rub'd upon by the most moving objects, it fails not of raising affections and and consequently expressions great and vehement as the objects are from whence they do arise. And therefore in Quintilian, to affist the power of Speaking very movingly and fluently extempore (which the Orators of those times so much endeavoured) adviseth to imprint upon imagination, cantacius, the images of the things we are to speak about; as if we were to speak about the murder of any person, suddenly to make all the terrible images of the bleeding man to walk upon the Scene of Phancy, and to set (as it were) before our eyes all the black circumstances of the action, thereby to quicken affection, and by that Expression.

I intend not these words to stifte the devout ardors of holy men displayed in affectionate pantings after God and a divine Nature, in desires too big for words, divine relishes, and that unforced Rhetoric which the abundance of their hearts instructs them unto, when to bespeak God in private. For our Religion could no more please our selves then God, if it could not ravish the
heart as well as renew it, if it were a kind of caput mortuum, an heavy, stark, insipid thing, without heat and Spirit. Heat and zeal is the calidum innatum of the New Man, without which he neither lives nor moves. Only care must be had, that this heat and zeal (like the flame at Pentecost) aspire and mount upward, but without firing the Person's head, and making him of too hot and fiery a temper to bear any confinement of Opinion or practice, by Scripture, laws or the Reasons of wise men. I have in all this designed only the disparagement of the ignorant imaginations of those men, which (like the heathens of old) look upon heat and noise, words full of charms thrown out without method or measure upon the sudden, and very vehement affections, the symptoms of a person full of God, and managed by some power transcendent to natural. Whereas all these things, howsoever, like Meteors, they carry an heavenly appearance in the eie of ignorance, we have found of a more common and base Extraction. Nor is the mighty power they may have over the Spirits of others, any argument to the contrary; all fluent language, feathered with soft and delicate phrasés, and pointed with pathetical accents, being naturally fitted (as the stage will assure us) to make a deep impression upon the heart.
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Carth: speaking of that rare Art, those Masters of Language, the Gracian Sophists, discovered in composing and delivering of their Orations, tells us, that they raised up a kind of Bacchical Enthusiasm, and transported their hearers, with some honey words, soft and effeminate phrases and accents, and a kind of singing tones. And no doubt, those hearers, of whom he there speaks, which used to applaud their Orators at the end of their Declamations with a σέιως, ἀυθορπίως, δυσμυκίως, διαμεροιως, divinely, heavenly, intitimately spoken; found themselves as much stirred and moved as many a Man at a Sermon, who yet thinks 'tis not the Art of the Preacher but the Spirit of God that warms and excites him.

It is further alleged in vindication of these Prophecies, that they are no evanish and languishing imaginations, but come upon the minds of those that have them with a light and evidence which bears before it all scruple about their divine Original: Now the Devil or Melancholy cannot possibly seal the mind with Opinions which carry that energy with them as these do: so that the very great Strength of the Impressions (like that of Samson) speaks the mighty presence of God with them: For how did the Prophets of God of old know themselves divinely incited but by
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feeling the hand of God strong upon them, and his word in their heart as a burning fire shut up within their bones, whence they were weary of forbearing and could not stay?

I answer, whence these prophetick phantasies come to be thus vigorous and importunate shall be inquired in due place; for the present, I assert (yet not I but the Lord) that there may be an ἐνέργεια πλάνης, energy of Error as well as Truth, which may strongly carry a man quite out of the hearing of what ever reason may be tendered to disabuse him. Theodoret tells us of some Enthusiasts of his time, which receiving the vigorous working of some, Dæmon in them, took it to be the presence of the Holy Ghost. And Gerson of many others, of which every one had it (he said) certainly revealed to him that he should be Pope. Amongst which there was one of great name and learning which left this revelation in writing with his own hand, and endeavoured to make it good by many arguments and conjectures: and we find in Scripture, false Prophets as much pretending prerophories and strength of persuasion as the true. As for those Characters whereby Gods Prophets were enabled to distinguish infallibly a divine fec, J. Gerl. De distinct. yea, vis, à falsis, dream
dream and prophetick impression, in their own minds, from the delusions of the Devil or Phancy, it is extremely difficult at this distance from that Age of Prophecy, clearly to assign them. A late learned writer, from Aberbanel and Maimonides, in this matter thus ventures to resolve his Reader: A Prophet when he is asleep may distinguish a Prophetical dream and that which is not such, by the vigor and liveliness of the perception, whereby he apprehends the thing propounded, or else by the imbecility and weakness thereof. And therefore Maimon hath said well. All Prophecy makes it self known to the Prophet that it is Prophecy indeed, that is, makes it self known to the Prophet, by the strength and vigor of the perception, so that his mind is freed from all scruple whatsoever about it. (A notion which he there endeavours to build up by Scriptures, but how short they fall of reaching the proof thereof, the indifferent Reader may easily perceive.) But though I doubt not but the divine illapses made a very deep impression upon the minds of holy men, and came attended with such light and evidence as chased away all shadow of scruple about their divine Original, yet I think to assert this vivacity of impression, the distinctive character of divine from pretending Enthusiasms and dreams, is neither true nor safe.
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Which will perhaps appear by what time I have shewn the Reader, that the Ancient Interpreters of Dreams proceeded by some such rule as this, Artemidorus gives this difference between Ἐνυπνίαν, a natural and divine Dream; Ἐνυπνίον ἐργαζόμενον, a common Dream is the meer fragment of men asleep, of which he faith, "So far as it appears in sleep it is vigorous, and active upon the Scene of Fancy, but as the sleep determines, that vanisheth from the thoughts. But then Ὅλοι, a divinatory Dream, ἐρρηθέν ἔτει, hath a more lasting energy upon the mind, creates a regard of the futurities declared in it, ingageth endeavor, and is made apt extremity to stir up and excite the Soul that hath it. Besides, if that power and evidence, with which a conceit may bear down the mind to a persuasion thereof, may be preferred the Sign of its divine Original, how many men shall we soon have that will look demurely, and tell the World (as the Sons of Fancy among us used to do) that God hath made out this or that to them, and that this is much upon their spirits, and therefore past question an intimation from God?

As for those accomplish'd Predictions brought to support the falling credit of these Modern Prophets, they will prove but as Prov. 25.19. a foot out of joint. For there was no prophes-
tick Sign foregoing to assure the accomplishment to be any other then a lucky hit. And besides, the a Papists, nay the b Heathens, tell us (and men must be willing to give that Faith they expect from others) of many instances of such Predictions delivered by their Popes, Religiofo's, Diviners, Oracles, very particularly accomplish'd. Now then I demand, were these Prophecies from Heaven, or from Men? If from Heaven, why then do many men think with no more favor of the Heathens and Papists, to whom God seems to give the testimony of Jesus, the Spirit of Prophecy? If from men (assisted by civil Prudence or evil Spirits) then all accomplish'd Predictions are not concluding Arguments of the divine Inspiration of the Authors. But because God in the trial of Prophets hath directed us to a regard of the issues of their Prophecies, this matter may seem to merit a more close and particular Consideration, to which therefore I shall next apply myself.
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CHAP. V.

The faling of Vulgar Prophecies an assurance of their Vanity.

Vulgar Prophecies referring to the Publick, generally false: that proved from Judits Martyrs, and the fallhood of some Modern Prophecies particularly instanced in. A farce but in a circumstance a sign of the forgery of the whole Prophecy, and why. A fivefold account given of the pretended accomplishments of some Modern Prophecies. How far it seems fitting that Prophecies should descend to the circumstancies of Events. An account why some of these Prophecies hit and others miss. All Divine Prophecies fulfilled which were absolutely delivered. Some Characters to distinguish such Prophecies by.

That which may yet more fully secure us in a perswasion of the Vanity of all these Modern Prophecies, is this: All these unattested Prophets generally fail in all their Prophecies; but always in some. Generally in all; viz. Such are most fit to assure men of their divine Inspiration, as those only are which are of a publick reference. d Je-d Jer.28.8. Remiah tells us, that the Prophets which had been before him of old, prophesied both against many Countries, and against great Kingdoms, of War and of Evil and of Pestilence; as they also did sometimes of great National Blessings. Now the coming to pass of such Prophecies was the most undoubted evidence of their Divinity: for though the Devil may be presumed able to bring about
some little turns in the lives of private men, yet the spirit of the living creature only moves in those great Wheels; the turns in States are solely under the particular conduct of God; those Wheels are too great for him to move one way or other. And therefore Justin Martyr, when the accomplished Predictions of the Ethnick Prophets were opposed to him, returns this judicious Answer: No Event which the Ethnick Prophets foretold, either against the Truth of God, or his Worshippers, or referring to the public Affair of the Grecian States, ever came to pass; though perhaps some matters of a more narrow concern might, which fell more within the Devil's compass. An Observation more fully justified in the pretending Prophets of later times: what is become of all the Oracular leaves of Grebner's hath not the wind taken them away, and the whirlwind scattered them? (as it did those of the Sibyl,) He prophesied (faith Mr. Mede) great matters of Henry the fourth of France, which proved clean contrary, of Queen Elizabeth, and other Princes, which never came to pass: I have, I know not how often to satisfy one or other, told them as I now tell you, and yet every five or six years it comes up again as if it had never been discovered. Men are prone to believe anything they would have; &c. And how have all the swelling Prophecies
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Prophecies of Cotterus, Christina Poniatavia, and Drabicus, concerning the sudden Conversion of the Turks, the Establishment of the German Churches by Frederick King of Bohemia and Gustavus of Sweden, the sudden Propagation of the Gospel throughout the World, the advancement first of Ragotzi the Father, and then the Son and then the Brother, to the Crown of Hungary, of the dreadful overthrow of the Papacy (many of them delivered about fifty years ago) been delivered of nothing but the wind: even their great Patrons themselves being witnesses, while yet so incantated with the Opinion of them as to publish them now as the Oracles of God, when Divine Providence hath encouraged sober Christians to hiss them out of the World. And indeed it is so the usage of Divine Providence to shame the impatience and curiosity of men discovered in attending to such Prophecies, that I persuade myself it is next to impossible to instance a Modern Prophecy referring to the Publick, that speaks distinctly as to words and time of accomplishment, that failed not in the substance or some eminent circumstance thereof. Now a fayleur but in a tittle, is a dead flie sufficient to make the whole Prophecy smell strongly of an imposture. Of Divine Prophecies (as the
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Matter to whom we have had such frequent recourse, well notes, not the greater nor lesser part, substance or circumstance, ever fell to the ground. And He tells us, those words of Jeremias, 'The Prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully; what is the chaff to the wheat? their Doctors used to glos thus; Prophecy is a thing pure without the alloy of any falsehood mixed with it, like wheat cleansed from the chaff; but Dreams and other vulgar Indications have a lie always intermixed, and are like chaff, in which there are but some few grains of wheat. God is careful to accomplish the very criticisms and circumstances of his Predictions, because this gives the greatest assurance of their Divine Author.

For the substance of Events, may possibly be thought Object great enough for the Eye of Humane Prudence to see afar off, but circumstances are easily presumed too little for our heavy Eyes, to discern at any great removes.

If any Person better seen in the Writings of Modern Prophets, then I have any ambition to be thought to be, is able to instance a Prophecy of any longer date, whose words did exactly touch the Event foretold both in the substance and circumstance thereof; yet he shall alway observe his Prophet to have
have failed in some one, nay in very many other instances, if any thing talkative (as it is well the prophetick humor in such persons disposeth them to be) which is a sufficient assurance that he foretold nothing by a divine suggestion. Thus Savanarola (a Dominican) foretold long before, that Charles the eighth of France should come into Italy with a great Army, which came to pass: But 1 withal, that God had revealed to him that the State Ecclesiastick should be reformed by force of Arms: which (faith the Historian) hath not yet (nor yet) hapned, but at that time was very likely to have been effect ed. The Examples of this kind are too great for Arithmetick.

The two branches of this Consideration I find struck at by a double Objection, which I shall endeavor to secure them from. It is opposed to the first, That very many of these Modern Prophecies have been very punctually accomplishd, though unseal'd by any divine Sign attending the delivery of them. In Answer hereunto, I return, (1.) More prudential Conjectures after the Event often commence, accomplish'd Prophecies in vulgar Opinion: the common sort of people being apt to invest every thing that lies out of the road of their thoughts and observations with the Opinion of some Divinity lodged in it. Thus that famous Speech
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Speech of Seneca the Tragædian,

— Venient annis

Secula seris, quibus Oceanus
Vincula rerum laxet, ingens
Pateat Tellus, Typhisque novos
Deterat orbes, nec sit terris
Ultima Thule,—

hath been concluded the voice of God, a prophetick instinct, referring to the discovery of America in these latter Ages, which was indeed but the voice of a Man, a rational conjecture proceeding upon a probable persuasion, that so great a part of the Globe of the Earth was not all Sea, and so would in time be found. Cardan having related several very strange Predictions of his, exactly fulfilled, adds, Neither would I have any one think these to have been far fetch'd, either from the Devil or the Stars, but only from the Oracle of Aristotle, who gives true Divination onely to prudent Persons. This prudential Divination, which is but the foresight of the effect in the promises of some parturient Causes, is familiar with wise and observant men. For a wise-mans heart will tell him more then seven watchmen that are upon a tower, whole office it is to see men and things at distance. Prudence is but the contraction of Providence in the name, and the commendable image of it in the nature thereof. (2.) Many of these accomplishments were

m Nesc velim quenquam opinari quod bec longius petita sint, aut ex Damone, aut ex astris, sed ex Aristotelis Oraculo, solum enim inquit ille, prudencium ac sapientiam vadam esse Divinationem. Card. de vit. propr. c, 42.
were rather lucky hits than divine foresights. These Prophets are many, and perpetually shooting of their bolts, and it were hard if they did not sometimes hit the mark, especially when standing so near as sometimes they do before they let fly (foretelling things, removed by no great distance of time.) Such a lucky cast was that singular foresight of Tully, reflected upon by himself as a kind of divine Testimony to the sincerity of his intentions in reference to the Commonwealth. And the fortunate Speech of that Ancient Grecian Philosopher Lucanus Ocellus, ? Greece hath been often barbarous heretofore, and so shall be again in after Ages, some would be ready now to prefer to the repute of a Prophecy, which was but a loose & conjectural Conclusion built upon an observation that Bodies Politick, as well as Natural, have their decays and years of dotage, and that the deepest dye of any worldly felicity would in time languish and change color. (3.) A great part of these Prophecies are meer impostures, and contrived after the Event, by some idle heads. For it is seldom that we hear of them, till the matters related in them are past; and then these Prophets, having the Event before them to take measure of, make their Prophecy to fit it exactly, both in substance and circumstance, that so there might be the less suspicion.

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ration that they saw things to come (like the man but half cured of his blindness) only in rude generals, and by the heavy Eye of humane prudence. Whereas there cannot be a greater assurance of sophistry in a Prediction, then an over-busie and critical enumeration of Events therein. For Prophecies should deliver the general substance or some one great circumstance of an Event so distinctly that they be not thought loose conjectures, but as to the circumstances of less remark, they should be wholly silent, that they be not suspected only disguised Histories when once they are fulfilled. For this Reason perhaps the Divine Prophecies come forth (like the pillar in the Wilderness) partly cloud and partly fire, cloudy and obscure as to the lesser circumstances, but bright and clear enough as to the substance of Events foretold. Whereas these Vulgar Prophecies either stay in loose Generals, and like a sack are so contrived that they may be clapt upon any person, but perfectly fit none; or else are most industriously particular and scarce omit a circumstance. Thus the pretended Sibyl Oracles tell our Saviors very name Jesus; and whereas the Prophet only foretels, A Virgin shall conceive, they add, The Virgin Mary shall conceive, and the like. For so it is usual for such Apes of Prophecy to become ridiculous by an over-acted imitation.
Many of these Vulgar Prophecies owe their successes, in all probability, to diabolical efficiency. The Devil first excites such Images in the Fancies of these Prophets, as may probably determine them to foretel many things, which he conceives most likely to fall within his sphere of activity, and then he accomplishteth as many as he can, though with no more of true foresight than that man hath that should think fit, when he knows them, to fulfil many of his Neighbors Dreams. And he is the more ready to interpose his power in this business, because when men shall see their Prophecies or Dreams, of future contingencies especially, thus strangely issued, they will stroke their heads presently, and make no doubt of their near approaches to the prophetick grace; and whilst other men are detained in an idle attendance to such shining vanities, they are ξειρογινθοι, taken alive by this Fowler in his net. And this Consideration may probably resolve us why some of these Prophecies so strangely hit, and others miss; viz. because the Devil fulfils as many of them as fall within his compass, and those which his confined power extends not to accomplish necessarily fall to the ground.

Several of these Prophecies are delivered in words so loose and unconfined both as to sense and time, that it were a great wonder.
if amidst the vast varieties of Providence they appeared not fulfilled in some Event and Time or other. Thus it was noted of old of the true Sibylline Oracles, that they were composed in such dark and undetermined expressions, that Fancy might make them, like a Picture, look to any Person, any Event whatsoever. All this offers us some account of those successes which these Propheticall Essays have sometimes been followed with; and withal conclude the great necessity of some divine Sign to attest the Prophet or Prophecy, that so it may be known that the Event was not a chance, a prudential foresight, or diabolical delusion, but a true prophetical accomplishment.

To the second branch of the present Argument it is opposed, that many of God's Prophecies were never fulfilled. If all were (faith Comenius) whence was it that the Pro phets became the publick scorn, the People farcastically demanding, Where is the Word of the Lord? Let it come now, Jerem. 17. 15. To this Objection (though indeed it merit rather a Censure then an Answer) I return, That Scripture abundantly assures us, that never one word which God spake fell to the ground: and therefore perhaps the LXX chose to render Urim and Thummim by φηλωσις and ἀλήθεια, Manifestation and Truth, because by these two especially were God's
Oracles distinguished from the Devil's: God's being eminent for perspicuity and Truth, and the Devil's for obscurity and falsehood. God hath given us this character to know a false Prophet by, When a Prophet speaketh in the Name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, this is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; and therefore we may rest assured, that God, if he speak with his mouth, will fulfill with his hand. True indeed, we read of some divine Prophecies of great Blessings and Judgments not literally fulfilled: But these (as God himself tells us) though absolute in their terms, yet were always conditional in their interpretation; and therefore when ever they were not fulfilled in terms, there was some great sin or repentance interposing which gave a very rational account thereof to the minds of men. But all divine Prophecy, absolute both in its terms and intent, constantly was fulfilled. Now when the Prophecy was such, the People might understand by such Signs as these, If the Prophecy were sealed with the Oath of God, or some equivalent asseveration: If it were delivered as a Sign of the truth of the Prophet's Mission, or of some other more considerable Prediction: If the Prediction were delivered in terms of the Preter-tense.
If it were often repeated by the name of more Prophets: If it were a Prediction of some Evil against things or persons evident, great good or evil, and many such like. Then I lay constantly came to pass: and therefore to those words of the People which I thought a Prophecy delayed, forgotten. I spoke the words of God appealing to the Experience of the very People. My words and my Statutes which I commanded my servants the Prophets did they not take hold of your Fathers? to which the People, in a more serious manner, return. Like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us, according to our doings, so hath he done unto us.
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CHAP. VI.

Many Modern Prophecies proved to arise from Melancholy.

The strong Opinion of Inspiration in Modern Prophets, proved an effect of the power of Melancholy. Their pretended Visions attributed to the same cause. The Visions of melancholy men, why many, and to them very evident. Their vehement incitations to Prophecy proved also a Symptom of Melancholy. How this humor becomes effectual thus to excite to Prophecy. Dying men, why often, in appearance, Prophetical. A natural account of the Prophetical Essays of the Pythia. Plutarch’s Philosophical account of some ceasing Oracles justified. The ardors in these Prophets and the Sibyls, natural. The delusions of Melancholy assisted usually by the cooperation of the Devil.

A Fifth Consideration to reprehend the Faith of these Prophecies, is this: Those popular Wonders which shew forth themselves in the Authors of them, plainly appear but the natural Effects of Melancholy tinctured with Religion. This will appear more clearly if we be a little particular: (1.) That invincible confidence (which enchants the vulgar) of their being divinely inspired. It is ordinary with such men to take to themselves the titles of the Trump of God, the last Prophet, the Word and Power of God, and the like, and that with a plerophory that shall bear it self a-gainst the strongest Reasons, contrary Events.
of things, yea sometimes the greatest bodily severities that can be used to discompose their Dreams. Now as the Heathens holding ἰχθυς, that the brain was sacred, and the seat of some Deity, when any one sneezed they would venerate the noise as a kind of expression of the Deity enshrined in the head; thus these men being strongly possesed by this conceit, that they are God-ed with God, and that the Holy Ghost is lodged in their heads, not a fancy can rise up therein but it is received with as sacred Opinions as a Papist doth the relics and reliques of his Saint; not a cloudy expression drops from them but it ischristned a depth and a great mystery, their ear cannot tingle but God is thought to whisper into it; and the men cannot dream at the common rate of other mortals.

Whereas all these imaginations are but the issues of that impostrous humor when it passeth into a disease. A Melancholy Fancy is a kind of Incubus and Succubus to itself, serving to beget and to conceive any odd crotchets, and that with so much strength, that it appears before the mind in the certainty of sight or taut. And it is so usual for this black humor to bewitch the mind into some one wild and extravagant conceit, while it appears sound and untouch'd in all its other judgments, that the Greek Physician
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Physician hath defin'd it, that 

A solemn sadness and seriousness about some one odd Fancy, without a fever. Now look as the images which appear before our Minds in a dream, owe their general odness of composition to the power of Fancy over reason in our sleep, but their more particular figures usually to the occasions of the day before: thus the conceits of Melancholy (the dreams of waking men) owe their general wildness and fondness, to the undue figuration of the brain or Spirits by this anomalous humor, but their particular kinds to those mutable occasions of common life, the head is most accustomed to receive impressions from. Men of a more contemplative Genius, conceive themselves inspired with some rare mysteries in Nature, with the Cabbalistic sense of Scripture, with the understanding of the hidden analogies between the sensible and intelligible, and the greater and lesser world, with the Art to cure all the natural leprosies of metals, and the like: Men whose course of life determines their thoughts more upon civil affairs, this humor possesseth with the opinion of their being designed Popes or Princes, or some Restorers of the publick liberty. And persons of a more devotional complexion talk much of Visions, raptures, converse with Angels and prophesie, and are apt to fall down before
fore every idol of their busy fancy, as if some Deity were lodged in it. Thus this giddy humor moves every man (as Plutarch faith: the Divinatory Enthusiasm doth) ἀ πέρπνευ, according as he is naturally disposed and inclined.

How the humors of the body arise at an ability thus to impregnate the mind with conceits wild and monstrous beyond the Varieties of Africa, is an enquiry not pertinent here; but to question that so they can, is to speak our selves strangers to all the stories of Hypochondriacks, books and discourses abound withall, and that tis nothing but the enormous power of a disturbed imagination that bears down these persons into a belief of divine visions, voices and apparitions sufficiently in, that they usually commence Prophets per saltum, and before they are tolerably qualified with knowledge or piety, they become inspired; and that though heaven and earth refute their predictions once and again, an heart deceived by the fulness and importunity of the impression, hath so turned them aside, that they cannot attend; and therefore are no more awakened out of their prophetic dreams by any contrary events, than the beggar out of his dreams of greatness and honor by the rags he wears and the dung-hill he sleeps on. An example of which grossness
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grossness and non-attendance we have in Drabicius, (a German Prophet, of whom so much written and discourse of late) who though he saw his predictions clearly refuted by events, and told thereof at one ear by his Friends and at both ears by his enemies, yet was so carried away by the power of his prophetick dreams as to secure himself in his fond opinion of Inspiration by returning, 2 Annon. 2.Am. 3.7. 


Is it not the voice of God which faith, God doth nothing but he reveals his secrets to his servants, and that in the latter days he will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh; and young men shall see visions and old men dream dreams. Scriptures which any pretender to prophecy might have cited in his vindication, as well as he.

2. Those wonderful visions represented to their minds in some Ecstasy or profound sleep. At such a time some very frightful or lovely images shew themselves upon the Scene of Fancy, and those (as dreams take figure from the occasions of the day) generally made after the likeness of those Apocalyptical or other Prophetick Visions, with which the minds of such persons when awake are commonly entertained and deeply sealed. Now these Visions, by the great singularity of their form, vivacity of representation
sentation, and prophetical analogy, do so wonderfully affect and possesse the Mind, and enchant it with such huge fears or joys, that the Melancholy person doubts not to receive them with the faith and affection of Divine discoveries. And therefore if the more terrible aspect of the images represented to his mind, proclaim them the proper emblems of some great evils, he presently concludes that God, who tenders his servants with the care and affection a Mother doth her suckling child, would willingly have them forewarned, that so they might by repentance, prayers or prudence avert the impendent evil from themselves, or fortifie their minds with Christian patience to receive its coming. But if their more delightful form prefer them the types of some joyful Event, as is the freedom of the Church laboring under some heavy oppression, the propagation of the Gospel, and the enlargement of Christ's Kingdom; they hastily catch at the welcome token, and that is thought foretold therein which themselves have the greatest passion for. And they are the more soft and easy to such prophetical conceits, because those passions of Fear and Hope, so intimate to our Natures, and which generally govern the Perswasions even of wiser men, are so regnant in their Souls made so impressive by Melangolv
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Lanctholy and some tinctures of Religion.

Now these pretended Visions, which conciliate Veneration to these Prophets with rude persons, will appear much beneath our wonder, if it be considered that Melancholy when it exceeds its just proportions, is very productive of them. This the Philosopher hath noted, *Men that are of a talkative and melancholy temper see any kind of Visions.* And this, especially because they have so deep a resentment of the most affecting objects, whose images therefore recur to the fancy when they are asleep, in most distinct and lively figures. Now the Visions of such men are the more evident and lively, because of the dryness of their temper (as Galen gives the reason) whereby there are no such mysts and vapors rising up to confound and obscure them, which are the cause why the night-Visions of persons full-fed, or overcome with wine, are so confused and leave such languishing impressions upon their waking Fancies. These images being so clear and active, the mind takes them (as the birds did those on the tables of Apelles) for true and real things; and as when we suddenly awake out of some very affecting dream, the figures which its clearness and strength of impression made upon the Fancy, can...
not presently be blotted out, but we continue for a time to entertain it with the affections of a great reality; thus (but by a more obstinate delusion) are the persons we now speak of imposed upon by an unruly Fancy. For when deep sleep hath fallen upon them, and cut the Soul off from all converse with things sensible, it is wholly immersed in the view of those images which walk upon the stage of Imagination, with which the common sense is as inwardly moved, as if excited by some object from abroad; and therefore it receives them with the Opinion of their being not phantastical but real and divine appearances. As for those Visions these Prophets speak of when they are awake, they may arise from those vehement and intense thoughts, which represent some great Objects to them in very distinct and affecting Ideas; with which the mind is so fully possessed and sealed, as not much to attend to the circumstance of the real presence thereof; and therefore easily perswades itself, that object stood before it of which it had so lively a perception, and with which it was so inwardly touched and affected. Besides, nothing so familiar as for men of very impasive phancies and timorous dispositions to have a continual scene of strange sights presented before them. The Philosopher no-
ted long ago, that to persons young and that look intensely, if it be dark, there appear many strange images moving to and fro, so that in a great fear they hide themselves in the bed-clothes. Whereas in such lights the Fancy is both Scene and Spectator to it self. This shews that 'tis possible that these pretended Visions may be but the incantations of Melancholy. But he that considers that Divine Visions were vouchsafed as rarely and upon as concerning occasions as Miracles, will believe it probable that they are no other. Did God dispense the favors of these divine visits to the Patriarchs and Prophets so sparingly of old, and are they become now as familiar to some men as dreams to others? Familiars, hath been the title of bad spirits but never of good.

3. Their vehement incitations to prophecy. They feel the new images of things or persons striking with great strength and evidence upon their Fancies, and themselves quickened by a very hot and active principle, whose powers they cannot easily stand against, to make the Vision plain, and to declare to others what conceits and passions it comes attended with; and therefore they conceive that the word of the Lord is as a fire shut up in their bones, and that they are commanded, wholly possessed by some divine power which they cannot bear themselves against.
against, nay indeed should not, for who are they that should withstand God? Whereas all these things are but the subtil fallacies which the fumes of hypochondriacal Melancholy, when grown hot and fiery, put upon the Fancy, being as apt to intoxicate the brain, and make it impressive to as odd conceits, as the active vapors of lusty wine. These vapors being carried by the brain with a mighty force, confound the natural figurations thereof and excite some new Idols therein, which by the singularity of their appearance, and importunity of occurrence, cannot but create affections correspondent to them which together with those fiery Spirits, will put men upon great freedom of speech (that which a very affecting dream will sometimes do) to deliver themselves of those strange thoughts which upon such occasions will rise up within them. Now 'tis no wonder at all (as the philosopher faith) if such kind of men being thus incited to speak very much and of very various things (the Scenes of Fancy being so often shifted by these giddy vapors) that they have some fortunate hits, and true divinations.

That 'tis only the forrein heat of these Vapors which excites these predictions, appears probable in that every flatuous cal- enis, hominemq; supra se pene constitit. Christ. à castro. de Vaticin. l. c. 27. Inscription.
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I especially in the brain whencesoever it arise, is apt to make a man ecstasical, to express it self in wonderful speeches, and those often prophetical. The vapors of wine meeting with some constitutions, have strangely ap'd an Enthusiasm; as appears from those Verses of the Poet, upon occasion of the truly Ovidial doings upon some of their idolatrous Festivals.

Invenies illic qui Nestoris ebibat annos
Qua sit per calices facta Sibylla suos.

There shall you find old men turn'd boies by wine,
Young Maids old Sibyls, who by the cup divine.

Accordingly in some Oracular places, the Diviners used to excite the prophetick faculty (as they thought) by a liberal dose of wine or some water which had a kind of inebriating property: such hot and unwieldy vapors (though excited by a fever) have made dying men so famous, for their prophetical Essays, in all Ages and Nations: though they have been vainly thought (as all Extraordinaries, especially about the minds of men usually are) of a more divine extraction. And that prophetick fit which seiz'd the Pythia placed over some hollow cavern of the Earth, was owing to the sub-

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The Vanity of

Cap. 6.

til and fiery spirit (as Iamblicus calls it) thence ascending her tender body and intoxicating of her, though in somewhat a more violent manner then wine would have done (in so much as sometimes she dyed in the fit) and sealing her Fancy (already strongly possesft with the extraordinary Sacredness of her place and office) with wild conceits which she delivered in as wild a manner: and this account of the pretended inspiration of the Pythia is favored by Strabo, telling us that she expected the Oracular power being placed over the narrow mouth of the Sacred cavern, and that ἀναφέρεσθε ἐκ ἐκείνης τῆς θησαυροῦ, from thence was carried forth an Enthusiastic vapor or spirit, which excited the latent disposition to prophecy in her soul, as the wind doth the Musical power of some well-tuned Organ. And therefore I think Plutarch, not so much out, as commonly thought in his Treatise, ἐν τῇ ἐνθυσίασθε προφητείᾳ, concerning the ceasing Oracles, (for so it should be rendered, call not being silenced in his time, nor long after) when attributing their Silence in some formerly famous places, to the languishing of that Enthusiastic Vapor which inspired the Prophetess, the caverns (as he conceives) lying continually open being apt (like exposed liquors) to lose Spirits, and to decay in their an-
ancient virtues. This imposture the Devil abused the world withal, till the light of the Gospel and Philosophy made the fallacy notorious.

To return. As for that mighty ardor whereby they are carried forth to deliver themselves, it is perfectly a natural thing, being but the impatience of that hot and nimble vapor of fermented Melancholy. The Sibyls of old (which Aristotle rightly judged inspired only by this fiery Spirit) used so often to mention those divine fires they felt themselves (as they thought) quickened and excited by, which were only the Symptoms of this exalted humor of which the same Philosopher notes, so it becomes even like boiling water when once sufficiently heated. And that they are only these hot and restless Spirits arising out of the cavities of the body (much of temper with those in the Pythia) which inspire them, appears in that we generally find them among Preachers, of Montanus his doctrine. Prophets that talk without measure. Their books and discourses are so voluminous as if they feared nothing more then the poor title of Minor Prophets: witness the mighty bulk to which the Revelations of St. Brigid, Drabitus and others swell into. We may
ever have Prophecies from these persons very good cheap. Whereas when the Spirit of wisdom incited the holy men of old, their words were weighed in a balance, their discourses consequent, their seasons of Prophecy few and chosen, and their Doctrine precious as the gold of Ophir.

While I thus salve the strange phenomena about these Vulgar Prophets by the powers of Melancholy; I intend not to deny but that the Devil (who works by darkness as God by light) may sometimes interpose, and where he finds the Mind fitted by this distemper for him to work upon, may (to make the imposture more fine and subtil) act it to some expressions beyond the bare capacities of this jugling humor, as to speak languages, to tell some things at distance, as the certain coming of such a friend or Epileptick fit, upon such a day or hour (which the German Prophets Christine often did.) It seems to have been the received opinion of the Ancient Jews that an high Melancholy or distraction was attended alway with an evil Spirit. whence that speech of theirs concerning our Savior. *He hath a Devil and is mad,* upon which Text Mr. Mead tells us that they used to stile their Melancholici and Maniaci שליש or דמיאנים. And according to the strain of
all the Jewish Scholiasts (as Master Smith informs us) by the Evil Spirit of Saul nothing else is meant but a Melancholy kind of Madness which made him Prophecy or speak distractedly and inconsistently; and when the gentle aires and motions of Musick had dissipated these Melancholy vapors the Evil Spirit departed with them.
CHAP. VII.

Probable Arguments to prove all divine Prophecy now ceas.

The cessation of Prophecy now, was obstinately affirmed, and why. Five reasons alleged to prove its cessation, probable. A promise of Prophecy to any Age, the greatest Security that it is not imposed upon by Pretenders to it. No Promise of Prophecy made to the ends of the World. The several ends Prophecy served to under the times of the Old and New Testament: proved unserviceable to any such ends now. Why Prophecy not given now to comfort good men in affliction. Why it expired in the Jewish Church so long before our Saviors coming. Several reasons alleged against the received Opinion of a Bath Kol succeeding to Prophecy under the second Temple. The Original of that speech of Strabo, that Moses advanced himself by the promise of a Religion without Sacrifice or Prophecy,guest at. Such a Religion proved the felicity of this New Dissemination.

Confid. 6.

The last Consideration which I shall add to dispassage the faith of these Vulgar Prophecies is this. It seems highly probable that the true Prophetick Spirit is now gone up, and that all divine Revelations, as well of future Events as new Doctrines, are wholly ceast in the Church of God. I shall not be positive in this Assertion, because I find a Synod convened in Germany, Anno 1633. where the Divines being moved by some zealous persons to declare themselves against all pretended Revelations and Prophecies, now that God had
so eminently refuted the famous Visions of
Covinæu, and Christinæ Pontianæ in the un-
expected deaths of Gustavus of Sweden and
Fredrick of Bohemia, prophecyed of by
them, as the Saviors and Restorers of the
German Protestants; They declined it, add-
ing, that yet no Church, or Consistory or
University had altogether rejected or conden-
mned, such kind of new Prophecies; and why
would we be the First? Certainly then 'twill
very ill become my privacy and obscurity to
take the Chair and pronounce confidently
that folly is with them all, and that there is
nothing of Divine Prophecy now in the
world besides the vain noise and affectation
thereof. I shall only crave the freedom to
tender those reasons which make it seem pro-
bable to my self that there are no such extra-
ordinary visits of the Divine Spirit now to
be found in the world. Whereof the first is
this:

1. God hath by no Promise encouraged our EXPECTATION of any such prophetic inspiration in these latter Ages of the World:
When ever God gave Prophecy to his Church, as it usually came attended with
some other eminent gifts, whereby men
might understand it was an Age of Extra-
ordinaries, so it was alway ushered by some
promise thereof. God gave Prophecy to
the Church of the Old Testament, and to
the
the Times wherein our Savior was first manifested and preached to the world (stiled the last days, being the expiring times of the Jewish Oeconomie) and there was notice given thereof by a fore-running Promise delivered by in Moses and Joel. God would not have so great a gift, that comes forth (as all extraordinary ones do) upon some errand of import, to steal into the world, and men be in danger of losing the benefit thereof, while destitute of any thing to resolve them whether there be any ̊Holy Ghost thus given yea or no. Besides, where we have no special promise, we have no ground at all of expectation or trust, and if we trust our Faith with any pretended Prophecy and Revelation though presented with all the probable appearances of truth, before we know whether God hath made promise of any such matter now, we do but tempt God, and expect he should charge himself with us while we walk in praecipitis, in waies wherein he never told us we should meet him. A Promise from God in this matter, is (I think) one of the most necessary securities to our faith. There were under the times of the Old Testament undoubtedly, as many persons inspired only by the Spirit of heated Melancholy, and more by a much worse, then now there are, but that which was the great security to the minds
minds of good men then, that they were not cheated by any of the gilded Prophecies then current among them, was, that God had made them a Promise to send them Prophets from time to time to resolve them in all matters relating to this life as well as the other: and therefore they might presume the Providence of God would be more especially watchful to preserve them (if not greatly wanting to themselves) from being fatally abused while expecting instruction by a Prophecy, a way of divine Sanction in those times. In confidence especially of this divine security, we find even n Princes proceeding without scruple to action, and in matters of very great moment, upon the bare word of a Person that pretended to speak from God, though without any Sign (that we read of) given to seal his Mission from God upon that occasion; whereas now a Prince would but fall the Martyr of his own credulity, if trusting his affairs with the most importunate voices of a pretending Prophet against sober Reasons of State, when there appears neither divine Sign, nor promise of Prophecy, to warrant his Faith.

It is readily acknowledged, that none of God's true Prophets but came attested at one time or other with some divine Signs; but yet he that shall consider that these
were not vouchsafed to bear testimony to each particular message which they delivered as from God, and that many signs were given by them (as the causing of iron to swim, disclosing the secrets of the bedchamber, foretelling the death of some person, and some seeming contingencies) which it is likely fall within the Devil's compass to shew; and that sometimes the Prophets countermanded their own counsels and advices, and that those holy men were no more exempt from the delusions of Melancholy then good men are now; and that Miracles have been so counterfeited by the Arts of Magick, that even wise men have not been able to detect the imposture, must needs grant; that the promise of God to teach men by Prophecy, together with the Prophet his appearing (as the Jews speak) a Man fit for Prophecy, was generally the firmest ground of trust they had to build the faith of the Divinity of his Signs and Prophecy upon. And therefore I think many Signs might more firmly conclude the divine inspiration of men in those Ages to which Prophecy was promised, then the like can do if tendred by any Pretender to inspiration in our own.

Now then, there being not the least air of any promise of Prophecy made to the last Times of the World, we have reason to think
think that the Prophetick Spirit is flown back to Heaven (like Elijah) and hath left nothing behind it, but its mantle, its garb and dress, which Imposture sometimes walks up and down the World withal. As for that place of Scripture so often allledged by the Modern Enthusiasts, to justify the Expectation of Prophecy now, it shall come to pass in the Joel 2.28. last days that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesie; or, it is wholly impertinent, because, as Theodoret notes, it received its evident and literal accomplishment at the day of Pentecost. But a greater then Theodoret is here, S. Peter, who expressly sheweth the accomplishment of that Prophecy in the liberal effusions of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit upon that great Day, where we may note by the way, that he seems not to understand the place of Prophecy strictly taken (for Prediction) in favor of which alone it is allledged by our Adversaries, but for those other extraordinary gifts of the Spirit there mentioned, and for which Prophecy doth often suppose elsewhere in Scripture.

2. All other extraordinary gifts which antiently attended the Prophetick Spirit, are now ceased. The gifts of healing, of working Miracles, of discerning of Spirits, of divers Tongues, of interpretation of Scripture,
have all expired with their occasion; and why should we imagine that Prophecy (numbered with them) survives them all? a gift of which I am sure the World hath incomparably less need than of any of the rest! Those other gifts of the Spirit could ease the pains, enlighten the Eyes, resolve the Conscience, presentely confirm the Faith of men, which a Prophecy could not do: and therefore whereas we find those gifts very familiarly used, and liberally conferred in the first times of the Gospel, yet we meet with this prophetick gift very rarely exerted by our Savior or his Apostles; and some of the Persons who had it (as if they were rarely to be found) are particularly mentioned in the New Testament; viz. Agabus, Barnabas, Simon Niger, Lucius, Manahen, Silas, the four Daughters of Philip, and some few others. Why then should a Gift, which was of so little name and consideration in compare with the rest, continue in the Church, when all the other (like Scaffolds when the House is built) are taken away, now that the House of God is built up, and the Faith confirmed? Certainly the fond affection which some men have for Prophecy, and that strength of face with which others pretend to it, are the things which suborn their Understandings to believe that so acceptable a gift is honored with a longer continuance
in the World then the rest of its Brethren. If we consult Antiquity, it will appear more likely that this gift alone is fallen, there being more frequent mention therein of some Miracles wrought in the Name of Christ; but less is said concerning the Prophetical Spirit, especially after the second Century.

3. Prophecy cannot now minister to any of those great ends, to which under the first times of the Old and New Testament it did. It served under the Old Testament as a seal of the divine Inspiration of those Scriptures in which it was found; and was a pregnant assurance to present and future Times, that all those Promises, Precepts, Threatnings, found in conjunction with any accomplished Prophecy, were equally of divine Original. To this purpose speaks a Jewish Doctor, The fundamental Reason why Prophecy is extant in the Prophets, is only this, That they may with the greater authority exhort men to an observance of the Law, to divine Worship, and to do what is acceptable unto God, and that Man may be perfect with God, not barely that they may declare things to come. This is found in the Prophets but out of a secondary intention, only to confirm the truth of their inspiration; and the like reason of Prophecy in Scripture is alledged by Origen. Whereas these

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Vulgar Prophecies cannot (need not) seal any divine Doctrine or part of Scripture if they should be fulfilled; and therefore have no more real value then the seal in separation from the writing. They tell us perhaps (which no wise man much concerns himself to know) that after such a period of time, such a great Prince shall ascend the Throne, such a famous Event shall fall; and if the Prediction chance to succeed, the Prophet looks big, and the People wonder, and that’s all. Moreover, Prophecy served (like the Shechinah in the Temple) as a testimony of God’s dwelling in and owning of that Church in which it was found. And accordingly the departing of the Prophetick Spirit from a people, if found elsewhere in the World, was a Sign God had given them a bill of divorce. Thus God at last assured his rejection of the Jewish and acknowledgment of the Gentile Church, by his taking Prophecy wholly from the one, and giving it at the same time unto the other; that which w Origen and x Justin Martyr take frequent notice of in their Disputes against the Jews and Heathens. Now Prophecy is no more necessary in this Age then Miracles to witness Christ’s presence with his Church, for she hath had it liberally already; and when it departed, it went not from her to Jew or Turk, but back to Heaven, leaving
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behind it the many virtues of the Spirit, in themselves more undoubted pledges of his favor. And besides, the Christian Church now is crumbled into so many Sects and Forms, that were Prophecy now in the World, men would be apt to receive it as a testimony, not to their Church, but to their Party, (to which purpose the Faction of Rome pretends it;) and therefore perhaps Prophecy was to be found in the more united times both of the Jewish and Christian Church, but went away when they began to distinguish themselves by little Forms and Notions, lest it should seem to witness not to the Truth of God, but humors of Men.

A third Reason assigned by some Gemish and Christian Writers, why God gave the People of the Jews their Oracles and Prophets to give them the knowledge of Fortunacies, as the success of a Battle, the issue of a Sickness, the condition of other Kingdoms in after-times, &c. is this: Because else, in all likelihood they would have apostatized to the Rites of the Heathen, who had their Oracles and Diviners ... and being prompted thenceby that natural liquorousness in the minds of men after the knowledge of things to come, as Orig. gives the reason; and Scripture seems

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to assign the same why God gave them Prophecy, even to secure them from all temptation to consult the Oracles of the Heathen, which we find they sometimes did in the silence or absence of the true Prophets. To suppose Prophecy necessary now for this end, to save mens longing after the knowledge of things sealed up in the Counsels of God, is to reproach the World, and to suppose it as liquorish as in its more childish years. Hath not the World out-grown the follies of Auguries, Soothsaying, and profest Diviners long ago, and took up in the resolves of Reason, as the best Oracle to consult in a civil business? and must Christians be thought the onely persons that want a Prophecy to arrest their anxieties in reference to hereafter, and a Prophecy of the certain truth whereof they are as much unresolved as of the issue of affairs? And besides, we shall observe how God sometimes chastised that wanton humor in the Jews, by permitting even his own Predictions to be, not seldom, the occasions of very evil Effects.

If we proceed to a view of those Ends which prophecy serv'd to more specially in the times of the New Testament, it will more clearly appear a great impertinence now. It served then as a divine largess to grace the solemn Inauguration of our Savior to his Mediatory Kingdom.
Kingdom: To assure the acceptance of his person and undertaking with God, who impowered him to confer such great gifts on men. To fore-warn and so to fore-arm young Converts, apt otherwise to be scandalized by the then approaching persecutions for Christ's sake. To seal the reception of the Gentiles to the dignity of Sonship, upon whom God had bestowed so great a portion of his Spirit. To prefer the Christian Oeconomy to as sacred regards with men as the Jewish had of old, because attended with as liberal an effusion of all extraordinary gifts upon men, as that was. Now it were greatly to under-rate the Reader's time and my own, to prove Prophecy in this Age utterly unnecessary for the service of any such ends as these. So that there appears not any sufficient Reason why we should believe there are any Examples of the Prophetick Spirit now extant in the World. Miracles and Prophecies always came forth from God to serve some great occasions, (his Servants never wrought a Miracle, or foretold an Event, as Juglers shew tricks, or Gypsies tell fortunes, only to cause wonder or to supply discourse:) now these occasions being long ago expired, it is but reasonable to presume that Miracles and Prophecies are fallen with them.

To all this perhaps it will be opposed,
That oft-times a very black and tedious night of affliction covers the Servants of God, and that a Prophecy might then serve as the voice of the Cock to bring the joyful news of an approaching morning of deliverance; and that for this end also God often favored his ancient People the Jews with Prophecy, even to let them understand when their miseries should determine, lest they should grow weary and faint in their minds.

I answer; God hath now supplied good men with higher cordials than a Prophecy to support their sinking spirits with in a day of Evil. He hath confirmed his singular affection to them by the great gift of his Son, he hath told them that all things shall work together for their temporal or eternal good, that they have a merciful High-Priest that is touch’d with a feeling of all their infirmities, that their light affliction which is but for a moment works for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and are not these Considerations better to them then ten Prophecies? Besides, God having now caused the felicities of the other World to stand before us in so full a light, he would have our minds less intangled with solicitous and unquiet thoughts about the futurities of this. It greatly becomes us now to be more heroical and manly in our hopes and
and resolutions then the Jews were, whose temper was as weak, worldly and carnal, as their way of Worship; in compliance with which God encouraged their service by a Covenant made up of worldly Promises, possession of the Land, the abundance of all things, freedom from evils and bondage. Now, lest in a tedious affliction they should think God had forgotten his Covenant, and should cast about for some new Master, the Prophets were sent from time to time, to resolve them of the cause and continuance thereof, and (that their patience might not tire) to tell them when their warfare should be accomplish'd. Besides, their notices of the felicities of the other World, being so obscure and languishing, might easily render them to greater impatience of the undetermined miseries of this: and therefore when in the times of the second Temple they began to be more clear in the Doctrine of a Resurrection and a life to come, Prophecies of a temporal reference became more rare; as appears from the words of that Psalm, written (it is thought) after the Captivity, where the Church under great pressures thus bemoans her self: We see not our Signs, there is no more any Prophet, neither is there any among us that knoweth how long: which words suggest to us a fourth Reason.

4. Prophecy expired in the Jewish Church
for two or three hundred years before the coming of our Savior. This is a truth of catholic acknowledgment, all Jewish and Christian Writers confess it but only Justin Martyr, who once and again tells Trypho the Jew, There never ceased in your Nation, either Prophet or Prince till Jesus Christ was both born and had suffered. But in this Opinion that excellent Man stands against all the Ancients, and against the Canon and Apocrypha, and therefore his Testimony not binding. Now if Prophecy ceased then, we have no reason to presume it continues now; for what ever Arguments seem to conclude it necessary to the Christian Church now, would with much more strength conclude the necessity of it to the Jewish then: for the Scripture was then more dark and incompleat then now, the People were of a more weak and worldly temper, the Oeconomy more carnal, the Age more accustomed to Prophecies, Men more in danger of being tempted by the absence of Prophecy to consult the Devil's Prophets and Oracles, then so frequent in the World, and a succession of Prophets more fully promised without any limitation of time, then now. Besides, the reason of its cessation seems to have been catholic, viz. this: It had now ministred to all those great Ends to which it was thought necessary in the Times
to which it was vouchsafed; and therefore (as it is said of David) having thus served its Generation, it fell asleep. For though it be true that the cessation of Prophecy, as also the absence of the many Glories from the Second Temple which the First had, might serve to take men off from looking too intently upon the face of Moses, whose splendor plainly appeared to be nigh to vanishing away, and to quicken their desires after the more inward and abiding Glories of the Messiah's Kingdom, and to cause them to expect that New Dispensation so long promised before, which should restore the Prophetical Spirit more abundantly; yet I conceive this to be neither the onely nor the principal Reason of that long interstitium of Prophecy in the Jewish Church. For the Ark, the Shechinah, the heavenly fire, and the rest, were ceremonial appendices, and served the pomp and splendor of that Lower Dispensation, the utter absence whereof from the second Temple might shew that Oeconomy now waxing old and wearing away; but Prophecy lasted (it is concluded) for at least forty or fifty years under the second Temple, and besides was given rather for Moral than Ceremonial Ends, which having sufficiently served, it was beneath the sacredness thereof to be continued to serve onely the pomp of the Church,
or the curiosities of Men.

The onely thing now occurring to my thoughts, which may seem to weaken the force of this Reason, is the common Opinion of a Filia vocis, a soft voice, heard as descending from Heaven; and was (say the Masters) a lower degree of Prophecy continuing under the Times of the second Temple as a kind of twilight in the Jewish Church after the setting of the Sun of Prophecy; and to which the Targum is thought sometimes to refer. But as for this prophetick voice, I see no great reason why we should stick to number it with those Jewish Fables mentioned Tit. 1. 14. and invented (as many more were) to serve the glory of that Nation, and to greaten the favor of Heaven thereunto: there being no two Nations so much remarked for vanity and pride, both in sacred and profane Writings, as the Jewish and Grecian; and there are none that have so corrupted Histories, and obtruded so many Legends upon the credulity of the World, to inhaunce the credit and reputation of their own People. Can it easily be thought that God would now speak from Heaven to them who had turned the deaf ear to all his Prophets, and were now so addicted to Magick, Superstition, and all the Examples of Folly and Profaneness? What reason can
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be given why God should silence all the Prophets, the Oracles by Ὠριμ, and by Visions, and honor that obdurate People by any immediate addresses? What higher Grace did God confer upon Abraham, upon Moses, nay upon his Son, then to speak to them by a Voice from the excellent Glory? What are all the occasions, upon which they say it was heard, but weak and trifling, and evidently unworthy of so sacred an Oracle? When Jonathan began his Paraphrase, they tell us he was check'd by a Βαθ Κόλ, saying,

Quis est ille qui revelat filiis hominum mystēria Legis? When Rab. Ḥuda Sanctus died, the Talmudists tell us, Βαθ Κόλ beati
tudinem eum plangentibus proununciavit, and the like. Besides, a Voice from Heaven seems reserved as the more sacred way of divine Revelation (so far is it from being the lowest degree of Prophecy) for the Times of the Gospel. It was a Voice from Heaven that gave testimony to Christ, that occasioned S. Paul's Conversion; and it is urged as a strong argument against refusing the Gospel, because it is a

turning away from him that speaketh from Heaven: And we shall observe that all the Prophecies of the Old Testament have not that Expression, I heard a Voice from Heaven, so oft as that single Prophecy of the New, the Revelation: God generally making use of o-

I 4 other
ther ways before, to give his Prophets an intimation of his Counsels: So that this Notion cannot greatly prejudice the Reason alleged, having so little color of truth to recommend it. Nor am I alone in this persuasion, finding some learned men speaking very doubtfully of it, and others very confidently against it. Though perhaps all this be more then I need have said, for this was no personal Prophecy, nor (that I can find) ever asserted to declare things to come, but to direct in some emergent difficulties in common life.

In confirmation of what hath been said, 'twere easy to superadd the many Testimonies of the Ancients to prove the going up of the Prophetick Spirit in this confirm'd State of the Kingdom of the Messiah, who are so full in this persuasion, that (as 'tis noted) the Montanists are by some of the Fathers proved to be no better then Dissensers when they pretended to the Gift of Prophecy, for that it was then ceased in the Church. But that I seem not to boast in any other Man's line, I shall dismiss this Chapter with a Conjecture upon a passage...
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in Strabo applicable to our present purpose. He, coming to speak of Moses and some Jewish Customs, makes (after the manner of the Heathen) a very invidious relation of what Arts he used to oblige so great a multitude his Followers. One of which, he faith was a promise to deliver to them, such a worship, and such rites of Sacrifice, as should not trouble the Users of them with any great expenses, nor prophetical raptures and ecstacies, nor any other absurd businesses in Religion. A Speech that assures Strabo not over-fond of such things himself, for else he could not so easily have believed a promise of deliverance from them, the best bait Moses could use to catch the hearts of the Multitude withall. But certain it is that no promise was further from his thoughts then this; for his law was a law of rites and costly sacrifices, and his great wish was that all the Lords people were Prophets, and nothing that himself more pretended or promised then Prophecy. I conceive therefore that (as most lies bottom upon some truth) this Relation was originally but some traditional prophecy of the State of the times under the Messiah current (among some others) among the Jews, or else a right opinion of theirs founded in a mistaken Sense of that Prophecy of Daniel concerning the Messiah, that He should seal up Vision and...
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Prophecy and cause. sacrifice and oblation to cease. Now this notion of the ceasing of Prophecy and Sacrifice might (as some other did) arrive at last among the Gentiles, who understanding it to halves, might easily intitle Moses to the promise thereof, a Person of so great Name both among the Jews and themselves.

But a freedom from these two is, if not the promise, the performance only of the Mediator of a better Covenant then Moses, who by the offering of himself to God left place for no other then Law, the living sacrifice of our selves to God; and by the more liberal effusions of his Spirit to enlighten our minds, and to place our hearts above the fears and hopes of this world, hath made Prophecy less necessary now, and therefore most likely not be at all therein. Sure I am God hath nowhere promised it to the ends of the world, nor do men most disposed, by great wisdom and Sanctity, to receive it, either feel it or desire it, and all that ever have, with the greatest wariness trusted to it, have been at last clothed, with shame and confusion; and God in his Providence seems to deliver all pretences to it to persons so extremely ignorant, vicious, vain or hypochondrical, that 'tis become a scandal to profess it, & for a man to pretend an Enthusiasm now, gives notice that he wants a Physician.
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fician; whereas heretofore his greatest judgments Miracles and signs came to secure the honor of Prophecy, and of those excellent Persons which protest it.

Now there is scarce any Man but hath a quick sense of the happiness of being freed from a Religion made grievous by so many chargeable sacrifices as the Jewish was: and who so considers that it was so hard to distinguish true Prophecy from false even in that Age to which it was promised, that often the People, and sometimes the true Prophets were abused by the Pretenders to it, and that it could not but have some uneasinesses therein, while attended with those vehement transports, confusions, terrors, enigmatical Visions, and that harshness which the most gentle strokes the hand of God made upon the faculties of those holy men which were acted by it, cannot but value it as a happiness that God hath delivered us now to the conduct only of that sure word of Prophecy, the Scripture, and the evident and gentle Maxims of Right Reason.
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Private persons not Competent Judges of Prophecy, and why. The Decree of Pope Leo touching New Prophets commended. Men formerly and still subject to be imposed upon by seeming Miracles. The discrediting of these Prophecies of great advantage to the Church.

Left these Considerations should not be thought sufficient to disparage that easy faith which private men usually meet these Vulgar prophecies withall, I shall further mind the Reader, that Prophecy is in itself and so hath been judged by wise men a matter too nice and subtile for any, much less for men that occupy the room of the unlearned in the Church, to make an hasty judgment in. Therefore (as was noted before from Plato) the Laws in the Gracian Commonwealth, appointed unto some publick Judges over Enthusiastick prophecies: which institution, whatever further end the State aimed at therein, proceeded upon this acknowledged principle, That Prophecy was in the source and sense thereof too perplexed and dark a business for the ruder minds of private men to make any steady judgment in.

And therefore as passionately as the Romish Church laies claim to the Spirit of Pro-
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Prophecy, as the testimony of God to her, yet upon occasion of some Enthusiasts which would define the particular time of the Day of Judgment, we find a very severe and punctual Decree made by Pope Leo to limit the judgment of such Persons, the summ whereof is this. If God have revealed some things to come to any of them, we will by no means that they be presently reputed Impostors, or any way disturbed, (against the Apostolical command of not despising Prophecysings) but we will that by an Ordinary law all such asserted inspirations before they be published or preached to the people, be from henceforth understood reserved solely to the cognizance of the Apostolical Chair. But if that may not be without some danger of delay, and an urgent necessity advise otherwise, then that they be notified to the Ordinary of the place, that he taking with him three or four grave and learned men, and having diligently examined the whole business with them, when they shall judge it convenient (upon which we charge their own Consciences) they may give licence for the publication of them. And after many other Proviso's in this affair, the whole is concluded with a severe temporal and spiritual punishment threatened upon the offenders in the premises. Should appear iexus Piscator, the Pope once stricken by such apish prophets became wise, and would no longer entrust
the judgment of them with the soft and ignorant Multitude.

Now Prophecy hath been thus wisely referred to the cognizance of Persons of more exercised minds, because humane Nature undisceplin'd is so extremely prone to meet things pompous and vehement with very sacred and solemn thoughts, and to think (as the frogs in the fable, by the block which fell among them) if the person make a great noise and bustle, come attended with flaming expressions, pathetical devotions, singularities of gesture and phrase, affected silences and severities, that he is Διονυσίς sent from God extraordinarily, to rule in their minds and lives. Besides, men that have no notices of the compass of natural or diabolical operation, are ready to receive the sudden tremors, frequent ecstacies and other works which fall not within the little circle of their observation, as the powers of God and examples Miraculous. And this they may be the more easily tempted to do, because though sometimes the signs these Prophets shew are so thin and weak that the dullest eye may see through them, and discover them to be the delusions of the Devil or Melancholy: (such was that of Drabeius and many of Apollavins,) yet sometimes jugling Prophets have acted a Miracle so to the life, that even wise men have been imposed upon by the fine and
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Subtil management of the imposture; as may appear by that Chapter in 1st Thessalonians intitled Miracula multa sunt a Propheta, and other writers.

If all these considerations might obtain with men to give no faith or (which is next to it) a very slow and doubtful one to all pretended Prophets now, the happy consequent would be the freedom of the world at last from these ancient cheats; for these little Oracles (like those of old) would soon become less talkative if men were once become less credulous; and God would no more be look’d for in the whirlwind of raptures, mystical phrases, and ecstastical Ora-
tions, but in the still voice of a great humility, a sound mind, and an heart reconciled to himself and all the world; and they would begin to believe God knows better what is good for us then we do ourselves, while hiding futurities from us, that so we might not be discomposed by any joys, sorrows or fears born out of due time; and they would cast anchor onely upon his Promises and Attributes, when afflicted with all his waves, and value them as sufficient security to the peace and quiet of their minds in the worst of Evils. Finally, all the Ends the Devil seek
The Vanity of Prophecies would be happily defeated; who if they chance to hit, fails not to possess the Deliverer of them with an impregnable persuasion that he is God's Holy One, his (Urim) sacred Oracles being found with him; and the Receiver with such great Opinions of them as shall render him curious, credulous, anxious, impertinent in his studies, and regardless of the known rules of life. But if they miss, he tempts men to a suspicion of all Prophecy for the sake of the false, and to regard even the Revelations of Scripture but as more venerable impostures.

FINIS.

T. Smalbroke
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John Parkes

Parloge me n: Augusti
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