

miraculous works, and they are further called signs, because they offered sensible proofs of the working of a divine power.

Miracles by their nature call for these two characters. First of all they are sensible, or else could they be thrust forward as signs manifesting anything. It is equally plain that exterior and material phenomena can alone supply miracles, because they alone are perceptible to our senses. In addition they must be extraordinary. Ordinary phenomena, though the work of God as well as of second causes, do not however indicate sensibly God's immediate and ordinary presence. It costs effort and thought to realize that without God nothing is done. God is the most secret as well as the first of causes. He sets the second causes in motion by imperceptible means. But when there happens a number of phenomena, plainly due to no natural cause, the primary cause shows itself directly. Common sense can recognize or suggest none but this secret cause, and it says, "This work is surely the work of God."

Miracles are therefore so closely connected with nature, its phenomena and laws, that justice would not be rendered to these latter, if passed over unnoticed "Nature," in the words of a scientist, "is the united totality of all that the senses can perceive. In fact, all that cannot be made by man, is termed nature, that is God's creation." In nature there are certain causes and effects and also objects. An object is a thing perceptible to the senses and occupies space. From objects spring phenomena. In ordinary language the term denotes something extraordinary or preternatural. Strictly, phenomena are visible changes remarked in an object outside of chemical effects. They include the results perceptible to one of the senses. Take a stone, as a familiar example, in our hands, open the fingers and the stone falls. We know it falls because we see it fall. We say it falls by the law of weight or gravity. The curious, naturally ask what is a law.

At this point investigations dig somewhat deep, for they touch almost the foundation of things. Law is not besides an object we can see or touch, nor do we find practicable means of laying hold of it. It is artfully constructed by means of careful

observations, reflections and abstractions. Airy and elastic of substance it is found adapted to the most dissimilar circumstances. Observe what takes place. In its proper sense law applies only to free agents. It is a rule which these adopt for the purpose of fixing themselves upon a certain aim and precision in action. In man this rule regulates his free acts with a binding force. By aid of intellect and will, he comprehends its substance, drift, and urging force. On this account it is called the moral law. Of itself, it directs, but gives no reality or being to the action which follows. The force which does this lies within the agent, the rule is without.

From this its proper sphere, law is transported to the physical world, to agents not masters of their movements. It is no longer an external rule for it finds here neither knowledge nor liberty, required to choose and observe its dictates. Physical law therefore differs essentially from the moral. We remark that irrational agents have each their peculiar natures, constituted by particular properties, which in turn give rise to peculiar acts and no others. We notice that in each being, the nature its properties and actions are so considered as inseparable that when one or the other is taken away, the rest changes or is lost. The relation by which these elements are so bound up together is called the physical law. Here, the nature of this law is clear. It is not a force, has no real influence and the action is independent of it.

It is now pretty well agreed to explain law as the constant and invariable relation between phenomena and their diverse forces; in other words, the same phenomena are invariably produced when the conditions are the same. A stone falls if not held up. At ordinary pressure water boils at 100%. Yet is this definition more than a statement of facts? Does it throw light on the causes of the phenomena, and why they should be necessarily identical? Herein lies the nature of the law. We know it is the object of every law-giver that all his subjects tell the truth always, that the property of all would be respected by all, in a word that in the same circumstances, the same acts of virtue would be reproduced with mathematical precision. Yet does it really happen! It