

now ever again to see its bright innocent face, or hear the voice which once sounded in thine ears so cheerfully? Ah! my friend, if thou wouldst be at last where thy child is, thou must have very different thoughts from those which now centre all on thyself and thy selfish worldly occupations. How good would it be for thee if, in the stillness of the night, when thoughts of thy ledger and thy gains are coming back to thee, reproduced by that law which makes a man's dreams hover round the things his heart is set on, thou couldst be startled by hearing a rustle of the angel's wings with whom thy child consorts, or the faint echo of that happy song with which in their company, she is following the Lamb. A voice to thee from heaven, a gleam of the heavenly brightness—a vision of the employments and interests of those goodly companies which surround Christ on His throne, so different from the cares and pleasures of thy sordid, hardening life, thus to be convinced of the reality of things beyond and above thy low experience, this is the very cure required to startle thee from thy narrowness, selfishness, ignorance, and sin. And not less clear are messages and manifestations from the unseen world, needed for all the rest of us, miracles in all their three shades of meaning which their three names denote—(*terata*) things wonderful, startling and arousing attention by being unlike the even course around us—(*δεικνύειν*) speaking of God's power, and therefore warning us not to resist Him—(*σημεία*) signs of His near and loving presence and care for man in Jesus Christ. We do much need the appeals of these wonders, powers, and signs. There is nothing unreasonable in the oft-recurring thought that it would be a great privilege if we were allowed ourselves to witness them. And if the actual witnessing of them would, we naturally believe, have brought us nearer to things heavenly, it must be good for us in its degree to dwell on the well attested record which shows how they were once given. Here is a young man whose heart is full of gaiety, whom the pleasures of sense are sorely tempting to make him live solely for the enjoyment of the present hour. The distant, the unseen, the spiritual, how much does he need that it shall be brought vividly and forcibly to his thoughts? What, then, is better for him than to read of Christ's wonder-working life? Thus, when sorely tempted in his fallen humanity—to see human nature raised and purified by the manifest indwelling of the Eternal and All-holy, become man through the incarnation, a man in every word and better feeling, yet shown all through by His miracles and His resurrection to be the Son of God? These to such an one become the veritable signs of the Son of Man, speaking to his heart when he much needs it of the nearness of God incarnate, enabling him to see how Christ has set His mark on all a young man's life—its joys, temptations, sorrows—to feel that in Christ's history he has something more than a pure, unapproachable example, for indeed the All-holy Redeemer, unlike mere human teachers, is manifested through the signs of His divinity to be powerful everywhere, and ever-living, ever-able, as He is ever-ready to help the weakest of His creatures in all times of need. There is nothing, I will venture to say, as salutary for the tempted conscience to dwell on, as the thoughts of God's nearness to humanity brought before us by the miraculous birth, life, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who is indeed safe without such thoughts? Talk of a miraculous system as being uncongenial to the feelings and longings and reasonable conclusions of an uneducated age. Prate as to a more human system, more like our everyday experience being more accommodated to our wants—nay, it is this very element of the supernatural, the miraculous, that best helps to bring God and man together—telling man that God, as He is near now in Christ, in the conscience and the purified reason, and through faith, has been manifested also outwardly and visibly to be near in wonderful works. Thus the imagination is arrested, the feelings stirred, bright pictures fixed in the memory of scenes in which God has, as it were, left footprints to be marks for ever of His visibly manifested presence. Truly there is none of us who can do without these helps. Pleasure does so entice, business so engross, the world's sorrow so oppress, its honours so dazzle, its delights of affection so enthrall us, that good and bad alike are ever in great danger of looking on the world as a home. Everything is to be prized which helps us to know how the monotony of the world's drowsy chimes has been broken when God has willed it by some distinct interruption from the music of the spheres. Old records of the grand miracle of creation, glimpses of primeval blessedness in a land where sin was not, and where God manifested His presence

visibly and habitually, distant voices of God which, age after age, made themselves audible to the consciences of the faithful of old in some way unknown to us, and thus kept the knowledge of God's will from dying out of a sin-stricken world; visible manifestations of His superintending providence controlling the powers of nature by His will, that He might show Himself the King and Father of the people who were selected to guard His truth; bright vision of angels looking down, as it were, from time to time to see how the earth was growing ready for the incarnation of the King of Angels; longing anticipations of His incarnation guided so as to embody themselves in spirit-stirring prophecies; and then the advent of the King amid the heavenly gleams which lighted up the shades of His humility; disease, madness, death, all controlled by the Almighty power, which, working through His human hand, showed God in man, vanquishing all physical as well as moral evil; and after His departure His chosen servants sent to preach of Him, with a manifested outward guarantee of that inward heavenly illumination which qualified them to be heralds of His new faith. How dull, cold, heartless, would life and the world be without the brightness of those links through which the electric spirit has been visibly conveyed to man from the throne of God. Another system, less replete with miracle, more like an ordinary philosophy, more approaching to the much-vaunted model of a non-miraculous theism, might doubtless, had God so willed it, have been adopted by him as his plan of teaching; and some natures might have found it suited to their wants, but who can fail to see that the real Bible system is far better suited to seize upon the whole complex nature of man—feeling, imagining, reasoning, loving to be brought near to God, and yet ever tempted in a thousand ways to flee from His presence and forget our relations to Him?

I think, then, there is good ground to maintain that we have a system well suited to draw men to God, in that which St. Peter and all the apostles declared to be the Gospel, a system replete with miracle, and that the miraculous element in the faith of Christ is not, in fact, at least to sensitive human hearts, a stumbling block. Granted that God is what He is, and man is what he is, and the pre-supposed relations between God and man necessitating a revelation are what they are, the miraculous element in what God teaches man is not a stumbling-block, but does draw the heart to heavenly truth reasonably and with a welcome influence.

We hold that a sincere and devout believer admiring God's infinite intelligence dares neither to deny that He may, if He so willed, have worked by miracles, nor yet to prescribe what evidence, if He willed so to work, He was bound to afford to man before requiring his assent to them. Miracles are neither impossible nor improbable, and all we are entitled to demand in proof of them is such reasonable and probable evidence as the apostles have secured for us in the records of the New Testament.

Here we have St. Peter in the text addressing the Jews and appealing to their experience. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." In fact, the Lord's resurrection does set before us clearly that on the Christian hypothesis miracles are probable, nay, indispensable. Death is the common law for man on earth; but there is a higher region where death has no power. Christ, the Son of God, comes from that higher region to vindicate for men an assurance of the nearness, the actual presence of the Father with His creatures; and, further, by the sacrifice of Himself to secure man's redemption. It is part of the great plan that, becoming perfect man, as man He shall die; but, in His own nature as the eternal Son of God, death is no law of His being. He manifests Himself amongst men first as subjugated voluntarily to the common laws of their ordinary life: but then the law of His higher spiritual eternal life intervenes; the operation of the lower law cannot thwart the manifestation of the higher: and He who died in ordinary course as man, rises triumphant by a miracle as the Son of God. I do not say that all miracles resemble this the greatest of miracles, but all in their degree reflect the same principles which the resurrection illustrates—all speak of the meeting of the human and Divine, and show the Divine power unimpeded by the earthly and human circumstances with which it has condescended to ally itself. The Gospel in its essence everywhere presents to us this