

great curses, there is distinct and emphatic evidence of supernatural and miraculous energy, we cannot but notice, also, how *law-abiding* is the miraculous energy. Once the force in operation, it follows exactly the channels and sequences of natural law.

In Egypt, not only is the water the life, but of the water there is only one source of supply—the river Nile. Disturbance far in the interior, even in the mountains of Abyssinia, would fill every sluiceway, every pond, every canal in Egypt with the precise equivalent of that disturbance. What natural means may have been called in to aid the supernatural power in order to produce that first reddening, thickening, poisoning of the water, which in the narrative is called “blood,” we do not know, but the proof is clear that the supernatural energy, which we do not question, availed itself, in its very initial stroke, of precisely that agent and channel, by which all Egypt could be reached in the most telling and simultaneous way.

To this extent, then, even in the first burst of the miraculous power, natural propriety was complied with. In the first movement of that divine dealing, by which a nation was to be excised and educated, natural conditions were not antagonized, but utilized, and made the most of. We not only admit, but maintain, a miraculous element and energy at every step of the process. We believe that the great engine of retribution about to roll over Egypt was set in motion and pushed forward by the Divine hand; but we see, that even in that first stir of the great drama, ordinary law and condition were used just so far as possible.

Now, let us observe carefully what followed. Seven days elapsed—the only indicated instance of any long lapse of time between the successive plagues. The ensanguined poisoned waters brought death, to the fish. The fish died, the river became turbid, rank, laden with decaying organic material. What would be the result? Evidently, the creation, *not instantly*, but within the few days of interval specified, of immense swarms of those foul or small organisms which carrion and putrid waters always breed. The frogs, the lice, the flies, are not arbitrary selections; they are simply the successive battalions in that loathsome army whose coming was natural as well as supernatural. Miraculous energy was added; we do not question that. It intensified the process; but it also went along with the natural law. If the order had been reversed—if, for example, the flies had bred and brought forth the rotting fish, and the fish had produced the bloody water, the difficulty would have been much greater. This would have been an inversion, a contradiction of nature, and would have constituted a good miracle for the Apocrypha or mediæval legend, but the actual fact, viz: that the fishy corruption bred and brought forth the flies, was precisely the supernatural pushing forward of the natural process applicable to the case.