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“REDEEMER” AND “REDEMPTION”¹

There is no one of the titles of Christ which is more precious to Christian hearts than “Redeemer.” There are others, it is true, which are more often on the lips of Christians. The acknowledgment of our submission to Christ as our Lord, the recognition of what we owe to Him as our Saviour,—these things, naturally, are most frequently expressed in the names we call Him by. “Redeemer,” however, is a title of more intimate revelation than either “Lord” or “Saviour.” It gives expression not merely to our sense that we have received salvation from Him, but also to our appreciation of what it cost Him to procure this salvation for us. It is the name specifically of the Christ of the cross. Whenever we pronounce it, the cross is placarded before our eyes and our hearts are filled with loving remembrance not only that Christ has given us salvation, but that He paid a mighty price for it.

It is a name, therefore, which is charged with deep emotion, and is to be found particularly in the language of devotion. Christian song is vocal with it. How it appears in Christian song, we may see at once from old William Dunbar’s invocation, “My King, my Lord, and my Redeemer sweet.” Or even from Shakespeare’s description of a lost loved-one as “The precious image of our dear Redeemer.” Or from Christina Rossetti’s,

“Up Thy Hill of Sorrows
Thou all alone,
Jesus, man’s Redeemer,
Climbing to a Throne.”

¹ Opening Address, delivered in Miller Chapel, Princeton Theological Seminary, September 17, 1915. Some references and explanatory notes have been added.

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

It need not surprise us that a somewhat widespread attempt is being made to reconstruct what is termed a "non-miraculous Christianity." We have witnessed the attempt to hold fast to a "Christless Christianity," and even to an atheistic Christianity which knows nothing of God, but adheres to the "spirit of Jesus." A "non-miraculous Christianity," therefore, might seem to be a mild type of the general tendency toward some form of a reduced Christianity.

But so soon as we speak of a reduced Christianity, we are brought at once to the necessity of a reconstructed Christianity and a critical manipulation of the sources. And this in turn is soon seen to depend upon an underlying philosophy or view of God and His relation to the world. In other words we cannot avoid coming to the task of historical criticism with certain presuppositions, and it is very necessary that this be made clear.

When we speak of a miracle, there are three questions which at once emerge. What is a miracle? Is a miracle possible? What is the nature and value of the evidence for miracles, especially the New Testament miracles. In general it may be said that the recent literature on the subject in England by Sanday, Davies, J. M. Thompson, Headlam, Lock, Holland, and others, is concerned for the most part with a discussion of the question of the evidence for the New Testament miracles. Mr. J. M. Thompson's book, *Miracles in the New Testament* (1911), in which he reached a negative conclusion, has been fully answered by E. O. Davies, *The Miracles of Jesus, A Study of the Evidence* (1913), which is a constructive treatment of the subject rather than a mere reply to Thompson. Already in 1911 some papers contributed to the *Guardian* by Lock, Sanday, Holland, Headlam, and Williams, were published in a book entitled *Miracles*. These papers deal mostly (except Williams') with the question of the evidence for miracles, and all but Sanday's are replies to Thompson.

In Germany, on the other hand, it may be said, generally speaking, that it is the question of the idea of a miracle and the possibility of miracles which has been uppermost in the recent literature on the subject by Beth, Hunzinger, Wendland, and Stange, whose views we shall have occasion to examine.

It might seem to be most interesting, timely, and practical, perhaps, to proceed at once to the examination of the evidence for the Biblical miracles. But this would be a wrong method of procedure. It is impossible to discuss intelligently the question of the possibility of miracles without first obtaining a clear idea of what a miracle is. And the question of the possibility of miracles, in turn, has played a determining rôle alike in influencing the discussion of the evidence for miracles as well as even the question of what a miracle is, so that it is necessary first of all to be clear upon the subject of the nature of a miracle and its possibility.

This can be made clear at once by examples. We need not concern ourselves with those who honestly and baldly assert that miracles are impossible, and so that they cannot have happened, and no amount of evidence could prove that a miracle had taken place.¹ It is more common for students of the evidence to claim that they admit the possibility of miracles and are objectively investigating evidence. But we often find that the *a priori* assumption of the impossibility of miracle in the strict sense, determines either their estimate of the evidence or their idea of what they will call a miracle. This can be illustrated from the case of Mr. Thompson and Dr. Sanday. To put the matter in a word—Mr. Thompson believes that a miracle happens through a breach of natural law and concludes that there is no evidence for miracle; whereas Dr. Sanday thinks the evidence for miracles in the New Testament is valid, but lowers Mr. Thompson's definition of miracle. There is no valid evi-

¹ Dr. B. B. Warfield has quoted a long passage from Wm. MacIntosh to this effect, *cf.* B. B. Warfield, Editorial Notes on Miracle, *Bible Student*, 1903, vol. vii pp. 124, 125.

dence, Dr. Sanday would say, for miracles in Mr. Thompson's sense of the term *i.e.* for events which happen without natural causes, but for exorcisms and faith cures *i.e.*, for events which can be naturally explained there is evidence. Of course Mr. Thompson would not deny this at all. The only difference between them is as to the idea of a miracle, both are sure of the impossibility of events which cannot be explained by purely natural and immanent causes.

Lest it be thought that we do either Mr. Thompson or Dr. Sanday an injustice, let us look at their views more closely. Mr. Thompson² starts with a definition of a miracle which regards it as an event which cannot have been brought about by any natural law or second cause or human means, as an interruption or breach of the course of nature; and then he finds that the evidence for such events in the New Testament is inadequate. The point of his argument lies in the fact that he distinguishes two classes of wonderful events. One class includes healing of disease, exorcism of demons etc. For these there is adequate evidence, but Mr. Thompson would not regard them as miracles. The other class such as raising the dead, the feeding of the five thousand; in short all events which involve a "breach in natural law" are really miracles if they happened, but they did not happen. The evidence here is inadequate, according to Mr. Thompson. It is the result of superstition or credulity or the excited state of mind of the early church.

But is it not true, as Dr. Headlam³ suggests, that if Mr. Thompson thought that he could discover a natural law which would explain all miracles naturally, he would have judged the evidence differently? Thus Dr. Headlam pointedly remarks that the "credulous crowd" in Palestine who believed that our Lord cured a man sick of the palsy, and the ordinary believing Christian also, are supposed to be right, and the critic of some fifty years ago is supposed to be

² J. M. Thompson, *Miracles in the New Testament*, 1911, p. 1.

³ A. C. Headlam, "Christian Miracles", printed in *Miracles*, 1911, p. 44.

wrong, because Mr. Thompson thinks this incident can be naturally explained as a faith cure. But as for a real miracle, why we can get no adequate evidence that real miracles ever happened.

But there must be some *a priori* judgment back of such an opinion. It would not be a difficult task—Mr. Davies and most of the writers mentioned have performed it easily and adequately—to show that the evidence for the class of events which Mr. Thompson calls miracles is just as good on all principles of objective criticism, as is that for those events which Mr. Thompson thinks he can explain as faith cures. But as we are only trying to illustrate one point *viz.*, that the idea of the impossibility of a miracle determines Mr. Thompson's dealing with the evidence, we must confine ourselves to one case. In the Gospel of Mark, and hence in one of the primitive sources which are supposed to underlie our Gospels, are found the healing of the man sick with the palsy and the feeding of the five thousand. The former is true and the latter is not, according to Mr. Thompson. He would claim that it is a question of evidence and that his decision is based upon evidence. But the evidence for the miraculous feeding is just as good as that for the healing of the man sick with the palsy. It is in Mark's Gospel and must have been in the sources of Mark. It appears to be as well attested as any of our Lord's miracles. Mr. Thompson sets aside both the rationalistic and the mythological explanations of the event, and seeks one which shall be "psychologically appropriate." He suggests two possible explanations.⁴ The miraculous element of the event—whatever it may really have been—is either merely symbolic of the idea that Jesus satisfies the needs of all, or else it was a case of "assimilation" to Old Testament stories suggested by the institution of the Eucharist in the early church. There was an original incident, the meaning of which we do not know. This impressed itself on the memory of the Apostles and was assimilated to the Old Testament stories

⁴ J. M. Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

in 1st and 2nd Kings, and came to be regarded as a miracle at a comparatively late date. Then the account of it would be early assimilated to the experience of Christian worship where Jesus satisfies the needs of all. But all that Mr. Thompson can say in support of this improbable hypothesis is that "assimilation has probably taken place," or "it seems likely" that it has taken place, or "this incident may have been transformed. . . . Then the account of it would be assimilated."⁵ Of course if the account of the event has been transformed to make it like certain other narrated events, then it has been "assimilated." But this is no proof at all that such a process has taken place. In fact Mr. Thompson offers no proof. It is a bare assumption without any evidence. So far as the evidence goes, here is a miracle in the strictest sense.

Even if we were to adopt Mr. Thompson's view of the sources of Mark as being a Petrine tradition (P), the Logia (Q), and editorial additions by Mark (M), there is and can be no proof that this belongs to M, or, if it did, that Mark assimilated it to the Old Testament. Indeed Johannes Weiss,⁶ who cannot believe in the miracle any more than Thompson can, and who like him thinks that something happened which became heightened into a miracle and that the narratives in 1st and 2nd Kings may have played a part in this process, nevertheless asserts that the whole narrative must go back to the earliest Galilean tradition. The whole description is so vivid and detailed that it points to the memory of an eyewitness. That all were filled, Weiss says, is of course inconceivable, and yet the narrator, he says, feels no need to explain how this was because it is for him a matter of course that Jesus could do such things. Weiss, therefore, must simply postulate back of his earliest source this heightening of the event to a miracle. This is a purely subjective procedure, but shows the impossibility

⁵ On the arbitrary way in which Mr. Thompson deals with this miracle (cf. Davies, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 1913, p. 54.

⁶ Johannes Weiss, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*², I, pp. 129, 130.

of Mr. Thompson's pretense that it may be due to the editorial work of his source M.

It is instructive in this connection, further, to see how J. Weiss emphasizes the fact that the miracles *i.e.*, miracles in the strict sense, or the miraculous element in the events in regard to which both he and Thompson believe that something happened,—how this miraculous element goes back to the earliest sources. We cannot trace the heightening of these narratives as Mr. Thompson would try to do. Weiss tells us that “the tradition, with which we have to do, is indeed—that is the difficulty—anything else but a dry historical account of ordinary, every day events. It is, even in its very oldest parts, already saturated with the miraculous: from the Baptism of Jesus up to the empty grave (Mark), not to mention, from the miraculous birth to the bursting of the seal (Matthew), is the natural course of events inseparably joined with a series of miracles. And we stand yet today, as in the days of supernaturalism and rationalism, facing the question: how are these two elements related to one another? It is the question of questions: is the supernatural only a loose stratum lying on top, which can be easily removed, or is it the original bed-rock? In other words: have we here, not, it is true, an everyday history, but one dealing with a hero, gradually bedecked by legend with miraculous appendages, and elevated into the sphere of the Divine? Or do we have to do from the very outset with a history of gods, which, simply in order to render it persuasive and credible, has been given the necessary place in space and time, and endowed with a historical form?”⁷ This simply means that if we cannot accept the supernatural Jesus of our only sources, we must have recourse to the Jesus of the liberal school or to the Jesus of the radicals. In either case, the point to be pressed here is the impossibility of getting a non-miraculous Christianity from our sources.

But to return to the feeding of the five thousand and Mr.

⁷ J. Weiss, *Jesus von Nazareth, Mythos oder Geschichte*, 1910, p. 114.

Thompson's explanation of it, we can now see that it is in our source and is there represented as a miracle. Hence Mr. Thompson's explanation of it is pre-determined by the idea that a miracle is impossible. Indeed he baldly declares that the events in the New Testament either are in accordance with natural law, in which case they are not miracles; or else they are not in accordance with natural law, in which case they cannot have happened, for nothing can happen except in accordance with natural law. This is the essence of his position in a nut-shell, *i.e.*, miracles cannot happen; they are impossible. Hence whenever such events are recorded, there must be found some way of explaining the miracle away. Dr. Headlam is fully justified when he says ⁸ that "all his (Mr. Thompson's) talk of criticism and evidence has little or nothing to do with the question. They are only the clothes in which he wraps up his real argument. We come back to the old story—miracles cannot happen; if they happen, they are not miracles."

Dr. Sanday, on the other hand, we saw, is quite as much opposed to what he calls miracles "*contra naturam*", *i.e.*, real miracles. But he thinks that a miracle need not be defined in this way. A miracle, then, for Dr. Sanday is only such an event as can be explained in some natural way by second causes. His statement, therefore, that the evidence for miracles in the New Testament is "stringent" can refer, only to such events as he thinks can be explained as cases of faith cure or exorcism. The point of his position is similar to Mr. Thompson's—*i.e.*, in distinguishing two classes of miracles. It follows that Dr. Sanday cannot mean to include all the New Testament miracles when he says that the evidence for miracles is stringent. As a matter of fact Mr. Thompson would admit the evidence for such events as Dr. Sanday calls miracles, and Dr. Sanday is obliged to modify his statement about the evidence being valid in regard to all such events as cannot be explained by natural causes. In fact he does

⁸ A. C. Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

so very explicitly in his latest word on the subject—his pamphlet entitled *Bishop Gore's Challenge to Criticism*, 1914.⁹ Such events are miracles like the Virgin Birth, the bodily Resurrection of Christ, and the "nature miracles." In regard to "nature miracles" Dr. Sanday expressly says:¹⁰ "In regard to 'nature miracles' I think that of the two hypotheses—that they were performed by our Lord exactly as they are described, and that they came to be attributed to Him in this form by the imagination of the early Church—the latter is more probable. I believe that, in most of these cases *something* happened which gave rise to the story, but that the most difficult element in it was probably due to an extension of the original fact, rather than itself original." In other words the evidence is only that some

⁹ W. Sanday, *Bishop Gore's Challenge to Criticism*, A Reply to the Bishop of Oxford's Open Letter on the Basis of Anglican Fellowship. The other works of Sanday to be noted in this connection are his article "Jesus Christ" in *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. II, reprinted as *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, 1905; *The Life of Christ in Recent Research*, 1907; "Miracles and the Supernatural Character of the Gospels", a paper read at the Church Conference at Northampton, 1902, printed in the *Expository Times*, 1902-03, vol. XIV, pp. 62 ff.; "The Meaning of Miracle" in the volume *Miracles*, 1911, pp. 1 ff.; the paper on "Miracles" at the Church Congress at Middlesbrough, 1912. With all these should be compared his *Christologies Ancient and Modern*, 1910, where his philosophical views are developed in relation to his conception of the Person of Christ. Here he asserts his belief in the Incarnation and Deity of our Lord, but explains it from his view of the subconscious. It is in the sphere of the subconscious that the Divine life flows into every man. This Divine life flowed more fully into the man Jesus. The Divine in Jesus is, therefore, simply this inflow of God into His subconscious life. This Christology I cannot but regard as humanitarian, since according to Sanday Jesus seems to have been a human Person indwelt thus by God, and all men have this Divine indwelling. This half pantheizing metaphysics leaves no room for any real supernaturalism, in spite of the statements which Sanday makes in this volume, and also in *Bishop Gore's Challenge*, etc., p. 69, and in many other places. For a full exposition of Dr. Sanday's development toward Naturalism—if indeed any development can be spoken of—and for a criticism of his position on the subject of Miracles cf. B. B. Warfield, "Kikuyu, Clerical Veracity, and Miracles," *THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW*, October, 1914, pp. 529-585, especially pp. 566 ff.

¹⁰ Sanday, *Bishop Gore's Challenge*, p. 19.

natural event happened which was heightened into a miracle by the imagination of the early Church. But we have no evidence of any such natural event, and no evidence of its exaggeration. Our earliest sources, as Johannes Weiss says, are "saturated" with the miraculous. This process of exaggeration is a pure assumption.

This arbitrary method of dealing with evidence is fully illustrated by Dr. Sanday's treatment of the Virgin Birth. Dr. Sanday asserts his belief in the "supernatural birth of Christ."¹¹ But he cannot think that it was "unnatural." "This is just a case", he says, "where I think the Gospels use symbolical language." He can endorse the "substantial" meaning of Luke i. 35. This, he thinks, means "substantially" that our Lord's birth was "sanctified in every physical respect in the most perfect manner conceivable." It means that "the Holy Babe was Divine".¹² But what, then, of the evidence? Does not Dr. Sanday's idea of a miracle as not being "*contra naturam*" and of the impossibility of "*contra naturam*" events determine his dealing with the evidence? He puts a high estimate on the infancy narratives in Luke.¹³ He traces the material recorded ultimately to Mary.¹⁴ But, as Dr. B. B. Warfield has pointed out,¹⁵ the thing which Mary could and does testify to—"I know not a man" Luke i. 34, is that the birth was "unnatural" or "*contra naturam*", while the only thing which Dr. Sanday will admit is something which Mary could not testify to *viz.*, that the Holy Spirit sanctified this child. This is not dealing objectively with evidence; it is an attempt to make the evidence prove Dr. Sanday's own view of what the Virgin Birth means "substantially".

The same method of dealing with the evidence from the point of view of a naturalistic theory is seen in Dr. Sanday's treatment of Christ's Resurrection. "The central meaning

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

¹³ Art. in *H. D. B.*, ii. pp. 643 ff.

¹⁴ "The Meaning of Miracle", in *Miracles*, ed. by Holland, p. 16.

¹⁵ B. B. Warfield, *PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW*, Oct., 1914, p. 578.

of the Resurrection," he says, "is just that expressed in the vision of the Apocalypse, 'I am the first and the last and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore'"¹⁶ Rev. i 18, *i.e.*, the Risen Lord lives and governs His Church. But can Dr. Sanday pretend that the evidence for the empty tomb is less valid and stringent than that for the appearances of the Risen Lord? The empty tomb is in all the Gospels and in two of the sources supposed to underlie them—Mark and "L", a source supposed by many to underlie Luke's account of the passion and resurrection of Christ. Moreover Paul's view of the Resurrection in 1 Cor. xv. evidently supposes a bodily resurrection of Christ. If Paul's belief is to be explained from visions or pagan myths, the resort to such explanations is because a bodily resurrection (the only sense in which we can speak of a resurrection at all) is a miracle "*contra naturam*" and this is regarded as an impossibility. And do not the naturalistic critics of the Resurrection narratives admit all that Dr. Sanday will?

Dr. Sanday goes on to distinguish explicitly between miracles "*supra-naturam*" and "*contra-naturam*",¹⁷ that is between events which may be explained by natural laws and those which "involve some definite reversal of the natural physical order." These latter he cannot believe occurred. For though he says he will not limit God's power, he is nevertheless sure that God's "providence" never "breaks the proper sequence of cause and effect." This latter class of miracles, he says, constitutes a "tiny group". In regard to the evidence for it he tells us that it is the evidence of men whose minds were steeped in the Old Testament, and this fact, he supposes, renders it invalid for the facts as described in the sources. Thus as to the feeding of the five thousand in Mark, Dr. Sanday has no doubt that the story represents a "real event" with "exaggerations in detail". This whole group of miracles

¹⁶ Sanday, *Bishop Gore's Challenge*, etc., p. 20.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

thus become a "fixed type" which arose from the influence of the Old Testament. The "*contra-naturam*" element is only a small part of these events, and "our modern standpoint" shows that it is an unimportant part which in ancient times seemed to be an important addition.¹⁸

This, of course, is dealing with the sources from an *a priori* point of view. So far as the sources go, our Lord not only was conscious of working miracles, but they constituted a part of His Messianic work and occupy an essential place in His Messianic consciousness. And not only is this the truth of the matter, but also miracles which Dr. Sanday calls "*contra-naturam*" are among them, Matt. xi. 5, Lk. vii. 22.¹⁹ Hence when he insists that such miracles did not happen, it is really because he believes that they could not have happened because God never acts in this way.²⁰ Dr. Sanday allows his naturalistic philosophy to influence and distort his dealing with the evidence. He allows it also to determine his idea of a miracle as something which God works by the use of natural means and after the analogy of the relation of the human will to Nature.²¹ Hence his position does not differ essentially from that of Mr. Thompson, who defines a miracle as an event which cannot have been brought to pass by any natural agency, and who then judges the evidence for such events as inadequate. In both cases the same naturalism and the same idea of the impossibility of miracle in the sense in which Mr. Thompson defines it, determines the treatment of the evidence.

This will illustrate what was above stated—*viz.*, that the question of the possibility of miracle should be dealt with before the question of the evidence is taken up. This being

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹⁹ Cf. for example what Dr. Warfield says (*op. cit.*, p. 581) in regard to Jesus' Temptation which Dr. Sanday regards as well attested. "The point now to be pressed is that this stringent witness of our Lord's own to His miracle-working concerns particularly nature miracles, miracles "*contra-naturam*."

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

²¹ "The Meaning of Miracle", in *Miracles*, p. 7 ff.

so, the question of the idea of a miracle should be the first question to be treated, because one cannot discuss the question of the possibility of miracle without a clear idea of what he means by the term, and also because in cases like that of Dr. Sanday the very idea of what a miracle is is determined *a priori* by his view of the impossibility of events which cannot be explained by natural laws.

When we come to the question what a miracle is we find at once that the usage of the term is varied and somewhat arbitrary. Thus, to mention an older theologian, Rothe²² recognizes what he calls "maximum" miracles and miracles of providence. The first class take place without any cooperation of second causes, and the second class includes exceptional events which occur through God's coöperation with and control of second causes, that is—they are simply cases of special providence. Or, to take a modern theologian, Haering,²³ while he criticises the idea of a miracle as an event due to higher, unknown laws of Nature, and also the idea that it is an event due to the "grouping" or "manipulation" of natural forces by God, so that by implication, at least, he would seem to take a higher view of the nature of a miracle, nevertheless is far from clear upon the point of the relation of the miracle to nature. R. Schmid²⁴ so emphasizes what he calls "the religious aspect" of a miracle as an event manifesting God's power, that he says that every event may be miraculous from this point of view. Though he recognizes miracles in what he calls the "narrow sense" and calls them "events which diverge from ordinary occurrences",²⁵ nevertheless he says in regard to these events²⁶ that we cannot say whether God works in them directly or through second causes as yet unknown; whether these intervening causes are forces which come into existence for the first time when the

²² Rothe, *Zur Dogmatik*.

²³ Haering, *Der Christliche Glaube*, 1906, pp. 351-361.

²⁴ R. Schmid, *The Scientific Creed of a Theologian*.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 193, E. T.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 197.

miracle occurs, or whether they are forces which were all along present in the phenomenal series of causes and are now unloosed for the first time. These views of themselves are sufficient to show us the necessity for seeking a clear definition of a miracle, while this need is only made clearer by the fact that a majority of the most recent works on the subject with which we shall presently have to deal, consider as miracles providential events, answers to prayer, as well as the miracles of the Gospel history (*heilsgeschichtliche Wunder*).

Before attempting to give any outline and criticism of the various views on the subject, just a word must be said concerning the way in which we ought to proceed in seeking a clear statement of what a miracle is. The New Testament terms furnish us with important general marks or characteristics of miracles. They are *δυνάμεις* or works produced by God's mighty power; but this does not tell us how God produces them or what is their relation to natural law. This term, however, does stamp them as works which manifest the power of God with especial clearness. They are called *τέρατα*, that is wonderful events, describing them from their striking subjective effect in producing wonder in the beholder. They are sometimes called *ἔργα* or simply works. Finally they are called *σημεῖα* or signs, not only in the sense of accrediting a divine message or messenger, but because they set forth in striking manner the power of God over all the effects of sin. It would be interesting to follow out these marks of a miracle implied in the New Testament terms for them. Nevertheless it is impossible to get an adequate definition of a miracle in this way. These terms are either too general or else express the function of the miracle rather than its nature. In order to reach an idea of what a miracle is, it is necessary to take some typical cases of miracles from the "highest class," so to speak, for only concerning these events can there be any real distinction from providential events. And then we must ask what is the relation of such events—as for example,

the making of water into wine or the Resurrection of our Lord—to Nature or natural law and to the power of God in its mode of operation.

It will make the matter clearer if we state the general types of what we consider to be inadequate conceptions of a miracle. Dr. C. M. Mead²⁷ has cautioned against what he terms “overstatements” and “understatements” in regard to the idea of a miracle. The views on this subject, then, may be distributed broadly under two main classes. First the view that a miracle is a “violation of natural law.” This overstates or emphasizes in a wrong sense the contra-natural character of the miracle. A second class will embrace all those views which are understatements or which underestimate the supernatural character of the miracle. Without at present entering into details, and speaking only broadly, we shall find three main subdivisions or classes of views as to the nature of a miracle. There is first the view which regards nature as a closed system of mechanical laws which cannot be interrupted and which suffers no intrusion of any higher causality. This reduces a miracle to the experience of the power or presence of God which any event happens to produce upon the mind. The miraculous element in any event is here reduced to something merely subjective. There is secondly the view which regards a miracle as a merely providential event brought about by the special control or combination of different series of phenomena by the power of God and the control which He exercises over the whole course of providence, or else by unknown laws of nature. Then there is a third class of views which would find a place for miracle in nature by breaking down our idea of nature through an extreme empiricism which leads logically to scepticism; or by an idealistic criticism of our idea of nature and of the causal judgment which results practically like the second view in reducing miracle to providence, since there is thus a miraculous element in all providence and thus the distinction be-

²⁷ C. M. Mead, *Supernatural Revelation*, pp. 87 ff.

tween the natural and the supernatural, and between providence and miracle is really obliterated.

First, then, there is the view that a miracle is a "violation" or "transgression" of natural law or a violation of some force of nature. It is supposed by this view that nature is a fixed mechanical system of causes and effects, and that a law of nature is an objective force of some kind which drives events in a certain direction. In the case of a miracle, therefore, the Divine power "violates" or "destroys" the operation of this force of nature, so that a second miracle would be required in every case in order to restore again this force or law and to re-establish the course of nature. Hume seems to have defined a miracle in this way and was criticized for it by Huxley, though Hume's argument against miracles did not depend upon this idea of their nature.²⁸ Park²⁹ uses the term "violation of natural law" in his article on "Miracles" in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, but so describes them as to indicate that he did not mean this in the strict sense. Weisse³⁰ argues against miracles on this ground and seeks a merely subjective view of miracle. This view of the nature of miracle, according to Köstlin,³¹ goes back to the theology of Scholasticism. It has been asserted that Thomas Aquinas is the chief representative of this idea of a miracle, but this opinion is incorrect.³² What Thomas wishes chiefly to do is to emphasize the supernatural character of the miracle, that is, to show that it takes place apart from all natural causes and wholly without their coöperation. He asserts, therefore, strongly that a miracle is "beyond" (*praeter*) the order of all created nature.³³ He repeatedly asserts

²⁸ Hume, "Essay on Miracles", *Works*, vol. IV, p. 133. Huxley's *Hume*, pp. 127-137 especially 129.

²⁹ Park, Art. "Miracles", *Smith Bible Dict.*

³⁰ Weisse, *Phil. Dogmatik*, I, 96, 100.

³¹ Köstlin, Art. "Wunder", *P. R. E.*,² Bd. XVII, p. 362.

³² Lütze, *Ueber das Wunder*, p. 7, traces this idea to Thomas Aquinas, but E. Müller, "Natur und Wunder", *Strassburger Theologische Studien*, 1892, I, pp. 131 ff., has pointed out that Lütze is mistaken in this matter.

³³ Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, Part I, Q. 110, Art. 4. "Miraculum est

that miracles are *praeter naturam* in the chapters dealing with them in his work in defense of the Catholic Faith against Gentiles. And he also shows that God can act in two ways—through second causes and apart from second causes.³⁴ The same truth concerning the miracle is brought out where he distinguishes three grades of miracles, for the supernatural character of the miracle is brought out in each case.³⁵ The highest grade, he says, is where an effect is produced by God which nature never could produce. The second grade is where God produces an effect which nature or second causes can sometimes produce, but not in the specific causal series in which it now occurs. For example, it is an effect of natural causes that a man lives, walks, and sees, but that he should do this after death is a miracle wrought by God alone. The third grade is where God does without the aid of natural laws that which nature may do, that is, certain cures. Now in every one of these instances, Thomas' point is that God acts alone and apart from second causes in working a miracle. But Thomas does not believe that a miracle is a "violation" of a natural law. Where he asserts that it is "*contra naturam*" he means that it is contrary to our experience of the course of nature, as he explicitly states in the passage quoted in footnote 34. And he also affirms that when God produces any effect "contrary to the course of nature", the order of the whole universe is not destroyed, but only the relations of certain

praeter ordinem totius naturae creatae." He concludes from this that only God can work miracles in this sense of the term. Cf. also *De Veritate Cath. Fid. cont. Gent*, Lib. III, c. 101 "Haec autem quae praeter ordinem communiter in rebus statutum quandoque divinitus fiunt miracula dici solent."

³⁴ *De Potentia*, Q. 6, Art. 1. § 21. "Respondeo dicendum, quod absque omni dubio Deus in rebus creatis potest operari praeter causas creatas, sicut et ipse operatur in omnibus causis creatis, ut alibi ostensum est; et operando praeter causas creatas potest operari eosdem effectus quos eisdem mediantibus operatur, et eodem ordine; vel etiam alios, et alio ordine; et sic potest aliquid facere contra communem et solitam cursum naturae."

³⁵ *Summa Cath. Fid. cont. Gent*, Lib. 3 c. 101.

events are changed.³⁶ Moreover Thomas frequently defends the idea that created causes have their own inviolable effects, and the contrary opinion he regards as "absurd."³⁷ And where he speaks of God working beyond (*praeter*) the forces of nature, he says that it is not contrary to nature.³⁸ It is a mistake, therefore, to attribute this "overstatement" of the nature of a miracle to Thomas.

E. Müller, in the article mentioned, attributes this idea to the old Lutheran theologians Buddeus and Quenstedt. Müller says that they considered a miracle to suspend the whole order of the universe to such an extent that in each case a new miracle is required to restore it. It is true that both these theologians do define a miracle as contrary to nature in a somewhat extreme sense. But the context in each case will show that while their definitions are not satisfactory they do not state the matter quite as Müller supposes.³⁹

What we are chiefly concerned to affirm is that this is an "overstatement" of the idea of a miracle. A miracle is performed by the power of God acting apart from natural law. It is the introduction of a new force into nature, and hence "violates" no natural law nor destroys any of nature's forces, if we may speak of 'forces' in nature. If a new force is followed by a new effect no law of nature is violated or even suspended. The new effect being due to a new cause, nature is transcended altogether, but is not violated at all. The customary effects of nature's forces, or of some one of them, may be counteracted, but this is something quite different from saying that it has been destroyed or violated. Accordingly the miracle is supernatural rather than contra-natural. The effect, that is, the

³⁶ *De. Pot.* Q. 6. Art. 1. "Quando Deus agit aliquid contra cursum naturae, non tollitur totus ordo universi, sed cursus qui est unius rei ad aliam."

³⁷ *Distinct*, II, 1, Q. 1, Art. 4.

³⁸ *De Ver. Cath. Fid. cont. G.*, Lib. III, ch. 99.

³⁹ Buddeus, *Inst. Theol. Dogm.*, I, 224 note. "Per miracula ordo naturae" tollitur. Quenstedt, *Syst. Theol.* I. 671. A miracle is said to be "contra vim rebus naturalibus a Deo inditam".

miracle, is an effect in nature, but it is an effect which none of nature's forces could have produced. It is an effect, therefore, which is introduced into the phenomenal series by a transcendent power, and which is in no sense the product of the phenomenal series of second causes, and yet, since the effect is produced entirely independently of nature, no natural law or force is violated.⁴⁰

Coming then to views which are understatements or inadequate concerning the supernatural character of the miracle, we meet with the several main types of theory which were outlined above.

The first of these is that which regards nature as a fixed mechanical system of causes and effects which cannot be broken into or interrupted, and the miracle or the miraculous element in any event is transferred to the subjective sphere and said to be our experience of the presence and power of God which any event in the external world arouses in us. This view of miracle is asserted by those who hold diverging views of nature and of the relation of God to

⁴⁰ J. S. Mill, *Logic*, Bk. III, ch. 25, rightly says that a miracle is a "new effect supposed to be produced by a new cause". Hence it violates no law of Nature. Many criticisms of the idea that a miracle violates natural law have been made. Thus Rothe (*Zur Dogmatik*, p. 88) replied to Weisse that miracles are not violations of natural laws because the efficient cause of the miracle is entirely independent of Nature and acts apart from it. In the miracle we have a new and higher cause producing a new effect in Nature. So also W. M. Taylor, "*Gospel of Miracle*", p. 11, objects to the term "violation" for the same reason as Rothe does. See also J. H. Newman, *Two Essays on Miracles*, ed. 2nd, p. 4; Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural*, p. 338; C. M. Mead, *Supernatural Revelation*, pp. 97, 98; B. B. Warfield, *Bible Student*, VII, 1903, 121, 122; Carl Stange, *Naturgesetz und Wunderglaube*, 1914, *vid.* the opening sections, and *vid.* also Stange's article, "Natural Law and Belief in Miracle", *The Constructive Quarterly*, March, 1915, pp. 137-158. Stange gives a long and elaborate criticism of the idea that a miracle is a violation of a law of Nature. Stange's criticism of this view, however, rests upon the idea that it is only possible to define a miracle in this way if we adopt an outworn conception of Nature *viz.* the mechanical one, and that from the standpoint of the idealist we get a new view of Nature, consequently a more adequate idea of the miracle. Consideration of this, therefore, must be postponed till we come to deal with Stange's position.

nature. It may be held by one who is a deist and who denies God's providential control of the course of nature, and who likewise holds the mechanical view of nature. This regards it as a mechanism due to matter and motion which are supposed to explain all quantitative distinctions of our knowledge, while all qualitative distinctions are traced to sensation rather than thought, and so regarded as purely subjective. This subjective view of the miracle may also be held by the speculative theist who believes in the providence of God, and who rejects the mechanical theory of the universe. We have said that it reduces the miracle to something purely subjective. It is necessary, therefore to distinguish it sharply from other views which also regard a miracle as subjective in one sense or another. Of course we do not include here such a view as that of Dr. A. Kuyper⁴¹ who includes under the idea of miracle such strictly supernatural events in the psychic sphere as Regeneration. Dr. Kuyper from his supernaturalistic point of view recognizes the objective cause of Regeneration in the Holy Spirit and the supernatural mode of operation of the Holy Spirit in regenerating the spiritually dead soul. The views to which we refer differ from this in two respects. They deny the supernatural character of the event which gives the experience, and they regard the miracle, not as a subjective event, but as a subjective impression derived from some external event. Neither do we refer to the view of Lange expressed in his *Life of Christ*.⁴² In dealing with the miracle at Cana of Galilee he supposes that the water in the pots remained water, but through the influence of Jesus on the minds of the guests at the wedding it was made to taste as if it were wine. This is an old view, and the dilemma involved has frequently been exposed. If the influence of Jesus on the minds of those present was truly miraculous, that is apart from all natural psychic causes or influences, then it would have been a truly supernatural event, and there would be no reason for objection to the

⁴¹ A. Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, E. T., pp. 420 ff.

⁴² Lange, *Life of Christ*, E. T., II, p. 137.

miracle as recorded in John's Gospel, that is, no reason for inventing this change from the miracle as recorded. If, however, the alleged psychic effect was wrought by hypnotism or any natural means, then it is no more a miracle than any instance of hypnotic influence.

What we have reference to is rather the tendency to emphasize what is called the religious aspect of the miracle. It is said that it is a remnant of Scholasticism to enquire into the relation of the miracle to the power of God or to the laws of nature. It must be viewed in its relations to the religious consciousness, and must be studied as regards its conditions by means of an analysis of the religious consciousness. Such an analysis will show, it is said, that belief in miracle is an essential element in the Christian consciousness and that the miracle is essential to Christianity. Such a view of miracle, however, reduces it to something purely subjective, and that not simply in the sense of a psychic or subjective event, but in that of a mere subjective impression produced by some event. It further renders it impossible to distinguish a miracle from any providential event, and in its most characteristic forms raises an antinomy between the scientific view of the world and faith in miracle. As illustrating what has just been said Ritschl⁴³ may be taken as one example. He argued in 1861 in an article, and later in his *Instruction in the Christian Religion*, that when the supposed miracle occurs, we do not know what happens objectively, nor is it essential that we should know this. A miracle is an event which makes us immediately conscious of God's presence and power. This, he thinks, is the religious view of a miracle. It is obvious that upon this view any event could turn out to be a miracle, and would become so simply through the subjective impression made upon the person experiencing it or hearing of it from others. This view is the result of Ritschl's well known distinction between religious and theoretic knowl-

⁴³ A. Ritschl. *Jahrbuecher für deutsche Theol.*, Bd. IV, 1861, pp. 429-459. *Unterricht u. s. w.*, § 17.

edge, according to which the former kind of knowledge would not be concerned with the cause of the miracle nor with its relation to nature, since religious knowledge is concerned with the value of the objective event and this consists in the impression of God's presence which it makes. This naturally leads to the self-contradictory idea of "the double truth", an idea which Haering⁴⁴ rejects and subjects to criticism, although he lays stress on the religious value of the miracle.

Probably the best illustration of this way of viewing the miracle is given by Herrmann.⁴⁵ In his address, which was first delivered at Giessen in 1908, entitled *Der Christ und das Wunder*, he emphasizes strongly what he terms the "collision" between what he believes to be the true idea of miracle and that of nature and natural law. He sets forth his view over against the view which seeks to avoid this "collision" by means of an inadequate conception of the inviolability of natural law, and over against the opposite view, which seeks the same result by doing away with the supernatural character of the miracle. He criticises the view of Stange as not doing justice to the modern conception of nature, and that of Schleiermacher as seeking to explain the miracle by purely natural causes. Over against these views Herrmann asserts that he goes further than the "old dogmatics" in emphasizing the idea that the miracle is something "*supra et contra naturam*." He says that he emphasizes more strongly than the old evangelical theology the supernatural character of the miracle, and that this is seen especially in the fact that whereas the old theology sought to give a rational and metaphysical basis for its idea of the miracle, he not only acknowledges but also emphasizes the fact that this idea of the miracle is logically irreconcilable with our idea of nature and of natural law.

It might appear from this that Herrmann believes that we have two conflicting world-views—a scientific and a re-

⁴⁴ Th. Haering, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

⁴⁵ W. Herrmann, *Offenbarung und Wunder*, 1908; for a review of this cf. PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW, VII, 1909, pp. 515 ff.

ligious—each one in conflict with the other, and both equally valid. If this were the situation in which the Christian faith finds itself, it would go hard with that faith. The mind cannot rest in such a contradiction. We cannot be persuaded of the truth of miracles on one set of grounds, and of their irrationality on impossibility upon another set of grounds. This, however, is not Herrmann's view. For it at once becomes evident, upon studying his book, that instead of two conflicting views of the world, what we have is an objective and a subjective view, the scientific view with its assertion of the impossibility of miracle being objective, and the religious view with its assertion of their reality and necessity being subjective. Perhaps it might be a more accurate description of his position to say that from the scientific standpoint any event is viewed from the point of view of its causation, whereas from the religious standpoint the same event is regarded from the point of view of the impression which it makes upon the Christian of the power and care of God. That this really is his view can be seen from Herrmann's criticism of Seeberg. He commends Seeberg for seeking the proof of miracles in Christian experience. He differs from Seeberg in that while the latter seeks in Christian experience a standpoint from which the reality of the New Testament miracles may be established, or at least from which their evidence may be considered, Herrmann, on the contrary, sees a miracle in any event which produces such an experience. This amounts to saying that after all it is the experience which constitutes the said event a miracle. It is difficult to see, then, how his view differs from the purely subjective one which he rejected at the beginning of his essay, and which would explain a miracle by purely natural causes, the miraculous element being reduced to the mere subjective impression which the event makes upon the mind. And this, of course, amounts to saying that there are no miracles in the external world, and really none in the inner or psychic sphere, for surely it is not miraculous that the providence of God im-

presses us with a sense of His power and presence. And if a miracle is only the religious impression made upon us by some providential event, it is very difficult to see how it is *supra et contra naturam*, or why such a conflict between the scientific and religious world-views, as Herrmann maintains, can possibly arise. Here, then, we have no definition of a miracle but a denial of the possibility of miracles. We may conceivably deny them, but we cannot do so by means of a definition of them.

There have been a number of theologians who have endeavored in one way or another to combine this purely subjective view of miracle with some attempt at an objective account of it. Ménégoz seems to have combined this subjective view with the idea that the miracle is simply a case of special providence, or to have librated between the two views.⁴⁶ Also W. A. Brown's idea⁴⁷ of miracle seems to belong to the general class which regards the test of a miracle as being primarily its subjective impression. He distinguishes between what he terms the religious and the philosophical views of a miracle. According to the religious view it is an event which in an especial manner reveals God. According to the philosophical view it is a wonder which cannot be accounted for by any known natural causes. These are not two different kinds of events; it is two ways of looking at one event. Now the important thing for Dr. Brown is the revealing impression of the event. His view seems similar to that of Herrmann, but Brown admits the legitimacy of asking what a miracle is objectively. In this connection he tells us that modern science is rendering it increasingly difficult to isolate any event and call it a miracle in the sense of being the product of any new creative power in nature. On the other hand, he says, modern science is showing us that nothing can be accounted for ultimately without this power of God, and that every transformation in nature is a creation. This of

⁴⁶ Ménégoz, *Essai sur bib. notion du miracle*, 1894.

⁴⁷ W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 1906, pp. 223 ff.

course means simply that Dr. Brown cannot distinguish a miracle from any providential event, and that he regards all providence as a species of continuous creation. This half pantheizing philosophy involves the denial of miracle in any sense differing from events of God's providence.

Kessler also would remove the question of miracle from the sphere of the causal judgment into that of religious appreciation or value, leaving thus the real question of the objective nature of the miracle unsettled.⁴⁸

Possibly the most recent attempt to define a miracle so as to make it a matter of religious experience is that of Hunzinger.⁴⁹ He vibrates between the idea that a miracle is simply the experience of God which we derive from certain events in nature and the idea that a miracle is an event due to unknown laws of nature. He thinks that the old theology made a mistake in regarding a miracle as an event in nature wrought by the immediate action or causality of God, and that in this way the religious significance of a miracle was reduced to a minimum.⁵⁰ We cannot speak, he says, of any twofold mode of God's action in relation to nature.⁵¹ A miracle is an event in which we experience a revelation of God. It belongs to a different sphere of experience from our ordinary experience of natural events. We can speak of a miracle only when we experience events which introduce us to another world, and this experience can only be an experience of God. It is not in the relation of an event to nature or natural law, but in its relation to God, that we can hope to define a miracle. But if we should ask Hunzinger how a miracle is related to God, he would tell us at once that the question does not concern its relation to the Divine mode of action in producing the event, because events in which we experience God cannot be put into the categories of the understanding such as the

⁴⁸ Kessler, "Wunder und Causalität", *Zeitschr. für Theol. u. Kirche*, 1900, pp. 284-324.

⁴⁹ Hunzinger, *Das Wunder*, 1912.

⁵⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

causal category. The miracle, he says, belongs to a transcendent sphere. It has to do with a different kind of experience from ordinary experience and scientific experience.⁵²

This, however, is quite confusing to us. No doubt religious experience is different from ordinary experience, but when this religious experience attaches to an event in the external world, it does not remove the event itself into a "transcendent sphere". How, then, does the event take place? What is its nature? How is it related to God's power and to natural law? And why does it give an experience of God which certain other events do not? Hunzinger can answer none of these questions satisfactorily. He is sure that in a miracle we look at an event from a different point of view from that of science. In science, that is, in the explanation of events by natural causes, and in the immediate production of an event by God's direct intervention, the old theology saw a twofold mode of God's action. Hunzinger says this is wrong, and he sees here only a twofold way of viewing events. From the causal point of view they are all alike, yet some reveal God and some do not. How, then, can we distinguish a miracle in any objective sense from any providential event? Hunzinger says there is a distinction because, while for religious faith all events are "supernatural"⁵³ *i.e.*, reveal God, nevertheless Christian experience finds God in an especial manner in some events, and cannot find Him thus in all events. These are the events connected with Jesus and the Gospel history. But here Hunzinger is in a dilemma. If there can be no event which is not explainable by natural causes, then he must deny just these supernatural events upon which Christian experience depends and which Hunzinger would wish to maintain. If he maintains the reality of the supernatural events of the Gospel, he must give up his assertion that God can work only through natural causes. He has

⁵² *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁵³ *Op. cit.*, p. 114.

given a definition of miracle which renders it impossible to distinguish it from any providential event, and which would necessitate the denial of the Virgin Birth and Resurrection of Christ. He does not wish to accept the Jesus of the liberal theology; he knows that this Jesus cannot account for Christian history or Christian experience; and yet he has adopted a philosophy which renders a miracle impossible in any but a purely subjective sense. He must elevate his philosophy or lower his Christianity. He seems to feel the inadequacy of his subjective view, for when he comes to ask what is the relation of the miracle to nature, he tells us that we do not know nature's working forces but only its phenomenal side, and that therefore a miracle may be due to some unknown forces of nature. In another part of his book he says that all providence is a continuous creation or miracle, and in still another place he tells us that for the Christian "everything natural"⁵⁴ comes under the category of God's supernatural action and is miraculous. He cannot, therefore, distinguish miracle from providence, and yet appears dissatisfied with his purely subjective idea and groping after some objective criterion of the miracle.

It has now been pointed out how this subjective view of a miracle is unable to distinguish between a miracle and any event of God's providential control of nature and history. It remains to indicate briefly how it thereby destroys the religious or experiential value of the miracle from the Christian point of view. The communion with God which we have through providence or even through the Jesus of the liberal theology stripped of all that is supernatural and reduced to a fact of providence, cannot take us beyond the sphere of natural religion. This natural religion, therefore, can contain no redemptive element. Providence gives us no assurance of the Gospel or the grace of God in relation to sin. Religious faith without the supernatural history in the Gospels is not the Gospel of redemption from sin. For the latter we need the historic facts of the Gospel history. Now it is the characteristic of the miracles recorded in the

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 114.

New Testament that they give us a Gospel. They either constitute the Gospel and show us God actually working out man's redemption centrally in history, as in the Incarnation and Resurrection of Jesus; or else they are signs of Jesus' power to redeem from sin; or once again actual illustrations or symbols of that power of Christ; or finally they have an eschatological significance, and indicate that, at the end of the redemptive process, the universe, now cursed for man's sake, shall be transformed by the supernatural redemptive power of God. This soteriological significance of Jesus miracles is seen from the simple fact that the frequent demand for faith in Jesus' grace and power to save is usually in direct connection, in the Gospels, with a miracle which He is said to have wrought. All this we may be led to accept or reject, but this is the view of miracle and of Christianity which we derive from the sources. Hence the "religious value" of the miracle as conceived by Herrmann falls below the specifically Christian level.

This is fully recognized by Hunzinger who criticises Herrmann, and points to the essential place of the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus in Christianity and in Christian experience, and who emphasizes the importance of what he calls the miracles of the Gospel history, but whose philosophy seems to force him into the same subjective view of a miracle. God, he says, cannot act apart from nature. All events in nature are alike supernatural, by which he only means that he conceives providence as a "continuous creation". It follows, therefore, that any events which transcend the power of nature's forces, however loudly one proclaims their "creative" character, are impossible. The man who holds the subjective or "experiential" view of miracle must either give up the supernatural facts of Christianity, as Herrmann does; or hold them in contradiction to his philosophy, as Hunzinger tries to do.

When we turn from the purely subjective view of a miracle we come to the second class of "understatements", which still maintain that nature is a system of objective

forces, and which seek to give an objective explanation and definition of a miracle without breaking down this concept of nature. This class of views in general may be said to regard a miracle as an event due to the providence of God, and find its distinction from ordinary providential events in some special control of natural laws by God.

But before taking up these views a word must be said about a view which may be described as deistic and mechanical. God's control of nature is pushed back to the time of Creation, and the seeds of the miracle are supposed to have been introduced by God at the creation. This has been called the "pre-formation" theory. It is supposed that the germs of miracles at the creation of the world were inserted into nature to emerge when the time comes.⁵⁵ This view really does away with the miracle altogether. It rules out any special activity of God when the miracle takes place. The proximate cause of the miracle is nature. If, then, these supposed "seeds" of miracles are simply the ordinary forces of nature, a miracle becomes an impossibility. If, on the other hand, we should be bold enough to assume such a highly speculative thing as a "miracle germ" inserted in nature which is suddenly to burst forth at the proper moment, this amounts simply to saying that the miracle is due to an unknown natural force or law. This view will come up for discussion later.

If, on the other hand, any action of God, whether immediate or providential and mediate, is admitted at the time of the occurrence of the alleged miraculous event, supposedly liberating these "seeds of miracles", then this view passes beyond the limits of Deism, and must regard the event as the result of God's providential control of nature's forces. This advance upon the pre-formation theory was made by R. Schmid.⁵⁶ He believed that nature is "prepared" for the miracle which is brought to pass by the providence of God. This view transcends the deistic pre-formation theory. In fact Dorner is mistaken in class-

⁵⁵ Dorner, *Christl. Glaubensl.*, I, p. 591, gives an account of this view.

⁵⁶ R. Schmid, *Die Darwinischen Theorien*, pp. 332-361.

ing it under any form of that theory. It would seem to come under the next class of views which conceive the miracle as due to the special providential control of nature by God, although in his later book⁵⁷ Schmid says that we cannot tell whether in a miracle the Divine action works mediately or immediately.

We are led, therefore, naturally to the second class of "understatements" of the nature of miracles, as above mentioned. These views recognize nature as an objective system of forces and of causes and effects which constitute an unbroken series, and ascribe the miracle to some form of God's Providential control of nature. Under this class of views are found several different ways of conceiving the action of God's Providence in causing the miracle. In each case the validity of the causal judgment is recognized, and the unbroken continuity of the course of nature, but the miracle is reduced in each case to the level of a merely providential event. This has been done in several different ways.

The first of these practically reduces the miracle to an ordinary providential event. This view is agnostic as to the mode of God's action in relation to second causes or natural laws, but would explain a miracle as due to the co-operation of God with all the course of nature, controlling second causes. It would seem, therefore, to reduce a miracle to an ordinary providential event. If it really does this, then it rules out the miracle altogether, whereas if it remains really agnostic as to the mode of God's action in working a miracle, it fails to give an answer to the very point which would enable us to discriminate the miracle from providential events. This position seems to be that of Professor George T. Ladd⁵⁸ when he says that "a miracle must be conditioned upon the existing course of nature", and that "no event in history can even be conceived of without the coöperation of all the preceding forces and laws of the physical universe." Of course if this

⁵⁷ Schmid, *The Scientific Creed of a Theologian*, p. 197.

⁵⁸ G. T. Ladd, *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, p. 296.

means only that the effect produced takes its place in the series of natural phenomena or in nature, the statement is obviously true, but then it throws no light at all upon the question at issue, which is as to the cause of the said effect. But if it means that all events must be the product of natural forces operating under the Divine control, then it leaves no room for a miracle. Take for example the miracle which our Lord is said to have wrought at Cana. The wine, when made, was ordinary wine and subject to all the chemical conditions of wine. It is also true that the water out of which the wine is said to have been made was "the physical basis" of the wine. But the water and its properties did not produce the wine; did not evolve suddenly into wine. That special quality which distinguishes wine from water, the water in the Providence of God could not have produced. One may say that such an event never happened, but if it happened, the Providence of God does not account for it. Moreover in some "nature miracles", nature so far from coöperating with the power of God, requires to be constricted, as in the case where Jesus is said to have walked upon the sea. One may deny that this happened; it is hopeless to try to explain it as due to God's providential control of nature's forces. If such events as these ever did happen, they cannot be explained from the Providence of God, nor may we say, with R. Schmid⁵⁹ that in the case of miracles "in the narrow sense" *i.e.*, "nature miracles", that it is impossible to say whether God works directly or through natural means. Upon this view there is no possibility of distinguishing a miracle from any providential event.

Hence we proceed to consider views which conceive of the miracle as due to God's providential control of nature, but which attempt to give some special account of the peculiar mode of God's providential control in the case of a miracle, that shall discriminate it from ordinary providential events.

⁵⁹ R. Schmid, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

A second view, then, is that the miracle is due to the "acceleration" of the "natural process" by Divine power.⁶⁰ This view has little acceptance and need not detain us. It explains nothing, and is a baseless speculation. In the case of such a miracle as the resurrection of the dead it is meaningless.

X A third view under this general class is that a miracle is due to special "grouping" of natural causes, or to the "manipulation" of natural forces by God, after the analogy of the control which the human will can exercise over nature. This is not a new view, though it has been recently advocated by Beth and Sanday. It is the view of Gloatz, which he advocated in a long article on miracles in 1886.⁶¹ It was advocated long before this by Köstlin.⁶² These writers say that man to a certain extent may control nature, and hence God may act in this way in working miracles. This view has recently been advocated by Beth, Sanday, and Seeberg, Illingworth, and possibly Headlam.⁶³ Beth asserts that the

⁶⁰ Olshausen, *Com. on John*, ch. II.

⁶¹ Gloatz, "Wunder und Naturgesetz", *Studien und Kritiken*, 1886, pp. 403-546.

⁶² Köstlin, *Jahrb. für deutsche Theol.*, 1864, pp. 259 ff. Köstlin says, "The Divine power presiding over things may intervene in the reciprocal action of the forces. In this way these forces produce the miraculous." For a criticism of this general position see C. M. Mead, *op cit.*, chap. IV; Haering, *op. cit.*, p. 353; C. Stange, *Wunder u. Naturgesetz*, p. 45 ff.

⁶³ Beth, "Das Wunder", *Biblische Zeit und Streitfragen*, IV, 1908, Heft 5; Seeberg, art. "Wunder", *P. R. E.*,³ Bd. XXI, pp. 558-567; Sanday, "The Meaning of Miracle", in *Miracles* 1911 pp. 1 ff.; Illingworth, *The Gospel Miracles*, 1915, p. 92. Illingworth, after speaking of man's control of nature's laws says that here there is something "strictly analogous to the only thing which reasonable people mean by miracle—the guidance, that is, of natural laws, to the production of new effects, by the intervention of God's freewill". Dr. Headlam defends the historicity of the New Testament miracles. He believes in the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of Jesus. But his view of the nature of miracle is unsatisfactory because of its indefiniteness. He says that "a miracle means really the supremacy of the spiritual forces of the world to an extraordinarily marked degree over the mere material". Nature and man, he says, are responsive to the Spirit of God, and hence miracles are possible. The difficulty with this definition of miracle is

“inviolability” of natural law, by which he means its uninterrupted uniformity, and the miracle in nature can both be defended. He starts with a philosophy of nature, rather than with an epistemological criticism of the causal judgment. Scientific knowledge, he says, gives us only a knowledge of the mechanism of nature, not of its inner organization.⁶⁴ The course of nature is not determined by mechanical necessity. The question concerns the guidance and control of natural laws by God. Is the interaction of natural laws to be conceived mechanically, or does a higher power control them? The continued and abiding course of nature points to a higher power, *i.e.*, to God. But once recognize the government of God, and then the explanation of a miracle, Beth says, becomes easy. For God can control and combine the different laws of nature. This control is quite in accordance with nature and yet seems marvellous to our apprehension. Beth illustrates this by the case of a number of ants crawling along until their progress is impeded by a stream which they cannot cross. They move up the bank and suddenly cross on a log which has fallen across, and this log and this passage across it seems miraculous to them. Or again, he uses the illustration of the way in which a physician will use the forces of nature to counteract and cure the progress of disease in the human body. Thus for Beth there is no action of God apart from second causes or forces of nature. A miracle is thus only an event produced by God’s providential control of nature. Moreover he seems thus to give no explanation of real miracles according to his own view. For he distinguishes

that it does not state the mode of the Divine action in producing the miracle, nor its relation to nature and second causes. Indeed he sometimes speaks as if human causes were operative in producing the miracle. Thus he supposes that the Holy Spirit so affected the spiritual life of Mary that her spirit became powerful over her body to such an extent that she conceived and brought forth Jesus. This is a far more difficult idea to believe than that the miracle is due to the immediate power of God. *Cf.* Headlam, *The Miracles of the New Testament*, 1915, pp. 335-340.

⁶⁴ Beth, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

between what he calls a real miracle and a relative miracle.⁶⁵ A relative miracle, he says, is an event the natural causes of which we do not know, but of which we assume a natural explanation unknown to us without the need of God's "direct causality". This, Beth rightly says, is not a miracle but only a providential event. It would seem to follow from this that a real miracle for him must be an event which is produced by God's direct causality apart from natural laws. But Beth will not accept this view. Instead of this he says⁶⁶ again that we know only the external mechanism of nature, not its inner organism or the entire sum of its forces. And he seeks to explain the "real miracle" by a combination of these forces by God. He thus reduces it to what he before called the "relative miracle," which he himself said was no miracle at all but only a providential event. His whole polemic is against the mechanical world view. He is right in supposing that in refuting this he has made room for the possibility of miracle. For if there is a God of Providence, He may act in another and supernatural mode. But Beth does not take this further step. Having defended the idea of the Divine Providence, he proceeds to reduce the miracle to a merely providential event, and thus leaves no basis for any idea or defense of the miracles of Christianity.

Seeberg's position is similar to that of Beth. He does not attempt to give a philosophy of Nature, as Beth does. He limits himself to pointing to the analogy between the Divine and the human will in relation to Nature. When a man bends Nature to his ends, he does not act against Nature. Just so in a miracle we are concerned with "a special combination of natural forces for the production of an effect which has not happened before."⁶⁷

Sanday's view is also to be classed here. He starts with

⁶⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁶⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 24, 25.

⁶⁷ Seeberg, *op. cit.*, p. 566. In a miracle "es handelt sich um eine besondere Kombination natürlicher Kräfte zur Hervorbringung eines früher nicht geschehenen Effektes".

the definition of miracle in the *New English Dictionary* as "a marvellous event occurring within human experience which cannot have been brought about by human power or by the operation of any natural agency, and must therefore be ascribed to the special intervention of the Deity or of some supernatural being." . . . This definition he pronounces as "very good" though not "quite ideal." Where it fails, he thinks, is that it is too definite, for "when we read of an 'event which cannot have been brought about by human agency and must therefore be ascribed to the special intervention of Deity', we need not beg the question quite so far as this." It will be enough to assume that a miracle "suggests" Divine intervention. For "whatever be the case in the absolute nature of things, to our human experience at least God is more manifestly present in some events than in others."⁶⁸ But that any idea of a direct action of God in Nature is rejected by Dr. Sanday can be clearly gathered from his own words. He continues by saying: "I confess that the movement which tends, as it were, to merge miracles in the supernatural—in other words to lay stress on the Divine cause rather than the exceptional mode—seems to me entirely wholesome and to be welcomed, so long as it keeps within the bounds of Christian reverence and humility, and does not become too free with its negations."⁶⁹ The course of nature, he says, is uniform and never contravened, and a miracle is likened to the catching of a ball by a man, in which act the force of gravitation is neutralized.⁷⁰ A miracle, therefore, is "supernatural" only in the sense that God is its cause ultimately. Dr. Sanday will not recognize that God can work in nature apart from natural laws or second causes. Accordingly he finds an apparent, but as he thinks only apparent, conflict between belief in miracle and the modern view of the uniformity of nature.⁷¹ The evidence, he says,

⁶⁸ Sanday, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁶⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁷⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁷¹ Cf. art. in *The Expository Times*, vol. XIV, pp. 62 ff.

is undoubted that Christ and His Apostles wrought what they thought to be miracles. How then are we to reconcile this fact with the belief of the modern man in the uniformity of nature? It might be supposed that what they thought to be miracles in the sense of interruptions of natural law, we, by our better knowledge of nature's law, can see were really not such events. This solution Dr. Sanday finds to be unsatisfactory. He finds the solution of this difficulty in the analogy between God's relation to nature and that of man's will. Just as man can to a certain extent manipulate the forces of nature, so can God to a greater degree. But this, as we said reduces a miracle to a providential event. And we have seen that Dr. Sanday cannot allow that any such events have occurred which cannot find some explanation in a purely natural way, as cases of faith-cure, and how he rejects the evidence for miracles like the Virgin Birth which cannot possibly have any natural explanation. It is only by lowering his idea of a miracle that he can allow the evidence to stand for cases where he thinks a natural explanation of the event can be found.

This whole class of views as to the nature of a miracle is quite unsatisfactory. The teleological action of man is not even a proof against a purely mechanical explanation of events. It goes without saying that man can exert an influence upon nature, but the same is true of natural causes in cases where one influences another. If it be said that man acts with a purpose, this will not exclude the fact that in nature the events which man's action bring to pass, can take place in accordance with nature conceived as a mechanism. Still less can it explain miracles. The human will can never go beyond nature or produce any event which transcends her power. This view, therefore, can never explain how God acts in working an event which transcends nature. It can never go beyond simply pointing to an analogy between man's action on nature and God's providential control of nature, and even this analogy is most imperfect. If the action of God in the miracle is only the

teleological ordering of natural events, then what Beth and Seeberg call "miracles of providence" can be thus explained simply because such so called miracles are just events of God's providence and nothing more. But there is no possibility of what they call "nature miracles" like the feeding of the five thousand or the resurrection of the dead. And yet Beth and Seeberg seek an explanation of these miracles instead of dealing with the evidence as Sanday does. But even these "nature miracles", according to Beth and Seeberg, must be explained as only a combination of natural forces. Thus Seeberg says that bread and wine are not made from nothing, but through an especial combination of chemical substances.⁷² But Wendland is quite right when he terms this an "artificial invention" (*ausgeklügeltes Kunstprodukt*); and Stange criticises Seeberg severely on this point.⁷³ It is a mere evasion. If we hold this view of a miracle, we must explain away these miracles as Sanday does. In the making of water into wine or in the increasing of the bread there is manifest a power transcending any combination of natural forces, and we must either deny that these events happened or seek a better explanation of them than this theory can give.

— A fourth view of miracle which comes under this general class is that it is produced by "higher" or "unknown" laws of Nature. If it is not due to the "manipulation" or "grouping" of natural causes by God, and if one denies that God can or at least that He has acted apart from natural causes, there seems nothing left to say except that what we call a miracle is due to some unknown law or laws of Nature. This view has been wrongly attributed to Augustine.⁷⁴ Augustine says that "a miracle, therefore, does

⁷² Seeberg, *op. cit.*, p. 566.

⁷³ Wendland, *Der Wunderglaube im Christentum*, 1910, p. 107. Stange, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁷⁴ The view that a miracle is due to unknown laws of Nature has been erroneously attributed to Augustine by Lütze, *cf. op. cit.*, p. 4, and by Hunzinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 2 ff. The misunderstanding of Augustine here involved has frequently been exposed. *Cf.* F. Nitzsch, *Augustins Lehre vom Wunder*; Diestel, "Bibel und Naturkunde", *Studien und*

not happen contrary to nature, but contrary to nature as known". But what Augustine means by nature as known to us is the real objective uniformity of nature *inclusive* of any supposedly unknown laws, while by nature absolutely, against which the miracle does not occur, he means the predetermination of the whole course of nature in the eternal plan or purpose of God. This is evidently what Augustine means, as can be seen from the quotations given in footnote 74. God cannot do anything contrary to his eternal plan which includes all that comes to pass, for that would be to contradict Himself. He may and has caused events which transcend altogether what we understand by natural laws or forces.

Kritiken, 1866, p. 233; E. Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 136. This mistake is due to taking Augustine's statement out of its context: "Portentum ergo fit non contra naturam, sed contra quam est notam naturam", *De Civ. Dei*, Lib. XXI, c. 8; *Cont. Faust. Man.*, Lib. XXIX, 2; XXVI, 3. What Augustine means by Nature as known to us is the real and objective uniformity of all Nature, including any supposedly unknown natural laws; while Nature absolutely means the entire course of the universe as determined by God's eternal plan. God cannot act contrary to Nature in this latter sense without contradicting Himself. This is all that Augustine means. This is abundantly clear from the whole of *Cont. Faust. Man.*, Lib. XXVI, 3; and also from Augustine's fine conception of the fixed objective course of Nature and of natural law in *De Gen. ad lit.*, Lib. IX, 17; and his attribution of miracles to the omnipotence of God (*De Civ. Dei*, Lib. XXI, c. 7). To the course of Nature thus conceived a miracle is in "opposition", though not a violation of natural law. But any opposition of any event to the eternal purpose of God is of course for Augustine inconceivable. But this does not answer the question as to how Augustine did conceive of the miracle and Nature. He does make a distinction between relative and absolute miracles. A relative miracle is one where God at creation inserted the germs of a miracle in Natural forces, so that their concrete occurrence demands the intrusion of God's power to liberate these forces; no immediately creative power is required, *Quaest. in Hept.*, II, q. 21; *De Trin.* III, c. 8, § 13, c. 5, § 11; but Augustine recognizes an absolute miracle. He denies that all miracles can be explained as above. God, he says, has in Himself the causes of events which He has not put in Nature, and which He produces in a creative manner for man's salvation. This is an absolute miracle, due to God's creative power and transcending all natural law. Cf. *De Gen. ad lit.*, IX, 17; also Augustine's statement that the ultimate ground of belief in miracles is the omnipotence of God (*De Civ. Dei*, Lib. XXI, c. 7). See also the long quotation from Augustine by E. Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

This idea of a miracle, as produced by "higher" or "unknown" laws of nature, appears to have been asserted by the Duke of Argyll, Baden Powell, and Ménégoz. Schleiermacher leans toward it in his *Glaubenslehre*, though it is not his most characteristic view which is found in his *Reden*, and which is that the miracle is a sign of the immediate dependence of everything on the Infinite.⁷⁵ As we saw, Schmid⁷⁶ says that probably this is the true conception of miracle, though he is agnostic upon this point.

This idea of the miracle has called forth much criticism not only formerly but also recently, and its weaknesses have been thoroughly exposed by a number of writers on the subject.⁷⁷

In criticising this view we have in mind both its older and its newer forms. For it makes really no essential difference whether we say, upon the basis of a naïve realism, that in natural science we know nature as it really is but do not know all of its laws, so that some unknown law may be the cause of a miracle; or whether upon the basis of a critical theory of knowledge we say that we only know the phenomenal aspect of nature, only nature as a mechanism, not its inner and real organism and the forces which really are active in it. For this conception of a miracle, while it might account for some miracles of healing, cannot account for the so-called "nature miracles". It is true that the progress of modern scientific knowledge has shown us great stretches of reality yet to be conquered. It has made us conscious of our ignorance. But at the same time modern

⁷⁵ Schleiermacher, *Der Christl. Glaube*, § 47: *Reden* u. s. w., 2 te Rede; The Duke of Argyll, *Reign of Law*, p. 22; Baden Powell, *The Order of Nature*, pp. 376, 377; Ménégoz on the Biblical notion of miracle in *Seance de Rentrée de la Faculté de Théologie Prot. de Paris*, 1894, p. 40.

⁷⁶ Schmid, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

⁷⁷ Mozley, *Miracles*, Bampton Lectures, 1865, pp. 144-165; A. B. Bruce, *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, pp. 48 ff.; C. M. Mead, *Supernatural Revelation*, pp. 111 ff.; C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, I, pp. 622 ff.; W. B. Greene, "The Place of the Miracle in Nature," in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. LXIII, 1906, p. 547 ff.; Haering, *Der Christliche Glaube*, 1906, p. 353.

scientific knowledge of nature has by its advance made us more sure of some things. If we were totally ignorant of nature we might suppose it could do many wonderful things. But it is just because we know so much about nature that we can say that it is not creative. It does not multiply substance; it does not bring life out of death. And not only can we say that it does not, but we know enough about it to say that it cannot. In other words, some of the miracles recorded in the New Testament transcend not only all known but all possible laws or forces of nature. If Jesus really fed the five thousand with two loaves, if He really rose from the dead, these events cannot be explained in this way. In the face of the evidence even, it would seem more reasonable to deny the occurrence of these events than to attempt to explain them by attributing them to unknown or higher laws of nature.

And even in the case of some miracle of healing, where some such explanation might conceivably be made, two things must be remembered. One is that because it might conceivably be thus explained is no valid reason for asserting that this is its true explanation. The other is that when the cure takes place at a word from Jesus, it is more than highly improbable that these unknown laws of nature were operative just at the desired moment. If, on the other hand, it be urged that God acted immediately so as to start these unaccustomed and unknown forces at work, then God's creative and supernatural action is called in and only moved one link further back. Such an explanation even of the miracles of healing is one which is not only merely hypothetical, but improbable to the verge of impossibility.

Furthermore this idea of miracle really tends to do away with miracles in any objective sense, and to pass into a subjective view. For in referring miracles to unknown laws of nature, it reduces the miraculous element in any event to our ignorance of nature. As far as the general idea or category of miracle goes, this view would thus reduce it to our ignorance of nature. Hence the number of

miracles would increase or diminish in inverse ratio to our scientific knowledge, and hence become a purely subjective matter. Dr. Mead has remarked that upon this view a juggler's tricks would become miracles for those who could not understand them.

Nature, then, controlled by the providential government of God cannot work miracles. Nor does the course of nature leave any room for the miracle without an interruption of its course. This being so, there is only one other conceivable way to explain or define a miracle if one is still unwilling to admit that God can act immediately apart from natural causes, as well as through them. This is to break down the conception of nature.

The third main class of views of the miracle, therefore, are those which attempt to break down the idea of nature as an objective system of forces acting as causes of events.

This has been done either by means of an extreme empirical scepticism as to the ideas of causation and natural law, or by an idealistic conception of nature.

It will be best, therefore, before examining the views which come under this class, to ask more definitely what the ideas expressed by the terms nature, natural law, and causation, mean. There are two erroneous conceptions of nature and of natural law which either operate to render belief in miracle impossible, or else to give rise to very inadequate conceptions of what a miracle is.

One of these may be called the mechanical view which asserts that nature is a closed system of second causes or objective forces producing events in a necessary manner. Nature is regarded as a name for this complex of necessarily acting causes or forces. This is supposed by many to be the particular achievement of "the modern mind." Thus Professor H. R. MacIntosh,⁷⁸ who seeks to refute this view, nevertheless says that "the modern mind has taken in the conception of the world as a closed system of

⁷⁸ H. R. MacIntosh, "Miracles and the Modern Christian Mind", *Expositor*, 1910, Series VII, vol. 9, pp. 420, 421.

physical sequences. And in the main that conception is a modern novelty." Professor MacIntosh also tells us that "today the Christian believer is faced by the conception—often enunciated as the basal presupposition of all science—that the world is an inviolable system of mechanical causation, a complex unity of rigidly fixed forces, acting and interacting in absolutely predetermined ways."

This view would render it as impossible for God to act in the world as for man. But in ruling out the miracle, it does so on grounds which render man's free agency and God's providential government of the world alike impossible.

This mechanical view, however, is a philosophical or speculative, and not a scientific one. Natural science regards the uniformity of nature as an empirical generalization, and natural laws are considered by natural science as empirical descriptions, or possibly explanations, of the way in which things happen. Such a mechanical determinism in natural science purposely abstracts all qualitative characters of things, and knows that its explanation is not ultimate and exhaustive of reality. When put forward as an ultimate philosophy of the universe, it is not science, but speculative metaphysics constructed from the viewpoint of the science of mechanics, but not a valid inference from that science.

On the other hand, there is an opposite view of nature which has just as much claim to be termed "modern," and which is perhaps quite as fashionable as the above view. It is a sceptical view which, carried out logically, will invalidate all scientific knowledge, but which is frequently used in such a way as to give a specious defense of miracle, and to result in an erroneous idea of what a miracle is. It starts out from Hume's idea that the uniformity of nature is only a matter of custom or habit, and that it is merely a generalization from a number of experiences. We suppose that the future course of events will be like the past because of our past experience. Likewise particular laws of nature are simply registers of experience, the expression of the way in which we find things to behave in the ex-

ternal world. Hence there is no necessity about nature, and no idea of objective forces producing events, and no reason why events may not happen anytime quite contrary to our past experience. If it be replied that one experiment will make us certain that a particular antecedent will be followed by a particular consequent, it is replied in turn that this certainty is in turn only because of our belief in the uniformity of nature, which again is only a belief resting upon past experience, and which accordingly can give no necessity for the future being like the past.

This view, instead of furnishing any rational ground for belief in miracle, must lead to complete scepticism in the sphere of natural science, because it is not merely the uniformity of nature which it reduces to a merely empirical basis, but also the causal judgment which lies at its basis. Hume supposed that all knowledge rests on sensation. The senses can take cognizance only of the sequence of events. One event follows another. That which uniformly precedes, we call the cause; that which follows, we call the effect. The supposition that there is anything in the antecedent which determines the consequent is arbitrary. A cause, therefore, is only an invariable antecedent, and an effect only an invariable consequent. That is all that we can affirm.⁷⁹

But experience only relates to the past; it cannot guarantee the future. If we are to say that a given consequent always will, let alone must, follow a given antecedent, there must be some other ground of belief than the fact that it always has done so. And this ground of belief is the causal judgment as a necessary law of thought. Night follows day, but we do not regard day as the cause of night. If we wish to explain the darkness of night, we refer to the movement of the earth on its axis by which part of it is turned away from the sun. But on Hume's principles this is no more the cause of night than is day, for each are invariable antecedents of night. On these principles there is

⁷⁹ Hume, *Enquiry*, etc., § 4 and § 7.

no rational ground for belief that the future will be like the past. A universal scepticism as to any scientific knowledge is the result.

Hume, therefore, gives no explanation of the causal judgment. Experience in Hume's sense cannot even show what event is cause and what is effect, much less the necessary connection which exists between them. A wider and wider experience will not explain this necessary connection. If we once understand the reason why a certain phenomenon or group of phenomena give rise to a certain effect, no amount of custom or experience will increase our certitude. According to Hume we ought to be more and more certain the more our experience of the same sequence is increased, but this is contrary to fact. If we understand the reasons why certain causes give rise to certain effects, no multiplication of these particular sequences can render us more certain. And this is a fact of experience which Hume's theory fails to account for.⁸⁰

Such a view leads, as was said, to absolute scepticism as to any knowledge in the sphere of natural science. Hence its result would be to do away with any rational explanation of any events and of course with any distinction of a miracle from any other event. It is not only illogical, therefore, it is a highly precarious method of procedure when Christian apologetes appeal to such a scepticism in order to defend the possibility of miracle, and still worse when it is used to determine the nature of a miracle.

This has been done by Wendland, who, though not a disciple of Hume, nevertheless makes use of a sceptical criticism of the principle of causation and an idealistic natural philosophy to defend the possibility of the miracle and to explain its nature as an event which may deviate from the course of nature and at the same time be brought about by natural causes in so far as natural causes can be said to explain any event. Wendland attempts to define a miracle, and to give it its place in relation to natural law

⁸⁰ Cf. W. G. T. Shedd, "Hume, Huxley, and Miracles", *Presb. Review*, vol. I, 1880, pp. 22 ff.

by an idealistic criticism of the idea of nature and by the destruction of the idea of causality. Causality, he says, is only valid as an empirical category, not as a principle of explanation of the world.⁸¹ He says that "all scientific concepts can only deal with a specific side of reality. They leave room for other and deeper explanations."⁸² This statement is true, but Wendland goes much further than this. He does this by attempting to show that the mechanical idea of causation is inadequate as an ultimate principle. Here too he is right. But instead of showing that a more adequate conception of causation is necessary, he seeks to break down entirely the idea of causation in natural science so as to leave room for a miracle produced in accordance with natural laws, in so far as they are capable of producing anything. He does this by a criticism of the causal judgment which is false and which no scientist would admit. For example he will not allow the principle of the "similarity" of cause and effect in nature.⁸³ This, he says, is never found, but always a dissimilarity. He here appeals to the dissimilarity between a physical event and the resulting sensation *i.e.*, between the prick of a needle and the sensation of pain. But he surely cannot suppose that he is saying anything new to natural or to psychological science. Neither can he thus refute the equivalence of cause and effect, for this does not mean that in the effect there is always found precisely the same thing as in the cause. This principle has never been so understood. In the physical sphere there is always a transformation of energy, so that the effect may differ from the cause. This principle only means that the same cause always produces the same effects under identical conditions, and that there is a constant relation between cause and effect. Moreover, to point to the sensation as the effect of a physical stimulus is aside from the point, for mechanical science does not carry its

⁸¹ Joh. Wendland *Der Wunderglaube im Christentum*, 1910; cf. p. 117 f.

⁸² *Op. cit.*, p. 120.

⁸³ *Op. cit.*, p. 116.

doctrine of the conservation and transformation of energy into the mental or psychic sphere. Whatever independence is shown for mental phenomena, no place for a miracle in nature can be thus made without the interruption or suspension of natural law. When, for example, James Ward in his *Naturalism and Agnosticism* criticises the doctrine of psycho-physical parallelism, he does not suppose that he is making room for a miracle. In a word, to show the inadequacy of the mechanical view of the world is not to make room for Christian supernaturalism. In the mental sphere, moreover, the causal judgment presupposes a natural antecedent for each effect. Without the acknowledgement that God can act apart from natural causes, no point is gained for the miracle, and furthermore this line of argument will result in making all events alike contain a miraculous or creative element, as we shall find Wendland actually does. Second causes are thus reduced to a complete non-efficiency.

In the next place, Wendland says that the causal law asserts only that the effect is necessary when the condition or cause is given, but it does not follow that the cause is necessarily given.⁸⁴ But natural science replies that the cause itself is the consequent of a preceding condition, and comes under the causal law. We might argue in this way that the existence of the world is not necessary, but not against the validity of the application of the causal idea to the phenomena of nature.

Once more Wendland seeks to weaken the idea of causality by saying that events in the world allow of many possibilities as to future occurrences. It is not only that subjectively we cannot know future possibilities, but objectively from the causal standpoint future possibilities are not certain.⁸⁵ Every event must have its causes but it does not follow that every event is so completely determined by its antecedents that it necessarily must occur.⁸⁶ But this is not the case and, were it true, would not help us. Causation

⁸⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁸⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁸⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 117.

means just the necessary connection of events. In the idea of causation there is no possibility of a different set of consequences unless the antecedent conditions are different. It is only our ignorance of the antecedent conditions which gives rise to this illusion. If we knew all the causes and con-causes we could predict the future with precision. Natural science, it is true, cannot say that a miracle is impossible. But this gives us no right to say that a miracle in nature is possible in accordance with natural laws. Natural science from its point of view claims that whatever happens in nature is determined by a fixed relation of cause and effect.

In thinking then of natural laws discovered by observation and experiment, it may be asked how we get the idea of any causal necessity. If observation and experiment leads to the drawing up of particular laws of nature, we must reckon with the fact that under circumstances experience leads to other results *i.e.*, to a correction of laws of nature so drawn up. Hence science concedes that particular laws have only a conditional and provisional validity. They are only hypotheses for the knowledge of phenomena. This much is widely acknowledged by men of natural science. But no representative of modern science supposes that therefore the idea that all phenomena in nature have a natural explanation can be given up. Although our statements of natural laws may always be subject to revision, the idea of natural law and natural explanation of events is the rule of knowledge in natural science.

It is false, therefore, when theologians adopt a scepticism in reference to separate and particular so-called natural laws and often apply it for apologetic purposes. They wrongly suppose that this relativity—a provisional character of particular laws—discredits natural science. But this is not so at all. Even if particular statements of natural laws have to be revised, the standpoint of natural science and a natural causal explanation of events in nature is not touched.

How then do we get our idea of the necessity involved in

the natural sequence of events? It cannot be derived in an empirical way, as we have seen. Those who would do this would suppose that by abstraction from different particular cases there arises an idea of necessity in regard to natural law. But this conclusion falls to pieces the moment the relativity of these separate laws is considered. If they have only an empirical significance, they cannot establish the necessity of the general idea of natural law. On the other hand if we suppose that it is the idea of general natural law which gives the idea of necessity to the particular laws, we are arguing in a circle, as Stange has pointedly shown.⁸⁷ We can reach the idea of natural law in general only through the particular laws, and they can attain to the idea of necessity only through the general idea of natural law. Extreme empiricism cannot escape this circle.

But the idea of a necessary connection between natural events is really due to the causal judgment as a necessary law of thought. This leads us beyond the mere empirical description of sequences of events in nature to the idea that nature is a complex of forces which produce events in a necessary chain of causes and effects. If miracles are possible, it cannot be by breaking down our idea of a natural cause, but only by recognizing a higher cause than nature—a transcendent cause which can act apart from the second causes of nature.

This method of breaking down the idea of nature and natural cause, moreover, leads Wendland to the idea that all providence and all God's action in nature is of a creative character, and so gives rise to the idea that all events are miraculous, thus destroying the idea of a miracle as distinct from other natural events. He regards God's Providence as a continuous miracle, saying that there is a continuous

⁸⁷ C. Stange, "Natural Law and Belief in Miracle", *Constructive Quarterly*, March, 1915, pp. 137-158. Stange has given an acute criticism of the method which uses a scepticism as to natural law in defense of miracle. His views coincide with those expressed above on this point, though we shall find his idea of the miracle unsatisfactory.

creative working of God in the world.⁸⁸ And also he says that because God is transcendent as well as immanent, His working in the world must have a transcendent miraculous character.⁸⁹ This does not follow. It is true that if God is transcendent, He may thus work, and if He is only immanent, enmeshed as it were, in nature, He cannot thus work. But it does not follow that because God is transcendent He must always work in a miraculous manner. This at once makes every event in providence a miracle. God can work nothing but miracles on such a view—*i.e.*, in the sense that there is a creative element in every event of providence. Wendland's idea of nature, moreover, shows that he regards all providence as miraculous. He says that in nature there is a creative working of God, but it is in all events. Hence all the course of nature is miraculous in having this creative element in it, and yet not really miraculous in a real sense because he says that for this very reason, it is a mistake to say that there is any interruption or even suspension of natural law or that any event can come to pass apart from natural causes. How is it possible, then, for God to create something new in nature and at the same time not act apart from natural causes? It is impossible, Wendland would say,⁹⁰ if natural law is viewed uncritically as an ultimate explanation of any event. Natural law is inadequate to explain any event, and hence Wendland supposes that what he terms the "miraculous" *i.e.*, the providential working of God, does not suspend or act independently of any natural laws or forces. Consequently he defines miracles⁹¹ as "acts of God, which ground a new condition of things, which did not find its ground in the already existing connection of phenomenal events in the

⁸⁸ Wendland, *op. cit.*, p. 6, "es gibt ein stetiges schaffendes Wirken Gottes in der Welt". 10.

⁸⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 1. 3

⁹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 8, "Wunder sind Taten Gottes, die einen neuen Tatbestand begründen, der nicht in den bestehenden Zusammenhängen der Welt begründet lag."

world." Hence he says⁹² that the assertion that in a miracle God works immediately, is true, but it is not true to say that He works in some events mediately and in others immediately.

Hence his idea is that all events of providence involve an immediate or creative activity of God, but this does not mean an activity apart from second causes, nor even one in which second causes contribute nothing toward the production of the event. Hence all providence is "supernatural" in the sense that no event is explicable from second causes but requires an activity of God which Wendland calls creative, but every event, on the other hand is the product of second causes in as far as they can produce anything. We have left then no possible means of distinguishing between a miracle and any providential event. Wendland wishes to distinguish the great Christian miracles from other events, but in asserting that providence is a continuous creation, that God acts only in one manner, and that all events happen without interruption of natural law, he has robbed himself of the possibility of making any such distinction. Hence instead of attempting an impossible defense of the great Christian miracles, we find Wendland making concessions to the demands of his philosophy, and saying, for example, in the case of the Resurrection of Jesus that so long as we are sure that He is alive, it makes no difference whether His Resurrection was a bodily one, and in fact how we conceive its mode.⁹³

Another method of conceiving a miracle from the point of view of an idealistic criticism of nature is that of Carl Stange.⁹⁴ He differs sharply from Wendland, though we shall find that his conception of a miracle in the end is quite similar. He proceeds not so much from the point of view of an idealistic reflection upon nature combined with the breaking down of the idea of causality, as Wendland does,

⁹² *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 111 ff.

⁹⁴ C. Stange, *Naturgesetz u. Wunderglaube*, 1914; "Natural Law and Belief in Miracle", *The Constructive Quarterly*, March, 1915, pp. 137-158.

but rather from an epistemological criticism of our knowledge in natural science. He criticises Wendland severely for his treatment of the principle of causation, and in fact for trying to find a place for the miracle within nature by this scepticism as to scientific knowledge. He wishes to remove the miracle altogether from its connection with the causal principle, which he limits to its mechanical form, and to regard it as an act of God. And yet while it belongs to a different sphere than phenomena in nature from the point of view of natural science, it is nevertheless an event which is in nature and history. And since he denies any action of God apart from second causes, it is difficult to see in what essential respect Stange's view differs from that of Wendland. Stange, then, says that a miracle is to be considered, not from the standpoint of causation, but as an act of God. We must not start from the opposition of a miracle to nature, nor from an analysis of religious experience.⁹⁵ Both methods are one sided. We must hold fast the truth that faith in miracle is possible only for religious experience, but we must show, over against "the experiential view", that the miracle is not a universal element in all religious experience, but is objective and involves a specific relation to our empirical consciousness of nature. The question concerns the relation of God's activity to the world. And the question is as to how it is possible that the Divine activity stands in a twofold relation to the world. From the standpoint of causality such an idea is impossible. In other words if we conceive of God's relation to the world under the idea of causation, we can go no further than the ideas of creation and providence as explaining the existence of the world and its course of events. If, then, we are to reach any other idea of God's relation to the world, we must abandon the causal idea as inadequate. Indeed it is inadequate even as applied to creation and providence. The causal idea only explains things from the mechanical point of view, and even in creation and providence we conceive

⁹⁵ *Naturgesetz u. Wunderglaube*, pp. 84 ff.

the world and its course of events as acts of God. The constitutive mark of the miracle is that it is an act of the Divine Will, "not an event which is distinct from the ordinary course of events".⁹⁶ A miracle, then, means that in it we meet with God as a Person; we think of the "content" or "motivation" of the Divine Will. In creation and providence we do not meet God as a Person, and "do not advance beyond the idea of an impersonal power".⁹⁷ These two conceptions, he says, are common to Deism; and "to a certain extent" even pantheism accepts them. To limit God to the work of creation and of providence is to fail to see Him as a Person. To see Him as a Person we must look to the motives and content of His Will. In Christianity and in Christian history God gives us to share His life. And in these events we see that holiness and love are the motives of His personal Will. Creation and providence do not give us this knowledge and experience. The course of nature fails us here, and so does the religious consciousness itself, unless we are to regard religion as something merely subjective. There must be, therefore, events in history of a specific kind in which we can recognize the especial character of the Divine Will; events beyond those of creation and providence. Hence the analysis of the Christian idea of God leads us to the conception of events which are "essentially distinct" from natural events. These are the miracles of the Gospel history (*heilsgeschichtliche Wunder*). A miracle, then, is an act of God in history in which we recognize the Will of God as love. If we did not have these events we would be helpless against Deism and Pantheism. But though these events are objective and meet us in nature and history, it is not as if we had to do with two different modes of God's action in the world.⁹⁸ If we ask after the mode of God's action in miracle, it is the same as in events of providence; the point is that in the miracle we look at the motive of God's will.

⁹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁹⁷ Art. in *Constr. Quarterly*, March, 1915, p. 158.

⁹⁸ *Naturgesetz u. Wunderglaube*, p. 94.

If we ask how this can be and if after all this is not simply a subjective view of miracle, Stange would reply in the negative, and say that the ground of his view is in the idealistic view of nature. Nature is simply the world of phenomena as apprehended by the understanding under its ideas of space, time, and causality. Hence everything that belongs to the world of phenomena must be included by the understanding under its form of necessary causation. But our knowledge in natural science extends only so far as we have to do with phenomena as apprehended by the understanding. Hence nature is not the whole of reality. We have also "perception" which is not, as in Kant, the grouping of sense presentations by the understanding, but a kind of immediate apprehension of reality. Here we can find a "standard" for the "valuation" of experience of objective events as real. Hence for *every* event the scientific point of view is limited. In this way we really understand no single event. Natural science regards the world as a series of interrelated necessary events. But that there is such a universe of events lies beyond the purview of natural science and in the same way, no single event can be ultimately conceived by natural science. Hence when we meet with miracles, we have events which we regard as beyond the sphere of natural science, but at the same time we cannot say that they "suspend" the laws of nature or are not the product of natural causes. Consequently while we cannot deduce the idea of miracle from the idealistic conception of nature, we can see that it leaves room for miracle, and can understand that the religious consciousness must embrace types of ideas that cannot be measured by the standards of scientific knowledge.

How then does Stange's view differ from that of Wendland? Both assert that God acts only in one manner *i.e.*, through natural laws. Both assert that nothing takes place except through the operation of natural laws. Wendland finds God active "creatively" in every event. His difficulty, therefore, is to show how we meet with God more in some

events—those in the Gospel history—than we do in others, in ordinary events. Stange thinks we meet with God as a Person in no events of providence, but only in those of the Gospel history. His difficulty, therefore, is to show why this is so. If God is not the cause of these events in a particular way, they become providential events. But providence, he says, cannot bring us face to face with God. If, on the other hand, these events differ from events of providence, Stange fails to show how. The view of miracle given by both Stange and Wendland is, therefore, very much the same. It is an act in which we are brought face to face with God. They differ only in their view of providence. Providence for Wendland is a kind of continuous creation and at every point reveals God. Providence for Stange is a mere mechanism and does not reveal God at all. Hence Wendland cannot distinguish a miracle from providence because all providence is in his sense miraculous, while Stange can only discriminate the miracle by appealing to its motive in the mind of God.

In criticism of Stange's view it is only necessary to show its inherent contradictions. He is involved in a hopeless dilemma. If providence does not reveal the personal will of God, and if miracles do so, and if at the same time they differ objectively from providential events, then it follows that miraculous events cannot be brought about by natural law as are all providential events according to Stange. On the other hand if, as Stange affirms, God can act only in one way and if even miracles, as he asserts, are produced in accordance with natural law, then miracles become merely providential events, and since providence cannot reveal the personal will of God, neither could a miracle. If he points to the "content of the Divine Will", that is the love of God, manifested in the miraculous event, then he really passes into a subjective view of miracle. For the love and care of God may conceivably be seen in some providential events as much as in some miracles. The fact is that no view which asserts that God acts in the world only through

natural causes and that all events are thus produced, can make any real objective distinction between miracle and providence. Stange tries hard to give an objective view of the miracle and to discriminate it sharply from providential events, but he just as vigorously asserts that "in the case of the saving activity of God there is no suspension of the laws of nature."⁹⁹ But this is quite impossible. In the last analysis a miracle for him must be a providential event, and its miraculous character must consist in the experience of God which we derive from the event. It is simply viewing some events religiously, while these events and all others may also be viewed scientifically. And the one viewpoint is after all subjective and the other objective. We cannot see that his view differs essentially from that of Herrmann, though he criticizes Herrmann most severely, and strives earnestly to maintain an objective idea of the miracle.

Having found these three main classes of views unsatisfactory, we proceed to state what we believe a miracle to be, upon the basis of the preceding criticism of those views we deem inadequate.

A miracle, of course, has a religious function and a vital relation to Christianity and Christian experience. But to define a miracle we must state its relation to the power of God and to nature and natural law. An adequate conception of nature and natural law leaves room for the miracle. The matter was well put by John Stuart Mill in a passage which is well known and which Mozley has quoted.¹⁰⁰ Mill says—"But in order that any alleged fact should be contrary to the law of causation, the allegation must be, not simply that the cause existed without being followed by the effect, for that would be no uncommon occurrence; but that this happened in the absence of any adequate counter-acting cause. Now in the case of an alleged miracle, the assertion is the exact opposite of this. It is that the effect was defeated, not in the absence, but in consequence of a

⁹⁹ Art. in *Constructive Quarterly*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁰ J. S. Mill, *Logic*, vol. II,⁸ pp. 167, 168; Mozley, *Bampton Lectures*, 1865, p. 302.

counteracting cause, namely, a direct interposition of an act of the will of some being who has power over nature; and in particular of a being whose will, being assumed to have endowed all the causes with the powers by which they produce their effects, may well be supposed alike to counteract them. A miracle (as was justly remarked by Brown) is no contradiction to the law of cause and effect, it is a new effect supposed to be produced by the introduction of a new cause." This statement shows that there can be no rational objection to a miracle from the causal judgment. But it gives us no right to define a miracle as an event produced by natural causes operating in a manner contrary to ordinary experience. It gives us no right to find a place for miracle in nature and through natural law, by pointing to the limitations of scientific knowledge, because science assumes that any given event must have some natural explanation. A miracle, therefore, transcends explanation by natural causes, and its possibility cannot be defended by pointing to the limits of scientific knowledge, but rather by pointing to the power of God. It is an event due to God's immediate working apart from natural law and second causes.

When we view the miracle in its relation to the power of God, we see that it is one instance of a class of events which we call supernatural. If this directly supernatural or immediate action of God apart from second causes is denied, one goes beyond natural science and constructs a naturalistic philosophy or metaphysics. This has been done, for example, by Pfeiderer.¹⁰¹ He says that theology must adopt the "scientific method". "This method is simply that of causal thinking, according to which every event is the necessary effect of causes whose operation is again determined by their connection with other causes or by their place in a reciprocal action of forces according to law." This is a fair description of the method of natural science. But Pfeiderer insists upon its universal application, and here

¹⁰¹ Pfeiderer, *Evolution and Theology*, p. 2.

he goes beyond the point where he can find any justification at all from natural science. He says that "there is only one choice: either the evolutionary mode of thought is right, in which case it must be uniform in all fields of investigation, in history, then, as well as in nature; or it is wrong, in which case the views of nature acquired by means of it are not justified, and we have no right to prefer them to the traditions of faith." Hence according to Pfleiderer the supernatural activity of God is to be denied in every sphere. The intrusion of any cause outside the immanent nexus of second causes is, he thinks, to be strictly denied. But this conclusion is an unwarranted extension or universalizing of the principles and method of natural science. It is not justified by the idea of natural law in natural science which lays no claim to such universal validity. It is not warranted by the uniformity of nature, as the above quotation from Mill clearly shows. It cannot base itself upon the causal judgment which only affirms that every effect must have an adequate cause. It could only find its justification in the denial of the transcendence of God. And yet, strangely enough it is put forward as an axiom by men like Pfleiderer who admit the existence of God, His transcendence, and His providential government of the world. These men argue that just because God is not absent from the world, but is concerned in the production of every event through natural causes, therefore *no* event can occur outside this causal connection. But this by no means follows. It was a mistake to see God only in supernatural events. According to this naïve view the progress of scientific discovery could only mean the gradual banishment of God from the world. But it by no means follows that the recognition of God's providential control of all events renders it impossible for Him to act immediately in the world apart from second causes. The assertion that God cannot thus act is wholly unwarranted for anyone who believes in the God of creation who made the world, and the God of providence who upholds and governs it. It is not only an assertion to which natural

science lends no support; it can be supported only by an atheism which denies God's existence, or by a pantheism which denies His transcendence and personality.

In order, therefore, to understand the nature of a miracle, we must ask what is meant by this supernatural action of God. This can best be understood by briefly defining the ideas of creation, mediate creation, and evolution. According to the Scriptural view of creation, it is an action of God alone in which He only is active. It is further an originating activity which produces something new, that is, something before non-existent: something not potentially contained in anything preceding. Creation, then, implies the previous non-existence of its product, and hence no possible *concursum* of the action of God with anything else.

Contrasted with this originating activity of God, is His providential control of all things, by which He not only upholds and preserves them in being, but controls them. This providential control is not a continuous creation, but a *concursum* of God's action with second causes. It is not an originating activity, but an unfolding or evolution by the means of natural forces under the Divine control. It does not bring forth a new product, but unfolds or draws out what was potentially contained in the evolving series. Now it is very important, for the proper view of a miracle, to note that creation and evolution are opposite ideas, and mutually exclusive in the sense that where there is creation, there is not found evolution, and vice versa.¹⁰² Evolution is an unfolding, and this process produces nothing. It simply evolves what was before contained in the evolving series. Creation, on the other hand, is an origination, the production of something new. Now we do not mean to assert that in any specific product, such as man, both these forces may not have been at work; we do mean, however, that any element in any complex whole which is the product of creation is not the product of evolution, and *vice versa*. This

¹⁰² Cf. B. B. Warfield, *Bible Student*, 1901, pp. 1 ff. Dr. Warfield has brought out clearly this mutually exclusive character of the ideas of creation and evolution.

is important to bear in mind. On the one hand some natural scientists are clear headed enough to realize that just in so far as things are accounted for by evolution, just so far is the creative activity of God excluded. On the other hand some theologians and apologetes have sometimes presented a weak defense of supernaturalism by forgetting this mutually exclusive character of creation and evolution, and by speaking of evolution as God's method of creation, or by using phrases like "creative evolution". If, then, we remember the real nature of creation and evolution, we will not be exposed to the danger of supposing that we are upholding the Christian view of the world, while we are all the while admitting the contention of naturalism. For suppose that we should distribute the activity of God in relation to the world under just these two ideas—absolute creation and evolution, and at the same time remember that they are in the above sense mutually exclusive. Then we would conceive that God absolutely originated or created the original world stuff, and then that *all else* is to be accounted for by the action of natural causes under God's control. Here, then, we should have a truly theistic evolution, but by no means the Christian view. For in order to have a Christian view of the world, we must recognize the direct intrusion of the activity or power of God apart from second causes at least in the Incarnation and Resurrection of Jesus, and also in the creation anew of the human soul in the new birth. In all such cases the result is joined to the series of second causes which may be operating according to their nature, but which have no part in producing the event.

This, accordingly, brings us to the idea of "mediate creation". This term is unfortunate. This is not a creation by means of or "through" second causes. This would not be any kind of a creation at all. Mediate creation, like all creation, is an absolutely originating activity. It is the insertion into the already evolving series of second causes, of something entirely new, and which, although joined to the series of natural causes, is not in any sense their product,

and not within their power to produce even under the Divine control. The second causes may be acting, but they are not active in producing the product of this mediate creation. Mediate creation, then, does not exclude a genetic relation of any *total* product to the preceding phenomenal causes, but it does imply that the new element, that is, that which is the product of this creative power, is not in any sense produced through second or natural causes.

Now this "mediate creation" is just the supernatural or direct mode of the Divine action on the world. It is implied in the Christianity of our sources, and is essential to New Testament Christianity.

A miracle, then, is a supernatural event in this sense. It is an event due to the immediate activity of God apart from second causes. All miracles, therefore, are supernatural events. But all supernatural events are not miracles. The class of supernatural events is wider than that of miracles. There are supernatural events in the psychic sphere such as Regeneration which is a creative act of God alone, and sanctification which is a supernatural process due to God's power, though not apart from man's coöperation, and these events are sometimes called miracles. Hence it is better to distinguish the miracle from these other supernatural events, since the terms applied to it in Scripture are scarcely applicable to these inner events. A miracle, then, is not only an event due to the immediate power of God; it is an event in the external world. We may define a miracle, therefore, as an event in the external world due to the immediate power of God.

This definition will of course exclude what most of the recent writers on the subject have included under the category of miracle, and called miracles of providence, and of the answer to prayer. But we have shown that such events are not miracles, and all those writers recognize the miracles of "the Gospel history" as a higher class of miracle, though we have seen that they have been unable to give any satisfactory idea of their nature.

Most of the objections to this idea of a miracle really involve and spring out of the denial of its possibility. To discuss them would take us beyond the limits of our subject and require a consideration of the second main question concerning miracles—the question of their possibility. There is, however, one objection concerning which a word must be said in closing. It is often urged as an objection to the above given conception of miracle, that it is a modern conception, and that the Scripture writers did not have our modern notions about nature and laws of nature. But this objection is without adequate support in the Bible. While it is true that the writers of the Biblical accounts of miracles did not write out of a consciousness formed by the ideas of modern natural science, it is nevertheless true that, even though they may not have had the idea of a “law of nature”, they did have a sufficiently clear conception of “the natural order of things”, and they by no means identified the natural and the supernatural, neither did they regard everything as supernatural. In a word the Biblical writers distinguish between the natural order of events and wonderful works of God which transcend this natural order and are referred to the omnipotence of God. This, indeed, is acknowledged to be the case by Ménégos who rejects this idea of the miracle while acknowledging it to be that of the Biblical writers. Thus, for example, after reviewing some of our Lord’s miracles, Ménégos says that the writers of the accounts evidently believe that it is by the power of God that the miracle is wrought, and that it involves a “domination” of nature, so that the natural order of things yields to a superior will, the will of God.¹⁰³ In all these accounts, Ménégos continues, “the miracle is invariably considered as a phenomenon contrary to the natural order of events. It is precisely that which gives it the peculiar character of a miracle.” This is true of the Old Testament which distinguishes clearly enough between what conforms to the ordinary course of nature, and what does not. Köst-

¹⁰³ Ménégos, *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 25.

lin agrees with Ménégoz on this point *vis.*, that in the Old Testament the idea of the miracle is practically the same as the one we have above stated, and that the miracle is always considered as a supernatural *intérv*ention of God in the ordinary order of events.

Moreover it should be noted that this is the common idea of a miracle throughout the Bible as we have it. This is admitted by a writer such as Ziller¹⁰⁴ when he seeks to show that this unitary conception of miracle is due to the working over of the sources which, in the case of the Old Testament, they suffered in the post exilic period when a more fully developed idea of God led to a more fully developed conception of miracle. It is thus only through a reconstruction of the Old Testament's own account of the development of its doctrine of God, that the unity of the Biblical idea of miracle can be denied.¹⁰⁵

Turning to a very brief confirmation of what has been said concerning the Biblical idea of miracle, the Old Testament writers recognized fully the unchangeable continuance of nature and its uniformity.¹⁰⁶ Consequently when a miracle occurred it was recognized as a reversal of the natural order of events, and attributed to the power of God.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, so far from conceiving of everything as the product of God's power alone, the author of Genesis

¹⁰⁴ Ziller, *Biblische Wunder*, 1904, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ On this whole subject besides the works of Köstlin, Ménégoz, and Ziller already cited, see also Gloatz, *op. cit.*, p. 403. Schultz, *Alttest. Theol.*, p. 577; Kleinert, "Naturanschauung des Alten Testaments". *Studien u. Kritiken*, 1898, p. 1 ff.; Koeberle, *Natur und Geist nach der Auffassung des Alten Test.*, 1901, pp. 231, 260. Compare also the brief but well considered statement of Bavinck, *Geréformeerde Dogmatiek*,² I, 350 ff. See also Sanday's statement in his article on Miracles and the Supernatural Character of the Gospels, *Expository Times*, vol. XIV, p. 64, where he says, "The ancients as well as the moderns believed that there was an order of Nature; if they had not had this belief, they would not have attached the importance they did to miracle."

¹⁰⁶ Gen. viii. 22; Job. xxxviii. 10 ff.; 7-10; Jer. v. 22; xxxi. 35, 36; xxxiii. 20, 25.

¹⁰⁷ 2 Kings xx. 9-11.

ascribes causality to nature,¹⁰⁸ and the working of miracles is the making of a new thing by God.¹⁰⁹

When we turn to the New Testament, we find that Jesus recognized an order of nature with its own causality,¹¹⁰ and, in the latter passage given in footnote 110, regarded the continuance of this natural order as a proof of God's mercy to a sinful world. The miracle Jesus regarded as transcending the natural order of things, as can be seen from the fact that in connection with all His miracles Jesus taught that they were works lying only in the power of Him in whom was all power, so that nature was obedient to His will. The Evangelists also distinguish between the natural order of things and the miraculous, and believe that the natural order is subject to Jesus and to God.¹¹¹ All through the eighth and ninth chapters of Matthew where Jesus, without any means but His mere word of power, healed a leper, two blind men, two demoniacs, a dumb man, a woman sick with fever, and another with an issue of blood, calmed a tempest, raised a dead man to life, it is clearly the idea of the Evangelist that there is a natural order and that it is subservient to the Divine Will, so that the miracle is an event which interrupts this natural order and is wrought by the power of God.

If we leave the Gospels and turn to Paul, it would not be difficult to point out how he considered the Resurrection of Jesus to be a work of God's power, and of such a creative nature that the Apostle uses it to illustrate the greatness of the power of God in regenerating the soul that is dead in sin,¹¹² and how the whole world order introduced by Christ's Resurrection into this natural order now ruled by sin, is through and through supernatural and due to the risen Christ as the powerful life-giving Spirit.¹¹³ But to unfold the meaning of all this would lead us far beyond our

¹⁰⁸ Gen. i. 11, 12.

¹⁰⁹ Numbers xvi. 30.

¹¹⁰ Mark iv. 28; v. 45.

¹¹¹ Matt. viii. 27; ix. 5 and 6, 24, 25, 33; xiii. 54.

¹¹² Eph. I. 19, 20.

¹¹³ I Cor. xv. 45 ff.

purpose which was simply to answer the objection that the writers of the Biblical books had no idea of a natural order of events and no idea of this distinction between the natural and the supernatural.

This has been done sufficiently. We cannot enter on the great topic of the function of the miracle. The contrast between the natural and the supernatural in the New Testament, especially in Paul, is soteriological and eschatological. We should have to speak of the connection of the miracle with sin and the effects of sin in nature, and how it points us to the power of God to save from sin, and to that future when all nature shall share in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Our purpose has been simply to set forth the idea or nature of the miracle as an event in the external world wrought by the immediate power of God.

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