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ARTICLE I.—*History of the Old Covenant.* By J. H. Kurtz, Ord. Prof. at Dorpat.\* Vol. II. 1855. 8vo. pp. 563.

THE first volume of this work traced the history of Israel as a family to its close in the death of Jacob, their last common progenitor. The next period regards Israel as a nation, and, according to the epochs marked by our author, extends to the establishment of the kingdom. This period is divided into four unequal parts, severally represented by the residence in Egypt, the wanderings in the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, and the residence in Canaan. Each of these has its own distinctly marked character and aim. First, the family was to expand to a nation and to attain a separate and independent existence. Secondly, they must receive their national form and constitution; they are not to be like other nations, but God's peculiar people. Hence he concludes a covenant with them and provides them with their code of laws. Thirdly, in order to realize the destiny thus set before them, and to develop themselves in their newly imparted character, they need to come into the possession of a suitable land. Fourthly,

\* Geschichte des Alten Bundes, von Joh. Heinr. Kurtz, u. s. w. Berlin, New York und Adelaide.

Brown. (Page 69.) Though the appearance of the volume is pleasing, there are numerous slips of the press. Among these we of course rank the strange double adverb "illy," instead of the English "ill." But the book is one which will remain as a treasure in many a Christian household, whose thanks and prayers will be the author's recompense.

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ART. V.—*Miracles and their Counterfeits.*

THE word *miracle*, considered with reference to its derivation, means simply a wonder, or wonderful work. In this, however, as in most cases, usage has modified but not destroyed the etymological meaning. According to this use, which has become universal and classic in Christendom, the strict meaning of the word has been narrowed down, to denote a single class of wonders or prodigies. This consists of supernatural works, wrought by God himself, in contravention of the laws of nature, and in attestation of the divine commission of his inspired servants, which includes, of course, the truth of their teachings. This is now the normal and proper sense of the word *miracle*. Other wonderful events and works are, indeed, often called miracles, or miraculous. But this is always understood to be mere hyperbole of speech, employed to express the speaker's sense of the greatness of the wonder; and its expressiveness depends wholly on the strict meaning of the word *miracle* being what we have indicated. In any other view, such phrases as, "I am a miracle of grace," "the miracles achieved by modern inventive genius," etc., would be void of all that now makes them forcible and felicitous.

Such being now the fixed and proper meaning of the word, it is next to be observed, that a class of events is narrated and signalized in the Scriptures, which precisely answers to this meaning, while no other word adequately indicates them. They are variously and indiscriminately denominated by words indicating some one of the constituents of a *miracle*. These

words are *σημεῖα, τέρατα, δυνάμεις*, translated in our version, "signs and wonders, and mighty deeds." 2 Cor. xii. 12. *Δυνάμεις*, however, whether used simply, or in connection with the other two, is often translated by the word *miracle*. "A man approved of God among you by *miracles*, and signs, and wonders," Acts ii. 22: "to another, the working of *miracles*," ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, 1 Cor. xii. 10. *Σημεῖα*, is sometimes so translated, as John iii. 2. "No man can do these *miracles* which thou doest, except God be with him." *Τέρατα* (wonders, prodigies) is seldom, if ever found, except in connection with *σημεῖα*; the uniform rendering of the two being "signs and wonders." These scriptural designations of these events severally shadow forth the several constituents of a *miracle*. It is 1. a wonder, surpassing the powers of man and nature; therefore, 2. rightly called a *power*, as being produced by the immediate exercise of supernatural and divine power; and, 3. a sign or token, as proving that he who works it, or by whom God works it, has this seal of a divine commission, of speaking by divine inspiration, and acting by a divine authority. In Acts ii. 22, we find a concise but beautiful and sublime summation of the various parts of the scriptural teachings relative to miracles. The scattered rays are here brought to a focus. With this grand epitome, Peter first introduces the name of Christ, in a discourse whose power was attested by thousands of converts, and which may well be studied by those who are now searching for the secret of sacred eloquence. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know."

Here it is expressly asserted, in addition to what is implied in the phrase, "miracles and signs and wonders:" 1. That they are the immediate work of God. Whatever was the connection of the man Jesus Christ with them, "God did them by him." Thus, in harmony with the current of scriptural representations, they are ascribed to the direct efficiency of God, in distinction from those events which he brings to pass by the immediate efficiency of second causes. 2. That they were enacted openly and publicly, when all had opportunity not only to wit-

ness, but to scrutinize and test them. 3. That they were such, and so wrought, that the people among whom they occurred, could not but know their existence and character—"as ye yourselves also know." They were so evident, that they might not only be known, but could not be unknown, unrecognized, or misunderstood, without sin. 4. Their purpose was to demonstrate to beholders, and all others cognizant of them, that Jesus Christ was "a man approved of God," ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀποδοσεδειγμένον, evinced, certified of God, by miracles, signs, and wonders wrought in the midst of them. 5. Thus miracles are important proofs for Christianity. By them an obligation was laid on the people to believe on and obey Christ, in all his teachings, claims, and requirements, as the Son of God, and promised Messiah. For he immediately proceeds to charge home upon them the guilt of crucifying one, whom God had certified by such stupendous miracles, to be, what he claimed to be, the Lord of glory. The fact that this argument was made thus fundamental and paramount in this discourse, together with the prodigious effects which ensued upon it, must be a sufficient answer to those who question the value, as evidences of Christianity, of the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles. On these several points, however, more hereafter.

For the further determination of the ground-principles pertaining to this subject, it is to be observed with some emphasis, that in order to fulfil the foregoing conditions, miracles must be wrought by the immediate efficiency of God, and not by second causes: further, they must involve a suspension, or counteraction of second causes beyond the power of man: so they must be not merely supernatural, but contra-natural. What second causes, including creatures with the laws, forces, or powers inherent in them, can accomplish of themselves, can be no evidence of the immediate agency of God, or of any special divine interposition. No suspension, or counteraction of those laws by the natural power of creatures, e. g., of gravity, by a man uplifting a stone, can be evidence of such interference by the Almighty. Moreover that direct interposition of God, which acts not in suspending, or contravening the laws of nature, but in concurrence with those laws, is not a miracle. That the renovation of the human soul is an immediate super-

natural work of God, above the power of man, and of nature, we shall not here stop to prove. But this work, although divine, neither suspends nor counteracts any proper law, functions, or faculties of the soul. Its rational, emotional, and optative faculties exist and operate according to their own proper nature, before, during, and after regeneration. The work itself is unseen by the believer, no less than by others. It is known only in its effects; and in these much more imperfectly by others than by the subject of it, often uncertainly by himself. It manifests itself gradually, not in any interruption, but simply in the gradually developed, orderly activity of his rational nature. While then it has this element in common with miracles, that it is supernatural and divine; while it is in a high sense marvellous; while it evinces to the subject of it, however sceptical before, the truth of the gospel; while the whole body of the regenerate, in their holy profession and life, are a standing and ever growing monument of the truth and power of Christianity; yet regeneration is not a miracle in the proper and scriptural sense: it is an interposition of God, not in such a sense immediately visible, palpable, suspending and counteracting the powers of nature, that, as beheld by our very senses, it shows itself an incontestable work of God, and so a "sign to those that believe not," as well as to those that believe. A miracle is this. It is a work done before the eyes of men, so that they may know it, and innocently cannot but know it, as being what cannot be accounted for by the laws and powers of nature, or on any supposition but the immediate agency of God, exerted in overpowering those laws. So it is not merely supernatural; it is contra-natural. Ordinary events of providence are accomplished by the agency of second causes. Works of grace are supernatural, yet congruous with nature's laws.\* Miracles are both supernatural and contra-natural.

\* We are not unaware that there is a sense in which miracles of bodily healing may be thought by some to be included in the class of divine acts, that are congruous with nature's laws, inasmuch as they restore the body, or the organ cured, to its normal state. Yet it is not without reason that theologians have held to a clear distinction between the two. The one is a moral change, wrought by supernatural power indeed, yet in no manner interfering with the proper laws and activities of our moral nature. The other is a physical creation, which so suspends or counteracts the natural laws of our material organism, that they are estopped from produc-

If we were then to set forth the doctrine after the old method, which often has a high advantage, in sharply defining the subject-matter, and the true issues of a discussion, and view a miracle according to its material, formal, efficient, and final cause, we would say:—1. That materially considered, miracles are supernatural events. So they are distinguished from the ordinary events of providence; from all the products of occult arts, of jugglery and legerdemain; of scientific discovery and insight; of the dexterous use of laws and secrets of nature, known to the miracle-monger and hidden from others; and, finally, from all extraordinary occurrences arising by the operation of natural laws from unusual combinations of the powers of nature, in the course of divine providence. An earthquake, or a thunderstorm, occurring in the most extraordinary and unexpected manner, would, in itself, be no miracle; but, should the still sky and earth suddenly and always roar and quake at the bidding of some man, and be quiet the moment he should say, “Peace, be still,” it would be a clear and incontestable miracle. 2. In its formal nature, a miracle is not only supernatural, but contra-natural. So it is distinguished from the gracious operations of the Spirit in the soul. Moreover, the formal in this case includes, 3. the efficient cause, who is God. A granite rock, although in fact the work of the Almighty, would be none the less granite, though it were made by any other being; but no conceivable wonder, nothing whatsoever, can be a miracle, unless immediately wrought of God. Were the miracles of the Scripture just what they are in other respects, but were they not wrought by God, they would not be true miracles. That he is their efficient cause, is not only true, as in respect of many other things, but enters into their essence, their formal nature, without which, whatever else they may be, they are not mira-

ing their wonted and due effect. It is true, that, if the distinction be rigorously followed up, it may appear subtle and tenuous; no more so, however, than all rigid analysis of the will ultimately becomes. As we know the will to be free, yet not independent, and still may find it difficult to explicate either of these truths in propositions which do not seem contradictory of the other, so we know that there is a difference in kind, between that divine work which restores the will to rectitude, and that which, by a mere word, makes those born deaf, dumb, or blind, instantaneously to hear, speak, and see. This is none the less so, although we may be unable to define that difference perfectly. It is still more evident that the latter fulfils the purpose or end of a miracle, while the former does not.

cles. So they are distinguished from all superhuman interruptions of the laws of nature, or quasi-miracles caused by evil spirits, if such there be, in regard to which we will yet show our opinion. 4. The final cause of miracles, the end for which they are wrought, is to furnish proof, and work the conviction, that those through whom God works them, are commissioned by him, and speak his truth. So they are distinguished from all prodigies, whether natural or supernatural, wrought in support of error, immorality, or irreligion—while those are contradicted who assert the uselessness of miracles as criteria of truth.

It is obvious that this doctrine of miracles supposes a radical distinction between God and nature; *i. e.*, the real, separate, unconfounded existence of each. It denies Atheism, Fatalism, and Pantheism. It is also in conflict with atheistic and pantheistic theories, such as are sometimes espoused by even theistic and Christian advocates. There have been those among the best theologians, from Augustine downward, who have been jealous of representing the miracles as involving the suspension or counteraction of the laws of nature, lest they should thus seem so far to separate nature from God, as to lend some countenance to Pelagian notions of independent and self-sufficient being and power in creatures. Hence, they were inclined to construe Christ's saying, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," as meaning, that all the laws and processes of nature are nothing else than the immediate agency of God. Of course, this view fully carried out, would be incompatible with the definition of miracles which we have deduced from the Scriptures. It is a solecism to speak of the agency of God counteracting itself. A recent school of theistic advocates, with a wholly different aim, have more deliberately and articulately resolved nature and its laws, (save the actions of free agents,) into the immediate agency of God. They deny efficiency, whether original or derived, to everything but will. They thus aim to confute the materialistic or positive school of Atheists, who allow no knowledge of anything beyond what is given in sensation; consequently, no knowledge of any laws or causality in nature, except mere uniformities of antecedence and sequence; consequently, no knowledge of any First Cause.

The theists, to whom we refer, grant that portion of the premises which asserts our ignorance of any causality in nature or its laws. Some of them go further, and absolutely deny such causality. They then assert the common doctrine, that it is a first principle that every event must have a cause. They add, that we know from our own consciousness, that an intelligent will is a cause; and that human wills are inadequate to the creation of the universe. Thus, by asserting the universality of causation, eliminating all original and derived causality from matter, excluding the human will from acts of causation that are above its scope, the actings of the laws of nature are resolved into immediate forth-puttings of divine efficiency. So Dr. Bowen, in his argument for the existence of God, "attributes all changes that take place in the universe, except those which are caused by man, to the *immediate* action of the Deity."\* The italics are his, showing that this is no random expression. Accordingly he tells us, "this doctrine places the material universe before us in a new light. The whole frame-work of what are called 'secondary causes' falls to pieces. The *laws of nature* are only a figure of speech; the powers and active inherent properties of material atoms are mere fictions. . . . There is no such thing as what we usually call the 'course of nature.'"†

We notice that Tulloch, in his Burnett Prize Essay in defence of Christian theism, meets the allegation that the uniformity of the laws of nature militates against the sovereign dominion and providence of God, with some expressions, which, if anything more than mere rhetorical exaggerations, assert the same thing. These laws are, according to him, "the continual going forth of the Divine Efficiency. . . . The truer view, therefore, would be to regard the whole course of Providence, the whole order of nature as special, in the sense of proceeding directly every moment from the awful abysses of creative Power. . . . To conceive of any order of events, or any facts of nature, as less directly connected than others with their Divine Author, is an absurdity. And what, save this, can be distinctively

\* *The Principles of Metaphysical and Ethical Science applied to the Evidences of Religion.* By Francis Bowen, Alford Professor of Natural Religion, Moral Philosophy, &c., in Harvard College. Page 123.

† *Id.* Page 95.

meant by a General Providence, we are at a loss to imagine. Only suppose the Deity equally present in all his works, equally active in all, and Providence no longer admits of a two-fold apprehension. It is simply, in every possible mode of its conception, the agency of God; equally mediate in all cases as expressing itself by *some* means, but also in all cases equally immediate, as no less truly expressed in one class of works than in another. According to this higher and more comprehensive view, the Divine Presence lives alike in all the divine works. God is everywhere in nature.”\*

That there is a sound sense in which most of the foregoing may be taken, and in which it was probably intended, we most cordially admit. But if the “Deity is equally present in all his works, and equally active;” if his agency is equally mediate and equally immediate in all; if none are “more directly connected than others with their divine Author;” if all are alike “directly” the products of “creative power,” the immediate outgoing of the divine efficiency; if they admit of no “two-fold apprehension” in their relations to his agency; then where are the second causes which this author appears elsewhere to recognize?† But whether he means to keep pace with Mr. Bowen in denying secondary causes or not, we ask, where, on the scheme of either, is the line of demarcation between the natural and supernatural? In what sense are miracles, or works of grace in the soul, supernatural? In short, if the events of the natural world are accomplished by the immediate exercise of divine efficiency to the exclusion of second causes, how are miracles or regeneration in any sense the *special* work of God? However indifferent these questions may be to a Socinian, they can scarcely be so to an evangelical theologian. Prof. Bowen indeed objects to fatalism, that it renders miracles impossible. So far as we can see, his own scheme does the same. It is not indeed incompatible with deviations from the uniform methods in which God commonly exerts his efficiency. But, according to it, such deviations are in no sense peculiarly works of God. How then are they seals of his truth, more than any extraordinary events of providence,

\* *Christian Theism.* By the Rev. George Tulloch, D. D. Carter’s edition, pp. 66, 67.

† Quotation from Dr. Whewell, p. 50.

which arise from some unusual junction of the uniform laws or forces of nature? The fact is, this theory needs to be pressed but a little further, to approach a confounding or identification of God and Nature, either in the shape of Pantheism or Fatalism, schemes which above all others its abettors detest. None are more strenuous than they for free-will and proper causality in man, up to the point of the most unconditional self-determination. We have sufficiently shown Dr. Bowen's opinions about the will, in a former article.\* Dr. Tulloch describes it as "a naturally undetermined source of activity," p. 263. But he very justly adds, "In our very freedom, we at the same time find our dependency." The question is, then, if free agents are causes, are they not second, derived, dependent causes? On the other hand, although thus derivative and dependent, are they not true and proper causes, having their own separate existence and activity? And if it is competent for God to create and sustain agents of this order, why not to create and sustain laws and forces in the material world, which, though upheld and guided by him, are yet distinct from him, and exert an energy distinct from his? Surely this is the scriptural doctrine. The raising of Lazarus from the dead, the creation of the world out of nothing, is there treated as a work of God, in a far more direct and emphatic sense than the sun's rising. They are no less so in the intuitive judgments of the race. Moreover, the old example of Reid is as good against this class of reasoners, as against sensational sceptics and positivists. Night always precedes day—so also does the sun's rising. The movements of a clock's machinery uniformly precede its striking twelve: so does its striking eleven. Does any one doubt in these cases which is the cause, and which is not, of the succeeding event? And is not this enough to show, not only that cause is something more than mere antecedence, but that it is found in material as well as spiritual agencies; and that whether in intelligent or unintelligent creatures, it is, though dependent and secondary, still a cause? For ourselves, we do not see how the opposite view can consistently stop short of Pantheism or Spinosism, making the only difference between God and Nature, that of *Natura naturans et natura naturata*.

\* See article entitled *Logic of Religion*, July, 1855.

Other theories, militating against the possibility of miracles, require less notice. We have emphasized the foregoing, rather as a suicidal speculation advanced by their defenders. When it is claimed to be inconsistent with the immutability of God to suspend his own laws, the answer is obvious. Such interruptions of these laws were included in his eternal purpose. If it be alleged that miracles suppose his original plan so imperfect as to require to be improved upon by subsequent variations from it, and that thus his wisdom is impeached; it is a sufficient answer, that the laws of nature are the wisest provision for the ends to be accomplished by them, and their miraculous suspension or counteraction is the wisest provision for the purposes to be thus effected. To meet these and similar objections, a theory has been framed, and has gained currency with a class of Christian apologists, which verges to an extreme, the opposite of that which we have been considering. This scheme is, that miracles, though apparently interruptions of the laws of nature, are but the outworkings of these laws, either of such as we know, acting in strange and occult combinations, or of some more general law as yet hidden from us. This scheme we find sanctioned, if not adopted, as follows, in a late work. "It is no less a miracle when the lower law of nature is modified by a higher law, at the exact time at which it pleases God to make a revelation of his will, than if the nature which is known to us were modified by his immediate interference. Thus, to illustrate by the calculating engine of Mr. Babbage, it is no less a proof of knowledge and of power superior to the engine itself, to predict that a law which has held good for a million and one instances, will change at the million and second, than to be able to produce such a change, by interfering with the movements of the machine. Suppose it granted, that the standing of the sun, in the time of Joshua, was a phenomenon of a law superior to the ordinary laws of nature which are known to man, and including these laws as subordinate, still it is no less a proof of divine power, and no less an evidence of special revelation."\*

\* *Christian Theism: The Testimony of Reason and Revelation to the Existence and Character of the Supreme Being.* (Burnett Prize Essay.) By Robert Anchor Thompson, pp. 344-5.

This indication of supernaturalism overthrows it. There is no miraculous suspension or counteraction, but only the normal action of the laws of nature. On this supposition, a miracle can in no wise be distinguished from those events, which our ignorance disables us from accounting for, by any known laws of nature, while they are yet the product of such laws which science afterwards discovers. On this theory, the first instance of the congelation of water known to a tropical savage, the prediction of eclipses, the galvanic battery, the magnetic telegraph, for all savages, have every possible element of a veritable miracle. They are special divine interpositions to authenticate to these savages, those who employ them, as messengers from God. Nor are they less so, on this scheme, although afterwards they are discovered to be but the mere effect of natural laws, and of man's knowledge thereof. Suppose that the law should yet be discovered, which, on this theory, arrested the course of the sun, would that fact alter the nature of the event? Things are constantly occurring, inexplicable according to our present knowledge, as the products of natural laws, which are afterwards explained by a deeper knowledge of those laws. Are these miracles? Are these the seals of God's messengers and truth? And are the mighty signs and wonders which God wrought by the hands of Moses, of Christ, and his Apostles, to prove their divine commission, only what man could do with sufficient knowledge of the laws of nature, what a steamboat or hydraulic press are to the savage? Believe it who will.

But what can we know of a true miracle, more than that it is inexplicable by any human power, or any known laws of nature? And, what less than this would appear in the case of those, who ignorant that astronomy has taught men how to predict eclipses, should be told by some one who had got the secret, that they would occur on such days, hours, minutes, seconds, and find the event uniformly and precisely answerable to the prediction? Can then miracles be surely discerned as such, and how?

This is a fair question, and on any theory of miracles, an inevitable one. Not only does the question arise in consequence of our comparative ignorance of the laws of nature,

whether any inexplicable phenomenon be the work of God, or the effect of some occult natural law, or of the dexterous use by man of known or unknown powers of nature; it arises from another cause, which, to the best of our knowledge, is now considerably ignored or disbelieved among Christians; a course, whereby not only they, but the interests of truth and holiness suffer loss. We refer to the undeniable scriptural truth, that within certain limits, evil spirits, the powers of darkness, are suffered, in God's sovereign wisdom, to counterfeit miracles. However any may recoil from such a statement, it will be conceded by all with whom we now argue, that the only appeal is to the law and to the testimony. And it may here be further remarked provisionally, that should such an inquiry prove that Satan is suffered at times to simulate divine miracles, it is only what he is suffered to do with reference to every divine work in the kingdom of grace.

He becomes, when it suits his purpose, an angel of light, and his ministers, ministers of righteousness. Counterfeits here as elsewhere, serve to prove the existence of the genuine, and put it to the test, to try faith and prove sincerity. There must be heresies, that they who are approved may be made manifest.

Rev. xvi. 19, sets forth "the spirits of the devils working miracles," *σπυριτῶν*. Chap. xii. 9, describes "the great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." Chap. xiii. 11-14, represents a beast, who "spake as a dragon," and "doeth great wonders, so that he maketh the fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell upon the earth by means of the miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast." Again, we are told, chap. xix. 20, "the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had the mark of the beast." So the coming of the man of sin, predicted in 2 Thess. ii., which the Church has so generally understood to be the Papal Antichrist, is declared to be "after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." Christ forewarns us, that "there shall arise false

Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders that shall deceive, if possible, the very elect." It cannot be denied that Pharaoh's magicians were enabled for a time to imitate the miracles wrought by Moses and Aaron. Their rods became serpents; the fish of the rivers died; the frogs gathered upon Egypt at their bidding.

The least that can be made of these and other concurrent scriptural representations is, that infernal spirits have the power to work pseudo-miracles, which give colour to antichristian delusion and iniquity; that these have a sufficient resemblance to true miracles to deceive those who have not received the love of the truth, but not enough to deceive the children of God. How closely they approached real miracles, as to their supernatural character; whether merely by deeper insight into the laws of nature, devils are enabled to perform what is impossible to man, in the same sense as what is possible to a Morse, or a Whitney, is impossible to the vulgar; or whether, by their superior might, they have a power that is absolutely superhuman, but under divine control, really to suspend or counteract some of the laws of nature in a degree impossible to man, is not important to determine. But can we infer anything less than that, in some cases, they exercise the latter and higher of these powers, from the actual performances which we have seen are ascribed to these fell beings? Says Chalmers, in accordance with the prevailing current of doctrine in the Church, "they on the one hand, who affirm that the bare fact of a miracle," (*i. e.* an apparent interruption of nature's laws,) "is in itself, the instant and decisive token of an immediate forth-putting by the hand of God, must explain away the feats of the Egyptian magicians in the days of Moses; must explain away the demoniacal possessions of the New Testament; must explain away certain precepts and narratives of the Old, as a certain passage, for example, in the history of Saul, and a precept too which recognizes false miracles by false prophets. Now all this has been attempted. . . . Why all this tampering with the plain and obvious literalities of Scripture? How is it possible, without giving up the authority of the record, to reduce these demoniacal possessions to diseases?" He also observes, in reference to all

this, "it certainly tends to obscure the connection between the truth of a miracle, and the truth of a doctrine which is sanctioned by it. It is on the adjustment of this question, that the English writers on miracles have expended, we think, most of their strength; and, while in Scotland, the great labour has been to dissipate the sophistries of Hume, and so to vindicate the Christian miracles as sufficiently ascertained facts—in the sister kingdom it has been, admitting them as facts, to vindicate them as real credentials from the God of Heaven, and so as competent vouchers for that system of religion with which they are associated."\*

The rejection or overlooking by so many, of the fact, that quasi-miracles are sometimes wrought by infernal spirits, is due, we think, to the fact that we have been so much accustomed to study the subject of miracles in writers of the Scotch school to which Chalmers refers. Paley too, has long been the standard authority with great numbers, on the whole subject of miracles and Christian evidences. In his argument for the historic verity of the miracles, and the genuineness of the canonical books of the New Testament, in his microscopic detection of undesigned coincidences, and his masterly bringing out of facts which at once strike every man of sense as inconsistent with the hypothesis, that the sacred writings could be the product of imposture or irrational enthusiasm, he is incomparable. This sufficed to confound the sensational infidelity with which he had to deal, and which not only scouted divine miracles, but much more, all lesser supernatural agencies. Their ground was, that the scriptural miracles did not occur; that the Bible was the offspring of delusion or imposture. They did not deny, that if these miracles were wrought by Christ and his Apostles, they were a divine confirmation of their teachings and of their authentic writings. Paley's argument is, therefore, conclusive against them. It may be further observed, that Paley's mind had but one eye, far and sure-sighted as that was. That eye was the sensuous, discursive understanding; clear, solid, English sense, judgment and logic. But he had no eye for the higher intuitions, rational, moral, or spiritual; a fact nowhere

\* Chalmers's *Christian Revelation*. Book ii. Chap. viii.

more painfully conspicuous than in the ground-principles of his Moral Philosophy. Hence, the self-evidencing light which the Scriptures bear, of a divine imprint and origin, and which is the great source of conviction to believers, he scarcely recognized or made account of. He, indeed, does not overlook such internal evidence, as the prophecies, the morality, the harmony of the Scriptures afford. These are adduced as subordinate and ancillary to the evidence furnished by miracles. But miracles alone were conclusive proof. He says of the first propagators of Christianity, "they had nothing else to stand upon."\* Of course, this view, which makes the evidence of Christianity turn wholly on miracles, is incompatible with the supposition that there may be counterfeits of these miracles so expertly done, that they need to be in any degree discriminated by a doctrinal test; in short, that the miracle must, to a certain extent, be tested by the doctrine as well as the doctrine by the miracle. Yet, such, as we shall see, is the plain teaching of Scripture.† We have dwelt the longer on these quasi-miracles wrought by evil spirits, which on their face resemble genuine miracles, and on the causes of current scepticism relative to the subject, because we believe that it is afflicted with a false estimate of the various parts of the Christian evidences, and imperfect views of duty in regard to the whole enginery of lying wonders, which is plied from time to time against gospel truth.

However spurious miracles may counterfeit the genuine, there must be certain criteria by which the latter can be surely known, not only to be unaccountable wonders, but to be wrought of God, for both these are requisite to constitute a miracle. This must be so, both because the Scriptures teach that God's

\* Paley's Evidences of Christianity. Part I. Chap. vi.

† Says Whateley, "The ultimate conclusion, that 'the Christian religion came from God,' is made to rest, (as far as the direct historical evidence is concerned, on these two premises; that a religion attested by miracles is from God; and, that the Christian religion is so attested.

"Of these two premises, it should be remarked, the minor seems to have been admitted, while the major was denied, by the unbelievers of old; whereas, at present, the case is reversed.

"Paley's argument, therefore, goes to establish the minor premiss, about which alone in these days there is likely to be any question."—*Whateley's Logic*. Harper's edition. Pp. 381, 2.

miracles may be known as such, and because they would be valueless if they could not.

These criteria are two-fold :

1. Those belonging to the character of the alleged miracles themselves.

2. Those belonging to the nature of the doctrines they are offered to confirm.

I. The alleged miracles of impostors and infernal spirits always differ from true miracles in a two-fold way.

1. As to number and variety. Miracle-mongers do not usually attempt or claim to work any preternatural feats beyond some *given* single kind, or at the utmost, some two or three kinds. For the most, the workers of charms, sorceries, and conjurations, cannot perform even these, except under some peculiar circumstances, or with certain fixtures or arrangements, the failure or disturbance of any one of which instantly disables them and spoils the exhibition. With real miracles, it is otherwise. They are of vast number and variety, such, that although each, taken singly, might warrant a doubt whether it were a God-wrought miracle, or the product of some magic or diabolical art, or of some extraordinary providential concurrence of events—yet taken together, they inevitably show that they must proceed from the exuberance of creative power and wisdom. If a man give only the sign or wonder of seeming converse with departed spirits, and then only in certain magic circles connecting him with a medium or familiar spirit, we may well stand in doubt of him, or rather we should have no doubt about repudiating and denouncing him as a sorcerer.

But if, at the fiat of his word, all kinds of diseases are instantly cured, in all circumstances, without medication ; if food is created out of nothing ; if the dead are raised, if the sea is cloven asunder for his friends to pass safely, and rolls together immediately, to engulf his pursuing enemies, and if all sorts of plagues are immediately, at his command, made to sweep desolation over them ; then we cannot doubt the hand of God therein. If a person professing the gift of prophecy, or powers of knowledge beyond the reach of unassisted human faculties, should, in some single instances, or only when in some charmed circle hit the truth, we might well discredit his pretensions, or

refer his power to other agents than divine inspiration: but should he, in all circumstances, when professing to speak under inspiration, accurately disclose hidden, or foretell future events, even for centuries in advance, then we could not doubt his divine inspiration. But just this difference holds between all spurious prophets, dreamers, and wonder-workers, and the authors and miracles of the sacred Scriptures.

2. There are some of the Scripture miracles, such as raising the dead, creating things out of nothing, immediate control of the elements, which surpass all that impostors and magicians, men or devils, have ever given any plausible evidence of having enacted. These emit a radiance of divinity that cannot be mistaken, and that wholly extinguish all counter-pretensions of miracle-workers, by their overshadowing brightness. All the other miracles of Scripture are linked with these, and, therefore, in addition to the cumulative evidence arising from their number and variety, partake of the surpassing and irresistible evidences of divinity given in raising the dead, and controlling the elements at will. God so works miracles, that they overbear all competition from counterfeits. Pharaoh and his magicians were obliged to confess, "this is the finger of God." Much more than must this be incontestable, with candid minds.\*

II. The other great criterion of a divine miracle, is the nature of the doctrine purporting to be attested by it. Divine truth, when once fairly before the mind, bears upon itself the self-evidence of its divinity. This is not indeed true of every

\* Says Dr. Hill, a divine of eminent learning, judgment and moderation: "The power of working miracles may descend from the Almighty, through a gradation of good spirits; and he may commission evil spirits, by exercising the power given to them, to prove his people, or to execute a judicial sentence upon those who receive not the love of the truth. But both good and evil spirits are under his control; they fulfil his pleasure, and he works by them.

"This is the system which appears to be intimated in Scripture. . . . It is, indeed, very remarkable, that at the introduction of both the Jewish and Christian dispensations, there seems, according to the most natural interpretation of Scripture, to have been a certain display of the power of evil spirits; I mean in the works of the Egyptian magicians, and in the demoniacs of the New Testament. But in both cases, the display appears to have been permitted by God, that it might be made manifest that there was in nature a superior power. . . . Our faith rests upon works whose distinguishing character, and whose manifest superiority to the power of evil spirits, are calculated to remove every degree of hesitation, in applying the argument which miracles afford."—*Lectures on Divinity.* By George Hill, D. D. Carter's edition, pp. 48, 9.

portion of Scripture. But it is true of its grand distinctive announcements, in which God speaks, as man never spake, in a manner like a God, suited to our need, and worthy of all acceptance. These portions of Scripture, like the greater miracles, speak their own divinity past all dispute, and with these the rest are implicated, as parts of an organic whole, so that their inspiration stands or falls with them.

On the other hand, the doctrines supported by false miracles are invariably either frivolous, absurd, immoral, or irreligious, —at all events, anti-scriptural. The doctrines are as much below the doctrines of the Bible, as the signs and wonders are below the miracles of the Bible. No better illustration of this can be found, than in the pretended revelations of our modern spiritualists. To this test, then, must all miracle-workers and their doctrines be brought. The divinity of the Bible is established by the highest possible evidence, external and internal, miracles, prophecy, history; the vastness and duration of its effects; its adaptation to our need; and, finally, by the glorious outshining of divinity on its pages. Does the alleged miracle, however plausible, sustain or impugn the teachings of the Bible. This is the ultimate test laid down in the word itself. Every doctrine, no matter what wonders may appear to attest it, must be judged by its nature, and its fruits. False prophets, sooner or later, show their true character by the effects of their instructions. Therefore, Christ says, "By their fruits shall ye know them." But we cannot always wait for the development of fruits, before our welfare and our duty require us to discern and reject them. And the grand criterion is the doctrinal one. The command is, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God," but is antichrist. 1 John iv. 1-3. This is explicit and unmistakable.

Equally emphatic was the command under the old dispensation. Deut. xiii. 1-5: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and

the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God." This is the strongest case of an apparent miracle that can be supposed. A sign or wonder is not only given, but it comes to pass. But, if the doctrine it is offered to support be unscriptural, it is to be repudiated and denounced as the work of the devil. And it is signified to us that such signs and wonders may be given, to prove our fealty to God and his truth.

Here arises the common objection, that if this be so, miracles are nugatory as proof of the divine origin of the Scriptures. According to this, it is said, the doctrine proves the miracle, not the miracle the doctrine. It is true, the doctrine, if corrupt or plainly absurd, disproves the miracle alleged in its support. A real miracle, however, is not proved by a true doctrine. If proved at all, it is by its own independent evidence. Thus it is an additional proof in support of what has indeed other proof—proof, however, which would often not be duly regarded, unless enforced by this auxiliary evidence displayed to the senses. Besides, the miracles of Scripture are in themselves, as we have seen, distinguishable from all other signs and wonders. They are, therefore, "for a sign to those that believe not," and props to the infirmity of real believers.

Moreover, many doctrines though rational and wholesome, are not in themselves past all doubt, unless corroborated by a sign from Heaven. Such is the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, eternal retributions, &c. Miracles are their appropriate confirmation. While then, a corrupt or absurd doctrine would disprove an alleged miracle, true miracles stand on their own evidence, and prove many doctrines otherwise uncertain, while they confirm all. It would then be

nearer the truth to say, not the doctrine proves the miracle, but rather its nature shows whether it is capable or not of being proved by a miracle. A doctrine obviously false, absurd, frivolous, antichristian, is incapable of being proved by miracles, with whatever signs and wonders it may be paraded before us. As to the holy truths of the gospel, they, for the most part, shine in their own light; and, at all events, no impostors, human or diabolic, will undertake by prodigies or argument, to promote faith in what promotes allegiance to God. As to matters in themselves indifferent, such as can be no test of a miracle purporting to be wrought in their support, it is incredible that holy angels should wish to deceive; or, that evil angels should be permitted by God to work any wonders in support of error, not otherwise discernible, which cannot on their face be easily discriminated from God-wrought miracles.

Here we are confronted with the whole question, as to the use and value of miracles. Under the influence of Paley, and the school he so ably represented, the value of miracles, as attestations of Christianity, was overrated. They were exalted to the rank of primary and exclusive evidences of the truth of Christianity. According to him, it "had nothing else to stand on." This is false, if there be any truth in the preceding views. It is false in fact. Not one believer in ten ever read Paley's Evidences, or any equivalent treatise. Their belief, that the Bible is from God, is founded on its contents. They find God speaking therein, "as never man spake," and see that its testimonies are "sure testimonies," from their very nature, "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance," as from God. Is it asked, how? How do they know that the material universe is the work of God? They know it from circumstances and characteristics of the visible worlds, which are unaccountable on any other hypothesis. But if,

"The spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
Their Great Original proclaim;"

much more does the word of God, discover God its author. It is a thousand-fold more radiant with the beams of divinity, than the whole creation besides. God hath magnified his word above all his name, every manifestation of himself. This evi-

dence of the gospel is the fundamental ground on which the faith of believers ultimately rests, whatever auxiliary support it may receive from miracles. Of course, the theory that miracles are the only evidence of the Bible, could never stand, and was bound to be followed by a reaction.

That reaction came. And now, a numerous class undervalue them, and deny them to be of any value as proofs of Christianity; because, they say, it is sufficiently evidenced by itself, while miracles themselves must be tested by a doctrinal criterion.

This is the opposite and plausible extreme; but it is fallacious, and overlooks several important facts.

1. The Scriptures constantly assert, that the inspiration of their authors, and the truth of their teachings, were attested or confirmed by miracles, while they no less command us to reject all false teachers, by whatever signs or wonders they may be supported; assuring us, also, that the elect, the true people of God, cannot be fatally deceived, because they have an unction from the Holy One, whereby they know all things. These several facts are therefore compatible, whether we can see how or not.

2. As we have shown, the Scripture miracles surpass all other miracles, in this, that their number, variety, and character, utterly preclude the opinion, in any fair mind, that they can have been wrought by the hands of any creature, much less, by wicked men or devils. They, therefore, may serve to demonstrate that those by whom they were wrought are God-sent. They had this effect even upon the ancient magicians, and upon cavillers as well as others in Christ's time.

3. The same truth may be supported by various evidences. These may all corroborate each other, or they may be even interdependent, so that each stands or falls with the other. Or, if equally demonstrated by a plurality of separate and independent proofs, some men may be in a state of mind to be convinced by one class of evidences, others by another, others still, by their combined force. A case in court may depend on the testimony of an unimpeached witness, and on a strong chain of circumstances, neither of which alone might suffice to convict a felon. Both united may carry conviction to every juror's mind. And again, of these jurors, some may be more influenced by

the testimony of the witness; others by the net-work of corroborating circumstances. Before we can adopt the conclusion that the motions of the heavenly bodies are produced by the law of gravity, two things must appear: 1. That the law of gravity is a property of matter. 2. That the motions of the planets are precisely such as this law would produce. If either of these points fails, it weakens the other, as well as the general conclusion dependent upon both.

The application of these views to the case of miracles is obvious. A corrupt doctrine destroys a pretended miracle, just as strong counter circumstantial evidence would invalidate the testimony of a single witness. A miracle, on the other hand, is a divine attestation of a true and salutary, but uncertain or contested doctrine, like the soul's immortality, or eternal retributions. Not only so, but with regard to the Scriptures as a whole, which carry a self-evidence of divinity on their face, there is no question that multitudes are in a moral state, which disqualifies them for appreciating this evidence. Many who appreciate in some measure the prophetic evidence, and the lofty morality of the Bible, yet see not the bright radiance of divinity on its pages. Yet, those whose moral sense is thus dulled, may be alive to those stupendous miracles in which God displays himself to their very senses. Thus, a respectful and candid attention may be gained for the other and higher evidence of the truths so attested, which through divine grace will lead to its due appreciation. That miracles exerted this convictive energy at the first promulgation of the gospel, is the constant representation of the Scriptures. That this influence may have been more important then than now, when the Scriptures in their integrity and purity are accessible to all, and have so long and so widely given proof of their divine origin by their effects, is doubtless true; but that it still continues, and is of power under God to promote faith among men, is past all doubt. Miracles are proofs offered to the eye of sense, where the eye of spiritual insight is wanting, or is dim; "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them which believe, but to them which believe not." 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

Moreover, true believers often find their faith wavering, and struggling with unbelief. To them even, miracles may be a

prop for this infirmity. They lean not only on the self-evidence of the word, but on the miracles which corroborate it; since God thus "confirms his word by signs following." Mark xvi. 20. Besides, the miracles narrated in Scripture form an integral part of it, and, in the description given of them, emit a divine radiance, which is a part of its self-evidencing light. As truly in the accounts given of miracles wrought, as elsewhere, does the unsophisticated reader of the Bible feel that there is that which no impostor, or evil spirit, would invent, if he could, or could if he would. The doctrines and the miracles of Scripture are given to us together, as one concrete outgoing and manifestation of divine wisdom, power, and goodness, with an "implication of doctrine in the miracle, and of miracle in the doctrine," which goes to the soul through all its avenues of access. They both fasten the obligation to believe and obey the gospel, upon all to whom it comes. "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression received a just recompense of reward; 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 that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" Heb. ii. 2-4.

If it be objected that this is arguing in a circle, to confirm doctrine and miracle by each other, it is so in a good sense. It is not like arguing that a house is good, because it is built of good materials, and in order to prove this, arguing it to be built of good materials, because it is a good house. It is rather like showing the excellence of a man's character, by the excellence of his works, while the excellence of these is enhanced by the well-known piety and conscientiousness which prompts their performance; like the reputed veracity of a witness and the verisimilitude of what he relates, rendering each other mutual support. The parts of an arch give each other the strongest support, and form the strongest whole, when they follow each other in the line of a circle.

It may be further objected, that on this hypothesis, after all, it is left to the judgment and good pleasure of each one to decide what is immoral and absurd, or stamped with a divine im-

press, and what is not; that hence, miracles bind none to any belief which they would not adopt without them. The first answer to this is, that this difficulty applies with equal force to all moral evidence, of every description. It is possible for men to blind themselves to its existence, or its force. It is possible to refuse to retain God in our knowledge; to call good evil, and evil good; to put light for darkness, and darkness for light. Men may refuse to acknowledge the most stupendous evidence of miracles, of prophecy, of moral and divine excellence, in support of any system of doctrines. Multitudes do thus hate the light, and refuse to come to the light, because their deeds are evil. Doubtless these things ultimately fall back upon each one's moral responsibility. Every one is bound to be fair in recognizing and estimating evidence; just and true in his moral judgments. As it is possible to ignore or pervert truth and evidence, so a woe is upon those who so confound good and evil. And we are expressly assured that those who are blind to the existing evidence for the Scriptures, would be incapable of conviction by any evidence whatever—"neither would they be persuaded, though one arose from the dead." It is doubtless possible for a Socinian to reject that as absurd, and impossible to be taught in the Scriptures, which is simply unwelcome or mysterious; which has been dear to the saints of all generations, as an adorable life-giving mystery; even as the mystery of godliness, which was hid from ages and generations, but is now made manifest unto his saints. For any to reject such truths as absurd, is simply to proclaim their own hardihood of unbelief. Truth is truth, and it is evidenced by sufficient proofs, the beliefs of any or all men to the contrary notwithstanding. And if any know it not, it is because they seek it not with a right spirit, and in a right manner. They who so seek, shall assuredly find. They who do not so seek, do not deserve to find. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God. They who desire not the knowledge of his ways, are in danger of realizing their hearts' desire, and being given over to a strong delusion that they should believe a lie.

We are of opinion, moreover, that among the most important uses of miracles, is the guarding of the doctrine of the self-

evidencing light of the Scriptures from perversion by enthusiasts, rationalists, and the advocates of intuitional theology. As counterfeit miracles are detected by the antichristian doctrines associated with them; so spurious pretensions to inward light, to inspiration, to a theology self-evidently superior to scriptural doctrine, are as summarily refuted by their want of miracles to attest them. They may indeed be refuted by reason of their manifest inherent falsity. But yet on their intrinsic merits, adversaries can dispute interminably, and make the worse appear the better reason to fallen humanity. But all these schemes want the prestige of a miraculous attestation, such as overshadows all other seeming and pretended miracles. The normal authority of the Scriptures as the objective standard of truth and rule of faith, is constantly assailed by the haters of its doctrines, who assert that these doctrines contradict our first moral intuitions. This class generally seek to attenuate the value of miracles to the lowest minimum. Thus Stuart Mill, after proving that Hume's argument against miracles is of no weight, on the supposition that God exists, and a sufficient exigency arises for his making such interposition, (and surely we need not stop to combat Hume's sophism on this subject, when the ablest writers of his own school confess it,) applauds what he calls the theory of the most advanced thinkers, viz. that "the doctrine must prove the miracles, not the miracles the doctrine."\* Not exactly. They mutually prove each other. And we are persuaded that to assert less for miracles than this, is to surrender one of our strong fortresses to the enemy.

Still the question may arise, why any counterfeits of miracles were suffered at all. Why are not miracles so distinguished and contrasted with all other events, that there can be no more chance for doubt, cavil, or deception, than about a proposition in Euclid? The first answer is, that such is not the decision of Infinite Wisdom. The second is, that had God ordered this matter differently, he would have deviated from his uniform methods in evidencing moral and religious truths to men. This he does not after the fashion of mathematical demonstration:

\* Mill's Logic, Harper's edition, p. 376.

but in a way that enforces conviction in every candid mind, while it gives opportunity to the perverse and unbelieving to shield their unbelief under specious pretexts. Such as hate the light can refuse to come to the light. They can hold up false miracles to screen themselves from the convictive power of true ones. In his revelations, as in all his dealings with us, God's aim is to try and prove us. Such he expressly assures us is his purpose in permitting heresies and lying wonders. "Thou shalt not hearken unto that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." Deut. xiii. 3.

We thus reach the last point in this inquiry, for which all that precedes clears the way. We have found that miracles are wonders supernatural and contra-natural, and that they are wrought of God; that their use is to serve as seals of the divine commission of his messengers, and of the divine inspiration of their teachings; in all ages are evidence, though not the only or the highest evidence, that the Scriptures are the oracles of God; that there are infallible criteria by which they may be known as miracles, and distinguished from all counterfeits; that such counterfeits are perpetrated by wicked men and devils; that they may be known as such, as well by the anti-christian, immoral, false, or frivolous character of the tenets they are put forward to confirm, as by their signal inferiority to the miracles of that gospel which they are always employed directly or indirectly to impugn. The question then is, what is our duty with reference to all pretended miracles, and miracle-mongers? All are familiar with the boastful pretensions of a low species of necromancy miscalled spiritualism, and with the wide extent of the mania it has begotten. Papists are constantly parading their simulated miracles to deceive the simple and unwary. In all ages, wizards, conjurors, and sorcerers will appear, often commanding followers enough to make the occupation lucrative. What then is our duty with reference to them, so far as they come in our way?

1. In regard to all pretended or quasi-miracles which are offered in support of what is unchristian, immoral, absurd, or frivolous, our duty is plain. They are either feats of natural

magic, jugglery, and legerdemain ; or they are the works of evil spirits. In either case they are mediately or immediately works of the devil. As such, whether offered to our consideration by Jesuits, conjurors, clairvoyants, mediums, circles, wizards, fortune-tellers, or other sorcerers, our duty with regard to them is very clear and simple. It is incumbent on us to give ourselves the least possible trouble about them, except to abjure and denounce them, and to try to persuade others to do the same. We are not necessarily called upon to investigate the truth or falsity of the wonders alleged to have been wrought. And it is seldom that they are worth this degree of attention. Whether the "sign or wonder come to pass (or not) whereof they speak unto us, saying, Let us go after other gods," our duty is the same, to shun and denounce them as antichrist; to renounce the devil and all his works.

We think a false issue is often before the minds of people on this subject, which arises from ignoring or rejecting the scriptural doctrines in regard to Satanic counterfeits of miracles. Many apparently suppose that if these performances cannot be explained by natural laws and tricks of jugglery; if they clearly imply any preternatural agency, then there is no alternative but to regard them as wrought of God, and entitled to becoming reverence. Hence they deem it important to investigate them rigidly and seriously, and, if they cannot explain the feats by natural laws, they are sadly perplexed. But this is by no means the issue in regard to pretended miracles in behalf of frivolous, wicked, or unchristian doctrines. Whatever in them cannot be referred to man, is to be attributed to the father of lies. The supposed superhuman is at most only diabolic, to be discarded and stigmatized as such. This is most clearly taught in the Bible, and can never safely be lost sight of, in regard to this class of wonders and wonder-workers.

2. It is dangerous and sinful to participate in these pretended miraculous performances, or in any manner to countenance them, by giving them serious and respectful heed. To enact, to assist in enacting these prodigies, to consult these lying oracles, to repair to them for the purpose of acquiring knowledge not accessible by the due use of our rational faculties, or of

divine revelation, is a clear case of rebellion against, or of apostacy from that God, who hath said, "woe to the rebellious children that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin;" who hath put all sorcerers out of his kingdom, and doomed them to the lake of fire, and in every form signified to us, that all who use divinations, all observers of times, enchanters, witches, charmers, consulters with familiar spirits, wizards and necromancers, are an abomination to him. Deut. xviii. 10-12.

And in our judgment, there is more danger, as well as sin, than is often supposed, in meddling with these things from mere curiosity. Deceit, as the Scriptures constantly indicate, is their radical characteristic. This is so great, that if it were possible, it would "seduce the very elect." Now, few can safely volunteer to put themselves under the influence of "all deceivableness of unrighteousness," of those signs and lying wonders, wherewith Satan deceiveth the world, unless in obedience to the call of duty, and guarded by the antecedent and scriptural conviction, that they are impious abominations. The state of mind which prompts such approaches to what God has condemned, to gratify a prurient curiosity, opens all its avenues to the stealthy ingress of delusion and error. Those who forsake the faculties and the revelations which God has given us for our guidance, to heed the processes or utterances of magicians and necromancers, will be quite likely to be left to the guidance of their chosen teachers. Those who give up the guidance of reason and revelation, to familiarize themselves with antics, in which all the laws of nature, God, and reason are defied, will be likely to be forsaken of their reason and their God. If they are not left to lunacy, they are likely to be "given over to a strong delusion that they should believe a lie," because they received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. That those who take this course, put themselves out of the way of the divine guidance and blessing, appears not only from Scripture, but from all experience. It is notorious that lunatics by scores, and we believe hundreds, have already gone forth from the spirit-circles of our land, to insane hospitals. It is notorious that multitudes who began by amusing themselves with clairvoyant

sports, have ended in this pneumatophobia, which disowns the word of God, and looks to the thumpings of wizards and jugglers for guidance in regard to the future state. These persons are of all ranks and professions, from the drudge and the scavenger, to the judge, the senator, the scientific savant, and the professed minister of Christ. He who begins to tamper with these impostures, knows not how soon he may become their votary and victim. No degree of worldly knowledge is any security against such a catastrophe. The only maxim of duty and safety regarding these things, for ourselves, and to be impressed upon others, is, "touch not, taste not, handle not:" "have no communion with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Eph. v. 11.

3. It is characteristic of this kind of conjuration and miracles, the operators of which are often not only deceivers, but deceived, that they wax and flourish in proportion to the attention and consideration they command. They wane and die out, if they pass neglected as being what, *by its very pretensions, on its face, and prior to all examination*, all good men are bound to abhor and let alone. *Spreta vilescent*. It is with reluctance that we have given them the degree of attention requisite for setting forth, what we are sure so many have overlooked, some of the grounds on which they are entitled only to neglect and detestation. This whole thing is only a small and clumsy attempt, at what in former times was called witchcraft. A witch has been defined, by a believer in witchcraft, to be a person "that having the free use of reason, doth knowingly and willingly seek or obtain of the devil, or any other god, (we would add, or extra-mundane spirit), besides the true God Jehovah, an *ability* to do or know strange things, or things which he cannot by his own human abilities arrive unto. This person is a witch."\*

The whole history of demonology and witchcraft shows that it has increased when made prominent by persecution and punishment, or otherwise, and that it has disappeared in proportion as it has been neglected and disregarded. Mather tells us, that the more witches in his day were punished and executed

\* Mather's *Magnalia*, Vol. ii. p. 479.

by the civil sword, the more they increased, until "at last it was evidently seen that there must be a stop put, or the generation of the children of God would fall under that condemnation." As soon as the prosecutions stopped, the witchcraft stopped. This is the voice of history with regard to witchcraft and conjuration in all ages. We believe, that all notice taken of these "mediums," familiar spirits, and necromancers, such as implies anxiety to explain their movements, and to find the secret of them; and especially, all attempts to give them the dignity of originating in and bringing to light a new power of nature, "odylic" or otherwise, increase rather than abate the nuisance. These things thrive on notoriety and attention, certainly in all cases of attempts which fail to detect and expose the trick, and have been so made as to imply that anything depends on success. Many who have undertaken to detect the imposture, have become its dupes. But let them be utterly abjured on this plain ground, that if mere tricks of man, they are detestable; and if too much for man, they are from Satan, and so are still more detestable. They will not long survive this treatment. The trade will soon come to an end. Those who thus contribute to abate the evil, by denouncing and shunning these pretenders and their works as conjurations of men or devils, will, we think, experience the comfort, *quoad hoc*, of a good conscience, sustained by the Bible and the God of the Bible. No wonders can compare with those that establish its divinity. Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be accursed. Gal. i. 8.

In conclusion, it has occurred to us, that it might not be amiss to cite an extract or two from thaumaturgic history, by way of showing, that what now passes under the name of spiritualism, is closely akin to what mankind have called witchcraft. Henry More, in his *Antidote against Atheism*, tries to confute the materialists, by proving with other things, the agency of evil spirits in witchcraft and various prodigies. He says, he has been informed by eyewitnesses, of "bricks being carried round about a room without any visible hand; multitudes of stones flung down at a certain time of the day from the roof of a house, for many months together, to the amazement of the whole country; pots carried off from the fire and set on again,

nobody meddling with them; the violent flapping of a chest-cover, nobody touching it," etc., etc. *Philosophical Writings*. Page 93.

Cotton Mather gives the following proofs of demoniac agency, in a certain house in his day. "Bricks, and sticks, and stones were often by some invisible hand thrown at the house, and so were many pieces of wood; a cat was thrown at the woman of the house, and a long staff danced up and down in the chimney; and afterwards, the same long staff was hanged by a line and jumped to and fro; and when two persons laid it on the fire to burn it, it was as much as they were able to do, with their joint strength, to hold it there. An iron crook was violently by an invisible hand hurled about; and a chair flew about the room, until at last it lit on the table, where the meat stood ready to be eaten, and had spoiled all, if the people had not with much ado saved a little." *Mather's Magnalia*. Vol. ii. Page 450.

The visit of the Commissioners of the Long Parliament to Woodstock Palace, was disturbed by motions of all objects within the palace, far more unaccountable and unearthly than the foregoing. It came out, after the Restoration, that this was the trick of their own clerk, who was fully acquainted with all parts of the edifice. "Being a bold, active, spirited man, he availed himself of his local knowledge of trap-doors and private passages, so as to favour the tricks which he played off upon his masters by the aid of his fellow domestics. The Commissioners' personal reliance on him, made his task the more easy, and it was all along remarked, that trusty Giles Sharpe saw the most extraordinary sights and visions among the whole party." *Scott's Demonology and Witchcraft*, pages 315, 316; a volume in which much more of this sort may be found. Many of the most prodigious feats of our pseudo-spiritualists have at length found a similar solution. Whether they all can be brought to it or not, we deem of small moment. Our duty is the same in either case. Though his sign or wonder come to pass, we may not hearken to the prophet or dreamer, who would turn us away from the God of our fathers.