

but that was the chief reason why I chose this subject, because there were various opinions about it. There is little good in trying to teach what everybody knows and what everybody believes. It is well, I admit, to have those thoughts firmly established in our minds that we already know and believe. But it is *better* to have *new* thoughts created, and errors, if any there be, crossed out and rectified. If I do not say something new, or something that you may at first perhaps doubt, then I will consider this essay not only slightly but almost a failure.

Did then Jesus Christ perform the recorded miracles in violation to, or in harmony with, natural law. If you have done your duty, you who are teachers and you who are scholars, you must have thought over, you must have talked over this important question glaring out in all our recent lessons. I have more sympathy for those who think something, an earnest, honest, though an erroneous something, than for those who do not think, and do not care.

Let us see the object and force that Jesus would have in reverting natural law. Did he do it, as a great many say, to show his super-human and supernatural power, proving himself a being above the possibility of ordinary man, and equal with the Omnipotent Himself—a position that the man Jesus, I fancy, never claimed? Are we to trust in him, and put our faith in him because he was so far above what we are or can be? Is *this* the mission of the miracles? Not, at least, to me. A miracle as I understand it, is in the *strictest* harmony with the laws of nature. Christ did not come to revert or annul the eternal decrees of God. The Almighty, in the beginning, gave the universe and all nature, laws by which it is to move. If Christ is *one* with the Father, He will not revert the decrees of the Father. "If a house be divided against itself that house cannot stand." Think you the obedient, devoted son will bring discord and anarchy into the Father's kingdom? He will set aside the laws of nature to show his power, you say, and instil me with confidence in him. Is it a sign of power when the child disobeys the laws laid down by its parents, and does the violation of parental command increase our confidence in it? I think not. It is rather a trait

of weakness, and raises in our minds doubt and suspicion. To throw more light upon the miracles, we have, in our best though imperfect way, endeavored to find out the position that Jesus held with God; let us now turn and endeavor to find out the position that he held with man.

Jesus is termed the great Exemplar, the perfect model for all humanity. A model is for imitation. A *perfect* model is capable of being imitated in *every* particular. I could not accuse God of being so unjust as to give to Jesus, the model, the Exemplar, powers and possibilities that he does not as freely grant to us, the imitators. Such a model would not be perfect. Hence, if miracles are as some say, every human being has the power and privilege of perverting the laws of nature. The reign of order would then be at an end, *cosmos* would be again dethroned, and eternal night would sweep over the chaotic world.

It seems to me that the burden of Christ's work was and is to bring the erring and lost humanity back again into harmony with God and his inviolable laws. His earnest life-work was to show how this was possible. Hence he made the way plain and positive. He began, in all respects, on a level with humanity. He was no undeserving favorite. He had access to no power that is denied the rest of humanity. He had no secret avenue, now closed to us, by which he could approach the Father; he went by the common way of gloom and sorrow, implicit obedience, complete self-denial, unflinching faith and trust, and fervent, earnest, exhaustive prayer. This is the way of all humanity. The miracles that Jesus did are nothing else than the effects of the laws of nature played upon by the *inspired* human soul. And the same harp is ready for even us if we choose. O Friends! there is a power in the world with which we are too slightly acquainted. May you and I, and all bring to bear upon the laws of nature that God breathed into the universe in the beginning, the spiritual laws and power that He breathed into our souls now. The spirit world must have supremacy over the world of nature, and when nature's laws work in obedience and harmony to this higher power, then will effects be wrought that seem miracles to the natural understanding.

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