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By *Whom*, all things; for *Whom*, all things.

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THE MIRACLE OF CREATION.

THE account of the creation of the world, as given in the first chapter of the Bible, has always been greatly admired for its beauty and sublimity. The sentence with which it commences, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," is a grand rhetorical synthesis which brings the whole subject under a single view of the mind, and the subsequent analysis unrolls the vast picture in a succession of animated scenes. But this is only one of its least remarkable traits. Hence we find that even a heathen rhetorician and philosopher, the amiable and accomplished Longinus, could not withhold from it his meed of praise; for in his celebrated work on *The Sublime* he thus speaks of it in comparison with the beauties of Homer: "So, also, the Jewish lawgiver, who was no common man, exhibits the power of the Deity in a manner worthy of its excellency, as follows: God said—what does he say? 'Let there be light, and it was; let the earth be, and it was.'" The sublimity of this representation of the infinite power of God is probably unrivalled in the literature of the world.

The great theme which it presents for contemplation is the creation of the universe. The expression, "In the beginning," carries the mind back through all the dim ages of the past, in order to portray to the imagination the origin of all created things. Its indefiniteness is eminently suitable to the subject. For it does not chronologically determine any particular time when the creation took place, nor, indeed, is there in the subsequent Scriptures any information from which it is possible to form a satisfactory estimate of the age of the world. There has been no science of chronology revealed from heaven, any

more than of other things which are the legitimate subjects of scientific investigation. There is no reason to think that the apostles or writers of the New Testament regarded the Scriptures as containing an inspired chronology. For they quoted from the Septuagint translation as freely as from the original, notwithstanding, if a full chronology could be made out from the sacred records, this version of the Old Testament would give nearly fifteen hundred years more for the age of the world than can be gathered from the Hebrew. They did not even notice this, nor similar discrepancies, which seems to warrant the inference that they did not regard them as of sufficient importance.

It is true, indeed, that learned and able men have taken the greatest pains to work up a sacred chronology from the data supplied in the Hebrew Scriptures. But no two of them agree in their results, so that these are of no authority. Nor can this be a matter of surprise to any one who will take the trouble to examine for himself the materials out of which these elaborate systems are constructed, which are nothing else than the genealogies interspersed here and there in the historical records, and which a child may see were never intended, and are totally untrustworthy for any such purpose. For they freely apply the terms father and son to grandfathers and grandsons, and even to remote ancestors and descendants; and they leave out, or skip over, two or three, and sometimes as many as thirty or forty generations at a time. Thus in the genealogy of our Lord himself, Matthew leaves out many links in the chain, which are elsewhere supplied. The first words of his Gospel are, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Now, if this statement stood alone, it would appear that Christ was the son, and not a remote descendant of David; and so of David with respect to Abraham. In this case, there are at least thirty-eight or forty generations omitted, and how many more there are no means of determining. Hence it appears that the attempt to construct a final chronology out of such materials is preposterous. That great and good men should have wasted so much labor, learning, and ingenuity in building up these imaginary schemes, is one of those things which must be classed with the many attempts which have been

made, and which have not yet ceased, to discover or invent a perpetual motion.

The Holy Scriptures leave science perfectly free within her own sphere—as in all other things so in this—to determine by her own methods the age of the world and the length of time during which it has been inhabited by man. They teach nothing opposed to any conclusions upon these and similar questions which may be established upon strictly scientific evidence. If it should be proved that the earth is millions of years old, and that it has been inhabited by man for a much longer time than has been supposed, Christians may accept these results with entire satisfaction, and without the least detriment to their faith in the Scriptures.

Another thing in this account which seems worthy of observation is, that it assumes the being or existence of God, without attempting to prove or account for it in any way. For, in this respect, there is a striking contrast between the Christian Scriptures and other ancient books which pretend to divine inspiration. In those counterfeits of the true coin there are often the most labored attempts to trace the genealogies of the gods, which are always absurd because it is manifestly impossible to conceive of an origin for that in which all other things originated. One cannot even make an effort to form such a conception without involving himself in the labyrinths of an infinite series, in which there is always something of whose existence no rational account can be given. Instead of leading into the mazes of this inextricable perplexity, the sacred writers begin with God in the exercise of all his personal and creative attributes, and simply refer to “the creation of the world,” as being in itself such evidence of “his eternal power and Godhead,” that none but “the fool” can say “in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”

The reasonableness or validity of this assumption is denied by none but atheists, who are shut up to one of the following alternatives, namely, that the universe came into being of itself, or that it has always existed. But the former of these is utterly inconceivable, for it is a necessary truth that whatever begins to be must be produced by some cause exterior to itself. All science rests upon the foundation of this

truth, so that, if it be not such, there is no such thing as science. The other alternative, that the universe has always existed, is a possible conception, and one which can hardly be refuted to the satisfaction of those who hold it. Yet it has been rejected by the great mass of mankind in all ages, including the noblest minds and most eminent characters the world has ever known. Without undertaking to refute it here, it is assumed that the world has not always existed; consequently, that it had a cause or Creator. What follows will have no force with any who cannot proceed upon this assumption. For, after all that can be said upon this subject, it is "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

It is now proposed to examine this primary fact of creation in its bearings upon the vexed question of the probability of the occurrence of miracles in the subsequent history of the world; in other words, to contemplate the subject of miracles from the point of view of the primal miracle of creation. This is a high vantage-ground; for skepticism or faith, with respect to such manifestations of the power of God, turns very much upon one's stand-point. Considering only the uniformity of physical laws, miracles are altogether improbable, and the burden of proof rests upon their defenders. But standing where the world is placed, at the opening of God's revelation to man, on this first and greatest of all miracles, it will be seen that the antecedent probability is all in favor of the truth of later miracles, and that the burden of proof rests upon those who maintain that they have never been wrought. For miracles must be expected to occur in the subsequent history of a world which originated in a miracle.

The first thing, then, to be considered is, whether the creation of the world was a miracle in the true and proper sense of the word. The solution of this question will depend, of course, upon the conception of what a miracle is. The simplest definition is the following: a miracle is an act or work of God in the external world which cannot be comprehended under the law of uniformity in physical causation, and to which the power of created beings is inadequate. But in referring such

manifestations exclusively to the power of God, it is neither affirmed nor denied that inferior and even wicked spirits may produce results having all the appearance of miracles; for the present purpose does not require the discussion of this curious question. A miracle, as here defined, can be wrought by no other than the power of God acting in a manner extraneous to the uniformity of nature's laws. Yet does it in nowise imply their abolition, violation, or suspension. Even in the raising of the dead, the laws of gravitation, chemical, capillary and electrical attraction and repulsion, polarity of light, correlation and conservation of forces, together with all other physical laws which have ever been discovered or named, remain in full operation and retain their absolute uniformity. Let any one who speaks of a miracle as a violation or suspension of the laws of nature be required to name the particular law which is supposed to be violated or suspended, and he will immediately see that no such thing is implied even in the greatest miracle that was ever wrought. But a true miracle cannot be ranged under any physical law, nor ascribed to any physical cause, whether light, or heat, or electricity, or chemical attraction, or any other of the forces which operate uniformly in nature. A fact called miraculous, if attributed to any of these, even if possibly it may hereafter be accounted for by some as yet undiscovered physical law or force, ceases thereby to be regarded as a miracle in the sense here defined.

It is sufficiently obvious that the distinction between miracles and natural phenomena which is given in this definition does not turn upon the conception of a different power or cause in the two cases. The power is regarded ultimately as the same in both; its mode of operation only is different, as being either uniform or abnormal. The forces of nature are conceived of as ultimately depending upon the uniform action of the power or will of God, and physical phenomena as the final results of his agency, no less than miracles themselves. But this conception requires to be verified

Either, then, the forces of nature are ultimately to be referred to the energy of the divine will; or they are the acts of inferior spirits; or they are the properties of matter; or they

are entities in themselves. For no other conception of them has ever been, or can be, formed; nor, indeed, can all these. For as entities in themselves they are absolutely inconceivable, notwithstanding many scientists are accustomed to speak of "matter and force" as if these two were co-ordinate existences. It is impossible to form a conception of force otherwise than as the act or property of some being or substance. As material properties they are conceivable, but that this is not the true conception of them may be evinced by many considerations—especially by this, that it is inconsistent with the inertia, or essential passivity of matter, upon which all astronomical and physical science depends. For if a body cannot move itself, how can it by its own power move other bodies? Hence it was maintained by Sir Isaac Newton that the attraction of gravitation, for example, could not be a property of matter, but must be conceived of as a force acting from without upon matter. Moreover, the primary conception of force is derived from the consciousness of one's own voluntary acts in moving his hands or feet, or other members of the body. But for this consciousness of voluntary causality men would know nothing whatever of causation or force; in all the on-goings of the universe only precedence and sequence would appear as the bare succession of phenomena. Now, this conception of force, so obtained, cannot be legitimately extended to any substance or being that is incapable of volition. Consequently there is no evidence that original causality, or force, can be exerted by any but voluntary beings; in other words, all such force must ultimately depend upon will-power. Hence it is necessary to ascribe the forces of nature to spiritual agency, mediate or immediate—either to that of God himself, or to that of created spirits, such as angels or demons. This latter view, with respect to angels or demons, is held by some eminent modern theologians, as it was also by Proclus and the eclectic philosophers of ancient times, and perhaps by Plato himself; but it appears extremely fanciful, and altogether inconsistent with the precision and uniformity, but above all, with the unity and infinite power which these forces manifest. The only conception of them which remains is, that they depend, in the last analysis, upon the uniform energy of the will of God; and this view is held

and strenuously maintained by some of the most eminent physicists of modern times. It will be seen in the sequel that it is altogether scriptural.

Now, with this conception of the forces of nature, it is manifest that the phenomena of light, heat, electricity, gravitation, and the like, the germination and growth of plants and animal bodies, the productions of nature, differ from miracles especially in this, that they fall under the law of uniformity in causation. For every such phenomenon there is an antecedent physical cause, which is always the same for the same effect. The force of gravitation is the one such cause for the falling of a body to the ground wherever it occurs. Hence there is absolute uniformity in all the operations of nature, strictly so called. This is their specific character.

This definition also regards false miracles as phenomena produced by uniform or physical causation, but which men ascribe to non-uniform spiritual agency, either because they are themselves deceived, or because they seek to impose upon others. For, whenever any thing occurs of which the true cause is unknown, it may either be ascribed to some occult physical force or regarded as a miracle. The former is characteristic of science, the latter of superstition. The scriptural view is the golden mean between these two extremes, namely, that there are such things as miracles, but that nothing is to be received as such, except phenomena for which natural causes are not only undiscoverable, but rationally inconceivable.

This definition of miracle may be still further illustrated and confirmed by the historical relations between science and superstition. For it is the specific function of science to explain the phenomena of nature by ranging them under the laws of uniform causation; while superstition consists in ascribing them to non-uniform spiritual agency. Consequently wherever superstition has reigned science has been feeble; and as science has made progress superstition has declined. Thus in the earliest ages, and still wherever the light of science or Christianity has not penetrated, the people are under the dominion of gloomy and cruel superstitions. The negro population of the west coast of Africa is diminishing at the present time from the enormous destruction of human life constantly going on by

the poison-ordeal for the detection of witchcraft. For the belief in witchcraft seems to be the only religion of the people, and every case of natural sickness or death is ascribed to supernatural agency. Even among the Jews of the Old Testament, with all their light of divine revelation, the worship of the golden calves was with difficulty suppressed, while that of "Moloch, horrid king," prevailed to a late period, with other similar abominations, all resting upon pretended miracles. Among the Greeks and other pagan peoples, in the earlier stages of their history, almost every natural phenomenon was ascribed to supernatural agency and regarded as a miracle. Hence that rabble of divinities which were the objects of their superstitious worship—gods of the earth, air, and ocean; gods of the sun, moon, and stars; gods of the day and of the night; a god for every season, stream, and tree, and for every passion of the human heart. But when science began to make progress among them, when the true causes of natural phenomena began to be discovered, the gods retired to the tops of the mountains. If now you would find one you must ascend the steeps of Mount Olympus or Mount Ida. And when it was discovered that uniform causes, the same as in the populous plains and along the fertile banks of the streams, were in full operation upon the summits of the loftiest mountains, the gods took flight to the skies, and dwelt in their golden palaces above the firmament. Yet even there they were not allowed to rest, but were warred upon by the earth-born Titans; in which final conflict, however, these last enemies were overthrown, and paid the penalty of their crimes. Such Titans are the materialists and pantheists of modern science, who would banish the Creator from the world he has created, and who may read their fate in this old heathen prophecy.

Yet one can well afford to be patient with these painful negations into which foolish scientists are betrayed by their excess of zeal, especially when the inestimable benefits of science are seen in every department of human life, but most of all in religion. For both these grand sources of truth and human well-being, religion and science, are from God, though in different ways; and their reciprocal influence is such that neither can do without the other. On the one hand, the intellectual faculties

of man have their deepest roots in his moral and spiritual nature, through which they draw their richest nourishment from the infinite of truth ; and thus, in distinction from the mere animal mind, they are rendered capable of growth and development from generation to generation, from age to age. And all science, properly so called, is the intellectual grasp of the raw material of truth, subjecting it to the forms and laws of thought. Science itself, therefore, is truly a blossom and fruit of faith, and cannot attain to its utmost and permanent development except upon the soil of religion. On the other hand, scientific culture is the most powerful and effectual means of developing and purifying the intellect, in order that it may become capable of appreciating the evidences of true religion in distinction from baleful superstitions. This, doubtless, is the reason why Christianity, with its transcendent claims upon the faith of mankind, always prevails wherever science is cultivated, and why there is not even a possibility of any other religion in the bosom of modern civilization.

The benign influence of science upon faith, however, is most conspicuous in the emancipation of the human mind from the paralyzing terrors and hideous cruelties of superstition. For unenlightened faith does not teach men to discriminate between true and false miracles, nor in any other respect between truth and falsehood in religion. Consequently it cannot effectually guard mankind against the influence of superstition. Nay, inasmuch as faith mightily stimulates the imagination, it predisposes the mind, in some sort, to accept as miraculous, phenomena which can be otherwise explained. There is abundant evidence upon this point in the idolatries of the Jews in ancient times, in the superstitions of mediæval and modern Romanism, and in those which yet remain in the Protestant Church. The overthrow of superstition is one of the grand results of science, as stimulated, quickened, and developed by the Scriptures ; and this it accomplishes chiefly by discovering the physical causes of those phenomena which otherwise are sure to be regarded as miraculous.

Having thus defined and elucidated the nature of the miracle, as an act or work of God which is not in uniformity with the course of nature, it will be seen at a glance that the crea-

tion of the world falls under this definition. For "in the beginning" there was no pre-existing course of nature in uniformity with which the creation could stand, and consequently no physical cause by which it can be explained. The supposition of any such cause involves a palpable contradiction, inasmuch as it implies that nature, which is the system of uniform causation, existed before it began to exist. Nor does it matter how far back in time the first creative act of God may be sought, whether six thousand or six millions of years, nor how different the things originally created may have been from their present condition. It may even be conceded here, what on mere scientific evidence can be strenuously denied, that all existing things have been developed by uninterrupted uniform causation from the elemental star-dust of the astronomers, yet that star-dust, if it was the first thing created, must have originated without a physical cause—that is, by a miraculous act of the Creator.

Thus, supposing there ever was any creation at all, if matter be not eternal—although there had been no other miracle in the history of the world—yet here in its origin there is one at least, and one which covers a great deal of ground. For this miraculous origin of the world pours a flood of light upon the question whether the occurrence of miracles in its subsequent history is, or is not, a credible or probable thing; and, in fact, affords a strong presumption against absolute uniformity in all the subsequent operations of divine power. For since God, as in this case, has once acted in a manner not in uniformity with any thing in the past, such exercise of his power is established as one of the modes in which it is competent for him to act; since he has wrought one miracle, he may, for aught that appears, have seen it equally wise and good to work others; and since that one miracle was the creation of the world, it is reasonable to expect its subsequent development, or history, would partake, in some degree at least, of the miraculous character of its origin; in other words, the antecedent probability, or presumption, stands not against miracles, as is commonly supposed, but strongly in their favor.

But in order to estimate this presumption at any thing like its full value, it is necessary here to take into consideration

the old and commonly received truth, that the natures, characters, or essences of things are in their beginnings. The peculiar nature of the oak is in the acorn, and so of all other plants after their kinds. The nature of the lion is in the lion's cub, and so of all other species of animals. The nature of man was in the first man, and so of all other created beings. Moreover, the peculiar natures of things often stand out unveiled in their origin more conspicuously than in any subsequent stage of their development. A beautiful example of this may be observed in the young of some domesticated animals which bear the precise and uniform marks of their former wild state, although these had long previously disappeared from their progenitors under the modifying influences of domestication. This principle is well understood, and has been applied with magnificent results, by the men of science. Hence that flood of light which the lamented Agassiz, by his studies in embryology, has poured upon the physical constitution of man, upon the whole subject of natural history, and, it may be added, upon the most fundamental truths of religion. For his work on Classification is incomparably the greatest argument in natural theology the world has ever seen. Paley, in comparison, is as the watch which one carries in his pocket to the whole world of living creatures.

This principle holds equally good in all historical developments. For what is Protestant history but the progressive realization of those ideas of individual liberty and personal responsibility in which it originated? Nor is it possible to understand the history of the American Republic apart from the ideas, purposes, and character of those refugees from civil and religious oppression who first landed on these shores and founded American institutions. Thus, also, the idea that makes right is one upon which heathen Rome was founded, in consequence of which it dominated through all her vast history, from the rape of the Sabine virgins to the conquest and plunder of the world. In like manner, the history of the Jews—what is it to this hour but that of the Abrahamic covenant, in which it had its origin? And with what admirable insight Paul, in his discourse to the Athenians, seizes upon the germinal principle of Greek idolatry, in which it originated, and in the development and realization of which its life consisted, namely,

that the gods were like men, and therefore could be worthily represented and worshipped in human form under images of gold and silver and stone, "graven by art, and man's device"!

This truth, that the beginnings of things contain their natures, of which their history is the development or unfolding, applies with all its significance to the creation and history of the world. For since it originated in a stupendous miracle, the miraculous exercise of divine power must be conceived of as entering into its constitution, as required for its conservation, and as certain to manifest itself in its history. Would it not be a strange and incomprehensible thing if the most essential and striking characteristic of the universe in its origin should from that moment and for ever disappear—owing its very existence to a miracle, if it should never, in the whole course of its subsequent history, manifest any thing of a miraculous nature? While the nature of the oak is in the acorn, is the nature of the acorn not in the oak? Jewish history originated in the covenant of Abraham, but the principle of that transaction may not be expected ever again to manifest itself in the life of the Jewish people. Greek idolatry sprang from the belief that the gods were like men, but it must not be anticipated that it will ever produce a likeness or statue of any god in human form. Protestantism originated in the principle of individual liberty and responsibility, but it is against all probability that there should ever be another exercise of this principle in Protestant history. Such is the preposterous assumption of those who, while they admit a primal creation, maintain that the occurrence of miracles in the history of the world is against probability, and incapable of being substantiated without such an array of evidence as is required for no other class of facts.

But it may be objected to this argument that it proves too much, namely, that the whole history of the universe, in so far as it depends upon the operations of divine power, should partake of a miraculous character. For since the principle in which Protestantism originated reappears at every step of its progress, the miraculous exercise of the power of God which gave birth to the universe, ought, not occasionally but constantly, to manifest itself. Now this is a perfectly fair objection, and requires to be fairly met. The solution of the difficulty,

however, is not far to seek, but is found in the conception of a miracle already given, and the objection tends to a further confirmation of the definition itself.

For this definition includes, along with others, these two distinct and separable elements, namely, an act of God, and such an exertion of his power as cannot be comprehended under the law of uniformity in physical causation. Now, if the whole agency of God in nature had been of a non-uniform character, it is evident, since all the physical forces depend upon his power, that there could have been no such thing as law or order in the universe. Consequently science, which is the knowledge of laws, would have been impossible; neither could there have been any such thing as a rational creation. For reason in man involves a recognition of the uniformity of such laws as that fire will burn and water will drown, that food nourishes and poison kills. It is insanity to think there is no such uniformity; nor can it be doubted but that, if the uniform laws which now govern the forces and phenomena of nature should be broken up, universal insanity in rational creatures would immediately ensue. Moreover, upon this supposition the creation itself could never have passed beyond its first stage of chaos, if it could have reached even that; for law and order are the fundamental ideas of the universe as a cosmos, apart from which it could never have existed. But beyond all this, it is an inconceivable thing that the whole agency of God in nature should be of a non-uniform character; for if it had been such, this would have been the uniform mode of his operations. The supposition itself, therefore, is self-contradictory. Thus there were the best of reasons why the universe was made subject to law, why a departure from uniformity in all its phenomena was impossible, and why this element of miracle must necessarily be of comparatively rare occurrence.

But, now, with respect to the other of these two elements of miracle, the action of the power of God, the case is altogether different; for this is everywhere and always present throughout the universe. One form of its manifestation is that of the divine sustentation of existence. For God did not only create, but he upholds all things by the word of his power, "and by him all things consist." The continuance in existence of that which

has been created depends upon the direct and immediate action of his will as truly as did the creation itself. But for this all things would immediately cease to be, as if they had never been. This rock-ribbed earth with all its marble bones, however solid and indestructible it may seem, would lose its solidity, would melt and dissolve as a vapor, and not even a vapor would be left. This glorious arch of the heavens, this firmament whose very name in all languages is significant of its immovable stability, would immediately disappear. What stability in these laws of nature, by which the planets revolve, the seasons return, the sun rises and sets, and the earth brings forth all her productions! What conservation of the forces of nature, so that in all the infinite changes which are constantly taking place, not one particle of force is ever expended or lost! Yet, if God should cease for one moment to act in nature, that moment all this would cease to be. And this subtle essence in man—this mind, soul, or spirit, by which he thinks, feels, and acts—is no less dependent upon uninterrupted sustentation by the power of God than his physical organism.

But the presence and action of divine power in nature are not limited to sustentation. For the physical forces which act upon matter and produce most of its phenomena are ultimately dependent upon the uniform energy of the divine will; so that whatever is done by them, God is the doer of it as truly, whether or not as immediately, as in miracles themselves. God is the ultimate source of all working power in and throughout the physical universe. The uniform modes or methods in which he chooses for good and sufficient reasons to work, are called the laws of nature. But these laws are not to be confounded with the forces of which they are simply the modes of operation; nor are these forces to be identified with the properties of matter, the chief of which is inertia. For the conception of nature as a vast machine, having its powers within and from itself in the properties of matter, or otherwise, which God created a great while ago, and which he now stands by, or afar off, to watch and direct, as an engineer superintends and manages the machinery of a factory, would, if it were exhaustively analyzed, be found as self-contradictory as that of a perpetual motion. But its moral conse-

quences are those which are most to be deplored. For if the machine be perfect and self-sufficient, as surely the work of infinite wisdom and power ought to be, what need or place is there for God even as an engineer? Thus by this conception the Creator is banished from his own creation. The omnipresent and ever-active God of the Scriptures becomes little more than the deity of the ancient Epicureans, withdrawn into some remote corner of infinite space, too far off to concern himself with earthly affairs—a god of eternal idleness. And, indeed, if he were ever so much concerned for the welfare of men, what, according to this conception of him, could he do for them, even in their utmost need, subject as they are to the immutable and fatal forces of nature, with whose operations God has nothing whatever to do? Such views of God render the faith of prayer, and all expectation of help from him, simply impossible. It is a doctrine of despair.

The sacred writers know nothing of nature as a system of mere matter and force, or of forces originally and independently inherent in matter. They everywhere represent the phenomena of the natural world as ultimately dependent upon the action or will of God. There has been in these days a wide departure from the forms in which the Scriptures express and reveal his omnipresent agency. For where men are accustomed to say, it thunders, it rains, the storm rages, the wind blows, and the like, in the word of God it is: "The fire of God. . . . God thundereth marvellously with his voice. . . . He commandeth and raiseth up the stormy wind. . . . He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof be still. . . . He sendeth the springs into the valleys. . . . He watereth the hills. . . . He giveth rain upon the earth. . . . These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. . . . Thou sendest forth thy breath—they are created. Thou openest thy hand—they are filled with good. Thou takest away their breath—they die and return to their dust. . . . Behold the fowls of the air. . . . Your heavenly Father feedeth them. . . . Consider the lilies of the field. . . . Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. . . . If God so clothe the grass of the field . . . how much more shall he clothe you? . . . Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? . . .

and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.”

Such is the scriptural representation of the divine agency in nature, in accordance with which it is ultimately the power of God which works according to the method called the law of gravitation, and which moves the planets in their vast elliptical orbits around their focal suns. It is God who shines in the light of the sun, and quickens the earth with his genial influences. He sprouts the germ in the ground, and draws the juices of the earth up through its capillary tubes, and nourishes therewith the growing plant. He stretches out its branches, puts forth its leaves, blooms its flowers, paints their petals with his own varied and beautiful colors, and forms and ripens its delicious fruit. The thunder is his voice now as of old. He speaks in the sound of the cataract, the storm, and the troubled ocean as truly (though in a different manner) as he spoke from the midst of the cloud and flame on the summit of Mount Sinai to the many thousands of Israel. In the motions of the planetary worlds, in the blooming of the flowers, in the fall of the sparrow, his agency is manifested as truly (though in a different manner) as it was in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. All this he does now, whether mediately or immediately, by his own free choice and voluntary action, though in a uniform manner, as truly as he created the world. For within, under, behind—or howsoever otherwise it may be expressed—all the processes, methods, or laws and forces of nature, is the power or agency of the one only living and true God, upholding and moving all things that are characterized by the property of inertia, except so far as they may be acted upon by other spiritual agency, as they are upheld and moved.

And not only in the phenomena of nature, strictly so called, is this ubiquitous action of the power of God, but also in the sustentation and government of the human soul, and of all other rational and voluntary creatures, even in the exercise of their own freedom and responsibility. For although man's acts are his own, and in no sense the acts of God, yet, in the freest exercise of his faculties, he is not independent of God, but subject to his influence and under his control. “The

king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, and as the rivers of water he turneth it whithersoever he will. . . . Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." In this way, that is, by his sovereign control and direction of man's faculties and energies, God is in all human history working out his wise and holy and benign purposes, no less truly than in the world of nature. And, in fine, the direct and immediate agency of God is manifested in the regeneration and sanctification of human souls, and in all the phenomena of spiritual life, in such wise that they would all have to be regarded as miraculous, in the full sense of this word, if it were not that in them the human agency is inseparably blended with the divine, and that, though of special grace, they partake of something approaching to uniformity.

Now with these scriptural views of the divine agency in nature and in man—views which are held by many distinguished physicists at the present time—it seems that one element of miracles, namely, the action of God, is in divers ways present throughout the universe in its whole history. The other element, namely, departure from uniformity, was not possible nor conceivable except in abnormal and rare cases. Hence the objection, that, if the true nature or constitution of the world be represented in the miracle of its creation, its whole history ought to be miraculous, is of no force; while, at the same time, it is found to embody one of the most important of all truths, and one which confirms, instead of invalidating, the presumption, that miracles, in the full sense of the word, would occur; thereby laying a still heavier burden of proof upon those who maintain that there never have been any such manifestations of divine power.

Moreover, the counter-presumption of absolute uniformity in all the divine operations, upon which over-zealous and one-sided scientists lay so much stress, is wholly gratuitous and inconsistent with the most exalted and perfect ideas that can be formed of the Divine Being. For there is not a shadow of proof that by such uniformity the best possible results in the government and history of the world could be attained. God, in the exercise of his infinite wisdom and all-comprehending foreknowledge, for aught that appears, may have the best of reasons for

varying his methods of procedure. One such reason may be here suggested, namely, that occasional departures from strict uniformity would be the most striking and conclusive evidence conceivable of his free personality. And there is manifestly a great need of just such evidence; for that which is afforded by the uniformity of his operations in nature is incomplete or obscure; at least there are many whom it fails to convince. Hence it is that those scientists who deny the possibility or the fact of miracles gravitate, as by inevitable necessity, towards either materialism or pantheism; in other words, to the denial of the personality of the First Cause; while this can never be doubted by any who admit the fact or the possibility of miraculous phenomena. Also, it is evident of itself that the conception of the cause of all things as a free, moral, and personal Being, is a nobler and more exalted idea of him than that which represents him—or it—as an impersonal and fatal force; just as a person is higher in the scale of existence than a thing—as a man is a nobler being than a steam-engine. The truth is, that absolute reason, which is the principle of uniformity in the divine operations, and absolute free-will, or personality, without which no variation from such uniformity is conceivable, are both equally essential to the noblest idea of the Creator, to whom men, as the work of his hands, are bound in reason to ascribe all that they can conceive of excellence or perfection. What, then, is more reasonable than that he, being such, should reveal to man the perfection of his reason, wisdom, and foreknowledge of all contingencies, by the uniformity of his operations in nature, and by miracles, the fullness of his free personality?

The conclusion which, in all the preceding discussion, has been kept steadily in view and indicated from time to time, is that, antecedently to all inductive evidence, it is more probable that miracles have occurred in the history of the world than that they have not; and, consequently, that the phenomena which claim to be such require no more or better evidence to substantiate them than other facts for which no such claim is made. The burden of proof does not rest upon those who advocate miracles, but upon those who maintain that they never have occurred; just as it would rest upon him who should

maintain that there never had been any such thing as an earthquake or a tornado. For the evidence which has produced the common belief of mankind that there have been tornadoes and earthquakes and miracles must stand good until it is overthrown. Whether, indeed, the facts called miraculous are truly such, is always an open question until it has been finally decided by science whether or not they can be accounted for by natural causes, or referred to uniform laws. If in this way they can be rationally explained, they must cease to be regarded as miracles and remanded to the domain of natural phenomena, whatever may be the consequences. But to deny the facts themselves, simply because they cannot be so accounted for, while the antecedent probability stands in favor of non-uniform manifestations of divine power, is unscientific and preposterous.

It does not enter into the object of this discussion even to touch upon that vast array of inductive evidence which might be, and has been, given for the miracles of Scripture, especially for those wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ. All that has been attempted is to show that they are in perfect harmony with the miraculous creation of the world, with the most rational conception that can be formed of what its history would be, and with the noblest ideas of the perfections and character of the Deity. The belief of them is inseparable from, and is a chief corner-stone of faith in the Christian religion. Whoever denies them, especially the resurrection of Christ, or supposes that possibly they may be hereafter explained by some as yet undiscovered law of physical causation, denies Christ; and, if he be sufficiently strong in logic, he must inevitably become a pantheist or materialist. Stop short of this he cannot, except by rejecting the legitimate consequences of his principles; by halting in those very processes of thought which have led him to his present conclusions. Hence this argument may fitly close with some suggestions—for no more need be said—of the enormous difficulties under which they labor who maintain that the forces of nature not only originally spring from matter, but that from the uniform operation of these forces the existence of all things may be rationally explained.

First, then, they who stand on this ground can give no account whatever of the existence of matter with these proper-

ties. Whence did it come? How came it to be thus mysteriously and wonderfully endowed? They do not pretend to answer otherwise than by saying, with a frankness which is worthy of all praise and imitation: "We do not know." How much easier is it to believe in a God who created matter! In which case, there is the stupendous miracle of creation coming back, with all its consequences, as these have been exhibited. Secondly, they have no rational account to give of those innumerable correlations and adaptations in the world or cosmos which evince intelligence, purpose, design, as clearly as it is conceivable that these should be manifested. The physical, intellectual, and moral correlations between the two sexes; the mother's bosom and the nourishment of her child; the stomach and its food; the heart and its blood; the lungs and the air; the eye and the light; the motions and order of the stellar worlds; the light and heat of the sun in their relations to the production, support, and development of organic life; the intellectual faculties and their objects—all these, together with innumerable similar correlations, result—if men are to believe the materialist or pantheist, whether avowed, or veiled under development theories, from the operation of blind, unintelligent causes, the forces of nature, the properties of matter. How much easier is it to believe in a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, who created all these things in their beautiful adaptations to the purposes which they subserve! Again, the human soul, with all its wonderful faculties or powers of intellect, sensibility, and will, is produced, according to these men, by the operation of the same forces of nature, or properties of matter, which themselves have no will, no sensibility, and no intelligence. Is not this an effect without any adequate cause? Is the maxim, that "The quality of the effect is antecedently in its cause," which has always been regarded as a necessary truth, and which is a part of the foundation of all science and knowledge, no longer a truth? Can that which has no intelligence be the cause of intelligence? Can that which has no sensibility and no will be the cause of sensibility and will in man? How much easier is it to believe in a God who created man in his own image! Finally, these men affirm that Christ and his apostles were either fanatics or

impostors; that he himself never rose from the dead; that his mind and soul have utterly perished, and are now as if they had never been. *Credat Judæus Apella, non ego.* And again, how much easier is it to believe in God, who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead!

In the leisure of a summer vacation a person once read over almost consecutively Renan's *Vie de Jesus*, carried away for the time by the magic of its sensuous style. When he had finished it, he took up the Gospels, and read for an hour or two, and he bears record that it was like coming up out of the sulphurous darkness of hell into the clear light and vital air of heaven. Again he sat at the feet of Jesus, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Peter and James and John were there, and Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the ever-blessed mother of the Lord. Once more with them he looked up into his dear face, and beheld there the wisdom, power, and love of the heavenly Father revealed. There, in the face of Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, he saw that his soul was immortal, and that it was an object of the compassion and love of Christ. Ah! how the tears flowed from his eyes! He was a lost sinner, yet he could trust in Christ as his Saviour, whilst he heard him say, with what voice! "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" It was as if he had stood on the banks of the river of life, which flows through the streets of the New Jerusalem, in the shade of the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields her fruit every month, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. And there he resolved that, God helping him, he for one would go down into hell no more.

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