

ness. For uniformly He declared that these were the works given Him by the Father to do.

If we ask ourselves what effect the miracles have had on our own minds, we cannot fail to recognize that they have revealed God to us, and rendered in a vivid and forcible manner truths about Him which otherwise could not have been so impressively taught. For, after all, it is chiefly through them we come to apprehend the sympathy, and patience, and devotedness of Christ, and in Him the fatherliness of God. Christ's accessibility to all, the forgiving and encouraging spirit He bore to all, the suitable and gratuitous relief He brought to all—everything, in short, which draws men to Christ is made apprehensible to us, not solely, but chiefly, through the miracles. To eliminate them from the gospels would be to eliminate what declares, manifests, and teaches the love of Christ and the fatherhood of God far more distinctly and impressively, and in a more universally intelligible form, than any verbal teaching. The miracles are themselves the revelation.

Why, then, did Jesus uniformly refuse to satisfy the demand for a sign? This question cuts to the heart of His conception of His work. He recognized that His kingdom was spiritual; that is to say, that those only could belong to it who were attracted to Him by spiritual affinities. Nothing external could introduce men to His kingdom. His claims were recognized by those who had eyes to see Divine glory, holiness, love, unworldliness, truth. To leap from a pinnacle of the temple was irrelevant, and had no bearing on the work of the Messiah—redemption from sin. To have given any outward, extrinsic sign would have been to confess that the ordinary woes and general condition of men did not afford sufficient scope for exhibiting the fatherly love and power of God. Besides, affinity to Christ and love for Him could not be so produced. These could be produced only by revealing the compassion and care of the Father.

Jesus, then, persisted in His refusal to win men by wonders; for so, He knew, they could not be truly won. He wrought no miracle for the primary purpose of convincing men of His Messiahship; but, quite consistently, He could appeal to the miracles he did work as proof of His Messiahship. The poet writes because he is a poet; not to convince the world that he is a poet. The benevolent man acts as Christ did when He laid His finger on the lips of the healed person and warned him to make no mention of His kindness; and, therefore, all who do discover his actions know him for a benevolent person. Actions done for the sake of establishing a character for courage or compassion are much more likely to establish a character for vanity and love of applause. It is just because the primary intention of Christ's miracles was not to establish a character for this or that, but directly to benefit needy persons, that they did convincingly prove Him to be God's representative on earth.

It is, then, to misunderstand Christ's own conception of His mira-