

selected for an Egyptian command, and why he was so specially honoured by a city where Jewish influence was so strong as Alexandria.

W. M. RAMSAY.

(To be continued.)

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

THE assertion has gradually settled down into a commonplace, that the miraculous in the Christian religion was a great help to its early diffusion, but is now the chief hindrance to its acceptance by modern thought, armed with rigorous and scientific tests. The miraculous was a very estimable superstition, used by Providence (somewhat unscrupulously, one must confess) to pass off upon the ages of credulity, for their good, a revelation which we, who are not thus to be imposed upon, may accept for its own merits.

It is therefore proposed to relieve the faith from this encumbrance, which served its generation by the will of God, but must now fall asleep. We are advised to reject as accretions, afterthoughts, all the supernatural events which surprise us in the story of Jesus and His followers, while reverently retaining the marvellous teaching, the lofty and unprecedented conception of life and duty, and the exquisite morality of the gospel.

Alas! we cannot thus reject the supernatural from Christianity, and retain its ethical forces. For the more closely we examine the Gospels, the more certain we shall become that the supernatural is by no means eliminated when one tears off the record of certain events, of the so called miracles, since these are only visible flashes from an atmosphere densely laden, surcharged throughout with the same electricity. The miraculous reaches far beyond the miracles,

which are rightly called "the signs" of much that lies behind them. In one sense, the beginning of these was at Cana, yet we know what Nathanael felt when made aware that he was observed under the fig tree. The supernatural is no patch sewn upon this garment, nor even a thread combining with others to form a tissue, whence it might be unravelled, with whatever pains, at whatever cost to the design. It is not even a pigment by which all is so deeply dyed that now the union between colour and fabric is indissoluble. It is the fabric itself. Beneath all that Jesus taught, and sustaining it all, was the authority of His own supernatural personality, like the canvas beneath some picture which the artist spreads, touch by touch, on this essential, all-sustaining base.

The morality of Jesus is compliance with His simple imperative mandate, for the sake of His all-dominating personal attraction. The self-sacrifice which Jesus inculcates is "for My sake." The additions made by Jesus to the code of Sinai are sufficiently ratified by the words, "I say unto you." Jesus calls Himself meek and lowly in heart, but in the same sentence He proposes to relieve all the burdens of mankind. If others may not aspire nor assert themselves, this is because Jesus is the only Teacher, in the same sense in which God is the only Father.

Now all this is without a precedent or parallel. Socrates would be as ignorant as any one, if it were not that he is aware of his ignorance; but Jesus knows the Father as thoroughly as the Father knows Him. Epictetus gropes for truth: "The beginning of philosophy is this, a perception of the disagreement of men with one another, and an inquiry into the cause of this, and a distrust of the apparent, and the discovery of some such test as physics possess in the balance and the yardstick." But the teaching of Jesus rests on intuition. According to St. John, He declares what is heavenly because He is in heaven.

According to the Synoptics, none knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him. Marcus Aurelius infers: "It is satisfaction to a man to do the proper works of a man: now it is the proper work of a man to be benevolent." But Jesus waives all such argumentation, and even the permissions of the Old Testament, aside altogether: "It hath been said unto them of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies."

It is abundantly clear that Jesus was the most gigantic of all egoists, or else He was a supernatural Ego, and not merely an ordinary man performing supernatural feats.

Therefore nothing can be more shallow than the attempt to solve the problem which Christianity inflexibly presents to scientific scepticism by accepting Christ and His teaching, but rejecting certain of His actions because they are tainted with the supernatural. Least of all men may the sceptical physicist deny that the laws of mind are as rigid as the laws of matter, and a spiritual portent as portentous as any, since, according to him, mind and spirit are nothing but a phase of matter.

Well, then, here is an absolutely abnormal Being, a Galilæan artisan, whose thought outsoars the thought of Plato; whose love still evokes the responsive love of a great multitude, whom no man can number, out of all nations and kindreds; who imprinted His convictions on the conscience of the race without a shred of argumentation, except when controversy was forced on Him; who was right, as the event has proved, in valuing His own sufferings more than the loftiest truths He taught; and whose matchless self-reliance is now justified by success, even when He declared that His flesh should become the bread of all the race.

In the thought of God there is a power to overwhelm all the saints with self-abasement. But Jesus is not a

saint, whether we call Him greater or less than they; and the thought of God simply exalts Him to assert His own unique relationship.

The Founder of Christianity is utterly unlike other men; and in one sense most unlike those who follow Him most closely; for the effect of copying His superb holiness is always a holiness with ashes on its head.

And His disciples knew well that He was a greater sign than His works. When tempted to desert Him, their question was not, Who else can do such prodigies? It was: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed, and we know that Thou art the Holy One of God."

Now all this, to the unbeliever in spiritual realities, is a physical product of natural forces. But then, the evolution of Jesus by the religious influences of the first century is a far greater marvel than the turning of water into wine. And he cannot get rid of the supernatural by rejecting some five and thirty incidents which challenge him at intervals along the story.¹

To us, the supernatural Person explains the supernatural events. The true key to every act is in the personality

¹ Thus when Keim admits that in Him "was revealed, not only a religious genius, but the miracle of God and His presence upon earth; the person itself, and nothing else, is the miracle" (*Jesus of Nazara*, i., p. 10), the main affirmation destroys the warrant for the interpolated phrase, "and nothing else." He tells us again that "it was not with Him as with the other great characters of the earth; . . . and however steadily and minutely we examine, in order to arrive at a conclusion without any fallacy, we are still able to retain the strong and joyful conviction that it was Virtue herself who trod the earth in Him, and that the dolorous confession made by antiquity [and surely also by the modern world] of the impossibility of sinlessness, and the non-existence of the ideal of virtue and wisdom, found in Him its refutation and its end" (vi., p. 416).

But the Church is entitled to reply that all this is an admitted exception to law, and Keim's own word "miracle" applies in a sense as absolute and literal as in any of the physical marvels which Keim explains away. When one miracle is established, the presumption against a second miracle is nullified; we are no longer in a position to reason from ordinary analogies to the action of what is confessedly extraordinary and phenomenal.

of the actor. To a modern maker of instruments the Cremona violin is impossible, but this is because he is no Straduarius. And to an ordinary soldier Marengo is a feat of the gods, but Napoleon explains his campaign. To the supernatural Christ the miracles are natural; they are simply good works which He shows.

Here, then, are certain events, of which it will presently become clear that, without assuming the occurrence, the very conception, the notion, is a deviation from the course of nature. And here also is a Man, all of whose doctrines and methods of thinking and teaching are as unprecedented and astonishing as these actions. Do you gain much, even of plausibility, by rending asunder these clearly correlated phenomena, and declaring the events to be unreal, while retaining, in your own despite, the preternatural Teacher? The natural wonder-worker is the predicted One, whose name is Wonderful.

To all this it is answered that the door was finally locked against miracles when science discovered the absolute invariability of the sum of the forces of nature. Force, active and latent together, is always the same in quantity. The same heat which to-day drives an engine vibrated in former ages from the sun, and has lurked ever since in those vegetable forms which slowly consolidated into the coal now burning in the furnace. The force with which an iron shield is stricken by the projectile from an eighty-ton gun becomes visible for a moment in a great sheet of flame, and then disperses 'itself through the universe in radiated heat. To the sum of existent forces nothing is really added, from it nothing is really withdrawn.

It is granted to us that possibly this great law does not formally disprove the possibility of a Divine interference with the uniform sum-total of force. What is urged is that it adds so enormously to the presumption in favour of its stability, that any hypothesis, however strained, will be

more credible than that new forces should have been poured into nature from outside. If the universe be indeed a creation of Deity, the Divine Creator decreed the stability of force in it, and it is virtually incredible that He has occasionally countermanded His edict.

To this objection, urged both against miracles and answers to prayer, there are two replies. In the first place, it is palpably no more than an application to this specific law of the well-worn general argument that testimony is more likely to be false than any law of nature to be violated. A law of nature, however, is only a generalization, a broad statement to which we have been led by observing a sufficient number of similar cases. Like all inductions, it leaps from an array of particular observations to a universal affirmation. And in applying it, the vital point is the similarity of the cases, the absence of any new condition, removing the event in question from the category. In a temperate climate certain laws regulate the action of dynamite; but he will be a rash man who reasons from these to its behaviour when crystallized by even a touch of frost. Now it is an audacious *petitio principii* to assume that no new conditions are at work, when the question disputed is whether the Creator has willed to manifest His power to His creatures.

But in the second place, the objection, as connected with this particular law of the conservation of force, only proves that men, otherwise well informed, are content to assail the faith in utter ignorance of its teaching.

Let us, on our side, observe that the forces to which this celebrated law applies are purely physical. If we include in the sum of forces human thoughts, convictions, and volitions, then the law is palpably disproved. When Demosthenes or Peter the Hermit inflamed great multitudes with new passions and volitions, the sum total of emotion was changed, although no physical alteration was

produced, not a flush or pallor, not the clenching of a fist, the quickening of a breath, the agitation of the molecules of any brain, except by drawing on the reserves which are stored in every human frame, and quickening the need of new supplies. What was physical remained, unaltered in the aggregate, although these new convictions and resolutions were superadded; and this, by the way, is enough to show that these are not material products, since, if they were, their addition would involve a commensurate decrease of other physical forces.

When a man dies, certain convictions and volitions disappear, but no physical energy is extinguished; that is only dissipated. To recall him to life, therefore, would not require the creation of new physical energies, but only the reassembling of those which had been scattered. The doctrine of the conservation of force does not in any sense affirm that the volitions and energies by which latent force is started into energy remain the same. No man ever creates or abolishes force enough to move a finger, but he can propagate beliefs and aspirations, and he can slay them. His name may be Muhammad or Voltaire. And probably there never yet was a conviction which did not more or less modify the arrangement of physical forces.

The stability of the sum of forces, active and latent, does not forbid me to produce great changes by flinging a match into a powder magazine, nor by prayers addressed to any one whom I can induce to try this hazardous experiment. An infant, upsetting chemicals, may convulse the arrangement of forces for miles around. And if there be, within the circle of the universe, any intellect and volition superior to mine, it will also produce superior changes, without needing to create any new stock of physical forces, by swaying, exciting, and stilling those which already exist.

When scientific unbelievers assert that Christ could not have worked His miracles without importing new force from

outside into the universe, they either imply that God is not within His universe, but above and outside it, so that His interference is necessarily the importing of foreign forces; or else, that the total resources of the universe, by whatever intellect and energy commanded, is so inadequate to perform the "works" of Christ, that foreign forces must have been drawn upon. But the latter of these is a pure assumption. To raise the dead is clearly not a creation of new forces, it is a reassembling of those that have been scattered. Whenever Jesus multiplied food, He carefully shut out the notion of creation from nothingness by working around a nucleus of existing natural material. What the seed does under the clod, grasping and assimilating materials, transforming these, and so multiplying itself, that was done transcendently by a transcendent will and energy.

The only ground which exists, therefore, for the appeal of unbelief to the conservation of force is the notion that God is outside His world, and His interference is necessarily that of a foreign force, adding itself to those within the universe. But who told the objector that God can only interfere in His universe "from outside"? The doctrine of the Church is that by Him all things consist, that in Him we live, move, and have our being.

"Closer is He than breathing," says our Christian poet. And Marcus Aurelius said the same thing before Lord Tennyson: "The all-embracing intelligence . . . is not less all-diffusive and all-pervasive for whoever is willing to receive it, than is the atmosphere for whoever is able to inhale."

That God could, and if necessary would, pour new forces into the universe "from outside" is the doctrine of creation, and is implied in the future creation of new heavens and a new earth. But there are abundant indications in Scripture that this is not the true light in which to regard the miracles of Christ. They are good works shown from

the Father, the doing "likewise" of whatsoever the Father doeth. In seeing Him who wrought these, men saw the Father. But as regards creation this is the Sabbath of God. When the Christian passes within the veil, he enters into that Sabbath. When souls transgress, God swears that they shall "not enter into My rest."

If then the works of Jesus were creative, they would no longer be a more vivid and impressive manifestation of God's work in providence, for creation belongs to another order; but this is a notion which is diametrically opposed to the expressions quoted above. And our position becomes impregnable when we observe His defence against the charge of Sabbath-breaking. He answers: I only do upon My Sabbath what My Father doeth during His: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

It is therefore the doctrine of Scripture that God is now working from within His universe, and not from above it, by wielding its forces, not by superseding them; and, secondly, that Jesus in His miracles only carried out this process further. Against these positions, modern science has not a word to say which would not equally paralyse every other vital energy by which the chain of forces is shaken, while no new links are forged.

The results at which we have now arrived are far from being so purely negative, so merely controversial, as may be supposed.

I. We have been led, in the first place, to a reasonably definite comprehension of what a miracle may be.

For the laws of nature, in themselves so stable, are by no means invariable in their results. When I cause an ivory ball to "cannon" off the cushion of a billiard-table, the laws which govern projectiles are neither arrested nor outraged, yet I have modified the result of them, by combining their operation with that of another law, the law of action and reaction. Gravitation is neither arrested nor

contradicted when a balloon ascends, nor the laws of heat when a lump of ice is shaken out of a red-hot crucible. The additional resources possessed by the modern chemist enable him to perform this marvel, utterly impossible to me, not by violating law, but by wielding it. Therefore a Being endowed with vastly greater resources will perform vastly greater works; but works contrary to the laws of nature will only be performed in periods of creative or destructive energy.

The miracles of Jesus, therefore, are not contra-natural. And in Scripture they are never said even to be supernatural. We now see in what sense this latter epithet is just, and in what sense it is unauthorized and perilous. If by the supernatural we mean that which natural forces, the existing resources of the universe, could not accomplish, by whatever energies wielded, then we reintroduce the notion of creation, and the collision with scientific teaching. But the explicit claim of Jesus was to do what the Father doeth during His Sabbath from creation of new forces. And therefore it is quite enough to say that a miracle is what transcends the effect of natural forces wielded by merely human energies. The miracles of Jesus were "the works that none other man did." Therefore a miracle is sometimes called "a wonder," a much less ignoble epithet than many commentators believe. For it is not the ignorance of a backward province or an unscientific age which feels this wonder, but the limitations natural to humanity. The true marvel is marvellous to man, as such. And his wonder is wholesome: it is one premeditated result of the sign. "Greater works than these shall 'the Father' show 'the Son,' that ye may marvel" (*ὅνα ὑμεῖς θαυμάζητε*).

II. And thus the true ethical importance of the marvel becomes clear. Why, it is sometimes asked, must the Church insist on her prodigies, when it is proposed to leave

intact her morality and her adoration? What is religious in a prodigy? But such a "wonder" as we have spoken of is "a sign"; it implies an adequate, a supernatural Personage; and the miraculous Christ is assailed when you assail the miracles. Apart from its power to reveal Him, the miraculous cannot be more worthless to the nineteenth century than it was to St. John. The signs were written in his book, that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God (John xx. 31). And he has recorded a remarkable expression of his Master, which implies the same truth. After complaining that "ye seek Me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate," Jesus puts His indictment into other words: "I said unto you, that ye have seen ME, and believe not." To have missed, not the marvel, but its revelation of Himself, that was to have lost all. And therefore it was the will of His Father "that every one who beholdeth the Son" (discerning the Worker in the work), "and believeth on Him, should have everlasting life" (John vi. 26, 36, 40).

III. From this follows a test of the reality of the miracles. So long as they seem to be merely prodigies, amazing interruptions of the regularity and order of things, they cannot be classified, compared with other events, and reasoned about as the subjects of analogy and inference. But when they come to be recognised as the natural "works" of a great Worker, all this is changed. We now expect them to resemble those works of His which do not startle us. We look for character in them. We feel certain that, if we possess His genuine discourses and much of His real life, then the miracles will show themselves to be His, or else betray the fact that they are accretions, by revealing "the mind of Christ" or the somewhat superstitious, somewhat vindictive, and not a little puerile characteristics of the next age. The evidence thus afforded is of a kind the more valuable because it is incidental, often

microscopic, and wholly beyond the critical or literary power of early Christianity. And its results will be purely scientific, being an induction from a large number of absolutely indisputable facts, the phenomena exhibited in certain documents.

Before examining these, however, some other preliminary questions must be considered.

G. A. CHADWICK.

GIDEON.

THE story of that great Hebrew judge Gideon is the subject of this lecture; but before taking up his brief career, I ought to deal with two or three questions that grow out of the general subject of the conquest of Canaan by the children of Israel. The Hebrews, expelled by oppression from Egypt, lived a nomad and pastoral life for a number of years in the Sinaitic wilderness, probably with Kadesh as their centre. Apart from their religious character, they must have been very much like the Bedouin tribes: fierce, warlike, and civilized in a very poor way, but not accustomed to agriculture, to the tillage of the soil, to vintage, or olive-growing. At a certain point a strange spirit moves those Hebrew Bedouins. They unite together. They approach a fertile, cultivated country—Canaan. They have a succession of battles; they seize the country, settle in the farms, vineyards, and homesteads; ultimately and completely they dispossess the old tenants.

What shall we say as to the moral character of this transaction? Was the conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews morally justifiable, achieved as it was through the violence, bloodshed, and cruelty with which war has blackened the face of our world as far back as our eyes can see and our ears can hear? We must not let our affection or veneration for old traditions blind us to the difficulty of the question.