

We need hardly expend thought on the discussion as to the possibility of believing in miracles. The very term supposes the existence of a power above nature, able to reveal itself by a suspension of nature's ordinary course, and willing so to reveal itself for the salvation of mankind. There is nothing apparently repugnant to reason in such a supposition. The existence of the power is even implied in the phrase "laws of nature," constantly used by science; for wherever there is a law there must be a law-giver, and the law-giver must be presumed capable of suspending the operation of law. This, Hume himself would hardly have denied. In fact, the metaphysical argument against miracles comes, as has been said before, pretty much to this: that a miracle cannot take place, because if it did it would be a miracle. We could not help believing our own senses if we actually saw a man raised from the dead. There is no reason why we should not believe the testimony of other people, provided that they were eye-witnesses, that they were competent in character and in intelligence, and that their testimony had been submitted to impartial and thorough investigation. Suppose a hundred men of known character, judgment, and scientific attainments were to unite in declaring that they had seen a blind man restored to sight or a man raised from the dead in circumstances precluding the possibility of fraud or illusion, should we, as Hume says, at once reject their testimony? On what ground? On the ground of universal experience? Experience, being only previous uniformity, is broken by a well-attested exception. We assume an adequate object, such as the revelation to man of vital truth undiscoverable by his own intellect would be. It is simply a question of evidence. All will allow that we require either the evidence of our own senses or an extraordinary amount of unexceptionable testimony to warrant us in accepting a miracle.

That the Supreme Being, supposing that he intended to reveal himself by miracle for the salvation of mankind, and required belief in the miracle as the condition of our salvation, would provide us with conclusive evidence, may surely be assumed. A miracle is an appeal to our reason through our senses, and to make it valid either the evidence of our own senses, or evidence equivalent to that of our own senses, is required. To call upon us to believe without sufficient evidence, would be to put an end to belief itself in any rational sense of the term. Theologians always take advantage of proof so far as it is forthcoming. Faith, to which they have appealed in defect of proof, is a belief, not in things unproved, but in things unseen. Miracles may be accepted on the evidence of a church assumed to be itself divine; they may even be accepted on the supposed evidence of a spiritual sense illuminated by divine influence; but if we are to accept them on the evidence of reason, there must be satisfactory eye-witnesses. What ocular testimony do we possess?

In the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul says that the risen Christ had appeared to him. He says simply "ap-