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ARTICLE III.

MIRACLES.

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THE importance of miracles as facts in scripture history, and evidences of the truth of a divine revelation, cannot be too highly estimated. Devout men sometimes treat assaults upon miracles with indifference, regarding it a matter of little moment whether those beyond the circle of strict orthodoxy believe in or deny their reality. They argue that it is wise not to disturb the smooth current of popular faith, by a review of sceptical objections. There would be wisdom in this if the current were smooth. It would be folly to meet objections if those objections were not intruded upon our attention. But objections to miracles meet us, in the present age, at every turn, in books, pamphlets, periodicals, and even newspapers. No thoughtful young man who tries to keep abreast of current popular literature, can possibly be ignorant of the fact that the evidential character of miracles has been denied, and that their historical reality has been called in question of late by men of great learning and influence. Nor can he be ignorant that the tendency of the higher scientific training, and of the most advanced philosophical speculation at the present moment, is to set aside the miraculous and the supernatural altogether; in a word, to banish God as a personal, free, omnipotent, all-controlling Governor from his own universe.

We do not wish to provoke discussion; but we must show that we are not afraid of it, and that we are prepared to meet it. We do not wish to go back and establish again the foundations of our faith; but we are ready, if need be, to

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open them up to the world's eye, and to show, alike to philosopher and artizan, that they are firm as the everlasting hills.

The place which miracles occupy, and the object they were designed to serve, in the scheme of divine revelation, are plainly taught in the New Testament. Whatever may be the views of theologians or philosophers now, there can be no doubt as to the views of our Lord and his apostles. Miracles were professedly the visible or sensible signs and evidences of a divine commission given to, and a divine revelation made through, those who performed them. Miracles were acts of superhuman power performed for the express and declared purpose of enabling ordinary observers to test, and to test with absolute certainty, the claims of men who professed to be inspired and commissioned of God. Miracles were direct appeals to Omnipotence, in proof of doctrines alleged to be taught by the Omnipotent. The case is this: A man declares to his fellow-men that he speaks by God's authority God's word. He cannot show his fellow-men the Divine Spirit communicating the divine truth to his mind. From its very nature this lies outside the region of observation. He cannot, therefore, prove *directly* the truth of his declaration; but he proves it *indirectly*. Thus: he performs an act above human power—an act which any ordinary observer can see, and test, that it must be of God. He performs it, moreover, by a direct appeal to God, and as a palpable evidence that God's power is in him, and that he consequently holds God's commission.

There is a double miracle involved in the case I have here supposed, and which, as I shall show, is the case of every sacred writer. There is, first, the miraculous communication of some truth to the mind of the man. This is revelation. There is, second, the act by which the reality of that hidden and mysterious spiritual or intellectual communication from God to man—that revelation—is evidenced and tested, through the ordinary medium of sense, to the world at large. This is the Bible *miracle*. The scripture doctrine of a

miracle, then, is the confirmation, by an act of divine power, palpable to the senses, and so far within the range of ordinary observation, of a divine commission given to one man to communicate God's word to his fellow-men, and a confirmation, besides, of the infallible truth of the word so communicated.

I wish it to be clearly understood that I speak here of real miracles, not of mere tricks, or feats of legerdemain, like those of the Egyptian magicians, with which real miracles are sometimes confounded. Nor do I speak here of those acts of superhuman power which, it appears, evil spirits were occasionally suffered to perform in past ages. All these were in their nature essentially distinct from the miracles wrought by God; so distinct that any thoughtful, observant man could detect them. The miracles wrought of God had a self-evidencing power. Our Lord indicates this when he ridicules the view propounded by the Jewish rulers, that his power to work miracles emanated from Satan. The idea was absurd; and Jesus knew that it was dishonest as well as absurd. His miracles, and all the miracles wrought by the commissioned servants of God, had a character, a stamp of divinity, which no observant, unprejudiced man could mistake. They had, therefore, a self-evidencing power apart from, and prior to, the message which they were designed to authenticate. This is our Lord's plain teaching in the case of the paralytic (Mark ii. 5) whose sins he forgave; and in his discourse to the apostles in John xiv.; and, indeed, in every part of the Gospels where the subject is discussed or referred to. On this important phase of my subject I can, at present, only enunciate a principle; time will not permit me to elaborate an argument, and to illustrate it, as I could easily do, with instances.

I shall now develop the scriptural view of the evidential character of a miracle. The Evangelist John, in recording the first miracle of our Lord, writes: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him." Observe here

how the superhuman, or divine act, of changing water into wine, is set forth as a palpable and irresistible proof of the glory of Godhead indwelling in Christ, and consequently of his alleged divine mission as the world's Saviour. The result of that act was, as any thoughtful man might anticipate, "His disciples believed in him."

Take another example. The Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, "Art thou he that should come?" The question was just a demand for evidence of the reality of his alleged divine mission. What was his reply? "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up" (Matt. xi. 4, 5). Here our Lord points to his miracles — those miracles which two plain men saw performed before their eyes; and he leaves both them and their master to draw their own conclusion from them as to the reality of his divine mission. So also in reasoning with the learned classes in Jerusalem — the leaders of Jewish thought, the sceptical philosophers of those days — he adopted the very same line of proof: "I have greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father gave me to finish, the very works which I am doing (*αὐτὰ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ*), bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" (John v. 36). Here he makes special reference to the miracle he had just wrought on the paralytic, who lay helpless at the Pool of Bethesda.

By miracles, also, the divine commission of the apostles was proved to the various peoples among whom they preached. Thus, of Paul and Barnabas at Iconium, it is said: "Long time abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord, who gave testimony unto the word of his grace, granting *signs* and *wonders* to be done by their hands" (Acts xiv. 3). And Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, writes (ii. 3, 4): "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them who heard; God also bearing witness to it (*συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος τοῦ θεοῦ*) with *signs* and *wonders*,

and with various *miracles*." The signs, wonders, and miracles (rather "powers," *δυνάμεις*) were wrought by the power of God, and were the evidences to mankind of the reality of the apostle's commission and the divine authority of his teachings.

I have been careful thus to state clearly and fully the scripture doctrine of miracles, lest any should be misled by the incorrect definitions and teachings of certain philosophers and theologians of the present day.

An important question now meets us—What is a miracle? Wherein does a miracle differ from an ordinary event? A miracle may be defined, or rather described, as an act which, from its intrinsic nature, cannot be the result of ordinary or natural causation, and must consequently be ascribed to the supernatural. In the New Testament three Greek words are used to denote those acts which we now designate by the general term "miracles"; they are, *τέρατα*, *σημεῖα*, and *δυνάμεις*, and may be represented by the English terms "wonders," "signs," "powers," though they are not always so translated in the Authorized Version. It is well to note, regarding these Greek words, that the first never occurs in the New Testament alone, as if to show that miracles were not mere "wonders," or arbitrary displays of omnipotence. Every miracle has a grand design. It was not enough that from its startling and stupendous nature it should excite the astonishment of the crowd. It was also a "sign," and hence the Greek *σημεῖον* is always connected with *τέρας*, to show that the act specified was the sign or evidence of a commission received from God, and of the truth of the message brought by the commissioner. In three remarkable passages, where the object of the sacred writer is to exhibit in fullest force the evidential character of miracles, all the three terms are grouped together. It will be sufficient for my purpose to quote one of the passages. It is the appeal of the apostle Peter to the astonished multitude who witnessed the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of

Nazareth, a Man proved by God unto you, by *powers* and *wonders* and *signs* (δυνάμεισιν καὶ τέρασιν καὶ σημείοις) which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts ii. 22). The two other passages are, 2 Cor. xii. 12; Heb. ii. 4.

It should be observed, also, that while these three words are not synonymous, they do not denote three distinct kinds of miracles. They are intended rather to describe a miracle in three distinct aspects, so as to bring out its full significancy. Every miracle is a wonder, to awe the beholder, and thus to rouse and rivet attention; it is a sign of a divine power in, and therefore of a divine commission given to, the actor; and it is a power, evidencing of itself the possession and forth-putting of delegated omnipotence. An example will best illustrate this. The healing of the paralytic at Capernaum, recorded in Mark ii. 3-12, was a "wonder," for they that saw it "were all amazed"; it was a "power," for the moment Christ spake to the palsied man "immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all"; and it was a "sign," for it showed that he who wrought the miracle was possessed of the attributes of God, and "had power on earth to forgive sins." And the evidential character of the miracle was clear, for all who saw it "glorified God."

There is yet another important and essential element in a miracle. Every miracle contains a prophecy; and it is this prophetic element mainly which, in some cases, shows the presence of Divinity. The actor in a miracle knows beforehand what he is going to do, and the act is of such a kind as to exclude any possibility of natural anticipation. None, for instance, could anticipate the restoration of sight, or the calming of a storm, or the healing of disease by a word. But our Lord did so. Consequently the word by which every such miracle was wrought embodied a prophecy. It implied a previous knowledge of the act to be done—an act which no human eye could foresee, because no human power could do it. When Christ stood before the open tomb at Bethany, and said, "Lazarus, come forth," his

words were prophetic. When he looked over the stormy sea, and said, "Peace, be still," his words were prophetic. No act is, or can be, properly speaking, miraculous which does not contain this prophetic element.

Such, then, is the nature of a miracle—not, it may be, as defined by philosophers, but as described in the word of God. Each miracle recorded there is connected with divine power. It is the result of a divine cause. God is its Author. Man is sometimes the agent; but his commission and his power are alike from God. No Bible miracle is a mere gratuitous display of might; there is always a wise and good object to be served by it. Miracles were professedly the credentials of God's ambassadors; they are the seals which authenticate God's revelation. They were not mysterious events, occurring without a cause, or without any known or sufficient cause. They were produced by the direct operation of the great First Cause. In miracles we see the might and majesty of God transferred for a gracious purpose from heaven to earth. In miracles we see the Creator, in wondrous condescension to the weakness and ignorance of the creature, coming in power to attest the truth of his own message of mercy. In miracles we see the Almighty, by an exercise of his sovereign will, controlling the laws, and suspending for a time the order of his own universe, to advance his own glory and promote the good of his people.

Looking at miracles thus in the light of scripture, all is clear and intelligible. No difficulty is involved in full belief. But determined efforts have been made during the last two centuries to get men to look at miracles from a purely human stand-point, and to judge of their reality and their evidential character in the light of philosophy and science. The tendency, if not the design, of all such efforts is to lead to doubt and infidelity. It is a partial, and therefore a false, view of miracles. It is laid down at the present moment, in many of our schools and colleges, as a fundamental postulate, that no assertion is to be credited which is inconsistent with,

or unsupported by, our experience of the order of nature. It is maintained that the order of nature is fixed; that the inductive philosophy confirms the constancy and invariability of natural causes; that the educated intellect is compelled to disown the recognition of anything in the world of matter at variance with the first principles of the laws of matter; that the material universe, in fact, is under the unalterable reign of law; that, therefore, a miracle is impossible, because it involves a violation of this grand, uniform, and all-pervading law. Such reasoning is plausible chiefly because of the free use of those high-sounding phrases, "order of nature," "constancy of natural causes," "laws of matter," and a host of others. It is dangerous, moreover, because there is an element of truth and sound philosophy in it. Let us, therefore, analyze it, that we may divide truth from error, and clear away, if possible, the clouds of doubt which have enveloped Bible miracles.

It will be readily seen by the thoughtful student that the validity of the principles and arguments cited above depends upon two things: 1st. The nature and range of inductive philosophy, as here used; and 2d, The character of the laws of nature alleged to be founded upon it.

1st. Inductive philosophy, as that name is here used, is just the observation and classification of those facts and sequences which come within the range of human experience, and the deduction from them of certain general conclusions. For example, I have observed in all my experience that the sun has risen at a specified time on each morning; I thence infer, as a necessary sequence, that this observed order will be invariable in future. I have observed in all my experience that death has been followed by the corruption and dissolution of the body, and that no power or agency has been able to restore life; I thence conclude that the same will be the case in future, and that, consequently, life cannot be restored to a dead man. Or, to express it in a general proposition: I have observed in all my experience, and tested with all possible certainty, the regular recurrence of a fact

in nature, in a certain connection ; I consequently infer from that induction that the same fact will universally occur in the same connection. I thus convert the sum of my observations of natural phenomena into a generalization, and I call that generalization a law of nature. This then is induction, or inductive philosophy, so far as applicable to the point at issue.

The first part, therefore, and the basis of induction is observation. It is purely and simply what we see or hear or feel. Its validity depends upon the accuracy of our observation. Its principle depends upon, or is a corollary from, belief in the evidence of our senses. We may apply all manner of scientific tests to the facts we observe, we may extend our observations over a field wide as the world ; but our senses are, after all, the sole agents and instruments by which the results of tests and observations alike are judged.

The second part of induction is the framing of a generalization, or so-called natural law, out of the observed facts, which law, it is affirmed, will, and must be, applicable to all similar facts. It amounts to this : such a thing has occurred in all our past experience in an observed connection ; therefore the same thing will always occur in future in the same connection.

Let us examine this mode of reasoning, — this highly lauded philosophical induction. It is affirmed that because a thing has occurred in times past, it must occur in time to come. But why must it ? Can any man show a necessity for it ? Can any philosopher assign a reason beyond the simple truism, that so it has been ? Is there any physical impossibility involved in the supposition that it will not be so ? We expect that it will be so ; but for this expectation we can assign no rational reason. Our expectation is grounded on an impression, an instinct, an intuition — call it what you will, but you cannot call it a logical deduction ; much less can you call it a mathematical demonstration. We cannot explain or fathom the causes of those uniform sequences in natural objects which we have observed ; and not being able to do

so, we are not warranted in converting the sum of our observations, however large that sum may be, into a positive and unalterable law. There may, for aught we know, be a mysterious and powerful cause behind all—beyond the range of our observation, able to control, to suspend, and entirely to change the ordinary course of events. Such, then, is the real sphere of inductive philosophy, and the uncertainty of its teaching regarding the order of nature.

2d. We can now understand what is meant by those so-called "laws of nature" which are based upon induction. When we hear of laws we are apt to think they are powers, — powers which, in some way, operate by an uncontrollable necessity, which overcome all resistance in the accomplishment of their work. This is a grave mistake; and this mistake has given rise to the most serious and dangerous errors. The laws of nature are simply, as has been seen, the observed modes in which events have occurred, or in which material substances have operated upon, or in relation to, each other, within the experience of men. To say that these will continue uniformly in the future, as they have been observed in the past, is an assumption; it is a pure hypothesis, for which we can assign no reason beyond the expectation of our own minds. The so-called law is based upon a series of observations, independent altogether of the latent and true causes of things, which causes we can neither see nor comprehend; and a single accurate observation at any time, by any person, in any place, of an opposite character would upset all our expectations of necessity, or fixed order, grounded upon induction. It would not invalidate our induction as to the general uniformity of nature; but it would invalidate our hypothesis as to the necessary or universal order and constancy of natural causes. The widest possible induction in the present age might so far establish the fact that no dead man had risen, or had been raised to life; yet a single observed instance of a dead man rising, or being raised, to life would completely set aside the inductive argument, or law, that no dead man could rise, or be raised, from the dead. The

statement, therefore, that a miracle involves a violation of the grand and uniform laws of nature, and is thus impossible, is, when traced to its source, neither more nor less than an assumption.

We may look at this in another aspect, and thereby see the rationale of a miracle. A law of nature which may be regarded as universal and absolute is the law of cause and effect. Every effect must have a sufficient cause. It would be a violation of this law were an event to occur without the operation of any, or of a sufficient cause; if, for instance, a stone should rise from the ground without the action of a force sufficient to overcome gravitation. We can affirm that this is impossible. And if the same can be predicated of miracles — if it can be truly affirmed, as some have ventured to affirm, that they are “isolated, unrelated, uncaused,” then it can be truly affirmed that they are impossible. But it is also a law of nature that when a sufficient cause operates the effect must follow. When a force sufficient to overcome the law of gravitation is applied to a stone, it must rise from the ground. The same is true in regard to a miracle. If a sufficient cause operated, then, no matter what the nature of the cause, no matter what the nature of the event itself, there is no violation of nature’s law. The cause may be of the class we call natural, or of the class we term supernatural, still the effect follows in accordance with law. The question of possibility or impossibility depends, not on the nature of the event, but upon the operation or non-operation of a sufficient cause.

Take the illustration already given. There is a stone upon the ground. Were it to rise into the air without a cause, that would be a violation of the laws of nature, because the law of gravitation keeps it down. Were any man to affirm the occurrence of such a thing, and instance it as a miracle, we might fairly meet him with the assertion, it is impossible. Observe, however, that the assertion is grounded, not on the mere fact of the stone rising, but of its rising *without a cause*. Suppose I lift the stone and throw it into the air; in that

case the law of gravitation is overcome, but the laws of nature are not violated. Why? For this reason, a sufficient cause operated. What was that cause? It was the force of the muscles of my arm. What is the source of that force? It is my will. What is will; is it a physical, or is it a mental force? It is mental. Here, at length, we reach the root of the matter. We have will, or *mind*, operating upon matter, so as temporarily to overcome one of its laws. This bears a remarkable analogy to that latent, powerful, but to human eye unseen cause, which, as stated above, may be beyond the reach of observation, and control, change, and set aside the ordinary course of nature.

Take another example which brings out the point more clearly. My body, being material and subject to the fixed laws of matter, has, in itself, no more power of motion or action than a stone. Yet I can move all its members. I can make them overcome the great law of gravitation by the simple exercise of volition. I can rise when I will; I can walk where I will; I can act on other parts of the material world around me as I will. This is a fact, but an inexplicable fact. We know that mind, or will, acts thus upon the physical organization, and through it upon other objects, arresting, controlling, and overcoming the ordinary laws of nature. But we know not how it acts. The mode is to us a mystery, yet we believe the fact on the testimony of consciousness and observation.

We have now reached the root of the controversy as to the alleged impossibility of miracles. Those who make the allegation seem to forget that there is more in the universe than dead matter. They seem to overlook the noblest part of the universe, — *mind*. The laws of matter may be uniform in their operation; and, when regarded in themselves and by themselves, any alleged violation of them may be open to the charge of impossibility. But mind is an independent power — independent, that is, in so far as regards matter. It can produce effects which the laws of matter could never have produced. It can arrest, regulate, and

temporarily overcome all the laws of matter; yet such acts cannot be regarded as violations of natural law. We must be careful to distinguish between a violation of law, and an overcoming, or temporary suspension, of a generalization of observations, to which the name law is given. No event, whatever its character, is a violation of law if produced by a sufficient cause. The cause may be physical, as gravitation; or it may be purely mental, as an exercise of the will; it may be natural, proceeding from an earthly power; or it may be supernatural, proceeding from divine power; but, if the cause be sufficient, the effect produced, however stupendous, is not a violation of natural law. None can deny the power of mind over matter, as a higher law, a personal and free agent. None can deny that it may, and often does, operate freely, arbitrarily, and as an efficient cause, over matter and its law. We are all conscious of this, though unable to explain the mode of it. Can we deny, then, to the mind of God a power which is exercised every day by the mind of man? We take for granted his existence; we admit his personality and independence: cannot he, therefore, for his own glory, for the accomplishment of his own purposes, by a simple exercise of his sovereign will, control, suspend, or temporarily overcome, any of nature's laws? When the mind of man acts in suspending or overcoming any of the laws of matter, the effect is said to be natural; when the mind of God thus acts, the effect is said to be supernatural, and is called a miracle; but neither the one effect nor the other is a violation of law. Consequently, when we regard God, as he is always regarded in scripture, as the source of the power which works a miracle, that miracle is not a violation of law; on the contrary, it is in accordance with one of the greatest of laws, the law of cause and effect. A higher than human power comes within the sphere of human observation, not visibly but potentially, for the accomplishment of wise and mighty purposes. The Almighty himself is seen, as it were, to come to earth, and, by an exercise of his sovereign will, to produce new and

wondrous events; but these, though we may call them "wonders," "signs," "miracles," are no more violations of law than my act when I throw a pebble in the air.

I have already indicated the power of mind over matter — its power as a free agent to control and overcome the laws of matter. There is one aspect of this grand truth which is of paramount importance in connection with, and in its bearing upon the doctrine of miracles, and the existence of a God. Mind is seen to be the sole originator of motion in the world of matter, so far as human observation has traced, or can trace, motion to its source; that is, in fact, so far as the range of induction extends. Matter in itself is inert. It possesses no inherent power, and power is necessary to motion. When at rest, it can be moved only by an impulse from without; and that impulse, wherever given within the sphere of observation, can be traced ultimately to mind. In this busy world of ours, wherever we see matter in motion, we conclude that mind has been, directly or indirectly, the moving principle. Mind planned and formed that complicated mechanism which for days, and even years, goes on marking time and noting epochs, with a precision which would seem to equal the highest achievements of inherent intelligence. Mind launches those noble ships which brave the tempest, and with unerring accuracy plow their way onward through midnight darkness, through ocean's noontide solitude, through storm-tossed billows, till at length out of the bosom of the mighty deep, they emerge like things of life, and glide right into their destined haven. Mind hurls, with a voice of thunder, those terrific missiles, — war's swift messengers — which fly with mathematical precision, high above impregnable battlements, and then, at length, spread death and desolation in the very heart of fortress or city. Mind trains those mysterious wires across mountains, kingdoms, rivers; lays them down in ocean's profound abyss, connecting country with country, continent with continent, until the globe is girt with a pathway for thought. And then, by the touch of a finger, the thoughts of men are

flashed to their fellow-men at the ends of the earth, with the swiftness of thought itself. Mind has thus left the impress of its mighty, independent power over matter and its laws in every part of the inhabited world. The mechanisms, the agencies, the channels, the stupendous engines which mind has devised to carry out these wondrous operations are all extant. Tens of thousands of them are now working. And yet were mind this moment annihilated, a moment more and motion in them all would cease. The stillness of death would reign over the whole world of humanity. The pendulum would cease to beat. The ship would lie in mid-ocean a helpless log. The cannon's mouth would give forth no voice of terror. The wire that carried human thoughts on lightning's wing the world around, would only sing, touched by the winds of heaven, the requiem of dead humanity. Mind is the sole life-principle — the only discoverable motive-power in the world of man. We see in that world the reign, not of material law, but of mind. We recognize the existence of a power capable of acting independently of the normal course of material sequence. We observe mind originating new combinations, giving a new stimulus to inert matter, working too in a way entirely different from the fixed and narrow instincts of the lower animals — in a word, claiming, and exercising a force which is truly creative.

And will not analogy justify us in carrying this reasoning further? Matter, being inert, cannot originate, and of and by itself cannot perpetuate motion. There is no such thing as spontaneousness in matter. When at rest, it must remain so until moved by a force from without. If in motion, the motion will cease, unless sustained by a force from without. Mind is the great originator of motion, the sole possessor of inherent force. But the material universe is in motion. The ocean never rests. The winds never sleep. The earth, on its axis, in its orbit, rolls ceaselessly on. The system of which it is but an atom — the stars in the vast canopy of heaven, which reach away into space further than the telescope of the astronomer can penetrate — are all moving in

sublime concord. A grand design, an all-pervading law, is seen to guide them. This design indicates a designing mind. This motion proclaims a *Mover*. In a word, we are led in the very motion of the spheres to recognize the presence and working of a living, independent, omnipotent God. And this independent, omnipotent God is presented to us in the Bible as the Author of miracles; bringing them about, not without a cause, but as the great First Cause.

The independent power of mind, proved by the indisputable evidence of our own consciousness, and witnessed in our every-day experience, is the real key to all the difficulties connected with miracles in relation to nature and natural law. When the advocates of pure physical science affirm, as some of them do affirm, that no modification can take place in the relations or conditions of any two material atoms, unless through "the invariable operation of a series of eternally impressed consequences," I reply: Has mind no independent power in this respect? Cannot the profound physicist move his hand, or throw a pebble, when he will? Does not his mind arbitrarily prompt and originate interference with matter every day, and almost every moment? Is he not as fully assured of this by his own consciousness and observation as he is of any chain of sequences in the material world? Do we not all perceive mind freely changing the positions and relations of material atoms, modifying too the conditions of material agencies, and that altogether independent of any series of eternally impressed consequences, following in some necessary chain of orderly connection?

Miracles, then, viewed as the results of the direct action of the divine will, in which light they are always set forth in scripture, are no more interferences with nature and law than the acts done by the free-will of man every hour of his existence. They may be far more stupendous in character; but they are the same in kind. It is, after all, only a shallow philosophy which attempts to assail miracles with such an argument as this.

Another plausible objection to miracles I must notice. It is said, *They are incredible, because contrary to all experience.* Let us examine this objection, and see whether it will bear the test of logical analysis.

That only can be contrary to all experience which is contrary to the perceptions of those who were present when it is alleged to have occurred. For example, it is alleged that Lazarus was raised from the dead by our Lord. Philosophers declare the allegation incredible, because it is contrary to all experience that a dead man should rise. Their argument amounts to this: A dead man never came to life, therefore Lazarus was not raised from the dead. Examine it, and you see that it is no argument at all. It is an assumption. The fact that Lazarus was raised cannot be affirmed to be contrary to all experience, except it can be shown that it was contrary to the perceptions of those who were present when the resurrection is said to have taken place. Can this be shown? Is not the very opposite asserted in the Gospel? Was not the miracle seen and attested by a large number of credible and competent witnesses? Did not even the hostile Jewish rulers see and believe it?

The fallacy of the objection lies here. A miracle may be contrary to my experience; but I am not therefore justified in affirming that it is contrary to all experience. A miracle may be contrary to the experience of the whole existing generation of men; but it would be illogical to affirm that it must therefore be contrary to the experience of all those who lived nineteen centuries ago. Unless, in fact, experience could be extended over all creation, unless it could be made to reach to all ages past, unless it could be endowed with the attributes of omniscience and eternity, we could not legitimately affirm that a miracle is contrary to all experience.

It may with truth be affirmed that miracles are contrary to the analogy of ordinary experience. However wide our observation in the present age, we meet with no miracle. I admit it. Were it otherwise, miracles would be no longer miraculous. It is this very characteristic which gives them

their value as evidences, making them signs and proofs of a divine commission specially given to those who wrought them. Miracles are not natural events produced by natural causes. Were they so, they would come within the range of ordinary observation; but they would, for that very reason, be useless as evidences of the divine origin of Christianity. The miracles of the New Testament were wrought professedly by a power from God, under a solemn appeal to God, in proof of a commission received from him, and of a revelation given by him. God was the Author of those miracles. His sovereign will was cause sufficient for their production. Those miracles are not "isolated, unrelated, uncaused," though they do stand apart from the whole system of natural causes. God is their cause. They are in accordance with the great law of cause and effect; and they have, as historic events, come within the range of human experience.

Another objection to miracles is, that *they are alleged supernatural events, and thus incapable of proof by testimony*. It is argued that, being supernatural, they do not come within the range of ordinary observation, as no observation can reach to the supernatural.

It is said a miracle does not come within the range of ordinary observation. I maintain that it does. So far as regards the perception of a miracle, there is no difference between it and an ordinary event. When the miracles of the New Testament were wrought, they were wrought before witnesses, in many cases amounting to hundreds, in some to thousands, who saw them as they would have seen any other event. An example will best illustrate my meaning. When the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee, a tempest rose suddenly. Our Lord was asleep. They awoke him, with the prayer: "Lord, save us; we perish." He replied: "Why are ye fearful?" Then he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still." The disciples heard his words, as they would have heard any other words. They had the evidence of the sense of hearing, and under such circumstances that sense could not deceive them. Im-

mediately on the words being spoken, the storm abated ; "there was a great calm." The disciples saw it. They had the evidence of the senses of seeing, hearing, and feeling as to the reality of the whole occurrence. There could be no more doubt about them, and no more difficulty in observing and testing them, than in regard to any ordinary events. Viewed each by itself, they were ordinary events. Can any man affirm, therefore, that they did not come within the sphere of ordinary observation ?

But now let us inquire what it is which makes this whole event a miracle. It is not the words spoken by our Lord ; nor is it the sudden lulling of the storm. The miraculous element lies in the connection between the two. The miracle consisted in the exercise of divine power, indicated by the prophetic command, and resulting in the "great calm." But this connection did not place either the command itself or the calming of the sea beyond the range of ordinary observation, or of legitimate and satisfactory proof by testimony. It required no higher faculty to establish the absolute reality of the whole incident than it does to establish the reality of any incident in common life. Observation can establish the outward occurrences, and from these we infer the miracle.

We are now led to examine another dictum — that no testimony can reach to the supernatural. True, our observation, and therefore our testimony, cannot reach to the supernatural ; for there is no supernatural act performed now. Even at the time the miracles of the New Testament were wrought, the observation of the spectators could not reach to the supernatural, because the human eye could not see the working of the supernatural agency producing the event. The supernatural or miraculous character of the event was an inference on the part of the spectators ; but under such circumstances the inference was inevitable. It was as true as the event itself. Testimony based upon it is as trustworthy as that based upon observation. While, therefore, in so far as regards mere spectators, their testimony cannot reach by actual observation to the supernatural, yet by

means of necessary deduction it does reach to it. Thus: when the widow's son was raised from the dead at Nain, the spectators saw the dead body on the bier; they saw the weeping mother; they saw Jesus meeting the funeral procession; they heard his words to the widow: "Weep not"; they heard his command to the dead: "Young man, arise"; they saw the instantaneous effect—"He that was dead sat up, and began to speak." They saw all this, and their senses could not deceive them. Their observation, however, did not reach further. They inferred that a "great prophet" had arisen—that "God had visited his people." But will any man affirm that their inference is at all less certain or less credible than their testimony as to the facts? The facts being known, the inference follows. We can deduce it with as much certainty as could the original spectators.

But I go farther. It is not true in every case that no observation reaches to the supernatural. The observation of those who wrought the miracles must have reached to the supernatural. They felt the power of God working by them. They were as fully cognizant of it as of the operations of their own will. When Peter said to the cripple at the beautiful gate of the temple: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk," he was fully conscious that he then possessed, and was exercising, the delegated omnipotence of the Son of God. He was as competent to testify to the fact, as to testify to any exercise of his own will. He could be no more deceived as to the one than as to the other. And his communication of the fact to others was testimony which reached to the supernatural.

We now see that in whatever light we regard miracles, whether as events witnessed by spectators, and which from their nature they necessarily infer to be miraculous; or as exercises of a divine power specially conferred upon the workers, and testified to by them—they are alike capable of proof by testimony, because they are within the sphere of ordinary observation, of sound logical deduction, and of mental consciousness. These are the legitimate sources

of knowledge. All our deductions are founded upon them. All history is founded upon them. If we refuse to accept them in regard to miracles, can we consistently accept them in other cases? If we reject them we sweep away the whole basis of history; we affirm, if consistent and logical, that the evidence of our senses is unworthy of credit, and incapable of establishing the occurrence of any event, or the reality of any phenomenon; and thus we actually sweep away the whole basis of inductive philosophy.

The explanations I have given, and the arguments I have adduced prove, as I believe, that miracles are not impossible, that they are not incredible, and that they are not incapable of proof by testimony; but, on the contrary, that they have been established as facts, and are, therefore, God's own infallible proofs of the divine commission given to his ambassadors, and of the divine message sent by them. Many of the doctrines which the ambassadors proclaimed were new and strange, many beyond the grasp of the human intellect. Something, therefore, which the intellect in its ordinary exercise could apprehend, and the divine origin of which the honest spectator could trace, had to be performed to attest the doctrines. Such was the design of miracles. They were never mere arbitrary displays of power. They had a grand object and that object could be seen. Man saw in them God's own seal set to his truth; he saw in their nature the impress of infinite power and wisdom; he saw in their object the impress of infinite mercy and love. He was compelled to acknowledge in them the working of a present, omnipotent God, and to receive them as irresistible evidences of the truth of God's revelation.