

views which have imbued such a large portion of the young, the concealed and the half educated, of which Strauss is the chief exponent. The largest portion of this work is employed in refuting Hume's celebrated argument against miracles, and in the application of principles already established in a former part of this volume, to the one great miracle of Christ's resurrection—this prince of Scottish theologians lays down the position, and we think successfully proves, that miracles do not require to be tested by the doctrine in order that we may ascertain whether they are wrought by God or by devils; and that a miracle can, in no possible circumstances, be wrought in attestation of error. Such a theory is completely opposed to all our conceptions of God's moral government; and consequently the language of Nicodemus must be maintained without qualification or reserve—"No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." This able work contains, in a condensed and masterly style, the entire argument in defence of Christianity, and of our Redeemer's divine mission; and it is of the utmost importance that it should not only be read, but studied, at a time when the various forms of infidelity and Romanism so extensively overpread the land, and threaten to blot the sun of truth from the heavens.

Dr. Wardlaw, in the outset of his argument, defines miracles "*as works involving a temporary suspension of the known laws of nature, or a deviation from the established constitution and fixed order of the universe;*" or, perhaps more correctly, of that department of the universe which constitutes *our own system.*" Now we object to this definition of a miracle, because many of its terms—such as nature and the laws of nature—are as obscure as the thing defined; and because it gives essentially erroneous views of the nature and mode of the divine government. By nature, we simply mean that state of things and course of events which God has appointed; and by the laws of nature, we do not understand any independent principle inherent in things, giving to events the powers of agents; but simply the uniform mode of the divine operation. The common vague belief that God, at first, endowed creation with certain powers and properties, and then left it to itself, just as a mechanic makes a time-piece, winds it up, and then interferes no more with it till the chain has run down, we conceive to be equally irrational and unscriptural. The scriptures represent God as always working, as constantly "*upholding all things by the word of his power,*" as every moment acting directly on creation; and hence, what we commonly ascribe to the laws of nature, the inspired writers uniformly attribute to the direct operation of the Almighty. Our common notions of cause and effect have greatly contributed to conceal from our view the wonder-working hand of God. We think and speak as if an inherent power existed in every cause, and consequently we fail to connect every event immediately with God. Such a fallacious mode of reasoning might be obviated by considering every cause as nothing more than an invariable antecedent, and every effect as an invariable consequent; so that every cause might be viewed as an effect in relation to a more extended system of the universe, than what falls within our present knowledge. Suppose, for instance, that a dozen of balls were placed at certain distances from each other, and suppose that the first six were concealed from view: if the seventh was observed to impinge upon the eighth, this seventh would be regarded as a cause, and all the rest as effects. If the seventh ball was exposed to view, then the seventh would sink into an effect; while to the individual who saw the hand of the operator acting on the first ball of the series, all would be equally effects; and the hand of the individual who set them in motion would be the only cause. It is thus with the system of created things. We see that various objects and events are related to each other; we trace the connection till our knowledge fails, when we designate the highest recognized event in the series a *cause*, and all the rest *effects*; while, perhaps, to an angel, Jehovah might be seen at the fountain-head of existence, acting every moment on creation, and constituting, by his direct operations, what we call the laws of nature. The series of causes and effects, it has been well remarked, may be compared to the links of a chain hanging down from heaven: part of which is concealed amid clouds and darkness; the links that are visible support each other; while the last link in the series is bound to the throne of the Eternal. It follows, therefore, that miracles are produced, like other events, by the direct and immediate agency of God; and that instead of being suspensions of the laws of nature, they are

events out of the ordinary course of nature altogether—events entirely distinct from the ordinary mode of the Divine operation. Dr. Wardlaw seems to have partially apprehended this truth when illustrating the position, "*that in the working of a miracle, there is, in every case, a direct and immediate interference of Deity.*" "There is," says he, "no transference of power from God to the divinely commissioned messenger. Neither is there any committing of divine omnipotence to his discretion. The former is, in the nature of the thing, impossible. It would be making the creature for the time Almighty; and that (since omnipotence can belong to none but divinity) would be equivalent to making him God. And the latter, were it at all imaginable, would neutralize and nullify the evidence—inasmuch as it would render necessary to its validity a previous assurance of the *impeccability* of the person to whom the trust was committed—that is, an assurance, and an absolute one, of the impossibility of its ever being perverted by the improper application of the power to purposes foreign to those of his commission. * * * There is, strictly speaking, in any miracle, no agency but that of the Divine Being himself. Even to speak of the messenger as his *instrument* is not correct. All that the messenger does is—to declare his message; to appeal to God for its truth;—and if, at his word, intimating a miracle as about to be performed in proof of it, the miracle actually takes place, there is, on his part, in regard to the performance, neither agency nor instrumentality; unless the mere utterance of words in imitation of what is about to be done, or an appeal to heaven and petition for its being done, may be so called. God himself is the agent." Page 52-53.

The definition of a miracle to which we object contributes nothing to the proper understanding of the subject. When Christ cured the sick, healed the blind, and raised the dead, we never enquire what particular natural law is suspended, nor how that suspension constitutes a miracle; but we at once address our Lord in the language of Nicodemus: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." We may, therefore, define a miracle in harmony with this view; as a work wrought by God in confirmation of some doctrine, manifestly beyond the unassisted power of man.

The question may now be asked, What are the objects which miracles were designed to accomplish? Dr. Wardlaw gives a substantial answer to this important enquiry, when exposing the falsity of Hume's argument against miracles. They manifest, in general, the glory of God, by breaking in upon the ordinary events of Providence. And they thus convince the most careless and inconsiderate, that there is a God distinct from and superior to nature, who governs all things according to the counsel of his will. "If in one sense," says Trench, "the orderly workings of nature reveal the glory of God (Ps. 19, 1-6), in another they hide that glory from our eyes. If they ought to make us continually to remember him, yet there is danger that they lead us to forget him, until this world around us shall prove—not a translucent medium, through which we look to him, but a thick impenetrable veil, concealing him wholly from our sight. Were there no other purpose in the miracles than this—namely, to testify the liberty of God, and to affirm the will of God, which however it habitually shows itself in nature, is yet more than, and above nature,—were it only to break a link in that chain of cause and effect, which else we should come to regard as itself God, as the iron chain of an inexorable necessity, binding heaven no less than earth, they would serve a great purpose, they would not have been wrought in vain."—*Trench on Miracles*, page 24. But miracles—especially the miracles of Christ—serve other and more important purposes than these, bearing directly on man's salvation; and to a brief consideration of such designs we shall proceed:

1. The miracles of Christ were intended to authenticate his divine mission. Were an individual to assert that he had received a message from God unto us, and were he to command our instant obedience, since the fact of such inspiration could only be known to himself, in order to protect ourselves from imposture, we would naturally demand a sign from heaven. If, without the application of any medicine, he should heal the lame with a word; if those who wanted a limb or an arm had it instantly restored, and if the dead were in a moment raised to life, we would say that such a man was what he professed to be—"a prophet