

LECTURE VI.

Review of passages in the early Fathers bearing witness to the exercise of *miraculous powers* in their times. Unanimity of this testimony. Estimate, which ought to be formed of it; and difficulty of resisting it. The powers of exorcism and healing diseases more decidedly asserted than others. Correspondence of this with the terms in which the powers were conferred, and with the record of their exercise in the Acts. The same correspondence between the Scriptural and Ecclesiastical records observable in another particular. The exercise of miraculous powers by those on whom the Apostles laid their hands established by inspired authority. The theory of the cessation of all miracles with their lives unsatisfactory.

THE next point we have to consider, in which the Fathers may be made instrumental to the Evidences, is one of great difficulty and perplexity; the *miraculous powers* which subsisted in the Primitive Church.

I shall review as briefly as possible some of the principal passages in the Ante-Nicene Fathers, which bear on this subject, and endeavour to draw a conclusion from an induction of particulars.

It has been disputed whether the Apostolical Fathers, properly so called, speak of contemporary miracles at all. Considering how short are their works, and the practical purpose for which most of them are written, the absence of all allusion to miracles in them would prove little or nothing, and might well be accidental. Such an expression, however, as that of Clemens Romanus,¹ that there was in the Church of Corinth "a plentiful outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon all" (*πλήρης Πνεύματος Ἁγίου ἔκχυσις ἐπὶ πάντας ἐγένετο*), or that of Ignatius addressed to the Church of Smyrna, "that it was mercifully blessed with every good gift" (*ἐν παντὶ χαρίσματι*), "that it was wanting in no good gift," (*ἀνυστέρητος οὐσα παντὸς χαρίσματος*)²—such phraseology, I say, being compared with that of times both before and

¹ Ad Corinthios, I. § ii.

² Salutation of the Epistle of Ignatius to the Church of Smyrna.

after, when it undoubtedly had miraculous as well as other gifts in contemplation, would lead us to think, I agree with Dodwell,¹ that Clemens and Ignatius did not exclude such gifts from their account.

Justin Martyr's testimony is not to be mistaken. He challenges a denial of the fact. "It is manifest to all" (*πᾶσι φανερόν ἐστι*), says he, "that the Father has given Christ so much power, that even the demons are subject to the dispensation of his Passion."² "That Jesus was born for those who believe in him, and for the overthrow of devils, you may learn," says he again, "from the things which even now (*καὶ νῦν*) are coming to pass under your own eyes. For many of our people (*i. e.* Christians) having adjured by the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, many persons possessed with devils (*δαιμονιολήπτους*) all over the world and in *your city*, have healed them when they had not been healed by all other exorcists and enchanters and magicians, reducing and expelling the demons that had possession of the men."³ And again, "and now (*καὶ νῦν*) we who believe in Jesus our Lord who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, when we adjure all devils and evil spirits, have them obedient to us."⁴ Exorcism, you see, is the gift which he attributes to the Christians. In one passage, however, of the Dialogue,⁵ he ascribes to them *προφητικὰ χαρίσματα* in general, as if they had been transferred to the Christians from the Jews, who once possessed but had since lost them. And in another of the same treatise,⁶ he enumerates *healing* and *foreknowledge* amongst their supernatural endowments.

Here is one witness, now writing at Rome, now at Ephesus or elsewhere,⁷ who testifies to the existence of certain miraculous powers in the Church, of *exorcism* more especially; which latter faculty he speaks of in a manner which must convince us that he thought the fact indisputable, however reluctant the parties he addressed might be to draw from it the conclusion he pressed. And yet Justin

¹ Dodwell, Dissert. in Irenæum, II. § vii.

² Justin Martyr, Dial. § 30.

³ Apol. II. § 6.

⁴ Dial. § 76.

⁵ § 82.

⁶ § 39.

⁷ The Dialogue, however, though held, it is said, at Ephesus, does not appear to have been committed to writing for publication till some time afterwards.

was a man of education ; had been a philosopher ; and was writing in two of the tracts where these statements are made, to philosophical Emperors, and to the people of Rome ; and was sufficiently a lover of truth to die for it.

Irenæus expresses himself to the same effect. Speaking of the heretics, he says, "they cannot give sight to the blind, nor hearing to the deaf, nor can they cast out evil spirits, except such as they have themselves introduced, if even that ; nor heal the sick, the lame, the palsied ; nor remove diseases which may happen to afflict any other part of the body. *And so far are they from raising the dead, as the Lord did and his Apostles, by prayer, and as hath come to pass often among the brethren, when the spirit of the dead hath returned, and the man been restored to the prayers of the saints,* the whole Church of the place on the necessary occasion entreat- ing for him with much fasting and supplication—so far have they been from doing this, that they do not even believe that it can be done."¹ And again, having vindicated the miracles of our Lord from the charge of being ocular deceptions, he proceeds, "Wherefore his true disciples receiving grace from him, work benefits in his name for mankind, according to the gifts which each of them have received from him. For some *really and truly* eject evil spirits, so that those very persons who have been possessed, now purged of these demons, become believers, and are added to the Church. Others have *foreknowledge* of future events, see *visions*, and *prophecy*. Others, again, *heal the sick* by imposition of hands, and restore them to health ; nay, as we have said, even the *dead have been raised up*, and continued with us many years."² And he elsewhere assigns to the Jews also the power of exorcism, on the principle that all created beings are afraid of an appeal to Him who created them. Again, with respect to the gift of tongues and the discerning of spirits, he writes, "as we have heard even many brethren in the Church pos- sessing prophetic gifts, and speaking by the Spirit in all manner of tongues, and bringing to light advantageously the secrets of men."³

Here we have another witness, him also a man of educa- tion and research, and though perhaps not a martyr to the

¹ Irenæus, II. c. xxxi. § 2.

² c. xxxii. § 4.

³ V. c. vi. § 1.

death, a man who, for the sake of teaching the truth, was content to forego the charms of his native land, and migrate to a distant, a barbarous, and as it proved a dangerous station; we have this man, I say, still testifying, in another quarter of the world too, in Gaul, to the existence of miraculous powers in the Church; exorcism; healing both of natural infirmities and sickness; prophecy; tongues; discerning of spirits; and even raising the dead: but perhaps expressing himself with different degrees of confidence whilst treating of these several gifts. Thus, with respect to exorcism, "some really and truly eject evil spirits" (*οἱ μὲν γὰρ δαίμονας ἐλαύνουσι βεβαίως καὶ ἀληθῶς*), is his language—"we have heard brethren speak with tongues, and detect spirits," so I understand *καθὼς καὶ πολλῶν ἀκούομεν ἀδελφῶν ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ προφητικὰ χαρίσματα ἔχόντων, καὶ παντοδαπαῖς λαλούντων διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος γλώσσαις, καὶ τὰ κρύφια τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἰς φανερόν ἀγόντων ἐπὶ τῷ συμφέροντι*. And in these instances, as well as in some others which I have named, he uses the present tense, *δαίμονας ἐλαύνουσι, πρόγνωσις ἔχουσι, τοὺς κάμνοντας ἰῶνται, χαρίσματα ἔχόντων, παντοδαπαῖς γλώσσαις λαλούντων, τὰ κρύφια τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἰς φανερόν ἀγόντων*. But when the miracle of raising the dead is touched on, the expressions are less definite, *sæpe eventit fieri, πολλάκις*, the phrase indefinite as to time—*ὁ Κύριος, οἱ ἀπόστολοι, ἡ πᾶσα ἐκκλησία*, the language again indefinite as to agents—So the tense in these cases is no longer the present, but the aorist, *τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ τετελευτηκότος ἐπέστρεψε*, the spirit of the dead returned—*ἐχαρίσθη*, he was granted to the prayers of the saints—*νεκροὶ ἠγέρθησαν καὶ παρέμειναν σὺν ἡμῖν*, the dead have been raised up, and have continued with us. There is something remarkable, at least, in the change of tense, something which, when coupled with the looser construction of the sentences, would lead us to think that though Irenæus had no doubt of the fact of the resurrection of the dead having been effected by the brethren, he had not witnessed a case with his own eyes.

Papias, a Bishop of Hierapolis of the second century, has left it on record, through Eusebius, who has preserved his testimony,¹ that he had received it from the daughters of Philip the Apostle, that one was raised from the dead in

¹ Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. iii. c. 39; Routh. Reliq. Sacr. vol. i. p. 12.

Philip's time¹; by whom, or in what place, is not specified, though we might suppose that Hierapolis was the scene: but the manner in which it is mentioned by Papias, would lead to the conclusion that even in his day, and he was a hearer of John, that particular miracle, though wrought, was rare. But here we have a witness to miracles in another part of the world, Asia Minor.

Theophilus, he too of the second century, a man of learning, a Bishop, and still in another region, Antioch, affirms the same fact, and much in the same way as the last two. He introduces his correspondent Autolycus saying, "Show me a man who has been raised from the dead, and I will believe;" to which challenge Theophilus replies, "Much thanks to you for such a belief, and yet you believe in Hercules and Æsculapius coming to life again. Perhaps I shall even show you a dead man raised and living, and yet you will not believe this."² We must remember that the challenge, put into the mouth of Autolycus, is in fact introduced to the reader by Theophilus himself; who would not, we may suppose, have volunteered it, had he felt the question to be a staggering one. The fair inference from his words seems to be, that he, like Papias and Irenæus, made no doubt of instances of resurrection from the dead having occurred, though he had none to give of his own experience.

Tertullian is another witness to the existence of miraculous powers in the Primitive Church in his own time, and still in a district far removed from any we have yet referred to, Carthage and its neighbourhood. His testimony is given with the same confidence as to some of the miracles, and the same reserve as to others, which we have already discovered in other of the Fathers. In his Apology addressed to the governors of proconsular Africa, persons of intelligence, therefore, and not to be duped by a bold claim laid by Christians to faculties which they did not in reality enjoy; writing, I say, to such men as these, Tertullian uses language like the following. "Let any one who is confessedly under the influence of demoniacal possession, be brought here before your

¹ So I construe *κατ' αὐτὸν* with Dodwell, *Præf. Dissert.* in Irenæum, § 8. *Νεκροῦ γὰρ ἀνάστασιν κατ' αὐτὸν γεγονυῖαν ἰστορεῖ.*

² *Ἴσως καὶ ἐπιδείξω σοι νεκρὸν ἐγερθῆντα, καὶ ζῶντα, καὶ τοῦτο ἀπιστήσεις.*
—Theophilus Ad. Autolycum, I. § 13.

tribunal. If the spirit be commanded by any Christian to speak, he shall as truly confess himself to be a demon as in other places he falsely professes himself to be a god ;”¹ with much more to the same purpose. There may be some extravagance or incaution in the mere wording of the passage, but it is impossible not to believe that Tertullian considered he was perfectly safe in the challenge ; and that his substantial meaning was, that exorcism was practised so successfully by Christians, that the result could not be denied by heathens. Again, in his “*De Exhortatione Castitatis*,”² whilst describing the advantages which accrue from the exercise of the virtue of chastity, he says, “Then if a man prays, he finds himself near heaven ; if he applies himself to the Scriptures, he is wholly intent on them ; if he *adjures a devil*, he has confidence in himself (*si dæmonem adjurat, confidit sibi*).” There is something in the very natural and casual way in which he here mentions exorcism, that gives one the utmost reliance in his own belief at least in the possession of that virtue by the Church. The same may be said of another passage in the *De Idololatriâ*, “Can he (*i. e.* he whose trade ministers to idolatry) *exorcise with any degree of consistency*, when he is the very man, who has been feeding these evil spirits, whom he evokes ? If he casts out a devil, let him not flatter himself that it is effected by his faith.”³ The same of a third in the “*De Spectaculis*,”⁴ “Want we pleasure (which those are in pursuit of who frequent these spectacles), what higher pleasure than the contempt of pleasure ? the spurning of the world ? true liberty ? a clear conscience ? a contented life ? no fear of death ? to trample upon the gods of the nations ? to expel demons ? to work cures ? to seek revelations ? to live to God ? These are the spectacles of Christians.” Again, Tertullian speaks without any hesitation on the subject of visions ; “*I know* that one of the brethren,” says he “was grievously chastised by a vision the same night that the slaves had decorated his house with garlands . . . yet he had not ordered it to be done ;”⁵ as though the party had himself informed him of the fact. And again, “There is at this

¹ Tertullian, *Apol. c. xxiii.*

² *De Exhortatione Castitatis, c. x.*

³ *De Idololatriâ, c. xi.*

⁴ *Quod dæmonia expellis ? quod medicinas facis ? quod revelationes petis ?*

—*De Spectaculis, c. xxix.*

⁵ *Scio fratrem per visionem eâdem nocte castigatum graviter, &c.—De Idololatriâ, c. xv.*

day amongst us a sister who is endowed with the gift of revelations. These she experiences by ecstasy in the spirit at church amidst the solemnities of the Lord's day."¹ And then follows an account of her having seen a disembodied soul in one of these trances; the woman, no doubt, having herself related the incident. Again, in a still more remarkable passage, if I understand it right, "Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream from God, and almost the greater part of mankind get a knowledge of God through visions;"² as though the Spirit of God was very active in those days in producing an impression on the world through this channel. He, too, speaks of the miracle of raising the dead, but in terms which lead us to think that he knew of no case since the Apostles' time. Having argued that demons cannot evoke the spirits of the dead, but must have counterfeited them when they seemed to do so; and that the case of the rich man and Lazarus shows that the spirits of the dead cannot visit the earth, he proceeds, "besides, in the instances of the resurrection, when the power of God by the Prophets, or by Christ, or by the Apostles, restored souls to their bodies, it was done according to such substantial, palpable, satisfactory truth, as decided that such ought to be the form that truth on such occasions should take; and that whenever any exhibition of the dead, of an incorporeal nature was pretended, it was to be regarded as a fraud."³ Here, we see, he makes the agents of these resurrections the Prophets, Christ, and his Apostles; but no others.

It is evident that Tertullian, like several of these authors before him, is not indiscriminate in his assertion of miraculous powers in the Church, but that whilst he is positive with respect to some, with respect to others he is cautious.

The only passage, says Bishop Kaye,⁴ which he had found in the writings of Clemens Alexandrinus, that has any bearing on the question of the evidence of miraculous powers in the Church, is in the extracts from the writings of Theodotus,⁵ if that epitome be justly ascribed to him—"The Valentinians

¹ De Animá, c. ix.

² Nabuchodonosor divinitus somniat: et major pene vis hominum ex visionibus Deum discunt.—c. xlvii.

³ c. lvii.

⁴ Bishop Kaye on the Writings of

Clemens Alexandrinus, p. 468.

⁵ Excerpta ex scriptis Theodoti et doctrinâ orientali.—§ xxiv. p. 975, Potter's Ed. of Clemens. This Theodotus was probably a Valentinian, anterior in date to Clemens.

say that the Spirit which each of the Prophets specially possessed for the purposes of his ministry, was poured forth on all the members of the Church. Hence the signs of the Spirit, cures of diseases and prophecies, are accomplished through the Church." Clemens' comment then is (supposing this work to be his), "they are ignorant that the Paraclete, who *now works proximately in the Church*, is of the same essence and power with him who worked proximately under the Old Testament."

There is, however, a paragraph in an undisputed writing of Clemens, the *Stromata*, which may be considered, I think, to have some relation to this question. "The proof that our Saviour is the very Son of God is this—the prophecies preceding his advent, and proclaiming him; the testimonies concerning him, accompanying his sensible birth; and *his powers preached and openly shown after his ascension*"¹—miracles subsequent to his ascension certainly affirmed, but nothing determined as to how long subsequent, or whether active even at that time. Whatever this testimony may amount to, it is that of a very learned and inquisitive man, and is drawn from yet another district of Christendom, Alexandria.

Minucius Felix, a layman and a lawyer, and a dweller at Rome, challenges in the same uncompromising language as we have seen so many before him employ, any denial of the notorious fact that the Christians had the power of exorcism²; "Saturn and Serapis and Jupiter, and whatever other demon ye worship, subdued by pain, declare what they are, and cannot be supposed to tell lies to their own discredit, *especially when many of you are standing by*. Believing them to be demons on their own testimony, for when adjured by the true, the very God, they reluctantly tremble in the bodies they possess, and come out, either forthwith or by degrees, according to the faith of the sufferer or the grace of the healer."

Origen, whether we regard his evidence as that of an inhabitant of Egypt, of Palestine, of Cappadocia, of Nicomedia, of Athens, or of Arabia, for during the course of his unsettled life he appears to have been a sojourner in all these countries,

¹ Πρὸς δὲ καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάληψιν κηρυσσόμεναι τε καὶ ἐμφανῶς δεικνύμεναι δυνάμεις αὐτοῦ. — Clem. Alex. | *Stromat.* VI. § xv. p. 801.

² Minucius Felix, *Octav. c.* xxvii.

furnishes evidence to the same effect as before—indeed, much more copiously than any other of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, and in terms so moderate and unimpassioned as to entitle it to the greater attention. Thus, in his treatise against Celsus, he speaks of the spirit of Christianity being demonstrated by prophecies, and “its power by those miraculous powers which we may show to exist both by many other arguments, and by the *traces of them* being yet preserved amongst those who lived according to the preaching of the Gospel.”¹ And again, in the same treatise, in the same remarkable phrase, he objects to the Jews, that “There is no longer any sign of Divinity being amongst them, for that there are no longer prophets nor miracles, of which the *traces, at least, are in some sort found amongst Christians, and even more than the traces*; and if we are to be believed who say so,” he adds, “we have ourselves seen them.”² And again, “The signs of the Holy Ghost were displayed at the beginning of the preaching of Jesus; after his assumption, more; afterwards, fewer; though even now there are traces of it with a few persons who have their souls purged by reason (or the Word) and by behaviour according to it.”³ And again,⁴ “And still traces (*ἰχνη*) of that Holy Spirit, which was seen in the form of a dove, are retained (*σώζεται*) amongst Christians. They eject demons, they perform cures, and they enjoy some visions of things future, according to the will of the Word. And though Celsus, or the Jew whom he introduces, may laugh at what I shall say, nevertheless it shall be spoken, because many, as it were, against their will have come over to Christianity, a certain spirit suddenly turning their minds from hating the word to being ready to die for it, and presenting them with the phantasm of a vision or dream. For we have ascertained many such things, which if we should write down, though ourselves having been present with them and seen them, we should afford matter of derision to un-

¹ Ἐκ τοῦ ἰχνη δὲ αὐτῶν ἔτι σώ-
ζεσθαι παρὰ τοῖς κατὰ τὸ βούλημα
τοῦ λόγου βιοῦσι.—Origen, Contra Cel-
sum, I. § 2.

² Ὡν κἀν ἰχνη ἐπὶ ποσὸν παρὰ
Χριστιανοῖς εὐρίσκειται, καὶ τινὰ γε
μείζονα, καὶ εἰ πιστοὶ ἔσμεν λέγοντες
ἐώρακαμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς.—Origen, Contra
Celsum, II. § 8. The Benedictine edi-

tor would translate μείζονα “*majora quam olim apud Judæos.*” See the index to that edition, p. 971, “*Miracula.*”

³ Ὑστερον δὲ ἐλάττονα πλὴν καὶ
νῦν ἔτι ἰχνη ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ παρ’ ὀλίγοις,
τὰς ψυχὰς τῷ λόγῳ καὶ ταῖς κατ’ αὐτὸν
πράξεσι κεκαθαρμένους.—Origen, Con-
tra Celsum, VII. § 8.

⁴ I. § 46.

believers; for they suppose that we, like those whom they know to invent such things, invent them also. But God is the witness of our conscience, that it does not desire to recommend the divine doctrine of Jesus by false tales, but by clear and various arguments." Once more,¹ when replying to the objection of Celsus, that Jesus did no magnificent action which bespoke him to be God, he observes, "It is a magnificent act of Jesus, that *even to this day* those whom God pleases are healed in his name." And again, when contending against the same antagonist for the superior claims of Jesus to be accounted a God over those of Æsculapius, he observes how few there were who believed in Æsculapius, "whereas we can exhibit an unspeakable number of Greeks and barbarians, who confess Jesus. And some show signs of having received extraordinary endowments through that faith by their powers of healing; using over the patients no other invocation than God above all, and the name of Jesus, together with the history concerning him. For we have ourselves seen many thus delivered from severe maladies, and frenzies, and insanity, and numberless other complaints, such as neither man nor demon could cure."² Here, then, we see that Origen asserts a residue only of the miraculous Spirit which was once so operative in the Church to be then remaining in it, and speaks of traces only of it as then to be found, as though the age of miracles was passing away; but he still does insist on the actual existence of that spirit of miracles, and affirms that demons were still ejected, cures still wrought, and visions still vouchsafed, of which he himself, whatever scoffers might say to the contrary, had been a living witness—the moderation of the language in which this announcement is made, I repeat, a strong pledge for the truth of the facts it announces, and of the competency of the testimony.

The last contemporary authority which I shall produce is Cyprian. His testimony to the continuance of a miraculous interference in the affairs of the Church, I would say, rather

¹ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, II. § 33.

² Τούτοις γὰρ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐωράκαμεν πολλοὺς ἀπαλλαγέντας χαλεπῶν συμπτωμάτων.—III. § 24. See also *Contra Celsum*, III. § 28. Κατὰ τοὺς ἐξῆς χρόνους ἐν οἷς οὐκ ὀλίγα θεραπείαι τῷ Ἰησοῦ ὀνόματι καὶ ἄλλαι τινὲς ἐπι-

φάνειαι οὐκ εὐκαταφρόνητοι ἐπιτελοῦνται. And § 36. Εἰ γὰρ μὴ θεόθεν ἦν αὐτῷ δοθεῖσα σύστασις, οὐκ ἂν καὶ δαίμονες τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἀπαγγελλόμενοι μόνον εἰκόντες ἀνεχώρουσαν ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπ' αὐτῶν πολεμουμένων.

than the continuance of miraculous powers in it, is express and positive, chiefly, however, manifested by visions vouchsafed to himself or other conspicuous members of it.

In Ep. liv. he writes,¹ "We are aware that another persecution is coming on, and are admonished by *visions* to prepare for the conflict, and draw together Christ's soldiers into the camp." Again, in the same,² "Wherefore, at the suggestion of the Holy Spirit, and after that the Lord hath admonished us by *many and clear visions* that the enemy is at hand, we have thought well to gather Christ's soldiers into the camp." Again, in Ep. lxiii.,³ "Wherefore, my brethren, if any of our predecessors, through ignorance, did otherwise than Christ's example in this teaches, let us who have been *admonished by Christ* (to this effect) *mix the cup*, and direct by letter our colleagues to do the same, that the rule may be uniform." Again, in Ep. lxix., to Pupianus, who had slandered him,⁴ "If you show penitence, I may receive you again into communion, respect, however, being still had to this, that I first consult the Lord, whether by some ostensible warrant he will allow the peace of the Church to be granted you, and your readmission to be ratified, for I remember what manifestation hath been made to me already," &c.; and then he adds,⁵ "although I am aware that *dreams* seem ridiculous to some, and *visions* foolishness, but it is so to those who had rather believe what is against the Priest than the Priest. But no wonder, since Joseph's brethren said to him, 'Behold this dreamer cometh, come let us slay him;' and yet that dreamer was confirmed, and his murderers were confounded." Again, in the "De Mortalitate,"⁶ "when a certain colleague and brother Priest of ours anxious for death, prayed for his passport, there *stood near him*, when now at the point of death, a youth of venerable aspect, tall and striking and said, Are you afraid to suffer?" &c. This, however, is a vision experienced by another, and by him when at the point of death.

Finally, there is a passage in Eusebius,⁷ which occurs in a short preface with which he introduces the fragment of the letter of the martyrs of Lyons, to the following effect. "Mon-

¹ Ep. liv. § 1.

² § 5.

³ lxiii. § 17.

⁴ lxix. §§ 9, 10.

⁵ § 10.

⁶ De Mortalitate, § xix.

⁷ Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. v. c. 3.

tanus and Alcibiades and Theodotus in Phrygia being then for the first time accounted by many to have the power of prophesying, for as there were very many other miracles of Divine grace *even yet* at that period wrought in different Churches, these created a belief in many that those persons also possessed the power of prophesying,"—a passage which, as on the one hand it seems to show that Eusebius had no idea that miracles were wrought in his own time, so does it seem equally to show, on the other hand, that he had no doubt they were wrought in the time of Montanus, Alcibiades, and Theodotus, or in the second century.

These, then, are not, indeed, all the notices we have of contemporary miracles, or supernatural agency, in the writings of the Fathers of the first three centuries, but they are a very large portion of them, and are the facts in kind, if not quite in number, on which we have to build up our conclusions.

Now, in the first place, I must remark, what, indeed, I have partly done already in the course of the short comments I have given on the passages I have produced,—I must remark, that the witnesses, in many cases the eye-witnesses, who thus speak to the existence of extraordinary powers and extraordinary visitations in the Church of their own times, are men of various natural temperaments; their very writings prove it; calm, as Irenæus; or impetuous, as Tertullian—are men of more than one profession, for Minucius was a lawyer and so was Tertullian in his early days—are men, several of them, of great reading and knowledge, and of much experience; the infinite number of authors they some of them cite, the course of studies they describe themselves as having in several instances passed through, and the wide extent of the travels through which we can trace them, whether taken of choice or of necessity, and taken, moreover, in times the most stirring, being all pledges of that knowledge and experience—are men quite alive to the necessity of distinguishing between miracles and works of magic and conjuration, so common in their days; and of sifting the cases, which claimed to be supernatural, with that object especially in view¹;

¹ See, e. g. *Contra Celsum*, I. § 68, and II. § 50 (λεγέτω τις οὐν ἡμῖν εἰ δύναται τι τῶν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ ἢ τῶν παρὰ τῷ ἀποστόλῳ χῶραν παρέχειν ὑπονοίας γοητείας), and elsewhere when he replies to the charge of the Jew in Celsus, that the miracles of Jesus were wrought by magic.

dwelling particularly, as some of them do, on the *moral* reformation which the proceedings of Jesus wrought on his followers, an effect so *contrary* even to that produced by magicians and conjurers on their dupes¹—are men of unquestionable love for truth, enthusiastic zeal for it, submitting as they did for its sake to innumerable hardships and dangers in life, and some amongst them even to death itself—I say that when we consider that men of this character are the witnesses to the existence of these supernatural agencies in that age, we cannot but think their testimony weighty, or as our old writers would say, *considerable*, more especially when we call to mind that they speak from so many different quarters of the world, and still concur in the assertion of the fact itself—from Asia Minor, from Palestine, from Africa, from Gaul, from Italy. It is almost impossible, I repeat, to believe that there are not some substantial grounds for such a mass of assertion: and however some particulars of it may embarrass us, as *e. g.* the affirmation of Tertullian that the exorcism could be practised by any Christian, “a quolibet Christiano;”² whether the expression be a mere loose one, or whether the word “quolibet” be used by him in a sense of his own, which any one familiar with his style may well consider probable; or, as that other declaration of Irenæus, that even Jews could eject evil spirits too in the name of Jehovah, though the case of the Jews, who were exorcists, in the Acts,³ proves that the evil spirits were indifferent to their adjuration by that name; or, as that of Origen, who ascribes a virtue to the name of the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, by which demons were ejected by those who were not Jews as well as by Jews⁴—however, I say, these and other like diffi-

¹ See *Contra Celsum*, II. § 44, and again § 50. *Τίς γὰρ τὸν κρείττονα βίον, καὶ συστέλλοντα τὰ τῆς κακίας ὀσημέραι ἐπὶ τὸ ἔλαττον, εὐλόγως φησὶν ἀπὸ ἀπάτης γίνεσθαι;*

² Tertullian, *Apol. c. xxiii.*

³ Acts xix. 13.

⁴ See *Contra Celsum*, IV. §§ 33. 35, and V. § 45, in which latter passage he says, “if the names Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were translated into their equivalent meaning in the Greek, the phrase would have no more effect than the most indifferent words:” though it

is remarkable that when giving further instances of the like effect produced by the names Israel, Sabaoth, Adonai, whilst expressed in the Hebrew, and of the inefficacy of the same when translated, he uses the expression *ὡς φασιν οἱ περὶ ταῦτα δεινοί*, and again, *εἰάν δὲ τηρήσωμεν αὐτὸ, προσάπτοντες οἷς οἱ περὶ ταῦτα δεινοὶ συμπλέκειν αὐτὸ φήθησαν*, “but if we retain the original word, coupling it with such other words as those *who are skilful in such matters* are used to couple it,” as though Origen disclaimed all such powers of

culties may present themselves, and may no doubt be turned to account by those who are disposed to disparage these early reputed miracles ; still the whole stream of primitive testimony sets in so strongly for the fact, that extraordinary powers were exercised by the Church of those days, that the truth of that fact *in the main* it is extremely hard to resist.

In the next place I will observe, that the miraculous powers of exorcism and of healing diseases, are those which the Fathers are far the most unanimous, as well as the most peremptory upon ; that the speaking with tongues, prophesying, discerning of spirits, and above all, the raising the dead, are powers asserted by them indeed, but not near so universally or so determinately as the others. And this has been made matter of charge against the Fathers. But, on the other hand, it may be, and has been contended, that the terms in which our blessed Lord conferred miraculous powers on his immediate followers, and the manner in which they are related to have exercised those powers, coincide with such a condition of things ; that they lead us to think, that the ejection of evil spirits and the curing of sicknesses were in fact to be, not the sole, but the principal fields in which the operation of the supernatural faculties, with which those followers were endowed, were to lie : thus, that St. Matthew tells us that our Lord's charge to the Apostles, when He sent them on their first mission, was this, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils ;"¹ but when the Evangelist at the beginning of the same chapter had been giving a sort of heading of his own to this transaction, which he was about to describe a few verses afterwards, he, from whatever cause, perhaps because two only of the four faculties here vouchsafed were to be principally called into action, names but two of them, and those two the ejection of evil spirits and the healing of diseases ; these are his words, "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples he gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease :"² and that St. Mark, whether speaking of the same scene or of another, writes, "And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would ;

incantation for himself, and devolved the onus of supporting the facts on other parties: this candour, however, in one instance, only making Origen's

testimony, where it is not so qualified, more valuable in other instances.

¹ Matt. x. 8.

² x. 1.

and they came unto him ; and he ordained twelve that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils ;”¹ taking no notice of any other miraculous gifts, that were imparted to them: that when we look to the result of this mission of the Apostles, we find it recorded in these terms, “ And they went out and preached that men should repent. And they *cast out many devils*, and anointed with oil many that were *sick*, and healed them ;”² no mention being made of their having had occasion to exercise the other two faculties with which they had been endowed, that of cleansing the leper, or of raising the dead: that so again when our blessed Lord despatched the other seventy, two and two, to spread the Gospel, his charge to them was, as St. Luke informs us, “ Heal the sick ;”³ and when they return and communicate to the Lord the success of their labours, it is in these terms, “ Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name :”⁴ still the cure of diseases, and the casting out of unclean spirits the two miraculous gifts to which our attention is exclusively drawn: that such were the commissions, and such the issue of them, as they were first given by our Lord to his disciples when they had to act on them during his sojourn amongst men, as we find the facts recorded in the Gospels: but that after his resurrection, and before He went away, the final charge which He delivered to them was this, “ Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe ; in my name shall they *cast out devils* ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall *lay hands on the sick*, and they shall recover ;”⁵ and if we consider the former charge as still in force, which we must, to the several powers here put into the disciples’ hands, those of cleansing the leper, and of raising the dead must be added: that if, however, we examine the manner in which this charge was actually carried into effect, the actual use that was made of these gifts in the *Acts of the Apostles* ; just as in the other case we traced the result of the mission in the *Gospels* ; we

¹ Mark iii. 13, 14, 15.
² vi. 12, 13.

³ Luke x. 9.
⁵ Mark xvi. 15–18.

⁴ x. 17.

shall find, as before, that of all the powers here allotted to the disciples, those of casting out devils and healing disease were still the two primary ones: that we have indeed instances of the dead being raised, but only two such instances, that of Tabitha, and that of Eutychus; three instances of the gift of tongues, that at Pentecost; that at Cornelius' house¹; and that, when Paul laid his hands on John's disciples at Ephesus, twelve in number²; though in the Epistle to the Corinthians³ there is incidental evidence of the use of tongues in that Church: that we have no instance of the cleansing of a leper: and none of poison having been drunk by a disciple with impunity; and but one of protection from the bite of a serpent: yet that numbers of instances of the ejection of devils, and of the cure of diseases are presented to us! "They brought forth the *sick* into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a *multitude* out of the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing *sick folks*, and them that were vexed with *unclean spirits*; and they were healed every one;"⁴ and again, when Philip went down to Samaria, and the people gave heed to the things which he spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did; what were those miracles? "Unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed; and there was great joy in that city;"⁵ and again, when special miracles were wrought by the hands of Paul at Ephesus, we are told that "from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them:"⁶ that if then we find the instances of the gift of tongues, of prophecy, and above all of raising the dead, few in number as recorded in *ecclesiastical* writings, as compared with the instances of casting out devils and healing diseases; the same is true with respect to the Canonical Scriptures; and that the coincidence is in itself remarkable, if we consider that the fact does not perhaps strike us even in the Canonical Scriptures till our attention happens to be called to it, and we investigate the question: and that if such be the case, it is no matter for

¹ Acts x. 46.² xix. 6.⁴ Acts v. 16.⁴ viii. 7, 8.³ 1 Cor. xiv.⁶ xix. 12.

wonder, if miracles which were more sparingly wrought, and which therefore had been witnessed by comparatively few persons, should be spoken of with less certainty by the Fathers; none of whom profess to have been themselves the agents of them: and that it is not reasonable to expect that Theophilus, *e. g.* or Irenæus should affirm contemporary cases of resurrection from the dead, as if they were things of ordinary occurrence, when even in the Acts of the Apostles, the number of such cases left on record is extremely limited, though the accounts of such as are found *there* are so circumstantial, in this respect so greatly differing from those of the Fathers, as to carry conviction to the mind at once.

Furthermore, it is argued, that though there is something distinct from miraculous agency in visions and dreams, of which, as we have seen, the later of the Ante-Nicene Fathers more especially speak very positively and very often; and though some may be enumerated which have no pretension to be reckoned amongst Divine communications, yet it is not easy to reject them all, attested as they are by persons of credit, who had the means of judging from results, and in action, as they are represented to have been, at peculiarly critical periods of the Church: that certainly the vision may often seem prompted by the circumstances of the party at the moment, as the visions which informed Cyprian of an approaching persecution, and might be resolvable into natural causes; but that still the same might be said of St. Peter's vision, which was no doubt closely connected with his physical wants at the time, for there is evidently a relation between his being "hungry" before the vision came on, and the character of the vision itself, which exhibited to him "four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air," which he was to "kill and eat;"¹ and the sacred narrative clearly means to mark that relation; and yet after all, that vision was made the vehicle of a revelation from God to guide his future conduct: and that we may say in general of early ecclesiastical visions, what we have said of early ecclesiastical miracles, that such phenomena are precisely in accordance with the proceedings of God as described in the Acts; of which visions are as remarkable a characteristic as casting out devils or healing diseases: and indeed, that

¹ Acts x. 10-12.

St. Peter's first sermon prepares us for them, where he quotes from the prophet Joel, that "it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh : and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams :"¹ that accordingly, St. Stephen sees our Lord before he is dragged forth to martyrdom² : and Saul was converted by a vision³ : and there was the vision of Cornelius⁴ : and a vision appeared to Paul, when "there stood a man of Macedonia ;"⁵ and at Corinth Christ spake to Paul "by a vision, Be not afraid :"⁶ and in prison "the Lord stood by Paul and said, Be of good cheer :"⁷ and aboard ship an angel stood by him "saying, Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar :"⁸ and more examples might be added.

All this, I say, is contended ; with what success I will not peremptorily pronounce ; but leave it to thoughtful men to weigh and consider ; at the same time adding, in conclusion, that whilst we contemplate this difficult question on the whole, we must remember that we do not rest ecclesiastical miracles or visions *merely* on the testimony of the Fathers to the facts, but we have it on the authority of revelation itself, that as the Apostles received the power of working miracles from Christ, so did some of those at least on whom the Apostles laid their hands, receive a power of doing the same from them. Thus we read in the sixth chapter of the Acts,⁹ that the Apostles laid their hands on the seven Deacons ; and we are then told,¹⁰ that forthwith Stephen, one of the seven, "did great wonders and miracles among the people :"¹¹ and again,¹² that the people of Samaria "with one accord gave heed unto these things which Philip spake," another of the seven, "hearing and seeing the miracles which he did ;" so that the question only is, how far this virtue was transmitted ; through what successive generations it lived. And though the Bishop of Lincoln's theory¹² is one which is well calculated to reconcile a sceptical age to the acceptance of ecclesiastical miracles in a degree, and though I have sometimes felt inclined to adopt it myself, yet on further reading and further examination of the subject, I am led to doubt if the testimony of the Fathers can

¹ Acts ii. 17.² vii. 55.⁹ vi. 6.¹⁰ vi. 8.³ ix. 3-6.⁴ x. 3.¹¹ viii. 6.⁵ xvi. 9.⁶ xviii. 9.¹² Account of the writings of Tertulian, p. 92, 3rd edit.⁷ xxiii. 11.⁸ xxvii. 23, 24.

be squared to it, if it will satisfy the conditions of the case. The cessation of all miracles with the lives of those persons, on whom the Apostles themselves laid their hands, for that is the theory, would imply that miracles could not have been wrought in the middle of the third century, and yet Origen's testimony, which, as we have seen, is singularly candid and cautious, and on that account is deserving of more than ordinary respect, clearly and repeatedly, indeed more frequently than any other of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, affirms them to have co-existed with him, though in a less abundant measure than they once did ; and Cyprian supports him : nor can such testimony be satisfactorily or safely explained away, I think, by the supposition of " a combined operation of prejudice and policy ; of prejudice, which made the parties reluctant to believe the cessation of miracles ; of policy, which made them anxious to conceal it." ¹

¹ Account of the writings of Tertullian, p. 93.