

cles, either on the one hand to suppose that the main function of the miracles was evidential, or on the other hand to suppose that they have no evidential function. They are evidential precisely because their primary object was not evidential.

The common objection, therefore, to the evidential function of miracles falls to the ground. It is commonly objected that miracles, even if credible, are useless. It is the doctrine, it is said, that proves the miracle; not the miracle the doctrine. To this objection Matthew Arnold has given the classical expression in his famous words: "One may say indeed, suppose I could change the pen with which I write this into a pen-wiper, I should not thus make what I write any the truer or more convincing. That may be so in reality, but the mass of mankind feel differently. In the judgment of the mass of mankind, could I visibly and undeniably change the pen with which I write this into a pen-wiper, not only would this which I write acquire a claim to be held perfectly true and convincing, but I should even be entitled to affirm, and to be believed in affirming, propositions the most palpably at war with common fact and experience."

Every friend of Arnold must wish his pen had been changed into a pen-wiper before he wrote this sentence, for it proves that he misconceived both the nature and the purpose of our Lord's miracles. It is a libel on the common sense of mankind to assert that they would be influenced by a mere piece of legerdemain which had no natural relation to the truths to be renounced. Miracles are not gratuitous, superfluous, inconvenient, and irrelevant credentials; they are themselves didactic and revealing. We accept the miracles of Christ because they embody and express the very thing to be proved. They were not credentials of the kind that can be examined, approved, and then laid aside that the substance of the mission may be gone into. They were something very different from the seal on a letter, which as soon as recognized is torn off and thrown aside, that the contents of the letter may be read. They were rather like the very contents of the letter, which in every line reveal and certify the writer. They resembled the munificent gift which suggests but one possible giver; the far-reaching benefaction which guarantees its own authorship.

Further, in all consideration of the miracles of Christ, the miracle of His own person must be kept in the foreground. His sinlessness is the crowning or, we should rather say, the fundamental miracle; a miracle continuous, innate, inseparable from His own person; a miracle unique, separating Him indubitably from all other men, and which makes all other miracles congruous and credible. Is a miracle in the spiritual world less or is it greater than a miracle in the physical? Which is the more divine, the turning of water into wine, or the perfection of character that is impervious to sinful thought or desire? The one is as unexampled as the other, as truly beyond ordinary experience as miraculous.