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I. THE CONTRA-NATURAL CHARACTER OF THE MIRACLE.

NONE but the maintainers of a rigid process of evolution, enforced by a law of blind, immanent necessity, would deny that man has degenerated from his primitive condition. He has fallen from the estate of holiness and happiness in which he was created into one of sin and misery. That being admitted, it is obvious that the scheme of religion which he originally possessed is now utterly inadequate to his wants. The law which it contained as a rule of action has been violated, and its condemning sentence renders impossible an acceptable obedience to its requirements. So far as that scheme of religion is concerned man is doomed.

On the supposition that, God the Moral Ruler were willing to reveal to sinful man another scheme, not merely legal but redemptive, as a directory of faith, a guide of life and a basis of hope, it would be just, if not indispensable, that its credentials should be so clear as to admit of no reasonable doubt. They ought to be not so much deductions from speculative premises however apparently well-founded, as phenomenal facts easily apprehended by consciousness, or immediate and necessary inferences from those facts, and therefore of equal validity with the original data themselves: the concrete results of observation and experience, or good because logical consequences from them. While the revelation itself is to be proved, its proofs ought to be as nearly as possible autopoistic.

But it is not only necessary that they be clear: they should also be striking. It may be laid down as a maxim, that an extraordinary interposition of the divine will, affecting the religious interests of mankind, should be authenticated by correspondingly extraordinary proof. Reason is entitled to entertain this expectation on two grounds: *First*, that the danger of deception by imposture in matters of so vital an importance may be rendered impossible—a danger to which, it must be confessed, history furnishes mournful and abundant evidence that the race is peculiarly exposed; and, *secondly*, that the certainty of faith and of eternal hopes may be based upon an impregnable foundation. The religious element, involving a belief in the supernatural, is so firmly imbedded in the human constitution that, even if it be pitched out with the fork of a perverse speculation, it is sure to return. It has often been remarked that the rejectors of the Bible are, generally speaking, most liable to become the victims of a superstitious credulity. Suppressing faith in the true supernatural revealed in the Scriptures, they subject themselves to the vagaries of the false. Liable, then, as men are to be imposed upon by deceptive evidences of supernatural intervention, they need clear and extraordinary proof that a revelation professing to come from God is in reality what it claims to be. This reasonable expectation God has in fact complied with, and has satisfied it, by furnishing *miracles*, as unmistakable evidences of a supernatural revelation of his will concerning the salvation of men. Miracles do afford clear and extraordinary proof of an extraordinary interposition of God in relation to man's religious interests.

The importance of miracles, therefore, cannot be exaggerated. It is against them that the most subtle and powerful assaults of scepticism have been directed, under the influence of a sagacious judgment that their demolition would involve the overthrow of christianity itself. When the shout is, Down with miracles! the meaning is, Down with the Bible! and Down with the Cross! And this is no mistake. The foes and the friends of christianity concur in emphasizing their significance. Strauss said that he despaired of overthrowing the influence of the christian ministry until faith in miracles shall be extirpated from the minds of the

people. Hurst, in his "History of Rationalism," forcibly declares that "no branch of scriptural faith attracted more of the wrath and irony of the Rationalists than miracles;" and Christlieb puts the case with equal truth and strength when he remarks, "However much in other respects our opponents may differ, they all agree in the denial of miracles, and unitedly storm this bulwark of the christian faith; and in its defence we have to combat them all at once. But whence this unanimity? Because with the truth of miracles the entire citadel of christianity stands or falls."

The two questions which will now be discussed are: *First*, What is a miracle? What is the nature of this extraordinary credential of a supernatural revelation? *Secondly*, Can it be shown that all the evidences in favor of supernatural revelation, so far as their principal features are concerned, are reducible to unity upon the miracle? Are all the departments of the evidence, in the main, miraculous in their character?

I. What, then, is a miracle?

The highest genus under which it comes is event—it is an event. The proximate genus is wonderful event—a miracle is a wonderful event. Its specific marks, differentiating it from other wonderful events, are: *first*, that it is a contravention of the known course of nature; and *secondly*, that it accompanies the teaching of a person claiming to be commissioned by God, or a revelation professing to be divine and intended to promote human holiness.

A miracle, then, may be defined to be a wonderful event, contravening the known course of nature, and accompanying the teaching of a person claiming to be commissioned by God, or a revelation professing to be divine, and intended to promote human holiness. The miracle is here defined from its nature and its office. Clearness and completeness require the incorporation into the definition of these elements.

As has already been shown, no event short of wonderful could be an unimpeachable proof of an extraordinary interposition of God. But wonderful events may be brought to pass by power less than divine. The sort of wonderful event, therefore, which is alone competent to attest an extraordinary divine interposition is one which, from the nature of the case, must transcend the power of

mere creatures. It must be one which cannot be produced by the devil or any combination of devils, or by a human being or any combination of human beings, or by any combination of devils and human beings. If it could be produced in either of these ways, the proof would be lacking that God is its author; and consequently the revelation in the interest of which it is adduced could not be proved to be from God alone. But if a revelation claiming to be divine is attested by events which it is competent to God only to produce, his approbation of the claim is clearly established. And since he cannot uphold a lie or endorse a fraud, the proof is irrefragable that the professed revelation is of divine origin, and is authoritatively true.

The question, then, is, What kind of event would fulfil this requirement? The answer is, that as an infraction of the known laws, or a contravention of the known course, of nature cannot, for obvious reasons, be wrought by human beings, and when produced for the purpose of promoting holiness would not be wrought by devils, an event involving these elements is manifestly to be attributed to the sole efficiency of God. If, then, a professedly supernatural revelation is proved by events of that character, its credentials are indisputable. To this apparently necessary view of the proofs of a revelation claiming to be divine objections have been offered by the most dissimilar parties, and have been pressed by some theistic, and even christian, writers with a zeal for which it is difficult to account. The most prominent of them will be subjected to a brief examination.

1. It is objected that this view of the miracle represents God as acting inconsistently with himself. As the laws by which he governs the world are expressions of his will, that will is held to contradict itself. To this the answer is obvious upon several grounds:

(1.) Using law as a compendious term for the regular operation of any one force of nature, or of more than one force in combination with each other, we cannot fail to observe that nothing is more common than the resistance and counteraction of one law by another. Of so frequent occurrence is this fact, that illustration would be unnecessary and gratuitous. It commends itself to ob-

servation at every moment. It is very strange that this opposition of law to law, by which the checks and balances of the physical system are maintained, and without which that system would be reduced to chaos by the unlimited and excessive operation of one or more forces, should be made a ground of objection to the miracle conceived as a contra-legal event. As every law is a special mode in which the divine will expresses itself, and every such exponent of that will is, to the most ordinary observation, liable to be resisted and held in check by another special mode in which the same will energises, will it be contended that God is inconsistent with himself? Will it be said that the whole system of nature affords an exhibition of divine self-contradiction? Or rather is it not true that this complex of special antagonisms of law to law contributes to the harmonious action of the whole, and the production of a general end which, as far as we can see, could in no other way be secured? It is evident, therefore, that it can be no valid objection to the miracle that, because it is affirmed to involve a contravention of some law, it would suppose the inconsistency of God with himself. For, simply in this aspect of it, it is sustained by the whole analogy of nature. The miracle is not a wonderful event, merely because it furnishes an instance of contradiction to law. It is wonderful, for the reason that a law is contradicted, not by another known law, but a new and exceptional force, exerted apart from any ordinary force of nature.

It may be urged that it is in this respect, in which the miracle is wholly singular and peculiar, that it is exposed to the objection that it makes God inconsistent with himself. But this does not really change the state of the question. The only difference between the two cases is that in one the divine power is mediately, in the other immediately, exercised. In both cases the element exists of the contradiction of one force by another. In both, the forces which operate express the power of God. And how in one case the resistance of one force by another is reconcilable with the divine consistency, while in the other it is not, it is impossible to see. Grant that in each the divine power is the real agent, at least that from which the force is derived, which no theist will deny, and no difference worth mentioning exists between them in

this regard. In one, God mediately contradicts, in the other, he immediately contradicts, a physical law. The conclusion is that in neither, or in both, is he inconsistent with himself.

There are two forms, deserving attention, in which an *a fortiori* argument may here be pressed. In the first place, if there be inconsistency on the part of God in opposing an exceptional force to some law of nature, much greater would be the inconsistency of resisting the regular and systematic operation of a law by the equally regular and systematic operation of another law, for example, of the centrifugal by the centripetal force. The objector, therefore, would be logically bound to consider God more inconsistent with himself in the usual course of nature than in the occasional employment of a miraculous force. The former, upon his supposition, would imply habitual, the latter infrequent, inconsistency on God's part. The objection rebounds upon him who offers it. In the second place, if God is consistent with himself in entirely abrogating some of his laws which possessed a moral and religious significance, much more may he be regarded consistent with himself in occasionally contravening a physical law by a physical force. The distinction between moral and positive laws—a distinction signalized even in human law under the terms *malum in se* and *malum prohibitum*—is too familiar to require in this place extended elucidation. It needs, however, to be stated, to secure clearness and prevent misapprehension. These two kinds of law are not defined from the ends which they contemplate. Both the moral and the positive suppose moral ends. They receive their specific denomination from their respective grounds. A moral law is grounded in the eternal nature of God, a positive in his will as expressing the divine determinations. Bishop Ezekiel Hopkins has tersely embodied the distinction in the words: A thing may be commanded because it is right; a thing may be right because it is commanded. It is therefore clear that a moral law is one which cannot be repealed. Its revocation, were it possible, would involve God in inconsistency with himself. And were it maintained that a miracle is a contravention of moral law, the position would be fairly liable to the objection under consideration. But no such ground is taken. The miracle is viewed as having no

such relation to the moral laws which God has ordained, as to furnish a contradiction of them. This must be borne in mind, or the discussion becomes utterly confused.

But we have scriptural testimony to the fact that God has abrogated some of his positive laws. The change from the scheme of natural religion to the gospel, and the change from the Mosaic dispensation of the gospel itself to the christian, embraced a repeal of positive laws. The reënactment of the Moral Law amidst the solemnities of Sinai was accompanied by no reënforcement of the specific law in regard to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which was a test of obedience to man in his primeval estate. That law was abrogated. The laws which so stringently bound upon the Jew the obligation to offer animal sacrifices, and in general to observe the ritual ordinances of the Mosaic economy, were repealed at the inauguration of the christian. These laws, although positive, operated in the moral and religious sphere, and were designed to secure corresponding ends. If, now, God was not inconsistent with himself in completely abrogating those laws, much less can he be regarded as acting out of harmony with his perfections in contravening, at some particular juncture, without absolutely destroying, the laws of the mere physical system. The same argument would hold also with reference to the change of the sacraments of the respective dispensations, the revocation of the law concerning the observance of circumcision and the pass-over, and the enforcement of that respecting baptism and the Lord's supper. This view is enhanced by the consideration that not only, in these instances, was there the abrogation of particular laws, but of whole systems of law. Were the naked requirements of the original scheme of moral law, which knew nothing of atonement for sin, not revoked, so far as the obligation to personal obedience resting upon the mere human subject is concerned; were not the law of faith substituted for the law of works, no member of the race could be justified and saved. And that the whole system of ritual law, which was specifically characteristic of the Mosaic dispensation, has been repealed by God's authority, could, were it necessary, be easily proved from the immortal speech of Stephen, the elaborate arguments of the New Testament epistles, and the

historic usages of the christian church. If God could, consistently with himself, annul, in certain respects, whole schemes of law possessing a religious significance, why could he not, with like self-consistency, contravene, under certain limitations, some special laws of nature? These *a fortiori* arguments must be met by one who takes exception to the contra-legal feature of the miracle on the ground that it would involve the Almighty Ruler in inconsistency with himself. They are based on facts which cannot be countervailed by *a priori* considerations, however specious.

(2.) The objection proceeds upon a fallacious assumption in regard to the immutability of God. If the miracle, as here defined, supposed a change in the essence, or the perfections, or the purposes of the Eternal Being, the definition would bear its refutation upon its face. But while we maintain, as maintain we ought, the unity and unchangeableness of God, we ought not to sink out of view the mysterious fact of the manifoldness of his intelligence and the almost boundless variety of his operations. While his nature remains eternally one and immutable, it is also the ground and the origin of change in all that is not itself. The universe teems with changes. Whence the conception of them if not in the infinite mind of its author? Whence the effectuation of them, so far, at least, as they are not the free sinful acts of moral creatures—the effectuation of them as physical, if not by his infinite will and his almighty power? The very existence of the universe is itself an instance of a transcendent change. Unless we take the atheistic ground that the universe is eternal, we are obliged to admit that there was a period of duration in which it did not exist. It began to be. However inconceivable to thought the fact of creation may be, it is a datum of faith. There was a moment, then, when out of nothing something came. At this supreme crisis of creation, the objects about which forces, and laws as the generalized expression of the operations of forces, are concerned, passed from non-being into being. Here, then, was the origination of forces, and consequently the origination of their laws. It is idle to say that they eternally existed in the mind and purpose of the Creator. That is true; but it must be conceded that their actual existence was not eternal; it began in time. Was this tremen-

dous change inconsistent with the unity and unchangeableness of God ?

On the supposition of creation, there could have been no physical law or laws in accordance with which it was effected, since on that supposition nothing physical, no physical objects and no physical laws, were in previous existence. And it follows that in this great instance we have the proof that God acts above and without the very highest physical laws which it is possible to suppose. The supernatural agency of the divine will is demonstrated.

But this being granted, it will be urged that when physical forces and consequently physical laws, were brought into existence and started into operation, any subsequent change in them would imply the inconsistency of God with himself. That could only be shown by proving that when he created and projected them there was no eternal purpose to change them or to contravene their operation. That cannot be proved; and there are considerations which exhibit the groundlessness of the hypothesis. Although no intrinsic change in God is possible, there are extrinsic changes in his relations to finite objects. No actual relation could have subsisted between himself and created being until it was brought by his will into actual existence. A new relation, therefore, emerged, a relation involving in one of its terms—the created one—new forces and new laws. Now it follows from God's possession of the power to create, that he possesses the power to annihilate. The power which evokes something out of nothing can surely re-
mand it to nothing. If, therefore, it should please the Almighty to exercise the power of annihilation, the finite object to which he was before actually related would, with everything it contains, be blotted out of being. Of course along with it would go the forces and laws which belonged to it and operated within its sphere. It makes no difference that we know of no instance of annihilation. For besides that our ignorance proves nothing but itself, it is sufficient to the purpose in hand to indicate the possibility of such an event. And as it is not possible for God to act inconsistently with himself, the supposition of the possibility of annihilation refutes the hypothesis that God cannot contravene the laws and change the constitution of nature established by him without inconsistency with himself.

As this argument goes to the root of the question, and the possibility of annihilation in which it is grounded may be disputed, the following proofs are briefly presented:

First, No power, so far as we are able to judge, can be greater than creative. Consequently the power required to annihilate cannot be greater than that to create. As, therefore, God creates, he is not incompetent to annihilate.

Secondly, If it was not contradictory to the divine Being that *once* nothing besides himself existed, it could not contradict that Being that *again* nothing besides himself should exist; in other words, that the universe should be annihilated. To say that, as God has brought the universe into being, he will not annihilate it is irrelevant; the question is in regard to the possibility of annihilation—not will God, but may he, annihilate?

Thirdly, All finite being absolutely depends for the continuance, as well as the beginning, of existence upon God, the only necessary and independent Being. This is the very reason of its existence. Were God, then, to will the withdrawal of his support, the cause of finite being would cease to operate, and consequently the effect—finite being itself—would cease to exist. To say that God cannot will to withdraw his support would be to speak unintelligently.

Fourthly, To suppose annihilation impossible is to limit the infinite power of God, which is itself impossible. If he cannot annihilate, he cannot do all things. There would be something which he cannot do. To say that he cannot contradict himself, and that to suppose annihilation is to suppose his contradiction of himself, is to make a mere assumption. For if he had given the express assurance that he will not annihilate—which cannot be proved—that would only show that he will not, and not that he cannot, annihilate.

Fifthly, Life, as a force operating in a particular organism, may be annihilated. Consequently, other forces connected with material things may be. It may be said that life, at what we call the death of the organized being, is simply transferred from special relation to that being; it may, for aught we know, be absorbed into some general fund of force. This cannot be proved; but if

the annihilation of life as related to organized beings is considered too doubtful to be employed in this argument, the spiritual life of the soul furnishes a case which is not doubtful. According to the testimony of the Scriptures, that life was destroyed by sin, and may be restored by the creative act of God in regeneration. Now it cannot be said that the spiritual life of the soul may be absorbed into a general fund of spiritual life, either as finite or as infinite. Not as finite, for that would destroy the supposition of the possession by a particular soul of an individual quality peculiarly its own; and further, as the whole race lost its spiritual life by sin, the existence of a general fund or reservoir of such life is un-supposable. Not as infinite, for that would concede the doctrine that the life of the creature is an emanation from God's life, and is one with it as a special form in which it is manifested. But if the spiritual force, which we justly denominate spiritual life, may be annihilated, much more may a force of lower importance related to merely material existences.

The conclusion is, that annihilation is possible. And then, if God may, consistently with himself, annihilate the universe of substantial being, he may annihilate all the forces which belong to it, which of course would involve the obliteration of the laws according to which they operate, since, if there were no operation, there could be no fixed mode of operation; and, therefore, reasoning from the greater to the less, it is possible for God to contravene a particular constitution of nature, and special laws in accordance with which some forces operate in connection with a single world or system.

If it be said that the annihilation of the substantial universe would not necessarily imply the annihilation of its forces, for the reason that they might be retracted into the infinite energy from which they sprung, the answer is twofold: *First*, this would be to take the pantheistic ground, and efface the distinction between the divine will and the forces operating upon matter. Those forces are grounded in the will of God and depend upon it for existence; they are controlled by it and express it, but they are not identical with it. If they are one and the same with it, the system of the dualism of spirit and matter is given up and that of monism ad-

mitted. It may be that, in attempting to *think* the annihilation of the forces of the universe, we could only conceive their re-absorption into the sum of existence, but what we cannot think we may believe. The limits of thought are not the limits of faith. We cannot think the infinite God, but we must believe in his existence. *Secondly*, if, according to the supposition, the forces of the universe would be retracted into the omnipotent energy of the divine Being, it is admitted that they would be out of connection with the universe; and as they could not operate upon nothing, the laws of their operations would be non-existent. The argument, therefore, holds good that the supposition of the annihilation of the universe involves the supposition of the contravention of all its laws. And if all may be contravened, some may.

(3.) With christian writers who urge the objection under consideration one clear, concrete instance of a violation of the known course of nature, and consequently a contravention of its known laws, which is established by the authority of the Bible, ought to be sufficient. Such an instance is the destruction of the world by fire. To the christian it makes no difference that the fact has not already occurred. God says the fact will occur. It may therefore enter into our reasoning with the force of a fact accomplished. It is certainly a part of that constitution of nature which we denominate uniform, that the earth is daily brought into relation to the beams of the sun which fructify it. But during the time that the world shall be burning and while it may continue, if God so please, in an incinerated condition, the law which has been mentioned will cease to operate. The sun may still shine, but it will not fructify the earth. This is clearly a case in which God, consistently with himself, will infringe the known laws of the present mundane system. For thousands of years, day by day, the sun will have vivified the earth. The induction of particular instances will be enormous. But on that day of the universal conflagration, the uniform operation of the law will be violently interrupted. One negative instance, according to the great maxim of Bacon, is sufficient to check a host of affirmatives. The negative instance here will be the fire which will stop the operation of a law that had persisted uninterruptedly, day after day, for millen-

niums. Will that infer divine inconsistency? If not, why should a lesser instance of the same sort? Other cases upon which a similar argument may be based might be adduced, such as the resurrection of the dead and the incarnation of the Son of God, but as they will be used in another part of the discussion, they will not now be emphasized.

(4) It is difficult to see the force of this objection, in view of the consideration that the physical system is subordinate to the moral. It is the moral perfections of God which peculiarly constitute his glory. It may be safely assumed that for their illustration chiefly—we do not say exclusively—the whole material system was brought into being. What hinders, then, that for the attainment of great moral ends God should alter, or even destroy and re-arrange some particular natural system? Why may not this have been a part of his eternal plan, conceived as a whole? This line of argument is so obvious, that it is scarcely necessary to pursue it in detail.

(5.) It is admitted by all christian writers that the system of which we form a part is a disordered one. The revolutionary force of sin has entered it and marred its harmony. It is dominated by the law of sin and death, a law operating with undeviating uniformity and grounded upon an induction of particular facts as wide as the human race and reaching back to its origin. Now it is the office of that professed divine revelation, which appeals to miracles as its credentials, to announce a remedial scheme intended to recover the world from the operation of this law of sin and death. It involves as its very end a contradiction of that law. For if to make men holy and to restore them from the grave is to contradict sin and death, the gospel scheme most certainly professes to contradict the law of sin and death. Its very design is to antagonize and correct the disorder pervading both the moral and the physical system, and this it must accomplish, if at all, by destroying and removing it, just as the operation of the principle of health destroys disease in a disordered body and removes it from all connection with it. If, then, the remedial scheme proposed by a revelation claiming to be supernatural and divine is, in the general, contradictory to the great and admitted law of sin and death,

why should not the proofs of such a revelation be derived from events which contradict special laws operating upon the theatre of nature? If the general design be the destruction of all disorder, why may not certain particular laws which contribute to that disorder by their operation be contravened in order to prove that design? If the disorder as a whole may be contradicted, why not in part? But if the proofs cannot involve the contravention of specific laws, because that would make the Deity inconsistent with himself, there could be no remedial scheme which would contravene the universal law of sin and death. And so, farewell to the gospel! It is pronounced impossible, because the divine self-consistency and the harmony of a disordered and ruined world preclude it! The position that the miracle is contra-natural is charged even by some christian theologians as leading to infidelity. The answer is as easy as it is necessary, that the principle upon which the contra-natural character of the miracle is denied would make the delivery of men from the law of sin and death an impossibility, and consequently the scheme of redemption a figment. But that the reduction of disharmony to harmony, and of disorder to order, that the substitution of holiness for sin, of life for death and of bliss for woe, by violating the laws of an anomalous and abnormal system, is unworthy of God, it passes one's comprehension to see.

This argument would be enhanced upon the supposition of the pessimist, that this world is not only disordered, but as bad as it can be. For, if it be absolute evil, its perfect contradictory would be absolute good. The more of contradiction to it the better: the more of contradiction to it, the nearer the approach to heaven and the farther the recession from hell. Who would oppose a contradiction to the laws operating in such a system? If this world be the vestibule of hell, by all means let us have contradictions to its laws, whether by the proofs, or the constituent elements, of a scheme which proposes to redeem it from reigning evil and constitute it the porch of heaven.

2. It is objected to the contra-natural and contra-legal character of miracles, that they are wrought in conformity to higher laws than those with which we are acquainted.

(1.) This objection is irrelevant, and therefore is destitute of force. All that is affirmed in the definition of a miracle here given is that it contravenes some *known* law or laws of that course or constitution of nature by which we are environed and conditioned and with which we are familiar. To object that there is a course or constitution of nature higher than this, embracing unknown laws in accordance with which what are called miracles may be wrought, is to travel beyond the bounds of the question under consideration and to introduce a new and foreign issue. It is of course admitted that there must be, from the nature of the case, and is in fact, a general plan upon which all the works of creation and providence, having been eternally purposed by the supreme Ruler of the universe, are in time executed by him. Bishop Butler, in his powerful argument to show that there is no presumption from analogy against miracles, says, that "a miracle, in its very notion, is relative to a course of nature; and implies somewhat different from it, considered as being so." He further says, that "it might be part of the original plan of things, that there should be miraculous interpositions."¹ If the fact of miracles be allowed, every theist must deepen this cautious language of Butler into must be. They are not improvised to meet emergencies in the divine government. But provided for eternally as they were in God's great scheme, the provision is precisely this, that the course of a particular system should be extraordinarily transcended and contravened for high religious ends. What is there impossible in this supposition? It cannot be impossible, unless it involve the Deity in inconsistency with himself, and that has already been disproved.

(2.) Of a course or constitution of nature different from and higher than that to which we are related, we can, in the exercise of mere reason unassisted by a supernatural revelation, know nothing, at least with certainty, and consequently it could not possibly be a sphere in which *evidence* is presented to us. The question about which we are engaged is one of evidence. How can a revelation claiming to be divine be proved? The proofs furnished ought to be of the most convincing character. They must, there-

¹ *Anal.*, Pt. II., Chap. 2.

fore, be derived from that course or constitution of things with which we are familiarly acquainted, and about which we are able to judge with confidence. To invoke the operation of higher laws than those which are known to us is to transfer the proofs into a region in which conjecture is substituted for evidence. To bring in the consideration of higher laws is to envelope the whole question in clouds and darkness. The appeal to evidence becomes impossible.

But these higher laws, What are they? Let them be named and described. If they be unknown, what can be predicated of them? They are introduced without description merely to serve a purpose. We indicate the laws of which we speak—we name them, we describe them, we know what they are and how they operate. Of unknown elements we have nothing to say, and we are entitled to ask that others should maintain like silence in regard to them. If by higher laws it be meant to designate ethical ends, as Trench does, there is a confusion of terms. We are speaking of laws, not ends; and no one dreams of denying that ethical ends are contemplated in the working of miracles. That constitutes an element of the definition which we furnish. Surely it is an ethical end which is secured when a revelation professing to be divine is attested. If by ethical ends are meant the moral results in particular cases of miracle-working, as, for instance, the healing of diseases by Christ, it is granted that they entered, to a greater or less extent, into those miracles, but it cannot be proved that they were the only, or even the chief, ends contemplated in their production. When, however, it is conceded that miracles are wrought for ethical purposes, what has been established against the position that they contravene the known course of nature and contradict some of its known laws? Nothing whatsoever.

3. It is by some objected, that miracles are not contraventions of the known course of nature, not violations of its laws, because they are merely the results of the introduction into that course of new antecedents. The introduction of new antecedents being allowed, new natural consequents follow in strict accordance with the known laws of nature. Dr. Thomas Brown, of Edinburgh, in the Notes appended to his treatise on the "Relation of Cause and

Effect," elaborately maintains this view.¹ He says that "the will of the Deity, whether displayed in those obvious variations of events, which are termed miracles, or inferred from those supposed secret and invisible changes which are ascribed to his providence, is itself, in all such cases, to be regarded by the affirmer of it as a new physical antecedent, from which, if it really form a part of the series of events, a difference of result may naturally be expected, on the same principle as that on which we expect a change of product from any other new combination of physical circumstances." Or, to put the case more briefly, as Dr. J. R. Beard does in his "Voices of the Church," in reply to Strauss, quoted by Dr. Wardlaw: "Simply a new antecedent comes into action, and a new consequent necessarily ensues."

(1.) This begs the question. It is assumed that the immediate efficiency of the Deity is a new antecedent. But the very question is whether God does immediately act? Is the event itself of such a character as to necessitate the conclusion that it takes place in consequence of his immediate efficiency? If so, the inference is legitimate that he attests the commission or revelation in connection with which it is produced. This hypothesis assumes the point in dispute, and therefore logically breaks down.

(2.) According to the meaning of the terms *new antecedent*, it must be supposed to be a force or influence which is foreign to the known course of nature. It is, *e concessio*, new. The uniform operation of the known laws of nature would not lead us to expect its operation. It would then be unwarrantable to say that it was provided for in the known scheme of nature. It therefore unexpectedly traverses the known course of nature; that is, it is contra-natural. Certainly, the immediate exercise of divine efficiency without the employment of second causes, would be a new antecedent, but it would be one for which the known system of nature makes no provision. It would be alien to that system and could only enter it by invading it. The law by which its appointment was excluded would be contradicted.

The theory for which Dr. Brown contends is that the unifor-

¹ The same view, substantially, is maintained by Dr. Samuel Harris, in his recent work, *The Self-Revelation of God*, chap. 15., on Miracles.

mity of nature is but the result of a series of *invariable* antecedents and sequents. But a new, wholly unexpected antecedent could not be supposed to fall in with this law of "invariable antecedence and sequence." It would be an extraordinary and exceptional variation from such a uniform course. And how the course of nature can be invariable and variable one fails to see.

To this it may be answered, that the uniform series of antecedents and consequents is not inconsistent with the occasional introduction of new natural causes, or, what is the same thing in Dr. Brown's nomenclature, new "physical antecedents." Now, either these are second causes or they are not. If they are, Dr. Brown's conception of the miracle as involving the immediate efficiency of God—that is, his efficiency acting not mediately through second causes, but apart from them—is contradicted. If they are not second causes, then, in the first place, it may be demanded how we are to know that they are not. New antecedents, in the form of second causes, known only to certain persons of unusual scientific knowledge, and employed by them to condition new and surprising results, astonish and confound the generality of men who are ignorant of them. How could such events indicate the immediate efficiency of God, when a man of scientific skill or a devil might, for aught is known, be their producer? Unless the very nature of the event, as one manifestly competent only to divine power, proves the immediate intervention of that power, such intervention cannot with certainty be presumed. Now the only sort of event, we make bold to say, which can be demonstrated to be a product of God's immediate efficiency alone is one which contravenes some known law of nature. In the second place, if these new antecedents are not second causes, they would lie outside of the domain of scientific observation, outside of that system of "invariable antecedence and sequence" in which it is possible to employ induction and generalization in order to group the facts of nature into laws. The properties of finite things and beings may be observed and their effects, or, if one pleases, sequents may be noted and classified. But what instrument of observation is nice enough to detect the occult exertions of God's immediate efficiency, and reduce them to the category of laws? Is it not manifest that such

new antecedents, contradistinguished as they are to second causes which are subject to observation, cannot be harnessed into a system of natural law? In the third place, one cannot help wondering that the astute mind of Dr. Brown did not perceive that a two-fold absurdity lurks in his position. His hypothesis is that the will of God alone is efficient, and that what are called second causes and effects are merely antecedents and sequents devoid of all productive connection with each other. It follows necessarily that the immediate efficiency of God can never be occasional, and therefore no miracle considered simply as an exceptional event would be possible; and it follows also that as every sequent may in turn become an antecedent of a new sequent, one instance of divine efficiency produces another instance of divine efficiency; that is, the divine efficiency produces itself. In the fourth place, the assumption that in the miracle the immediate efficiency of God is a new antecedent resulting in a new consequent in accordance with some known law of nature, is refuted by a glance at the miracles of Scripture and at the illustrations employed by these writers to support their view. One used by Dr. Brown will suffice, and it is selected because it is plausible and because it precisely expresses the view for which he contends. (*Cause and Effect*, Note E.):

“That a quantity of gunpowder, apparently as inert as the dust on which we tread, should suddenly turn into a force of the most destructive kind, all the previous circumstances continuing exactly the same, would be indeed contrary to the course of nature, but it would not be contrary to it, if the change were preceded by the application of a spark. It would not be more so, if the antecedent were any other existing power of equal efficacy; and the physical influence which we ascribe to a single spark, it would surely not be too much to claim for that Being to whom we have been led by the most convincing evidence to refer the very existence of the explosive mass itself, and of all the surrounding bodies on which it operates,” etc. “Events of this kind, therefore, if truly taking place, would be only the operation of one of the acknowledged powers of nature, producing indeed what no other power might be capable of producing, but what would deserve as much to be considered as the natural consequence of the power from which it flows, as any other phenomenon to be regarded as the natural consequence of its particular antecedent. . . . Every law of nature continues as it was, for every antecedent has its ordinary effect.”

All that the advocates of the contra-natural character of the miracle desire is here conceded. For this supposed miracle of Dr.

Brown let us substitute the real miracle at Cana. A "quantity" of water was suddenly turned into a quantity of wine, without the operation of any known force of nature, or what is termed a second cause. The law here infringed was that, according to the known course of nature, water is not convertible into wine without the operation of some natural force or second cause. But the conversion did take place without the intervention of such a force or cause. That law was consequently violated. The circumstances which condition the production of an effect, or, as Dr. Brown would have it, the occurrence of a sequent, are, from the nature of the case, natural circumstances; that is, those which are involved in the system of the world known to us. If they are supposed to be supernatural circumstances, they are ruled out of the question; they would not belong, *ex hypothesi*, to the order of nature. If introduced, they would traverse that order. The ground, therefore, is legitimately taken that the water was changed into wine, "all the previous circumstances" belonging to the known order of nature having continued exactly the same. The miracle was therefore "contrary to the course of nature." But if it be a law of nature that water cannot be instantly converted into wine by the operation of any known natural cause—and who will deny?—it becomes still more evident that the actual conversion was a contravention of a known law.

But it will be said that this is not the whole case. Dr. Brown contends that all the previous circumstances do not remain the same. A new circumstance is introduced. What? The power of God in the miracle acts immediately, apart from the envelope, so to speak, of ordinary antecedents, and acts, as a natural force, in accordance with the laws of nature. Now, one is entitled to ask, What laws? In the instance of the miracle at Cana, with what law of nature did the divine efficiency accord? That under certain circumstances water may be changed into wine? Dr. Brown might safely have been challenged, and the advocates of this view may now be safely challenged, to indicate the law. Upon what induction of particulars has such a generalization ever been effected? To answer: the law that "every antecedent has its ordinary effect," is to play off upon words. Is it an "ordinary" ef-

fect that any antecedent is followed by the consequent of the conversion of water into wine? One might here pause to expose Dr. Brown's egregious confusion of terms. He continually talks, like other men, of natural powers producing effects, and of effects produced by their antecedents. And yet it is the very purpose of his philosophy to show that there is no productive relation between what are called causes and effects—they are mere antecedents and sequents. To say, then, that it is a law of nature that "every antecedent has its ordinary effect" is, in his case, either to speak absurdly, or to contradict himself. Although, however, Dr. Brown's theory of causation is one which contradicts the laws of human belief and human usage—was it a miracle of paradox?—we do not now intend to assail it. But there is one of his positions touching the miracle that must be emphasized under another point.

(3.) The ground is maintained by the Edinburgh philosopher and by some recent writers of note, that in the miracle the divine power comes immediately into play as one of the powers of nature. We have heard Dr. Brown expressly terming it "one of the acknowledged powers of nature." Were this granted, it would of course fall in with the course of nature and constitute one of its forces. Consequently a miracle wrought by it could not be contrary to the course of nature.

First, It is easy to convict this individual writer of palpable inconsistency. His doctrine is clear. What is called the relation of cause and effect is a relation of mere antecedence and sequence. In this system, it is the power of God alone which produces effects. That power operates universally in nature. Antecedents are barren of results—they are simply the signs of the divine efficiency. It is therefore the *only* real power, the *only* power which is efficacious in producing effects. How then, it is asked, can it be *one* of the powers of nature? If it be one of them, there are other powers of nature different from it. What are they? Are they antecedents which have no power? The sole power of nature, and yet one of a class of powers with which it is coördinated, and powers the very existence of which is denied! If it had been allowed that natural antecedents possess a derived, dependent, limited power, one could recognize a distinction between the power of

God acting mediately through that power and acting immediately and apart from it. But as no such power is conceded to these antecedents, it comes to this: the power of God immediately causes every effect, but there are some effects which are exceptional and extraordinary because the power of God immediately causes them. Such are Dr. Brown's miracles!

Secondly, Let us throw out of account Dr. Brown's peculiar theory of causation, and direct our attention to that part of his doctrine which is common between him and certain other writers who oppose the contra-natural character of the miracle, namely, the position that the power of God, as immediately exercised, is one of the forces of nature. The view is maintained by several recent writers that there are no exceptions to the uniform, continuous operation of law. The unbroken continuity of law is asserted. So far do these authors go as to affirm that redemption itself is not what it has commonly been regarded—"the Great Exception" to the undeviating reign of law. The Duke of Argyll, in his *Reign of Law*, says: ¹ "Assuredly, whatever may be the difficulties of christianity, *this* is not one of them—that it calls on us to believe in any exception to the universal prevalence and power of law." Professor Drummond, in his *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, steps in the tracks of the Duke, when he says, "Science can hear nothing of a Great Exception"; and that he himself can hear nothing of it is sufficiently evinced in these words: "If there is any truth in the unity of nature, in that supreme principle of continuity which is growing in splendor with every discovery of science, the conclusion is foregone. If there is any foundation for theology, if the phenomena of the spiritual world are real, in the nature of things they ought to come into the sphere of law. Such is at once the demand of science upon religion, and the prophecy that it can and shall be fulfilled." ²

Without stopping now to expose the radical subversion of the gospel contained in the denial that redemption originated in the mere mercy of God apart from the demands of law, and the glaring absurdity that law suggested the deliverance of transgressors out of the grasp of law, we pass on to examine the sweeping affir-

¹ P. 49.

² Pp. 18, 20.

mation that there is no exception to law, inasmuch as it would destroy the contra-natural character of miracles, which it is the purpose of these remarks to establish. Both of the authors alluded to maintain the "identity" of the laws operating in the natural and the spiritual worlds; and in this respect again Professor Drummond ploughs with the Duke of Argyll's heifer.¹ To accomplish this, the old distinction, recognized by the Church of God in all ages, between the natural and the supernatural is obliterated. All is natural. Grace is nature. In the miracle the power of God is but one of the powers of nature, acting extraordinarily, but still acting in conformity with natural law.

Now, these authors, as men of science, will admit that even material substances, not to speak of mental, possess peculiar properties by virtue of which they act, in their appropriate relations, as forces. They concede the force of gravity, of electricity, of chemical affinity, and the like. But as theists and christians they hold that these forces are specific manifestations of a generic power resident in the will of Almighty God. Even Mr. Spencer, whom Professor Drummond sometimes cites with approval, maintains that all the special forces of nature may be correlated upon a great, central force—"an infinite and eternal energy." It follows that all the canons of classification would be violated by reducing the generic, all-pervading power of God, sustaining, directing and controlling the subordinate forces of creatures, to coördination with them as a specific force. Can the divine power be coördinated with electricity, magnetism, chemical affinity, heat, gravity, and the like? Does it not involve a logical solecism to speak of it as one of these powers or forces? It is as if one should coördinate the genus animal with the species included under it, as one of them, and enumerate the species as animal, lion, horse, etc.

This may be regarded as an unjust statement of the view under examination. Let us, then, test it by an application to a concrete case. Professor Drummond, in his chapter on Biogenesis, advocates the law formulated in Harvey's great maxim, *omne vivum ex ovo* or *ex vivo*—life cannot be generated from death; it must spring from life. This law, he contends, rules in the spiritual and

¹ *Reign of Law*, pp. 50, 51.

the natural world. He rejects spontaneous generation in both spheres. Now the sinner is spiritually dead. He cannot, therefore, evolve his own spiritual life. He may, however, receive spiritual life by contact with the life that is in Christ. Biogenesis holds good everywhere. It is a law with which the power of God in regeneration conforms. Now, we beg to know how the generalization expressed in Harvey's maxim was formed. The answer must be, Upon an induction of particulars in the domain of the physical. Had the Professor been content to signalize the analogy between this law in the physical sphere with a law in the spiritual, the case would be different from what it is. But this he denies as being utterly inadequate, because utterly unsatisfactory to science. He has made a new discovery, which will hush the conflict between orthodox believers and scientific men. He explicitly contends that the law enounced in the aphorism under consideration is the very law which prevails in the spiritual world. "There are not," he observes, "two laws of Biogenesis, one for the natural, the other for the spiritual; one law is for both. Wherever there is life—life of any kind—this same law holds. The analogy, therefore, is only among the phenomena; between laws there is no analogy—there is continuity."¹ The natural and the supernatural sphere being one and the same, the law which operates in the former is by continuity projected into the latter, or rather it continues to operate in the same sphere. If, then, it begins natural it must persist as natural. It is natural law which operates in what is usually called the spiritual world. When, therefore, the life-giving power of Christ quickens the spiritually dead sinner, it is exerted in obedience to the natural law of Biogenesis. It becomes one of the life-communicating powers of nature conforming to natural law. But as the life-giving power of Christ is divine, the divine power is coördinated, as a specific force, with the other specific forces of nature. The concrete case has justified the abstract affirmation, that this writer commits the blunder of reducing the universal power of God to the category of a particular force, and coördinating it with the specific forces of nature. As there is an electric, so there is a Christic, force.

¹ *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, p. 76.

If it be excepted, that in one case a life-communicating force operates upon a material subject, in the other upon a spiritual, we will take the resurrection of the dead body. That is material. The life-giving power of Christ must be held by Professor Drummond to operate in this case in conformity with natural law. He would be obliged to rank the life-imparting power of God which raises the dead body to life as one of the forces of nature, physically considered. And, as law supposes a series of particular facts, otherwise it could not be characterized by continuity, one cannot forbear asking Professor Drummond upon what series of particular facts he would base the law of the resurrection of the dead. Supposing that he could reduce the fact of resurrection under a general law of Biogenesis, would he deny that the power which produces that fact contravenes the particular law of death? If he would not, he concedes the position that a miracle contravenes some known law of that system of nature with which we are acquainted. The same thing holds in regard to the miracle of regeneration—it contradicts the law of spiritual death.

Professor Drummond may further be asked, if there is a Christic force operating in nature to give life to the spiritually dead, how it comes to pass that it is not characterized by uniformity. Why are some men made spiritually alive by it, and others not? By what law is the operation of this natural force checked, so as to operate unequally upon the spiritually dead? Would he reply, The law of Election? If he did, as a Calvinist he must, would he reduce the free, sovereign will of God, the source of election, under the reign of law? To say, Yes, for God is a law to himself, would be to trifle with the subject, since the question is in regard to laws which terminate upon the objects of finite nature.

Finally, as the Professor will admit that we are dependent upon revelation for the knowledge of God's willingness to regenerate sinners, it may be asked, Is that revelation the product of natural law? If the answer be, It is the product of the law of benevolence, what becomes of the law of justice, which demanded the destruction of transgressors? It is obvious that it was the result of a free and sovereign determination of the divine will, and

the attempt to subject that to the operation of law could scarcely be screened from the imputation of profanity. But whatever view may be taken of the origin of revelation, it cannot with truth be denied that it contravenes the universal law of human ignorance with reference to spiritual things. And so we make our bow, on retiring, to Dr. Brown, the Duke of Argyll, and Professor Drummond.

4. It is further objected, that a miracle is not contra-natural, because one law is extraordinarily introduced as counteracting another law, and nothing is more common in nature than such a fact.

(1.) Here *extraordinarily introduced* may mean either extra-naturally introduced or not. If the former, the question is given up. For it would be conceded that no provision is made for such an introduction of law into the known system of nature, in accordance with which intelligent foresight may exist and intelligent action adopted. It would be the intervention of one of those supposed "higher laws" which, as has already been shown, must be ruled out of the discussion. If the latter, the law would only be one exceptionally operating among the known laws of nature, and it is admitted in these remarks that one known law frequently counteracts another known law. No miracle, in such instances, exists. But this leads us to consider the gist of the objection, and it will be evinced to consist in a mistake of the *status questionis*.

(2.) The question is not, whether in the miracle a known law of nature is counteracted, but it is, whether the counteraction of a known law is accomplished in the absence of any natural cause. In the former case, the course of nature may be complied with; in the latter it is contravened. Miracles may be distinguished into two classes: those which could not be effected by any natural or even by any finite cause, and those which might be effected by such a cause and are not. The changing of water into wine in an instant, the supply of the hunger of thousands with a few loaves of bread and a few fishes, and the raising of the dead, are instances of the first class. As they involve the exercise of creative power, they could not be effected by any natural cause. They obviously infer the immediate efficiency of Almighty God. The swimming of the iron axe in the Jordan is a specimen of the second class.

It might have been effected by a natural cause; the force of gravity might have been counteracted by muscular or mechanical force; but it was not so effected. The absence of any natural, or second, cause stamped the event miraculous. In such cases, we are obliged to admit that the effects *might* be produced by præter-human agency, say by that of the devil, notwithstanding the fact that no natural cause is apparent. But when the effect is produced in designed connection with the teaching of a person claiming to be a commissioned messenger from God, teaching intended and adapted to promote holiness, we are warranted on ethical grounds to exclude the agency of evil spirits. Physically, the effect might possibly be produced by such agency, morally it could not.

Leaving out of view now the first class of miracles, which, palpably involving creative power, are, as contraventions of a course of nature excluding the ordinary exercise of that power, patent seals of heaven's High Chancery, let us contemplate the second class. Take the instance of the axe floating in the Jordan. The natural law which held it at the bottom was that of gravitation. Now the swimming of the axe on the surface of the stream was not simply the result of the counteraction of that law. Had any natural means been used to pull or lift the axe to the surface, the counteraction of gravitation would have been in accordance with the known course of nature; there would have been no miracle. But the iron rose to the surface without the employment of any such natural means. The law which was contradicted was that iron, or any other substance of greater specific gravity than water, will not rise to its surface unless some natural force counteract the force of gravitation. That law, established upon an induction of innumerable particular instances, was contradicted, for the iron did rise to the surface of the water, and float upon it, without the intervention of any natural force counteracting that of gravitation. The known course of nature was contravened. It may be added that the objection is also founded upon too narrow a basis. It takes no account of general laws which regulate the relations to each other of special laws.

5. There is a conceivable difficulty which, to our mind, is more

formidable in the way of the definition of a miracle that has here been given than those which have been examined. It is this: Creation is the highest exercise of divine power of which we have any notion. The miracle, therefore, as an instance of divine efficiency, cannot rise higher than creative power. Without the assertion of its truth, let it be supposed that the doctrine of some scientific thinkers may be true, that successive orders of beings are brought into existence, not by an unbroken process of evolution through the transmutation of species, but by periodically recurring acts of creative power originating new species. Were that a law of nature, the successive exertions of creative power would be natural. They would form a part of the course of nature. As, then, the miracle can be no more than an exercise of creative power, it could not be regarded as a contravention of the course of nature. To this we answer:

Creation establishes an order or constitution of things which we call natural. It is fixed and uniform, governed by laws which operate in a regular manner. Upon the hypothesis before us, the successive acts of creative power, by which new species of beings may be produced, are put forth in the line of this fixed system of operation. They fall in with it, and carry it on to that end which the whole constitution of nature was designed to secure. But if we suppose an exercise of creative power which is manifestly exceptional to the order in which that kind of power ordinarily acts, and which, moreover, contradicts that order and interrupts it, we would have an instance, not of a natural, but of a contra-natural effect. Certain species of animals, for example, are created, and in the course of nature those species decay and perish, and others are produced and take their place. Now, it is admitted that the creation of the new species would be natural. But if a certain species which became extinct were by creative power to be reproduced, that would be contra-natural. And this will be seen more clearly, if we suppose also that the old species, once dead and then new-created, is not intended to live on and propagate, but only to exist for a short time in one or a very few non-productive individuals. That would be a procedure evidently contradictory to what we know as the course of nature.

So, for God to create a new species of human beings might be in accordance with natural law. But if a single man is raised from the dead, who is not designed to originate a new species, that would be entirely contra-natural. There are no analogies even, which would lead us, antecedently to experience, to expect such an event. The resurrection of Lazarus and of Jesus were events of that sort. They cannot by any ingenuity be referred to the operation of any known law; on the contrary, they sharply cross the line of known law. They were wholly exceptional instances of creative power, not exercised for the purpose of starting a new species. They, with other instances of resurrection, stand alone, conspicuous examples of an extraordinary and supernatural intervention of Almighty God. There was no Lazarite species which sprang from the raised Lazarus, and there were no descendants of Jesus according to the flesh. The only adequate reason which can be assigned for the exercise of creative power in the resurrection of Lazarus is that it was intended to be a credential of the commission of Jesus and of a supernatural revelation.

It has not been our purpose to discuss the possibility, the credibility and the fact of miracles. But taking them for granted, we proceed very briefly to show the bearing of the miracle, as contra-natural, upon various theories.

1. **Atheism:** The miracle proves the existence of God. If the order of nature is interrupted and contravened, such an effect could only be attributed to an extra-mundane Being of power sufficient to accomplish it. For no system can be supposed to make provision for its own infraction; and if notwithstanding this the infraction occurs, it must be ascribed to an Agent outside of the system powerful enough to revolutionize and reverse it if he pleases.

2. **Pantheism, Atheistic Evolution and Materialism:** These theories stand upon the same foot in one important respect. They hold that the processes of nature are enforced by a law of blind, immanent necessity, in one case evolving the world from an impersonal divine substance, in the other two, from primordial elements of matter. To say that a contra-natural event has occurred is to say that one sort of necessity has been contradicted by another sort of necessity, which is absurd. For a system embracing two

such necessary elements would be self-contradictory and suicidal—self-contradictory, because it would necessarily evolve contradictory elements—suicidal, because it would necessarily provide for its own infraction, and for aught that appears to the contrary, its own destruction.

3. The professed Theistic Evolutionist must find the miracle a stumbling-stone to his theory. For he holds that God evolves the world by an unbroken process of mediate creation. No mediate creation consequently could be miraculous. He appeals to the miracle of creation from nothing in the first instance. But creation from nothing cannot be a miracle, for two reasons: *First*, such creation begins the order of nature. On the supposition, therefore, there was no nature in relation to which an event could be determined to be miraculous, or even extraordinary. *Secondly*, science knows of no other intelligences than human beings, and as they were not in existence before creation *ex nihilo*, miraculous evidence was an impossibility. He cannot, therefore, admit the existence of the miracle. But if it has occurred, it contradicts his theory.

4. The professed Christian Evolutionist must also find the miracle difficult of adjustment to his theory. The revealed fact, for example, of the general resurrection of the dead absolutely contradicts it, for it will involve the revival of an extinct species from their dust, nor will it be the transmutation of one species into a new and different one, but the persistence of the very same species. He may say that while his science denies, the Scriptures affirm, and that he holds to both, to the former on rational grounds, to the latter by faith. But they are mutually contradictory, and one must be true, the other false. Will he hold to both contradictories and so make his science contradict his religion? Perhaps he will use the plea of the Bishop of Cologne, who, on being rebuked for swearing, said that he swore not as a bishop but as a man; or that of Pomponatius, who as a philosopher denied the immortality of the soul, but professed to believe it as a christian; which occasioned the witty remark of Bocalini that “he must be acquitted of heresy as a man and a christian, but burnt for it as a philosopher.”

5. Agnosticism: The contra-natural character of the miracle

proves the interposition in nature of a personal will, and as it accompanies a teaching which ascribes that will to a being characterized by certain attributes, it proves the existence of a God who may be known and worshipped, loved and obeyed.

We have thus endeavored to establish the contra-natural character of miracles against the most prominent objections which have been urged in opposition to it. In another discussion the attempt will be made to show that all the principal evidences of divine revelation are reducible to unity upon the miracle as contra-natural.

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