

MIRACLES

WORK'S Above and Contrary to

NATURE:

OR,

An Answer to a late Translation out of *Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Mr. *Hobb's Leviathan*, &c. Published to undermine the Truth and Authority of Miracles, Scripture, and Religion, in a Treatise

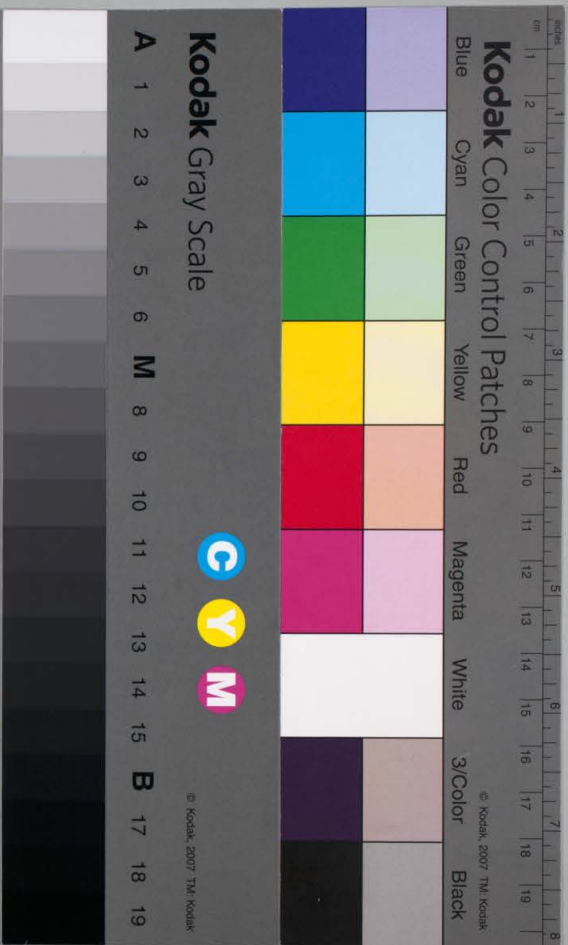
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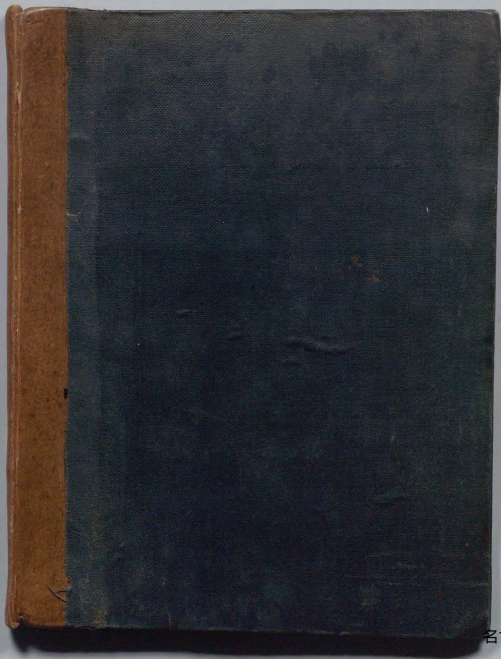
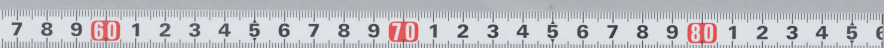
*MIRACLES no Violation of
the LAWS of NATURE.*

Sicut non fuit impossibile Deo quas voluit instituere, sit ei non est impossibile in quicquid voluerit quas instituit mutare Naturas. D. August. de Civitate Dei, l. 21. cap. 8.

L O N D O N,

Printed for Samuel Smith at the Princes Arms in
St. Pauls Church Yard. 1683.





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MIRACLES

WORKS Above and Contrary to

NATURE:

OR,

An Answer to a late Translation out of
Hobbes's Treatise of Liberty and Necessity,
and of the Liberty of the Will, in
which the Liberty of the Will is
asserted, and Religion is
maintain'd.

ENTITLED

MIRACLES no Violation of
the LAWS of NATURE.

Printed by J. Sturges, at the
Sign of the Ship, in St. Dunstons
Church-yard, near St. Dunstons
Church, in the City of London.

LONDON
Printed by J. Sturges, at the
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(1)

MIRACLES

WORKS Above and Contrary to

NATURE:

OR,

An Answer to a TRANSLATION, &c.

In a TREATISE Entituled
MIRACLES no Violations of the
LAWS of NATURE.

TO the Compiler of this *Treatise* we are en-
gaged for two things. 1. The *Collection*
of the several parts of his Work out of se-
veral Authors, and the *tacking* of them
together. 2. The *Translation* of each part out of the
Latin: A Method much in use of late, to Copy out
the pernicious Authors, as well as Practices, of
former times, and instead of sitting down and putting
their own Invention upon the Rack, to take a more
easie and compendious way of doing Mischief, by
Transcribing or Translating for the greedy recep-
tion of the present Age, whatever has been formerly
written tending to the subversion either of Religion
or Civil Authority. The former of these is unquesti-

*The Treatise
about Miracles
a Translation
out of several
Authors.*

onably

onably the Design of this Treatise; since the asserting *That there is no such thing as a Miracle, i. e. a Work above Nature*, undermines the Foundations of both Law and Gospel, overthrows the Credit and Authority of Divine Revelation, and remits us either to a bare Religion of Nature and Morality, or to none at all.

The Authors
Spinoza, Mr.
Hobbs, and
Mr. Burnett.

The Book (to Assign to each Author his share in it) consists of Two Parts. The latter, which is the main, from the middle of the third Page to the end of the Book, is wholly (except two or three Authorities in the last page) a bare Translation of the Sixth Chapter of the *Traктatus Theologico-Politicus*, written by *Spinoza*. Which Chapter he seems to have made choice of out of that Author, as effectual by it self to compass the design of his whole Treatise: *viz.* To instill the Principles of *Deisme* or *Atheisme* into the minds of his Readers. The other part, which takes up the two first Pages and half of the third, is a Translation likewise of part of *Mr. Hobbs's* Chapter about *Miracles* in his *Leviathan*, from whence he has taken as much as he thought would make for his purpose, and seem to be of a piece with the other Translation out of *Spinoza*, to which he has prefixed it.

Part 3. cap. 37.

Introductory to the Book there is a *Premonition to the Reader*. And here we might justly expect from him to speak himself, and to give us a free and ingenious Account of his Authors, his Translation, and the Design of it. But the greatest part of this too is Borrowed (or Translated, whether you please) out of *Mr. Burnett's Telluris Theoria Sacra*, and the rest only some brief Touches of what he has after more at large out of *Spinoza*. Of.

Lib. I. c. 11. p. 114.

Of his Three Authors, the *last* I believe, is not very proud of the company of the other two; and therefore is not much obliged to his Translator for clapping him and them together as Confederates and Brethren in Opinion. But it is more pertinent to observe, that two of the three are clearly against him in their sense about the main point in Controversie. *Spinoza* indeed is the great Patron of his Assertion; *viz.* *That there is no such thing as a Miracle, if we take the word to signify a Work above or beside Nature*. But *Mr. Burnett* and *Mr. Hobbs* are point blank of the contrary mind, and therefore either they must speak very inconsistently, nay in effect contradict themselves, or what he here produces out of them cannot be drawn to favour his and *Spinoza's* Opinion; and so the co-herece of the several parts of the Collection will not appear to be very great, nor the Harmony very agreeable, to any that shall first consider each as they stand apart in the distinct Authors, before he examine them as they are here associated in the *Rhapsody* of this Treatise.

Mr. Hobbs
and Mr. Burn-
nett against the
opinion for which
they are pro-
duced.

all was
not drawn
from the
opinion, as
above.

To begin with *Mr. Hobbs*, whom we have least reason to suspect to have any wrong done him; we have no more to do but to read the rest of that Chapter, where the *Translator* leaves him, and we shall soon find that he admits and supposes Miracles in that very sense, wherein he is produced to deny them here. For, First, He defines a Miracle to be *A work of God beside his Operation by the way of Nature ordained in the Creation*; which is flatly contradictory to that Assertion, *That nothing can fall out but according to the order of Nature*. 2. He infers from that Definition, *That a Miracle is not the effect of a*

B. 2. printed in 1703.

17. *Vertue in the Prophet whose Doctrine it confirms, but of the immediate hand of God: and that no Devil, Angel, or created Spirit can work a Miracle.* Which Positions (however questionable if understood of a delegated Power in Men or Angels) are sufficient to demonstrate that it is his sense, that there are Miracles or Works above Nature. For if there are Works wrought which no finite Spirit; nothing but the immediate hand of God can effect, these certainly must surpass the force of Nature, the working by second Causes in all her Operations.

It is to be confessed, That Mr. Hobbs does in his open way, as well as Spinoza, destroy the Authority of Miracles by his Doctrine: in as much as he does not admit them for sufficient Credentials of the Divine Mission of any Prophet, when the Doctrine he reveals does not square with the Religion established by the Civil Magistrate. So that all the Miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles were of no force, because the Doctrine they taught contradicted the established Tenets of the superstitious Jews, and the Idolatrous Gentiles. Yet, though these two Authors (equally to be honoured for the good Service they have done the Christian Religion) agree very well in the main Design, they differ notwithstanding very widely in the way of compassing it, as far as the opposite parts of a contradiction can set them at odds; the one Asserting that there are works above Nature, the other denying it: So that the Author of this Collection was not very well advised to think they would cotten so well together; and ought rather to have tried first how far the Work might be done by one of them singly, and to have referred the other for a new expedient if the former had failed.

Mr.

How Mr. Hobbs' Doctrine destroys the Authority of Miracles.

Mr. Hobbs then, we see, asserts there are Miracles. And so does Mr. Burnett in Words most express, and in the very same Paragraph, part whereof he has quoted out of him in the Latine in his last Page, and at very little distance from the very Words, there quoted to represent him as an abettor of the contrary opinion; *Certissimum est* (says he) *à Divina Providentiâ* Lib. 1. c. 17. p. 138. *(pendere res omnes enjuscung; ordinis & ab eadem) vera miracula edita esse.*

It is, I think, a sufficient prejudice against the opinion which he produces these Authors to insinuate and patronize, or at least his judgment in the choice of his Authors, that two out of three declare flatly against him in that Point. Yet 'tis possible that, as he produces them here, they may both better consist with him and Spinoza than with themselves. This therefore comes to be examined, and will lead us gradually to give a particular Answer to each part of the whole Work. We begin therefore with the *Premonition to the Reader*, he there with Mr. Burnett.

What he takes from Mr. Burnett; is out of the seventh and last chapter of the first book of his *Theory*. Mr. Burnett's Words are these, *In eâsum equidem sententiâ, Autores Sacros cum de rebus Naturalibus Sermones habent, &c.* Upon these the Translator thus varies in the first Words of his *Premonition*, *It is the judgment of most of the Ancient Fathers of the Christian Faith, and of the most learned Theologues of the Moderns, that the Authors of the Holy Scriptures when they speak of Natural things, &c.* And so goes on with the rest of that Page, which he translates more faithfully: what he designed in this amplification, whether to amuze his Reader, oblige Mr. Burnett, or to make

The first part of the Premonition taken out of Mr. Burnett.

make a fair shew of his own great reading, I shall not enquire.

The Summ of it. The Summ of what he has out of Mr. Burnett is this, *That the Authors of the Holy Scriptures where they speak of Natural things, design only to excite Piety and Devotion in us, not to improve us in the knowledge of Nature. That agreeably to this Design, they explain the visible Works of God in a manner suitable to the received opinions of the vulgar: they wrest the general causes and ends of the whole Creation in favour of the Peoples prejudices, as if all things were ordained only for the good and benefit of mankind: they do not make mention of the ordinary train of second causes in the productions of Nature, but recur immediately to God himself, the first Cause, Author and President of it, and compendiously refer all things to his immediate Power, and to his irresistible Will and Command.*

The design of Mr. Burnett in what he speaks there.

All Mr. Burnett's design in this, is to excuse himself for giving a Philosophical and Mechanical account of the Deluge and other grand Effects in the Sublunary World; as the Original of the Mountains, Rocks, Islands, Ocean, Rivers, &c. in the Terraqueous Globe. The production of all these the Scripture immediately refers to God: and Divines ordinarily speak of them as Effects supernatural and miraculous; *viz.* That God by the same powerful Word, whereby he created Heaven and Earth, cast up the Mountains, and cut out the Channels for the Rivers, and that vast cavity for the immense Ocean, commanded the waters into one place, and made the dry land appear. And by the like command, when the wickedness of man was great upon the Earth, and the end of all flesh was come before

Gen. 1. v. 9.

Gen. 6. v. 5,
85.

before him, opened the Cataracts of Heaven, and broke up the Fountains of the Deep, and deltr oyed all mankind, except eight persons, by a deluge of Waters. Gen. 7. v. 11. To this Mr. Burnett's Answer is, That it is in no wise necessary that these effects should be conceived to have been wrought by miracle. For the Scripture, that it does not appear that they are recorded for Miracles there, because the Scripture immediately refers effects purely Natural to God, and makes no mention of the train of second causes subservient to God in their production: the design of the sacred Writers, when they speak of natural things, being not to instruct us in the knowledge of Nature by giving us a Philosophical account of their mediate causes, but to excite in us Piety and Devotion, by working in our minds a true sense of the Power and Providence of Almighty God, to which all things owe their original.

This is the intent, scope, and drift of Mr. Burnett's Words, as they stand at home in their proper place; but here they are applied to far different purposes, as appears by the Conclusion the Translator draws from them, when he comes to speak himself: *viz.* *That these things considered.*

The conclusion which the Translator draws from Mr. Burnett's principles.

1. *We are not to admire, if we find in the Holy Scripture many memorable things related as miracles, which notwithstanding proceeded from the fixt and immutable order of Nature, &c.*

2. *(Which is but the application of the former) We ought not rashly to accuse any Man of Infidelity, only because he refuses to believe, that those Miracles were effected by the immediate Power of God, &c.*

Which conclusion of his

1. Is just the quite contrary to Mr. Burnett's.

2. De-

2. Destroys the authority of Scripture, and leaves us free to disbelieve any Miracle recorded in it for such.

This conclusion quite contrary to Mr. Burnett's

1. It is quite contrary to Mr Burnett's. Mr. Burnett's way of Arguing is this, The Scripture immediately refers to God things which are purely the effects of Nature. Ergo, we cannot justly conclude, that what effects the Scripture immediately refers to God, those it records for miracles. Yes (says the Translator upon the same grounds) we may conclude that it records them for Miracles, and this too we may conclude over and above, that the Scripture records such effects for Miracles which really are the Effects of Nature.

It destroys the authority of the Scripture, and the belief of Miracles.

2. It destroys the authority of Scripture, and leaves us free to disbelieve any Miracle recorded in it for such. For first it makes the Holy Scripture guilty of Imposition, and that not in a small matter, but such whereupon depends the authority of all the revelations made therein by God to mankind: for upon the truth of those relations in Scripture, wherein these Miracles are recorded as matter of Fact, depends the certainty of the *Divine Mission*, of *Moses and the Prophets*, our *Blessed Saviour and his Apostles*, and consequently the authority of the Doctrine which they revealed. 2dly, it takes away the only *reason* which we have, to discern whether the effect it relates be a Miracle or not. The only thing whereby we can know it is from the Scriptures manner of relating it: if it relates one thing for a Miracle which is not, all may be, for ought we know, of the same Nature. And so farewell both the belief of Miracles and the Scripture it self.

I presume that he does not *ply* with us in a matter of this importance, *i. e.* That he does not mean by the Scriptures *relating such things as Miracles*, onely that it relates the production of them in such Terms, as Idiots and illiterate Persons may from thence conceive that they are *super-natural Effects* (for then all he says will be very true, but withal very impertinent) but that it sets them down for Effects Miraculous and Supernatural as much as any in the whole Bible. And if he means thus, I have already hinted the ill Consequences of his Doctrine, and how disagreeable his Conclusion from Mr. Burnett's Principles is to that which Mr. Burnett himself draws from them, and shall proceed now to shew how unnaturally it is drawn from such premises.

It does not follow from Mr. Burnett's Principles.

I shall not stand to make any tedious Reflection upon each particular in the summary Account which I have given above of what he has out of Mr. Burnett; but I shall apply my self chiefly to the Consideration of that whereupon he seems wholly to build his Conclusion. All that I shall say to the rest is this, Touching the design of the Sacred Writers when they speak of natural things, I grant it to be such as is there suggested: And, That in subordination to that Design, they may be conceived to explain the visible Works of God in a manner suitable to the received Opinions of the *Vulgar*; *i. e.* To speak their Sense and Dialect about Natural Things, when they do, occasionally speak of them, and to comply therein with their common prejudices; as *Moses* seem to do *Gen. 1. 16.* where he ranks the Moon with the Sun as the other great light, *i. e.* the next or only one besides of considerable magnitude; speaking there agreeably

How far each Particular, in what he has from Mr. Burnett is not, is true.

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to the appearance of sense, and the apprehensions of the vulgar grounded thereupon. Yet not that they are obliged to comply with all their prejudice neither; For this is one, *That every considerable Effect in Nature is miraculous and supernatural*: And the Design of the Sacred Writers does not oblige them to descend so far to the apprehensions of the vulgar, as to relate every effect for Miraculous which they conceive to be so. Their Design is, *Not to instruct us in the knowledge of Nature, but to excite Piety and Devotion in us*. The utmost therefore that Design will oblige them to, in this regard, is to make no mention of the Train of second Causes in the Productions of Nature (which effectually answers the first part of their Design) and to ascribe all Effects to God as their Author (which as fully answers the second) and nothing of all this amounts to a *Revelation of the Effects of Nature for Miracles*, as will appear immediately.

To the next thing, *That they wrest the general causes and ends of the whole Creation in favour of the peoples prejudices, as if all things were ordained only for the good and benefit of Mankind*: I deny that the Scripture wrests the ends of the Creation; for this were to make the parts of the World be Created by God for other ends and purposes than he created them for. All the Scripture does is, that it mentions only those ends of Nature (out of many for which it is ordained in the Divine Wisdom) that relate to the good and benefit of Mankind (as for instance those ends only of the Heavenly Bodies, *That they are for lights in the Firmament of Heaven, and for Signs, and for Seasons, and for Days, and for Tears*) yet it

Gen. 1. 14, 15.

it does not deny but that there may be many other which to consider is not pertinent to its purpose.

But the Principle from whence he draws his Conclusion, is in the last words of what he has out of Mr. Burnett: viz. *That the Authors of the Holy Scriptures make no mention of the ordinary Train of second Causes in the productions of Nature, but recur immediately to God himself, the first Cause, Author, and President of it, and compendiously refer all things to his immediate Power, and to his irresistible Will and Command*. Their recurring immediately to God himself, and referring all things to his immediate Power, is to be understood in this sense, Not that the Scripture declares these Effects to proceed from nothing but the immediate hand of God (for this is to declare them to be supernatural, and such then they are unquestionably.) But, That it ascribes them only to God, and makes no mention of any Train of second Causes subservient to him in their production. For Instance, the Scripture immediately refers the Effects of Nature to God himself, in those places of the 147th Psalm where it says, *He giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels. — He sendeth out his word and melteth them, he bloweth with his wind and the waters flow*. So when God says to Noah, *I do set my bow in the cloud*, and to Samuel, *To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the hand of Benjamin*. These Instances are his and Spinoza's, as appears p. 17th and 18th below in his Treatise. And the Scripture refers these Effects immediately to God, as it mentions him only as the Author of them, and no other mediate cause;

The Principle
from whence
he draws his
Conclusion.

Psalme 67. 9.
15, 17, 18.

Gen. 9. 11.
1 Sam. 9. 26.

not that it says that he alone Acts in the production of them, for this were to relate them for Miracles.

The ground of the Connexion of this Cause, with the Principle from whence he draws it.

This therefore being stated, his way of Arguing will appear to be this, *The Authors of the Holy Scriptures make no mention of the ordinary Train of second Causes in the Productions of Nature, but recur immediately to God himself, &c. Ergo, they relate many things as Miracles, which yet notwithstanding are the Effects of Nature.* The Connexion of this antecedent and consequent is by Vertue of this Proposition, *That the Authors of the Holy Scripture must be conceived to relate those Effects as Miracles, which they immediately ascribe to God, without mention of any second Causes subservient to him in their production.* The fallhood whereof I shall evidently discover. 1. *By Instance.* 2. *From the natural import of the words.* 3. *From the reason of the thing itself.* 4. *By shewing in some Instances what it is for the Holy Scripture to relate any thing as a Miracle.*

This ground proved to be false, 1. By Instance.

1. *By Instance.* Infinite would be the number of Miracles Recorded in Scripture, if this were the manner whereby we are to know what Effects are related therein as such. The Scripture teaches us (from the mouth of our *Blessed Saviour*) to pray to God immediately for our daily Bread, for our Food and Raiment, for the annual increase of our Corn, Wine, and Oyle, for the former and latter Rain in their Season. It takes no notice of the ordinary way whereby Nature it self supplies us with these Necessaries, how our Corn grows in our Fields, how the Vine sends forth her Grapes, how the Clouds drop Fatness: But in a word, refers all to God without any more ado. He, it says, *Visiteth the Earth and blesseth*

Psalm 65. 9, 11.

Psalm

blesseth it: He maketh it very plenteous: he crowneth the year with his goodness. In a word, *He openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness.* Yet, I suppose, it were very hard to infer that the Scripture sets down all this as supernatural and miraculous: That it obliges us to conceive (not the Flood only, but even) the former and latter rain to come down by Miracle: That it prompts us to expect as supernatural a provision of our daily bread, as the *Israelites* had in the Wilderness, *Elijah in Horeb* when the Ravens were his Purveyours, the Widow with whom he lodged, whose *Barrel of Meal* was preserved from wanting; or lastly, the *four or five thousand* fed by our Saviour in the Gospel, which I suppose was a work of Nature, but related in Scripture as a Miracle, because it mentions not how the Corn grew in the hands and mouths of them that did eat it.

Psalm 146. 16.

2. *The Natural import of the Words disproves this conceit.* To be related as a Miracle, is to be recorded for an effect of God's own immediate Hand and supernatural Power. To be immediately refer'd or ascribed to God, without mention of a Train of mediate causes, is quite another thing. There it is expressly or by consequence declared, that the Work is above Nature; here it is left in *Medio*, without any determination from the manner wherein it is related, whether it be a natural or supernatural effect of the Divine Power. For instance, the Scripture says in one place, *Thou makest Darkness, and it is Night.* in another, *He sent Darkness, and made it Dark.* In the former it speaks of the ordinary, in the latter of the *Egyptian* darkness; and both it immediately refers to God, men.

2. From the Natural import of the words.

Psalm 104. v. 20. 105. v. 28.

mentioning no natural causes of the one or the other. Both of them it may thus ascribe to God, though the one be the Effect of Nature, and the other a Miracle; and therefore to ascribe any Effect immediately to God, is not to relate it as a Miracle.

From the reason of the thing.

3. *This will further appear from the very reason of the thing it self.* The Scripture may justly ascribe to God all the Effects of Nature without mentioning any train of subordinated causes, and yet cannot thereupon be justly concluded to relate these things as Miracles. And this because first God is the Author of Nature, by his Power, and the Governour and President of it by his superintending Providence: therefore every Effect in Nature may be justly ascribed to him as it's Author. 2dly, The Scriptures designs to speak of the Effects of Nature only with regard to the Power and Providence of Almighty God; therefore it may justly ascribe them to him without of the train of mention natural Causes whereby he mediately produces them. If then any Effect may be in this manner ascribed to God, and yet he be no farther the Cause of it, than as he is the Author and Governour of Nature by his Power and Providence: if so, then it is no just Conclusion, *That the sacred Writers relate any thing as a Miracle, because they immediately refer it to God without mention of the train of natural Causes subservient to him in the Production of it.*

What it is for the Scripture to relate any thing as a Miracle.

4. But to give as full satisfaction as may be in this Point, (and withal to shew that, all this notwithstanding, there are some Effects so related in the Holy Scripture, as that it may be justly conceived to have recorded them for Miracles) I shall state, *What it is for the Scripture to relate any thing as a Miracle.* It is

is not enough (as we have seen already) that it ascribes the Effect to God as its Author: nor that it immediately ascribes it to him, without mention that it is produced by the mediation of second Causes. For every thing proceeds from him, whether it be by the course of Nature, or a Work of his supernatural Power, and therefore is to be ascribed to him: and the Scriptures ascribing of it to God without mention any other Cause, does not necessarily imply, that no other Cause had any hand in the Production of it. But to relate a thing as a Miracle, is to relate it for an Effect of Gods own immediate hand, or, an Effect above, beside, or contrary to Nature. And this may be done two wayes: 1. *By express Declaration:* 2. *By relating it in such a manner and with such circumstances as from thence we may rationally conclude the Effect to be miraculous.* For the first, there may seem to be very few instances if any, wherein we can certainly assure our selves, that the Holy Scripture declares any Effect to be a Work above Nature. For though it may and often does use the Word *Miracle*, yet, that being Ambiguous, it may still be uncertain whether it be to be taken for any thing more than an Effect Wonderful and Surprising indeed, yet purely Natural. All which notwithstanding, in some places we may truly vouch the *express declaration* of the Holy Scripture, that such and such Effects are miraculous. *Job. 2. 11.* After the relation of our blessed Saviour's *Turning the Water into Wine*, the Text says, *This beginning of Miracles did Jesus.* So also *John 4. 54.* after the Cure of the *Nobleman's Son*, *This is again the second Miracle that Jesus did.* In these two places the Scripture does in a manner reflect upon the Works

it had related, and declares them to be supernatural. But by the Word *Miracle* may possibly be meant no more than an Effect Strange and Wonderful, not a Work above Nature: unless we can give some certain proof of the contrary. And I think this one Consideration may be sufficient to evince it. The Design of the Scripture in relating these Works of our blessed Saviour, is to propound them to us as undoubted Evidences of his Divine Mission. Now Evidences of that they could not be unless they were Works above Nature, because an Effect of Nature cannot prove Gods immediate power and presence, nor consequently confirm the truth of any Prophets Commission from Heaven to reveal his Doctrine. For the Scripture therefore to relate these Works of our Blessed Saviour, as undoubted Evidences of his Divine Mission, will argue that the Scripture where it styles these Works Miracles, Signs, and Wonders, must mean strictly such as exceed the power of Nature: Otherwise it would impose upon our belief, and oblige us under pain of Damnation to embrace a Doctrine as Divine, upon such Evidences, as are in no wise sufficient to confirm the Authority of the Person that reveals it. And upon this Ground we might discover many more instances of Effects, *expressly declared* in Scripture to proceed from God's immediate extraordinary Power. For it holds as well in the Miracles of the *Apostles* as our *Blessed Saviour's*, and in *Moses's* too, the Scripture relating them as wrought to evidence his Commission from Heaven to institute the Law, as well as those of our Saviour and his Apostles to evidence their Authority to Preach and Plant the Gospel.

Gospel. But if there were no such express Declaration in the Holy Scripture, there are yet, 2. *Many relations of Matters of Fact couched in such Terms, as that we may justly conclude from thence that the Effects there spoken of are related as Miraculous and Supernatural.* As, 1. Where the Effect is related as done without the use of Means. So in our Saviours curing Diseases (and indeed Working most of his Miracles) by the Word of his Mouth, turning the Water into Wine by the internal tacit Act of his Will, &c. 2. Where Mention is made of Means used, but those such as cannot be conceived to be in their own Nature proper or sufficient to produce the Effect. As the Clay wherewith our Saviour cured the Eyes of the Person born Blind, the Spittle wherewith he loosed the tongue of the other that was Dumb, &c. These effects may be justly affirmed to be related in Scripture as Miracles: not upon this account, that the Scripture refers them immediately to God without mention of any train of Natural Causes subservient to him in their Production: it appears we have some surer Grounds whereupon to proceed in examining what Effects in Scripture are related as Miracles, though that which he would possess his Readers with the Opinion that it is the only ~~arguments~~ we have, be (as has been shewed) not only false, but ridiculous and absurd.

From what has been said, may rationally draw these two consequences,

1. That for the Scripture to refer any Effect immediately to God, is not for it to relate the Effect as Miraculous: and therefore from its referring the Effects of Nature immediately to God, we cannot infer (as he does) that the Scripture relates many memorable things.

things as Miracles; which yet notwithstanding proceeded from the fixt and immutable Order of Nature.

Corollary 2.

2. That there are yet many Effects plainly related in Scripture for Miracles; by it's exprels Declaration, and it's relating of them in such Terms, from whence we may by undeniable Consequence gather as much. And so, supposing that the Scripture is a true History, for which we have infinitely more evidence than for any other History in the World) it follows evidently (against his main Assertion) from the relations of these miraculous Effects in Scripture, that *there really have been Miracles* in the sense wherein he denies them, *i. e. Works beside, above, and contrary to Nature.*

But this Corollary. (though very pertinent to our purpose) is *ex abundanti*: All that we were obliged to; was to shew, that the Conclusion which he draws from the Principles he takes out of Mr. Burnett is false and illogical. Since therefore Mr. Burnett asserts positively that there are Miracles, as is shewed above, and nothing here produced out of him can infer or insinuate the contrary: we may justly demand both *in his Name*, and *in behalf both of Religion, Reason, and good Logique*, that this part of the *Premotion* be returned into the Place from whence it came, where it may stand with more Truth and Coherence; and the Conclusion of the *Translator* left to stand apart by it self, as a bold and (I may say) Impious Assertion without any Proof.

The rest of the
Premotion
enlarged.

But, not to wrong him, he has some *Succedaneons* Arguments in the close of the *Premotion*: but these, as I before hinted, are only some brief Touches of what we have after more at large out of *Spinoza*. viz.

That

That for God to work by a power immediate (or supernatural) is inconsistent with and Point-blank repugnant the Fundamental Laws and Constitutions of Nature. (It sounds somewhat like to the King's Prerogative being inconsistent with the Fundamental Laws of Property and Priviledge.) That these Laws are the Acts of the Divine Wisdom, & extend themselves to what ever events be both Willed and Decreed: that the power of Nature is infinite, as being one and the same with the Power of God. He has one thing which he asserts besides, that among all the Miracles related to be done in favour of the Israelites, there is not one that can be apodictically Demonstrated to be repugnant to the established Order of Nature. Now here I am not bound to Demonstrate it for his sake, for two Reasons. 1. Because it were to prove a Negative, 2. Because his main Ground (or *Spinoza's* rather) why he denies all supernatural Effects, is not upon account of his own great reach in Natural Philosophy, whereby he could undertake to solve Mechanically all the effects related in Scripture for Miraculous; but from Arguments purely *Metaphysical* proving in his Opinion, the impossibility of any such thing as a Work above Nature. For to this he holds and not the other, as appears from p. 21. of the Treatise where he concludes absolutely (from his Arguments against the possibility of Miracles.) That all the Events that are truly related in Scripture to have come to pass, proceeded necessarily according to the immutable Laws of Nature: And that if any thing be found which can be apodictically Demonstrated to be repugnant to those Laws, or not to have followed from them, we may safely and piously believe the same not to have been dictated by

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Di.

Divine inspiration, but impiouſly added to the Sacred Volumes by ſacrilegious Men. So that unleſs the Scripture Miracles will ſubmit to his Touch-ſtone, unleſs they will come and lay open their Occult Qualities, and the whole plot and confederacy of thoſe natural Cauſes that combined to Effect them, he has an *Index Expurgatorius* to blot their Names out of the holy Scripture, and a *Court of Inquiſition* for thoſe that relate them, to arraign them for *Sacrilege* and *Impiety*: But I paſs on to conſider each part of the *Treaſiſe* in order.

The Sum of what he has from Mr. Hobbs's in the beginning of the Treatiſe.

The *Treaſiſe* is divided between Mr. Hobbs and Spinoza. Mr. Hobbs ſpeaks as far as to the middle of the third page; out of the Chapter about Miracles, in the third Part of his *Leviathan*. He firſt explains the ſignification of the Word, from its Etymology, and other words in ſacred and profane Writers of like import with it. From its Etymology he deduces that it ſignifies, *A Work of God which men admire or wonder at.* Then propoſes to enquire what works are ſuch, and reduces them to two kinds. 1. *Such as are rare, and the like thereof ſeldom or never ſeen.* 2. *Such as we cannot conceive to be produced by natural Cauſes, but only by Gods immediate hand.* He gives ſome Inſtances of both: An Oxe or an Horſe ſpeaking, preter-natural Births, the Conſervation of a man into Stone, and the firſt Rainbow that appeared. That ſuch Effects as theſe ſeem Miraculous, becauſe rare, or no natural cauſe of them conceivable. On the contrary, the Works of Art, however wonderful, not reputed to be Miracles, becauſe their Cauſes known.

Treat. p. 2.

Upon

Upon the ſame ground he obſerves, That the ſame thing may ſeem to be a Miracle to one Man, and not to another, in proportion to their different degrees of Knowledge and Experience. So, *Eclipses* Miracles to the vulgar, not to Philoſophers: Simple Men made to believe that others can know their moſt ſecret Actions by Inspiration, when the more wary and prudent perceive the juggle. So far Mr. Hobbs here, in his *Leviathan* he proceeds to aſſign another property of a Miracle, viz. *That it be wrought to confirm the Divine Miſſion of ſome Prophet or other;* and then to give a definition of it: but there his *Tranſlator* leaves him, and paſſes on to Spinoza.

Before we follow him thither, we may reflect a little. 1. Upon Mr. Hobbs's Doctrin. 2. Upon the uſe whereto he applies it. Mr. Hobbs informs us, What Works are by Men wondered at and reputed miraculous: He ſhews by Inſtance, That they are ſuch as are rare and unuſual, or ſuch as we cannot conceive to proceed from Natural Cauſes.

Reſolves upon what Mr. Hobbs ſay.

He does not ſay, That this is all that goes to the making of a Miracle, nor that this is the only Rule we have whereby to diſcern what Effects are ſuch: but that this is enough to make things ſeem to men to be miraculous, and that a true Miracle is indeed an Effect rare and inexplicable, and ſomewhat more. If he mean otherwiſe, he contradicts himſelf ſoon after, when he defines a Miracle to be a *Work of God* (not conceived only, but really) *beſide his Operation by the way of Nature ordained in the Creation:* and infers from thence, *That it cannot be the Effect of any thing but the immediate hand of God.* Yet, to clear all; That a man cannot conceive ſuch an Effect:

fect to proceed from Natural Causes, may bear a double sense. 1. That he is not capable of assigning the Natural Cause of it, or farther, of apprehending how it can be effected by any. 2. That he *clearly and distinctly perceives* that it is impossible to be produced by the Course of Nature. I grant that this is enough to assure a man that it is a Miracle; but if he concludes it to be so in the other case, he is guilty of presumption in measuring the extent of the force of Nature by the narrow reach of his own knowledge or capacity.

*The use whereto
this Translator
applies what he
takes from Mr.
Hobbes.*

Tr. p. 1.

This may prepare us to consider the use whereto Mr. Hobbes's Doctrine is applied by his *Translator*. His Design is, before he come to *Spinoza's* Arguments against the belief of Miracles, to make a discovery of the Causes that introduced this grand Mistake into the World. And the first, as a *Corollary* from Mr. Hobbes's Doctrine, he makes to be, *Admiration*, and that proceeding from these two Causes, *Rarity* and *Ignorance*. That is, all the effects which the deluded World has mistaken for Miracles, are such as are only rare and unusual, and inexplicable: and the Causes which make mankind so prone to admit them for Miraculous, are our Ignorance of the Causes, and want of experience and observation of the Effects of Nature.

*Where he takes
Spinoza in
hand.*

The second cause which he Assigns of the belief of Miracles, is *Superstition*, viz. That it is our hopes and fears which make us conceive every unusual Event in Nature to be the effect of an extraordinary Divine Power, fore-bodding to us some good or evil. And here he takes *Spinoza* in hand, and we come at length to the main part of his Work, to which the rest is only Preliminary, and with what Coherence and how

how much to his purpose, hath already been shewed. Before I joyn Issue with him about the main Point in Controversy, I shall premise only this short observation, in regard to what he says of the Causes of the belief of Miracles. It may very well be granted him, that the generality of Mankind, who are the Ignorant and unthinking Sort, are very prone to admire and wonder at every considerable Effect of Nature, and to look upon it as proceeding from an extraordinary Power, and the immediate hand of God: And that the Causes of this may be their want of knowledge and experience, and their superstitious Hopes and Fears. But to insinuate thereupon the same to be the only ground of the belief of any Miracles, is very Presumptuous as well as Irrational: unless it could be evidently made out that all Miracles are impossible; and to see how effectually that may be done is our next Work, viz. to examine the Method wherein *Spinoza*, and from him the *Author of this Collection*, attempts to demonstrate it.

Spinoza begins with a brief Account of the chief *Tr. p. 4, 5.* Heads of this (as he calls it) popular mistake, and the first Authors of it. These he makes to be the People of the Jews, who to magnify their own Nation, as under a more peculiar care of the Divine Providence than any other, and to set forth the greatness of the God they adored above the Gods of the Heathen, recounted to them what mighty Works he had done for them, and how all the parts of Nature, which the Heathens worshipped, were under his Command and Controul. The particulars of this Error which he recounts are these, *That the ordinary sort of Men think that God's Power and Providence does then most eminently*

minently appear, when any thing happens contrary to what they conceive to be the Course of Nature. That they think Nature's swerving from her own Laws, to be the best Argument for the Existence of a Deity. That they take those persons for Atheists, who attempt to deduce a Miracle from Natural Causes. That they think God sits idle when nature acts in her usual way, and Nature is suspended, whenever God pleases to interpose. That they form in their brain a Notion of two Powers numerically distinct, the one of God, the other of Nature, understanding not what they mean by either. And that all this they do partly out of Superstition, partly out of a desire to oppose themselves to Men of more Wise and Philosophical heads.

I need not stand to examine the Truth of this Account: it appears to be purely *Declamatory*, and not (which might have been more justly expected) a fair opening of the state of the Question, and a Declaration what those of his Adversaries hold concerning it, who take up the belief of Miracles upon better grounds than vulgar Prejudice and Superstition. I shall have Occasion to do that for him in what follows.

Tr. p. 6.

Four Propositions laid down by Spinoza.

He proceeds therefore, and proposes to do four things.

1. To prove, that nothing in the World happens contrary to Nature, but that Nature keeps an eternal, fixt, and immutable Order.

2. To prove, that by Miracles we cannot know the Essence nor the Existence, nor consequent by the Providence of God: but that all these may be better known by the fixt and immutable Order of Nature.

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3. To shew by instances out of the Scripture, that by the Decrees and Volitions, and consequently the Providence of God, it understands nothing else but the very Order of Nature, which necessarily follows from his eternal Laws.

4. To treat of the manner of interpreting the Scripture Miracles, and what is chiefly to be observed in the Relations about them; or (as the Translator) to shew that most Men have erred in the manner of interpreting the Miracles recorded in the holy Scriptures.

Of these Four, the first onely tends directly to prove his Assertion: the second Obliquely strikes at the being of Miracles, as it makes them no Evidences of the immediate Power and Presence of God, and so wholly useless and insignificant, as no Proofs of what they are designed for. The other two tend only either to draw the Scripture to his side, or to elude the force of the Arguments brought from thence against him.

1. He is to prove, *That nothing in the World happens contrary to Nature, but that Nature keeps an eternal, fixt, and immutable Order.* Before I come to examine his Arguments, I shall 1. State what is meant by *Nature*, and the *Laws* of it, in this Controversy. 2. Lay down the main Grounds whereupon the possibility of Miracles depends.

1. *What is the meaning of the Word Nature, and the Laws of it in this Controversy.* A Miracle in the common acceptation of the Word, which Spinoza opposes, is taken for a Work beside, above, or contrary to Nature; beside the order, above the force, and contrary to the Laws of it. Now the Word Nature may be

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taken

taken in many Significations. Either 1. For the Essence of any, but properly of Material and Corruptible Beings. Or 2. For the Aggregate of them, the Material World. Or 3. For the Author of Nature, God himself, called thence *Natura Naturans*. Or Lastly, For the Order of the several Bodies, as they act amongst one another, according to their innate Powers and Dispositions.

Now the acceptation of the Word here, is for the Aggregate of Bodies in the World; and the Order wherein they act amongst one another: And to the Laws of Nature must be, such as determine the Manner wherein Natural bodies act among themselves; whether they be the *general* Laws of Motion; which determine how each part of Matter must be moved upon the occurrence of other Bodies, or *particular* Laws impressed upon their several Natures, determining each to act in such or such a particular manner. The question therefore about the possibility of Miracles, must be this, *Whether there can be any such Effects in the Material World, as are beside, above, or contrary to the Order wherewith Natural Bodies are determined to act among themselves:* i. e. such Effects as transcend their Power and Efficacy; and deviate from or are repugnant to the general or particular Laws of motion determining them to act.

2. The Question therefore thus stated, I am to shew, *what are the main Grounds wherupon the Possibility of Miracles depends.* And I think it may be rationally deduced from these Principles. God is able to effect any thing which neither does; 1. Imply a Contradiction in the Nature of the thing it self; nor 2. Is repugnant to the Nature of God and his infinite Per.

The Ground
of the Possibility
of Miracles.

Perfection. Omnipotence, is properly a Power to bring any thing to Effect which does not imply a Contradiction: and the Contradiction must lie in one or the other of these two. I am to shew therefore that a Miracle, or a Work above Nature, is not impossible upon either Account.

1. *A Miracle does not imply a Contradiction in the Nature of the Thing.* Every Miraculous effect is either a Production of something by a Supernatural Power or a Suspension or utter Abolition of its Being. The thing produced or destroyed by Miracle, is either Matter it self, or a Form, Quality, Motion, or any other Accident of it. 1. Matter; as suppose a new Portion of it created, beyond the extent of this World; or the Matter of this World; or any determinate Portion of it reduced to nothing. 2. A Form, Quality, Motion, or any other Accident of Matter; as suppose, 1. God should endue any part of Matter with a Form, Quality, or any other Accident, above or contrary to what it otherwise might or should have, by the course of Nature. 2. God should devert any part of Matter of any Form, Quality, Motion, &c. which otherwise it must have by the course of Nature. Two kinds of Miracles therefore we have here: 1. When a portion of Matter is created a new, or reduced to nothing. 2. When a Form, Quality, or Motion, or any other Accident of Matter, is produced, suspended, or destroyed in a Supernatural Manner. And to these two are reducible all Effects above or contrary to the Order of Nature; as the whole Frame and Order of Nature, is made up of Matter, and the Forms, Qualities, Motions, and other Accidents thereof.

Now neither of these implies a Contradiction in the

A Miracle
implies no Con-
tradiction in the
Nature of the
thing.

*It implies no
Contradiction for
Matter to be
Created or An-
nihilated.*

the Nature of The thing; 1. It does not imply a Contradiction for a Portion of Matter to be created a-new, or to be reduced to nothing.

Matter in its own Nature is a Being possible and contingent: Possible, because its *Idea* or Conception is not amere *Chimera* and a Notion that destroys it self: contingent, because it's *Idea* or Conception does not include necessity of Existence. If matter therefore be in its own Nature a thing possible, then (unless the Matter of the present World be extended in *infinitum* (which is a Contradiction) there is still room and possibility for more to be created: but this must be by Miracle, *quia ex nihilo nihil fit naturaliter*. Again, if matter be in its own Nature a contingent being, the Matter of the World, or any determinate Portion of it may cease to be, or be reduced to nothing, but this too must be by Miracle, *quia in nihilum nihil revertitur naturaliter*. Possible therefore it is in the Nature of the thing for a Portion of *Matter* to be created a-new, or reduced to nothing.

*Not for the
Form, Acc. of
Natural Bodies
to be Supernatu-
rally produced,
or destroyed.
Exod. 7. 10.
Ibid. v. 20.
8. v. 17.
John 2.*

2. It does not imply a Contradiction for a Form, Quality, Motion, or other Accident of Matter to be produced, suspended, or destroyed in a Supernatural manner. For instance, the Form of a *Serpent* to be produced, and again destroyed, in *Aarons Rod*: the form and qualities of *Blood*, in the *Waters of the Nile*; of *Lice*, in the *Dust of the Earth*; of *Wine*, in the *Water at the Marriage Feast at Cana of Galilee*. The qualities and powers of *Sight* in the *Blind*, *Hearing* in the *Deaf*, *Speech* in the *Dumb*, *Strength* in the *Lame*, *Health* in the *Sick*, *Life* in the *Dead*: lastly the form of *Bread*, or the very *Humane Nature* it self in the matter of a *Stone*: The motion of *Ten degrees back-wards*

word, in the *Sun*, for a *Sign* to *Hezekiah*, and the Suspension of his Natural Motion for a considerable time, at the request of *Joshua*: the production or determination of *Fire from Heaven*, at the Word and Prayer of *Elijah*, upon his Sacrifice, and the Captains *&c.* sent to apprehend him: and the suspension of the action of Fire in *Nebuchadnezzar's Furnace*. The production or determination of the *Wind* to bring the *Locusts*, and drive them back, and to force back the *waters of the Red-Sea*: at the *stretching forth* of *Moses's Rod*: And the *ceasing of the Wind and Storm* at our *Saviours* command: *Exod. 10. 12, 14-21.*

In all these Instances there is nothing done; but only a Form, Quality, Motion, or the like, produced, suspended, or destroyed in the parts of Matter, by a Power above Nature. And that nothing of all this implies any Contradiction in the Nature of the thing, may be thus made to appear. Matter in its own Nature is indifferently susceptible of any Form or Qualities imaginable, and therefore is in it self capable at any time of being without those Forms and Qualities which it has, or of having any others instead thereof. Capable it is of being without any particular Forms & Qualities which it has, because they are each of them contingent & accidental to Matter considered in its own Nature: For instance, that it should have such Magnitude, Figure, Texture, Order and Situation, Motion or Rest of its sensible or insensible parts, and constitute a Body of such a particular Nature, endowed with such and such Qualities peculiar to it. Capable likewise it is at any time of having any Forms or Qualities indifferently, because in its own Nature considered it is susceptible of any, and in it's own Nature considered, not determined to receive any one more than

than another. Now if this be so, it is then possible for any Form or Quality to be produced, in any part of Matter, at any time; or to be suspended, or destroyed utterly, in that Body which is endued with it: and consequently for any part of Matter to be endued with such a Form or Quality, which otherwise it could or ought not to have by the Course of Nature; or, on the other hand to be deprived of that Form or Quality, which otherwise by the Course of Nature it must have had and kept. For instance, the water at the Marriage Feast in Cana of Galilee, could not at the bare Word or Will of Christ, by the Course of Nature have its Form changed into the Form of Wine; and yet the Matter in it's own Nature was capable of receiving the Form of Wine, and capable too of being without the Form of Water, though left to it self and the Order of Nature it must have kept it. If capable of losing the one and receiving the other, then it was possible for it to be turned from the one into the other: if possible, then within the Sphere of Omnipotence to effect it: by a Miracle though, *Quia quidlibet non fit ex quolibet Naturaliter.*

All Motion in Matter capable of being suspended or destroyed.

The like may be said of Motion in Matter: it is wholly contingent and accidental to it. It might in it's own Nature considered have for ever been without it, and so have continued one great unwieldy Mass: now it has so great a quantity of Motion impressed, yet all it's parts may be again reduced to rest, not by the Course of Nature indeed, but yet by a Power working above and contrary to Nature. To press this further home, The whole order of Nature, ever since the Production of it, has depended upon the Motion first impressed upon the parts of Matter, and

and the Power given them to transfer their Motions from one to another: for hereupon depends all the Variety of Forms and Qualities, all the various Productions in the World, wherein the Order of Nature consists. Now this Motion, and this Power of transferring and communicating it, was at first contingent, and so might not have been impressed upon Matter, is contingent still, and so may be now destroyed, and then what becomes of the Order of Nature.

There are therefore things possible which it is above the power of Nature to effect, as the creation of Matter, &c. Other things which are contrary to Nature and it's established Order, as the annihilation of the Matter of the whole World, the suspension of that Motion in the parts of Matter, whereupon the whole Order of Nature depends, the Production of any Form or Qualities in Matter, howsoever in the Order of Nature unqualified to receive them, &c. In a Word, The Matter of the whole World, and every Form, Quality, and Motion of Bodies therein are things contingent, and so capable either not to be, or to be otherwise. And consequently the whole Frame and Order of Nature may be altered, suspended, or reduced into nothing. A Miracle therefore, which is some of these Effects, does not imply a Contradiction in the Nature of the Thing.

2. A Miracle is not repugnant to the Nature of God, and his infinite Perfections. Not to his Power, because it is the Effect of it, and not of a Principle opposing it self to him. Not to his Justice, because all Nature is his own: nor his Goodness, because never made use of but to the best purposes. But rather highly Serviceable to both, as it pleases him to make use of

The production of a miracle is not repugnant to the Nature of God.

of it either to execute Judgment upon notorious Sinners in an exemplary manner, or to defend and protect the Innocent and Pious Man by the most signal instances of Providence and mercy. Not to his *Wisdom*, because the frame and order of Nature is admirably fitted to the ends of it: but Miracles are ordained for higher purposes and special and emergent occasions. For instance, if God be pleased to reveal himself to Man in an extraordinary manner, to enter into a new Covenant with us, and to propound to us new Terms of favour and reconciliation; to authorize some holy and inspired Persons to be his Messengers and Embassadors from Heaven, and to attest their Commission by his Letters of Credence; nay to cloath himself with humane Nature, and yet to dart forth the Rays of his Divinity through the veil of Flesh. Upon these grand and important occasions, what sure and infallible Evidence can we have that God himself speaks to us either by his *Prophets* or his *Son*, but by a *Miracle*? but by *Nature's* sitting down and being suspended a while, to shew that one greater than Nature is there, that God himself is then present by his immediate extraordinary Power as well as Revelation? It is not therefore (as *Spinoza* below profanely suggests) that God has created Nature so impotent, and given her *Laws and Rules* so barren; as that he is compelled sometimes to help her by new Ordinances and Supplies of Virtue, in order to her Support and Conservation, and that things may succeed according to his intention and design: It is not, I say, upon this Account that God has obliged himself to Work a *Miracle* upon special occasions; but because Nature was only fitted to the ends of Nature, and supernatural and extraordinary

traordinary means provided for Ends extraordinary and supernatural. Nor lastly, is the Working of a Miracle in any wise repugnant to the immutability of the Divine Nature or Counsel, as if he Acted therein *de novo, ex tempore*, and upon the sudden: because he has by one eternal immutable Act of his Will, settled the Order of all events Natural or above Nature. But this will appear more clearly in the Answer I shall give to his Arguments, to which I now come.

His Proposition to be proved is, *That nothing happens contrary to Nature, but Nature keeps an eternal, fixt, and immutable Order.*

His Arguments for the proof of this Proposition are Tr. p. 6. two.

1. *Because the Laws of Nature are the Decrees of God, and therefore involve eternal necessity and truth.* Spinoza's Arguments for the Truth of his first Proposition.

2. *Because the Power of Nature is the Power of God, and therefore as infinite as God himself.*

1. *Because the Laws of Nature are the Decrees of God, &c.*

In the prosecution of this Argument; it will appear: Arg. 4.

1. That he takes the Word *Nature* in another sense than this Question properly admits.

2. That his Argument as it proceeds upon his own Principles, terminates directly in flat *Atheism* or *Idolatry*.

3. That, setting aside his own Principles, his Argument may in some sense be true, and yet not infer the truth of his Conclusion.

1. *He takes the Word Nature in another sense than this Question properly admits.* By *Nature* (as I shewed above) In this Argument he takes the Word Nature in another

sense than the
Reason ad-
mits.

Tractat.
Theolog. Polit.
c. 6. p. 100.

His Propositi-
on true,
if he take the
Word in this
sense, for see
to the Question.

above) is meant here, the whole aggregate and com-
pages of Bodies in the World, and the Order where-
in they act amongst one another. In this sense
therefore *Spinoza* must be presumed to prove, That
nothing happens contrary to Nature, which whether
he does or no will immediately appear. In the Con-
clusion of this first Argument, to these Words, *Nihil
igitur in Naturâ contingit, quod ipsius Legibus uni-
versalibus repugnat*, &c. He subjoyns this Marginal
Note, *N. B. me hic per Naturam non intelligere solam
materiam ejusq; affectiones, sed præter materiam alia
infinita*. The *Translator*, I confess, has it not (whether
omitted as impertinent only, or as that which would
too openly discover the weakness of his reasoning, I
do not determine) but I shall take leave to consider
what he has as *Spinoza's* and not his own.

Now if *Spinoza* take the Word *Nature* in so great
a Latitude as to understand by it an infinite number
of other things besides Matter, he may find it pretty
easie to reduce all things within its compass: and if he
make the *Laws of Nature* in his sense of so great ex-
tent, it may be hard for any thing not to fall within
their Circuit and Jurisdiction: but then the Philoso-
pher's way of Arguing will be as much beside the
Question, as a Miracle is beside Nature.

The *Schoolmen* where they treat of Laws, make the
first division of them into the Eternal Law, and those
that are derived from it. The Eternal two-fold. 1. The
Order whereby God eternally decreed to do all things.
2. The Order which he decreed to prescribe to his
Creatures, to be observed by them according to their
several Natures and Conditions. The latter is branch-
ed out in these particulars, the Law of Natural Agents,

of

of Angels and Men; and this, either the Law of Natural
Reason, Divine Revelation, or Humane Institution.
This second Eternal Law, and the branches of it, are
such as that the several Agents to whom they were
given, may swerve from and not Act in a constant and
uniform obedience to them. So the Angels first vi-
olated their Law; then Mankind theirs, as they daily
do all Laws Natural and Positive, Divine and Humane.
The natural Agents indeed, as not endued with free-
dom of Will, observe one constant Order and Tenor if
left to themselves: yet may either cease to Act, or
Act otherwise, if God in his eternal purpose think
fit to interpose, who can then either suspend their O-
perations, or determine them to act beyond their
Sphere, beside their usual course, and contrary to their
natural tendencies and the Laws of their Motion. But
the first Eternal Law is of universal extent, and holds
inviolably. Nothing can fall out beside, above, or con-
trary to it. It directs to its own grand purposes what-
ever strays from the particular Laws of its Creation,
draws good out of evil, and makes all Events conspire
to the setting forth of the Glory of God. It ordains
the sins of lapsed Angels and Men, to the irrevoka-
ble Damnation of the first, and the Redemption of
the latter, by the most surprizing and mysterious
Methods of love and mercy. It provides for a
supplement to the lost or decayed light of Nature, the
Revelations of Law and Gospel by *Moses* and the *Pro-
phets*, our blessed *Saviour* and his *Apostles*; and to
attest their Divine Authority and Mission, ordains Na-
ture to act above or contrary to her self by an *obedi-
ent* Power. The same eternal Act of the Divine
Counsel decreeing the production of miraculous Effects

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upon emergent occasions, which first determined into Act the whole Frame and Order of Nature.

We see here an *Universal Law* from whence all things follow, and contrary to which nothing does or can fall out. An Order eternal, fixt and immutable, set down with himself by that Supreme being, who worketh all things *quasi in seipso non dependente a seipso*. That by this he hath appointed times for Miraculous and Supernatural Effects, as well as this lasting Period for the constant and settled operations of Nature. If this be *Spinoza's Law of Nature*, where he extends the Signification of that Word infinitely beyond the compass of the material World, and the order whereby Natural Bodies act therein; his Proposition may be true, *That nothing falls out contrary to Nature, but Nature keeps an eternal, fixt, and immutable Order.* But then, 1. He takes the Word *Nature* in a different sense from all the World besides; 2. Wholly leaves the Question about the possibility of Miracles, that being consistent with the Truth of his Proposition if taken in that sense.

This Argument as it proceeds upon his own Principles terminates in flat Atheism or Idolatry.

And I wish his sense were so *Orthodox* as this I have hinted, and that all his fault were only that he has mistaken the state of the Question, and the meaning of the Terms of it. But it will appear far otherwise when we come to examine upon what Principles his Argument proceeds.

His Argument is this, *The Laws of Nature are the Decrees of God, and therefore involve eternal necessity and truth. Ergo, nothing can fall out contrary to Nature, but Nature keeps an eternal, fixt, and immutable Order.* The ground of the Argument lies in this, *That whatever God Wills or Decrees, involves eternal necessity.*

necessity and truth. For the proof whereof *Spinoza* refers us to his Fourth Chapter. The Argument which he brings for it there, is drawn from the Identity of the *Divine Will and Understanding*, and it proceeds thus, All the difference between the Understanding and Will of God is, he says, only in our conception, and that in this manner, *We conceive God to understand any thing, as, for instance, the Nature of a Triangle, when we regard only this, That the Nature (v. c.) of a Triangle is contained eternally in the Divine Nature as an eternal Truth. We conceive God to will the same thing, when we regard this farther, That the Nature (v. c.) of a Triangle is so contained in the Divine, not upon account of the necessity of the nature of a Triangle it self, but upon account of the necessity of the Divine Nature: and that all the necessity of the nature of a Triangle and its properties, as they are conceived as eternal Truths, depends not upon the necessity of its own Nature, but the Divine.* So that for God to Will or Decree any thing, is for the same to be contained necessarily in the *Divine Nature*, by reason of the necessity of it, as an eternal truth: And therefore, *Whatever God wills or decrees involves eternal truth and necessity.*

Tractat Theologico-Polit.
c. 4 p. 77.

This is his *Principle*, which he borrows from his Fourth Chapter, and we see it is grounded upon a particular Notion which he had formed in his Brain of the *Divine Will and Understanding*. This conceit he does not farther explain or make out in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*; and therefore, to run up his Argument to the head, I shall consult his *Opera Posthuma* for a Scheme of his Principles from whence to deduce it. There, in the First Part of his *Ethicks*, which

which treats *de Deo*, he has this Doctrine, *That there is but one Substance in the World, and that is God. That God is a Substance absolutely infinite, i. e. a Substance endued with an infinite number of Attributes, each infinite, each displaying his infinite Essence: two whereof are known to us, Cogitation and Extension. That from the necessity of the infinite Essence and Attributes of God do proceed (as properties from an emanative cause) infinite Modes wherein the Divine Nature and Attributes do subsist and act. That Nature and all created Beings are only these various Modes wherein the Divine Essence and Attributes do necessarily display themselves: In particular that all Bodies and finite Spirits are only various Modes of those two infinite Attributes in God, Extension and Cogitation.*

And from these Principles we may indeed deduce not only his conception of what it is in God to understand and to will: but many other Consequences admirably agreeable to Religion and Right Reason. As, 1. That God is an extended Substance, and extension infinite. 2. That God is the emanative cause of all finite Beings, and they therefore really and identically contained in the Divine Nature, and the same with him. 3. That God subsists in all Bodies and finite Spirits, as a Substance under its necessary Modes flowing from its Essence: and therefore both he himself material and bodily, as being extended, and every body in Nature a part of him. So that now we clearly see the ground whereupon Spinoza asserts, *That nothing can happen contrary to Nature: viz. because God and Nature are one and the same, God Nature subsistent, and Nature God modified.*

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And why he says, *That for God to will or decree any thing, is for the thing to be contained in his Nature as an eternal truth flowing from the necessity of it*, viz. because his Will is only that of an emanative cause, and every thing which we conceive produced by the Divine Will, is so only in regard that it flows necessarily from his Essence, as light in the Sun, and heat in the Fire from their very nature. And so likewise his understanding of the same thing, is only that he sees its necessary Existence proceeding from the necessity of his own Nature.

Here we have a full discovery of his Sense and Scope in this Argument; and it plainly terminates in one of these two, *Atheism* or *Idolatry*. For to make God and Nature the same thing, is either to advance a Creature into the place of God, or (what Tully says of Epicurus) *Oratione relinquere Deum, ve tollere*. I shall not therefore prosecute his Argument, so far, as to confute him through the whole Set of his Principles: nor take my self to be obliged, in order to prove the possibility of a *Work above Nature*, to go so far about as to prove first the Being of a God above it. But his Argument may deserve a little Consideration, setting aside his Principles, and that only in order to state how far the Laws of Nature may be granted to be the *Decrees and Volitions of God*, and whether and how far thereupon they involve eternal necessity and truth.

His Argument therefore is in form this, *Whatever God Wills or Decrees, involves eternal necessity and truth. The Laws of Nature are the Decrees and Volitions of God. E. They involve eternal necessity and truth. E. Nothing can fall out contrary to them.*

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De Naturâ
Deorum l. 1.His Arguments,
setting aside his
Principles, may
be true, and yet
not infer the
truth of his Con-
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The Laws of Nature may be considered as in Nature it self, or as in the Author of it. In Nature it self they signifie the determinations of Bodies to act in such or such a manner. In the Author of it they signifie those Decrees whereby the Order of Nature is established, and particular Bodies determined to act in such a particular manner. In this Sense, I grant that the Laws of Nature are the *Decrees and Volitions of God*. And how they are so, and how far thereupon they may be conceived to *involve eternal necessity and truth*, may appear from these Considerations:

How the Laws of Nature are the Decrees of God, and eternal Truth.

1. That there is one grand Universal Law, Decree, and Purpose of the Divine Will, whereby he eternally set down with himself the Order wherein to work all things. This Conception is most agreeable to the simplicity and immutability of the Divine Nature. To his simplicity, that as his Nature, so the Act of his Will, should be perfectly one, and not multiplied in *infinitum* in proportion to the variety of Effects ordained and regulated by it. To his immutability, that we should not suppose him to be daily enacting new Laws and Decrees, but that he works all things by a Decree co-eternal to himself. And this Conception is cleared by our parallel apprehensions about the Divine Understanding. The Objects thereof are temporary, yet the Act of his Knowledge whereby he sees them eternal: they are manifold and various, yet that simple and uniform. Therefore as by one Act of his Understanding he sees *ab eterno* all things future in their several times, so by one Act of his Will he ordains them all.

2. That in this universal Law are included, *Secundum nostrum concipiendi modum*, many particular Laws

Laws and Decrees establishing the Order of particular Events, necessary and contingent, natural and above Nature, in their particular times and places.

3. That these particular Laws and Decrees have each (in subordination to the universal) a limited and determinate compass of times, places, and events, wherein they take effect.

4. That yet each of them does certainly take effect within that determinate compass to which it is limited. And therefore

5. That a Proposition declaring that such a Law and Decree will certainly take effect, is true; and the truth of it necessary and *ab eterno* by virtue of that Law and Decree.

6. That yet as the Law it self and the Decree is, so is the necessary and eternal Truth of that Proposition: *viz.* It is necessary and true *ab eterno* that this Law and Decree shall take effect within that determinate compass of times, places, and events, whereto it is limited, and no further.

Now the Laws and Decrees by which the Order of Nature is established, are such particular Laws and Decrees; and such is their eternal Truth and Necessity. For instance, The motion of the Sun is an Ordinance in Nature, proceeding from Gods Will and Decree: Yet so limited (in subordination to his universal Law and Purpose) to a determinate compass, as not to take effect at some points of time within that period for which Nature is established: I mean at that time, when the Sun stood still at *Joshua's* word, and when it went back so many degrees for a sign to King *Hezekiah*. So that the same universal Purpose and Decrees of God might settle the order of

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the Suns motion, and thereupon it be necessary and true *ab aeterno* that the Sun shall move in this Order, and yet without ordain, that at such times notwithstanding the Sun should stand still or go back, and thereupon it be as necessary and true *ab aeterno*, that at those points of time the Sun should go back or stand still. The Laws therefore of Natural Agents may in this sense be the Decrees of God, and involve eternal necessity and truth; and yet it may be possible for some certain effects to fall out contrary to them, *viz.* without that compass within which they are limited to take effect, and no farther. But if Spinoza will have it, That whatever God wills to come to pass in such a time, must therefore be always; or, that whatever Order God settles for such a determinate compass, must, because he wills and settles it, hold eternally: I deny that in this sense every Law and Decree of God involves eternal Necessity and Truth.

It is eternally necessary and true, That whatever God Decrees to be, shall be: if he decree any thing to be and endure to perpetuity, it is eternally true and necessary that it shall be perpetually; if he decree it to such a compass, it is *ab aeterno* necessary and true that it shall hold so long, and his Decree or the truth and necessity of the Effect, consequent thereupon, is not violated if it hold no longer.

So much therefore may be said in Answer to his first Argument to prove that *Nothing can happen contrary to Nature*, &c. The Sum is, That he mistakes the meaning of the Terms of the Question. That he makes Nature the same with God, and so (besides his taking the word in a sense of his own) he in ef-

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fect rejects the Existence of a Deity in Order to overthrow the belief of Miracles. Lastly, That in the sense wherein I have considered his Argument, it may be true, and yet his Conclusion not follow from it.

His Second Argument is, *Because the Power of Nature is the power of God, and therefore as infinite as himself. E. Nothing can fall out without its compass, or contrary to it.*

Spinoza's
cond. Arguments
for his first Pro-
position.
Tr. p. 7.

His ground whereupon he proceeds in this Argument is to be sure the very same conception of the Divine Nature, *viz.* That Nature is nothing but an infinite variety of Modifications of the Divine Essence, and the power of it consequently nothing but the infinite fecundity of the Divine Essence determining it necessarily to exert it self in all the infinite variety of the modes of its being. I shall therefore only give this Argument so much consideration as it may require, setting aside his Principles. The power of Nature is the force that natural causes have to act each in their several manners, and the vertue and efficacy of the whole arising from the joynt concurrence of the several parts in their distinct Operations: This, to speak properly, is all resolved into a *Virtutis* impressed upon matter, enabled to act by Gods Power, and determined to do it by his Will. This therefore certainly must be different from the power of its Author, in as much as the powers must be different if the Subjects differ to which they belong. But granting that the power of Nature is *virtually* and *originally* (though not *formally*) the Divine Power exerting it self in Nature as its Instrument: Yet it no more follows thereupon, that the power

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of Nature must be infinite, then it follows that because the motion of the Sun is the motion of Nature, therefore it is of as great extent as the motion of the whole frame of Nature besides. Or because the Power that moves the hand is the power of the Soul, that therefore the whole Sphere of the Souls Power in the Body is no larger than the hand. The Argument is from a particular to an universal, Gods power, though simple and indivisible, is yet unlimited. It may act far beyond that compass wherein it does, and therefore infinitely beyond the limits of Nature. It exerts it self both in a natural and supernatural way; and both kinds of effects proceed from one and the same indivisible omnipotence: which is no more multiplied by the variety of effects that flow from it, than the power of the Soul as it moves the hands, and the feet, the eye, and the tongue.

These are all the Arguments he brings for the proof of his first Proposition. The rest is the Conclusion he draws from the whole, viz. *What a Miracle is: That* (it being proved that all Supernatural Effects are impossible) *a Miracle can be only an effect inexplicable by our own observation, or the Principle of Nature known to us.* Having therefore proved that supernatural Effects are not impossible, and answered his Arguments for the contrary, I may take leave to draw a Conclusion contradictory to his, That a Miracle is not only what he says, but an Effect beside, above, or contrary to the Order of Nature.

The second thing he undertakes is, *To prove that by Miracles we cannot know the Essence, Existence,*

Tr. p. 1.

Proposition 2.
Tr. p. 1.

or Providence of God: but that all these may be better known by the fixt and immutable Order of Nature. His Design in this seems to be to destroy the Authority and Credit of Miracles, by shewing that they are not proofs sufficient of what they are designed for. But in the framing of this Proposition, he mistakes the end, for which they are design'd. For 1. The design of Miracles is not to make a discovery (at least immediately and by themselves) of the Essence of God. They are proper and meet evidences of the truth of any Revelation, and if in that Revelation it please God to make any supernatural display of his own Nature, then Miracles may be said mediately to discover to us the Essence of God; otherways they demonstrate no other Attribute of God but his power, viz. as it is able to suspend the Operations of Nature, or to act above it.

2. Neither do they tend in any peculiar mannerto prove the Existence of a Deity, but rather suppose it: viz. That there is a Supream Being who is the Author of Nature, who gave it such a Power and set it such Laws whereby to act; which Power and which Laws, a Miracle being either above or contrary to, proves thereupon (not that God is, but) that it is he who then acts by his own immediate hand, and not Nature. But, for any proof it gives us of the Being of a God, it is only in the same way that every natural Effect demonstrates it, by leading us to a first Cause.

3. Miracles are indeed sufficient Evidences of the Divine Providence; that God does take upon him and actually exercise the Government of the World; that he does not leave Nature to her self, but sometimes

In the framing of this Proposition he mistakes the end for which Miracles are designed.

times interposes and sets her aside: That he does not sit an unconcerned Spectator of the Actions of Men, but sometimes in a most signal manner rewards or punishes them here in this life. Yet the demonstration of Gods Providence is not the proper and primary end of supernatural Effects, but

4. A Miracle is properly intended to prove, 1. Immediately, the immediate power and presence of God Acting himself in an extraordinary manner in the working of it. 2. (By Vertue of this evident Demonstration of Gods immediate extraordinary presence) the Divine Authority and Mission of that person whom God has been pleased to make his Instrument in the effecting of it; at whose word or request the Order of Nature is suspended, which we cannot suppose God would permit either for no end at all, or for one so repugnant to his Sanctity and Goodness, as to assist an Imposture.

Thus much therefore we may know by miracles, not what God is in his Nature, nor his Existence any better than we may know it by any Effect of Nature; but his Providence, his extraordinary presence and power, and the Authority of that person whose Divine Mission it attests. We are next to enquire whether his Arguments are more sufficient to disprove the authority of Miracles in this regard.

His arguments for the Truth of his second Proposition are from Reason and Scripture. From Reason he attempts to prove it three ways.

1. Because the belief of the possibility of a Miracle does virtually introduce meer Scepticisme, and consequently is so far from proving the Essence, Existence, or Providence of God, that it takes away the

This Argument for his 2. Proposition from Reason, and Scripture.

the certainty both of the existence of a Deity and every thing else.

2. Because a Miracle is a work that transcends our Capacity to understand it, and therefore what we understand not, it self cannot lead us to the understanding of any thing else.

3. Because a Miracle is a thing finite, and therefore cannot be a fit Medium to prove the being of an Agent of infinite Power.

1. The belief of the possibility of a Miracle virtually introduces meer Scepticisme, and so takes away the certainty both of the being of God and every thing else. This Argument strikes as much at the belief of Miracles themselves as of any thing else upon their Credit and Authority: for there can be no Reason to believe any thing, which to believe obliges me to doubt of every thing else as impossible to be certainly known. The ground whereupon he asserts that the belief of Miracles leads us to Scepticisme, is, because it takes away the certain Truth of those Notions from whence we conclude the being of a God or any thing else that we know; and that this it does in as much as it supposes a Power in God able to alter the Truth of these Notions, for this too he must be able to do, if able to change the course of Nature.

By these Notions may be understood two things; 1. The Principles of Truth whereupon we build all our knowledge. 2. Our own Ideas and apprehensions of things. The former are either the common Principles of Natural Light, viz. Axioms evident upon the first apprehension of the Terms, as That a thing cannot be and not be at the same time, the whole is greater than any part, &c. Or 2. the definitions of things,

This first Argument for his 2. Proposition from Reason.

The objection Miracles do not introduce Scepticisme.

things, and propositions ascribing to them their Nature and Properties: as *Homo est animal rationale, Triangulum habet tres angulos aequales duobus restis*, &c. Or 3. Propositions containing the mutual respects of things, as *that Cruelty and Injustice are repugnant to the Nature of God, Theft and Murder to the Nature of a sociable Creature*, &c. Now these principles of Truth are all necessary, and immutable, and the Truth of them does not depend upon the being or order of Nature: a possibility therefore of change in the order of Nature does not imply that by the same Power the truth of these Notions may be altered. They are, first, necessary and immutable, because it implies a contradiction for them to be false, *v. c. for the whole to be no greater than any part, Man not to be a rational creature, God to be cruel or unjust*, &c.

2. They are true independently upon the being or order of Nature. If God should destroy the whole frame of Nature, yet it were true notwithstanding, *that the whole Body were bigger than any part*. If he should reduce Mankind into nothing, it were still true notwithstanding, *That the nature of Man consists in the Union of a rational Soul, and a Body endued with life and sense*. God may turn one thing into another, and make the same Matter appear under a Form above or contrary to what it should have by the course of Nature, but he cannot make it be and not be, *be of this Nature and of another, at the same time*. He can suspend the Actions of his Creatures, but yet cannot make them *Act and not Act both together*. In short, however God by his Power may alter or suspend the Order of Generations in Nature, yet this Principle will hold true, that in an order

order of successive generations of Men there must be some first Man, and this first Man must have a Cause that is not Man, and this Cause must either be it self, or lead us at last to, an infinite Supreme Being. So that the *existence of a God may be deduced from certain and necessary Principles, though the Order of Nature be capable of being changed by his Almighty Power*.

The altering therefore of the course of Nature, makes no alteration in the principles of Knowledge, But does it not infer a Power in God to change our Notions and Apprehensions of them and of every thing else? A Physical Power indeed it does, as it proves him *Omnipotent*: but this will not drive us to *Scepticisme*, while we are certain that it is as much repugnant to his *Veracity* and *Goodness* as compatible to his *Power* barely considered. For it is impossible that a Being infinitely Good and Holy should impose upon his Creatures, and implant such Notions in their Minds as would necessarily induce them to believe a Lye, or so alter their apprehensions of things, as to make it impossible for them to make a true Judgment by the use of their own reason.

The belief of Miracles therefore does not lead us unto *Scepticisme*, and so does not take away the certainty of the Being of a God, but yet perhaps it may not be a fit Medium to prove either his Existence, or his Providence, or to declare his Nature to us. And this upon two Accounts. 1. *Because a Miracle is a Work that transcends our capacity to understand it, and therefore what we understand not it self, cannot lead us to the understanding of any thing else.* 2. *Because a Miracle is a thing*

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thing finite, and therefore cannot be a fit Medium to prove the being of an Agent of infinite Power. To the First, a Miracle is a Work that transcends our capacity to understand it; i.e. it is beyond the compass of our Knowledge to deduce it from natural Causes, and good reason, because it is beyond their power and efficacy to Effect it. But yet so far it is within our Capacity, that it is possible for us to know whether it be an effect supernatural or not, and when it is known to be such it is sufficient to demonstrate the immediate operation of God's Power and Providence.

To the Second, nothing is more false or groundless than that Assertion. It is so far from being true, that a finite Effect cannot be a Proof of an infinite Cause, that every finite Effect is so; either immediately, as when the Effect though finite exceeds the force and efficacy of any finite being in the Order and Sphere wherein it acts, or mediately when the Effect is produced by a train of finite Causes, which yet must have had their own being and their first motion or power to act from an infinite Agent. The argument for an Infinite from the existence of finite beings, proceeds thus, every finite being is contingent, and so might not have been; therefore the reason of its being must not be in it self, but in something else, viz. the Cause that produced it. Again, every finite being has limits of Perfection; these cannot be set by it self, but by something else which gave it such a degree of Perfection and no greater; and this must be the cause that produced it. If this Cause be finite too, it must proceed from another, and the Question will recur till we stop, at last in a Cause self-existent and infinite.

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So much therefore may be said in answer to his Arguments from reason for the former part of his second Proposition, viz. That by Miracles we cannot know the Essence, Existence or Providence of God. To what he says for the other part, viz. That all these may be better known by the fixt and immutable Order of Nature, the Answer may be shorter. His reason is, because the Laws of Nature are infinite, eternal, and immutable, and therefore in some measure indicate to us the infinity, eternity, and immutability of God: or rather (to make him speak more plainly out of his Opera Posthuma) because God and Nature are all one, and the more I know of Nature the more I understand of the modifications of the Divine Essence. But if he tells us that the belief of Miracles leads us to Scepticism, we may reply, that this Discovery of the Divine Essence which he pretends to make from Nature, will rather carry us either to Atheism or Idolatry.

I proceed to his Arguments from Scripture, which are two.

1. He argues from Deut. 13. v. 1, 2, 3. Because a Miracle (as is plain from that place) may be wrought by a Person that designs to introduce the worship of a false God.

2. He argues from the corrupt notions the Israelites had of God and his Providence, notwithstanding so many Miracles wrought among them.

The words in Deut. 13. v. 1, 2, 3. are these. If Arg. 1. from Scripture. Ex. p. 11.
 there arise among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and give thee a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or Wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, let us go after other Gods (which thou

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hast not known) and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that Prophet, or Dreamer of Dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your Heart and with all your Soul. And that Prophet or that Dreamer of Dreams shall be put to death, &c. From hence he argues, a Miracle may be wrought by one that designs to introduce the Worship of a false God. Ergo, by Miracles we may be as easily induced to embrace the Worship of a false God, as of the true. E. God cannot be made known to us by Miracles.

Though a
false Prophet
may work a
Miracle, yet Mi-
racles sufficient
evidences of a
true Prophet.

This is a difficulty commonly propounded for these Words in Deut. viz. How Miracles can be an undoubted evidence of the authority of a Prophet and the truth of his Doctrine, & yet it be possible for a Miracle to be wrought by a false Prophet in the highest degree: viz. a Preacher of Idolatry. And the best way to give a clear and satisfactory Answer to it, will be to consider the utmost force of it as it is urged from this place. The Israelites to whom these Words were spoken, had already a Law given them, and the Authority of it attested by unquestionable Miracles; the same Law repeated again in this book of Deut. with a repetition likewise of the History of those mighty Works which had been wrought for its confirmation. Their Religion therefore being thus settled, to fortifie them against all Temptations that might draw them to the Worship of the Gods of the Nations round about them, they are fore-warned in this place not to give ear to any Person that should entice them to Idolatry, though he should work a Miracle to confirm the Authority of his false Doctrine; for that God might possibly permit such a Person to work

work a Miracle merely to try the stedfastness of their Faith and Adherence to his Worship. This is the Case wherein those Words (Deut. 13.) must be understood to be spoken; and this is all that can be rationally drawn from them, that God may permit a Miracle to be wrought by a false Prophet after he has established the true Religion, and fore-warned his people not to believe a Miracle against it. We are to enquire therefore whether if this be possible, Miracles can be sufficient evidences of a true Prophet.

The Argument is in form this, If God after he has established the true Religion, and fore-warned his people not to believe a Miracle against it; may permit a false Prophet to work a Miracle to try the stedfastness of their faith; then Miracles are not sufficient Evidences of a true Prophet. But God may in this case permit a Miracle to be wrought by a false Prophet. Ergo. If the consequence is, That Miracles are not always sufficient Evidences, or not in this particular Case, I readily grant it: If, That they never are in any case (which must be the Conclusion if to the purpose.) I deny it: and the reason of my denial of it is this, because notwithstanding an Impostor may work a Miracle in this case, and so the Miracle he works be no evidence of a true Prophet: yet in any other case (notwithstanding the force of these words) it may be (and I may positively say is) impossible for a true Miracle to be wrought by an Impostor; and therefore all other Miracles which are not reducible to this Case may be certain and infallible Evidences of a true Prophet. For Instance, two sorts of Miracles are excepted from this Case. 1. Those Miracles (suppose) that were wrought among the Israelites, after

after this warning given them not to believe any person that would seduce them to *Idolatry*, though he should work a Miracle, by persons that did not attempt to seduce them from the Worship of the true God. 2. Those Miracles which were wrought at any time by any persons whose Doctrine the people before whom they were wrought had not been forewarned by God not to believe. And that neither of these could be wrought by an *Impostor*, but both were sufficient Evidences of a true Prophet, I shall demonstrate evidently from these Principles.

1. In every Miracle or supernatural Effect, God must be present (not consenting and assisting only, but) working it himself by his extraordinary Power.

2. This God cannot do (*viz.* alter the course of Nature) for no end, or for any that is mean and trivial.

3. Nor can his end be to deceive or impose upon those persons before whom it is wrought.

4. If his end cannot be to deceive us, and yet he cannot work a Miracle, but for some great end: it follows, That every Miracle wrought by any person pretending thereupon a Commission to reveal any Doctrine, must either be ordained by God to ratifie and confirm his Commission, and this Miracle cannot be wrought by a false Prophet: or if it be not ordained by God to confirm his Commission, but may be done by him though he be a false Prophet, it must be onely in such a case where sufficient warning has been given to those before whom the Miracle is wrought, that they are

are not to believe the Authority or Doctrine of that Prophet though he work a Miracle.

5. Therefore in this one Case (where sufficient warning is given us not to believe such a person though he work a Miracle) God may work a Miracle by a false Prophet, and therefore it is no sufficient Evidence of a true: In any other case it is impossible he should work it by a false Prophet, and therefore it is not sufficient Evidence of a true.

All this necessarily follows from the Wisdom, Veracity, and Holiness of God. His Wisdom cannot permit him to work a Miracle by any man for nothing or upon any trivial account: and his *Veracity* and *Holiness* cannot permit him to bear witness to a *Liar* and *Seducer* (working a Miracle and pretending thereupon to a Commission from Heaven to Preach his Doctrine) which he does in working a Miracle by him, unless in such a Case where he gives us warning not to believe him upon the Authority of his Miracle: And in that Case he does not bear Witness to a Liar, because he fore-warns us that his Miracle is not done to attest the Authority of that Person by whom he does it: And so though it were the *setting of his Seal* to his Commission (to use that expression) yet we are sufficiently secured from being imposed upon thereby, because fore-warned that in this case his Seal is to be no Evidence to us, though otherwise it be the clearest and most convincing Evidence imaginable. A Miracle therefore, where warning before-hand is given against it, may be wrought by a Seducer and Impostor; but where we are not forewarned against it, it must be wrought by a true: *Ergo, Though in that Case a Miracle is no Evidence*
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of a true Prophet, yet in every other Case it certainly is, and consequently, Though an Impostor may work a Miracle, yet a Miracle is in most cases an undoubted Evidence of a true Prophet.

Now the warning or notice given us in this case, may be either expressed, or implied. Expressed as in the place fore mentioned, under the Law; or where we are forbidden to hearken to false Prophets and false Christs; *which shall do great Signs and Wonders; or to an Angel from Heaven that should preach another Doctrine, then that we have received under the Gospel.* Implied, as where the Doctrine and Institution of the Gospel is declared to be the last Will of Almighty God, and a Law to endure without alteration or repeal to the end of the World; for if God declare it to be such, this implies that no Doctrine contrary to it, no other Doctrine, is to be embraced, though the person preaching it should work a Miracle to confirm his Authority.

All other Miracles therefore are Evidences of a true Prophet, except where such warning is given. And those I reduced to two sorts:

1. Those that were wrought among the *Israelites* after the warning given them *Deut. 12.* by any person that did not attempt to seduce them from the Worship of the true God; for against such a person working a Miracle they had no warning, and therefore his Miracle was enough to command their belief.

2. Those wrought at any time by any persons against whose Doctrine there had been no warning given to the persons before whom the Miracles were wrought. And under these two kinds are placed all

the

Deut. 12.

Matt. 24. 24.
Gal. 1. 8.

Hob. 1. 2.
7. 16, 17.

the Miracles whose Authority *Spinoza* would destroy by this Argument. To begin with *Moses's*, they were wrought before the *Israelites* had any warning to reject the Authority of any Miracles whatsoever: and if after, they were wrought not to seduce them to Idolatry but with the contrary design, *viz.* to settle the Worship of the true God among them. So also *Elijah's*, to reclaim that people from Idolatry. And the Miracles of our blessed *Saviour* and his *Apostles*, will not I suppose be said by any one to be wrought to seduce the *Jews* from the Worship of the true God. So that if all these Miracles must be excepted from the Case wherein a Miracle may be wrought by a false Prophet, his Argument from the possibility of it (out of *Deut. 12.*) against the authority of all Miracles, falls to the ground.

His other Argument from Scripture is from the corrupt Notions the *Israelites* had of God and Providence, notwithstanding all the Miracles wrought among them. He instances in their Worshipping the *Calf* in *Moses's* absence: In the doubts the Author of the *73. Psalm* says he had about a Providence; and *Solomon's* Opinion that all things were governed by chance, which he confesses he once held. To this I answer, 1. I have already intimated that Miracles in themselves do not discover to us what God is in his Nature, any farther than as it is done in the Revelation which they confirm. 2. Therefore I hope he will not say that the Revelation which the *Israelites* had concerning God, was such as was not sufficient if they would have attended to it, to have taught them that God was not to be worshipped under the resemblance of a Creature, much less his glory to be turned

Argument 2.
From Scripture.
Tr. p. 14.

Psalm 73.
1. 21, 22.

Psalm 106. 20.

turned into the similitude of a Calf. 3. The mighty Works that God did for the Children of *Israel*, were such as might easily have convinced them, that such a base Creature was not the God that brought them forth out of the land of *Egypt*. 4. Therefore he ought rather to impute it to the great stupidity and blindness of that People, there being newly converted from the worship of the *Egyptian Apis*; and their forgetting of God their Saviour who had done so great things for them, than to any insufficiency either in the Miracles to demonstrate God's Power and Providence to them, or in the Law he had newly given them to instruct them how he was to be worshipped. I pass by what he says of *Solomon* and the Author of the 73 *Psalms*: their doubts were about such things wherein Miracles were not proper means to inform them: viz. Why the wicked prosper in this life?

What he has besides under this Head, is, 1. A profane abuse of the Scripture, instead of an Answer to those plain Expressions therein, where God is said to have wrought his Miracles, that he might make his power to be known, and that the *Israelites* might know that he was God. This, he says, is not as if the Scripture meant, that Miracles are in themselves convincing Arguments, but only that the Holy Spirit makes use of them as Arguments *ad hominem*, that is (for want of better Evidences) he is fain to take all the advantage he can of their pre-conceived Opinions, however irrational and absurd, and makes these his Topicks, as most effectual to persuade or convince them, and in this sense he interprets what *St. Paul* says, that to the *Jews* he became as a *Jew*, to the *Greeks* as a *Greek*, that is, argued with both
not

Eccod. 17. 4.

Psal. 106. 2.

Tr. p. 15.

Psal. 106. 2.
Ex. 16. 2.

not from any true and rational Principles, but by making the best use he could of their prejudices and propensities to gain them to his side.

2. That it is not consistent with true Philosophy, that God in the Order and Course of his Providence should be conceived to take greater care of one person or Nation than another; viz. he is not only bound to provide for all whatsoever means are necessary for their happiness, but also obliged not to give any one Man over and above any degree of Grace which he does not equally impart to all the World. To answer these two Positions fully, we should be obliged to examine *Spinoza's* second and third Chapter of his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. whereto he refers us for the demonstration of both.

I pass on therefore to the third thing he proposes to make out: viz. That the Scripture by the Decrees and Commands, and consequently the Providence of God understands nothing else but the fixt and immutable Order of Nature. This he attempts to prove two ways, 1. By Instance. 2. Because the Scripture relates several Circumstances in the production of those Effects that are commonly held to be supernatural. His Instances are some that I mentioned above in my Answer to the Premonition, viz. God telling *Samuel*, *He would send him a Man out of the Land of Benjamin*, which was only *Saul's* coming to him to enquire about the Asses. God being said to turn the hearts of the *Egyptians*, so that they hated the *Israelites*, who yet it appears, were moved to hate them upon Politique Accounts. Gods saying, *He would set his Bow in the Sky*, and yet the Rainbow, an undoubted Effect of Nature. So also the

1 2

Tr. p. 16.

Proposition 3.
Tr. p. 16.

A. G. 1.

Tr. p. 17.
1 Sam. p. 15.Psal. 105. 24.
Ex. 1.Gen. 9. 13.
Tr. p. 15.

Psal. 1. 8. 18.
and 104. 4.

melting of the Snow called Gods Word, and the Wind and Fire his Ministers.

I grant that the Scripture in these Instances, by Gods Decrees or Commands means no more than the Laws of Nature: but his Argument ought to conclude univerſally, for which a few instances in ſuch particulars wherein it holds, are not ſufficient. It is enough for me to name ſome things which the Scripture relates as the Decrees and Purpoſes of God, which yet could never take effect by the mere Courſe of Nature. As for Instance, *That a Virgin ſhould conceive and bear a Child*, That three Men ſhould be caſt into *Nebuchadnezzar's* Furnace, and the ſame Fire kill thoſe perſons that came ſo near to the Mouth of the Furnace as to throw them in, and yet not ſo much as ſinge a hair of their heads, though thrown into the miſt of it. That the Sun ſhould ſtand ſtill at the word of a Man; Fire come down from Heaven at the command of another; the Sea be ſtilled, the Dead raiſed, the Devils caſt out, at the Word, Touch, and Shadow of others. All theſe Effects the Scripture ſets down as wrought by the Decree and Order of Almighty God, but not, I preſume, by the Courſe of Nature. In a word, the Answer has been given before: That the Scripture aſcribes all Effects to God, natural or above Nature and as, from it's aſcribing the *Effects of Nature to God, without mentioning how he produces them*, we cannot juſtly conclude that it records them for *miraculous*; ſo on the other hand, from its ſpeaking of ſupernatural Effects in the ſame manner, we have as little reaſon to infer, that it means *nothing by them but the Order of Nature*.

His

II. 7. 14.
Dan. 3.

Joſh. 10;

His ſecond Reaſon is, becauſe the Scripture relates ſeveral *Circumſtances* in the production of Miracles; which Circumſtances, he ſays do ſhew that theſe Miracles required Natural Cauſes. So the Sprinkling of Aſhes required to produce the Plague of Scabs, an Eaſt Wind to bring the Locuſts, and a Weſt Wind to drive them away; an Eaſt Wind likewiſe to drive back the Red Sea. *Elijah's* laying his Body upon the Body of the *Sonnamites* Child, in order to raiſe it to life again.

If he argue to the purpoſe, he muſt grant that theſe Circumſtances, which he makes requiſite in the Order of Nature to produce theſe Effects, were alſo proper and ſufficient in the Order of Nature to produce them either wholly or in part.

And indeed the Wind may ſeem a very proper Inſtrument to bring and carry away the Locuſts, and to drive back the Sea: but the raiſing of the Wind, and determination of it is aſcribed to another Circumſtance not very proper to be the efficient Cauſe of it, *viz.* the ſtretching out of *Moſes's Hand* and his *Rod*. And this commonly was the firſt Circumſtance in every Miracle which *Moſes* wrought, and therefore though it were not ſufficient to produce thoſe Effects immediately and by it ſelt, yet it muſt be ſuppoſed proper to ſet all the other ſubordinate Cauſes on Motion. For their *requiring natural Cauſes, becauſe related with ſome Circumſtances concurring to their production*, muſt imply that theſe Circumſtances were the Natural Cauſes requiſite. And if ſo, then *Moſes's Rod* had many great, many occult, yet Natural Qualities, very hard indeed to explain or conceive, and very admirable though not miraculous;

Arg. 2.
Tr. p. 19.

Ex. 9. 2.
Co. 14. 14. 21
2 Kings 4. 34.

as

as of raising and laying Winds and Storms of Thunder and Hail, turning the Water into Blood, bringing Frogs out of the River, producing Lice out of the Dust, Water out of the Rock, &c.

To be short, the Circumstances commonly mentioned as concurrent to the production of Miracles, are so far from proving that they had Natural Causes, that they prove the contrary. For if they had any Natural Causes, these Circumstances must be all or part of them: but they are such as are in no wise qualified to produce the Effects ascribed to them in the Order of Nature, therefore must be qualified for it by a Supernatural Power, which can produce *quodlibet ex quolibet*, and make any thing instrumental to what Purposes and Effects it pleases.

For Instance, the *Clay* and the *Spittle* were the immediate Instruments applied by our Saviour to the Eyes of the Blind, and Tongue of the Dumb-man, The mention whereof in the account of these Miracles, if it prove that they required Natural Causes, then these were the Causes requisite, these they had, and these immediately produced the Effects. This they could not by the force of Nature, therefore by Miracle; and so his Argument destroys it self.

But farther, what if many are produced without any Circumstances at all, but purely at the Word and Will of the person that works them? This he says we cannot be assured of from the *Scripture*, because there may have been some though not mentioned there (he refers to *Exod. 14. 27.* compared with *Ex. 15. 10.*) But what if the *Scripture* does not only not make mention of any, but in a manner declares there were none! So in our Saviours stilling the Storm,

Storm, the very Reflection that his Disciples make Luk. 8. v. 25. upon that Miracle, proves that it was wrought by his bare Word, and not by the Application of any Means, much less, Natural. Before he draws his Conclusion from these Arguments, he answers an Objection from *Scripture*, *viz. That Famines are said to be caused by the sins of Men*, and the like: and Rain and Plenty restored by their Prayers, &c. His Answer is, that the *Scripture* does here speak *ad hominem*, and with the same Propriety as when it says that God is *angry, sorrowful, repents*, or the like; and that it is not true that any of these are the Causes of the Effects ascribed to them. Here 1. Methinks he is wary in his Answer. He might have granted that Famine is sent for the sins of Men, and Rain and fruitful Seasons for a return to their Prayers and Repentance, and yet have denied that either of these is wrought by Miracle. For Nature is ordered and directed by the Wisdom and Providence of Almighty God, as well as preserved and upheld by his Power; and therefore his Wisdom may so direct it, as often even by the Course of Nature to execute his divine purposes whether of Judgment or Mercy. He sees our Actions and hears our Prayers from all eternity, and therefore may, as he has the whole Order of Nature before his eyes, direct and determine the certain and necessary Events of it to their proper Seasons, and make them Instrumental to the accomplishing of his purposes, whether of shewing favour or executing wrath upon the Sons of Men. Thus therefore he need not be so strict as to deny any possibility of God's punishing us for our sins in the order of Nature, for fear lest it should

should betray him unawares to the concession of a Miracle. Natural Causes indeed our sins or Prayers are not of these Effects, nor yet Supernatural neither, but moral only and meritorious, as God upon view of either determines to punish or reward us. But suppose it were not so, 2. He gives but a very mean Solution of the difficulty *that the Scripture speaks improperly here, and in condescension to the Capacities and Opinions of the Vulgar, as it does when it says that God is angry, sorrowful or repents.* We grant the Scripture may be conceived to be obliged to speak in this manner, concerning the incomprehensible Nature of God, and such of his Perfections the modes whereof it is not necessary we should have explained to us, how they are and act in him: but yet it is not necessary that it should speak of every thing in the same manner, or that every thing that it says should be shuffled off by this or the like suggestion. Nothing is more natural and safe to be conceived, than that God does punish or reward our good or bad Actions, and that in this life, and that his Justice and Wisdom will oblige him to do it as he takes upon him the Government of the World: though it be very hard for the Vulgar to conceive how he does it without anger or displeasure and the contrary affections. Therefore the Scripture may be conceived to speak of the one in condescension to our Capacities, though yet no reason why it should be presumed to speak of the other in like manner.

reposition
P. 21.

I proceed to his fourth and last undertaking, *viz. To treat of the manner of interpreting the Scripture Miracles, and what things are chiefly to be observed in the Relations about them.* Or (as the

Tran-

Translator) *to shew that most Men have erred in their way of interpreting the Miracles recorded in the Holy Scripture.* To set us right he directs us in the reading of the Scripture-narrations about Miracles, to enquire into two things, 1. *The particular Opinions and Prejudices of the Relator:* 2. *The Idioms, Phrases and Tropes, of the Hebrew Tongue.* The first, because generally all Historians relate the events they speak of suitable to their own Conjectures, Opinions, and Prejudices. The other, because otherwise we may, from the Scripture-Style, conceive some things to be related for Miracles which really are not. For the first he instances in *Joshua* 10. v. 12, 13. where the Account of the extraordinary length of that Day is given according to the common opinion of the Sun's and not the Earth's motion. For the Second, in some allegorical places out of the Prophets. *Zachariah* 14. v. 7. *Isa.* 13. v. 10. 48. v. ult. By these two insinuations he would elude the force of all the clear and plain narrations about miracles in Scripture. To the first, and the instance he brings for it, I answer, the truth of the Miracle which *Joshua* relates is not at all prejudiced though it were true that the Earth moves, and not the Sun; for the course of Nature was stopped, whether in the motion of the Sun or the Earth, and therein consults the truth of the Miracle: As to the relation of it, it was not necessary either that *Joshua* should himself be so great a Philosopher or so far instructed by an extraordinary Revelation, as to put up his request to God that the Earth should stand still and not the Sun; or that the Account of it which he gives should be otherwise than according to the appearance of sense, and the

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apprehensions of the Vulgar grounded thereupon.

To the second, the truth of the Scripture-Miracles depends not upon any allegorical expressions in the Prophets, but upon the naked Relations of matters of Fact in the Historical Writers; so that though in the former we are to proceed with some Caution, and not to take every thing for Miraculous, which is spoken of in an high strain of expression: yet in the latter we find no such danger of being imposed upon by the Tropes and Figures of the Hebrew Tongue, all things being delivered in the Historical part of Scripture with the greatest plainness and simplicity.

Tr. p. 26.

Tr. p. 27.

I have run through the main of *Spinoza's* Chapter, which consists in the proof of his four Propositions at first laid down. What is behind, is, 1. An account of his different Method in this Chapter from that which he takes in his first and second Chapters about *Prophecy* and *Prophecy*: but this is proper to his *Treatise Theologico Polit.* 2. He attempts to prove from Scripture the Immutability of the Order of Nature, repeating also some of his former Arguments for it; 3. He closes all with a passage out of *Josephus*, agreeable to his Opinion. His places of Scripture which he alludes, are, *Plal. 148. v. 6. He hath established them for ever: he hath made a decree,* which shall not pass; *Eccl. 1. v. 9. That there is no new thing under the Sun,* and other places parallel to them. To the first, the Order of Nature may be said to be established for ever, and yet that Term imply no uninterrupted or eternal duration of it: see *Exod. 21. 6.*
1 Sam.

1 Sam. 1. 22. Deut. 29. 29. Levit. 23. 14, &c. To the second, it is possible, notwithstanding that place, that there may something new happen even according to the Order of Nature, for *Solomon* observes there no more than this, that ordinarily in Nature there is a constant vicissitude, a coming and returning of the several Species of Things: for all which, it is possible within the Period of Six thousand years that Nature may produce something new and not seen or heard of before: and if by Nature something thus new may be produced, there is no Reason from this place but the like may be done by Miracle too.

To *Josephus's* Authority it is enough to oppose the learned Mr. *Gregory's* remark of him in his *Opera Postuma* p. 33. That he makes it his business to lessen and detract from the greatness of the Miracle which he relates out of the Scripture, only to gain a more easie approbation of his *History* among the *Heathen*: and this Mr. *Gregory* makes out by several instance one whereof is the passage here quoted by *Spinoza*.

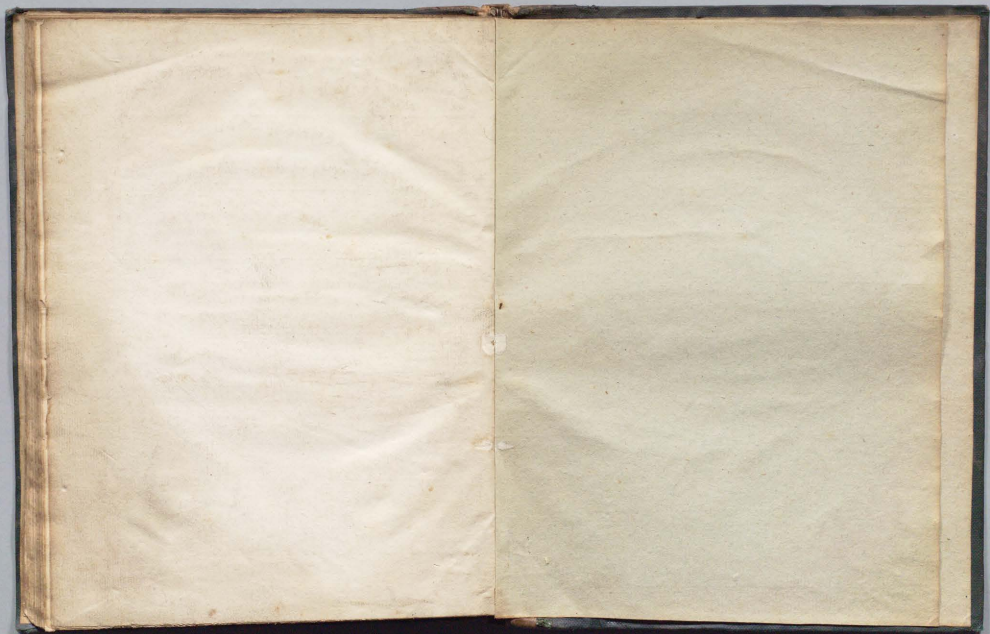
To *Spinoza's* Quotation out of *Josephus*, the *Translator* adds one or two more out of *Valesius*, *St. Austin*, *Mr. Burnet*, and *Dr. Sprat*. Mr. *Burnet*, I have shewed above, in the very next Words almost to those which here he quotes out of him, asserts positively that there are Miracles. I need not tire myself to examine whether the rest are as directly against him, as I make no question they are.

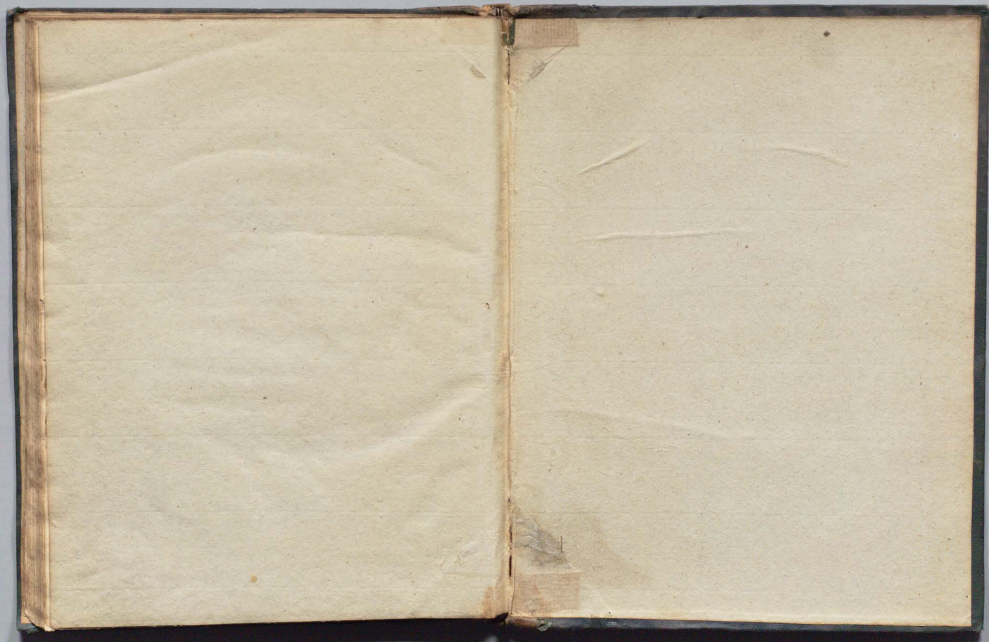
Upon the whole then I have made it appear, that the whole *Treatise* is only a *Collection* out of other Authors. That all of them, except *Spinoza*, are against

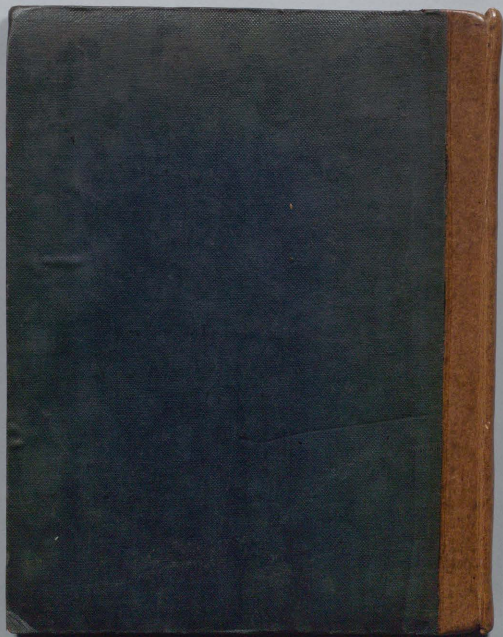
gainst the opinion for which they are produced. And whether I have given a full Answer to his Arguments, I leave to the candid and impartial Reader to determine.

F I N I S.









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