

fact, this must diminish very much the former testimony, *and make us form a GENERAL RESOLUTION, never to lend any attention to it, with whatever specious pretext it may be covered.*"

The Doctor replies—

"Never did the passion of an inflamed orator, or the intemperate zeal of a religionist, carry him further against his adversary than this man of speculation is carried by his prejudice against religion. Demagogues and bigots have often warned the people against listening to the arguments of an envied, and therefore detested, rival, lest by his sophistry he should be seduced into the most fatal errors. The same part this author, a philosopher, a sceptic, a dispassionate enquirer after truth, as surely he chuses to be accounted, now acts in favor of infidelity. He thinks it not safe to give religion even a hearing. . . .

. . . The old way of scrutiny and argument must now be laid aside, having at length been discovered to be but a bungling, a tedious, a dangerous way at best. What then shall we substitute in its place? The essayist has a most admirable expedient. A shorter and surer method he recommends to us, the expeditious way of *resolution*.—"Form" says he "*A GENERAL RESOLUTION never to give any attention to testimonies or facts urged by religion, with whatever specious pretext they may be covered.*" . . .

"Before the remark of the author can be of any use in directing our judgment, as to the evidence of miracles attested, we must consider whether the original tenets of the witnesses would naturally have biassed their minds in *favor* of the miracles, or in *opposition* to them. If the former was the case, the testimony is the *less* to be regarded; if the latter, so much the *more*. Will it say on this head to acquaint us, that the prejudices of the witnesses must have favoured the miracles, since they were zealous promoters of the doctrine, in support of which those miracles are said to have been performed? To answer thus would be to misunderstand the point. The question is, Was this doctrine the faith of the witnesses, before they saw, or fancied they saw, the miracles? If it was, I agree with him. Great, very great allowance must be made for the prejudices of education, for principles, early, perhaps carefully, and deeply rooted in their minds, and for the religious affection founded in these principles; which allowance must always derogate from the weight of their testimony. But if the faith of the witnesses stood originally in opposition to the doctrine attested by the miracles; if the only account that can be given of their conversion, is the conviction which the miracles produced in them; it must be a preposterous way of arguing, to derive their conviction from a religious zeal, which would at first obstinately withstand, and for some time hinder such conviction. On the contrary, that the evidence arising from miracles performed in proof of a doctrine disbelieved, and consequently hated before, did in fact surmount that obstacle, and conquer all the opposition arising thence, is a very strong presumption in favour of that evidence; just as strong a presumption in its favour, as it would have been against it, had all their former zeal, and principles, and prejudices, co-operated with the evidence, whatever it was, in gaining an entire assent.

"Hence there is the greatest disparity in this respect, a disparity which deserves to be particularly attended to, betwixt the evidence of miracles per-