

the Rev. Matthew Cranswick;—he died at sea, six months after the death of his father.

For the last few years of his life he was blind; but so long as he was able he attended the house of God very diligently, and when by his bodily infirmity confined to his house, he appeared to be generally much engaged with God.

In the Wednesday-evening prayer-meetings, which, on his account, were held in his house, he took an active part, exhorting his family and friends to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure." He encouraged the young convert to press forward, regardless of opposition, and endeavoured, by the combined force of example and precept, to stimulate them heavenward.

His last sickness commenced in January, 1838, and became so oppressive as to render him incapable of lying in his bed for four months, and in some measure deprived him, at intervals, of the due use of his reason; nevertheless, he still had his especial seasons for prayer; his patience was great, his confidence continued unshaken, and his will was sweetly swallowed up in the will of God. His last words were—"Jesus is mine—and I am his." Thirty years he was a class-leader; and as he greatly loved the faithful people of God, so also was he greatly beloved by them; which was abundantly evidenced at his interment: the crowded congregation responding to the testimony given by an aged member of the connexion to his work, in the following manner:—

"He was a man of sound judgment, great firmness of character, strict integrity, evident spirituality of mind; and were I to travel from Cape Canso to Cape Sable, I should expect to find few to equal, and none to excel him. To God be glory!"

Theological.

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

PART I.

THE miracles of our Lord, and the peculiarities which distinguish them from all others, are the subjects of our present inquiry; and the questions which we propose to answer we shall arrange in their natural order, so that each one may prepare for the elucidation of that which immediately follows.

I. Our first inquiry relates to the nature of miracles in general—what is the proper definition of a miracle? Many able writers, who have discussed this subject, have varied greatly in the terms in which they have attempted to describe it. Some have defined it in a language too loose and equivocal; and have thus confounded that which is unaccountable with that which is miraculous; others, to avoid this extreme, have so narrowed the definition as to make it inapplicable even to events which are truly entitled to that denomination. We shall endeavour to avoid these extremes. "A miracle is an event produced through the instrumentality of a human agent, which altogether transcends human powers, and which could not have been accomplished by the unassisted operations of the general laws of nature, or the combination of contingent circumstances."

Thus our Lord, when he speaks of himself as a man,* performing such works as none other man

*John vi. 21.

ever did, at once establishes the supernatural character of those works, and intimates that their transcendent superiority to all former miracles is the basis on which he challenges a reverence and a homage, due only to the Divinity which wrought within him.

In this definition, thus cautiously worded, we have avoided stating any absolute contrariety between miraculous operation and the laws which the Almighty has impressed upon the universe, because certain objectors have argued against the possibility of attesting a miracle, on the supposition that it involves the violation of the ordinary and settled laws of nature, and is contrary to universal experience. Now this supposition, in both its branches, is gratuitous—it is altogether without proof—assumed, it is to be feared, for the mere purpose of sophistry, and raising an argument at the expense of reason, and to the discredit of Divine revelation; yet it must be admitted, that vague statements of miracles, as if they suspended the laws of nature, or were wrought in direct opposition to them, have given some colouring to the assumption. We deliberately affirm, that we know of no miracles that can be pronounced contrary to the laws of nature, or which have changed their essential characteristics. The sun and the moon lost none of the properties of matter when the power that ordained them to perpetual motion appeared suddenly to arrest their progress in the heavens. The waters of the Red Sea obeyed the law of their nature when they flowed on in a confluent tide: their dividing asunder on a particular occasion, and for a special purpose, was not in opposition to this law; but other powers, equally the laws of nature, before unknown to human science, and which even now baffle our research, came in at the bidding of the Almighty, and produced the miraculous result. So much we have a right to assume till the contrary be proved. Sceptics and infidels talk of the laws of nature as if they were perfectly acquainted with all the springs of universal being; as if when the Omnipotent stretched the heavens over their heads, and laid the foundations of the earth beneath their feet, they had been admitted to his council; as if he had revealed to them all the combinations and influences which are at work in the most hidden recesses of his dominions.

There is, therefore, no general, much less any universal experience, that can pronounce a strange and wonderful occurrence, which may have assumed the character of a miracle, as contrary to the laws of nature, or the real order and harmony of the universe. It is an interposition of an extraordinary kind, and certainly supernatural as far as human agency is concerned. But who will presume to assert that it contravenes the nature of things, and is, therefore, impossible?

So far from being contrary to the laws of the universe, as far as we can understand their application to ourselves, and the globe which we inhabit, the miracles of our Lord especially were wrought to counteract those accidental inequalities and those physical evils which belong not to the original constitution of things, but which had arisen from some signal disturbance in the economy of nature. What are miracles, in many cases, but the restoration of things to that course from which they had been wrested by foreign and adventitious causes. As the phenomena of evil are continually putting on strange forms, and struggling with all that is uniform and beautiful in the world, why should we deem it inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of its Creator sometimes, and for some ulterior and greater purpose, to interpose for the re-establishment of his violated arrangements? As the body was not originally formed for paralysis or death, is it inconsistent with the law of its construction to emancipate it from the power of both; especially when the supernatural actions bring forth to the view the Great Restorer of our nature, exclaiming "I am the resurrection and the life?"

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