

laws of nature changes the order of physical nature—does in a word the very thing we are told God cannot do! He turns a wilderness into a garden—cuts a canal through the isthmus of Suez—drains a marsh and makes a fruitful field and a healthy instead of sickly dwelling place. In all these cases he interferes with the result of natural law; but he does not violate nature's laws—he does not even suspend them. And if man can do this by an act of will, are we really prepared to say that God cannot? Nay, if God be a personal God we must give Him the attributes of personality. We must allow that He is an intelligent Being, yea, that He has absolute freedom of will. To deny this would be fatal to the conception of God. Man can suspend and vary at his pleasure the laws of nature. To deny God a similar power would be to make man greater than God, and to say with Strauss that there is no God but man, God may conceivably perform a miracle by using one force of nature to overcome another; or He may accomplish the result by a direct act of His omnipotent will. But in any case the order of nature is not violated, the harmony of the kosmos is not disturbed, there is no rent in the universe, but on the contrary, there is a healing of a breach, a restoration of lost order effected by means of a miracle.

II. But Hume, that celebrated skeptic of the last century, declared that miracles were impossible, because they were, "contrary to all experience." The objection is specious, but untenable. It has been overthrown repeatedly by the progress of physical science. Let us take one or two examples. Alternate generation, which occurs in some of the lower orders of animal life—the jelly fish, for instance, begets a hydroid. This hydroid is an entirely different organism to its parent, and yet in its turn begets a jelly fish, thus the grandchild resembles its grandparent, and the hydroid is produced through a generation of jelly fishes into a hydroid again. Hermaphroditism, i. e., the same animal or plant uniting in itself the sexual characters of both the male and female, which is now discovered to exist normally in many invertebrate animals. Fertilization *per saltum*, for several generations. All these are scientific facts, yet are opposed to the inductions of experience down to our own time. Suppose Hume

had been told that there were creatures which at pleasure threw off a limb, that this limb forthwith began an independent existence, and by and by impregnated a female of the same species, he would have refuted the story at once by his destructive formula against miracles. It was contrary to all experience down to his time. It is now proved by such evidence as would have satisfied Hume himself. But the point is that it was as true when Hume wrote as it is now. Yet his argument then would have disproved it absolutely, and would even have forbidden enquiry. In like manner we may hereafter be able to perceive that a miracle is as susceptible of explanation as some of those secrets of nature which would have appeared miraculous to our forefathers. We must always remember that our knowledge of the forces of nature is extremely limited a fact which the progress of physical science makes more manifest every year. "There is always a possibility," as the late Prof. Jevons observes, "of causes being in existence without our knowledge, and these may at any time produce an unexpected effect," and he gives the following illustration: "We can imagine reasoning creatures dwelling in a world where the atmosphere was a mixture of oxygen and inflammable gas, like the firedamp of coal mines. If devoid of fire, they might have lived on for long ages in complete unconsciousness of the tremendous forces which a simple spark could call into play. In the twinkling of an eye new laws might have come into action, and the poor reasoning creatures, who were so confident of their knowledge of the uniform conditions of their world, might have had no time to speculate upon the overthrow of all their theories, caused by that little spark. Can we, with our finite knowledge, be sure that such an overthrow of our theories is impossible." (*Principles of science*.)

III. Again, "belief in miracles has been supposed by some to be incompatible with the acceptance of the doctrine of evolution. Yet the simple truth is that the doctrine of evolution has sapped the ordinary scientific position of the denier of miracles. For the doctrine of evolution implies that the creator of the universe is energetically present through all the operations of nature. If this world were a machine set going for a certain period of time the result would be constant