

merciful saints require them now as much as in the days of Our Lord. We have already stated, however, that the relief of the individuals concerned was doubtless a very secondary motive, even with the blessed Jesus, in the miracles which either He, or His apostles and disciples wrought. This His remarks upon raising Lazarus, upon the case of the man born blind, at the marriage in Cana, and on many other occasions, sufficiently prove. It is true that the great benevolence of His character led Him to choose works of mercy for the most frequent opportunities of exercising the miraculous evidences of His Divinity; but that was all; their chief motive being, as we have stated, *testimony not pity*. And yet there might be this further reason,—that the dispensation of faith not being yet fully revealed, the way to the Throne of Mercy, on occasions of temporal sorrow, was not opened, as it is now, and there was consequently the greater call for these miraculous acts, even simply as deeds of mercy.

To suppose, however, that it ever formed a part of the Divine plan to establish miraculous powers as a regular ordinance of the Church, appears to us alike inconsistent with His dignity, and His revealed mode of procedure. In the arrangements of the Most High, especially as relates to the material wants of His creatures, visible cause and effect are associated together; and to this law the bodily wants of His Elect, we imagine, form no exception. It would be very strange if they did; for the world and all its concerns are carried on by our Father, not for the sake of, the ungodly, but for the well-being of His own children; habitually to interrupt that order, therefore, for the sake of individuals amongst the very class of persons for the benefit of whom it was originally adopted, would surely—if we may so speak—manifest very singular inconsistency!

Such a system of continued miraculous interference for the sake of individual benefit would, it seems to us, tend also to undermine, or at least materialize, the faith of those for whom it was exercised, particularly now that the way to their Father's sympathies, even in every temporal affliction, is so clearly open to His children, through Him who has been Himself personally tempted, tried, and afflicted in all points, "like as they are." Hence, it follows that in time of bodily disease, for instance, it becomes our duty

to use all the medical aid which *His Providence* has provided, and then to seek His physical blessing, through our physical Saviour, nothing doubting but that He will as really heal, through that ordinary agency, if to heal be best for us, as though He were present to lay His hand upon us. To employ a visible direct miraculous agency were surely to lower the sublime character of faith.

The nearest approach to continuous miracle is unquestionably the priesthood and sacraments of the Church. But here it is to be remarked, that though the agencies are recognizable by the senses, neither the Divine Presence nor the spiritual effects are, and that consequently the beautiful operation of the simple, child-like trustfulness of faith is still demanded. And then the end to be secured—salvation, holiness to the Lord—is so vast in importance, that Infinite Love has condescended to make them, though miraculous, a *standing* spiritual law of His Church; not that anomaly, which those of whom we are writing seem to desire,—an organized *interruption* of the laws of nature and grace!

II. We proceed then to notice a second capital error into which the followers of the late Rev. Edward Irving fall, namely, in supposing that the Church is imperfect, and in "a captive state," because she is without "Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and Pastors" as distinct orders; more especially the former—the Church refusing to acknowledge any order upon earth as superior to its bishops.

Here, again, we are brought back to the very confines of Popery proper. And most singular is it, how that corruption of pure scriptural catholicity seems, in one shape or other, to foster every religious error, to which the sins or infirmities of Christians lead them. Thus the most plausible apology for the Papacy is, the yearning which weak or worldly minds have for a visible infallible guide. They are impatient for that privilege of Heaven—the capability of walking by *sight* rather than by faith,—before they have won it! This same desire would seem to animate the Irvingites, hence instead of *one* pope, they would institute *twelve*! and we grant that these last have more *apparent* scriptural warrant than the former. But both dangerously tend to a practical denial of the perpetual "coming of Christ in the flesh;" for if