

**OF THE USE OF MIRACLES
IN PROVING THE TRUTH
OF A REVELATION**

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Of the Use of Miracles in Proving the Truth of a Revelation by J. Penrose

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J. PENROSE

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ESSAY
OR
MIRACLES.

C. Baldwin, Printer,
New Bridge-street, London.

J. H. 1825

OF THE USE

OF

MIRACLES

IN PROVING THE TRUTH

OF A

REVELATION.

BY THE REV. J. PENROSE, MA.

FORMERLY OF C. C. C. OXFORD.

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IT has long appeared to me that the important question of miracles, and the use to be made of them in proving the truth of our religion, has never been treated of with the accuracy which it requires. The particular question, on what principle they are to be accounted a cogent evidence of the religion for which they are alleged, has been lately recalled very forcibly to my attention, and in a manner inclining me to attempt a brief discussion of it. What that principle is, will, if I do not mistake, be made apparent in the following pages, the whole argument of which was digested into its present form, before I knew that so able a writer as Dr. Powell had expressed an opinion that such an

inquiry was wanting to complete the argument concerning the truth of christianity.* If I am thought to treat accurately of this part of the subject, I may pursue in future the whole question into its details. Some of those parts of it which have been even the most laboured appear to me to have suffered much from mis-statement. Farmer's is, undoubtedly, the best book on the subject, but the opinions entertained by that most respectable writer on the difficult question of demoniacal possessions, must, I think, have warped his usually accurate judgment in this connected question of miracles. He certainly argues as if no miracle whatever can be an adequate proof of any divine revelation, unless we wholly exclude the belief that any events inconsistent with the

* Disc. vii. p. 103.

course of nature (and by that course he means rightly our own experience of it), have ever been performed but by the interposition of God. But, however this question may, in point of fact, be determinable, whether or no events inconsistent with the course of nature have ever been performed by angels or demons, without God's immediate sanction or interposition, we assuredly ought not to allow the evidence of the gospel miracles to depend in any degree on its solution. If it be proved (as will be proved, I think, incontrovertibly in the following pages) that all acts which evidence a superhuman authority, even though it cannot be asserted that that authority is always an authority *directly* divine, yet prove of themselves, when not rebutted by other evidence, an authority at least *remotely* divine, the christian

miracles, supposing them truly to evidence only a superhuman authority, will yet be in this case conclusive of the truth of the revelation, unless some contrary evidence can be adduced, either of the same kind or of some other kind, adequate to disprove the doctrines which they attest. We must for the present suppose that there is no such contrary evidence, and we may then conclude, that the miracles of christianity are a complete proof of the truth of our religion altogether independently of any opinions we may entertain, whether or no the Egyptian magicians had the assistance of demons in their unequal contest with Moses, or whether demons may or may not have dictated some of the heathen oracles. We must not consent that to hold the affirmative of these points shall deprive christianity of the evidence of its miracles.