

the world knows, disclaimed such evidence. He frankly owned, that he had no commission nor power to work miracles, being sent of God to the people only as a preacher. Not indeed but there are things mentioned in the revelation he pretended to give them, which, if true, would have been miraculous; such are the nocturnal visits of the angel Gabriel; his getting from time to time parcels of the uncreated book transmitted to him from heaven, and his most amazing night-journey. But these miracles could be no evidences of his mission. Why? Because no person was witness to them. On the contrary, it was because his adherents had previously and implicitly believed his apostleship, that they admitted things so incredible, on his bare declaration.

“It may be worth while to inquire, what were the reasons, that an engine of such amazing influence was never employed by one who assumed a character so eminent, as the *chief of God's apostles*, and the *seal of the prophets*? Was it the want of address to manage an imposition of this nature? None who knows the history of this extraordinary personage, will suspect that he wanted either the genius to contrive, or the resolution and dexterity to execute, any practicable expedient for promoting his grand design; which was no less than that extensive despotism, both religious and political, he at length acquired. Was it that he had too much honesty to concert and carry on so gross an artifice? Those who believe him to have been an impostor in pretending a divine mission, will hardly suspect him of such delicacy in the methods he would take to accomplish his aim. But in fact there is no colour of reason for such a suggestion. There was no prodigy, no miraculous interposition, which he hesitated to give out, however extravagant, when he saw it would contribute to his ends. Prodiges of which they had no other evidence but his own allegation, he knew his adversaries might *deny*, but could not *disprove*. His scruples, therefore, we may well conclude, proceeded not from *probity*, but from *prudence*; and were solely against such miracles, as must be subjected to the scrutiny of other people's senses. Was it because miracle-working had before that time become so stale a device, that, instead of gaining him the admiration of his countrymen, it would have exposed him to their laughter and contempt? The most cursory perusal of the Alcoran, will, to every man of sense, afford an unanswerable confutation of this hypothesis. Lastly, was it that he lived in an enlightened age, and amongst a civilized people, who were too quick-sighted to be deceived by tricks, which among barbarians might have produced the most astonishing effects? Quite the reverse. He lived in a barbarous age, and amongst an illiterate people, with whom, if with any, he had reason to believe the grossest deceit would prove successful.

“What a pity was it, that Mahomet had not a counsellor so deeply versed in human nature as the essayist, who could have assured him, that there needed but effrontery and enterprise; that with these auxiliaries he had reason to hope the most impudent pretences would be crowned with success! The too timid prophet would doubtless have remonstrated against this spirited counsel, insisting, that it was one thing to satisfy *friends*, and another to silence or convert *enemies*; that it was one thing to impose on men's *intellects*; and another thing to deceive their *senses*: that though an attempt of the last kind should succeed with some, yet if the fraud were detected by any, and he might expect that his adversaries would exert