

DIALOGUE CONCERNING TYNDALE: BK. 1. CH. 4-14

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

The author declareth in the comprobation of pilgrimages that it is the pleasure of God to be specially sought and worshipped in some one place before another. And albeit that we cannot attain to the knowledge of the cause why God doth so, yet the author proveth by great authority that God by miracle testifieth it is so.

With this your friend asked me what reason were there, that God would set more by one place than by another; or how know we that he so doth, namely, if the one be a church as well as the other.

Whereunto I answered that why God would do it, I could make him no answer, no more than saint Austin saith that he could. I was never so near of his counsel nor dare not be so bold to ask him. But that he so doth indeed, that I am sure enough; yet not for that he setteth more by that place, for the soil and pavement of that place; but that his pleasure in some place is to show more his assistance, and to be more specially sought unto, than in some other.

Then he asked me whereby was I so sure of that. Whereupon I demanded him, that if it so were that the thing [were] standing in debate and question it would like our Lord to show a miracle for the proof of the one part. Would ye not, quod I, reckon then the question were decided, and the doubt assoiled, and that part sufficiently proved?

Yes, marry, quod he, that would I.

Well, quod I, then is this matter out of doubt long ago; for God hath proved my part in divers pilgrimages by the working of many more than a thousand miracles, one time and other. In the Gospel of John, the fifth chapter, where we read that the angel moved the water, and whoso next went in was cured of his disease, was it not a sufficient proof that God would they should come thither for their health?

WHY GOD DOTHT MIRACLES IN CERTAIN PLACES

Albeit no man can tell why he sent the angel rather thither, and there did his miracles, than in another water. But whensoever our Lord hath in any place wrought a miracle, although he nothing do it for the place but for the honour of that saint whom he will have honoured in that place, or for the faith that he findeth with some that prayeth in that place, or for the increase of faith which he findeth falling and decayed in that place needing the show of some miracles for the reviving, whatsoever the cause be; yet, I think, the affection is to be commended of men and women that with good devotion run thither where they see or hear that our Lord showeth a demonstration of his special assistance.

And when he showeth many in one place it is a good token that he would be sought upon and worshipped there. Many Jews were there that came to Jerusalem to see the miracle that Christ had wrought upon Lazare, as the gospel rehearseth. And surely we were worse than Jews, if we would be so negligent that where God worketh miracle, we list not once to move our foot thitherward. We marvel much that God showeth no more miracles nowadays, when it is much more marvel that he doth vouchsafe to show any at all among such unkind, slothful, deadly people, as list not once to lift up their heads to look thereon, or that our incredulity can suffer him nowadays to work any.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Because pilgrimages be among other proofs testified by miracles, the Messenger doth make objection against those miracles partly lest they be feigned and untrue, partly lest they be done by the devil if they be done at all.

Then said your friend, Well I perceive then the force and effect of all the proof standeth all in miracles, which I will agree to be a strong proof, if I saw them done, and were sure that God or good saints did them. But first, since that men may and haply do of miracles make many a lie, we must not prove this matter by the miracles but if we first prove that the miracles were true. And, over this, if they were done indeed, yet since the angel of darkness may transform and transfigure himself into an angel of light, how shall we know whether the miracle were done by God to the increase of Christian devotion, or done by the craft of the devil to the advancement of misbelief and idolatry, in setting men's hearts upon stocks and stones instead of saints, or upon saints themselves that are but creatures, instead of God himself?

I answered him that the force of my tale was not the miracles, but the thing that I hold stronger than any miracles, which, as I said in the beginning, I reckon so sure and fast and therewith so plain and evident unto every Christian man, that it needeth none other proof, and that thing is, as I said afore, the faith of Christ's church, by the common

TO WORSHIP SAINTS AND IMAGES IS MERITORIOUS

consent whereof, these matters be decided and well known that the worship of saints and images been allowed, approbate, and accustomed for good christian and meritorious virtues; and the contrary opinion not only reprov'd by many holy doctors, but also condemned for heresies by sundry general councils.

And this in the beginning I told you, quod I, was and should be the force and strength of my tale. Albeit, of truth, I said unto you beside, that methought that the miracles wrought by God were sufficient proof and authority therefore, although there were none other, which thing, since ye seem to impugn, I shall, as I can, make you answer thereunto.

Nay, Sir, said he, I pray you take me not so as though that I did impugn it; but as I showed you before, I rehearsed you what I have heard some other say.

In good time, quod I, Then because they be not here, I pray you defend and bear out their part, with all that ye have heard them say, and set thereto also all that ever your own mind giveth you that they may more hereafter say, lest you return not fully furnished for your purpose.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Because the Messenger thinketh that he may well mistrust and deny the miracles because reason and nature tell him that they cannot be done; therefore, first, the author showeth what unreasonableness would ensue if folk would stand so stiff against all credence to be given to any such things as reason and nature should seem to gainsay.

And first where ye say.

Nay, quod he, where they say.

Well, quod I, so be it, where they say. For here ever my tongue trippeth. But now therefore first where they say that they never saw any of these miracles themselves, and therefore the miracles be no proof to them, which while they never saw them are not bounden to believe them, they seem either very negligent if they nothing inquire when they mistrust and doubt of the truth in such a weighty matter; or if they have diligently made ensearch, then must it needs be that they have heard of so many told and rehearsed by the mouths and the writing of so good and credible persons that they seem unreasonably suspicious if they think altogether lies that so many true men, or men like to be true, so faithfully do report. If these men were judges few matters would take end at their hand; or at the least the plaintiff should have evil speed if they would believe nothing, but that were proved, nor reckon nothing proved but that they see themselves.

Thus may every man reckon himself unsure of his own father if he believe no man, or because all the proof thereof standeth but upon one woman, and that upon her, which though she can tell best, yet if it be wrong hath greatest cause to lie. Let the knowledge of the father alone therefore among our wives' mysteries. And let us see if we believe nothing but that we see ourselves. Who can reckon himself sure of his own mother? For possible it were that he were changed in the cradle, and a rich man's nurse bring home her own child for her master's and keep her master's for her own, to make her own a gentleman good cheap. And this were no great mastery while the mother hath of her own child no ear mark.

Sir, quod your friend, if I should answer them thus, and by these ensamples prove them, that they were of reason bounden to believe such miracles as were reported because many credible men tell them, forasmuch as else we should believe nothing but that we see ourselves; and then were all the world full of confusion, nor no judgment could be given but upon things done in the judge's sight, I should, I fear me, very feebly satisfy them. For they would soon say that the ensamples be nothing like the matter. But as it is reason that I should believe honest men in all such things as may be true, and wherein I see no cause why they should lie, so were it against all reason to believe men, be they never so many, seem they never so credible, whereas reason and nature—of

which twain everyone is alone more credible than they all—showeth me plainly that their tale is untrue, as it must needs if the matter be impossible, as it is in all these miracles. And in such case, though I can perceive no profit that they can receive thereby, yet when I well see that it could not be true, I must well see that it was not true. And thereby must I needs know that if they can take no profit by lying they lie not for any covetise but even only for their special pleasure.

Forsooth, quod I, this is right merrily answered. And to say the truth as far as we be yet gone in the matter of these miracles not much amiss nor very far from the point. But since this thing is much material as whereupon many great things do depend, we shall not so shortly shake it off but we shall come one step or twain nearer to the matter. And, first, I will say to them that it were hard for them and not very sure to believe that every man lieth which telleth them a tale for true that reason and nature seemeth to show them to be false and impossible. Forin this wise shall they in many things err and clearly deceive themselves, and sometime while they make themselves sure of the wrong side if they would with wagers contend and strive therein, they should upon the boldness of nature and reason lose all that ever they were able to lay thereon. If there were a man of Inde that never came out of his country, nor never had seen any white man or woman in his life, and since he seeth innumerable people black, he might ween that it were against the nature of man to be white. Now if he shall, because nature seemeth to show him so, believe therefore that all the world lied if they would say the contrary, who were in the wrong? He that believeth his reason and nature, or they that against his persuasion of reason and nature shall tell him as it is of truth?

Your friend answered that reason and nature told not the man of Inde that all men should be black, but he believed so against reason and against nature, for he had nothing to lead him to it, but because himself saw no white, which was no reason. And he might by nature perceive if he had learning that the heat maketh his country black. And that of like reason, the cold of other countries must make the people white.

WHAT MAKETH BLACK AND WHITE MEN

Well, quod I, and yet he cometh to his persuasion by a syllogism and reasoning, almost as formal as is the argument by which ye prove the kind of man reasonable, whereof what other collection have you that brought you first to perceive it, than that this man is reasonable, and this man, and this man, and this man, and so forth all whom ye see. By ensample whereof by them whom ye know, presuming thereby no man to be otherwise, ye conclude that every man is reasonable. And he thinketh himself surer in his argument than he thinketh you in yours. For he saw never other but black people where ye see many men fools. As for that he heareth of other, that there be white men elsewhere, this serveth nothing for your purpose if ye believe no witness against the thing that your reason and experience showeth you. And whereas ye say, if the man of Inde had learning he should perceive that it is not against nature, but rather consonant with nature that some other men should in other countries be white, though all his countrymen be black, so peradventure those whose part ye do sustain, if they had some learning that they lack, should well perceive that of reason they should give credence to credible persons, reporting them things that seem far against reason because they be far above reason, whereof we may peradventure have more perceiving in our communication hereafter or ever we finish that we have in hand. But in the meanwhile, to show you further what necessity there is to believe other men in things not only unknowen but also seeming impossible, the man of Inde, that we speak of, can by no learning know the course of the sun whereby he should perceive the cause of his blackness, but if

it be by astronomy, which conning who can learn that nothing will believe which seemeth to himself impossible? Or who would not ween it impossible, but if experience had proved it, that the whole earth hangeth in the air, and men walk foot against foot, and ships sail bottom against bottom—a thing so strange, and seeming so far against nature and reason, that Lactantius, a man right wise and well learned in his work which he writeth *de divinis institutionibus* reckoneth it for impossible and letteth not to laugh at the philosophers for affirming of that point, which is yet now founden true by experience of them that have in less than two years sailed the world round about. Who would ween it possible

GLASS AND WHEREOF IT IS MADE

that glass were made of fern roots? Now if those that ween it impossible by reason, and never saw it done, believe no man that tell it them, albeit that it be no peril to their soul, yet so much have they knowledge the less, and unreasonably stand in their error through the mistrusting of the truth.

It is not yet fifty years ago since the first man, as far as men have heard, came to London that ever parted the gilt from the silver, consuming shortly the silver into dust with a very fair water. In so far forth that when the liners and goldsmiths of London heard first thereof, they nothing wondered thereof but laughed thereat as at an impossible lie, in which persuasions, if they had continued still, they had yet at this day lacked all that conning.

Yet will I not say nay but that a man may be too light in belief, and be by such ensamples brought into belief too far. As a good fellow and friend of mine late in talking of this matter of marvels and miracles, intending merely to make me believe for a truth a thing that could never be, first brought in what a force the fire hath that will make two pieces of iron able to be joined, and cleave together and with the help of the hammer he made both one, which no hammering could do without the fire, which thing, because I daily see, I assented. Then said he further that it was more marvel that the fire shall make iron to run as silver or lead doth, and make it take a print. Which thing I told him I had never seen, but because he said he had seen it, I thought it to be true. Soon after this, he would have me to believe that he had seen a piece of silver of two or three inches about, and in length less than a foot, drawn by man's hand through strait holes made in an iron, till it was brought in thickness not half an inch about, and in length drawn out I cannot tell how many yards. And when I heard him say that he saw this himself, then I wist well he was merrily disposed.

Mary, quod your friend, it was high time to give him over when he came to that.

Well, said I, What if I should tell you now that I had seen the same?

By my faith, quod he, merrily, I would believe it at leisure when I had seen the same, and in the meanwhile I could not let you to say your pleasure in your own house; but I would think ye were disposed merrily to make me a fool.

Well, said I, What if there would, besides me, ten or twenty good honest men tell you the same tale, and that they had all seen the thing done themself?

In faith, quod he, since I am sent hither to believe you, I would in that point believe yourself

alone, as well as them all.

Well, quod I, Ye mean ye would believe us all alike. But what would you then say if one or twain of them would say more?

Mary, quod he, Then would I believe them less.

What if they would, quod I, show you that they have seen that the piece of silver was overgilt, and the same piece being still drawn through the holes, the gilt not rubbed off, but still go forth in length with the silver, so that all the length of many yards was gilted of the gilted of the first piece not a foot long?

Surely, Sir, quod he, those twain that would tell me so much more, I would say were not so cunning in the maintenance of a lie, as was the pilgrim's companion, which when his fellow had told at York, that he had seen of late at London a bird that covered all Poules churchyard with his wings: coming to the same place on the morrow said that he saw not the bird; but he heard much speech thereof; but he saw in Poules churchyard an egg so great that ten men could scant move it with levers, this fellow could help it forth with a proper side way. But he were no proper underpropper of a lie that would minish his credence with affirming all the first and setting a louder lie thereto.

No, quod he, not if twenty should. Well, said I, then I have espied, if ten should tell you so, ye would not believe them.

What if an hundred would, quod I, that seem good and credible?

If they were, quod he, ten thousand, they were not of credence with me, when they should tell me that they saw the thing that myself knoweth by nature and reason impossible. For when I know it could not be done, I know well that they lie all, be they never so many that say they saw it done.

Well, quod I, since I see well ye would not in this point believe a whole town, ye have put me to silence, that I dare not now be bold to tell you that I have seen it myself. But surely if witness would have served me, I ween I might have brought you a great many good men that would say, and swear too, that they have seen it themselves. But now shall I provide me tomorrow peradventure a couple of witness, of whom I wot well ye will mistrust neither.

Who be they? quod he, for it were hard to find whom I could better trust than yourself, whom whatsoever I have merrily said, I could not in good faith but believe you in that you should tell me earnestly upon your own knowledge. But ye use, my master saith, to look so sadly when ye mean merrily, that many times men doubt whether ye speak in sport when ye mean good earnest.

In good faith, quod I, I mean good earnest now, and yet as well as ye dare trust me I shall, as I said, if ye will go with me, provide a couple of witness of whom ye will believe any one better than twain of me, for they be your near friends, and ye have been better acquainted with them, and such as I dare say for them, be not often wont to lie.

Who be they, quod he, I pray you?

Mary, quod I, your own two eyen, for I shall if you will, bring you where ye shall see it, no further hence than even here in London. And as for iron and laten + to be so drawn in length ye shall see it done in twenty shops almost in one street.

Mary, Sir, quod he, these witness indeed will not lie. As the poor man said by the priest, if I may be homely to tell you a merry tale by the way.

A MERRY TALE

A merry tale, quod I, cometh never amiss to me.

The poor man, quod he, had found a priest over familiar with his wife, and because he spake it abroad and could not prove it the priest sued him before the bishop's official for diffamation, where the poor man upon pain of cursing, was commanded that in his parish church, he should upon the Sunday at High Mass time stand up and say, mouth thou liest. Whereupon for fulfilling of his penance, up was the poor soul set in a pew, that the people might wonder on him and hear what he said. And there all aloud, when he had rehearsed what he had reported by the priest, then he set his hands on his mouth, and said, mouth mouth thou liest. And by and by thereupon he set his hand upon both his eyen and said, but eyen, eyen, quod he, by the mass, ye lie not a whit. And so sir indeed, and ye bring me those witness, they will not lie a whit.

Howbeit Sir and though this be true, as in good faith, I believe and am sure that it is, yet am I never the more bounden by reason to believe them that would tell me a miracle. For though this thing be incredible to him that heareth it, and strange and marvellous to him that seeth it, yet it is a thing that may be done. But he that telleth me a miracle, telleth me a thing that cannot be done.

I showed you, quod I, this ensample to put you in mind that in being over hard of belief of things that by reason and nature seem and appear impossible, where they be reported by credible witness having no cause to lie, there is as much peril of error as where men be too light of credence. And thus much have I proved you onward, that if ye believe no man in such things as may not be, then must it follow that ye ought to believe no man in many things that may be; for all is one to you, whether they may be or may not be, if it seem to you that they may not be. And of truth ye cannot tell whether they may be or may not be, except they be two such things as imply contradiction, as one self thing in one self part to be both black and white at once. For else many things shall seem to you such as all reason will resist, and nature will no wise admit. And yet they shall be done well enough. And be in some other place in common use and custom. But now, because all your shift standeth in this that of a miracle told you ye may with reason believe that all men lie, because reason and nature being more to be believed than all they, telleth you that they say wrong, in that the thing reported for a miracle cannot be done, I have showed you that nature and reason doth show you that many things may not be done, which yet indeed be done so far forth, that when ye see them done ye may right well accompt them as miracles, for anything that reason or nature can show you by what natural order and cause it could be done, but that ye shall still see reason stand quite against it, as in the drawing of the silver or iron.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

The author sheweth that neither nature nor reason do deny the miracles to be true; nor do not gainsay but that they may be well and easily done.

SIR, sayeth he, yet hit we not the point; for albeit that many things be well done, and by nature, in which neither my wit, nor haply no man's else, can attain so near to nature's counsel, that we can therein perceive her craft. But like as some rude people muse upon a clock that hath the spring—which is the cause of his moving— secretly conveyed and closed in the barrel, so marvel we and wonder on her work yet alway all those things differ and be unlike to miracles.

In that yourself will agree with me, that when I believe, that reason and nature teacheth me surely that miracles be things that cannot be done, I am not in this deceived, though I may be in such other things deceived as seem impossible and yet may be done. And therefore, as concerning miracles, in which yourself will agree that I am not by any mistaking of reason and nature deceived, ye may not yourself, me thinketh, say nay, but that I may well with reason believe them twain against all them that will tell me they have seen such things done, as yourself doth agree that they twain, that is to wit nature and reason, doth verily and truly show me cannot be done.

What manner of things be those, quod I?

Mary, miracles, quod he, such as yourself will agree to be done against nature.

Give us thereof, quod I, some ensample.

As if men, quod he, would now come to tell me that at our lady at Rounceyvale^s there were a dead child restored again to life.

Let that, quod I, be one: and let another be that a bishop, in the building of his church, finding one beam cut a great deal too short for his work, drew it forth between another man and him four foot (and ye will) longer than it was, and so made it serve.^e

Be it by my trowth, quod he.

Will we, quod I, take for the third, that a man was by miracle in a pater noster while, conveyed a mile off from one place to another?

Be it so, quod he.

Now they that should tell me, quod he, that they had seen these three miracles, were I bound to believe them?

Whether ye were bounden, quod I, or no, we shall see further after. But now why should ye not of reason trust them, if the men be credible, and earnestly report it, and peradventure on their

oaths depose it, having no cause to feign it, nor likely to lie and be forsworn for nought?

I will, quod he, not believe them because that nature and reason are two records more to be believed than all they that bear witness against them.

Why, quod I, what doth reason and nature tell you?

They twain tell me, quod he, that those three things cannot be done which those men say they saw done.

Wote you, quod I, that reason and nature tell you so?

Yea, Mary, quod he, that I wote well they do, and I think yourself will agree that they tell me so.

Nay, by Saint Mary, Sir, quod I, that will I not. For I think that neither reason nor nature telleth you so, but rather both two tell you clean the contrary, that is to wit, that they both bear witness that those three things, and such other like, be things that may be well and easily done.

Yea, quod he? Mary, this is another way. Then have we walked wrong awhile, if ye prove that.

Me thinketh, quod I, nothing more easy to prove than that. For I pray you tell me, quod I, doth reason and nature show you that there is a God or not?

Faith sheweth me that surely, quod he, but whether nature and reason shew me that or no, that I doubt, since great reasoned men and philosophers have doubted thereof. And some of them have been plainly persuaded and believe, that there was none at all, and the whole people of the world in effect fallen from knowledge or belief of God into idolatry and worship of mammots.

Nay, quod I, there is little doubt, I trow, but that nature and reason giveth us good knowledge that there is a God. For albeit the Gentiles worshipped among them a thousand false gods, yet all that proveth that there was and is in all men's heads a secret consent of nature that God there is, or else they would have worshipped none at all. Now as for the philosophers, though a very few doubted, and one or twain thought there was none, yet as one swallow maketh not summer, so the folly

ONE SWALLOW MAKETH NOT SUMMER

of so few maketh no change of the matter against all the whole number of the old philosophers: which, as saint Paule confesseth. found out by nature and reason that there was a God, either maker or governor, or both, of all this whole engine of the world —the marvellous beauty and constant course whereof sheweth well that it neither was made nor governed by chance. But when they had by these visible things know-ledge of his invisible majesty, then did they, as we do, fall from the worship of him to the worship of idols, as now do Christian men, not

THE IDOLS OF HERETICS

as heretics lay to the charge of good people, in doing reverence to saints, or honour to their images, but in doing as do those heretics themselves, making our belly or beneath our belly, or goods, or our own blind affection toward other creatures, or our own proud affection and dotage

towards ourself, our mammons and idols and very false gods. But surely both nature and reason well declare and teach us that a God there is.

Well, quod he, I will not stick in this, since saint Paule saith so.

Then, quod I, if reason and nature show you that there is a God, doth not reason and nature show you also that he is almighty and may do what he will?

Yes, quod he, that is both natural to his godhead, and by reason it may well be perceived.

Then followeth it, said I, that reason and nature doth not show you that these three miracles (that we were agreed should stand for ensamples) precisely could not be done, but they taught you only that they could not be done by nature. But ye may (as ye now see) perceive that they themselves teach that they may be done by God, since they teach you that there is a God, and that he is almighty. And, therefore, when ye will in no wise believe them that tell you they have seen such miracles done, ye refuse not to believe such things as cannot be done; but ye mistrust, causeless, the credence and faith of honest men, in the report of such things, as by him that they said did it, may well and easily be done.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

The Messenger allegeth that God may nothing do against the course of nature. Of which the author declareth the contrary; and over that sheweth that our Lord in working of miracles doth nothing against nature.

SIR, quod he, ye come indeed somewhat near me now. But yet seemeth me that reason and nature teach me still that I shall in no wise believe them that tell me they have seen such miracles done.

For first ye will grant me that they teach me that if they should be done they must be done by God against the course of nature; so is it then that reason sheweth me that God hath set all things already from the first creation to go forth in a certain order and course, which order and course men call nature, and that hath he of his infinite wisdom done so well and provided that course to go forth in such manner and fashion that it can not be mended. And therefore seemeth it that reason sheweth me that God never will anything do against the course which his high wisdom, power, and goodness hath made so good that it could never be broken to the better. For if it might, then had our Lord not made his order and course perfect in the beginning. And therefore doth, as I say, reason and nature yet bear record against them that shall say that they see such miracles, since God will never work against the course of nature which himself hath already set in so goodly an order that it were not possible to be better; and the goodness of God will make no change to the worse.

Surely, quod I, ye go now very far wide. For neither doth reason prove you that God—although

it cannot otherwise be but that anything of the making of his goodness must needs be good—hath made therefore everything to be of sovereign perfection; for then must every creature be equal; nor also that the whole work of his creation though it have in itself sufficient and right wonderful perfection, that therefore it is wrought to the utterest point of sovereign goodness that his almighty majesty could have made it of. For since he wrought it not naturally but willingly, he wrought it not to the uttermost of his power, but with such degrees of goodness as his high pleasure liked to limit. For else were his work of as infinite perfection as himself. And of such infinite equal perfection was there by God brought forth nothing but only the two persons of the Trinity, that is to wit the son and the holy ghost. Of which two the son was first by the father begotten, and after the holy ghost by the father and the son, after, I say, in order of beginning but not in time produced and brought forth. And in this high generation and production did the doers work both willingly and naturally and after the utterest perfection of themselves, which they did only therein and in none other thing. And therefore God might break up the whole world, if he would, and make a better by and by, and not only change in the natural course of this world some things to the better. Howbeit God in working of miracles doth nothing against nature, but some special benefit above nature. And he doth not against you that doth another a good turn which ye be not able to do. And therefore since God may do what he will, being almighty, and in doing of miracles he doth for the better, neither reason nor nature sheweth you, that they which say they saw such miracles do tell you a thing that cannot be done, since ye have no reason to prove that God either can not do it or will not do it. For since He can do it, and it may be that He will do it, why should we mistrust good and honest men that say they saw him do it?

THE NINTH CHAPTER

The author sheweth that albeit men may mistrust some of the particular miracles, yet can there no reasonable man neither deny nor doubt but that many miracles hath there been done and wrought.

FORSOOTH, quod he, and yet as for miracles, I were not for all this bounden to believe any. For I spake never yet with any man that could tell me that ever he saw any.

It may, quod I, fortune you to live so long that ye shall find no man that was by at your christening, nor when ye were bishopped * neither.

Mary, quod he, for ought I wote, I have lived so long already.

Why doubt ye not then, quod I, whether ye were ever christened or not?

For every man, quod he, presumeth and believeth that I am christened, as a thing so commonly done that we reckon ourself sure that no man leaveth it undone.

If the common presumption, quod I, sufficiently serve you to set your mind in surety, then albeit miracles be nothing commonly and customably done nor that no presumption can sufficiently

serve for the proof of this miracle or that, yet hath there ever from the beginning of the world in every nation christian and heathen, and almost every town at sundry times so many miracles and marvels been wrought beside the common course of nature, that I think through the world it is as well believed universally that miracles and marvels there be, as any thing is believed that men look upon. So that if common presumption serve you, ye may, as I said, as well believe that miracles be done as that yourself was ever christened. For I dare well say that' there are a thousand that believe there hath been miracles done, against one that believeth that ye were ever christened or ever wist whether ye were born or not.

Nor the doctors of Christ's church did never mistrust the wonders and marvels that the paynims tell and write to have been done by their false gods, but assigneth them to have been done by the devil through God's sufferance for the illusion of them that with idolatry had deserved

MIRACLES AND MARVELS

to be deluded. And whether they be miracles by which name we commonly call the wonders wrought by God, or marvels done by the devil, it forceth not for this purpose of ours. For if ye grant that the devil may do any by God's sufferance, ye cannot say nay but God may much more easily do them himself. And since ye be a Christian man and receive scripture, I might in this matter, quod I, have choked you long ago with the manifold miracles and marvels that be shewed there.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

The author proveth that many things daily done by nature or craft, whereof we nothing marvel at all, be more marvellous and more wonderful indeed than be the miracles that we most marvel of and repute most incredible.

NAY, quod he, surely, though it hath done me good to hear what ye would say, yet I neither doubt, nor I suppose no good man else, but that God hath beside the comen course of nature wrought many miracles. But yet of those that men tell of, as done in your time, by which ye would seem that it were well proved that the praying to saints, going on pilgrimages, and worshipping of images were well and sufficiently proved, although there were none other proof thereupon of these miracles did I mean in the report of which methinketh I need not believe a comen fame of this miracle and that, begun by some silly woman seeking saint Sythe ' when she sighth for miscasting of her keys. Of these miracles I speak and all such as men say nowadays be done at divers pilgrimages by divers saints or divers images, in which methinketh that such as be told to be done, which nature and reason saith be impossible, I may well mistrust the tellers. Or else how many of them shall make me a sufficient proof of an impossible matter? One or two or three either seemeth me too few to trust their credence in a thing so incredible. And if I shall not believe them till I find many records, I wene I were fain to wander the world about or I provide many miracles sufficiently of such, I say, as ye prove your pilgrimages by.

Your few words, quod I, have wrapped in them many things, that seem somewhat as they be couched together. Which when we see them unfolded, and consider each part asunder, then may

we better examine them, and better see whereof they serve.

First ye speak of seeking to saints for slight causes, as for the loss or miss of Kyttes keys. Then ye would wit how many ye must hear say they saw a miracle or ye should of reason believe it.

Thirdly, ye think ye were like to go long or ye should find any proved true.

Finally, when ye say that ye mean only those miracles that men tell of as done at pilgrimages, ye seem to put still a difference between those miracles wrought in pilgrimages and such as are wrought by God otherwise. The cause whereof I must further ask you after. For I perceive not well what ye mean by that.

But, first, whereas ye speak still as though ye might mistrust them were they never so many, because they tell you a thing that reason and nature sayeth is impossible, methinketh that ye should now change

IF MIRACLE IS IMPOSSIBLE TO NATURE

that word. For I have already proved that reason and nature say not that a miracle is impossible, but only that it is impossible to nature. And they confess both that miracles be possible to God; and they that report them do report them for things done by God. And therefore they do report you none impossible tale.

For the dearer consideration whereof, let us resort to the miracles which we were agreed should stand for examples. And first, if men should tell you that they saw before an image of the crucifix a dead man raised to life, ye would much marvel thereof; and so might ye well. Yet could I tell you somewhat that I have seen myself that methinketh as great marvel; but I have no lust to tell you because that ye be so circumspect and wary in belief of any miracles that ye would not believe it for me, but mistrust me for it.

Nay, Sir, quod he, in good faith, if a thing seemed me never so far unlikely, yet if ye would earnestly say that yourself have seen it, I neither would nor could mistrust it.

Very well, quod I, then ye make me the bolder to tell you. And yet will I tell you nothing, but that I would, if need were, find you good witness to prove it.

It shall not need, Sir, quod he, but I beseech you let me hear it.

Forsooth, quod I, because we speak of a man raised from death to life. There was in the parish of St. Stephen's in Walbrook in London where I dwelled before I came to Chelsith, a man and a woman which are yet quick and quething, " and young were they both. The eldest I am sure passeth not twenty-four. It happed them, as doth among young folk, the one to cast the mind to the other. And after many lettes, for the maiden's mother was much against it, at last they came together and were married in saint Stephen's church, which is not greatly famous for any miracles; but yet yearly on saint Stephen's day it is somewhat sought unto, and visited with folks' devotion. But now, short tale to make, this young woman—as manner is in brides ye wote well—was at night brought to bed with honest women. And then after that went the bridegroom to bed, and everybody went their ways and left them twain there alone. And the same night, yet

abide, let me not lie, " now in faith to say the truth I am not very sure of the time, but surely as it appeared afterware, it was of likelihood the same night, or some other time soon after, except it happened a little afore.

No force for the time, quod he.

Truth, quod I, and as for the matter all the parish will testify for truth the woman was known for so honest. But for the conclusion, the seed of them twain turned in the woman's body first into blood, and after into shape of man child. And then waxed quick and she great therewith. And was within the year delivered of a fair boy, and for-sooth it was not then—for I saw it myself—passing the length of a foot. And I am sure he is growen now an inch longer than I.

How long is it ago, quad he?

By my faith, quod I, about twenty-one years.

Tush, quad he, this is a worthy miracle!

In good faith, quod I, never wist I that any man could tell that he had any other beginning. And me thinketh that this is as great a miracle as the raising of a dead man.

If it seem so, quod he, to you, then have you a marvellous seeming, for I ween it seemeth so to no man else.

No, quod I, can ye tell what is the cause? None other sure but that the acquaintance and daily beholding taketh away the wondering, as we nothing wonder at the ebbing and flowing of the sea, or the Thamys because we daily see it. But he that had never seen it nor heard thereof would at the first sight wonder sore thereat, to see that great water come wallowing up against the wind, keeping a common course to and fro, no cause perceived that driveth him. If a man born blind had suddenly his sight, what wonder would he make to see the sun, the moon, and the stars; whereas one that hath seen them sixteen year together, marvelleth not so much of them all as he would wonder at the first sight of a peacock's tail. And very cause can I see none why we should of reason more marvel of the reviving of a dead man, than of the breeding, bringing forth, and growing of a child unto the state of a man. No more marvellous is a cuckoo than a cock, though the one be seen but in summer and the other all the year. And I am sure, if ye saw dead men as commonly called [to life] again by miracle as ye see men brought forth by nature, ye would reckon it less marvel to bring the soul again into the body, keeping yet still his shape and his organs not much perished, than of a little seed to make all that gear new, and make a new soul thereto. Now if ye never had seen any gun in your days nor heard of any before, if two men should tell you the one that he had wist a man in a paternoster while conveyed and carried a mile off from one place to another by miracle, and the other should tell you that he had seen a stone more than a man's weight carried more than a mile in as little space by craft, which of these would you by your faith take for the more incredible?

Surely, quod he, both twain were very strong. But yet I could not choose but think it were rather true that God did the one, than that any craft of man could do the other.

Well, quod I, let us then to our third ensample. If it were showed you that saint Erkenwald or his sister, drew out a piece of timber that was cut too short for the roof, in making Barking Abbey, should this be so incredible to you to believe that they drew in length a piece of wood by the power and help of God's hand, when we see daily a great piece of silver, brass, laton or iron drawn at length into small wire as wonderfully by man's hand.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

The author sheweth that a miracle is not so be mistrusted though it be done in a small matter and seemeth upon a slight occasion.

NOW though ye would peradventure, as ye seem to do, reckon this cause very slight for God to show such an high miracle, since there might have been without miracle a longer piece of timber gotten, and so ye would haply mistrust it for the slender occasion, resembling it to the miscasting of some good housewife's keys. God hath, I ween, so much wit of himself, that he needeth not our advice to inform him what thing were sufficient occasion to work his wonders for. But and if ye read in the books of Cassian, saint Gregory, saint Austin, saint Jerome, and many other holy virtuous men, ye shall, except ye believe them not, serve and know that God hath for his servants done many a great miracle in very small matters. And so much the more are we bounden to his goodness in that he vouchsafeth so familiarly in small things to show us so great a token of his mighty godhead. And no reason were it to with-draw his thank and honour because of his familiar goodness. And if ye peradventure would not believe their writings, go to Christ's gospel and look on his first miracle, ¹² whether he might not have provided for

WHEREFORE CHRIST TURNETH WATER INTO WINE

wine without [a] miracle. But such was his pleasure in a small matter to do a great miracle for some show of his godhead among them whom he vouchsafed; where on the other side, afore Herod that would fain have seen some miracle, ¹³ where it stood upon his life and might have delivered him from the Jews, yet would he not vouchsafe either to show the proud curious king one miracle or speak one word. So that times, places and occasions, reason is that we suffer to rest in his arbitrament, and not look to prescribe and appoint them at our pleasure, and else blaspheme them and say we will not believe them.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

The author somewhat noteth the froward minds of many folk that would be very hard to believe a man in a miracle upon his oath and very light in a shrewd tale ¹⁴ to believe a woman on her word.

NOW where ye require how many witnesses should be requisite and suffice to make you think yourself in reason to have good cause to believe so strange a thing, methinketh that right few

were sufficient of them that would say they saw a great good thing done by the power and goodness of God, except it be hard for us to believe either that God is so mighty that he may do it, or so good that he would do it.

But because ye would wit of me how many records were requisite, that thing standeth not so much in number as in weight. Some twain be more credible than some ten. And albeit that I see not greatly why I should mistrust anyone that seemeth honest and telleth a good tale of God in which there appeareth no special cause of lying; yet, if any witness will serve you, then would I wit of you how many yourself would agree. For I now put case that there came ten divers honest men of good substance out of ten divers parts of the realm, each of them with an offering at one pilgrimage, as for ensample at our Lady of Ipswich, each one of them affirming upon their oath a miracle done upon themselves, in some great sudden help well appearing to pass the power of craft or nature, would ye not believe that among them all, at the leastwise twain of those ten said true?

No, by our lady, quod he, not and there were ten and twenty.

Why so, quod I?

Mary, quod he, for were they never so many, having none other witness but each man telling his tale for himself, they be but single all, and less than single. For every miracle hath but one record, and yet he not credible in his own cause. And so never a miracle well proved.

Well, said I, I like well your wisdom, that ye be so circumspect that ye will nothing believe without good, sufficient and full proof.

A MERRY SUPPOSED TALE

I put you then, quod I, another case, that ten young women not very specially knowen for good, but taken out at adventure, dwelling all in one town, would report and tell that a frere of good fame, hearing their confessions at a pardon, would have given them all in a penance to let him lie with them, on your faith, would ye not believe that among so many some of them said true.

Yes, that I would, quod he, by the Mary mass believe they said true all ten; and durst well swear for them and they were but two.

Why so, quod I, they be as single witness as the other of whom I told you before. For none of them can tell what was said to another, and yet they be unsworn also, and therewith be they but women which be more light and less to be regarded, dwelling all in one town also, and thereby might the more easily conspire a false tale.

They be, quod he, witness good enough for such a matter, the thing is so likely of itself that a frere will be womanish, look the holy horeson never so saintly.

Ye deny not, quod I, but God may as easily do a good turn by miracle, as any man may do an evil by nature.

That is true, quod he, and he list.

Well, quod I, see now what a good way ye be in, that are of your own good godly mind more ready to believe two simple women that a man will do nought, than ten or twenty men that God will do good.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

The author sheweth the untoward mind of many men, which in miracles so highly touching the honour of God and weal of their own souls will neither believe other folk that tell them nor themselves vouchsafe to go prove them. ¹⁵

BUT since that this kind of proof will not suffice you, I dare say, if ye would seek and enquire, ye should find many done in your days in the presence of much people.

Where should I see that, quod he?

Ye might, quod I, upon Good Friday every year this two hundred year till within this five year that the Turks have taken the town, have

NOTE THIS MIRACLE OF THE THORN

seen one of the thorns that was in Christ's crown bud and bring forth flowers in the service time, if ye would have gone to Rhodes.

So far, quod he? Nay yet had I liefer have God's blessing to believe that I see not, than go so far therefor.

I am well appaied, quod I, thereof, for if .ye had liefer believe than take the pain of a long pilgrimage, ye will never be so stiff in any opinion that ye will put yourself in jeopardy for pertinacy and stubborn standing by your part.

Nay marry, quod he, I warrant you that I will never be so mad to hold till it waxe too hot. For I have such a fond fantasy of mine own, that I had liefer shiver and shake for cold in the midst of summer than be burned in the midst of winter.

Merrily said, quod I, but yet in earnest where such a solemn yearly miracle is wrought so wonderfully in the face .of the world before so great a multitude, it is a great untowardness in a thing so holy, touching the honour of God and health of our own soul, both to mistrust all them that say they have seen it and either of sloth or incredulity not vouchsafe himself to prove it.

If I should have gone, quod he, and found it a lie, then had I walked a wise journey; and on the other side, if I should have seen there such a thing myself, yet could I scantily reckon myself sure.

No, quod I. that were a strange case.

Not very strange, quod he. For where ye spake of miracles done before a multitude, a man may

be deceived therein right well.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

The Messenger maketh objection that miracles showed before a multitude may be feigned, and by the author [is] showed how the goodness of God bringeth shortly the truth of such falsehood to light, with ensamples thereof one or two rehearsed; and further showed that many miracles there be which no good Christian man may deny to be true.

SOME priest, to bring up a pilgrimage in his parish, may devise some false fellow fayning himself to come seek a saint in his church, and there suddenly say that he hath gotten his sight. Then shall ye have the bells rung for a miracle. And the fond folk of the country soon made fools. Then women coming thither with their candles. And the parson buying of some lame beggars three or four pair of their old crutches with twelve pence spent in men and women of wax, thrust through divers places, some with arrows and some with rusty knives, will make his offerings, for one seven year, worth twice his tithes.

This is, quod I, very truth that such things may be, and sometime so be indeed. As I remember me that I have heard my father tell of a beggar that in King Henry, his days, the sixth, came with his wife to Saint Alban's, and there was walking about the town begging a five or six days before the King's coming thither, saying that he was born blind and never saw in his life. And warned in his dream that he should come out of Berwyke, where he said he had ever dwelled, to seek saint Alban, and that he had been at his shrine and had not been holpen. And therefore he would go seek him at some other place. For he had heard some say since he came that saint Alban's body should be at Cologne, and indeed such a contention hath there been. But of truth, as I am surely informed, he lieth here at saint Alban's, saving some relics of him which they there shew shrined. But to tell you forth when the king was come, and the town full, suddenly this blind man, at saint Alban's shrine, had his sight again, and a miracle solemnly rongen ¹⁶ and *Te Deum* songen, so that nothing was talked of in all the

HUMPREY DUKE OF GLOUCESTER

town, but this miracle. So happened it, then, that Duke Humfrey of Gloucester, a great wise man and very well learned, having great joy to see such a miracle, called that poor man unto him. And first shewing himself joyous of God's glory, so shewed in the getting of his sight, and exhorting him to meekness, and to none ascribing of any part the worship to himself nor to be proud of the people's praise which would call him a good and a godly man thereby. At last he looked well upon his eyen, and asked him whether he could never see nothing at all in all his life before. And when as well his wife as himself affirmed fastly no, then he looked advisedly upon his eyen again, and said, I believe you very well, for me thinketh that ye cannot see well yet.

Yes, Sir, quod he, I thank God and his holy martyr, I can see now as well as any man.

Ye can, quod the Duke. What colour is my gown? Then anon the beggar told him.

What colour, quod he, is this man's gown? He told him also, and so forth without any sticking, he told him the names of all the colours that could be shewed him. And when my lord saw that, he bade him walk faytoure, ¹⁷ and made him be set openly in the stocks. For though he could have seen suddenly by miracle the difference between divers colours, yet could he not by the sight so suddenly tell the names of all these colours but if he had known them before, no more than the names of all the men that he should suddenly see.

Lo, therefore, I say, quod your friend, who may be sure of such things when such pageants be played before all the town. I remember me now what a work I have heard of that was at Lempster ¹⁸ in that king's father's days where the prior brought privily a strange wench into the church that said she was sent thither by God, and would not lie out of the church. And after she was grated within iron grates ¹⁹ above in the rood loft, where it was believed she lived without any meat and drink only by angel's food. And divers times she was houseled in sight of the people with an host unconsecrate, and all the people looking upon, there was a device with a small beare ²⁰ that conveyed the host from the paten of the chalice out of the prior's hands into her mouth, as though it came alone, so that all the people not of the town only but also of the country about took her for a very quick saint, and daily sought so thicke to see her that many that could not come near to her cried out aloud, "Holy maiden Elizabeth help me," and were faine to throw their offering over their fellows' heads for prease. ²¹ Now lay the prior with holy maiden Elizabeth nightly in the rood loft, till she was after taken out and tried in the keeping by my lady the king's mother. And by the longing for meat with voidance of that she had eaten, which had no saintly savour, she was perceived for no saint and confessed all the matter.

In faith, quod I, it had been great alms the prior and she had been burned together at one stake; What came of the prior?

Quod he, that can I not tell; but I ween he was put to such punish-ment as the poor nun was, that had given her in penance to say this verse, *Miserere mei Deus, quoniam conculcavit me homo*, ²² with a great threat that and she did so any more she should say the whole Psalm. But as for holy Elizabeth, I heard say she lived and, fared well and was a common harlot at Calyce ²³ many a fair day after, where she laughed at the matter full merrily.

The more pity, quod I, that she was so let pass.

That is truth, quod he. But now what say you, what trust can we have, or at leastway, what surety can we have in such things, when we see them fayned so shamefully in the face of the world, so openly and so much people abused so far, that they would not have letted to swear, and some to jeopard their lives thereon, that all this work was wrought by God's own hand, till the truth came to light, and the drab driven out of the church in the devil's name?

Verily, said I, there was abusion in the one side, and great folly in the other side. And as that noble Duke Humfrey wisely found out the falsehood of that blind ²⁴ beggar, so did that noble lady the king's mother prudently decipher, and found out that beastly filth. And to say the truth there was cause enough in both these parties, whereof the people might reasonably gather so much suspicion, that if they had made thereupon sufficient inquisition and search, they could never have been so far abused. For both might they well mistrust a beggar's word whom they had but newly known, and well likely to lie for to win first favour and after money. And also men might

well think that a young she saint was not metely to be shrined quick in a monastery among a meany of monks. And yet in conclusion because no such fayned wonders should enframe God's very miracles, his goodness shortly brought them both to knowledge. And so doth his especial cure and providence bring ever shortly such falsehood and faitery^s to light to their shame and confusion. And as He did in Berna, a great city of Almaine bring to knowledge the false miracles, whereby certain freres abused the people, for which they were openly burned. And so God always bringeth such false miracles to light.

Nay, nay, quod he, there be many such, I warrant you, that never come to light, and are still taken for very good.

Ye cannot very well warrant it, quod I. For since God brought to light the false famed miracle of the priests of the idol Bell in the old time, as appeareth in the fourteenth chapter of the prophet Daniel, it is more like that among Christian men He will suffer no such things long [to] lie hid. And also how can ye warrant that many of those miracles be false. For while there is no doubt but many be true, and ye know not any which ye precisely know for false, ye be not sure whether any be such or not.

Mary, quod he, that reason holdeth as well on the other side. For since I know not any which I precisely know for true, I know not whether any be true or not.

Nay, quod I, that argument will not serve you so. For though no man bindeth you to believe that every thing is true that is told for a miracle, yet some there be of which ye must needs reckon yourself sure, and of which ye cannot if ye be a Christian man have any scruple or doubt.

Yea, quod he, fayne would I wit which were one of those?

Mary, quod I, all that are written in the gospel

Mary, quod he, that wot I well; but them we speak not of, for they were done by God himself.

Why, quod I, be they not so all? If ye will not agree that ye be sure of any which be told by saints, what say you by the miracles of the apostles written by Saint Luke?

Nay, quod he, ye mistake me yet; for I do not mean any mistrust in the miracles done of old time by God for his apostles, or holy martyrs, in corroboration and setting forth of the faith. I mean only these miracles that men tell and talk of now-a-days, to be done at those images, where these pilgrimages be and where we see some of them ourself proved plainly false. And yet told for so true, and so many false shrews to affirm it, so many simple souls trust it, so much foolish folk believe it, that a man may well with reason mistrust all the remnant.

Ye have, quod I, more oft than once spoken of a difference between the miracles done by God in old time, and these miracles that are done or told to be done now-a-days at pilgrimages. But surely, if ye grant the miracles done of old time, we need no more for the proof of all our matter.
PILGRIMAGES WERE FOURTEEN HUNDRED YEARS AGO

For I trow that pilgrimages and miracles done at them be very old things, and not things newly begun now-a-days, except ye call a thousand year ago or fourteen hundred year ago now-a-days. For I am very sure that so long ago, and yet longer too, did good Christian people pray to saints and go in pilgrimage to their holy relics, and had images in great veneration, and many wonderful miracles did our Lord work for the comprobaton of his high pleasure to the conservation and increase of the devotion of his Christian people therein, as we find largely written and reported in the godly books of holy saint Gregory, saint Austin, saint Jerome, saint Eusebius, saint Basil, saint Chrysostom, and many other old holy doctour of Christ's church, whose books were not unwritten this thousand year. And where ye say that of miracles many be now-a-days fayned, so may it be that some were then also; but neither then nor now neither, were (nor be) all fayned. And any being true, all were they right few, sufficed for our purpose. For if God had but with one miracle declared that the thing contenteth and pleaseth him in his church, it must needs suffice for the church against all the heretics in the world that ever would bark against the church therein. And therefore there can be no doubt in the matter, where God hath declared his pleasure by so many a thousand, and that in every time, not only now-a-days but also a thousand year or fourteen hundred year, and yet more too, before our days. And as for fayned miracles of which ye speak so much, albeit that some such hath been, yet I verily think that neither of old time, nor now, Christ among Christian people suffereth not such things to happen oft, nor such delusion to last long, but shortly to their shame, as it hath appeared in some, doth utter and make open their falsehood as himself said of all such: That ye whisper one in another's ear shall be preached out aloud upon the ridge of the house roof. ²⁶

¹ John II.

² Refiners.

³ St. Pual's.

⁴ Laten, silver gilded over.

⁵ Roncesvalles.

⁶ Barking Abbey, see p. 47

⁷ Romans I. 20.

⁸ Confirmed.

⁹ St. Osyth.

¹⁰ Talking, crying.

¹¹ Notly 1557 ed. not lye 1529 and 1531 eds.

¹² John 2 II.

¹³ Luke 23. 8.

¹⁴ Thus 1529 ed.

¹⁵ Him 1557 ed.

¹⁶ The bells rung for a mirical.

¹⁷ Deceiver.

¹⁸ Leominster.

¹⁹ Enclosed within an iron grille.

²⁰ Bier.

²¹ Press.

²² Ps. 55. I.

²³ Calias.

²⁴ Blison.

²⁵ Deception.

²⁶ Matt. 10. 7.