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ART. I.—GREEK IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

*Dissertationis de Græcis Medii Ævi Studiis Pars prior. De Græcis per Occidentem Studiis inde a Primo Medio Ævo usque ad Carolum Magnum.* Scripsit FREDERICUS CRAMER. Sundiæ, 1849. In Bibliopoleo Lœffleriano ap. C. Hingst. 4to., pp. 44.

*Dissertationis de Græcis Medii Ævi Studiis Pars altera. De Græcis per Occidentem Studiis inde a Carolo Magno usque ad Expeditiones in Terram Sanctam Susceptas.* Scripsit FREDERICUS CRAMER. Sundiæ, 1853. In Bibliopoleo Lœffleriano ap. C. Hingst. 4to., pp. 65.

It is somewhat remarkable that the investigation of the fortunes of Greek studies in Western Europe, during the long decline of learning, should have been delayed until the most recent years, and that, among the multitudes who have assiduously devoted themselves to classical philology and to mediæval antiquities, no one should have anticipated Herr Cramer in the discussion of this obscure but interesting topic. The examination of old manuscripts, and the determination of the dates of their execution, might have naturally stimulated such an inquiry; but the erudite and the ignorant, with rare exceptions, have been equally content to accept, as the starting point of their speculations about the modern history of Greek philology, the commonly received belief, that the knowledge of Greek became extinct in the west soon after the fall of the Western empire; and that it was not revived till the anxieties and agitations of the Byzantine court, preceding the conquest of Constantinople, dispersed through the more tranquil and flourishing cities of Western Europe, emigrant scholars and accomplished ambassadors, who never returned to the troubles they had left behind, but preferred the quiet honours of a Greek professorship in an Italian university, to the harassing distinctions of a sinking empire. It is to this period that Humphrey Hody

## ART. VI.—MIRACLES.

- Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord.* By RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH, M. A., Vicar of Itchen Stoke, Hants; Professor of Divinity, King's College, London; Examining Chaplain to the Lord Bishop of Oxford; and late Hulsean Lecturer. Second ed. London: John W. Parker, West Strand. 1847. Pp. 467.
- On Miracles.* By RALPH WARDLAW, D. D. "*What sign showest thou, then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work?*"—THE JEWS TO JESUS. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, No. 285 Broadway. 1853. Pp. 295.
- An Inquiry into the Proofs, Nature, and Extent of Inspiration, and into the Authority of Scripture.* By the Rev. SAMUEL HINDS, M. A., of Queen's College, and Vice-Principal of St. Alban's Hall, Oxford. Oxford: Printed by W. Baxter, for B. Fellowes, Ludgate Street, London; and J. Parker, Oxford. 1831.

ALL the departures from the ancient faith concerning the authority of the Scriptures, which have distinguished modern speculation, may be traced directly, whatever may be said of the perverseness of the heart as the ultimate cause, to an insuperable repugnance to the admission of miracles. The supernatural has been the stone of stumbling and the rock of offence. The antipathy to it has given rise to open infidelity, on the one hand, and to the various types of criticism, on the other, which, in consequence of their agreement in rejecting everything that transcends the ordinary agencies of nature, have been classed under the common name of Rationalism. If the immediate intervention of God, either in the world of matter or of mind, is assumed to be intrinsically incredible, nothing is left but to discard the records which assert and pretend to give examples of it, as impudent impostures, or to seek, by tortuous interpretation, to reconcile accounts confessedly false with the honesty of the historian, and, what would seem to be still more difficult, with the essential divinity of the religion. The English Deists, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, took the former course, and denounced the Bible in unmeasured terms of vituperation and abuse. They saw no middle ground between the rejection of the supernatural and the rejection of Christianity. They could not comprehend how that could, in any sense, be treated as divine which was made up of a tissue of fables, or how they could be regarded as honest men, who had palmed the grossest extravagances upon the world, as sober, historical realities. Woolston may, perhaps, be deemed an exception. His letters upon the miracles of our Saviour are remarkable for having anticipated the method, in some degree at least, which has been carried out with such per-

verseness of learning and ingenuity by Strauss and Bauer. "His whole reasoning," we use the words of Strauss himself, "turns upon the alternative, either to retain the historical reality of the miracles narrated in the Bible, and thus to sacrifice the divine character of the narratives, and reduce the miracles to mere artifices, miserable juggleries, or common-place deceptions; or, in order to hold fast the divine character of these narratives, to reject them entirely as details of actual occurrences, and regard them as historical representations of certain spiritual truths." His own opinion is nowhere articulately expressed, but the presumption is, from the general tenour and spirit of his book, that he was really a Deist, who resorted to allegory as a convenient cover for his malignity; and to the spiritual sense, as a protection from the unspiritual weapons with which he was likely to be assailed. He was well aware, if his dilemma could be fairly and conclusively made out, which horn of it the sturdy common sense of Englishmen would adopt. A religion shrouded in figures could be no religion for them. But, with this exception, if exception it can be called, the issue in England was, No miracles, no Christianity; the Bible must be accepted as it is, as out and out divine, or wholly and absolutely rejected; it was, the ancient faith or open and avowed infidelity.

The case was different in Germany. The publication of the Wolfenbüttel Fragments—an anonymous production of Reimar, which pursued precisely the same line of argument with the English Deists—gave rise to a class of theologians, who have undertaken to retain Christianity at the expense of the historical accuracy of its records. They agree with the Deists in repudiating all that is supernatural, but they cannot agree with them in denouncing prophets and apostles as impostors; or in divesting the biblical narratives of all moral and spiritual significance. The nodes in which they save the credit of the sacred writers, and the divine import of the sacred history, vary with the reigning philosophy, and constitute the different schools into which the class of theologians, commonly known as Rationalists, may be divided. The first of these schools, that founded by Eichhorn, and perfected by Paulus, accepted the authenticity of the Scriptures, as a narrative of facts, by reducing the miraculous to the dimensions of the natural. They were only ordinary events, produced by ordinary agency, which had assumed an extraordinary character in the narrative, either from the omission of circumstances necessary to explain them, or from the style in which the opinions and prejudices of the age led the spectators to describe them. Our Saviour neither wrought nor pretended to miracles; and the evangelists properly interpreted, that is, interpreted in the light and spirit of their own times, record nothing of the kind. All was natural. Jesus was a wise and a good man; and what we are accustomed

to consider as his wonders, were "works of benevolence and friendship; sometimes of medical skill; sometimes also the results of accident and good fortune." In this way the history was saved; but what became of the divine? That also was reduced to very small proportions. Jesus introduced a pure and spiritual religion; enforced it by the example of a spotless life, and confirmed it by the glory of a martyr's death. He was called of God, in the sense that providential circumstances favoured the development of his character; and his natural gifts qualified him to become a great moral teacher.

The thorough-going attempt to reduce the supernatural in the New Testament to the dimensions of the natural, to make the miracles nothing but the language in which the age signalized ordinary phenomena, is one of the most curious chapters in the history of criticism. It contained the seeds of failure in itself; "and now," says Trench, "even in the land of its birth it has entirely perished."

The approximation to a deeper and more earnest faith was indicated by the systematic effort of Schleiermacher to reconcile religion to nature without stripping it of all divine power. The supernatural, in common with the Deists and the preceding school, he discarded. The low sense of the natural which Paulus contended for, he equally repudiated. He wanted more of God; a religion that should really answer to the description of God manifest in the flesh. The anxiety to escape from anything like a real miracle; and the longing for a system of spiritual life and power; the revulsion alike against a material naturalism and a palpable supernaturalism, is the key to the elaborate christology of Schleiermacher. The conception which he had of Christ, as the archetype of perfect humanity, in whom the consciousness of God existed in absolute strength, led him to attribute to the Saviour an intimacy of communion with nature, and an access to her secrets, which no other man possessed. He was familiar with her mighty energies, and he could lay his hand upon the springs of her power, and produce effects which, to those immersed in sense, should appear to be supernatural. Still all that he did was to obey her laws. He never rose above her. A profounder knowledge invested him with a deeper power, but it was the same in kind with the power of other men. This, of course, was to deny the miracles without denying the phenomena of the New Testament.

Next comes a school which discards the entire histories of the New Testament, as authentic narratives of facts, and makes them the offspring of the love, admiration, and glory with which the followers of Jesus adorned their recollections of their master. They were unconscious allegories, in which their imaginations, enriched and expanded by the prejudices, and expectations, and habits of thought engendered by the Old Testament, threw their

remembrances of their Lord; "the halo of glory with which the infant church, gradually and without any purpose of deceit, clothed its founder and head. His mighty personality, of which it was livingly conscious, caused it ever to surround him with new attributes of glory. All which men had ever craved and longed for, deliverance from physical evil, dominion over the crushing powers of nature, victory over death itself; all which had ever, in a lesser measure, been attributed to any, they lent in larger abundance, in unrestrained fulness, to him whom they felt greater than all. The system may be most fitly characterized," and we cordially concur in the caustic criticism of Trench, "as the church making its Christ, and not Christ his church."

On this scheme the history, both natural and supernatural, is fairly abandoned. There was a basis of facts in the life of Jesus; but what those facts really were, we have no means of determining. He lived and died, and this is about all we can know with any certainty. What, then, becomes of the divine? Is not that abandoned too? By no means, says Strauss. The history is altogether unessential; the absolute contents of Christianity are quite independent of it. The stories of the New Testament are only the drapery in which a grand idea is represented; and that idea may be seized and retained without clinging to the dress in which it was first presented. We may give up the Bible without surrendering aught that is divine in Christianity itself. Here that criticism, which ventures to reject the supernatural and yet call itself Christian, seems to have reached its culminating point. Extravagance could go no farther.

Though the term Rationalist, as a distinctive title, is, for the most part, restricted to the school of Eichhorn and Paulus, we have not hesitated to extend it to them all, in consequence of their agreement in radical and fundamental principles. They all equally reject the supernatural; they all equally admit no other standard of truth but our own reason; they all equally repudiate an objective, external, divine revelation. The divine with them is only the true, and the true is that which authenticates itself to our own souls. We believe because we see or feel, and not because the mouth of the Lord has spoken. They all equally make man the measure of his religion. To indicate the differences among themselves, the epithets sensual and spiritual might be chosen; which seem to be appropriate to the different systems of philosophy they had respectively embraced.

The pretensions to a deeper spiritualism and a profounder life, have given something of currency to the peculiar system of Schleiermacher, have detracted from the historic form in which the christology of the ancient faith is embodied, and served to increase, if not to engender, a secret prejudice on the part of earnest inquirers, against the miraculous features of

Christianity. Men have been willing to accept a religion which promises to satisfy the longings of their nature, without demanding an extraordinary faith, which meets their wants without repressing the freedom of speculation.

But the point on which the church has always insisted, and which she makes essential to the existence of a true faith, is, that the scheme of Christianity involves the direct intervention of God ; and that the Scriptures, which record that scheme, are an authoritative external testimony from him. She is not content with a barren compliment to the honesty and integrity of the writers ; nor to the still more barren admission that something of truth, more or less elevated, according to the philosophy of the critic, can be extracted from their pages. She asserts their authority to speak in the name of God ; and she commends their doctrines, not because they commend themselves by intrinsic probability or ideal excellence, but because they are the word of the Lord. The fundamental postulate of the Rationalist of every type precludes the conception of *such* a revelation. A religion of *authority* he as indignantly rejects as the most unblushing scoffer. Such a revelation, being essentially supernatural, stands or falls with the miracle. Let those, therefore, who feel themselves tempted to join in the cry against miracles, and to depreciate them as carnal and earthly ; who would insist upon the divine truths of Christianity to the exclusion or neglect of its equally divine credentials, consider well what they are doing. They are giving currency to a principle which, if legitimately carried out, would rob them of those very truths in which they are disposed to rest. There is not a distinctive doctrine of the gospel, which could be known to be true, independently of just such a revelation as implies the reality of miracles. There are no lines of ratiocination, no measures of experience, no range of intuition, no ideas awakened in the soul, which could authenticate to us the ends and purposes on the part of God, involved in that series of stupendous facts unfolded in the biblical histories. What elevation of consciousness, or what intensity of moral and spiritual enthusiasm could ever ascertain to us the appointment of a great Mediator, on the part of heaven's high chancery, to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers ? The sensible phenomena connected with the life and death of Jesus may, indeed, be apprehended ; but their significance in the economy of God it transcends the sphere of our faculties to discover. They are the counsels of His will, which none can penetrate but His own eternal Spirit ; and unless He has revealed them, our speculations about them are little better than a sick man's dreams. They must be known by a divine testimony, or they cannot be known at all. The question, then, of miracles runs into the question concerning those very doctrines for the sake of which we affect to slight them.

It is impossible to abandon the miracle, and cling to any other Christianity but that which is enkindled in our own souls from the sparks of our own reason. The consciousness of the individual, or the consciousness of the Christian community, awakened and propagated by sympathy, must be the sole criterion of truth. There is no alternative; man must make his religion, if God cannot give it to him.

As the question of an external, authoritative revelation depends upon the question of the truth or possibility of miracles, we have thought proper to contribute our mite to the interests of religion, and (may we not add?) of a sound philosophy, by a calm and candid discussion of the whole subject. We are aware that in introducing topics of this sort into a secular Review, we may offend the prejudices of some of our readers, who would have religion as completely divorced from letters as from politics. But such a separation is as hopelessly impossible, as it is undesirable, if it were possible. Religion and philosophy touch at every point; and we agree with Suarez, that no man can be an accomplished theologian who is not, at the same time, an accomplished metaphysician; and that no man can be an accomplished metaphysician without imbibing principles which shall lead him to religion. Faith and reason are distinguished, but not opposed; and though a superficial culture may have the effect which Strauss ascribes to it, of alienating the mind from the sacred records; yet a deeper and sounder philosophy will correct the aberration. We have, too, the example of the best English Reviews, which occupy no small space with those aspects of religion in which it touches directly upon science and letters. We shall not scruple to imitate them in this respect, as well as in devoting our pages to the social and political interests of man. We shall know nothing of sects or parties, but those broad questions which mere sectaries and partizans cannot comprehend, but which pertain to the statesman and scholar are exactly the topics which ought to find a place in a journal like this. We shall feel that we have rendered an essential service to society, if we can succeed, in any measure, in showing that the prejudice against the supernatural, which operates unfavourably on the minds of many, in averting their attention from divine revelation, is without any just foundation. We hope that religion can be reconciled with science upon a safer and easier plan than the sacrifice of either.

The works named at the head of our article cover the whole ground which we propose to occupy. We shall pursue the method adopted by Dr. Wardlaw, and discuss, first, the nature; then the apologetic worth; and finally, the credibility of miracles.

I. What, then, is a miracle? It is obvious that the definition should contemplate it only as a phenomenon, and include nothing but the difference which distinguishes it from every other species

of events. There should be no reference to the cause that produces it; that must be an inference from the nature of the effect. Those who make, as Mill does in his *Logic*, the belief of God's existence essential to the credibility of a miracle, virtually deny that the miracle can be employed as a proof of His being. But there is evidently no reason in the nature of things why the argument here cannot proceed from the effect to the cause, as in the ordinary changes of nature. The miracle presupposes God, and so does the world. But the miracle, as a phenomenon, may be apprehended even by the Atheist. It is an event, and an event of a peculiar kind, and God comes in, when the inquiry is made for the cause. Hence Cudworth and Barrow, as well as the Fathers and Schoolmen, do not hesitate to appeal to miracles as an argument for the divine existence. Considered as a phenomenon, in what does the peculiarity of the miracle consist? Trench does not give a formal definition, and we find it difficult to determine precisely what his notion was. He explains the terms by which miracles are distinguished in Scripture, but these terms express only the effects upon our own minds, the purposes for which and the power by which they are wrought, and the operations themselves—the effect, the end, the cause—but they do not single out that in the phenomenon by which it becomes a wonder, a sign, a power, or a work. In his comparison of miracles and nature, we have either failed to understand him or he contradicts himself. He asserts, first, that the agency of God is as immediate in the ordinary occurrences of nature, as in the production of miracles. The will of God is the only power which he recognizes anywhere, and to say “that there is more of the will of God in a miracle than in any other work of His, is insufficient.”—P. 10. And yet, in less than a page, he asserts: “An extraordinary divine causality belongs, then, to the essence of the miracle; more than that ordinary, which we acknowledge in everything; powers of God, other than those which have always been working; such, indeed, as most seldom or never have been working until now. The unresting activity of God, which at other times hides and conceals itself behind the veil of what we term natural laws, does in the miracle unveil itself; it steps out from its concealment, and the hand which works is laid bare.”—P. 12. If God immediately produces all events, what can be meant by extraordinary divine causality? And if the will of God is the sole energy in nature, what are “the powers of God other than those which have been always working?” Has the will of God been seldom or never exerted? If the hand of God was directly in every event, how has it been concealed behind natural laws? There is certainly a confusion here. The two sets of statements must have been written under the influence of different feelings. His anxiety to escape from a dead, mechanical view of nature, and from epicurean conceptions of the indolence of God, may account for his

denial of all secondary agencies; the palpable features of the miracle forced upon him the admissions of these same agencies, as a standard by which it was to be tried.

The scriptural term which gives us the nearest insight into the real nature of the miracle, is precisely the one of which Dr. Trench speaks most slightly—the word *wonder*.\* It is true that every wonder is not a miracle, but every miracle is a wonder. The cause of wonder is the unexpectedness of an event; and the specific difference of the miracle is that it contradicts that course of nature which we expected to find uniform. It is an event either above or opposed to secondary causes. Leave out the notion of these secondary causes, and there can be no miracle. All is God. Admit a nature, apart and distinct from God, and there is scope for an extraordinary power. The doctrine of nature, as consisting of a series of agencies and powers, of substances possessed of active properties in their relations to each other, by no means introduces a dead, mechanical view of the universe. God has not left the world, as a watchmaker leaves his clock, after he has wound it up, to pursue its own course independently of any interference from Him. He is present in every part of His dominions; He pervades the powers which he has imparted to created substances by His own ceaseless energy. He sustains their efficiency, and He regulates all the adjustments upon which their activity depends. He is the life of nature's life. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. But still, in dependence upon His sustaining care and the concurrence of His pervading energy, nature has powers, and consists of causes which, in the same circumstances, always produce the same effects. To the following remarks of Dr. Wardlaw, we cordially assent:

“I have already, at the very outset, given a definition of them in other terms—as *works, involving a temporary suspension of the known laws of nature, or a deviation from the established constitution and fixed order of the universe*; or, perhaps more correctly, of that department of the universe which constitutes *our own system*, whose established order and laws we are capable, to the full extent requisite for the purpose, of accurately ascertaining:—works, therefore, which can be effected by no power short of that which gave the universe its being, and its constitution and laws. In this definition, let it be observed, I have called a miracle a suspension of the *known* laws of nature. It is necessary to mark this. Effects, it is abundantly obvious, might be produced, such as, to those who witnessed them, might appear, and might be believed, miraculous, while the persons by whom they are performed are well aware, from their superior acquaintance with the laws, and powers, and phenomena of nature, that the appear-

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\* Nomen miraculi ab admiratione sumitur. Thomas Aquinas, Summa 1, Quest. 105, Art. 7.

ance is fallacious, and the belief unfounded. The persons before whom they are performed may be utterly unable to account for them by any natural laws or powers *known to them*:—while, in point of fact, in place of their being suspensions of any law or laws of nature whatsoever, they are actually the product of their operation; so that, in the circumstances, the real miracle would have lain, not in their production, but in their *non*-production. *That* would have been the true deviation from the settled constitution of nature. In such a case, the miracle is a miracle *only to ignorance*; that is, it is *no* miracle. A little further development of the secrets of nature annihilates the seemingly miraculous, and only reads to the previously uninformed mind a new lesson of nature's uniformity. It becomes, therefore, an indispensable requisite to a genuine miracle, that it be wrought both *on* materials, and *by* materials, of which the properties are well and familiarly known; respecting which, that is, the common course of nature is fully understood."—P. 34–35.

Dr. Wardlaw subsequently criticises, and, we think, with justice, the distinctions and evasions by which Trench undertakes to rescue the miracle from being a violation of nature's order: to this point we shall afterwards refer. We cannot forbear to quote a portion of his remarks:

"The truth is, we must understand the term *nature*, in the sense usually attached to it, as relating to the constitution and laws of the physical system of our own globe. It is true, that, in consequence of sin, there have been 'jarrings and disturbances' of its 'primitive order.' But it does not follow from that, that there are no natural principles and laws in fixed and constant operation. And when an event occurs for which these natural principles and laws make no provision—for which they can in no way account—which is quite aside from, and at variance with, their ordinary uniform operations—it does not to me seem very material, whether we speak of it as beyond nature, or above nature, or beside nature, or against nature, or contrary to nature—whether as a suspension, an interruption, a contravention, or a violation of nature's laws; provided we are understanding 'nature and nature's laws' as having reference to the physical economy of our own system. When, in illustration of his position that a miracle is not at all 'the infraction of a law, but only a lower law neutralized and put out of working by a superior,' Mr. Trench says, 'Continually we behold, in the world around us, lower laws held in restraint by higher, mechanic by dynamic, chemical by vital, physical by moral; yet we say not, when the lower thus gives place in favour of the higher, that there was any violation of law, that anything contrary to nature came to pass; rather we acknowledge the law of a greater freedom swallowing up the law of a lesser;' he seems to forget that this 'holding in restraint of one law by the operation of another,' is itself *one of the very laws* whose working 'we behold in the world around us;' and that it comes, therefore, among the laws of nature as ordinarily understood, that is, as having relation to this said 'world around us,' to the physical order of our system. But it is manifestly unfair, in interpreting *nature*, to quit our own system, to mount to a loftier sphere, to take in a wider amplitude,

to embrace the entire range of being; and then, because a thing, though a manifest contravention of the laws of 'the world around us'—of 'the nature which we know'—may not be out of harmony with nature when considered as embracing the boundless universe, and even the attributes of its Maker, thus bringing omnipotence itself into the range of 'natural causes,' to deny the propriety of pronouncing anything whatever to be *against nature*. For this involves the fallacy of taking the same term in two senses; and, because the thing in question may not be inconsistent with it in the one, concluding that it cannot be inconsistent with it in the other!"—P. 40-41.

II. Having settled that the essence of the miracle consists in the contranatural, or the supernatural, we are now prepared to investigate its apologetic worth. The question to be answered is briefly this—we quote the words of Mr. Trench—"Is the miracle to command, absolutely and without further question, the obedience of those in whose sight it is done, or to whom it comes as an adequately attested fact, so that the doer and the doctrine, without any more debate, shall be accepted, as from God?" In other words, is the miracle, in itself, from its own intrinsic character, a sufficient credential of divine inspiration, or a divine commission?

Trench, in company with the Jewish and pagan enemies of Christianity, and a large body of both Catholic and Protestant theologians, answers in the negative. Dr. Wardlaw answers in the affirmative; and we think that Dr. Wardlaw is right. The assumption on which the negative proceeds is, that a real miracle may be wrought by beings inferior to God. The Jews ascribed those of our Saviour to Beelzebub, the gentiles to magic, and the Scriptures themselves warn us against the lying wonders of the man of sin. The miracle, consequently, establishes, in the first instance, only the certainty of a superhuman origin, without determining anything as to its character. It may be heaven or it may be hell. To complete the proof, the nature of the doctrine must be considered. If that is approved by the conscience, or commends itself to the reason, it settles the question as to the real source of the miracle—and the miracle, thus authenticated as from God, confirms in turn the divine origin of the doctrine. We acquit this reasoning of the charge which has often been brought against it of arguing in a circle. When it is said that the doctrine proves the miracle, and the miracle the doctrine, it is obvious, as Warburton has judiciously remarked, that "the term, doctrine, in the first proposition, is used to signify *a doctrine agreeable to the truth of things, and demonstrated to be so by natural light*. In the second proposition, the term, doctrine, is used to signify *a doctrine immediately, and, in an extraordinary manner, revealed by God*. So that these different significations, in the declared use of the word, doctrine, in the two propositions, sets the whole reasoning free from that vicious circle within which our

philosophic conjurers would confine it. In this there is no fruitless return of an unprogressive argument, but a regular procession of two distinct and different truths, till the whole reasoning becomes complete. In truth, they afford mutual assistance to one another; yet not by taking back, after the turn has been served, what they had given; but by continuing to hold what each had imparted to the support of the other.”\* The whole argument may be stated in a single sentence: The goodness of the doctrine proves the divinity of the miracle; the divinity of the miracle proves—not the goodness, that would be the circle—but the divine authority of the doctrine.

But though we admit that this reasoning is valid as to form, we cannot make the same concession in relation to its matter. We cannot bring ourselves to believe that any created being, whether seraph or devil, can work a real miracle. We hold that this is the exclusive prerogative of God. The only power which any creature possesses over nature is the power which results from the knowledge of, and consists in obedience to, her laws. No finite being can make or unmake a single substance, nor impart to matter or to mind a single original property. Nature is what God made it; her laws what God appointed, and no orders of finite intelligence, however exalted, can ever rise above nature—for they are all parts of it—nor accomplish a single result independently of the properties and laws which God has ordained. They, like man, can only conquer by obeying. They may, through superior knowledge, effect combinations and invent machinery, which, to the ignorant and uninstructed, may produce effects that shall appear to transcend the capabilities of a creature, but they can never rise above, nor dispense with the laws they have mastered. They may reach the *mirabile*, but never the *miraculum*.† It was to set this truth in a clear light, that the miracle, from its very essence, transcends the only species of power that we can ascribe to creatures, that we were so earnest in fixing the definition of it, as something above or contradictory to nature. The power which works a miracle is evidently creative—the same which first gave to the

\* Divine Legation, book ix., chap. 5.

† The distinction between finite power and that by which a real miracle is wrought, and between real and relative miracles, is clearly stated by Aquinas, Summa 1, Quest. 110, Art. 4: “*Miraculum proprie dicitur, cum aliquid sit præter ordinem naturæ. Sed non sufficit ad rationem miraculi; si aliquid fiat præter ordinem naturæ alicujus particularis: quia sic cum aliquis projicit lapidem sursum, miraculum faceret, cum hoc sit præter ordinem naturæ lapidis. Ex hoc ergo aliquid dicitur esse miraculum quod sit præter ordinem totius naturæ creatæ. Hoc autem non potest facere nisi Deus; quia quicquid facit angelus, vel quæcunque alia creatura propria virtute, hoc sit secundum ordinem naturæ creatæ; et sic non est miraculum.*”

“*Quia non omnis virtus naturæ creatæ est nota nobis, ideo cum aliquid sit præter ordinem naturæ creatæ nobis notæ per virtutem creatam nobis ignotam, est miraculum quoad nos. Sic igitur cum dæmones aliquid faciunt sua virtute naturali, miracula dicuntur non simpliciter, sed quoad nos.*” Compare 2. 2., Quest. 178, Art. 2.

universe its being—to all substances their properties, and to the course of things its laws. It is the power of omnipotence. Hence, wherever there is a real miracle, there is and must be the finger of God. Neither can this power be delegated to a creature. He is, in no case, even the instrument of its exercise. If imparted to him as a *habit*, it would be, like every other faculty, subject to his discretion; if only as a transient virtue, it would still be a part of himself; and we cannot conceive that, even for a moment, infinite power could be resident in the finite.\* The prophet or apostle accordingly never performs the miracle. He is only the prophet of the presence of God. He announces what the Lord of nature will do, and not what he himself is about to perform. The case is well put by Dr. Wardlaw :

“ Another observation still requires to be made—made, that is, more pointedly, for it has already been alluded to ; I mean that in the working of a miracle, there is, in every case, a *direct and immediate interference of Deity*. There is no transference of power from God to the divinely-commissioned messenger. Neither is there any committing of divine omnipotence to his discretion. The former is, in the nature of the thing, impossible. It would be making the creature for the time almighty : and that, (since omnipotence can belong to none but divinity) would be equivalent to making him God. And the latter, were it at all imaginable, would neutralize and nullify the evidence : inasmuch as it would render necessary to its validity a previous assurance of the *impeccability* of the person to whom the trust was committed ; that is, an assurance, and an absolute one, of the impossibility of its being ever perverted, by the improper application of the power, to purposes foreign to those of his commission. Omnipotence placed at a creature’s discretion, is indeed as real an impossibility in the divine administration, as the endowing of a creature with the attribute itself : for, in truth, if the power remains with God, it would amount to the very same thing as God’s subjecting himself to his creature’s arbitrary and capricious will. There is, strictly speaking, in any miracle, no agency but that of the divine Being himself. Even to speak of the messenger as his *instrument*, is not correct. All that the messenger does, is, to declare his message : to appeal to God for its truth : and if, at his word, intimating a miracle as about to be performed in proof of it, the miracle actually takes place ; there is, on his part, in regard to the performance, neither agency nor instrumentality ; unless the mere utterance of words, in imitation of what is about to be done, or in appeal to heaven and petition for its

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\* The same doctrine is enunciated by Dr. Hinds in the work mentioned at the head of our article, Part II., § 4, p. 120. It is also found, as to its leading thought, in Aquinas, Summa, 2. 2. Quest. 178, Art. 1 : “ Operatio virtutum (miracles) se extendit ad omnia quæ supernaturaliter fieri possunt ; quorum quidem causa est divina omnipotentia, quæ nulli creaturæ communicari potest. Et ideo impossibile est quod principium operandi miracula sit aliqua qualitas habitualiter manens in anima. Sed tamen hoc potest contingere quod sicut mens prophetæ movetur ex inspiratione divina ad aliquid supernaturaliter cognoscendum ; ita etiam mens miracula facientis moveatur ad faciendum aliquid ad quod sequitur effectus miraculi, quod Deus sua virtute facit.”

being done, may be so called. God himself is the agent, the sole and immediate agent."—P. 52-53.

The miracle, according to this view, requires no extraneous support in authenticating its heavenly origin. It is an immediate manifestation of God. It proclaims His presence from the very nature of the phenomenon. But how does it become a voucher for a doctrine, or the divine commission of a teacher? Neither conclusion is implicitly contained in it, and notable difficulties have been raised as to the possibility of establishing spiritual truths by material facts. We are far from asserting that miracles are so connected in the nature of things with a divine commission, that wherever they are proved to exist, inspiration must be admitted as a necessary inference. There is no logical connection that the human mind is capable of tracing between the supernatural exercise of power and the supernatural communication of knowledge. It is certainly conceivable that one might be able to heal the sick and raise the dead, who could neither predict future contingencies, nor speak with the authority of God. The relation betwixt the miracle and inspiration depends upon the previous announcement of its existence. The man who professes to come from God must appeal to the extraordinary intervention of His power. That appeal makes known to us a connection, by virtue of which the miracle establishes the doctrine, not in its logical consecution, but by the extrinsic testimony of God—establishes the doctrine, not as a truth internally apprehended, but a matter of fact, externally authenticated. It makes the Almighty a witness in the case. The previous appeal is the great canon upon which the applicability of the miracle as a proof, depends; and whenever it is complied with, the performance of the miracle is as a voice from heaven; it is a present God affixing His seal to the claims of His servant. That this is the case can, we think, be conclusively evinced by three considerations:

1. The miracle is an instance of the reality of that which alone creates any presumption against the claims of the prophet—it is an *example* of the supernatural. There is obviously the same antecedent presumption against the pretension to work miracles as against the pretension to inspiration. They are phenomena which belong to the same class, and the man who justifies his pretensions in the one case, removes all proper ground of suspicion in the other. He goes farther; he illustrates an intimacy of connection with the Deity which inspiration supposes, and on account of which it is inherently improbable. This argument is clearly put by Dr. Hinds, in the book which we have named at the head of our article:

“ In the case of a person claiming to be commissioned with a message

from God, the only proof which ought to be admitted, is miraculous attestation of some sort. It should be required that, either the person himself should work a miracle, or that a miracle should be so wrought, in connection with his ministry, as to remove all doubt of its referance to him and his message. The miracle, in these cases, is, in fact, a *specimen* of that violation of the ordinary course of nature, which the person inspired is asserting to have taken place, in his appointment and ministry, and corresponds to the exhibition of *specimens* and *experiments*, which we should require of a geologist, mineralogist, or chemist, if he asserted his discovery of any natural phenomena; especially of any at variance with received theories. In this latter case, it would be not only reasonable to require such sensible proof, but it would be unreasonable to admit the assertion without it; without seeing the experiment or specimen ourselves, or satisfying ourselves, on the testimony of credible witnesses, that it had been seen by others. Equally unreasonable would it be, to admit any person's claim to inspiration, or extraordinary communion with God, without the appropriate test, the *earnest* of the Spirit."—P. 9.

2. The miracle, in the next place, is not only a specimen of the supernatural in general, but a specimen of the precise kind of the supernatural which it is adduced to confirm; it is a specimen of inspiration. Here the importance of the doctrine, that God is, in every case, the immediate worker of the miracle—that the power is never delegated to a creature—becomes manifest. He who appeals to the miracle with the certainty of its performance, must know that God will put forth His energy. He is a prophet of the divine purpose, and therefore, really and truly, as to the event in question, inspired. As we are indebted to Dr. Wardlaw for this feature of the argument, we shall permit him to speak for himself:\*

“For, having said that every prophecy is a miracle, I have now further to say, that every miracle is a prophecy. *The prophecy is a miracle of knowledge; the miracle is a prophecy of power.* The power by which the miracle is wrought, (as may be noticed more particularly by-and-bye,) being *divine* power, not transferred to the human messenger, but remaining God's, and God's alone, and being by God alone directly put forth for its effectuation, it is plain that a miracle, as far as the messenger is concerned whose commission and whose testimony are to be certified, is simply an intimation of such divine power being about to be put forth by him who alone possesses it, to produce an effect which he alone is able to accomplish. And, to make this still more manifest: if we only suppose that the production of the miraculous effect is not immediate, not to take place at the moment of its intimation, but fixed in the messenger's announcement for a

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\* The same thought is found in Dr. Hinds, but it had escaped our notice, until we had read the work of Dr. Wardlaw. It is not so clearly stated by Dr. Hinds as by Dr. Wardlaw, and Dr. Hinds does not seem to have appreciated its bearing upon the testimonial character of the miracle. See Hinds, p. 120.

precise time in the somewhat distant future ; in that case, when the time came, and the power was put forth, and the miracle wrought accordingly, we should have, you will at once perceive, a *miracle* and a *fulfilled prophecy* in the same event ; we should have, in that one event, the evidence of the miracle of knowledge and the miracle of power united."—P. 32–33.

"And there is, in connection with the miracle of power, a miracle of knowledge ; consisting in such a secret supernatural communication between the mind of God and the mind of His servant, as imparts to the latter the perfect assurance that God *will*, at the moment, put forth the necessary power ; that he certainly *will* strike in with His miraculous attestation."—P. 53.

The miracle, therefore, being an instance, is a proof of inspiration.

3. The third consideration is drawn from the character of God. It is not to be presumed that He will prostitute His power to the purposes of deception and of fraud ; and yet, if He works a miracle at the bidding of an impostor, He becomes a party to a double lie. He endorses equally the claim to supernatural power and supernatural knowledge. The whole thing becomes a scene of complicated wickedness. First, a creature with intolerable audacity professes to be in intimate communion with his Maker ; then, with a still more intolerable profaneness, takes the name of God in vain, by not only pronouncing it upon his lip, but by demanding a manifestation of the divine presence ; and the supposition is that God acquiesces in his blasphemy, succumbs to his behests, and fosters his designs. We cannot conceive of anything more atrocious. The miracle, as we have seen, is, in every case, the immediate operation of divine power. The man is not even the instrument ; he is only the prophet of the divine purpose. Now, to say that God's power shall be subject to his arbitrary dictation, is to say that the Almighty becomes a tool to answer the ends of imposture and falsehood ; a willing instrument to propagate deceit. If a creature, by habitual virtue, were able to effect a miracle, the case would be different. We might not be competent to say how far God's goodness should interfere to restrain its discretion. But the question is of the immediate agency of God himself ; and then it is wicked to think, much less deliberately to propose the problem, how far He can lend himself as a party to a fraud. This consideration seems to us to conclude the controversy. We concur most heartily in the earnest representation of Dr. Wardlaw :

"If a man announces himself, as having been commissioned by God to propound a certain doctrine, or system of doctrines, *as from him* ; and for the truth of his commission and his communication, appeals to works such as no power but that of God can effect ; if, upon his making this appeal, these works are instantly and openly done at his bidding ; there is no evading of the conclusion, that this is a *divine interposition*, at the

moment, in attestation of the authority he claims, and of the truth of what is declared. The professed divine ambassador says: '*This is from God*;' and God, by the instant intervention of the miracle, sets his seal to it, says, as by a voice from heaven, if not even more decisively, '*It is from me!*' The sole questions requiring to be answered, in order to the legitimacy of the conclusion, are these two: '*Is the work one which God alone can do?*' and, '*Is it actually done?*' If these questions are settled in the affirmative, there is no reasonable ground on which the conclusion can be withstood."

The foregoing reasoning as to the testimonial connection between the miracle and inspiration, seems to us to be abundantly confirmed by the example of our Lord. In the case of the paralytic, he claimed, in the first instance, to exercise a special prerogative of God. The scribes were shocked at the blasphemy. They looked upon it as altogether incredible, that a man should be entrusted with any such authority. *And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?* That is, which is antecedently the most improbable, that I should be commissioned to forgive sin, or to control the course of nature? Is there not the same presumption against the one as the other? Are they not both equally the supernatural, and, in that respect, equally unlikely? If, now, I can demonstrate to your senses that I have the power in one case, will not that convince you that I have it also in the other? If, by a word, I can arrest this disease and restore health and energy to this palsied frame, will you not believe that I am likewise commissioned to remit sin? Their silence indicated that the scribes acknowledged the force of the appeal. They instinctively felt, that if Jesus could do the one, there was no reason for saying that he could not do the other. The intrinsic improbability of both was precisely the same. *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house.* The effect was electric; the multitudes felt that he had made out his case, *and they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.* We venture to say that the same effect would have been produced upon every unsophisticated mind that witnessed the scene.

In this case, all the conditions of our argument are complied with. The miracle is appealed to as the proof of the commission; it is treated as belonging to the same category of the supernatural; as being a specimen of the kind of thing which is claimed, and as pledging the character of God for the truth of what is affirmed.

This case seems to us to go still further, and implicitly to rebuke the opinion of those who make the doctrine vouch for the

divine original of the miracle. The Jews were right in insisting upon the exclusive authority of God to pardon sin. It *was* blasphemy for a creature to claim and exercise the power in his own name. No such doctrine could commend itself to a Jew as good. If, therefore, the pretensions of the Saviour, in the case before us, had been tried only upon internal grounds, or if the miracle had been estimated only by the nature of the truth it was invoked to sustain, there would have been some pretext for the blasphemous insinuation, that he wrought his wonders by the finger of Beelzebub. Besides, there are other instances in which Jesus appealed from the internal improbability of the doctrine to the external authority of the miracle. When he announced the truths in reference to his own person, offices, and works, which were so offensive to his countrymen, on account of their alledged discrepancy with the pervading tenour of the prophets, he, in no case, undertakes to obviate their prejudices by removing the ground of their objections, and showing that the doctrine was intrinsically excellent, but appeals directly and at once to the miracle, as to that which ought to be an end of controversy. *The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him.* He suspends the guilt of the Jews in rejecting him upon the sufficiency of his miracles to authenticate his mission. *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.*

The theory which proves the doctrine by the miracle, is so much more simple, obvious, and direct, and so much more in accordance with the general tone of Scripture and the spontaneous suggestions of our own minds, that no counter-hypothesis would ever have been devised, had it not been for the philosophic error, that real miracles may be performed by a power inherent in the spirits of evil. That error we have exposed, as arising from a wrong conception of the nature of finite power; and the argument may be regarded as complete, that miracles are always the great seal of heaven; infallible credentials of a divine commission. Whoever works them must have God with him.

But it may be objected, that it avails nothing to prove that God is the only author of a real miracle, and that all such miracles impress the seal of His authority upon the doctrine, so long as it is admitted, that superior intelligences can produce effects which to us, in our ignorance, shall seem to be miraculous. We want a criterion by which to distinguish these achievements of a higher knowledge from the supernatural works of God. Cudworth applies the term supernatural to both classes of effects; though he is careful to indicate that the feats of demons do not transcend the sphere of nature and her laws. "Wherefore it seems," says he,

“that there are two sorts of miracles or effects supernatural. First, such as, though they could not be done by any ordinary and natural causes here amongst us, and in that respect may be called supernatural; yet might, notwithstanding, be done, God permitting only, by the ordinary and natural power of other invisible created spirits, angels or demons. As, for example, if a stone, or other heavy body should first ascend upwards, and then hang in the air, without any visible either mover or supporter, this would be to us a miracle or effect supernatural; and yet, according to vulgar opinion, might this be done by the natural power of created invisible beings, angels or demons; God only permitting, without whose special providence, it is conceived, they cannot thus intermeddle with our human affairs. \* \* \* But, secondly, there is another sort of miracles, or effects supernatural, such as are above the power of all second causes, or any natural created being whatsoever, and so can be attributed to none but God Almighty Himself; the author of nature, who, therefore, can control it at pleasure.”

The distinction is a just one, though we do not like the application of the terms, miracle and supernatural, to the first class; the broad line which distinguishes them from the works of God, is, that they are within the sphere of nature. But still, may not these achievements of the creature be palmed upon us as real miracles, and are we not in danger of being deceived by them, unless we have some criterion apart from the nature of the phenomena, by which we can distinguish the real from the apparent? Must we not, after all, fall back upon the doctrine to settle the question whether a real miracle has been wrought? whether the phenomenon in question is in the sphere of the natural or not? This evidently comes to the same thing with the hypothesis we have been endeavouring to set aside, and if it could be consistently maintained, all that we have said would go for nothing. But among those who concur in our views of the testimonial character of the miracle, the difficulty is commonly solved by appealing to the goodness of God. The thesis is, that God will not permit His weak and ignorant creatures to be deceived by counterfeits of His own seal; He will not suffer demons to imitate miracles in cases in which they are likely to mislead; He will restrain the exercise of their power. This, if we understand him, is the position which Dr. Wardlaw has taken. It is the position taken by Mosheim, in his valuable notes to Cudworth. God will never suffer anything that can be fairly taken for a miracle, or that is calculated to have that effect upon us, to be wrought in attestation of falsehood. We must be permitted to say that the inference here is contradicted by all analogy. We have no means of ascertaining beforehand, how far God is likely to limit the discretion of His creatures, or to prevent the machinations of malignity and falsehood. The

argument from His goodness is shown to be lame, from the uniform experience of the world. We see nothing in the distinctions of Dr. Wardlaw to render that experience inapplicable to the case.

The effect of all such prevarications and evasions, is to destroy the value of the miracle as a proof. If it possesses no authority in itself, except as supported by foreign considerations, and if these are neither clear nor obvious, it seems to be of comparatively little use; it is better to eject it from the scheme of evidences at once. But these distinctions are altogether unnecessary. The true doctrine is, that, as the miracle proves by an evidence inherent in itself, no miracles should be admitted as the credentials of a messenger or doctrine, but those which carry their authority upon their face. Doubtful miracles are in the same category with doubtful arguments; and if a religion relies upon this class alone to substantiate its claims, it relies upon a broken reed. There are unquestionably phenomena which, surveyed from a higher point of knowledge, we should perceive at once to be perfectly natural, and yet to us they may have the wonder and the marvel of the true miracle. We can lay down no criteria by which to distinguish in every case betwixt the natural and the supernatural. The effect is, where the line cannot be drawn, that the wonders are not to be accepted. We do not know them to be miracles, and consequently have no right to give them the weight of miracles. When the witness is suspected, we discard his testimony. Let it be conceded that the doctrine is good; that only shows it to be true, and not that God has revealed it. The same superior knowledge which enables a demon to transcend my experience of nature, may enable him to transcend my science; and so, after all, the good doctrine come to me from a very bad source. Devils sometimes speak truth, though not from the love of it. Shall we say that God will prohibit them from trifling with our credulity? This may be a trial of our understandings; the design may be to measure our love of truth, and to see whether we shall narrowly scrutinize the evidence which is submitted to our minds. We know not how far it may be proper that God should restrain His creatures in the exercise of their own energies. Suppose an unprincipled man of science should go among savages, and find that his attainments could give to him the distinction of being the great power of God, would God arrest his exhibitions, because they were deceiving and cheating the ignorant multitude? Has He ever arrested the frauds of priests who, under the guise of a rare acquaintance with philosophy, have gulled the populace with their marvellous achievements? This hypothesis is destitute of all probability and of all analogy. The only consistent course is to treat all suspected miracles as we treat all prevaricating witnesses. And if there were no other kinds of miracles but these, we should say that no doctrine could be authenticated by such evidence.

But, as Cudworth has suggested, there are some miracles which carry their credentials upon their face—so clearly above nature and all secondary causes, that no one can hesitate an instant as to their real character. There are some things which we pronounce intuitively to be the sole prerogative of God. Others may be doubtful; but these are clear as light. This is the class of miracles on which a religion must rely. These are seals, where the impression is distinct and legible—about which there can be no hesitation or uncertainty. These are the conclusive arguments to which a sound understanding feels itself justified in adhering. That the criterion of the miracle must be sought in itself, and that, where it cannot be definitely traced, the effect of the miracle as a proof is destroyed, is only the application to this department of evidence of the universal rules of probability. An argument must consist in its own light; and according as that light is feeble or strong, the argument is weak or conclusive. If a man should come to us, professing to be a messenger from God, and produce no clearer credentials than such effects as Cudworth has enumerated—the walking upon water, the suspending of a stone in the air, or the cleaving of a whetstone by a razor—effects which might unquestionably be produced by higher laws suspending or holding in check the lower—we should feel no more difficulty in rejecting him, than in rejecting a pretended syllogism with two terms, or a prevaricating witness. His pretensions might be true; but we should quote to him the maxim, “*De non apparentibus et non existentibus, eadem est ratio.*”

When we turn to the miracles of the Bible, with a few trifling exceptions, which are redeemed from suspicion by their connection with the others, as doubtful testimony may be confirmed by corroborating circumstances; when we turn to the miracles of the Bible, we feel intuitively that they are of a character in themselves and on a scale of magnitude which render the supposition of secondary causes ridiculously absurd. The scenes at the Red Sea, the cleaving of the waters, the passing over of the Israelites on dry land between the fluid walls, the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night; the daily supply of manna from the skies: effects like these carry the evidence of their original on their face. There is no room for doubt. And so, in the New Testament, the conversion of water into wine, the stilling of the tempest, the raising of the dead, the instant cure, without means or appliances, of inveterate diseases; the feeding of thousands with a few loaves, which involves the highest possible exercise of power, that of creation; and, above all, the resurrection of Jesus himself: cases like these have nothing of ambiguity in them. They reveal, at a glance, the very finger of God. The supernatural and the contranatural are so flagrant and glaring, that he that runs may read. We may not be able to say what a devil or an angel can do; but

there are some things which we can confidently say that he cannot do ; and these are the things from which the miracles of our religion have been chosen.

We have insisted upon this point at some length, because the neglect of the distinction has been at the bottom of all the frivolous evasions which have had no other tendency than to weaken our faith in the divine authority of the miracle.

The place, consequently, which we are disposed, as the reader may already have collected, to assign to the miracle, is the very front rank in the Christian evidences. We cannot understand how the question of a revelation or a divine commission can be entertained at all, until the credentials are produced. Mr. Trench laments the stress which has been laid upon them by modern apologists, and thinks it has contributed to obscure or to weaken the spiritual power of the gospel. We are not prepared to deny that many have been strenuous advocates of the miracles, who were strangers to the life of Christianity. It is one thing to believe in miracles, and quite another to believe in the Saviour of mankind. Faith in the divine authority of our religion is not necessarily faith in Christ. We admit all that he has said of the beauty, and glory, and self-evidencing light of the doctrine, and subscribe fully to the sentiment contained in the passage of Calvin's Institutes, to which he has referred us. That passage asserts, what all the creeds and confessions of the reformed churches, and the creeds and confessions of martyrs and saints in all ages of the world, have always asserted, that true faith in Jesus is not the offspring of logic or philosophy ; it is no creature of earth, but the gift of heaven, the production of God's holy Spirit. We would detract nothing from the inward light and power of the gospel, or from the need of supernatural grace. Neither, again, do we complain that Mr. Trench has signalized the ethical value of the Christian miracles, as being at once types and prophecies of greater works upon the soul. He has made an important contribution to our literature, by the successful manner in which he has illustrated this principle in his rich and valuable notes. We agree, too, that the appearance of such a being as Jesus would have been wanting in consistency, if nature had not been made to do homage to his name. An incarnate God could hardly walk the earth without unwonted indications of his presence. Such a wonder must needs draw other wonders after it ; and Mr. Trench has strikingly displayed this aspect of the importance of miracles. But still, it does not follow that because miracles are graceful complements of the mission of Christ, that their only use or their chief use is their typical relations to grace, and their harmony with the character and claims of the Saviour. We maintain, on the contrary, that their principal office is to *guarantee an external, objective revelation*, by

which we can try the spirits whether they be of God. They are the criterion by which a real is distinguished from a pretended revelation; the mark by which we know that God has spoken, and discriminate His word from the words of men. An external, objective, palpable test is the only one which can meet the exigencies of the case. If men are thrown upon their intuitions, impulses, and emotions, their pretended revelations will be as numerous and discordant as the dialects of Babel. Each man will have his doctrine and his psalm. The necessity of such a test has been universally acknowledged. The Catholic feels it, and appeals to a visible, infallible society, which is to judge between the genuine and spurious; the Protestant feels it, and appeals to his Bible; the Bible bows to the same necessity, and appeals to MIRACLES; these, it triumphantly exclaims, distinguish my doctrines from those of every other book, and seal them with the impress of God. Here, then, is a standard, fixed, stable, certain, with which the experiences of men must be compared. *To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* A religion of authority is the only bulwark against fanaticism, on the one hand, and a dead naturalism on the other.

We have no doubt that if the miracle should be reduced to an obscure or subordinate position in the scheme of Christian evidences, the result would eventually be, that an authoritative, external revelation would be totally discarded. This was the progress of criticism in Germany. Those who prevaricated with miracles prevaricated with inspiration, and we suspect those among ourselves who are offended at the latter, have as little relish for the spirit of the gospel, except when it happens to chime with the breathings of their own minds. We have never had apprehensions of any other species of rationalism in this country, but that which obtains in the school of Schleiermacher. We think that there are symptoms in various quarters, that it is insinuating itself into the minds of those of our scholars and reflecting men, who have not thoroughly studied the grounds of his philosophy. It invites by its warmth, and ardour, and life; it gives a significance to the history of Jesus which falls in with the pensive longings of a meditative spirit; it speaks of redemption, and pardon, and holiness, and sin; it employs, except in relation to the resurrection, the very language of piety; and seems to put on a broad and permanent foundation, the holy catholic church and the communion of the saints. But as it has no external standard of truth, it must repudiate all precise dogmatic formulas, and reduce the doctrine to a general harmony of feeling or pervading uniformity of sentiment. Religion must be a life without a creed. But as the understanding must have something to feed on, each man will be tempted to analyze the operations of his own consciousness of

God, and reduce to the precision of logical representation, the inspirations of his own soul. And when it is seen that the religion is supported by a philosophy essentially pantheistic, that the differences betwixt holiness and sin are stripped of all moral import; and that a stern necessity underlies the whole constitution of things, we may well tremble at the results, should this scheme be introduced in place of an authoritative Bible. It is because we feel that the tendency of every disparaging remark in relation to miracles, is to set aside the Bible in the aspect of authority, that we are so earnest to rebuke it. We love spiritual religion, but we abhor fanaticism. We detest bigotry, but we love the *truth*; and we believe that there is a truth in relation to God and to ourselves, which ought to be embraced in the form of definite propositions, and not apprehended as vague sentiments. There are truths which are powerful in proportion as they are clear and articulate, and worthless unless they are distinctly understood.

III. We come now to the last point which remains to be discussed—the credibility of miracles; and here we enter into the very citadel of the controversy between the friends and opponents of divine revelation. Here the question is fairly encountered, can God stand to man in the attitude of a witness to the truth? Can He declare to other intelligent beings, the creatures of His own power, facts which He knows, as one man can communicate knowledge to another? Or, if we admit the possibility of individual inspiration, in conformity with the laws of our mental constitution, can God authenticate that inspiration to a third party? Can He enable others to prove a commission from Him? To answer in the affirmative, is to admit the credibility of miracles. There are certainly no natural laws by which we can recognize any communications as authoritatively from heaven. Whether the miracles be visible or invisible; a supernatural operation upon the mind, producing an immediate consciousness of the divine voice, or supernatural phenomena addressed to the senses, producing the conviction of the divine presence: no matter what may be the process—it must be evidently miraculous, as out of and against the ordinary course of nature.

It would be obviously impossible to show, by any direct processes of argument, that there is anything in the mode of the divine existence, which precludes the Deity from holding intercourse with His creatures, analogous to that which they hold with each other. We can perceive nothing in the nature of things which would lead us to suppose that God could not converse with man, or make man the messenger of His will.

Analogy, on the contrary, would suggest that, as persons can here communicate with each other—as they can be rendered conscious of each other's existence—as they can feel the presence of one another, and interchange thoughts and emotions, the same

thing might be affirmed of God. It is certainly incumbent upon the rationalist to show how God is precluded from a privilege which, so far as we know, pertains to all other personal existences. Capacity of society and converse seems to be involved in the very nature of personality, and it cannot be demonstrated that there is anything more incomprehensible in the case of a divine than of a human testimony. How one man knows that another man, another intelligence is before him—how he reads the thoughts and enters into the emotions of another being, are problems as profoundly inscrutable as how a man shall know that God talks with him, and imparts to him truths which neither sense nor reason could discover. It deserves farther to be considered, that as all worship involves a direct address of the creature to the Deity, as man must *talk* to God as well as obey his laws, must love and confide in Him as well as tremble before Him—it deserves to be considered how all this is practicable, if the communications are all to be confined to the feebler party. Religion necessarily supposes some species of communion with the object of worship, some *sense* of God; and if this is possible, we see not why the correspondence may not be extended into full consistency with the analogy of human intercourse. Certain it is that the moral nature of man, which leads him to converse with God, has in all ages induced him to hope and expect that God would converse with him. Every age has had its pretensions to divine revelations—there have always been seers and prophets. Many have been false—have had nothing intrinsic or extrinsic to recommend them, and yet they have succeeded in gaining a temporary credit, because they addressed themselves to the natural belief that a revelation would indeed be given. Whence this natural expectation, whence this easy credulity, if the very conception of a direct communication from God involved a contradiction and absurdity?

Arguments of this sort are certainly not without their weight. They never have been and they never can be answered in the way of direct refutation. The approved method is to set them aside by the sweeping application of the principle upon which the Sadducees set aside the resurrection of the dead. Revelation and its proofs are equally supernatural, and whatever is supernatural must be false. “No just notion of the true nature of history,” says Strauss, “is possible, without a perception of the inviolability of the chain of finite causes, and of the impossibility of miracles.” The first negative canon, which this remarkable author prescribes, for distinguishing betwixt the historical and fabulous, is “when the narration is irreconcilable with the known and universal laws which govern the course of events.” He affirms that “according to these laws, agreeing with all just philosophical conceptions, and all credible experience, the absolute cause never disturbs the chain of secondary causes by single arbitrary acts of interposition, but

rather manifests itself in the production of the aggregate of finite causalities, and of their reciprocal action." In opposition to this desolating doctrine, we shall undertake to set, in a clear light, the principle that in all cases of competent testimony, where the witnesses have honestly related their own convictions, and where they were in a condition to judge of the facts, possibility is the sole natural limit to belief. We are bound to believe, upon competent testimony, what is not *demonstrably impossible*. The application of this law to all other cases of antecedent improbability but the supernatural, will hardly be questioned, and we shall therefore discuss it with special reference to miracles.

It would seem to be a self-evident proposition, that whatever is, and is, at the same time, adapted to our cognitive faculties, is capable of being known. No doubt but that man is a little creature, and that there are and forever will remain things, locked up in the bosom of Omniscience, which his slender capacities are unfitted to comprehend. But, then, there are other things, to which his faculties are unquestionably adjusted—which are not only cognizable in themselves, but cognizable by him. All that is necessary in reference to these is, that they should stand in the proper relation to the mind. When this condition is fulfilled, knowledge must necessarily take place. If an object be visible, and is placed before the eye in a sound and healthful condition of the organ, it must be seen; if a sound exist, and is in the right relation to the ear, it must be heard. Let us now take a supernatural fact; such as the raising of Lazarus from the dead, as recorded in the Gospel of John. There is not a single circumstance connected with that event which lies beyond the cognizance of our faculties. Everything that occurred could be judged of by our senses. That he was dead, that he was buried, that the process of putrefaction had begun, that he actually came from the grave at the voice of Jesus, bound hand and foot in his graveclothes, and that he subsequently took his part in human society, as a living man, are phenomena which no more transcend the cognitive faculties of man than the simplest circumstances of ordinary experience. We are not now vindicating the reality of this miracle—that is not necessary to the argument in hand. All that we contend for is, that if it had been a fact, or if any other real instance of the kind should ever take place, there would be nothing in the nature of the events, considered as mere phenomena, which would place them beyond the grasp of our instruments of knowledge. They would be capable of being known by those who might be present at the scene—capable of being known according to the same laws which regulate cognition in reference to all sensible appearances. Our senses would become the vouchers of the fact, and the constitution of our nature our warrant for crediting our senses.

The skeptic himself will admit that if the first facts submitted

to our experience were miraculous, there could be no antecedent presumption against them—and that we should be bound to receive them with the same unquestioning credence with which a child receives the earliest report of its senses. This admission concedes all that we now contend for—the possibility of such a relation of the facts to our faculties as to give rise to knowledge—such a connection betwixt the subject and object as to produce, according to the laws of mind, real cognition. This being granted, the question next arises, does the standard of intrinsic probability, which experience furnishes in analogy, destroy this connection? Does the constitutional belief, developed in experience—that like antecedents are invariably followed by like consequents—preclude us from believing, subsequent to experience, what we should be compelled, by the essential structure of our nature, to believe antecedent to experience? Does analogy force a man to say that he does not see what, if it were removed, he would be bound to say that he *does* see?

To maintain the affirmative is to annihilate the possibility of knowledge. The indispensable condition of all knowledge is, the veracity of consciousness. We have the same guarantee for the sensible phenomena which are out of the analogy of experience, as for those phenomena from which that experience has been developed. If, now, consciousness cannot be credited in one case, it can be credited in none—*falsum in uno, falsum in omnibus*. If we cannot believe it after experience, it must be a liar and a cheat, and we can have no grounds for believing it prior to experience. Universal skepticism becomes the dictate of wisdom, and the impossibility of truth the only maxim of philosophy. Consciousness must be believed on its own account, or it cannot be believed at all; and, if believed on its own account, it is equally a guarantee for every class of facts, whether supernatural or natural. To argue backwards, from a standard furnished by consciousness, to the mendacity of consciousness, in any given case, is to make it contradict itself, and thus demonstrate itself to be utterly unworthy of credit. There is no alternative betwixt admitting that, when a supernatural phenomenon is vouched for by consciousness, it is known, and, therefore, exists—or admitting that no phenomenon whatever can be known. This knowledge rests upon the same ultimate authority with all other knowledge.

But, it may be asked, is not the belief of the uniformity of nature a datum of consciousness, and does not the hypothesis of miracles equally make consciousness contradict itself? By no means. There is no real contradiction in the case. The datum of consciousness, as truly given, is that, under the same circumstances, the same antecedent will invariably be followed by the same consequents. It is not that when the antecedent is given, the consequent will invariably appear, but that it will appear, if

the conditions, upon which the operation of its cause depends, are fulfilled. Cases constantly happen in which the antecedent is prevented from putting forth its efficacy—it is held in check by a power superior to itself. “Continually we behold, in the world around us, lower laws held in restraint by higher—mechanic by dynamic, chemical by vital, physical by moral—yet we say not, when the lower thus gives place to higher, that there was any violation of law, that anything contrary to nature came to pass: rather we acknowledge the law of a greater freedom swallowing up the law of a lesser. Thus, when I lift my arm, the law of gravitation is not, as far as my arm is concerned, denied or annihilated: it exists as much as ever; but is held in suspense by the higher law of my will. The chemical laws which would bring about decay in animal substances, still subsist, even when they are hemmed in and hindered by the salt which keeps these substances from corruption.”\* When the consequents, therefore, in any given case, are not such as we should previously have expected, the natural inference is, not that our senses are mendacious, and that the facts are not what consciousness represents them to be, but that the antecedents have been modified or counteracted by the operation of some other cause. The conditions upon which their connection with their sequences depends do not obtain. The facts, as given by the senses, must be taken, and the explanation of the variety is a legitimate problem of the reason.

Suppose, for example, that a man, uninstructed in physical science, should visit the temple of Mecca, and behold the coffin of Mahomet, if the story be true, unsustained by any visible support, suspended in the air, would it be his duty to believe that, because all experience testifies that heavy bodies, left to themselves fall to the ground, therefore the phenomenon, as given by his senses, in the present case, must be a delusion?—or would it not rather be the natural inference, as he could not possibly doubt what he saw—that the coffin was *not* left to itself—that, though inscrutable to him, there must be *some* cause which counteracted and held in check the operation of gravity? “In order,” says Mill,† “that any alledged fact should be contradictory to a law of causation, the allegation must be, not simply that the cause existed

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\* Trench on Miracles.

† Mill's System of Logic. This representation requires to be somewhat modified, as it seems to imply that a previous knowledge of the cause is necessary to render the miracle credible, which is, by no means, the case. On the contrary, every phenomenon, whether natural or supernatural, must, in the first instance, authenticate itself, and, after it has been accepted as a fact, the inquiry into the cause begins. All that the constitution of our nature positively determines, is that it must have some cause—that it cannot be an absolute commencement. We do not, therefore, believe the miracle, because we know that there is a cause which can produce it; but we know that there is such a cause, because we know the effect has been produced.

without being followed by the effect, for that would be no uncommon occurrence, but that this happened in the absence of any adequate counteracting cause. Now, in the case of an alledged 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 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, having originally endowed all the causes with the powers by which they produce their effects, may well be supposed able 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." A man is, accordingly, in no case, permitted to call into question the veracity of his senses; he is to admit what he sees, and what he cannot but see, and, when the phenomena lie beyond the range of ordinary experience, it is the dictate of philosophy to seek for a cause which is adequate to produce the effect. This is what the laws of his nature require him to do.

It is obvious, from these considerations, that, if sensible miracles can exist, they can be *known*; and, if they can be known by those under the cognizance of whose senses they immediately fall, they can be proved to others through the medium of human testimony. The celebrated argument of Mr. Hume, against this proposition, proceeds upon a false assumption as to the nature of the law by which testimony authenticates a fact. He forgets that the credibility of testimony is in itself—not in the object for which it vouches: it must be believed on its own account, and not that of the phenomena asserted. In all reasoning upon this subject, the principle of cause and effect lies at the basis of the process. A witness, strictly speaking, only puts us in possession of the convictions of his own mind, and the circumstances under which those convictions were produced. These convictions are an effect for which the constitution of our nature prompts us to seek an adequate cause; and, where no other satisfactory solution can be given, but the reality of the facts, to which the witness himself ascribes his impressions, then we admit the existence of the facts. But, if any other satisfactory cause can be assigned, the testimony should not command our assent. There is room for hesitation and doubt. If a man, for example, afflicted with the jaundice, should testify that the walls of a room were yellow, we might be fully persuaded of the sincerity of his own belief; but, as a cause, in the diseased condition of his organs, could be assigned, apart from the reality of the fact, we should not feel bound to receive his statement. Two questions, consequently, must always arise in estimating the value of testimony. The first respects the sincerity of the witnesses—do they or do they not express the real impressions that have been made upon their own minds? This may be called the

fundamental condition of testimony;—without it, the statements of a witness cannot properly be called testimony at all. The second, respects the cause of these convictions—are there any known principles, which, under the circumstances in which the witnesses were placed, can account for their belief, without an admission of the fact to which they themselves ascribe it? When we are satisfied upon these two points—that the witnesses are sincere, and that no causes apart from the reality of the facts, can be assigned in the case, then the testimony is entitled to be received without hesitation. The presumption is always in favour of the cause actually assigned, until the contrary can be established. If this be the law of testimony, it is evident that the intrinsic probability of phenomena does not directly affect its credibility. What is inherently probable, may be proved upon slighter testimony than what is antecedently unlikely—not that additional credibility is imparted to the testimony—but additional credibility is imparted to the phenomena—there being two separate and independent sources of proof. The testimony is still credible only upon its own grounds. In the case, accordingly, of sensible miracles, in which the witnesses give unimpeachable proofs of the sincerity of their own belief, it is incumbent upon the skeptic to show how this belief was produced, under the circumstances in which the witnesses were placed, before he is at liberty to set aside the facts. He must show “how the witnesses came to believe so and so,” if there were no foundation in reality. The testimony must be accounted for and explained, or the miracle must be admitted through the operation of the same law which authenticates testimony in every other case. It is an idle evasion to say that men sometimes lie; no doubt there are many lies, and many liars in the world. But we are not speaking of a case in which men fabricate a story, giving utterance to statements which they do not themselves believe. That is not properly a case of testimony. We are speaking of instances in which the witness *honestly* believes what he says; and surely there are criteria by which sincerity can be satisfactorily established. With respect to such instances, we affirm that there can be but two suppositions—either the witness was deceived, or the facts were real. The question of the credibility of the testimony turns upon the likelihood of delusion in the case; and, where it is one in which the delusion cannot be affirmed without affirming at the same time, the mendacity of the senses, the miracle is proved, or no such thing as extrinsic proof exists on the face of the earth.

But it may be contended that although testimony has its own laws, and must be judged of by them, yet, in the case of miracles, there is a contest of opposite probabilities—the extrinsic, arising from testimony in their favour—and the intrinsic, arising from analogy, against them, and that our belief should be determined

by the preponderating evidence, which must always be the intrinsic, in consequence of its concurrence with general experience. The fallacy here consists in supposing that these two probabilities are directed to the same point. The truth is, the internal probability amounts only to this, that the same antecedents, under the conditions indispensable to their operation, will produce the same effects. The external is, that in the given case, the necessary conditions were not fulfilled. There is, consequently, no collision, and the law of testimony is left in undisturbed operation. It is clear that Mr. Hume would never have thought of constructing his celebrated argument against the credibility of miracles, if he had not previously believed that miracles were phenomena which could never authenticate themselves; that they were, in their own nature, incapable of being known. This is the conclusion which he really aimed to establish, under the disguise of his deceitful ratiocinations, the conclusion which legitimately flows from his premises, and a consistent element of that general system of skepticism which he undertook to rear, by setting our faculties at war with each other, and making the data of consciousness contradictory either in themselves or their logical results. If he had believed miracles to be cognizable, he would, perhaps, have had no hesitation in admitting, that what a man would be authorized to receive upon the testimony of his own senses, he would be equally authorized to receive upon the testimony of the senses of other men. What is cognizable by others—all having the same essential constitution—is cognizable by us through them. We see with their eyes, and hear with their ears. The only case in which the intrinsic and extrinsic probabilities come into direct collision, is that in which the alledged fact involves a contradiction, and is, therefore, impossible. In all other cases, testimony simply gives us a new effect.

The skepticism of Mr. Hume, and the disciples of the same school, it is almost needless to observe, is in fatal contradiction to the whole genius and spirit of the inductive philosophy. Observers, not masters—interpreters, not legislators, of nature—we are to employ our faculties, and implicitly receive whatever, in their sound and healthful condition, they report to be true. We are not to make phenomena, but to study those which God has submitted to our consciousness. If antecedent presumptions should be allowed to prevail, the extraordinary as contradistinguished from the facts of every-day life, the new, the strange, the uncommon, the *mirabile* any more than the *miraculum*, never could be established. To make a limited and uniform experience the measure of existence is to deny that experience itself is progressive, and to reduce all ages and generations to a heartless stagnation of science. The spirit of modern philosophy revolts against this bondage. It has long since ceased to wonder, long since learned to recognize every-

thing as credible which is not impossible ; it explores every region of nature, every department of existence ; its excursions are for facts ; it asks for nothing but a sufficient extrinsic probability ; and, when this is furnished, it proceeds with its great work of digesting them into order, tracing out their correspondences and resemblances, referring them to general laws, and giving them their place in the everwidening circle of science. When they are stubborn and intractable, standing out in insulation and independence, and refusing to be marshaled into systems, they are still retained as phenomena yet to be accounted for, and salutary mementoes of human ignorance. But no man of science, in the present day, would ever think of rejecting a fact because it was strange or unaccountable. The principle is universally recognized that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy. If Hume's laws were the laws of philosophy, where would have been the sciences of chemistry, of galvanism, electricity, geology and magnetism ? With what face could the palæontologist come out with his startling disclosures of the memorials of extinct generations and perished races of animals ? What would be said of aerial iron and stones ? and where would have been that sublimest of all theories, the Copernican theory of the heavens ? The philosopher is one who regards everything, or nothing, as a wonder.

The remarks of Butler are not only philosophically just, but worthy of Bacon himself, when he asserts that miracles must not be compared to common natural events, or to events which, though uncommon, are similar to what we daily experience, but to the extraordinary phenomena of nature. It is nothing worth to say that these extraordinary phenomena may be subsequently explained, in the way in which physical philosophers account for events. That was not known when they were first authenticated to consciousness. They had to be believed before they could be explained. Miracles, too, when we reach a higher pinnacle of knowledge, may connect themselves as clearly with the general scheme of God, as the wonders of physics. The conclusion, then, would seem to be established, that as the will of God is the sole measure of existence, so the power of God, or the possibility of the event, is the sole limit to the credibility of testimony.

The only question, therefore, which remains to be discussed, is, whether miracles are possible. This is simply the question concerning the existence of a personal God. If there is a being of intelligence and will, who created and governs the world, there can be no doubt, that the same power which at first ordained, can subsequently control the laws of nature, and produce effects independently of, as easily as in concurrence with, the secondary causes which He has appointed. Accordingly none will be found to deny the physical possibility of miracles, but those who deny a

great First Cause, or those who resolve the relations of the finite and infinite into a principle of immanence or identity, totally destructive of all freedom and intelligence, and of all essential separateness of being on the part of what they profess to call God. The worshippers of the supremacy of law, on the one hand, who see nothing in nature but a blind succession of events, and the philosophers of the imagined absolute, upon the other, who have ascended to the fountain of universal being, and traced the process by which the conditioned has been propagated and derived, unite in the warfare against miracles; because, in either case, the miracle is fatal to their pretensions. They cannot reconcile it with the stern necessity and rigid continuity which their speculations imperatively demand. With the avowed atheist, it is useless to contend. It is enough that he gets quit of miracles only by getting quit of God. And if he should be induced to admit their phenomenal reality, he could as easily resort to subterfuges and pretexts to explain them away, as he can dispense with intelligence and wisdom in accounting for the arrangement and order of the universe. To him whom the glorious wonders of creation and providence, renewed with every morning sun—whom what Philo calls “the truly great, the production of the heaven, the chorus of the fixed and erratic stars, the enkindling of the solar and lunar lights, the foundation of the earth, the outpouring of the ocean, the course of rivers and flowing of perennial fountains, the change of revolving seasons, and ten thousand wonders more”—reveal nothing of design, the most astonishing exhibitions of supernatural power could appear as nothing but fantastic freaks. As, according to Lord Bacon, God never wrought a miracle to convince an atheist, it would be frivolous to vindicate to him the possibility of such phenomena, or to take into serious account principles which he holds only by the abnegation of his nature. If there be no God, we care very little whether there are miracles or not.

But there is a class of philosophers, whom unlettered Christians are very apt to regard as closely approximating to Atheists, but who themselves profess to be very zealous for the divine existence and perfections, whose poison is as insinuating as it is dangerous, and whose speculations have mainly contributed to undermine the credibility of the miracle. For the purpose which we have in view, they may all be reckoned as Pantheists. It is obvious that those who, with Spinoza, start out from the notion of substance, and, by logical deduction from the elements contained in it, reduce the finite to a modification of the infinite, come to the same ultimate conclusion with those who start out from the analysis of consciousness, and by the phenomena of human knowledge are led to confound thought and existence, and identify the subject and the object. In either case, essential being is one, and the

differences of things are only varieties in the modes of manifestation. In the eclectic system of Cousin, both processes are combined: the infinite is the substance; the finite the attributes or affections;—the infinite is the real, the permanent, the unchanging; the finite is the phenomenal, the fluctuating, the variable;—the infinite is the cause; the finite, the effect. The one is the complement of the other; neither can exist or be known apart.

The fundamental error of Pantheism is, that it overlooks the fact of creation. Let this be denied, and we see no way of avoiding the philosophy of Spinoza or of Hegel. We must seek a logical and a necessary connection between the finite and the infinite. It must be that of a substance with its accidents, or a mind with its thoughts, or a blind cause with its effects. Deny creation, and you can conceive of no higher existence of the world, than as a thought of the Eternal Mind—an object to the knowledge of God; and contemplated in this light it has no real being—it is only God himself; it is only a subjective phenomenon of the divine nature. Postulate creation, and these eternal thoughts, or, as Plato would call them, these eternal ideas, become realized in finite substances, which have a being—dependent, to be sure—but still a being of their own. They are no longer the consciousness of God himself. But creation, as distinct from emanation or development, necessarily implies the voluntary exercise of power. It is a thing which might or might not be. It is in no sense necessary. Hence the relation of the finite to the infinite, upon this hypothesis, becomes purely contingent. It is a relation instituted by will and dependent upon will. In other words, we have no longer a necessary, but a free cause. This aspect of the case changes the whole problem of philosophy and gives a new direction to the current of speculation. It must now flow in the channels of induction and not of deduction. When we speak of creation as contingent, we do not mean to represent it as arbitrary. The will of God, so far from being analogous to caprice, can never be divorced from His wisdom and goodness. He must always act like Himself; and if He create a world or a universe, it must be to answer an end worthy of His exalted perfections. But while nothing can be conceived as done by Him unworthy of His name, no knowledge of his attributes can ever conduct us, *a priori*, to the nature of the particular concrete objects to which He might determine to give being. It would enable us to speak of their general character and aim, but it would throw no light upon their specific and individual differences. No man knows what kind of inhabitants there are in the moon, or whether there are any. He cannot deduce from the attributes of God any firm solution of the problem; and yet he is persuaded, that, however solved, these attributes are illustrated. It is one thing to be able to say, that whatever God does must be wise and good; it is quite a different

thing to be able to specify what those wise and good things may be. Speculation, therefore, must abandon the law of rigid deduction, when the starting-point is a free, voluntary, intelligent cause, a Person. The question then becomes one concerning the free determinations of a will regulated by wisdom and goodness. It is a question concerning design. Necessity obtains only in relation to its general character—all else is contingent. Creation gives us at once a personal God and final causes. It gives us real existences apart from God, which are precisely what He chose to make them; and final causes give us a plan, which we have no means of knowing in its special adaptations and general order, except as it is manifested in the course of experience, or supernaturally revealed. It is at this fact of creation that the pantheistic philosophy has stumbled; and, in stumbling here, it has as thoroughly exploded design as it has miracles. The argument is as complete in the one case as the other; and we would impress it upon those who permit themselves to be entangled in these cobwebs of transcendental metaphysics, that while they are revolting from the supernatural on the ground that it contradicts their philosophy, and pronouncing all miracles to be absolutely impossible—they are, at the same time, revolting from all manifestations of intelligence, and pronouncing their own most familiar consciousness to be also an impossibility.

Pantheism, in its common illustrations of the universe, has more of poetry than of truth. It represents it as an organic whole, whose unity is preserved by a regular series of separate developments, concurring in a common result. This seems to be the notion, if he had any, which Strauss intended to convey, when he said: "Since our idea of God requires an immediate, and our idea of the world, a mediate divine operation; and since the idea of combination of the two species of action is inadmissible: nothing remains for us but to regard them both as so permanently and immoveably united, that the operation of God on the world continues forever and everywhere twofold, both immediate and mediate; which comes just to this, that it is neither of the two, or this distinction loses its value." The universe, in conformity with what we take to be the meaning of this passage, is not unfrequently described as a living organism, the properties of matter being strictly analogous to vital forces, the development of which is like the growth of an animal body. This view, we are sorry to say, disfigures that masterly work, the *Cosmos* of Humboldt. The design of his introductory remarks is "not solely to draw attention to the importance and greatness of the physical history of the universe—for in the present day these are too well understood to be contested—but likewise to prove how, without detriment to the stability of special studies, we may be enabled to generalize our ideas by concentrating them in one common focus, and thus arrive

at a point of view, from which all the organisms and forces of nature may be seen as one living, active whole, animated by one sole impulse."

Having sufficiently indicated the point at which Pantheism diverges from the truth, and exposed the fallacy of its *a priori* demonstration of the impossibility of miracles, we cannot let it pass without rebuking the presumption of its spirit. In nothing is it more distinguished from the humility of true science than in the magnificence of its pretensions. When we consider the immensity of the universe, and the magnitude and extent of that government, physical and moral, which God has been conducting from the beginning, over all His creatures, whether material or intelligent, the conclusion forces itself upon us, that the plan of the universe is a point upon which we have not the faculties to dogmatize. True science accordingly, aspiring only to a relative knowledge of existence, instead of futile and abortive attempts to construct a universe, or to fix the *το παν* as a positive element of consciousness, takes its stand, in conformity with the sublime maxim of Bacon, as the minister, not the master—the interpreter, not the legislator of nature. Professing its incompetence to pronounce beforehand what kinds of creatures the Almighty should have made, and what kinds of laws the Almighty should have established, and what kinds of agency He himself should continue to put forth, it is content to study the phenomena presented to it, in order to discover what God has wrought. Without presuming to determine what *must* be, it humbly and patiently inquires what *is*. The spirit of true philosophy is much more a confession of ignorance than a boast of knowledge. Newton exhibited it, when, after all his splendid discoveries, he compared himself to a child who had gathered up a few pebbles upon the seashore, while the great ocean of truth lay undiscovered before him. La Place exhibited it, when he spoke of the immensity of nature, and human science as but a point; and Butler was a living example of it, in the uniform modesty of his confessions and the caution and meekness of his researches. Shall man, the creature of yesterday, whose mother is corruption and whose sister is the worm—who at best can only touch, in his widest excursions, the hem of Jehovah's garment—shall man undertake to counsel the Holy One as to the plan He shall pursue? Is it not intolerable arrogance in a creature, whose senses are restricted to a point, who is confessedly incompetent to declare what ends it may be the design of the Deity to accomplish in creation and providence, who cannot explain to us why the world has sprung into being at all, with its rich variety of scenery, vegetation, and life, who is unable to tell the meaning of this little scene in the midst of which he is placed—is it not intolerable arrogance in him, to talk of comprehending the height and depth, the length and breadth of that

eternal purpose, which began to be unfolded, when creation was evoked from emptiness, and the silence and solitude of vacancy were broken by the songs of angels bursting into light, and which shall go on unfolding, in larger and fuller proportions, through the boundless cycles of eternity? Our true position is in the dust. We are of yesterday, and know nothing. This plan of God—it is high as heaven, what can we know—deep as hell, what can we do? Our ignorance upon this subject is a full and sufficient answer to the folly and presumption of those who confidently assert that its order would be broken and its unity disturbed by the direct interposition of Omnipotence. Who told these philosophers that the plan itself does not contemplate interventions of the kind? Who has assured them that He, who knew the end from the beginning, has not projected the scheme of His government upon a scale, which included the occasional exhibition of Himself in the direct exercise of power? Who has taught them that miracles are an invasion, instead of an integral portion, of the divine administration? It is frivolous to answer objections which proceed upon the infinitely absurd supposition that we know the *whole* of the case.

But though the idea of a universe as a living, self-developing organism cannot be sustained, though the unity of nature is nothing but the harmony of divine operations, and creation and providence only expressions of the divine decrees, though the whole case is one which confessedly transcends our faculties, yet something we can know, and that something creates a positive presumption in favour of miracles. We know that God has erected a moral government over men, and that this sublunary state, whatever other ends it may be designed to accomplish, is a theatre for human education and improvement. We cannot resist the impression that the earth was made for man, and not man for the earth. He is master here below. This earth is a school in which God is training him for a higher and nobler state. If the end, consequently, of the present constitution and course of nature can be helped forward by occasional interpositions of the Deity, in forms and circumstances which compel us to recognize His hand, the order of the world is preserved and not broken. When the pantheist “charges the miracle with resting on a false assumption of the position which man occupies in the universe, as flattering the notion that nature is to serve him, he not to bow to nature, it is most true that it does rest on this assumption. But this is only a change would tell *against* it, supposing that true, which, so far from being truth, is, indeed, its first great falsehood of all, namely the substitution of a God of nature, in the place of a God of men.” Admit the supremacy of God’s moral government, and there is nothing which commends itself more strongly to the natural expectations of men, than that He shall teach His creatures what was necessary to their happiness according to the exigencies of their

case. Miraculous interventions have, accordingly, been a part of the creed of humanity from the fall to the present hour.

The argument here briefly enunciated requires to be more distinctly considered. There is no doubt that, after all, the strongest presumption which is commonly imagined to exist against the miracle, arises from the impression, that it is an interference with the reign of order and of law. It is regarded as an arbitrary infraction of the course of nature, or a wilful deviation from the general plan of God. It is treated as an aimless prodigy. If this view were correct, it would be fatal to its claims. The moral argument would be so overwhelming that we should be very reluctant to admit any testimony in its favour. It is to obviate this prejudice that so many attempts have been made, like the one already noticed in Trench, and rebuked by Dr. Wardlaw, to transfer the miracle to a higher sphere of nature. Nitzsch very distinctly states the difficulty, and resolves it in the same way that Trench has done. "If a miracle," says he, "were simply an event opposed to nature's laws—a something unnatural and incomprehensible; and if the human understanding, together with entire nature, experienced, through its agency, merely a subversive shock, then would the defence of Christianity—a religion established by means of a grand system of miracles—have to contend against insurmountable difficulties. But the miracles of revelation, with all the objective supernaturalness essentially belonging to them, are in truth somewhat accordant with natural laws, partly in reference to a higher order of circumstances to which the miracles relate, and which order also is a world, a nature of its own kind, and operates upon the lower order of things according to its mode; partly in regard to the analogy with common nature which miracles, in some way or other, retain; and finally, on account of their teleological perfection."\*

The same difficulty occurs in Thomas Aquinas;† and his

\* Christian Doctrine, p. 83.

† "A qualibet causa derivatur aliquis ordo in suos effectus, cum quælibet causa habeat rationem principii; et ideo secundum multiplicationem multiplicantur et ordines, quorum unus contineatur sub altero, sicut et causa continetur sub causa. Unde causa superior non continetur sub ordine causæ inferioris, sed e converso: cujus exemplum apparet in rebus humanis: nam ex patrefamilias dependet ordo domus, qui continetur sub ordine civitatis, qui procedit a civitatis rectore, cum et hic continetur sub ordine regis, a quo totum regnum ordinatur. Si ergo ordo rerum consideretur, prout dependet a prima causa, sic contra rerum ordinem Deus facere non potest; si enim sic faceret, faceret contra suam præscientiam, aut voluntatem, aut bonitatem. Si vero consideretur rerum ordo, prout dependet a qualibet secundarum causarum, sic Deus potest facere præter ordinem rerum: quia ordini secundarum causarum ipse non est subjectus; sed talis ordo ei subjicitur, quasi ab eo procedens, non per necessitatem naturæ, sed per arbitrium voluntatis. Potuisset enim et alium ordinem rerum instituere; unde et potest præter hunc ordinem institutum agere, cum voluerit; puta, agendo effectus secundarum causarum sine ipsis, vel producendo aliquos effectus, ad quos causæ secundæ non se extendunt." Summa 1, Quest. 105, Art. 6.

answer strikes us as far more direct and conclusive than any ingenious attempts to divest the miracle of its distinctive and essential character as a supernatural phenomenon. The answer amounts substantially to this : the miracle is against the *order* of nature, but not against the *end* of nature. It is a different way of accomplishing the same ultimate design. There is moral harmony, notwithstanding phenomenal contradiction. As one law of nature holds another in check, as one sphere of nature is superior to another—and the superior rules and controls the lower; and yet as all these collisions and conflicts conduce to the great purpose of God in establishing these laws and systems, so He who is supreme above them all may hold them all in check, when the design of all can be more effectually promoted by such an interference. There is no more confusion or jar in this omnipotent interposition of His own will in contradiction to nature, than when one part of nature thwarts and opposes another. In the sense, then, of disorder, as being a turning aside from the ultimate relation of things to the great First Cause, the miracle is not maintained. It is the highest order—the order of ethical harmony. It introduces no confusion in the universe. It rather lubricates the wheels of nature, and gives it a deeper significance. It breaks the apathy into which unbroken uniformity would otherwise lull the soul. The introduction of miracles into the moral system of the world is analogous in its effects to the introduction of chance upon so large a scale. The fortuities of nature keep us constantly reminded of God, and impress us with an habitual sense of dependence. We are compelled to recognize something more than law. The miracle, in the same way, brings God distinctly before us, and has a direct tendency to promote the great moral ends for which the sun shines, the rains descend, the grass grows, and all nature moves in her steady and majestic course. Miracles and nature join in the grand chorus to the supremacy and glory of God.

The true point of view, consequently, in which the miracle is to be considered is in its ethical relations. It is not to be tried by physical, but by moral probabilities; and if it can contribute to the furtherance of the ends for which man was made and nature ordained; if it can make nature herself more effective, we have the same reason to admit it, as to admit any other arrangement of benevolence and wisdom. We degrade ourselves, and we degrade our Creator, when we make the physical supreme; when we make the dead uniformity of matter more important than the life, and health, and vigour of the soul. This subject is very ably discussed by Dr. Wardlaw, and we close our argument upon it by a pregnant extract :

“ Let me illustrate my meaning by a simple comparison—a comparison

taken from what is human, but, in the principle of it, bearing with infinitely greater force on our conclusion, when transferred to what is divine. A mechanician, let me suppose, has devised and completed a machine. Its structure in each of its parts, and in its entire complexity, is as perfect as human ingenuity and long-practised skill are capable of making it. All its movements are beautifully uniform. Its adaptation for its intended purpose is exquisite. So far as that purpose is concerned, it cannot be improved. It works to admiration. In such a case, the probability certainly is, that the maker will not think of introducing any change; seeing in a structure thus faultless every alteration would be for the worse. The machine, therefore, would be kept going on as at the first, to the continued satisfaction of the inventor and artificer, and the delight and wonder of all who have the opportunity of examining it. Thus far all is clear. But suppose now further, that circumstances should occur, in which the continuance of the regular movements of the said machine exposed a human life to danger; and that, by simply stopping or changing one of those movements for but a few seconds, that life could be saved; and yet more, that it is in the power of the maker and owner, with perfect ease, to stop or to change that movement, and to do so, without in the slightest degree injuring his machine, or even at all interfering with and impeding the chief purpose of its construction: if, in these circumstances, we knew the maker and owner to be a man of unusual sensibility and benevolence, or even of no more than ordinary humanity, should we not feel it by far too feeble an expression to say that it was *likely* he would stop or change the movement? should we not think we insulted himself, and maligned his character, if we pronounced his doing so less than *certain*? If, merely because he was enamoured of the beauty and regularity of a mechanical motion, he were to refuse interference, and allow life to perish; what should we think of the man's heart, and what too of his head? Should we not look upon him with equal detestation for his cruelty, and contempt for his childish imbecility? setting him down at once as a heartless monster, and as a senseless fool? And if thus you would think of the fellowman who could act such a part, what is to be thought of the God, who, when a world's salvation was in the question—involving not the safety of a human life merely, or of hundreds and thousands of such lives, but the eternal wellbeing of millions of immortal souls—should allow that world to perish, for want of evidence of his willingness to save it, rather than allow the order of the material creation to be, in a single point, or for a single moment, interfered with? and that too, although not the slightest injury was, by such interference, to be done to the system? For surely by no one will it be held an injury, to be made subservient to a purpose incomparably transcending in importance any or all of those which, by its uninterrupted regularity, it is effecting.

“Excepting in one particular, the cases I have thus been comparing are closely analogous. The particular in which they differ is this: that in the case of the mechanician, the evil was not by him anticipated, nor, consequently, the need for his interference; whereas, in the case of the divine Creator and Ruler, all was in full anticipation; and the occasional deviations from the order of the physical creation entered as essentially into the allperfect plan of his moral administration, as the laws by which that order

was fixed entered into the constitution of the physical creation itself. But such a difference there necessarily is, between everything human and everything divine; between the purposes and plans of a creature who 'knoweth not what a day may bring forth,' and the purposes and plans of Him who 'knoweth the end from the beginning.' It evidently does not, in the least degree, affect the principle of the analogy, or invalidate the force of the conclusion deduced from it."

We cannot conclude these remarks without alluding to the fact that the researches of modern science are rapidly exploding the prejudices which pantheism, on the one hand, and a blind devotion to the supremacy of laws on the other, have created and upheld against all extraordinary interventions of God. The appearances of our globe are said to be utterly inexplicable upon any hypothesis which does not recognize the fact that the plan of creation was so framed from the beginning as to include, at successive periods, the direct agency of the Deity. The earth proclaims, from her hills and dales, her rocks, mountains, and caverns, that she was not originally made and placed in subjection to laws which themselves have subsequently brought her to her present posture. She has not developed herself into her present form, nor peopled herself with her present inhabitants. That science which, at its early dawn, was hailed as the handmaid of infidelity and skepticism, and which may yet have a controversy with the records of our faith, not entirely adjusted, has turned the whole strength of its resources against the fundamental principle of rationalism. It has broken the charm which our limited experience had made so powerful against miracles, and has presented the physical government of God in a light which positively turns analogy in favour of the supernatural. The geologist begins with miracles; every epoch in his science repeats the number, and the whole earth to his mind is vocal with the name. He finds their history wherever he turns, and he would as soon think of doubting the testimony of sense as the inference which the phenomena bear upon their face. Future generations will wonder that in the nineteenth century men gravely disputed whether God could interpose, in the direct exercise of His power, in the world He has made. The miracle, a century hence, will be made as credible as any common fact. Let the earth be explored; let its physical history be traced, and a mighty voice will come to us, from the tombs of its perished races, testifying, in a thousand instances, to the miraculous hand of God. Geology and the Bible must kiss and embrace each other, and this youngest daughter of science, will be found, like the eastern magi, bringing her votive offerings to the cradle of the Prince of peace. The earth can never turn traitor to its God, and its stones have already begun to cry out against those who attempted to extract from them a lesson of infidelity or atheism.