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ARTICLE II.

PAUL ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

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THERE has been of late a growing tendency to discredit the occurrence of miracles in general, and of the Christian miracles in particular. Doubt or disbelief of them is entertained not only by avowed agnostics or free-thinkers, but even by many conservative Christians. Once it was no uncommon thing for doubters to question only certain classes of the Christian miracles, whereas others were accepted as real. Now the tendency is to make no exceptions, and to declare all miracles impossible or incredible.

This extreme attitude is, no doubt, in part a reaction from an undue stress formerly laid upon belief in miracles, as if such belief were essential to orthodoxy, or even to salvation. But Dr. G. A. Gordon, in his recent work on "Religion and Miracle," has, with his usual vigor and impressiveness, shown that belief in miracles is *religiously* of very small account, and argues that, even if they were generally disregarded, yet all that is really vital in religion can be retained. This, as a general proposition, may be, and should be, frankly admitted. Religious faith, as a source and feature of the moral and spiritual life, is essentially independent of belief in miracles. Its essence consists in repentance, trust, and love toward God, and need not have any direct reference to miraculous events. This concession to the spirit of disbelief in the supernatural,

however, as Dr. Gordon also affirms, does not require us to assume that miracles are impossible or incredible. It only puts them where they belong, as events for the occurrence of which the evidence is to be dispassionately examined. If they are found to be probably or certainly historical, they may turn out to have also a real, though indirect and subordinate, value, for religious faith. I propose now to consider the evidence for one — the most prominent one — of the Christian miracles.

First, however, it is proper to make a preliminary remark about certain prepossessions that affect the weight of the evidence in question. Whether miracles in general are regarded as *a priori* credible, depends largely upon one's conception of God. Those to whom he is only a blind Force must of necessity hold all miracles to be impossible. But whoever regards the universe as made and controlled by a Divine Person cannot well deny the *possibility* of miracles. If, as is most commonly held by theists, the so-called "laws of nature" are nothing but God's orderly method of working, then it must be as possible for him occasionally to deviate from that ordinary method as it is for a human person, when occasion requires it, to depart from his ordinary rules of conduct. Whether God ever does in fact so deviate from his usual mode of working, depends on whether he finds sufficient reason for so doing.

True, it is sometimes alleged, and by Christian theists too, that a miracle would imply a sort of self-contradiction on God's part — would imply that, having constructed a universe according to his best wisdom, he finds his work now and then to need correction. This objection is often urged by those who emphasize the doctrine of the divine immanence. This doctrine, it is said, practically does away with the distinction

between nature and the supernatural; everything that happens in the natural world being the direct effect of divine agency, any event may be called natural or supernatural, as one pleases.

But here again much depends on what is meant by the doctrine in question. Whether the conception of God as immanent tends to discredit miracles depends on what is really meant by divine immanence. If it is meant that the notion of secondary causes is unwarrantable, and that all the so-called forces of nature are nothing but divine energies immediately exerted on the elements around us, then the doctrine, instead of making miracles difficult to believe, ought to make them easy to believe. For a miracle would then be nothing but an unusual or exceptional exertion of divine power. There would be no natural *law* violated or suspended; for, according to the assumption, there is no law of nature — no forces inherent in the natural elements — that would be interfered with. The only law in the case that we can speak of would be the law of the divine *will*. If, however, the conception of the divine immanence takes a pantheistic form, and the activities of the natural world are ascribed to the operation of impersonal Force, rather than of a personal Will, then of course it does very plainly conflict with a belief in miracles. But I am not addressing pantheists, but professed Christians.

A personal God, unless he is able, for wise reasons, to deviate from his ordinary method of working, must be more unfree and limited than human persons. As Dr. Channing well says, "To the skeptic no principle is so important as the uniformity of nature. To me there is a vastly higher truth, to which miracles bear witness, and to which I welcome their aid. What I wish chiefly to know is, that mind is the supreme power in the universe; that matter is its instrument and slave;

that there is a will to which nature can offer no obstruction; that God is unshackled by the laws of the universe, and controls them at his pleasure." It does not follow that because miracles are possible, they actually occur. It may be denied that there can be adequate reasons for any departure from the uniformity of nature's operations. Or it may be questioned, with Hume, whether, on account of the intrinsic improbability of miracles, any human testimony can be sufficient to prove their occurrence. Or it may be questioned whether the alleged miracles are real or only apparent. Strange things, and inexplicable things, often occur, which *may* be miracles, but which also *may* be caused by some unknown force working naturally. These, or other, difficulties may embarrass one who undertakes to prove the actuality of any particular miracle.

For my present purpose it is not necessary to discuss these points in detail. There are, at all events, certain occurrences recorded in the New Testament which, if they took place as they are described, must be called actual miracles. Those Christians who are skeptical about supernatural events in general do not attempt to show that these were really natural events, and have only been mistakenly called miraculous; rather, they attempt to discredit the accuracy of the narratives. I refer especially to such stories as those of the feeding of the five thousand, the raising of the dead, and especially those of the miraculous conception of Jesus, and his resurrection. Doubters do not dispose of these by the allegation that the line of distinction between the natural and the supernatural has been wiped out by more correct views of the divine immanence. No; these narratives are interpreted as myths, or legends, or fictions; and the events narrated are regarded either as unhistorical, or as unmiraculous facts, though described as actually miraculous.

In the progress of doubt respecting the full credibility of the Gospel stories of miraculous events, that of the resurrection of Christ from death has been the last one to be challenged. No other event reported in the Gospels is so amply attested as this. All of the Evangelists narrate it in detail, differing indeed in some minor particulars, but agreeing perfectly on the main point and in the general impression made, that Jesus died on the cross, but within three days afterwards was seen alive by his disciples in bodily form. The book of Acts repeats the story, and refers to it over and over as the grand, indisputable, and crowning fact in the history of the Christ. The Apostolic writings do the same. It is an obvious truth that the writers of the New Testament concur in pronouncing the miraculous bodily resurrection of Jesus to be the great fact by which God authenticated Jesus Christ as the divinely commissioned messenger of salvation to mankind.

When now this miracle, as well as all the minor ones related in the Gospels, is discredited, there forces itself upon one's mind the difficulty, that the giving up of the miracles necessarily involves the surrender of much besides the miracles. The admission that the narratives of miracles are untrustworthy discredits the general trustworthiness of the Gospel histories. *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*. Stories of supernatural doings or occurrences are so intermingled with the accounts of Jesus' life and teachings that it is simply impossible to deal successfully with the problem of sifting out the unhistorical, and determining how much remains that can be relied on as authentic. There would be no standard of judgment but a purely subjective one. Every one would have to decide for himself what passages to call authentic, and what ones to discard as mythical, legendary, or fictitious. It is safe to say that under such conditions no two persons could agree

as to what Jesus really did or said, or what he was. Consequently, while we may admit that the essence of the Christian religion does not consist in believing in miracles, a positive and sweeping *disbelief* in miracles necessarily affects our confidence in the trustworthiness of the records from which our conception of the Founder of the Christian religion is chiefly derived. And this disbelief would then affect one's views of Christ, who is certainly to the Christian an object of *religious* faith.

But this consideration, however weighty it may be, fails to solve the problem before us. The histories in the New Testament cannot, more than other histories, claim exemption from critical examination. And if stories of miracles in other histories create a presumption against the credibility of the histories, so must they be conceded to create a presumption against the credibility of the New Testament histories. And even though, in the case of the New Testament, this general presumption may be rebutted, so that the credibility of some of the miracle stories may be admitted, it does not follow that all of them must be believed indiscriminately. Some are intrinsically more objectionable than others; some are more poorly attested than others. Some, on the other hand, are peculiarly well attested, and among these is especially to be reckoned the miracle of Christ's resurrection.

Those who doubt the authenticity of the accounts of this miracle justify their doubts by laying stress on the fact that the Gospel narratives of the event disagree somewhat with one another, that they were all written many years after the event narrated, viz., say, from thirty-five to seventy-five years later, and therefore cannot be relied on to give us an exact account of what actually happened. Various conjectures are made in order to explain the rise of the stories about the al-

leged resurrection. Some (among them so able a man as Schleiermacher) have conjectured that Jesus did not really die on the cross, and after his deposition was resuscitated; they do not undertake to tell what he did with himself after his resuscitation. Others argue that the testimony concerning the empty tomb is scanty and inconclusive, and that, even if it was found empty, the soldiers, or some one else, may have removed the body in the night. Others are inclined to explain the whole story as a gradual growth, due to ardent devotion and a lively imagination; or to derive it from a misinterpretation of some Old Testament passages which were imagined to be prophetic of the Messiah's resurrection from the grave.

It is plain, however, that these hypotheses are not resorted to because the narratives themselves in general bear marks of untrustworthiness. On the contrary, though the Gospels in other parts are lacking in chronological arrangement, and disagree more or less in their details, yet just in regard to the final scenes in Christ's life and his resurrection they are uncommonly minute and orderly. And although they are here still enough at variance with one another to disprove any suspicion of collusion, yet they have every appearance of being veritable histories, have for centuries been so regarded, and would not now be questioned except on account of the supernatural element in the story.

Accordingly the present favorite method of evading the force of the narratives of the resurrection is that of admitting the general conscientiousness of the writers, and in a certain sense the truthfulness of the incidents recorded, but of assuming that the original disciples of Christ were the victims of *hallucination*; in other words, that those disciples *thought* that Christ rose from the dead, and *thought* that they saw him and talked with him, though in fact they did not.

And this theory of hallucination, we are told, is confirmed by the testimony of Paul. What he saw on his way to Damascus, it is said, was a vision — not a literal sight of Jesus in bodily form, but an ecstatic experience. Accordingly, inasmuch as he (in 1 Cor. xv.) makes his experience parallel to that of the other apostles, we may infer (it is argued) that theirs likewise was no objective vision, but only a peculiar state of mind. To this it is added that having visions was a frequent thing with Paul. Several of them are especially mentioned; and he himself (in 2 Cor. xii. 1-7) intimates that these experiences had been numerous. Moreover, it is a favorite theory with many that these visions were caused, or, at least, intensified, by a peculiar nervous temperament produced by epilepsy — a malady which is assumed to be the one which he calls his “thorn in the flesh.” The proof of this is thought to be found in the fact that the “infirmity of the flesh,” spoken of in Gal. iv. 13, 14, and assumed to be the same as the “thorn,” is said not to have been “spit out” by the Galatians; and, as it was a superstitious custom in some parts of the ancient world to spit in the presence of an epileptic, it is inferred that epilepsy must have been the physical infirmity from which Paul suffered.

To the more judicious the logic of this proof will seem to be seriously wanting in cogency. Indeed, when all the known facts are taken into consideration, the hypothesis may be called preposterous. Paul tells us that his thorn in the flesh was given to him to keep him from being overmuch exalted by the excess of his revelations. These exegetes, however, tell us that the thorn was just what chiefly caused the revelations. That is, he was in danger of being puffed up by his visions; therefore the Lord, to guard him from being puffed up by them, *sent him a malady which was fitted to increase*

the visions. The one certain information which we have about the thorn in the flesh is that it came *after* the visions which the exegetes regard as consisting in an epileptic diathesis which came *before* the visions! The result of the learning and sagacity of the scholars is to make the divine dealing with Paul resemble the wisdom of a magistrate who should punish a burglar by presenting him with a new set of burglars' tools.

This epilepsy hypothesis is a gratuitous aggravation of the notion that the apostle's visions were simple hallucinations. They are thus made out to be the products of a bodily disease. But even when this particular theory is rejected, the question still remains: Was Paul's vision of Jesus at Damascus of the same sort as those visions of him which his disciples had after the crucifixion? This question apparently must be answered in the affirmative; for Paul expressly makes his experience parallel to those of the original apostles. He gives a list of the persons to whom Christ "appeared" after his resurrection, and at the close says, "and last of all . . . he appeared to me also." To be sure, two very different corollaries may be drawn from this parallelism. One may say: Paul's vision was like that of the others; but his was evidently a purely spiritual vision; therefore theirs must have been of the same sort. Another may say: Paul's vision was like that of the others; but the others evidently had a literal sight of Jesus' bodily form; therefore Paul must also have had the same literal sight of him.

In order to decide which corollary is the correct one, we need more carefully to consider (1) how Paul describes the original visions of the risen Saviour, and (2) how he describes his own. As to the first point, he tells the Corinthians that he had delivered to them "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that

he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures"; and then follows the list of the several persons or companies to whom he appeared. The list does not exactly correspond to the accounts in the Gospels; he mentions Jesus' being seen by more than five hundred at once and by James — appearances not mentioned by the Evangelists — and mentions also particularly the appearance to Peter, which is not described in the Gospels, though it is alluded to as a fact in Luke' xxiv. 34.

The general impression produced by Paul's account of the Christophanies is quite the same as that produced by the Gospel narratives. Christ is said to have been *seen* by various individuals after he had been crucified and buried. Having emphasized this point, Paul goes on to argue with a class of persons in the Corinthian church who were skeptical about the resurrection of the dead. To those who denied it *in toto* he said, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised." To those who stumbled at the doctrine of a resurrection-body, he replied that the bodies of those who rise from the dead are not the same as those which are buried — the natural body very different from the spiritual body. Just what he understood the "spiritual body" to be, it is not necessary to ascertain, nor is it likely that he himself could have given us more light than this chapter conveys. It is his name for the vehicle of the human spirit after death. He makes clear that it is different from the earthly (the psychical, or animal) body. He makes clear also that he regards the resurrection-body of Christ as prefiguring — as analogous to — the spiritual bodies which his followers are to have. Apparently, therefore, Christ's resurrection-body was, in his view, a spiritual body. And vague, and almost self-contradictory, as the phrase is, it answers not unaptly to the representations which the Evangelists give of Christ's appearances after his

resurrection. But in whatever sense he may have regarded Christ's resurrection-body as homogeneous with the spiritual bodies of men in general, one thing is certain: he does not make the analogy complete. Christ's resurrection, according to him, had already taken place, whereas the resurrection of other men, even of those already dead, he represents as yet to take place in the future; and apparently here, as also in 1 Thess. iv. 13-17, he thinks of this future resurrection of all men as practically simultaneous.

All the more significant, therefore, is Paul's statement that Jesus was raised "on the *third day*," and appeared to his disciples. This appearance is thus made to be an exceptional, an extraordinary, a miraculous, occurrence. That he so viewed the matter, is made certain by Rom. i. 4, where he says that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead." If, as many seem to think, Christ's rising was nothing but the continuance of his personal existence, that would have been only what he had taught his disciples to regard as true of all the patriarchs and saints of the past. Jesus' personality did not begin to survive three days after his death; and his reappearance in visible form was in Paul's mind a divine and decisive sign given in confirmation of Jesus' Messianic claims. Paul here argues just as Peter did, who, on the day of Pentecost and afterwards, boldly adduced the fact of Christ's resurrection as an infallible proof that Jesus had been exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. It matters little what we may conceive, or what Paul may have conceived, to be the exact nature of the reappearance of Christ, whether in a material body, or in a form to apprehend which the disciples' senses needed a supernatural quickening. The essential point is that it was an actual objective appearance — that Jesus was palpably manifested to

them, and communed with them. In any case, it was, in Paul's mind, a supernatural experience, and not a hallucination.

The answer to the question, how Paul describes the original visions of the risen Saviour, has now been given, to the effect that he regarded them as no optical illusions, but as actual and veritable sense-perceptions of Jesus in bodily form. We come now to the second question, how he describes his own vision. As already remarked, he evidently makes his experience parallel to that of the original apostles; and since he describes theirs as an actual sight of the risen Jesus, there is every presumption that he means to describe his own to be of the same sort. As Christ "appeared" ("was seen") to them, so he "appeared" to Paul. The passage in 1 Cor. xv. gives us no further clew to the exact nature of the vision; but we find an instructive parallel in ix. 1, where Paul says, "Am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" This refers unmistakably to the vision which he had on the Damascus journey, and is especially significant, since it clearly adduces his seeing the risen Jesus as a proof of his apostleship. The point of his question is very clear. It had been a distinguishing feature of the apostles that they had been witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. Peter in his first public discourse on the day of Pentecost said, "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts ii. 32). So iii. 15; v. 31, 32. And Peter at Cæsarea is reported as saying, "Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen of God, even to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts x. 40, 41). So closely was apostleship associated with the experience of having seen the risen Lord that, when Judas was lost to the original twelve,

the eleven thought it necessary to choose, from the number of the disciples that had companied with them during all Jesus' ministry and up to his ascension, one who should become a witness with them of his resurrection (Acts i. 21, 22). And, according to Luke, Paul in his address at Antioch of Pisidia said, "God raised him from the dead; and he was seen for many days of them that came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses unto the people" (Acts xiii. 30, 31).

The upshot of all this is that Paul, on the one hand, recognizes the literal seeing of Christ after his resurrection as a prime prerequisite of apostleship, and, on the other, insists that on account of his experience at Damascus he had acquired the same qualification. He, like the other apostles, had seen the risen Lord. But if he had had only a spiritual apprehension of Jesus — the same as any believer may have had — this claim of apostleship, of a rank coördinate with that of Peter and the other apostles, would be not only without validity, but almost without meaning.

When we compare Paul's account of his vision of Christ with that of Luke (as given in Acts ix.), it is noticeable that in one particular Paul's is more explicit than Luke's with regard to what happened. Paul distinctly says that he *saw* Jesus. Luke tells about Paul's seeing a brilliant light and hearing a voice, but says that the attendants beheld no man, though they saw the light and heard a sound. Both in the first account (chap. ix.) and in the subsequent repetitions of the story, as it is ascribed to Paul (chaps. xxii. and xxvi.), there is no declaration that Paul saw Jesus. Yet Luke himself (Acts ix. 17) reports Ananias as speaking to Paul of Jesus "who appeared" ("was seen") to him on the way; and in ix. 27 he says that Barnabas declared to the apostles

how Paul "had seen the Lord in the way." And so in Acts xxii. 14 Paul represents Ananias as saying to him, "The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth."

If there is a strong presumption against the hypothesis that the original disciples of Jesus were the victims of optical illusion when they thought they saw him risen from the dead, still greater is this presumption in the case of Paul. He had never, so far as we know, seen Jesus in the flesh. He had also been not only an unbeliever, but a bitter enemy of Christianity. He was going to Damascus on a mission of persecution. He cannot have been in a state of mind respecting Jesus which was fitted to create in him a desire to see him, and therefore to produce an optical hallucination. In spite of all the speculations as to the workings of his conscience on his way from Jerusalem, plausible as some of them are, we have absolutely no warrant for supposing that, before he was arrested by the blinding light, he was expecting or desiring to have any other experience than that of success in his contemplated persecution of the Damascus Christians. When he was arrested, he was addressed as a persecutor of Christ. So far was he from expecting a vision of Christ that he did not know who was addressing him. The narrative makes no other impression than that the experience which he had was an utter surprise to him. Yet this surprise resulted in a complete revolution of his religious sentiments and of his life purpose!

Just here is presented a knotty problem for the anti-supernaturalist. The outstanding fact to be accounted for is this sudden and radical conversion of Paul. *He* explains it as occasioned by a plainly miraculous occurrence. The dazzling light which at midday exceeded the brightness of the sun, the visible appearance of the form of Him whose followers he

was going to persecute, the audible voice by which he was addressed, and the blindness which resulted from his startling experience — this all was to him a divine interposition which at once led to the renunciation of his scheme of persecution and to his acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. What other and better explanation can the skeptic adduce? He can tell us how Paul, during his week's journey to Damascus, thought over his life's religious experiences, became dissatisfied with them, had grave misgivings about his conduct towards the Christians and especially towards Stephen, and finally came to the conclusion that he ought to preach Christ instead of denouncing him. This is of course a purely conjectural explanation; and even though, so far as it goes, it may have some probability on its side, it yet fails to explain the remarkable phenomena which, the historical narrative tells us, preceded Paul's arrival at Damascus. Either these phenomena were supernatural, or they did not occur at all; and so we are asked to accept an explanation which not only is independent of the biblical history, but which rejects that history.

It is true, the narrative in Acts ix. is Luke's, not Paul's; but manifestly Luke must have obtained his information from Paul. Be that, however, as it may be; it is certain that Paul himself, in 1 Cor. ix. 1; xv. 8 and Gal. i. 13–17, substantially confirms Luke's account, in that he attributes his conversion to a divine intervention, through which he was confronted with the palpable appearance of the risen Jesus, who was thus so revealed to him and in him that, without conferring with flesh and blood, he was ready to preach Christ crucified, raised from the dead on the third day, and thus declared to be the Son of God with power. So far as the main question before us is concerned, Paul's testimony is explicit — that Christ's bodily resurrection was a historical fact; he affirms

it as a fact attested not only by the original disciples, but also by his own experience.

There are obvious reasons for attaching a peculiar importance to Paul's testimony respecting Christ's resurrection: especially (1) the fact that the genuineness of his letters is generally undisputed; (2) the fact that his is the earliest written testimony on the subject; and (3) the fact that he is a peculiarly trustworthy witness. The date and authorship of the Gospels are more or less uncertain and contested; and in any case they are of later origin than the Pauline Epistles. The First Epistle to the Corinthians was written about twenty-six years after the crucifixion of Christ, and about twenty years after Paul went to Jerusalem to visit Peter. He made this visit, and heard Peter's account of the resurrection and the Christophanies not more than seven years, possibly not more than five, after their alleged occurrence, and had been proclaiming the resurrection as an undoubted and vital fact ever since. The time between the crucifixion and Paul's interviews with Peter was altogether too short for the growth of a mythical or legendary version of the history of Christ's life and mission; neither can in that short time the recollection of the apostles concerning the last days of their intercourse with the Saviour have been materially impaired. And any theory of conscious and intentional falsification on their part is repugnant to every fair-minded student of Gospel history. Consequently not only Strauss's mythical theory, but every other theory which presupposes a long interval between the crucifixion of Christ and the rise of the resurrection-stories, have been abandoned by the more judicious critics; and skepticism concerning those stories now resorts to the assumption of hallucination on the part of the original disciples of Christ.

It remains, then, more narrowly to examine this hypothesis

of hallucination, or, to use a more euphemistic phrase, of subjective vision. The meaning of it is that some of the followers of Jesus imagined that they saw him alive after he had died, though in reality they did not. The imagination is explained as due to the working of strong feeling on sensitive nervous organisms, combined with the contagious influence of strong excitement. Renan may be called the modern patron of this theory. "We may say," he declares, "that the strong imagination of Mary Magdalene here enacted a principal part. Divine power of love! sacred moments in which the passion of a hallucinated woman gives to the world a resurrected God!" Mary, we are told, hastened to acquaint the apostles with her vision; and soon afterwards they all together had a like vision. After their first bitter disappointment on account of Jesus' death the apostles, it is thought, would naturally welcome any such report that he had been seen alive; and the wish that they might see him too became father to the thought that they had seen him. The imagination was so strong that it was taken for an actually objective experience, and was handed down as such to succeeding generations. So, it is thought, without the slightest idea that they were deceived or deceiving others, they proclaimed to the world that Jesus, after he had been put to death, rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples.

1. Now with reference to this hypothesis, it is obvious to remark, in the first place, that it is entirely without support in the narratives that have come down to us. They tell us that Mary Magdalene and the other women went to the tomb for the purpose of anointing the dead body. Mary Magdalene, whatever the seven devils may have been by which she had been possessed, and whatever may have been the peculiarity of her nervous system, was not expecting or hoping to see Jesus alive. When she did see him, she at first thought

he was the gardener; and her whole concern was as to the question, what had become of the dead body: "If thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." The other women also, when they found the tomb empty, were "perplexed"; and the vision of angels which they had, and the message which the angels delivered, made them frightened and amazed. The apostles, moreover, when they heard the women's story, simply disbelieved (Mark xvi. 11; Luke xxiv. 11). And when Jesus appeared to them, they were "terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit" (Luke xxiv. 37). This slowness to expect, or to credit, Jesus' reappearance is just what might have been looked for from sensible men and women, notwithstanding the miracles of which they had been witnesses. The hesitancy was natural even in spite of the recorded fact that Jesus had foretold his own resurrection. This prediction itself had not been understood (Mark ix. 10, 32; Luke ix. 45; xviii. 34), and was recalled to their memory only by its actual fulfilment. The death of Jesus had thrown them into a state of despondency which had no room for hope or expectation of his sudden reappearance.

2. A second objection to the hallucination theory is that it is intrinsically difficult to believe. Hallucinations, it is true, have often occurred. Diseased conditions of the physical system sometimes occasion optical illusions no less strange than an apparent sight of a dead man restored to life. But such experiences are generally recognized at once as abnormal, and are usually of very short duration; they are also generally confined to single individuals, not shared by a number of individuals at once. Ghosts are never seen by crowds of men. This is especially true of imaginary sights of persons known to be dead. Mental or emotional excitements, when

very strong, are contagious, and can be communicated from one to another, and by degrees to large assemblies. But a physical abnormality causing a delusive vision is not so easily transmitted from one to another. But apart from these general facts, the supposed hallucinations of the early disciples are in themselves in the highest degree improbable and incredible. A strong desire to see a person is by no means apt to create a vision of that person. The supposition that Jesus' disciples, simply because they greatly missed him and wished him back, suddenly, one after another, began to have visions of him as really restored to life, is almost monstrous in its incredibleness.

And if such visions of the Crucified One were in the highest degree improbable in the case of the original disciples, unless he in reality did appear to them, how much greater the improbability in the case of the persecutor Saul! There were in him none of the feelings which can possibly be imagined to have predisposed Mary Magdalene or John to think their Master might actually reappear to them. And when, to account for *his* vision, resort is had to Krenkel's unproved hypothesis that he was subject to epilepsy, and that, just before he reached Damascus, he happened to have one of his epileptic fits, which resulted *somehow* in converting him to be a follower of the Rabbi whose followers he had gone to persecute, it can only be said that exegetical extravagance has here about reached its lowest depth.

3. In the effort to explain away the resurrection stories the doubters assume or imply the fact of other miracles as hard to believe as that of the resurrection itself. In order to rebut that argument against the hallucination theory, which is derived from the intrinsic improbability that the mere desire to see again their lost Master would lead Jesus' followers gener-

ally to imagine that they really did see him again, some writers emphasize the fact that Jesus was such an extraordinary person that an extraordinary experience of this sort might be expected.

Well, the extraordinariness of Jesus' personality few intelligent people question. But *how* extraordinary did he need to be, in order that he might exert *such* a posthumous influence on his disciples that they should falsely imagine themselves not only to see him, but also to touch him, to talk with him, and to eat and drink with him, after he had died and been buried? His extraordinariness, as all assume, consisted not in any physical, but in a spiritual, uniqueness. Why should a remarkable mind and character in this Rabbi produce such a remarkable physical effect in his disciples? There have been many fairly well attested instances of living persons apparently seeing the bodily forms of dead acquaintances; but these apparitions are never attributed to the fact that the deceased persons were remarkable for genius or piety.

But be it supposed that Jesus was *so* extraordinary, and wrought himself *so* peculiarly into the spiritual life of his followers, that after his death they could not lose sight of him, and their spiritual vision reacted on their physical senses, so as to cause impressions of his actually appearing before them in bodily form — what then? Why, then it follows that, in desperately struggling to discredit the physical miracle of the resurrection, we are positing an equally incredible miracle in the realm of spirit. That is, we are assuming Jesus to be a person of so exceptional a sort that he cannot be regarded as a natural product of the evolution of the human race, but must be pronounced a supernatural phenomenon. This is indeed what the Christian world has generally held him to be, and it has therefore had no difficulty in believing the biblical narra-

tives of the miracles wrought on him and by him. But when Christian ministers and scholars, persuaded that it is unscientific to believe in the literal truth of those or any other miracles, nevertheless avow their belief in the perfect sinlessness of Jesus Christ; when they pronounce him to be the one authentic Revealer of God to mankind; when they speak of him as holding still a personal relation to the individual Christian, and to the Christian church in general; when they call him their Lord and Master, the Saviour of the world, — when they do all this, they ascribe to him a uniqueness which constitutes an absolute exception to the ordinary facts of the spiritual world; in short, they affirm him to be himself the great Miracle of that world's history. They have strained out a gnat, and swallowed a camel.

And yet if the Gospels have any real historic value, they show that Jesus was just such a person as above described. According to them he claimed to be the authoritative interpreter of the divine law, a divinely commissioned messenger of salvation, and the final Judge of men. He summoned all men to repent, but never confessed or implied that he had any need of repentance on his own account. Paul's Epistles reproduce all these features, and furthermore picture Jesus as a preëxistent being who had humbled himself to be "made in the likeness of men," but who after his death had been raised, and exalted to be "Lord of both the dead and the living." No one can pretend that there are any written records concerning the historical Christ which are more accurate and authentic than the New Testament books; and whoever is ready to profess himself a believer in the Christ who is depicted to us there, does *eo ipso* profess himself a believer in the supernatural. A human being who is absolutely free from sin, and who can rightfully say, "He that loveth father

or mother more than me is not worthy of me," must be also more than man; and they who take him for what he claims to be, and call him Lord and Saviour, while they disbelieve the miracles which he is alleged to have wrought, are simply admitting the greater wonder while they deny the lesser ones. For the higher, the mental and spiritual, realm has its laws, as imperative and uniform as those of the lower, the physical realm. And when Paul is set before us as our model, because he became a Christian without the evidence of Christ's resurrection, it must be replied that this is a very unfortunate example. For Paul is just the man who most emphatically asserted the supernaturalness of Jesus' person, and moreover not only declared his *belief* in the miracle of his resurrection, but needed to have another miracle, wrought for his special benefit, to bring him to that belief!

4. There is yet another difficulty created by disbelief in the bodily resurrection of Christ — a difficulty so serious that it may well be questioned whether it is not much greater than the one which is found in believing that the resurrection was a literal fact. That is, that this disbelief involves the assumption that the successful propagation of Christianity at the outset rested on a delusion. In the New Testament the miraculous resurrection of Jesus is everywhere characterized as the great fact without a belief in which the Christian church could not have been planted. Critics, like Pfeleiderer and Matthew Arnold, who are avowed disbelievers in all miracles, yet unequivocally declare that the introduction of Christianity into the world depended on this belief of the apostles in the miracle of Christ's resurrection. In this they are warranted by the whole drift of the several books of the New Testament.

And no one else of the New Testament writers is so emphatic on this point as Paul. In his mind, as he wrote to the

Roman church (Rom. i. 4), and as he said to the Athenians (Acts xvii. 31), it was the resurrection from the dead by means of which God declared Jesus to be the Son of God, and gave assurance that Jesus was the man by whom he would judge the world. So vital did Paul regard this fact that, in his argument with the Corinthian doubters, he could say, "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 17), and could even seem to ascribe an extravagant importance to the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, when he wrote to the Romans, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Indisputably Paul's conception was that Jesus was a supernatural being, supernaturally authenticated by God, through his resurrection from the dead, as the Saviour of men, the Head of his church, the Lord of his kingdom. Unquestionably Paul regarded Christianity as the embodiment of the manifold wisdom of God, introduced into the world according to God's eternal purpose, when the fullness of the time was come, by God's own agency and direction. But if the resurrection of Jesus, that supreme and crowning event by which God was supposed to have set his seal on the redeeming mission of the Son of his love, was after all not a fact; and if nevertheless *belief* in it as a fact was necessary in order that Christianity might get a foothold in the earth, then our conclusion must be that God had to arrange that the kingdom of *truth* should be indebted to a *falsehood* for its introduction and successful establishment among men.

A disbeliever in the divine origin of Christianity might assent to the possibility of such a relation of things. But the case is different with one who regards Jesus Christ as the medium of the authoritative and final revelation of God to

men. Such a one, believing that a personal and omnipotent God *can* work a miracle if he will, is quite justified in saying that for him it is much easier to believe in the miracle of the resurrection of Christ, as a divine authentication of his mission of salvation, than to believe that God would refrain from working it, if by so refraining he would make it certain that his gospel could gain acceptance only by a *false belief* in such a resurrection. The difficulty of disbelief in Christ's resurrection is aggravated by the necessity which it involves of directly contradicting the testimony of Paul, who, after he wrote, "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain," emphasized his affirmation by immediately adding, "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised." Paul testified what he had himself seen and heard; he testified what he directly received from the original apostles. And when men undertake to soften the charge of falsehood by alleging that Paul *thought* he was telling the truth, but was really laboring under a great illusion, the apostle would doubtless reply, "We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen. How can you, who live nineteen hundred years after the event, know more about the facts than we?" Moreover, refusal to accept Paul's testimony carries with it, as a necessary consequence, not only the charge that he was deceiving, or else himself deceived, but also the assumption that all the original apostles, and hosts of the first Christian believers, were victims of the same deception — a deception so monstrous, and of such a wholesale sort, that it can hardly be accounted for except on the supposition of a *miracle of delusion* wrought by God on the minds and bodies of those first believers. Such a miracle is hard to believe.