**OCTOBER 12, 2008 THESKEPTICARENA.COM**

**PART 1 OF 2**

[**Argument # 20: "Alternative medical practices such as acupuncture, homeopathy, psychic healing, etc. have no scientific basis and all work due to the placebo effect or the power of suggestion."**](http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/winston.html#top)

**This is a very presumptuous statement and a rush to judgment.**

**NO WINSTON, IT IS NOT. HOMEOPATHY HAS HAD HUNDREDS OF YEARS, AND ACUPUNCTURE HAS HAD THOUSANDS OF YEARS TO PROVE THEMSELVES AND THEY HAVE BOTH COME UP EMPTY.**

**THAT IS NO MORE A RUSH TO JUDGEMENT THAN YOUR WAIT FOR “REVELATIONS” TO FINALLY COME TRUE. WE’VE GIVEN THAT ONE 2,000 YEARS AS WELL.**

**It basically presumes that if we don’t understand how or why something works, then it must be due to chance, the placebo effect or the person’s own imagination.**

**NO WINSTON - IT DOES NOT PRESUME THAT. CHANCE, THE PLACEBO EFFECT, AND IMAGINATION EXPLAIN MOST OF THE “RESULTS” SEEN IN ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE. BUT THERE MAY BE OTHER EXPLANATIONS AS WELL.**

**REGARDING YOUR EXPLANATION - THAT THEY REALLY WORK - WE ARE STILL WAITING FOR THE PROOF. YOU KNOW, THAT STUFF YOU NEVER HAVE FOR ANY OF YOUR BELIEFS.**

**Since we don't know everything there is to know about the body and mind, why should we assume that only what we understand is real and the rest is superstition?**

**WINSTON, JUST BECAUSE WE DON’T KNOW EVERYTHING DOESN’T AUTOMATICALLY MEAN THAT GOD DID IT OR THAT SUPERNATURAL EXPLANATIONS EXPLAIN IT. PROOF, WINSTON, PROOF. THAT’S WHAT YOU NEED - AND THAT’S WHAT YOU NEVER HAVE.**

**There are already many functions, mechanisms and processes of the body and mind that we don't fully understand.**

**WINSTON, EVERY YEAR THAT GOES BY MEDICAL SCIENCE LEARNS MORE AND MORE. YOU KEEP TRYING TO PLAY THAT OLD RELIGIOUS ARGUMENT THAT ATTACKS SCIENCE FOR NOT HAVING ALL THE ANSWERS. EVERYTIME SCIENCE FINDS AN ANSWER, TRUE BELIEVERS SIMPLY FIND TEN MORE THINGS THAT SCIENCE DOES NOT KNOW. BELIEVERS ALWAYS MOVE THE GOALPOSTS BECAUSE THEY MUST. SCIENCE NEVER CLAIMS ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY - YOU ONLY FIND THAT IN RELIGION, PSEUDOSCIENCE, AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE.**

**JUST LIKE WHEN YOU GUYS CLAIMED THAT SCIENCE COULD NEVER CREATE LIFE FROM NON-LIFE. IN 1953 A COUPLE OF SCIENTISTS DID JUST THAT. TRUE TO FORM, THE RELIGIOUS BELIEVERS SIMPLY DID WHAT THEY ALWAYS DO - THEY MOVED THE GOALPOSTS. THEY CLAIMED THAT INORGANIC ELEMENTS MORPHING INTO ORGANIC ELEMENTS DID NOT CONSTITUTE COMPLEX LIFE FORMS. OF COURSE NOT - EVOLUTION EXPLAINS THE TRANSFORMATION FROM THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF LIFE INTO COMPLEX LIFE FORMS. BUT THE BELIEVERS WERE FORCED TO MOVE THE GOALPOSTS AFTER SCIENCE KICKED IT RIGHT THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF THE THEM.**

**Some examples of these are photographic memory,**

**WINSTON, PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY IS NOT SUPERNATURAL.**

**the ability of people with autism to perform lightning mental calculations,**

**YOU’RE DREAMING WINSTON. PEOPLE WITH FULL-BLOWN AUTISM CANNOT COMMUNICATE WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD. THIS WAS PROVEN DRAMATICALLY A FEW YEARS AGO WHEN CHARGES OF SEXUAL ABUSE WERE LEVELED AGAINST PARENTS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN BASED ON THE ALLEGED TYPING OUT OF THE CHARGE BY THE AUTISTIC CHILD. BUT IT WAS THE “FACILITATOR” THAT WAS DOING THE TYPING.**

**THEY DESIGNED A TEST WHERE THE CHILD AND THE FACILITATOR WERE SITTING NEXT TO EACH OTHER BUT HAD A DIVIDER BETWEEN THEM PREVENTING THE FACILITATOR FROM SEEING WHAT THE CHILD WAS SEEING. THEY THEN WERE DIRECTED TO TYPE WHAT THEY SAW ON A SCREEN. TESTS PROVED THAT THE CHILDREN COULD NOT COMMUNICATE AND THEREFORE ALL THE SEXUAL ACCUSATIONS COULD HAVE ONLY COME FROM THE FACILITATORS.**

**extraordinary and gifted musical aptitude in child prodigies,**

**AGAIN WINSTON, THERE IS NOTHING SUPERNATURAL ABOUT EXTRAORDINARYLY GIFTED CHILDREN.**

**certain mental disorders, dreaming, aging, consciousness itself, etc. Now if everything we didn’t understand was due to superstition, then nothing would have really worked until we understood how it worked, which is ludicrous and almost anything in nature can prove that wrong.**

**WINSTON, YOU LEFT ME IN THE DUST ON THAT ONE. I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT.**

**Likewise, we still don’t understand why women who live together tend to menstruate in the same cycles either, but that doesn’t mean that it’s not true. Just because we don’t understand why something works, doesn’t mean that it doesn’t work. Reality does not conform to what we are able to understand. There are not two strict categories where either 1) we understand it, or 2) it’s just a placebo effect.**

**WINSTON, THAT’S A STRAW MAN. NO ONE IS SAYING THAT WE MUST UNDERSTAND SOMETHING FOR IT TO BE REAL. EITHER YOU ARE GROSSLY MISUNDERSTANDING SCIENCE, OR (WHICH IS MORE LIKELY) YOU ARE CREATING A STRAW MAN BECAUSE YOU CANNOT DEFEAT THEIR ARGUMENTS AND THAT GOES BACK TO YOUR LACK OF EVIDENCE.**

**The important thing is that if an alternative treatment works, then we should try to understand how and why it works, rather than trying to put it on the same significance level as placebos.**

**WINSTON, YOU MISSED THE POINT AGAIN. SCIENCE DID TRY TO UNDERSTAND HOW AND WHY YOUR “PRACTICES” WORKED AND THEY DISCOVERED … THAT THEY DIDN’T WORK.**

**SCIENTISTS DID NOT “TRY” TO PUT THEM ON THE SAME LEVEL WITH THE PLACEBO EFFECT - THAT’S WHAT THE RESULTS INDICATED.**

**Understanding the mechanism behind the placebo effect is important, as it teaches us more about the mind/body connection.**

**WINSTON, SO TRUE. SO WHY ARE YOU SO CONFUSED ABOUT IT?**

**Marcello Truzzi, one of the founders of CSICOP (who broke away from it later due to its rising fanaticism), has emphasized this to me before.**

**WINSTON, I OWE YOU ONE. I LOOKED UP TRUZZI AND WAS FASCINATED BY HIS STORY. FOR ONE THING, YOU MAY RECALL THAT ONE OF THE FEW ARGUMENTS I HAVE CONCEDED TO YOU IS THAT EXTRAORDINARY CLAIMS DO NOT REQUIRE EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE. THIS IS THE ACTUAL GUY WHO COINED THE PHRASE! GRANTED, HE SEEMS TO HAVE BORROWED IT FROM LAPLACE AND HUME, BUT NEVERTHELESS, HE IS ONE OF THE ORIGINATORS OF THAT PHRASE; WHICH AS YOU KNOW, I DISAGREE WITH - EXTRAORDINARY CLAIMS REQUIRE EVIDENCE - PERIOD: JUST LIKE ANY OTHER CLAIM.**

**YOUR EXPLANATION FOR WHY TRUZZI LEFT CSICOP DIFFERS WITH THE VERSION ON WIKIPEDIA WHERE IT SAYS HE WAS “ASKED TO LEAVE” BY A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE FROM CSICOP’S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. AFTER READING THE REASON, I TEND TO BELIEVE THEIR VERSION OVER YOURS. IT SEEMS TRUZZI WAS BECOMING SOMETHING OF A WU-WU.**

**IN FACT, HIS ASSOCIATIONS WITH URI GELLER AND THE INTERNATIONAL REMOTE VIEWING ASSOCIATION PRETTY MUCH CONFIRM THAT WHATEVER SKEPTICISM HE ONCE HAD, HAD PRETTY MUCH EVAPORATED IN HIS LATER YEARS.**

**I ALSO SEE SOME OF HIS OPINIONS IN YOUR WRITINGS, MAKING IT CLEAR THAT YOU HAVE FORGIVEN HIM FOR DEMANDING EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE FOR EXTRAORDINARY CLAIMS.**

**Michael Talbot also pointed out in The Holographic Universe:**

**"We now know that on average 35 percent of all people who receive a given placebo will experience a significant effect, although this number can vary greatly from situation to situation. In addition to angina pectoris, conditions that have proved responsive to placebo treatment include**

**WINSTON, USE YOUR HEAD: ANGINA PECTORIS IS CAUSED BY HEART DISEASE. THIS IS NOT SOMETHING AMENABLE TO THE PLACEBO EFFECT. YOU CANNOT UNCLOG YOUR ARTERIES BY CHANTING “OM.”**

**migraine headaches, allergies,**

**WINSTON, MAYBE MIGRAINES, BUT ALLERGIES? SO YOU’RE CLAIMING THAT BY GIVING SOMEONE A PLACEBO, THEIR ANTI-HISTIMINES STOP REACTING?**

**fever, the common cold,**

**WINSTON, PLACEBOS MIGHT MAKE SOMEONE FEEL BETTER WHILE THEY ARE SICK BUT NO REPUTABLE MEDICAL ORGANIZATION HAS EVER CLAIMED THAT THE PLACEBO EFFECT CAN CURE EITHER FEVER OR THE COMMON COLD.**

**acne, asthma, warts, various kinds of pain, nausea and seasickness, peptic ulcers, psychiatric syndromes such as depression and anxiety, rheumatoid and degenerative arthritis, diabetes, radiation sickness, Parkinsonism, multiple sclerosis, and cancer."**

**WINSTON, YOU OVERWHELMED ME. PERHAPS YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE PLACEBO EFFECT. IT CURES NOTHING. THE PURPOSE IS TO PUT THE PATIENT IN A “POSITIVE” STATE OF MIND IN THE HOPE THAT THAT WILL HELP THE PATIENT WHILE THE BODY GOES ABOUT THE PROCESS OF HEALING ITSELF. ADDITIONALLY, THE PLACEBO EFFECT IS ONLY TEMPORARY.**

**SO WHEN TALBOT CLAIMED THAT THESE CONDITIONS “PROVED RESPONSIVE” I THINK HE MISUNDERSTOOD THE PLACEBO EFFECT. NONE OF THESE CONDITIONS RESPOND TO THE PLACEBO ITSELF (THAT’S WHY IT’S CALLED A PLACEBO), THEY RESPOND TO OUR BODIES REPAIR MECHANISM. AT MOST, THE EFFECT SIMPLY HELPS US THROUGH THE DIFFICULT MENTAL PART.**

**Besides, many alternative medicine practices are based on the power of thought and visualization.**

**WINSTON, THAT IS SAD BUT TRUE.**

**For those, a case can be made for the validity of the mind over matter theory since labs like Princeton’s PEAR research labs have pretty much proven that micro-psychokinesis exist.**

**WINSTON, “PRETTY MUCH PROVEN” IN YOUR WORLD MEANS NOTHING MORE THAN YOU AGREE WITH THEM. AS WE HAVE SEEN IN RECENT WEEKS, PROOF IS NOT A REQUIREMENT IN YOUR BELIEF SYSTEM.**

**Even before this, an abundance of medical research already proved that a mind body connection exists far deeper than we had thought. In fact, studies have been done to prove the power of mental visualization techniques over the body.**

**WINSTON, WHEN YOU CAN VISUALIZE AN AMPUTEE’S ARM GROWING BACK - GIVE ME A CALL. IT’S EASY TO TAKE CREDIT FOR CANCER REMISSION AND CLAIMS OF PAIN CONTROL - RELIGION DOES IT ALL THE TIME. THE GREAT THING ABOUT AMPUTEES IS THAT THEY PROVE THAT YOUR GOD AND ALL YOUR PARANORMAL HORSESHIT DOESN’T WORK IN THE REAL WORLD - ONLY IN YOUR IMAGINATION. AND WINSTON, I’M ONLY ASKING FOR ONE.**

**For example, Dr. O. Carl Simonton, a radiation oncologist and medical director of the Cancer Counseling and Research Center in Dallas, Texas, did the follow study described by Michael Talbot in The Holographic Universe:**

**"In a follow-up study, Simonton and his colleagues taught their mental imagery techniques to 159 patients with cancers considered medically incurable. The expected survival time for such a patient is twelve months. Four years later 63 of the patients were still alive. Of those, 14 showed no evidence of disease, the cancers were regressing in 12, and in 17 the disease was stable. The average survival time of the group as a whole was 24.4 months, over twice as long as the national norm.……. Simonton has since conducted a number of similar studies, all with positive results."**

**WINSTON, I GOOGLED DR. O AND FOUND “CA A CANCER JOURNAL FOR CLINICIANS.” THE TITLE OF THE ARTICLE IS: “UNPROVEN METHODS OF CANCER MANAGEMENT” BY DR. O. CARL SIMONTON, MD.**

**WINSTON - THIS EPITOMIZES EVERYTHING YOU BELIEVE IN. IF I WAS EVER LOOKING FOR THE ONE THING THAT PERFECTLY DESCRIBED YOUR ENTIRE BELIEF SYSTEM - THIS GOOGLE PAGE AND THAT TITLE WOULD BE IT.**

**Although there are plenty of quack things in alternative medicine today, the fact is that certain types of alternative healing practices have already been proven to work.**

**WINSTON, NAME ONE.**

**Skeptics are often misinformed on these. One strong example is Acupuncture.**

**WELL WINSTON, I ASKED YOU TO NAME ONE AND YOU DID. HOWEVER, I ASKED YOU TO NAME ONE THAT WAS “PROVEN.” BUT IN YOUR WORLD, WINSTON, PROVEN IS ANYTHING THAT YOU BELIEVE IN.**

**When first introduced in the west, it was thought to be superstition and only due to the placebo effect.**

**WRONG WINSTON, THAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF ACUPUNCTURE AFTER HUGE AMOUNTS OF TESTING. WHEN FIRST INTRODUCED, PEOPLE WERE AS GULLIBLE AS YOU ARE NOW. BUT THEY CAN BE FORGIVEN BECAUSE ACUPUNCTURE HAD NOT YET FAILED ITS TRIALS. YOUR CONTINUED BELIEF IN IT, HOWEVER, IS NOT SO EASY TO FORGIVE. THE WILL TO BELIEVE IN THE FACE OF ALL EVIDENCE IS THE PROOF OF AN IRRATIONAL MIND.**

**However, as it was more and more commonly practiced, doctors and the public came to realize that there was something to it after all. In fact, the American Medical Association now says that acupuncture is an effective form of treatment.**

**WINSTON, THE ONLY THING THEY LACK IS EVIDENCE. SOMETHING THAT NEVER BOTHERS YOU.**

**There are also plenty of studies to support this. Michael Talbot describes some of them in The Holographic Universe:**

**"Although still controversial, acupuncture is gaining acceptance in the medical community and has even been used successfully to treat chronic back pain in racehorses.**

**WINSTON, SO NOW YOU GUYS EVEN MAKE HORSES GO THROUGH THIS USELESS CRAP? WHY SHOULD THEY HAVE NEEDLES STUCK IN THEIR BODIES? THEY AREN’T THE FOOLS WHO BELIEVE IN IT.**

**In 1957 a French physician and acupuncturist named Paul Nogier published a book called Treatise of Auriculotherapy, in which he announced his discovery that in addition to the major acupuncture system, there are two smaller acupuncture systems on both ears. He dubbed these acupuncture microsystems and noted that when one played a kind of connect-the-dots game with them, they formed an anatomical map of a miniature human inverted like a fetus. Unbeknownst to Nogier, the Chinese had discovered the "little man in the ear" nearly 4,000 years earlier, but a map of the Chinese ear system wasn't published until after Nogier had already laid claim to the idea.**

**WINSTON, DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU THAT THE CHINESE WERE TOO EMBARRASSED TO PUBLISH THAT DRIVEL UNTIL AFTER SOME FOOL HAD ALREADY DONE SO?**

**THAT IS ONE OF THE STUPIDEST IDEAS I HAVE EVER HEARD OF. BUT AS ALWAYS, ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS BRING PROOF THAT IT IS ANYTHING MORE THAN A SALES GIMMICK AND SCIENCE WILL BE FORCED TO ACCEPT IT AS REAL. YET THE PROOF NEVER COMES. MUCH LIKE THE BOOK OF “REVELATIONS.”**

**The little man in the ear is not a just a charming aside in the history of acupuncture. Dr. Terry Oleson, a psychobiologist at the Pain Management Clinic at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine, has discovered that the ear microsystem can be used to diagnose accurately what's going on in the body. For instance, Oleson has discovered that increased electrical activity in one of the acupuncture points in the ear generally indicates a pathological condition (either past or present) in the corresponding area of the body. In one study, forty patients were examined to determine areas of their body where they experienced chronic pain. Following the examination, each patient was draped in a sheet to conceal any visible problems. Then an acupuncturist with no knowledge of the results examined only their ears. When the results were tallied it was discovered that the ear examinations were in agreement with the established medical diagnoses 75.2 percent of the time.**

**SO WINSTON, YOU WOULD RISK A SURGERY THAT ONLY HAD A 75% CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING? THOSE ARE PRETTY LOW EXPECTATIONS. ESPECIALLY IF THE OTHER 25% INVOLVED DEATH. I DOUBT YOU WOULD GET MANY “TAKERS.”**

**Ear examinations can also reveal problems with the bones and internal organs. Once when Oleson was out boating with an acquaintance he noticed an abnormally flaky patch of skin in one of the man's ears. From his research Oleson knew the spot corresponded to the heart, and he suggested to the man that he might want to get his heart checked. The man went to his doctor the next day and discovered he had a cardiac problem which required immediate open-heart surgery.**

**WINSTON, I RECOGNIZE THAT STORY AS THE KIND YOU ALWAYS CONSIDER TO BE SCIENTIFIC PROOF. IF DR. OLESON COULD ACTUALLY DIAGNOSE HEART DISEASE THAT ACCURATELY, HE WOULDN’T BE DOING RESEARCH IN A LAB AT UCLA.**

**Oleson also uses electrical stimulation of the acupuncture points in the ear to treat chronic pain, weight problems, hearing loss, and virtually all kinds of addiction. In one study of 14 narcotic addicted indiviuals, Oleson and his colleagues used ear acupuncture to eliminate the drug requirements of 12 of them in an average of 5 days and with only minimal withdrawal symptoms. Indeed, ear acupuncture has proved so successful in bringing about rapid narcotic detoxification that clinics in both Los Angeles and New York are now using the the technique to treat street addicts.**

**WINSTON, THEN WHY IS THE ADDICTION PROBLEM GROWING? IF THEIR CLAIMS ARE TRUE, THERE SHOULDN’T BE ANY ADDICTS OUT THERE.**

**Why would the acupuncture points in the ear be aligned in the shape of a miniature human?**

**WINSTON, I RECOMMEND THAT YOU LOOK UP AND STUDY THE SUBJECT OF PAREIDOLIA (NOT THAT IT WOULD DO ANY GOOD IN YOUR CASE). BUT AT LEAST IT WOULD ANSWER YOUR QUESTION. THEN YOU COULDN’T SAY THAT NO ONE EVER EXPLAINED IT TO YOU. YOU SIMPLY CHOSE TO IGNORE IT BECAUSE IT DIDN’T SUPPORT WHAT YOU WANTED TO BELIEVE.**

**PAREIDOLIA IS THE TENDENCY FOR HUMANS TO FIND HUMAN-LIKE DESIGNS (FOR EXAMPLE FACES) IN NATURE.**

**Oleson believes it is because of the holographic nature of the mind and body.**

**WINSTON, AT LEAST I GOT ONE GOOD THING OUT OF YOUR ARTICLE. IF I EVER FIND MYSELF SEEKING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AT UCLA, I WILL BE SURE TO AVOID THIS QUACK.**

**Just as every portion of a hologram contains the image of the whole,**

**WINSTON, THAT IS NO BIG DEAL. THE DNA IN EVERY CELL OF EVERY CREATURE CONTAINS THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAKING THE WHOLE CREATURE. A HOLOGRAM WORKS NO DIFFERENTLY THAN NATURE DOES.**

**every portion of the body may also contain the image of the whole.**

**WINSTON, I JUST SAID THAT. HAD YOU SPENT MORE TIME IN BIOLOGY CLASS AND LESS TIME AT THE ARCADE, YOU WOULD HAVE ALREADY MADE THAT CONNECTION.**

**"The ear holograph is, logically, connected to the brain holograph which itself is conected to the whole body," he states. "The way we use the ear to affect the rest of the body is by working through the brain holograph."**

**WINSTON, WHAT IF YOU ARE DEAF?**

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**THE SCIENCE SEGMENT**

**MATHEMATICS**

**Golden Ratio 1.618 (1 + 2 + 3 + 5 + 8 + etc).**

**zero invented by a hindu in the 800's.**

**PHYSICS**

**Absolute Zero (were it possible to achieve) would occur at -273.15C**

**(-459.67F).**

**Man-made record within .000022F.**

**Anti-Matter a particle in which each constituent (proton, electron, etc)**

**has properties (electrical charge, spin, etc)**

**the exact opposite of a particle normally found in nature.**

**Collision between matter and anti-matter results in total annihilation which equals a 100% energy conversion**

**versus 25% for nuclear and 7% for chemical reactions.**

**Electricity Watts = Volts x Amps.**

**Electromagnetic spectrum**

**radio waves**

**microwaves**

**infrared**

**visible light rays**

**ultraviolet rays**

**x-rays**

**gamma rays**

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**THE ARENA GOES ABROAD**

**UNITED KINGDOM**

**When Charles Darwin came out with his theory of evolution by natural selection nearly 150 years ago, the Church of England opposed it. But now, 200 years after the celebrated scientist's birth, the church has launched a website exploring its history with Darwin, and the church's head of public affairs has issued a posthumous apology, the Guardian reports.**

**Writes Rev. Dr. Malcom Brown, "People, and institutions, make mistakes and Christian people and churches are no exception. When a big new idea emerges which changes the way people look at the world, it's easy to feel that every old idea, every certainty, is under attack and then to do battle against the new insights."**

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**FAMOUS QUOTES**

**David Hume (April 26, 1711 – August 25, 1776) 65 Years.**

**Scottish philosopher, economist, and historian. He is an important figure in Western philosophy, and in the history of the Scottish Enlightenment.**

**He first gained recognition and respect as a historian; but interest in Hume's work in academia has in recent years centered on his philosophical writing. His History of England was the standard work on English history for many years.**

**Hume was the first great philosopher of the modern era to carve out a thoroughly naturalistic philosophy. This philosophy partly consisted in rejection of the historically prevalent conception of human minds as being miniature versions of the divine mind. This doctrine was associated with a trust in the powers of human reason and insight into reality, which possessed God’s certification. Hume’s skepticism came in his rejection of this ‘insight ideal’, and the (usually rationalistic) confidence derived from it that the world is as we represent it.**

**HUME’S QUOTE:**

**"That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle,**

**unless the testimony be of such a kind,**

**that its falsehood would be more miraculous**

**than the fact which it endeavors to establish."**