

of giving to paganism the advantages belonging to Christianity. Could there be a more unequivocal testimony to the excellence of that new spirit which was beginning to permeate and regenerate society?

ARTICLE II.

THE DENIAL OF THE SUPERNATURAL.

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THE subject of divine interpositions, recent denials of which we propose to consider in the present Article, is not a matter to be debated with all classes of unbelievers. There may be other questions lying back of this, which render any such debate useless. The adversary should not be allowed to meet us where, if we gain the battle, he can say it amounts to nothing; but should be compelled to defend himself in his real and fundamental position. Why should we discuss the problem of miracles, or of the supernatural generally, with a disciple of Spinoza? His pantheism is a foregone conclusion against every one of our arguments; and until he admits a personal Creator, distinct from the creation, we are merely chopping logic for each other's amusement or mockery. This remark holds in regard to the *positivist* also. As neither Spinoza, Hegel, or Emerson is the antagonist, in precisely the same way, we cannot argue with Comte or Mr. Buckle for divine interpositions. If there be no first truths, transcending time and space and revealed to the spirit, but all knowledge must be reached by the induction of the senses, then, as a matter of course, there is nothing of the nature of a miracle. It is idle to attempt to show that something above the cosmos may come into it, until the existence of that something is admitted; this is the common ground on which the objector must meet us, if he

has anything to say against the Christian doctrine of the supernatural. If Hume's celebrated Essay be atheistic, then it should be met as atheism ; but if he believed in a loving and overruling God (though he carefully concealed any such belief), then that essay is one of the best possible safeguards against imposture. His argument no sooner becomes pertinent than it ceases to be an objection. When Mr. Lewes ridicules praying for rain, as like praying "for the sun to rise at midnight," we have nothing to say, for he is speaking in praise of the positive philosophy ; but the same remark on the lips of Baden Powell or Theodore Parker might deserve a respectful answer. These latter men, if we understand them, were not disciples of Comte ; neither were they atheists or pantheists. Though rejecting the idea of the supernatural, claiming that nature is guided by cosmic forces only, they believed in a personal God, infinitely wise and good, who arranged the universe in the beginning, and in accordance with whose original purpose it still proceeds.

Taking these two names as representative of a class of objectors to all divine interpositions in nature, the debate to which they challenge us may be both honest and legitimate. What is, and what in all ages of the church has been, the position of this class of unbelievers ?

They have refused to see anything supernatural in human history or experience. They argue that Nature, with her necessary laws and inherent life, is adequate to the production of all events ; that it is unphilosophical and superstitious to refer any of those events, even the most extraordinary, to a source higher than nature.

This class of sceptics are not unaptly characterized, in the Epistle to the Romans, as "worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator." Though not deifying the cosmos, yet they take it out of the hands of any controlling power ; though conceding a certain supremacy to the Author of nature, it is difficult to see in what that supremacy now consists. They will hear of no interruption to the uniform

order of the world. That order, they contend, is a chain of necessary sequences, admitting no interference. They admonish us that our faith in divine interventions is a belief resting on ignorance; that all such faith will vanish away in the clear light of advancing science. To them there is no such thing as a providence — whether general, particular, or special — daily interposing in human affairs. Prayer is a speaking into the winds. The miracle, as defined by orthodox divines, is a dishonor to the inherent beauty and perfection of the universe. “It is derogatory to the idea of infinite power and wisdom,” says Professor Powell, “to suppose an order of things so imperfectly established that it must be occasionally interrupted and violated;” or, as Theodore Parker, with less affectation of reverence, remarks: “men have their precarious make-shifts; the Infinite has no tricks and subterfuges, — not a whim in God, and so not a miracle in nature.” “Why is it,” such men as these ask, “that certain events are referred by the pious to an immediate divine agency?” And then they proceed, somewhat in the following strain, and with great assurance, to dispose of the phenomenon. “The pious Christian, in his ignorance of the cosmical forces, fails to discover the true cause of the event; and therefore, since his mind refuses to rest without some explanation, he springs to the notion of a supernatural author. Reason not having the data for a philosophical answer, recourse is had to the all-feigning power of imagination.” In the same patronizing strain the writers of the sacred books are excused for representing as divine interpositions many events now explicable on natural principles. Such interferences as they describe can never be anything but a calamity, in this faultless universe; and even granting that for any reason they should be desirable, they are still impossible; it is not in the power of Omnipotence to bring them to pass; or, if we prefer, so far as the working of miracles is concerned, God is *not* omnipotent. “The light of the inductive sciences did not blaze, in its full splendors, in the times of the apostles. What seemed to

them to transcend all created causes, for the reason that the system of nature was so veiled to them, should not arouse superstition in the middle of this nineteenth century; for no small portion of it may be explained on scientific grounds, and anything beyond this cannot claim to be historic." That we may not seem to misrepresent these apostles of naturalism, we quote the words of the late Oxford essayist. Professor Powell, in his tract on the Christian evidences, says: "the inevitable progress of research must, within a longer or shorter period, unravel all that seems most marvellous, and what is at present least understood will become as familiarly known to the science of the future, as those points which a few centuries ago were involved in equal obscurity, but are now thoroughly understood." So, then, we are bidden to look for a day when the supernatural element will be entirely eliminated from Christianity; when it shall be universally perceived that general history, individual experience, and all events in the religious, as well as in the secular, world move on with a fatal harmony, like that which the starry hosts are forever weaving through the sky. The doctrine of divine interpositions is a girdled trunk, under which faith may no longer sit, having none to molest or make afraid, but from which she must hasten, to the broad-spreading tree of naturalistic research, if she would not be buried in the ruin soon to fall.

Let it not be inferred that we underrate the strength of these assailants, or the importance of meeting them and turning back their weapons from the holy citadel of truth. Christianity, as an unfolding kingdom, has nothing to fear from errorists; but while the Lord's chariot is steadily advancing, unhindered by any opposition, multitudes of souls, caught in the glittering toils of error, may be overthrown and crushed beneath his chariot wheels. There are various reasons why this denial of the supernatural should, if possible, be shown to be baseless and false:

1. This impatience of everything of the nature of miracle is wide-spread at the present time. The popular mind is more

deeply infected with it than many of us may be disposed to admit. We shall discover, upon careful inquiry, that nearly all doubts about the special inspiration of the scriptures, the Trinity, the twofold personality of Christ, prophetic utterances, the new-birth and its related doctrines, are traceable to a single source: Every such doctrine transcends the human understanding, and involves something supernatural. Only persuade the unbeliever of the reasonableness of divine interpositions, in nature and history, and he can entertain many truths at which he now stumbles and persistently rebels. As there is no propriety in arguing the subject of miracles with an atheist, so there is no propriety in discussing the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, with one who denies that any divine force ever comes into nature. Though we lop off the boughs of his unbelief never so often, yet they instantly begin to grow again, if the root thereof, which is his denial of the supernatural, be not uncovered and destroyed.

2. This incredulity respecting anything not amenable to science is gaining ground in certain localities. It can already fortify itself with names renowned in the scientific world; names which give it an air of respectability, although they are appropriated with an indiscriminating eagerness,—some of them being on the extreme right, and others on the extreme left, and but few having any real connection with this naturalistic “Christianity.” A great name is a power with the unthinking many, however misapplied, even though it may be equally fatal to their own theories and the belief which they deny. Not perceiving this, they regard their Christian teachers with a certain self-complacent scorn, fancying those teachers far behind the best intellects of the age, puffed up with a fragmentary and superficial knowledge, pointing to the fact that phenomena once deemed miraculous are now explained on natural principles, and from this drawing the inference—plausible to many an unreflecting mind—that future discoveries will gradually bring everything now referred to divine agency within the compass of natural law.

3. But this growing hesitancy of men, or distinct refusal to believe what transcends the domain of science, is oftentimes honest. However erroneous, and however slight the investigations on which it rests, to disdain it, or treat it with indifference, is a sure way of confirming its strength. By such a course, we shall be understood to confess that our belief in the supernatural is a blind faith; that we are unable to give a sound reason thereof; that we dare not trust it in the arena of debate. It behooves us to meet and satisfy these misgiving minds, to show the reasonableness and need of divine interpositions in the world, if we would smite down that scepticism which is the secret of nearly all existing hostility to evangelical religion. Persuade men that events of the nature of a miracle are not impossible; that they are reasonable, and, in certain great exigencies indispensable, and they are prepared to approach the subject of a revelation from God, and to entertain all and each of its mysterious doctrines.

It is in the hope of contributing something toward such a result, that we now proceed to point out some of the errors and misapprehensions to which the disbelief of divine interpositions is traceable.

In the first place, many persons have refused to believe in any such interpositions, owing to a misunderstanding of the doctrine involved. The question which arrays them against us is one of terms and definitions, rather than of essential doctrine. The word "miracle," which has proved more obnoxious than any other to the doubting, tells us nothing of the nature or origin of the event it designates. An event properly thus designated may have none of the element of supernaturalness in it,—may arise out of a created source; while other events, less striking in themselves, and even passing unnoticed perhaps, may spring immediately from a divine volition. This term "miracle," belonging partly to the technics of theology, is used to describe an *effect* produced in the mind of the beholder.

Certain occurrences are thus named, in the scriptural narrative, because they excited the wonder of the bystanders; the people witnessing them greatly *marvelled*, and were astonished above measure. Now the inspired penmen call such events by various names, in their artless records—signs, mighty deeds, wondrous works; but we, viewing them all from a single point of view, are wont to embrace them under the one term “miracles.” This may not be the best word. Looking only at the etymology of it, the objector may make it mean something very different from what we mean by it. Since we have chosen it, he must allow us to define it. We do not ask him to believe any notion which it may seem to him to convey, but only the doctrine which we mean it to express. What, then, do we understand by a miracle? Do we mean, as the sceptic affirms, that the laws of nature have been set aside and dishonored? Certainly not. Do we mean that God could not create a perfect world in the beginning, but is obliged to be continually interposing to remedy its original defects? We intend nothing of this sort by the word. Do we mean that there is irregularity and confusion in the government of the world; that God is fickle-minded, at cross-purposes with himself, undoing to-day what he did yesterday? On the contrary, we believe that Jehovah changes not; that he is not man, nor the son of man, that he should repent. We have an unflinching faith in the orderly march of history; in the steady administration of the affairs of the universe; in those eternal counsels, so wise and perfect as never to need any change or modification in the carrying out. When we apply the term “miracles” to certain historic events, we mean that they were manifestations of God’s power, so direct and immediate as to convince the witnesses of his agency in them. This is the whole statement; and certainly it involves no monstrous interference with the order of nature; it only asserts the divine sovereignty and supremacy, the Creator’s right and ability to do what he will with his own. Mediately and indirectly God is continually

manifesting himself to all mankind. His invisible things, even his eternal power and Godhead, may be known from the creation of the world; from the heavens, which "declare his glory;" from the human frame, "fearfully and wonderfully made;" from the earth, which is "full of the riches of his goodness;" from the "great and wide sea, wherein he hath made things small and great." But these revelations in nature do not constitute a miracle. They lack the essential quality — the element of supernaturalness; neither are they convincing signs of God's presence, given for a special and extraordinary purpose. There is always some originating force, satisfactory to science, between the divine fiat and the eye of the beholder; always some secondary cause, veiling the face of the great First Cause. A miracle, according to the technical use of the word, is wrought only when God steps out from behind these intervening agents; when he drops the instruments of his ordinary providence; when he stands, as it were, in front of the powers of nature, and works independently of them, so as to compel a recognition of his authorship in what occurs. The event, as the name signifies, is of a startling character; it arrests, and powerfully holds, the attention of the witnesses; it refuses to be accounted for on any naturalistic grounds, and obliges all men, even the most reluctant, to exclaim: "Lo! God is here; let the earth keep silence before him."

The value of the biblical miracles, as establishing the divine authority of the scriptures, has been doubted and denied. An elaborate effort is making, to show that Christ and his apostles relied altogether on the *character* of their teachings for credit with mankind. The very apparent fact, that they used miracles in connection with moral evidence, is first declared unnecessary and impossible, and then explained away. But this reasoning cannot change the laws of mental action. Healthy and unsophisticated minds do require something besides moral excellence in a teacher, in order to accept him as sent from God; and wondrous works cannot of themselves avail with persons knowing the

feats of magic, and believing in the power of malignant spirits; it must therefore be these two species of evidence supporting each other, rising until they meet and make a glorious archway of testimony, under which alone the divinely commissioned prophet may walk, receiving the homage and consent of men. This special value of the Christian miracles would not be doubted, were it not for the intrinsic character of the events. It is the quality of supernaturalness in them which gives offence; and therefore they need not be discussed separately, but on the same ground with all other divine interpositions. From the point of view of the present remarks, a miracle is the same thing as a special providence; whoever does not recoil from one, will easily be persuaded to believe in the other. The essential fact in regard to these, and all other like occurrences, is the entrance into nature of a divine force. This is the head and front of all their offending; and though firmly convinced of their necessity and historical reality, and prepared to bring forth our arguments, yet we wish it understood all along, that by such events, — whether called miracles, acts of providence, or divine interpositions, — we mean no dishonor to nature, no denial of the uniform order of the world; we only affirm, in opposition to the naturalistic theory, that those effects flow immediately and directly from the volitions of the Almighty.

- Those persons who appeal to science, as showing that a divine cause never comes into the creation, may be reminded that the best results of modern science are against them. Any respectable museum of zoölogy, like the one at Harvard University, convicts them of inconsistency. It is they, and not we, who have abandoned the inductive method. Mr. Darwin, whom they quote as their chief apostle, is notoriously imaginative as to his data, and hypothetical in his reasonings. No mediaeval scholastic, or disciple of the *a priori* school of philosophy, has ever shown more ingenuity in guessing at convenient premises. His theory, as it has

been briefly stated,¹ is, "that not only all plants and animals, but that man also, with his mind and conscience, with his gift of government and sense of immortality, are all derived, by natural selection, from a common parentage." This conclusion sets at nought, and is irreconcilably at war with, some of the latest and surest discoveries of science. Professor Agassiz has shown that it rests on a purely fictitious basis; that its pretended facts are empty imaginations; that it is a wild hypothesis dependent altogether on perverse and special pleading; that it forsakes and dishonors the scientific method, in whose name it is baptized. The upturned strata of the continents, from the present back to the remotest geologic ages, bear testimony against this vaunted theory. Not "natural selection," but creative acts coming into the domain of nature, explain the succession of races on this terraqueous sphere. Science, speaking through her most eminent votaries, proclaims the reality of divine interventions *since* that original fiat which called the universe into being. Naturalists make four grand divisions of the animal kingdom; and these they subdivide according to certain structural peculiarities, into branches, classes, orders, families, genera, and species. Now these subdivisions, in either of the four departments, did not all begin to exist at the same time; but the least perfectly developed first, and then others less rudimental, in distinct succession,—the genealogical tree being marked with a joint, at the commencement of each new stage of the progress, showing where a supernatural and creative force had intervened. Farthest away in the past, we may suppose, the humble star-fish and sea-anemone sprang into being; then, after vast cycles of ages, the nautilus rose out of the waters and spread his tiny sail; again, unnumbered centuries having rolled by, the many-hued insects began to display their beauties in the sunlight; and finally, the dry land having slowly risen and girded the waves, reptiles, birds, the beasts of the field, and MAN appeared. Our faith in these succes-

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sive creations is not beholden to an uncriticising piety. They are neither the dreams of the religious nor metaphysical entities. Science has spelled out the record, where her own clear eye discovered it, graven, in imperishable letters, on the earth's foundations; science, in opposition to the clamors of a few — children whom she has nourished and brought up, but who have rebelled against her — declares that no new order of life has ever arisen, save by the incoming of the creative word; that no cause in nature is adequate to so grand an effect; but that it is the high and awful prerogative of him who speaks, and it is done; who commands, and it standeth fast forever. Here and there a scholar, confused by such speculations as Mr. Darwin's, until the wish has unconsciously become father to the thought, may have attempted to overthrow the conclusions of science; to make it appear that there has been no intervention of the creative fiat in time, and that the succession of living creatures is caused by the gradual unfolding of the lower into the higher forms of life. But this attempt cannot make headway against the mighty pressure of truth. Science, with the torch of the inductive philosophy in her hand, has searched down the ages, and returned and spoken. She reports that the gulf between one species of life and another is too broad to be spanned by any force in nature; that the boundary between any two adjacent orders is insurmountable to all but God; that throughout all the millions of past ages it has stood uneffaced and unaffected by any cosmical agency; that the different families of plants and animals have stood immutably apart; that without a new and purely creative act, there has been, and can be, no shadow of a change. None can dispute the statement, save in defiance of the conclusions of palaeontology, that a supernatural power has entered nature many times since Jehovah first said "let there be light," inserting forces not there before, and necessitating new and peculiar results. The testimony is unimpeachable: what have been called "the vestiges of creation," turn out indeed to be the "foot-prints

of the Creator;" and the everlasting rocks, as well as the heavens over us, show forth his glorious handiwork.

This argument, we are aware, does not remove the objection to supernatural events, considered not as creative, but as providential. The unbeliever may admit the divine interpositions attested by geology, and still claim that they do not occur in the subsequent management of the new races. "Science proves that God created the *first* bird, the first lion, the first man, by a direct act; but there is no evidence that he interfered with that work, or with the race springing therefrom afterwards. Having produced it, he placed it under eternal and changeless laws, and there left it to fulfil its own destiny."

Proceeding to this new form of the objection, we meet it by denying the assumption on which it stands. Granting that the laws of nature are changeless and eternal, where do we learn that God has placed all his creations in their custody? Has he told us, anywhere, that such must be the fate of everything he calls into being? May he not constitute some of his creatures free and self-directive, and withhold them from the bonds of necessity, to be immediately subject unto himself? If he does place all his works under the guardianship of natural law, to remain in their keeping forever, then we may as well admit, with the sceptic, that no way is open for a miracle to come in subsequently. But we deny this assumption. God has given us no intimation or hint of any such procedure on his part; and certainly there is no necessity binding him to this course of action. If we would not fall back into pantheism, but hold fast the truth that God is distinct from nature, then we must grant that his power of creating involves power to locate each creature as he pleases. It is purely gratuitous, since he is at liberty to do as he will, to say that he has subjected all his works to immutable laws. He does not thus abdicate his sovereignty, and give his glory to another, so far as reason has discovered. We can accept such a doctrine only

by going beyond known facts, and believing unproved conjectures. God has placed many of his works under the dominion of fixed laws—the day and night, the cold and heat, the functions of the animal frame, the motions of the heavenly bodies; but by what authority do we extend that dominion over all his works? If a father sends his son into the army, and if the enlistment be for life, that son is ever after subject to military rule; the father cannot interpose, in any case, to relieve him of the prescribed discipline. But suppose that he keeps his son under his personal supervision: then he may interfere, and *ought* to, as the good of that son shall require. So with the divine interpositions. If we might assume that God subjects everything he makes to natural law, perhaps there might be no opportunity for providential miracles. But the assumption is purely gratuitous,—unsupported by any well-ascertained fact. The sovereign Creator may refuse, in the case of some of his children, to place them under such control. He may prefer to keep them in a state of freedom, answerable only to his own fatherly injunctions. And while they are thus independent of nature,—at liberty to turn either to the right hand or the left hand, as their own desires may prompt, we must grant the extreme probability of occasions for God to interpose. Miraculous events are likely to occur, and reason leads us to expect them, so long as any creature of our great and wise Sovereign is free.

More positively, then, we remark, that any denial of providential miracles overlooks the distinctions of natural and moral government—merging the moral in the natural. Not only may the omnipotent One create free agents, but he actually has. That voice of divine satisfaction, which went forth over the sinless pair in Eden, and the Psalmist's exulting shout: "Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, and set him *over* the work of thy hand," do but syllable and reëcho the consciousness of all immortals. Jehovah's government of the universe embraces two grand departments, the natural and the moral. Many of his works, above

and around us, are in the control of secondary causes; but there is one creature "made in the image of God." Man, as his own thoughts testify, is endowed with liberty; his will, like the Creator's, is free to move *with* or *against* the law of holiness placed over it. Man is superior to the control of nature. He may be called supernatural, so far as his moral agency is concerned. He can spurn all creative influence, whether by the inner or outer world; and therefore, in order to be sure of governing him, God must reserve the power to interpose. Nature may persuade man, but she cannot overawe and subdue his will. No iron destiny rules the action of his moral faculties. Though the movements of his body and mind are to a certain extent under the dominion of fixed laws, yet in his volitions he is necessarily and forever free. So far as he shares the life of nature, he is the subject of a natural government; but as a moral agent, nothing but a moral government can have any fitness, or even reality, to him. It was said that we are conscious of this freedom. We *know* that our wills can be in allegiance only to that which is supernatural. It is graven upon our hearts that we are free, and that no being but God can sit in authority over our souls. As we believe that man is not a machine, that his Maker has honored him above every other creature, withholding him from the grasp of fate, and endowing him with the power to choose his own course of action, we must cling to the doctrine of divine interpositions as the sheet anchor of human safety.

Since man is not subject to fixed laws, but is free to act as he will, he may act unwisely. He may leave the path of righteousness, and enter the pathway of unholiness and sin. He may go astray into wretchedness and despair; and what shall restore him from the fatal wandering? Natural forces cannot; for, as we have just seen, his moral capacity is superior to nature; it does not own her sway. Evidently something from above — a power not only different in kind from nature's but infinite in degree, and which his will shall not disdain to obey — must be interposed. Nothing but

the intervening hand of God can reverse the downward flight of a soul. Our wills, which spurn all natural dominion, must feel the awful majesty of divinity, or there is no certainty that they will be bowed into submission. The Almighty gives himself a terrible being to govern, as often as he makes a man! Nature cannot govern that creature; God must control him, or he may roam a wild marauder through the universe. Nor can any force of necessity restrain him. That free-will knows not the meaning of fate. Only motives, still leaving it the master of its own action, can reach it. Instead of being driven, it must be convinced and overawed. It must be turned back from the wrong, and influenced to follow after righteousness, by "the terrors of the Lord," — by such wondrous interpositions as it shall not dare resist. Take from God the miracle-working power, and the sceptre of his moral government is broken. He may trust nature to the management of natural forces; but, in order to be sure of controlling men, he must be able to touch them with his own finger, to utter the voice of his majesty close in their hearing, and make all his splendors flash immediately upon them. And if the existence of a *single* man calls for a ruler, able and ever ready to interpose, how much more impressively the argument reveals its greatness, in view of the countless hosts of free spirits peopling both time and eternity! If it be true that evil spirits may interfere with the movements of creation, what agency shall overrule their power? All angels, whether fallen or unfallen, have the same liberty as man to bring chaos and night into the moral realm; and considering their capacities and uncounted armies, and adding thereto the ever-springing and never-dying children of the human race, what must be the result if there be not some arm of holiness and wisdom which may reach and sway them at will? The evil which might ensue in such a universe, were it left without an interposing God, is but faintly imaged in the Miltonic description, where "hills amid the air encountered hills, hurled to and fro with jaculation dire."

Naturalism affirms that the miracle-working power could only introduce confusion and irregularity into the world. But nothing could be further from the truth, or more opposite, so long as the human will remains free. Divine interpositions alone, are adequate to keep irregularity and ruin out of the moral universe. The fountain of disorder is in the soul of man,—in a creature finite and temptable, and clothed with the transcendent power of self-direction. Aside from the fact of angelic orders of intelligence, and ceasing from any broad survey, every one may detect, in his own personality, an energy which threatens the moral harmony of the world. Over against the fearful truth of human liberty stand the miracles, winged messengers of goodness, ready to fly for our rescue whenever we abuse our freedom. We see not how it is possible for God to overmaster and guide this faculty of free-will, unless he, in certain great emergencies, lifts the curtain which veils his presence, and shows us his hand grasping his thunderbolts. His power to interpose and control us, independently of created causes, is the foundation of his throne. Without it all the beauty and lustre now encircling him would vanish away. The fact that he may deal with us immediately, no finite force intervening, so far from exciting our terror, saves us from alarm. It is no signal of anarchy, but an assurance that the moral world, no less than the natural, shall be governed; that there is a hand ready to be interposed, when any disturbance rises out of the free-agency of man, and able to restrain the agent at the same time that the freedom remains unimpaired; that the heathen may rage, the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, while the harmony of the universe is still secure.

The denial of supernatural events in nature and history often arises from a failure to see that it behoves God to subject his natural to his moral government. Reason teaches that matter should be the servant of mind, that all unintelligent forces should minister in the education of the soul.

Man is the flower of creation. The glory of the world lies in contributing to his excellency. His needs are sovereign. All things below him on the scale of life, should be subordinated to his fullest and fairest development. It is the verdict of philosophy that he should "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth on the earth." Now the devotee of science is apt to forget this subserviency of nature to moral and spiritual ends. He becomes so absorbed in his favorite studies, as to lose sight of the royalty and supremacy of the soul. He is charmed with the beautiful order which pervades both earth and sky. Whenever he is able to penetrate by the aid of either telescope or microscope, he finds all things moving in obedience to uniform laws; and he comes to be so in love with this exquisite harmony, as to recoil from the idea of the smallest interruption thereof. Forgetting the paramount moral government, he can see no occasion for the intervention of the supernatural; and he deems it unworthy of the God of order — as though he would wantonly bring a sudden crash and discord into the anthem of nature — to intimate that he may thus interpose.

From this point of view, and with this exclusive devotion to cosmical agencies, it is not at all strange that one should look with distrust on the Christian doctrine of the supernatural. But such is not the position which we are to take, if we would comprehend all the facts in our survey. Glorious as the fabric of nature is, there is something unspeakably more noble, — something to which all the laws of nature should be subordinate. That most precious of created things is the immortal soul. Looking steadily on that, and balancing its fearful possibilities, nature, with all her vast harmonies, appears only as a means and an instrument. If that free soul wanders, and threatens disturbance to the moral realm, the material universe ought to be sacrificed, if needful, to bring it back. God is concerned for its recovery. He decreed the saving interposition in eternity, when he

foresaw the wandering. There is no acting from sudden impulse, or by stress of unexpected emergencies. All takes place in fulfilment of the ancient purpose. But what is there that God shall not give in exchange for a soul? Who shall say that he is not infinitely wise, if, to hold up his noblest work from ruin, he thrusts his hand through all the course of nature, and wields the entire creation as the instrument of his fatherly love? Is any one so unreflecting as to believe that God would create a material universe, and launch it forth into space, and make it such that he cannot use it to educate and restrain his own children? Is nature a tyrant, to pluck those children out of his hand; or a willing servant, to whom he speaks as he has purposed on their behalf, and instantly his word is performed? An immediate act of the Almighty may become necessary to man's salvation. His soul has such power, is so terrible in its liberty, that nothing in nature can be sure of controlling it. And since it is worth so much,—God's costliest jewel, and his own offspring,—the whole realm of nature is as nothing in the comparison. Rather than that soul should perish, or one tittle of the law over it fail, the elements should be confounded, and the heavens be folded up as a decayed vesture, and laid aside. God shows his wisdom—a divine and holy economy of means—in seizing all nature with his omnipotent grasp, and wielding it, as the exigency may demand, for the rescue of his immortal child. He subordinates the less to the greater; he uses what is temporary and limited in value to secure that, the value of which passeth knowledge.

Passing on from this branch of the discussion, we remark in the next place, that those who reject the doctrine of the supernatural, lose the only ground on which the history of Christ can be explained. Of all miracles he is the greatest; and any attempt to make him less than the Son of God manifest in the flesh, is a wild defiance of both fact and philosophy. It had become necessary that the Creator should

interpose, in order to save the human race. What was the condition of the world, at the time of Christ's appearing? Every scheme originating with man, and instituted for the elevation of society, had miserably failed. Degeneracy was written all over the history of the nations. Morality, literature, art, philosophy, masculine energy, waned everywhere with the lapse of time. Nothing, within the sphere of finite causes, could reverse or check the headlong tendency. It had been demonstrated,

"Unless above himself he can erect
Himself, how mean a thing is man."

Nothing remained but that God should interpose, or leave the human race to perish in its corruptions. And rather than behold the ruin, he chose to work the miracle. According to the quaint but striking phrase of John Foster, "the great bell of the universe" was rung, calling the nations together, to hear the divine and saving sermon. The supernaturalness of the undertaking consisted in the incarnation of the Redeemer. Only accept Christ's declaration, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and every other miracle mentioned in scripture ceases to perplex us. They all find their solution in this one great mystery, and seem to be necessitated by it. When a monarch appears, we expect to see him attended by a train of servants and nobles. So the incarnation once admitted, and we are prepared to recognize all the marvels preceding or following it. They are no intruders, but the meet heralds and servitors of Immanuel. The supernatural births of Isaac, Samson, and the child moving so obscurely through the vision of Isaiah, were needed as a preparation, in order that welcome might be given to the virgin-born reconciler of earth and heaven. The miracles of the Old Testament, nearly all of which open the way to some aspect of the many-sided mystery of the incarnation, were a schoolmaster to lead the world believingly up to Christ. And those signs and wonders which the apostles wrought, instead of requiring any sep-

arate vindication, were only the trailing splendors and filaments of the glory passed into the heavens. Now who is prepared to deny the declaration of Christ, that "he proceeded and came forth from the Father?" Though he bears witness of himself, yet will any one doubt that his testimony is true? Are we not called upon by reason and the voice of the ages to believe his words, though every man, and every human speculation, should thereby be proved false? He was neither an enthusiast nor an impostor; and it is the judgment of all the enlightened and the good, to-day, "better that every other name should perish, than that his great name should be obscured." His profound wisdom, his all-loving beneficence and unselfishness, his perfect insight and truthfulness, are not so much a record as the deep and inwrought conviction of mankind. And aside from his own testimony, which ought to be forever conclusive, who will say that his miraculous mission was uncalled for? Who denies that his life, teachings, and death are the hope of the world? There is no reformer worthy of the name, no teacher of good morals, no man laboring in any way for the spiritual benefit of the race, but draws his inspiration from Jesus of Nazareth. Take that wondrous name out of history, and we all should feel that our sheet-anchor was gone. But in this same Jesus, coming forth from God, and returning whence he came, the problem of the supernatural is forever solved. He steps across nature with a single stride, in leaving his throne and becoming the babe of Bethlehem. There is nothing incredible, however much that may be inexplicable, in miracles and other supernatural events in nature and history; but they appear only as the bright halo of divinity around him in whom all the fulness of the God-head dwelt, while he proceeds on his wondrous mission,—healing the sick, raising the dead, foiling and defeating the prince of darkness, bursting the chains of the grave, and ascending up, where he was before, above all principalities and powers in heavenly places.

The argument for divine interpositions would be incomplete without some notice of the ennobling influence of the doctrine on the believing mind. The soul which regards itself as excluded from immediate contact with God, hedged about by secondary causes, and woven into the mechanism of nature, can hardly escape a feeling of degradation. Any consciousness of its high origin must raise the suspicion that it is an outcast and disinherited child. It misses the warning and beautifying presence of its own Father, and is rolled helplessly along under an inexorable destiny. Not until it escapes from this fatalistic movement, and enters into a divine companionship, does the sense of humiliation depart; then only may it raise the questions, "whence am I, and what, and whither bound," and not fall prostrate, crushed by its own self-communings. We have seen what events those are for which the doctrine of the supernatural pleads, — divine interventions, sometimes secret and at other times manifest, but always the direct and immediate forth-puttings of Jehovah's power. We have seen that the principle involved in all such interpositions must be admitted, since the findings of science attest a long succession of creative acts. We have seen that God is not compelled to place all his creatures in the power of natural laws, granting those laws to be uniform and eternal. We have seen — since *man* is exempted from the chain of necessity, and honored with the faculty of self-control — that occasion for God to interfere may arise; that he is not sure of governing this free agent, unless he reserves to himself the miracle-working power; that the exercise of such a power, instead of bringing in disorder, is needed to keep irregularity and confusion out of the world. We have also seen that a miracle, whether open or concealed, is no insult to nature when wrought in behalf of the soul and high moral ends, since God's moral government is his grandest care, in ministering to which the glory of all nature culminates. And we have seen that in no way, save on the ground of divine interventions, can we

frame a satisfactory answer to the question: "What think ye of Christ?"

From this high argument, mounting up through so many cumulative stages, we look forth as from the summit of a lofty watch-tower; and what must be the revulsion, and painful amazement in our minds, if unable to descry anywhere the movements and traces of the intervening hand of God! Though he is a sovereign, and may stretch forth his arms or keep them folded up at pleasure; yet where are his justice, his goodness, and his mercy, if he sits motionless and uncaring while woe and wickedness are stalking through the world? Believing, as we do, in his all-pitying kindness, we expect him to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh; to startle his erring and miserable children by his manifested presence; to call them around him, overawe them with his wondrous works, convince them that he is their Maker and Saviour, and instruct them into the upward way of blessedness and life. There are great spiritual exigences in the history of every reflective man, when he feels that nothing in nature can save him; when, distrusting his own strength, and all other created aid, his sinking soul cries out for a supernatural and divine helper. Such works as the essay of Professor Powell are a cruel impertinence to the soul thus overwhelmed. Instead of being regarded as inquiries after truth, they should be termed "further contributions toward universal hopelessness and despair." Such essays may have a brief notoriety, like that of an arraigned culprit. We are curious to know their contents, and talk about them immoderately, just as we waste many words on the criminal brought to trial; but as the case is soon closed, and the name of the culprit perishes, so the much-discussed tracts disappear beneath the onward sweep of the cause which helps and saves. We need have no fears, in view of the efforts of scepticism, — those "swarms of gnats" gathering ever and anon about the flashing sword of truth: mankind will never accept the humiliating conclusions of naturalism; our souls know that they are unsphered and wrecked forever,

if there be not around them the arm of a sustaining and ennobling God. This faith of the supernatural, which exalts and glorifies humanity, is interwoven with our most sacred instincts. We feel that it would not be like God, the father of compassions, to leave his world all these thousands of years, and make no direct effort to rescue it from its woes. We believe that he has interposed, simply because we believe in his goodness. We needed to hear his voice, and therefore he has spoken. No created arm could stay the degeneracy of the race, and therefore he made bare his own holy arm. The incarnation was indispensable to our rescue from sin; hence he wrought that miracle of miracles. We were perishing for lack of knowledge, and he, seeing our miserable estate, sent his revelation, miracle-winged, flying across the realms of nature. His soul is stirred within him, and his repentings are kindled together. Resolved to save his most precious work from the consequences of its own folly, he lays hold of nature, and wields her forces, or sets them aside, or walks over them all, for man's salvation. This is the God whom we worship, in whom we dare to trust, and by communing with whom we are transfigured into his own bright image. We do not recognize his face, nor the awfulness of his authority, if the miracle-working power be absent. That must remain. It is the terrible majesty which nature obeys, and which cheers and blesses the adoring soul. The transcendent jewel, the chief ornament and glory of God's crown, may nothing ever obscure its brightness, or dim our clear vision thereof, lest the hope of perfection die out of our hearts, and a night, such as never brooded upon primeval chaos, spread over us its all-ending gloom!