

# The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus

VOL. I.

KINGSTON, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1830.

NO. 3.

Original.

## ON MIRACLES.

*Nisi signa et prodigia videritis, non creditis.*

*Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.*  
John iv. 48.

The nobleman mentioned in the gospel, who brought our Saviour to go down and heal his son, had not a proper faith in Jesus Christ, till he saw his child miraculously cured: for only then did he himself believe and his whole house. Our Saviour therefore said to him, when he made his request: *Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not.* By these words he gives us to understand that our faith in him should not be always requiring new signs and wonders to confirm it. And he let us know by his conduct on this occasion, that, having once given miraculous evidence of the truths of his doctrine, we are not to expect, as often as we could wish, to see such evidence renewed: but that we are to rely on the testimony of those who at first have witnessed such evidence. He was aware that what is too common, however wonderful it may be, is apt to make but little impression on our minds; as it happened in effect with the Israelites of old; who were at last so little moved at the sight of the prodigies performed by Moses, because they had become frequent and ordinary. He therefore meant to reserve miracles as rare and striking proofs of his doctrine, to be manifested when and in what manner he in his infinite wisdom might think fit.

The Pharisees, though they had the testimony of the whole Jewish nation, that was daily witnessing the miracles wrought by Jesus Christ; would not however content themselves with this testimony; but were ever calling upon him by some new sign to prove to them his Divinity. Their curiosity, more than any desire of knowing the truth, prompted them to make these demands; and therefore our Lord did not choose to comply with their request.— *This wicked and adulterous generation, says he, seeks a sign: and no sign shall be given to them, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.* Matt. xii. 39. As they prided themselves in their knowledge of the law and the prophets, he referred them to those, by whom he was so clearly foretold and prefigured. Miracles, it would seem, he intended more as proofs to the heathens and ignorant, who had not such unquestionable evidence, as they.— *Search the scriptures, said he to them, in which you think to have life everlasting: and these are they that bear testimony of me.* John v. 39.

King Herod also knew by the common report of the nation that our Saviour performed the most won-

derful prodigies; and therefore rejoiced at his being sent to him by Pontius Pilate, in hopes of seeing him work some miracle before him. But our Lord did not choose to gratify his vain curiosity. For it was not certainly to any proof of his doctrine that Herod wished to have seen a miracle performed. He had such proof sufficiently by report. Nor did he ever doubt of our Saviour's power to work such wonders; else he would not have made himself so sure of seeing one wrought by him.— Herod therefore believed in the miracles of Christ, without believing in Christ; which clearly shews that even signs and wonders may not always enforce conviction. It were wrong therefore to desire them, while we have more than sufficient evidence of our faith besides, in the testimony of all Christians in every generation since his time. It is this testimony precisely that our Lord wishes us to ground our faith upon; and he therefore declares that he who will not hear the Church, is to be looked upon as a heathen and a publican. Matth. xviii. 17. While at the same time he blames those who wish to have their faith confirmed by signs and wonders. *Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not.*

I would believe, says the Infidel, in the mysteries of the Christian Religion, did I myself but see such wonders wrought, in their confirmation, as those I find recorded in the scriptures. Thus would he arrogantly prescribe to the Deity the terms on which he would choose to admit his sacred and infallible word for the truth. Still might this be so far excusable, had he no other sure proof left him, than that of miracles. But can he desire a more forcible and convincing proof than the unanimous testimony of all nations ever since our Saviour's time? Let him name, if he can, that single fact in history, which has such incontrovertible evidence in its favour.— Indeed, were he to believe nothing without such evidence, how few things would he then believe! Yet such is the inconsistency of our free thinkers, that they who call in question facts so well authenticated and facts so very important, that on their admission or rejection our eternal happiness depends; make not the least difficulty to credit, on the testimony of a few heathen authors, facts of small or no consequence whatever. The exploits of an Alexander, the wisdom of a Socrates or a Plato, &c. are never once doubted of. Yet can such for a moment, however unquestionable, be thought supported by an equal authority with the doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Still if they require signs and wonders to confirm

their faith in him, they have them of the most striking kind in that very church which he has established, and whose authority they despise. They have them in the manner in which she was propagated over all the earth; and in the manner in which she still continues to subsist.

The manner of her propagation is certainly, in the eyes of every rational and thinking person, the wonder of wonders, and the greatest of miracles: and it proves the divinity of her founder as much as all his other miracles. For had he been less than God, how differently would he have prepared for such a prodigious enterprise? An enterprise which aimed at nothing less than overthrowing all the received erroneous opinions and external modes of worship, as well of his own nation, which alone had the knowledge of the true God, as of all the other nations of the earth; which opinions and modes of worship were sanctioned and defended by the laws of the several countries in which they were received? Yet to shew that he required no human or natural means to bring about so great an event, for thirty years of his life he remained retired from the world, working with his reputed father at the carpenter trade: and, during the other three years of his life, when he applied himself more particularly to this work, how did he betake himself in order to accomplish it? What sort of men did he make choice of for his associates in it? Twelve poor fishermen, without learning, riches, friends or interest. These he meant to oppose to all the learned, the eloquent, the rich and mighty ones in the world! And how did he say, were they to prevail? By suffering and dying! That they have prevailed, we know. That they could have prevailed was evidently impossible, had he not been God, who sent them; especially as they taught a doctrine so disagreeable to flesh and blood, against which the pride and sensuality of mankind must have revolted, as it still continues to revolt. He foretold them both the opposition they should meet with from the world, and their success.

The Jews are the first to take the alarm. The most learned among them conspire against him.— He is reviled and persecuted; and at last, as he had foretold to his disciples, delivered up by the whole people to be crucified. But when I am exalted, says he, I will draw all things to myself; including as the Evangelist says, to what manner of death he was to die. What man could speak with such certainty of what was to happen after his death, and with such indifference so very cruel and ignominious a death, as that he foresaw he was