

Theological.

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

PART III.

AGAIN, while the miracles of Jesus Christ were the spontaneous expressions of his sovereign and almighty power, and therefore transcended all others, they were greater in other respects, in number, in variety, in constancy, and in uniform beneficence. No one ever crowded so many mighty acts into so short a space of time. His course was all miracle—the powers of nature, the evils of humanity, in all their countless varieties, the demon world with all its boasts; all were every moment subject to him, and wherever he went they fled before him. A look, a word, a touch of the hem of his garment, revealed his wondrous power; his constancy was unwearied; he never in a single instance failed; his authority was unlimited, either by difficulty, time, or death. His disciples on one occasion, in his absence, sought to eject an evil spirit, but they were foiled; he spake the word, and it was done. When the beloved fellow-labourer of Paul was sick (for “indeed he was very sick, nigh unto death,”) the apostle wrought no miracle for his recovery, but ascribed his restoration to Divine compassion. It was Jesus in heaven that had mercy on him; and when the workers of other miracles laid down their powers with their office in the dust, Jesus Christ more graciously revealed his; he not only exercised it in death, but extended his claims beyond the grave; he arose from the dead by his own resistless might, ascended up into heaven, carrying with him the trophy of his power and love into the regions of immortal bliss.

But the uniform beneficence of the miracles of our Saviour impresses upon them a Divine character, and perpetually illustrates the love which on earth he came to gratify, and at the same time to infuse into the hearts of all his followers. A remark has been made, and we deeply feel its justice, when we trace the footsteps of him who went about doing good, that the miracles of our Saviour were not merely demonstrations of power, but acts of the purest and most disinterested benevolence; that they have a kind of ethical excellence, a close and striking conformity to the peculiar temper, as well as the distinguishing and important mission of Him by whom they were performed. We might select as an example, the case of the widow of Nain.

V. But we pass on to answer, in the fifth place, another important question suggested by the subject of miraculous power employed to establish the singular and exclusive claims of Jesus Christ, as the sum and substance, the theme and the glory of that revelation which bears the impress of his name;—what is the ground of the credibility of these miracles. And is the testimony through which they are derived to us, an adequate and proper medium of conveying their impression to our minds?

Some, who want a pretext for their infidelity, contend, that if miracles were once accorded for the purpose of establishing the faith of any of the human race, all the rest have an equal claim to the distinction; and that miracles can only influence those who have personally witnessed them. How little do these persons understand the character of human nature, and the effect of miracles, simply and alone considered upon that human nature, even when exhibited with a preternatural energy that strikes both the earth and the heavens! The intention of miracles can only be realized by the mind receiving the system of truth which they are wrought to enforce. If the heart be disinclined to this—if the testimony which addresses itself to faith be disregarded, amidst the multitude of appeals which are made to

the senses, miracles may be believed—may be admitted—and yet their end be entirely defeated.

The ideas of a reality belonging to a supernatural occurrence, and of the truth involved in a particular religion which it has transpired to confirm, are not uniformly, nor frequently, associated in the mind of the spectator. Curiosity may gaze with a perfect vacancy of speculation. Thousands were fed by our Lord through the most palpable operations of miraculous skill and might; thousands witnessed his cures of diseases and his exorcisms of demons. Yet how seldom did the conviction appear to them, that if these things were true, so also must be the doctrine he taught! Herod hoped to have seen some miracle done by him, but it is abundantly clear that had his wish been gratified, he did not surmise that it would pledge him to the allowance of any particular religious system. The Pharisees even accused him of “casting out devils by the prince of devils.”

Miracles, alone, astonish and confound; they do not convince nor persuade. But when associated with moral testimony, when forming part of a great system of truth, then is their weight admitted, and the result is most salutary.

When miracles, as facts, are worked, so to speak, into a system of principles, they must both be leisurely and circumstantially examined together. The moral and the miraculous evidence, thus united in one calm record, are more likely to make their way to the understanding and the heart, than if they were both submitted at the same time, under circumstances of strong and opposing excitement, where the senses might overpower the reason, and bring the spectator to conclusions altogether foreign to the design of the wonders by which he had been amazed.

It may, however, be objected, that miracles, thus intermingled with the doctrines and truths of revelation, and accompanied by all the weight of testimony, are rejected. It is true; and so as we have seen were the miracles even by those who saw them performed. The same perverseness which rejects the combination in one uniform and glorious testimony would reject the evidence of miracles before their own eyes; “Neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

We contend, however, and wish we had time to show more at length, that those who possess a record of miracles, combined with the revelation which they attest, are in a far more favourable condition to receive the revelation as a whole, than those who actually witnessed the miracles themselves, especially when we consider the nature of the testimony which establishes the credibility of the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments. And, if we be asked for the authority on which the miracles of Scripture rest, we point at once to the character of the witnesses—the nature of the miraculous appeals made to them—their opportunities of judging—the conduct which they pursued—the scrutiny which they underwent, and the immediate and ultimate consequence—the universal diffusion of the Gospel by their instrumentality. As to the witnesses, they were under no possible temptations to deceive the world. As to the miracles, they were such as an impostor could not have attempted, and such as an enthusiast could not have effected. They had no disguise; and were, in a variety of instances, of such a nature as to preclude the very possibility of collusion. They were performed in the midst of his bitterest enemies; and were so palpable and certain as to extort the following acknowledgment even from persons who were most eager to oppose his doctrines and discredit his pretensions: “This man doth many miracles: if we let him thus alone all men will believe in him.” As to their opportunity of judging, they were assiduously instructed in the doctrines of which the miracles were

an attestation
their Master

When v
with Mr. H
ment again
applicable
of Christ
sufficient t
be of such
miraculous
tablish.”

would be t
under all t
traordinary

But, we
answer, in

VI. Hav
fluence tha
tunity upo

The belie
conclusion,

wrought is
taken as th

of power,
arm.

That he
which affect

of sin—sup
wants—sec

heaven, an

These mir
compassion

who wrong
towards ou

Thus they
tion and e

vidual cond
church—th

ness.

There ar
all times,

Prophecy c
it is founde

development is
been define

which repla
and in this

design of C
us! Let

sires!

How litt
which in ev

vision and

tianity be c
come!—the

be admitted

R

A BRIEF ACC
LY HELD

IN THE T

For some

to be at a v

bours of our

effect upon

time to time

to the faith

blessing att

out of Cor

speakable l

Aylesford, th

the same m