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The Miraculous Element in Christianity.

PROF. Charles W. Pearson's denial of the miraculous element in the Scriptures has been resented by the entire press of the Methodist church. His right to express and propagate his opinions is not questioned, only his right to do so while holding a professorship in a Methodist college.

A reader of *The Watchman* asks us why a denial of the miraculous element in the Scriptures should be treated as a matter of such grave concern. The answer to that is plain, namely, that in eliminating the miraculous from the Scriptures you are destroying an important evidence as to the supernatural character of Christianity itself. We do not say that it is impossible for a man to believe in supernatural religion if he denies miracles; for a miracle by itself is not sufficient proof of a doctrine. (Deut. 13:1-3). But the miracle that supports a doctrine which does not contradict the moral instincts of man or the trend of the rest of the revelation, authenticates that doctrine as nothing else can. The power that controls nature regulates the course of nature. The miracle shows conclusively that the course of nature and the doctrine in question spring from the same intelligence and will. One who denies miracles is not necessarily denying the supernatural character of the revelation with which they are associated, but he is weakening a most important evidence for it.

A curious feature of the historical discussion in regard to the miraculous is that those who are most persistent in denying that the miracles of the Bible have any evidential value whatever are unconsciously anxious to eliminate them from its pages. The inconsistency between their professed theory and their zeal awakens just suspicion that their appraisal of the probative force of miracles may not altogether accord with their real valuation of them. A man who declares that a piece of property is valueless and then makes the most extraordinary effort to acquire the title to it hardly vindicates his good faith in his original assertion. As a matter of fact the truthfulness of the miraculous element in the Scripture is so closely involved with the claim that Christianity is a supernatural religion, and not the mere product of historic forces, that with the great majority of men the two contentious stand or fall together. When the miraculous element in the Scripture is denied the evidence for the supernatural origin of the revelation is seriously if not fatally weakened. Here and there you may find a few intellectual and cultivated men who believe in a supernatural revelation without the evidence of miracles, but they are not mankind, and their type of mind is not one that influences mankind. The illustration Mr. Gladstone once employed is perfectly in point. He said:

As in wines, it is one question what mode of composition will produce a commodity drinkable in the country of origin, and what further provision may be requisite in order that the product may bear a sea voyage without turning into vinegar, so, in the matter of belief, select individuals may subsist on a poor, thin, sodden and attenuated diet, which would simply be death to the multitude.

Prof. Pearson's denials do not affect simply "the nature, force and purpose of single narratives" concerning which equally devout believers might differ, but they involve the entire miraculous element in the Scriptures, and though he does not explicitly mention the miraculous conception and resurrection of our Lord he is an exceedingly poor logician if he does not also discredit the truth of those narratives. It seems to us that the position of the Methodist press upon this matter is incontrovertibly sound.

"Nothing of worth or weight can be achieved with half a mind, with a faint heart or lame endeavor.

Conquering by Love.

By REV. WALTER B. VASSAR.

THAT love will achieve everything in a world where divers motives govern men, and the cross grained and perverse harks back to a long ancestry of evil, is too much to affirm. On the other hand, the belief in love's ability to conquer is far too feeble. And this is the mischief of it. He who said "Love your enemies," He who talked about heaping "coals of fire" on the head of the determined and ugly antagonist, believed in love. He came to tell us what His Father's love was and what it meant.

And conquering love, to which we turn as a last resort, might well be tried first. That there are a few to whom love can never be appealing, we are most of us inclined to believe, and then we take those few and make them stand for humanity in general. Never was there a greater mistake.

Of olden time it was said: Only an eye for an eye, the law holding men in check so that two eyes might not be taken for one. But Jesus saw that there was just as much the spirit of vindictiveness in this, the law's regulation, as there would be with no such restraint, and so He established the New Commandment. When will we ever learn its meaning?

We talk about love being the ruling passion; it is the ruling power. A Napoleon going everywhere with conquering armies, saw it, and he put Jesus highest in the world. Every man who does his conquering by love helps establish Jesus' estimate of its conquering force.

If we could govern ourselves and hold in restraint every other motive, then we would have the chance to see how love, which is the gospel, would have its free course and be glorified. It is not in what love has failed to do, but where we have failed, which makes love so little esteemed. It is under estimated in our practice however much we may praise it in our philosophy. An no philosophy about it amounts to a straw of help where the practice fails.

That there is to little love in reformatory institutions, is a secret of their great failures. Yet corporation cannot love; this is the individual's prerogative. Parents, brothers and sisters, neighbors and the people of our churches (not the churches) can love, and in loving, bless. Before a brother was turned forth as a heathen man and a publican, the early church, in so many matters near the heart of Christ, gave specific directions in the treatment of the offender. In our personal relations with men we often proceed with the most summary treatment.

No word need be spoken to make love felt, even as no utterance is required to harden the heart. Love is an attitude of the spirit; the ways of its expression are as subtle as the rarest perfume. It will go anywhere and everywhere, and if we can believe it, it will show a conquering power where we thought nothing save the rod would be effective. It will save a soul from perdition and hide a multitude of sins, where we in our un wisdom and haste thought only the thunder of Sinai fitting.

Hamilton, N. Y.

Doubt in the Scriptures.

ONE of the characteristics of the Bible is its ample and varied expression of human doubt and skepticism. Antecedently one might say that a revelation from God would be confined to the divine thought of human life, to a disclosure of the principles of the divine government, and to a proclamation of divine promises and grace. As a matter of fact, however, while the Scriptures are largely occupied

with a description of the reaction of the revelation upon the human soul. We have set before us in the most vivid fashion the behavior of men under the impact of God's disclosure of Himself. In the Gospel of John, for example, which is commonly regarded as the supreme book of the New Testament, we find a most detailed account of the processes of unbelief. In the Old Testament the Psalms are justly considered as the consummate expression of faith in God and satisfaction in Him. But we should remember that they are also the consummate expression of agonizing doubt and of a longing for an assurance as to spiritual realities. Take a single passage, as an example of many:

Save me, O God;

For the waters are come in into my soul.

I sink in deep mire,

Where there is no standing;

I am come into deep waters,

Where the floods overflow me.

I am weary with my crying; my throat is dried;

Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

Who has not felt in his hours of spiritual depression, doubt and skepticism that these words portray his own feeling? When our attention is exclusively fastened on such passages, the Bible seems to be a revelation of man's weakness and blindness quite as much as a revelation of the divine grace. Sometimes in our attempt to comfort those who are in great trouble we make a mistake in calling their attention to the glorious promises of the Scriptures. Passages like the 55th, the 60th; 79th and the 88th Psalms are more helpful. In them the man sees his own condition described with perfect insight and sympathy. The heart of David or of Asaph answers to his own. He feels at least that revelation comprehends him, and that its descriptions of human misery and doubt sound to the very depths of his own condition.

The Birth of Missions.

Like Jesus, modern missions were born as a child that is laid in a manger; and such a birth is always the sign of the Son's of God. That the missions of the present did not spring from the palaces of kings or from princely merchantile societies, has gained for them a position of evangelical freedom, independent of the great one of the earth, which have enabled them to follow apostolic paths; and as their birth resembled the nativity, so also their growth has been under the cross. Missions in their youth were no darling of public favor. And this is the other sign of the works of God, that they bear His shame with Christ.—Gustav Warneck, in *Hist. of Protestant Missions*.

HINDRANCES TO ADVANCE.

"Often from my window on the seashore," says a writer, "I have observed a little boat at anchor. Day after day, month after month, it is seen at the same spot. The tides ebb and flow, yet it scarcely moves. While many a gallant vessel spreads its sails and, catching the favorable breeze, has reached the haven, this little bark moves not from its accustomed spot. True it is when the tide rises, and when it ebbs again it sinks, but advances not. Why is this? It is fastened to the earth by one slender cord. A cord, scarcely visible, enchains it, and will not let it go. So with many souls.