

**THE CRITERION; OR, RULES BY WHICH
THE TRUE MIRACLES RECORDED IN THE
NEW TESTAMENT ARE DISTINGUISHED
FROM THE SPURIOUS MIRACLES OF
PAGANS AND PAPISTS**

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The Criterion; Or, Rules by Which the True Miracles Recorded in the New Testament Are Distinguished from the Spurious Miracles of Pagans and Papists by John Douglas

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JOHN DOUGLAS

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BY
JOHN DOUGLAS, D.D.
LORD BISHOP OF SALISBURY

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P R E F A C E.

THE first edition of the *Criterion* was printed in 1754, the second in 1807. It was published for the third time in a quarto volume, which contained some other works of Bishop Douglas, and which was printed at Salisbury in 1820. The preface to this last mentioned volume contains the following passage:

“ With respect to the present edition of the
“ *Criterion*, it has been carefully collated with
“ a copy corrected by the hand of the author :
“ and no alteration or addition has been made,
“ except such as he himself would have adopt-
“ ed, had not the copy been mislaid, which he
“ had long prepared for a new edition.”

A collation of this third edition with the preceding has proved the number of these alterations to be very considerable: and the present edition, which may be called the fourth, is a faithful copy of that which was

printed at Salisbury, except as to the quotations from other authors. These passages appear in many instances to have been very inaccurately transcribed. The Greek and Latin quotations particularly contain many errors: and a careful comparison of all these with the works from which they were taken, has made the present edition much more correct than any which preceded it.

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THE CRITERION,

&c.

SIR,

MY surprise has not been greater than my concern, to observe that a person of your good sense, candour, and learning, should have reasoned himself, as you say you have done, into an unfavourable opinion of the evidences of Christianity. Ever since our last conversation, the objections you stated have engaged much of my attention; and the result of my reflections you shall have in the present sheets. Nor do I think that this address requires any apology. The importance of the subject, and my repeated promises that I would give you my thoughts concerning it, sufficiently plead my excuse. And happy should I esteem myself, if any thing I suggest, prove the means of bringing you back to that religion, which you seem to have forsaken, and of satisfying you that the reasons you assign for rejecting the miracles recorded in the New Testament, ought not to weigh with one of your discernment.

Unskilled in controversy, it may seem presumption in me to offer my opinion on a subject, already so fully and frequently canvassed by the most eminent writers; and it may be thought that if their arguments have proved ineffectual to satisfy your doubts, it will be a vain attempt in me to aim at your conviction. But when I consider the nature of many of your objections, which are peculiar to

yourself, and not borrowed from books; when I reflect, farther, that the controversy, with regard to the credibility of the gospel miracles, has, of late, taken a turn somewhat new, it is obvious, that to refer you to the many excellent defences of Christianity, already in the hands of the public, would be entirely unsatisfactory; for these treatises having been adapted to the prevailing objections of unbelievers at the particular periods when they were written, it becomes necessary that the friends of our religion should change their method of defence, since the attack is not carried on in the old way.

You may remember what points you have chiefly insisted upon in our debates on this subject. You granted (as every thinking person must grant) that a power of working miracles, vested in one assuming the character of a Teacher from God, would sufficiently establish the truth of his claim; "but you urged, withal, that there was no solid foundation to believe that any such person was ever vested with such a power; for that the miracles of Jesus and his apostles, related in the New Testament, were not supported by stronger evidence than were the prodigies that disgrace the pages of Livy, and the legendary tales that swell the lives of the Romish saints. Now these latter accounts being, on all hands, justly rejected as false, while the former, it seems, are admitted as true; how then, you say, can we fairly dispute the authenticity of the one, and insist so much on the credibility of the other? For, as the testimony in both is equally strong, the miracles recorded in both the accounts must be equally credible. That, therefore, you had no way of extricating yourself