

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

PHILIP MELANCHTHON.

FEBRUARY 16, 1897, will be the four-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Philip Melancthon. The Protestant world will remember to celebrate the day as one of gracious influences. For the name of the most irenic spirit among the noble group of the great reformers is one that all the churches delight to honor. Lacking the vigor and originality of his great chief, falling short of the constructive force of the resourceful Calvin, and representing in himself no national movement as did Zwingli and Knox, yet as the tried and trusted lieutenant of the mighty leader of the German Reformation, the calm and scholarly theologian, the judicious and temperate advocate, he holds a place of deserved prominence and even more deserved affection. Luther in one of his fine bursts of enthusiasm wrote of him: *Res et verba Philippus; verba sine re Erasmus; res sine verbis Lutherus; nec res nec verba Carolostadius.* Such an estimate was more than kind to Melancthon in so far at least as the comparison with Luther himself was concerned. It was to Luther in no small measure that Melancthon owed his capacity for deeds; without Luther to wield the weapons which he forged in his intellectual armory it is to be feared that the fires in the forge would often have gone out. He shares from their close comradeship a large part of Luther's fame as the herald of intellectual and religious freedom, yet, by the temperate spirit which animated his words and acts, escapes the hostility so often stirred by his rash and rough-spoken leader. If at times he yields too much in the effort to reconcile

V.

CHRISTIAN SUPERNATURALISM.*

DR. JOHN BASCOM has lately told us afresh and certainly, as we shall all agree, most truly, that "the relation of the natural and supernatural" is the "question of questions which underlies our rational life." "The fact of such a relation," he justly adds, "is the most patent and omnipresent in the history of the human mind." We cannot think at all without facing the great problems which arise out of the perennial pressure of this most persistent of intellectual questions. From the first dawn of intelligence each human mind has busied itself instinctively with their adjustment. The history of human thought in every race from its earliest beginnings is chiefly concerned with the varying relations which men—in this or that stage of culture, or under the influence of this or that dominating conception—have conceived to exist between the natural world in which they lived and that supernatural world which they have ever been prone to conceive to lie above and beyond it. The most elaborate systems of philosophy differ in nothing in this respect from the tentative efforts of untutored thinking. For them, too, the problem of the supernatural is the prime theme of their investigation: and the solutions which have commended themselves to them too have been the most varied possible, running through the entire series from the one-sided assertion of the natural as absolute and complete, with the exclusion of all supernaturalism, to the equally one-sided affirmation of the reality of the supernatural alone with the entire exclusion of all that can properly be called natural. Between these two extremes of atheistic naturalism and superstitious supernaturalism, nearly every possible adjustment of the relation of the two factors has found some advocates. So that there is some color to Dr. Bascom's plaint that, though the proper appreciation of their relation constitutes "the summation of sound philosophy," "its final conception and statement elude us all."

Some color, but not a thorough justification. For, amid all the variety and confusion of men's ideas on this great subject, there

* Opening address delivered before the Faculty and students of Princeton Theological Seminary, September 18, 1896.

are not lacking certain lines of direction leading to one assured goal, broadly outlined only it may be and seen only dimly through the mist of innumerable errors of detail, within which it is demonstrable that the æonian thinking of the race is always traveling: within which also it is clear that the best and most vital of that high, conscious thinking which we call philosophy finds the limits of its conceptions and the pathway of its advance. We may not fancy that every conceivable conception of the relation of the natural and supernatural has found equal favor in the unsophisticated mind of man, or has won equal support from the criticised elaborations of philosophic contemplation. No one who will permit to pass before his mental vision the long procession of world-conceptions which have dominated the human race in its several stages of development will imagine that humanity at large has ever been tempted to doubt, much less to deny, the reality or the significance to it of either the natural or the supernatural. On any adequate survey of the immanent thought of the world as expressed in its systems of popular belief, atheistic naturalism and exclusive supernaturalism exhibit themselves as alike inhuman. Atheists have existed, who knew and would know nothing beyond what their five senses immediately gave them, and naturalistic atheism has found expression in elaborate systems which have warped the conceptions of large masses of men: and in like manner a debased superstition has fallen like a pall over entire communities and for ages has darkened their minds and cursed their whole life. So there have, from time to time, appeared among men both ascetic solitaries and communistic socialists, though God has set mankind in families. The band of camp-followers on either wing of an army confuses no man's judgment as to the whereabouts of the army itself, but rather points directly to its position. Similarly a general consideration of the great philosophical systems of the world will leave us in no doubt as to the trend of deliberate pondering upon this subject. Somewhere between the two extremes of a consistent naturalism and an exclusive supernaturalism we shall assuredly find the centre of gravity of the thinking of the ages—the point on which philosophy rests all the more stably that on both sides wings stretch themselves far beyond all support and hang over the abyss. Precisely where, between the two extremes, this stable centre is to be found, it may be more difficult to determine—our instruments of measurement are not always “implements of precision.” Assuredly, however, it will not be found where either the purely supernatural or the purely natural is excluded, and in any case it is much to know that it lies somewhere between the two extremes, and that it is as unphilo-

sophical as it is inhuman to deny or doubt either the natural or the supernatural.

It is not to be gainsaid, of course, that from time to time, strong tendencies of thought set in to this direction or to that: and, for a while, it may seem as if the whole world were rushing to one extreme or the other. A special type of philosophizing becomes temporarily dominant and its conceptions run burning over the whole thinking world. At such times men are likely to fancy that the great problem of the ages is settled, and to felicitate themselves upon the facility with which they see through what to men of other times were clouds of great darkness. Such a period visited European thought in the last century, when English Deism set the supernatural so far off from the world that French atheism thought it an easy thing to dispense with it altogether. "Down with the infamy!" cried Voltaire, and actually thought the world had harkened to his commandment. The atheistic naturalism of the eighteenth century has long since taken up its abode with the owls and bats; but the world has not yet learned its lesson. An even more powerful current seems to have seized the modern world, and to be hurling it by a very different pathway to practically the same conclusion. It is to be feared that it cannot be denied that we are to-day in the midst of a very strong drift away from frank recognition of the supernatural as a factor in human life. To this also Dr. Bascom may be cited as a witness. "The task which the bolder thinking of our time has undertaken," he tells us, is "to curb the supernatural, to bring it into the full service of reason." "To curb the supernatural"—yes, that is the labor with which the thinkers of our day have burdened themselves. The tap-root of this movement is firmly set in a pantheistic philosophy, to which, of course, there is no such distinction possible as that between the natural and supernatural: to it all things are natural, the necessary product of the blind interaction of the forces inherent in what we call matter, but which the pantheist calls "God" and thinks he has thereby given not only due but even sole recognition to the supernatural. But it has reached out and embraced in its ramified network of branches the whole sphere of human thinking through the magic watchword of "evolution," by means of which it strives to break down and obliterate all the lines of demarkation which separate things that differ, and thus to reduce all that exists to but varying forms taken, through natural processes, by the one life that underlies them all. How absolutely determinant the conception of evolution has become in the thinking of our age, there can be no need to remind ourselves. It may not be amiss, however, to recall the anti-supernaturalistic root and

the anti-supernaturalistic effects of the dominance of this mode of conceiving things; and thus to identify in it the cause of the persistent anti-supernaturalism which at present characterizes the world's thought. The recognition of the supernatural is too deeply entrenched in human nature ever to be extirpated; man is not a brute, and he differs from the brutes in nothing more markedly or more ineradicably than in his correlation with an unseen world. But probably there never was an era in which the thinking of the more or less educated classes was more deeply tinged with an anti-supernatural stain than at present. Even when we confess the supernatural with our lips and look for it and find it with our reasons, our instincts as modern men lead us unconsciously to neglect and in all practical ways to disallow and even to scout it.

It would be impossible that what we call specifically Christian thought should be unaffected by such a powerful trend in the thinking of the world. Christian men are men first and Christians afterwards: and therefore their Christian thinking is superinduced on a basis of world-thinking. Theology accordingly in each age is stamped with the traits of the philosophy ruling at the time. The supernatural is the very breath of Christianity's nostrils and an anti-supernaturalistic atmosphere is to it the deadliest miasma. An absolutely anti-supernaturalistic Christianity is therefore a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, immersed in an anti-supernaturalistic world-atmosphere, Christian thinking tends to become as anti-supernaturalistic as is possible to it. And it is indisputable that this is the characteristic of the Christian thought of our day. As Dr. Bascom puts it, the task that has been set themselves by those who would fain be considered the "bolder thinkers of our time" is "to curb the supernatural, to bring it into the full service of reason." The real question with them seems to be, not what kind and measure of supernaturalism does the Christianity of Christ and His apostles recognize and require; but, how little of the supernatural may be admitted and yet men continue to call themselves Christians. The effort is not to Christianize the world-conception of the age, but specifically to desupernaturalize Christianity so as to bring it into accord with the prevailing world-view.

The effects of the adoption of this point of view are all about us. This is the account to give, for example, of that speculative theism which poses under the name of "non-miraculous Christianity" and seeks to convince the world through reasoners like Pfeleiderer and to woo it through novels like *Robert Elsmere*. This is also the account to give of that odd positivistic religion offered us by the followers of Albrecht Ritschl, who, under color of a phenomanalism which knows nothing of "the thing in itself,"

profess to hold it not to be a matter of serious importance to Christianity whether God be a person, or Christ be God, or the soul have any persistence, and to find it enough to bask in the sweet impression which is made on the heart by the personality of the man Jesus, dimly seen through the mists of critical history. This is the account again to give of the growing disbelief and denial of the virgin-birth of our Lord; of the increasingly numerous and subtle attempts to explain away His bodily resurrection; and, in far wider circles, of the ever-renewed and constantly varying efforts that positively swarm about us to reduce His miracles and those of His predecessors and followers—the God-endowed prophets and apostles of the two Testaments—to natural phenomena, the product of natural forces, though these forces may be held to be as yet undiscovered or even entirely undiscoverable by men. This also is the account to give of the vogue which destructive criticism of the Biblical books has gained in our time; and it is also the reason why detailed refutations of the numerous critical theories of the origin of the Biblical writings, though so repeatedly complete and logically final, have so little effect in abolishing destructive criticism. Its roots are not set in its detailed accounts of the origin of the Biblical writings, but in its anti-supernaturalistic bias: and so long as its two fixed points remain to it—its starting point in unbelief in the supernatural and its goal in a naturalistic development of the religion of Israel and its record—it easily shifts the pathway by which it proceeds from one to the other, according to its varying needs. It is of as little moment to it how it passes from one point to the other, as it is to the electrician what course his wire shall follow after he has secured its end attachments. Therefore theory follows theory with bewildering rapidity and—shall we not say it?—with equally bewildering levity, while the conclusion remains the same. And finally this is the account to give of the endlessly varying schemes of self-salvation offered the world in our day, and of the practical neglect and not infrequent open denial of the personal work of the Holy Spirit on the heart. In every way, in a word, and in every sphere of Christian thought, the Christian thinking of our time is curbed, limited, confined within unnatural bounds by doubt and hesitation before the supernatural. In wide circles the reality of direct supernatural activity in this world is openly rejected: in wider circles still it is doubted: almost everywhere its assertion is timid and chary. It is significant of much that one of the brightest of recent Christian apologists has found it necessary to prefix to his treatment of Christian supernaturalism a section on “the evasion of the supernatural” among Christian thinkers.

It is certainly to be allowed that it is no light task for a Christian man to hold his aneorage in the rush of such a current of anti-supernaturalistic thought. We need not wonder that so many are carried from their moorings. How shall we so firmly brace ourselves that, as the flood of the world's thought beats upon us, it may bring us cleansing and refreshment, but may not sweep us away from our grasp on Christian truth? How, but by constantly reminding ourselves of what Christianity is, and of what as Christian men we must needs believe as to the nature and measure of the supernatural in its impact on the life of the world? For this nature and measure of the supernatural we have all the evidence which gives us Christianity. And surely the mass of that evidence is far too great to be shaken by any current of the world's thought whatever. Christian truth is a rock too securely planted to go down before any storm. Let us attach ourselves to it by such strong cables, and let us know so well its promontories of vantage and secure hiding-places, that though the waters may go over us we shall not be moved. To this end it will not be useless to recall continually the frankness of Christianity's commitment to the absolute supernatural. And it may be that we shall find profit in enumerating at this time a few of the points, at least, at which, as Christian men, we must recognize, with all heartiness, the intrusion of pure supernaturalism into our conception of things.

1. The Christian man, then, must, first of all, give the heartiest and frankest recognition to *the supernatural fact*. "God," we call it. But it is not enough for us to say "God." The pantheist, too, says "God," and means this universal frame: for him accordingly the supernatural is but the more inclusive natural. When the Christian says "God," he means, and if he is to remain Christian he must mean, a *supernatural* God—a God who is not entangled in nature, is not only another name for nature in its eöordinated activities, or for that mystery which lies beneath and throbs though the All; but who is above nature and beyond, who existed, the Living God, before nature was, and should nature cease to be would still exist, the Everlasting God, and so long as this universal frame endures exists above and outside of nature as its Lord, its Law-giver and its Almighty King.

No Christian man may allow that the universe, material and spiritual combined, call it infinite if you will, in all its operations, be they as myriad as you choose, sums up the being or the activities of God. Before this universe was, God was, the one eternal One, rich in infinite activities: and while this universe persists, outside and beyond and above it God is, the one infinite One, ineffably rich in innumerable activities inconceivable, it may be, to

the whole universe of derived being. He is not imprisoned within His works: the laws which He has ordained for them express indeed His character, but do not compass the possibilities of His action. The Apostle Paul has no doubt told us that "in Him we live and move and have our being," but no accredited voice has declared that in the universe He lives and moves and has His being. No, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him; and what He has made is to what He is only as the smallest moisture-particle of the most attenuated vapor to the mighty expanse of the immeasurable sea.

The divine immanence is a fact to the Christian man. But to the Christian man this fact of the divine immanence is not the ultimate expression of his conception of God. Its recognition does not operate for him as a limitation of God in being or activities; it does not result in enclosing Him within His works and confining the possibilities of His action to the capacities of their laws. It is rather the expression of the Christian's sense of the comparative littleness of the universe—to every part and activity of which God is present because the whole universe is to Him as the mustard seed lying in the palm of a man. An immanent God, yes: but what is His immanence in even this immense universe to a God like ours? God in nature, yes: but what is God in nature to the inconceivable vastness of the God above nature? To the Christian conception, so far is the immanent God from exhausting the idea of God, that it touches but the skirt of His garment. It is only when we rise above the divine immanence to catch some faint glimpse of the God that transeends all the works of His hands—to the truly *supernatural* God—that we begin to know who and what the Christian God is. Let us say, then, with all the emphasis that we are capable of, that the Christian's God is before all else the transcendent God—a God so great that though He be truly the supporter of this whole universe as well as its maker, yet His activity as ground of existence and governor of all that moves, is as nothing to that greater activity which is His apart from and above what is to us the infinite universe but to Him an infinitesimal speck of being that cannot in any way control His life. The Christian's God is no doubt the God of nature and the God in nature: but before and above all this He is the God above nature—the Supernatural Fact. As Christian men we must see to it that we retain a worthy conception of God: and an exclusively immanent God is, after all, a very little and belittling notion to hold of Him the product of whose simple word all this universe is.

2. The Christian man, again, must needs most frankly and heartily believe in *the supernatural act*. Belief in the supernatural act

is, indeed, necessarily included in belief in the supernatural fact. If immanence is an inadequate formula for the being of God, it is equally inadequate as a formula for His activities. For where God is, there He must act: and if He exists above and beyond nature He must act also above and beyond nature. The supernatural God cannot but be conceived as a supernatural actor. He who called nature into being by a word cannot possibly be subject to the creature of His will in the mode of His activities. He to whom all nature is but a speck of derived and dependent being cannot be thought of as, in the reach of His operations, bound within the limits of the laws which operate within this granule and hold it together. 1

Before all that we call nature came into existence God was, in infinite fullness of life and of the innumerable activities which infinite fullness of life implies: and that nature has come into existence is due to an act of His prenatal power. Nature, in other words, has not come into existence at all: it has been made. And if it was made it must have been by a *supernatural* act. The Christian conception of creation involves thus the frankest recognition of the supernatural act. To the Christian man nature cannot be conceived either as self-existent or as self-made or as a necessary emanation from the basal Being which we call God, nor yet as a mere modification in form of the one eternal substance. It is a manufactured article, the product of an act of power. God spoke and it was: and the God that thus spoke nature into being, is necessarily a supernatural God, creating nature by a supernatural act. As Christian men, we must at all hazards preserve this supernaturalistic conception of creation.

There are voices strong and subtle which would woo us from it. One would have us believe that in what we call creation, God did but give form and law to a dark Somewhat, which from all eternity lay beside Him—chaining thus by His almighty power the realm of inimical matter to the divine chariot wheels of order and progress. Or, if that crass dualism seems too gross, the outlying realm of darkness is subtly spoken of as the Nothing, the power it exerts is affirmed to be simply a dull and inert resistance, while yet the character of the product of God's creative power is represented as conditioned by the "Nothing" out of which it is made. Another would have us believe that what we call nature is of the substance of God Himself, and what we call creation is but the modification of form and manifestation which takes place in the eternal systole and diastole of the divine life. Or if this crass pantheism seems too gross, a subtle ontology is called in, matter is resolved into its atoms, the atoms are conceived as mere centres of force, and

this force is asserted to be the pure will of God: so that after all no substance exists except the substance of God. As over against all such speculations, gross and subtle alike, the Christian man is bound to maintain that God created the heavens and the earth—that this great act by which He called into being all that is, was in the strictest sense of the words a *creation*, and that in this act of creation He produced in the strictest sense of the words a *somewhat*. It was an act of *creation*: not a mere molding or ordering of a preëxistent substance—not a mere evolution or modification of His own substance. And in it He produced a *somewhat*—not a mere appearance or simulacrum, but Being, derived and dependent Being, but just as real Being as His own infinite essence. In creation, therefore, the Christian man is bound to confess a frankly supernatural act—an act above nature, independent of nature, by which nature itself and all its laws were brought into existence.

Nor can he confine himself to the confession of this one supernatural act. The Christian's God not only existed before nature and is its Creator, but also exists above nature and is its Governor and Lord. It is inconceivable that He should be active only in that speck of being which He Himself has called into existence by an act of His independent power. It exists in Him, not He in it; and just because it is finite and He is infinite, the great sphere of His life and activity lies above it and beyond. It is equally inconceivable that His activities with reference to it, or even within it, should be confined to the operation of the laws which He has ordained for the regulation of *its* activities and not of *His*. What power has this little speck of derived being to exclude the operation upon it and within it of that almighty force to whose energy it owes both its existence and its persistence in being? Have its forces acquired such strength as to neutralize the power which called it into being? Or has it framed for itself a crust so hard as to isolate it from the omnipotence which plays about it and successfully to resist the power that made it, that it may not crush it or pierce it at will through and through? Certainly he who confesses the Christian's God has no ground for denying the supernatural act.

Now nothing is further from the Christian's thought than to doubt the reality and the efficiency of second causes. Just because he believes that in creation God created a *somewhat*—real substance endowed with real powers—he believes that these powers really act and really produce their effects. He thinks of nothing so little to be sure as to doubt the immanence of God in these second causes. It is his joy to see the hand of God in all that occurs, and to believe that it is not only by His preserving care, but in

accordance with His direction, that every derived cause acts and every effect is produced. But least of all men, has the Christian a desire to substitute the immediate energy of God for His mediate activity in His ordinary government of the universe which He has made. Just because he believes that the universe was well made, he believes that the forces with which it was endowed are competent for its ordinary government and he traces in their action the divine purpose unrolling its faultless scroll. The Christian man, then, is frankly ready to accredit to second causes all that second causes are capable of producing. He is free to trace them in all the products of time, and to lend his ear to the poets when they tell him that

“This solid earth whereon we tread,
In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man.”

He only insists that in all this great process by which, he is told, the ordered world was hacked and hewn out by the great forces and convulsions of nature, we shall perceive, also with the poets, that those great artificers, “Hack and Hew, were the sons of God,” and stood

“One at His right hand and one at His left,
To obey as He taught them how.”

Let us open our eyes wide to the grandeur and perfection of God's providential government; and let us not neglect to note that here too is a supernaturalism, and that in the ordered progress of the world towards that one far-off divine event we can trace the very finger of God.

But let us not fancy, on the other hand, that the providence of God any more than the immanence of God is a formula adequate to sum up all His activities. God is the God of providence: but He is much more than the God of providence. The universe is but a speck in His sight: and its providential government is scarcely an incident in the infinite fullness of His life. It is certain that He acts in infinitely varied modes, otherwise and beyond providence, and there is no reason we can give why He should not act otherwise and beyond providence even in relation to the universe which He has made. In our conception of a supernatural God, we dare not erect His providential activity into an exclusive law of action for Him, and refuse to allow of any other mode of operation. Who can say, for example, whether creation itself, in the purity and absoluteness of that conception, may not be progressive, and may not correlate itself with and follow

the process of the providential development of the world, in the plan of such a God—so that the works of creation and providence may interlace through all time in the production of this completed universe? What warrant, then, can there be to assume beforehand that some way must be found for “evolution” to spring the chasms in the creative process over which even divinely led second causes appear insufficient to build a bridge? And if for any reason—certainly not unforeseen by God, or in contradiction to His ordering—there should a “rift appear in the lute,” who dare assert that the supernatural God may not directly intervene for its mending, but must needs beat out His music on the broken strings or let their discord jar down the ages to all eternity? The laws of nature are not bonds by which God is tied so that He cannot move save within their limits: they are not in His sight such great and holy things that it would be sacrilege for Him not to honor them in all His activities. His real life is above and beyond them: there is no reason why He may not at will act independently of them even in dealing with nature itself: and if there be reason why He should act apart from them we may be sure that the supernatural God will so act. The frank recognition of the possibility of the supernatural act, and of its probable reality on adequate occasion, is in any event a part of the Christian man’s heritage.

3. And this leads us to recognize next that the Christian man must cherish a frank and hearty faith in a *supernatural redemption*. As certainly as the recognition of the great fact of sin is an element in the Christian’s world-conception, the need and therefore the actuality of the direct corrective act of God—of miracle, in a word—enters ineradicably into his belief. We cannot confess ourselves sinners—radically at breach with God and broken and deformed in our moral and spiritual being—and look to purely natural causes or to simply providential agencies, which act only through natural causes and therefore never beyond their reach, for our recovery to God and to moral and spiritual health. And in proportion as we realize what sin is—what, in the Christian conception, is the nature of that bottomless gulf which it has opened between the sinning soul and the all-holy and faultlessly just God, the single source of the soul’s life, and what is the consequent mortal character of the wound which sin has inflicted on the soul,—in that proportion will it become more and more plain to us that there is no ability in what we fondly call the remedial forces of nature, no capacity in growth, however skillfully led by even an all-wise providence, to heal this hurt. A seed of life may indeed be developed into abounding life: but no wise leading can direct a seed of death into the ways of life. Dead things do not

climb. As well expect dead and decaying Lazarus through the action of natural forces, however wisely directed, to put on the fresh firmness of youthful flesh and stand forth a sound and living man, as a soul dead in sin to rise by natural powers into newness of life. No, the world knows that dead men do not live again: and the world's singers, on the plane of nature, rightly declare,

“One thing is certain, and the rest is lies;
The flower that once has blown, forever dies.”

If no supernatural voice had cried at the door of Lazarus' tomb, “Lazarus, come forth!” it would have been true of him, too, what the rebellious poet shouts in the ears of the rest of men,

“Once dead, you never shall return.”

And if there be no voice of supernatural power to call dead souls back unto life, those who are dead in sin must needs fester in their corruption to the eternity of eternities.

One might suppose the supernaturalness of redemption to be too obviously the very heart of the whole Christian system, and to constitute too fundamentally the very essence of the Christian proclamation, for it to be possible for any one claiming the Christian name to lose sight of it for a moment. Assuredly the note of the whole history of redemption is the supernatural. To see this we do not need to focus our eyes on the supernatural man who came to redeem sinners—the “man from heaven,” as Paul calls Him, who was indeed of the seed of David according to the flesh but at the same time was God over all, blessed for ever, and became thus poor only that by His poverty we might be made rich—the Word who was in the beginning with God and was God, as John calls Him, who became flesh and dwelt among men, exhibiting to their astonished eyes the glory of an only-begotten of the Father—the sent of the Father, whom to have seen was to see the Father also, as He Himself witnessed, who *is* before Abraham was, and while on earth abides still in heaven—who came to earth by an obviously supernatural pathway, breaking His way through a virgin's womb, and lived on earth an obviously supernatural life, with the forces of nature and powers of disease and death subject to His simple word, and left the earth in an obviously supernatural ascension after having burst the bonds of the grave and led captivity captive. The whole course of preparation for His coming, extending through centuries, is just as clearly a supernatural history—sown with miracle and prophecy, and itself the greatest miracle and prophecy of them all: and the whole course of garnering the fruits of His coming in the establishment of a Church through the apostles He had chosen for the task, is supernatural to the core. Assuredly, if

the redemptive process is not a supernatural operation, the entire proclamation of Christianity is a lie : as Paul declared with specific reference to one of its supernatural items, we, as Christians, " are found false-witnesses of God," " our preaching in vain " and " our faith is also vain."

Nevertheless, inconceivable as it would appear, there are many voices raised about us, which would fain persuade us, in the professed interests of Christianity itself, to attenuate or evacuate the supernatural even in redemption. That supernatural history of preparation for the Redeemer, we are asked, did it indeed all happen as it is there recorded by the simple-minded writers? Are we not at liberty to read it merely as the record of what pious hearts, meditating on the great past, fancied ought to have occurred, when God was with the fathers; and to dig out from beneath the strata of its devout imaginations, as veritable history, only a sober narrative of how Israel walked in the felt presence of God and was led by His providence to ever clearer and higher conceptions of His Holy Being and of its mission as His chosen people? And that supernatural figure which the evangelists and apostles have limned for us, did it indeed ever walk this sin-stricken earth of ours? Are we not bound to see in it, we are asked, merely the projection of the hopes and fears swallowed up in hope of His devoted followers, clothing with all imaginable heavenly virtues the dead form of their Master snatched from their sight—of whom they had " hoped that it was He who should deliver Israel?" And are we not bound reverently to draw aside the veil laid by such tender hands over the dead face, that we may see beneath it the real Jesus, dead indeed, but a man of infinite sweetness of temper and depth of faith, from whose holy life we may even yet catch an inspiration and receive an impulse for good? And Peter and Paul and John and the rest of those whose hearts were set on fire by the spectacle of that great and noble life, are we really to take their enthusiasm as the rule of our thought? Are we not bound, we are asked, though honoring the purity of their fine hero-worship, to curb the extravagance of their assertions; and to follow the faith quickened in them by the Master's example while we correct the exuberance of their fancy in attributing to Him superhuman qualities and performances? In a word—for let us put it at length plainly—are we not at liberty, are we not bound, to eviscerate Christianity of all that makes it a redemptive scheme, of all that has given it power in the earth, of all that has made it a message of hope and joy to lost men, of all that belongs to its very heart's blood and essence, as witnessed by all

history and all experience alike, and yet claim still to remain Christians? No, let our answer be: as Christian men, a thousand times, no! When the anti-supernaturalistic bias of this age attacks the supernatural in the very process of redemption, and seeks to evaporate it into a set of platitudes about the guiding hand of God in history, the power of the man Jesus' pure faith over His followers' imaginations, and the imitation by us of the religion of Jesus—it has assaulted Christianity in the very citadel of its life. As Christian men we must assert with all vigor the purity and the absoluteness of the supernatural in redemption.

4. And let us add, at once, further, that as Christian men we must retain a frank and hearty faith in a *supernatural revelation*. For how should we be advantaged by a supernatural redemption of which we knew nothing? Who is competent to uncover to us the meaning of this great series of redemptive acts but God Himself? It is easy to talk of revelation by deed. But how little is capable of being revealed by even the mightiest deeds, unaccompanied by the explanatory word? Two thousand years ago a child was born in Bethlehem, who throve and grew up nobly, lived a life of poverty and beneficence, was cruelly slain and rose from the dead. What is that to us? After a little, as His followers sat waiting in Jerusalem, there was a rush as of a mighty wind, and an appearance of tongues of fire descending upon their heads. Strange: but what concern have we in it all? We require the revealing word to tell us who and what this goodly Child was, why He lived and what he wrought by His death, what it meant that He could not be holden of the grave, and what those eloven tongues of flame signified—before they can avail as redemptive facts to us. No earthly person knew, or could know, their import. No earthly insight was capable of divining it. No earthly authority could assure the world of any presumed meaning attached to them. None but God was in a position to know or assert their real significance. Only, then, as God spake through His servants, the prophets and apostles, could the mighty deeds by which He would save the world be given a voice and a message—be transformed into a gospel. And so the supernatural word receives its necessary position among the redemptive acts as their interpretation and their complement.

We cannot miss the fact that from the beginning the word of God took its honorable place among the redemptive deeds of God. "God spake," declares the record as significantly and as constantly as it declares that "God did." And we cannot miss the fact that God's word, giving their meaning, their force and their value to His great redemptive acts, enters as vitally into our Chris-

tian faith and hope as the acts themselves. As Christian men we cannot let slip our faith in the one without loosing also our grasp upon the other. And this is the explanation both, on the one hand, of the constancy of the hold which Christianity has kept upon the Word of God, and, on the other, of the persistency of the assault which has been made upon it in the interests of an anti-supernaturalistic world-view. It is no idle task which has been set itself by naturalistic criticism, when it has undertaken to explain away the supernaturalism of this record of God's redemptive work, which we call the Bible. This is the rock upon which all its efforts to desupernaturalize Christianity break. It is no otiose traditionalism which leads the Christian man to cling to this Word of the living God which has come down to him through the ages. It is his sole assurance that there has been a redemptive activity exercised by God in the world—the single Ariadne's thread by which he is enabled to trace the course of redemption through the ages. If God did not so speak of old to the fathers by the prophets, if He has not in the ends of these days so spoken to us in His Son—He may indeed have intervened redemptively in the world, but to us it would be as if He had not. Only as His voice has pierced to us to declare His purpose, can we read the riddle of His operations: only as He interprets to us their significance can we learn the wonder of His ways. And just in proportion as our confidence in this interpretative word shall wane, in just that proportion shall we lose our hold upon the fact of a redemptive work of God in the world. That we may believe in a supernatural redemption, we must believe in a supernatural revelation, by which alone we can be assured that this and not something else was what occurred, and that this and not something other was what it meant. The Christian man cannot afford to relax in the least degree his entire confidence in a supernatural revelation.

5. And finally, we need to remind ourselves that as Christian men we must cherish a frank and hearty faith in a *supernatural salvation*. It is not enough to believe that God has intervened in this natural world of ours and wrought a supernatural redemption: and that He has Himself made known to men His mighty acts and unveiled to them the significance of His working. It is upon a field of the dead that the Sun of righteousness has risen, and the shouts that announce His advent fall on deaf ears: yea, even though the morning stars should again sing for joy and the air be palpitant with the echo of the great proclamation, their voice could not penetrate the ears of the dead. As we sweep our eyes over the world lying in its wickedness, it is the valley of the

prophet's vision which we see before us: a valley that is filled with bones, and lo! they are very dry. What benefit is there in proclaiming to dry bones even the greatest of redemptions? How shall we stand and cry, "O ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the Lord!" In vain the redemption, in vain its proclamation, unless there come a breath from heaven to breathe upon these slain that they may live. The redemption of Christ is therefore no more central to the Christian hope than the creative operations of the Holy Spirit upon the heart: and the supernatural redemption itself would remain a mere name outside of us and beyond our reach, were it not realized in the subjective life by an equally supernatural application.

Yet how easy it is, immersed in an anti-supernaturalistic world, to forget this our sound confession! Are we not men? we are asked: and is not the individuality of every human being a sacred thing? Must not each be the architect of his own fortunes, the creator of his own future—not indeed apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit, but certainly without His compulsion? Is it not mere fanaticism to dream that the very penetralium of our personality is invaded by an alien power, and the whole trend of our lives reversed in an instant of time, independently of our previous choice? Led, led certainly we may be by the Holy Spirit: but assuredly our manhood is respected and no non-ethical cataclysms are wrought in our lives by intrusive powers, not first sought and then yielded to at our own proper motion. But alas! alas! dead things are not led! Of course, the Christian is led by the Holy Spirit—and let us see to it that we heartily acknowledge it and fully recognize this directive supernaturalism throughout the Christian life. But that it may become Christian, and so come under the leading of the Spirit, the dead soul needs something more than leading. It needs reanimation, resurrection, regeneration, re-creation. So the Scriptures unwearyingly teach us. And so the Christian must, with all frankness and emphasis, constantly maintain.

The Christian man is not the product of the regenerative forces of nature under however divine a direction; he is not an "evolution" out of the natural man: he is a new creation. He has not made himself by however wary a walk, letting the ape and tiger die and cherishing his higher ideals until they become dominant in his life; he is not merely the old man improved: he is a new man, recreated in Christ Jesus by the almighty power of the Holy Spirit—by a power comparable only to that by which God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. As well might it be contended that Lazarus, not only came forth from the

tomb, but rose from the dead by his own will and at his own motion, as that the Christian man not only of his own desire works out his salvation with fear and trembling, in the knowledge that it is God who is working in him both the willing and the doing according to His own good pleasure, but has even initiated that salvation in his soul by an act of his own will and accord. He lives by virtue of the life that has been given him, and prior to the inception of that life, of course, he has no power of action : and it is of the utmost importance that as Christian men we should not lower our testimony to this true supernaturalness of our salvation. We confess that it was God who made us men : let us confess with equal heartiness that it is God who makes us Christians.

Of such sort, then, is the supernaturalism which is involved in the confession of Christians. We have made it no part of our present task to enumerate all the ways in which the frank recognition of the supernatural enters into the very essence of Christianity. Much less do we essay here to discriminate between the several modes of supernatural action which Christian thought is bound to admit. We have fancied it well, however, to bring together a few of the instances in which the maintenance of the occurrence of the absolute supernatural is incumbent on every Christian man. Thus we may fortify ourselves against that unconscious yielding of the citadel of our faith to which every one is exposed who breathes the atmosphere of our unbelieving and encroaching world. The confession of a supernatural God, who may and does act in a supernatural mode, and who acting in a supernatural mode has wrought out for us a supernatural redemption, interpreted in a supernatural revelation, and applied by the supernatural operations of His Spirit—this confession constitutes the core of the Christian profession. Only he who holds this faith whole and entire has a full right to the Christian name : only he can hope to conserve the fullness of Christian truth. Let us see to it that under whatever pressure and amid whatever difficulties, we make it heartily and frankly our confession, and think and live alike in its strength and by its light. So doing, we shall find ourselves intrenched against the assaults of the world's anti-supernaturalism, and able by God's grace to witness a good confession in the midst of its most insidious attacks.