

Wetter. Hence it came to pass, that when the Apostles preached the Gospel and wrought miracles in confirmation of a doctrine every way worthy of God, many Gentiles knew little or nothing of it, and would not take the least pains to inform themselves about it. This appears plainly from ancient history. The great division of the Roman public, and peculiarly that of its educated men, seems to have been into those who rejected Christianity without inquiry, and those who inquired and received it; for we know that it was received by a great multitude in Rome, and even in the palace of the Cæsars. The writers of the age would also be of two classes; those who were silent about Christianity; and those who were Christians. A good man, who attended sufficiently to the doctrine, would become a Christian; after which, his testimony of course ceased to be Pagan, and he was excluded from arbitration as being Christian. Where the evidence of miracles was pressed upon the Heathen, they were imputed to magic; as they had been by the Jews imputed to the assistance of demons. We now know, that those pretences were absurd subterfuges; but the use of the subterfuges proves the contemporary belief of the facts of the miracles, and the acknowledgment that they transcended the ordinary power of our nature.

Miracles were mentioned as one of the great evidences of Christianity. When Jesus wrought wonders before the Jews, and they said "he casteth out devils by Belzebub, the prince of the devils," he appealed to their common sense--he bade them combine his doctrine with his power, and ask their consciences, whether the power of evil would be lent to propagate good? "If Satan be divided against himself, he cannot stand." Christ came abolishing falsehood, enjoining the love of God, dependence on him as Father, and homage for him as the King of Creation. To substantiate this hallowed

doctrine, he performed wonders which transcended all human power. He came to communicate truths from God--he wrought miracles to prove that those truths were divine. He required nothing to be believed on his simple testimony.--"Believe me for the work's sake." If at this day we saw a man healing the blind with a touch, commanding the lame into the instant possession of his limbs, and raising the corpse already three days buried; and saw him do those things in confirmation of doctrines new to us, yet not contradictory to our natural conceptions of the Divinity, we must believe him to tell truth. If with this power he uttered blasphemy, we must still believe him to be a being gifted with extraordinary power, but from an evil source. Our reason exercised in humility is given to us as an original guard against deception, and to our reason we must adhere. But the combination of the holy doctrine with the supernatural power, would form an irresistible testimony to his divine mission. The miracles of Christ differ from all the alleged miracles of other teachers and times, by strong peculiarities. 1. They are narrated in contemporary history. This distinction strikes down the miraculous history of Pythagoras, written eight hundred years after his death; the prodigies of Livy's history; the poetic wonders of the heroic ages; the whole of the Greek, Roman and Gothic mythology; the life of Apollonius Tyanæus, written a hundred years after his death, and dependent on the solitary testimony of his biographer Philostratus; and the legendary histories of the Popish saints, seldom written till a century or two after their deaths.

2 The miracles were published in the places where they were performed. This excludes accounts published in one country of what happened in another, without any further proof that they had occurred in that other. The Church of Christ was planted in Judæa. The miracles of