

regards the external phenomena or the inferences drawn from them, being so infinitely greater than the probability of mistake in the complete induction, we must unquestionably reject the testimony of the twelve men.

It need scarcely be said that the assertion of liability to error on the part of the observers by no means involves any insinuation of wilful "falsehood or imposture in the case." It is quite intelligible that twelve men might witness an occurrence which might seem to them and others miraculous—but which was susceptible of a perfectly natural explanation—and truthfully relate what they believed to have seen, and that they might, therefore, refuse "with one voice to acknowledge that there existed any falsehood or imposture in the case," even although the alternative might be death on a gibbet. This, however, would in no way affect the character of the actual occurrence. It would not convert a natural, though by them inexplicable, phenomenon into a miracle. Their constancy in adhering to the account they had given would merely bear upon the truth of their own statements, and the fact of seeing them "one after another consenting to be racked, burned, or strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account," would not in the least justify our believing in a miracle. Even martyrdom cannot transform imaginations into facts. The truth of a narrative is no guarantee for the correctness of an inference.

As regards the applicability of Paley's illustration to the Gospel miracles, the failure of his analogy is complete. We shall presently see the condition of the people amongst whom these miracles are supposed to have occurred, and that, so far from the nature of the phenomena and the character of the witnesses supporting the inference that it was impossible that the observers could have been deceived, there is every reason for concluding with certainty that their ignorance of natural laws, their proneness to superstition, their love of the marvellous, and their extreme religious excitement, rendered them peculiarly liable to incorrectness in the observation of the phenomena, and to error in the inferences drawn from them. We shall likewise see that we have no serious and circumstantial accounts of those miracles from eye-witnesses of whose probity and good sense we have any knowledge, but that, on the contrary, the narratives of them which we possess were composed by unknown persons, who were not eye-witnesses at all, but wrote very long after the events related, and in that mythic period "in which reality melted into fable, and invention unconsciously trespassed on the province of history." The proposition, "That there is satisfactory evidence that many professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily under-

gone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of these accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct," is made by Paley the argument of the first nine chapters of his work, as the converse of the proposition, that similar attestation of other miracles cannot be produced, is of the following two. This shows the importance which he attaches to the point; but, notwithstanding, even if he could substantiate this statement, the cause of miracles would not be one whit advanced.

We have freely quoted these arguments in order to illustrate the real position of miracles; and no one who has seriously considered the matter can doubt the necessity for very extraordinary evidence, even to render the report of such phenomena worthy of a moment's attention. The argument for miracles, however, has hitherto proceeded upon the merest assumption, and, as we shall further see, the utmost that they can do who support miracles, under the fatal disadvantage of being contradictory to uniform experience, is to refer to the alleged contemporaneous nature of the evidence for their occurrence, and to the character of the supposed witnesses. Mill has ably shown the serious misapprehension of so many writers against Hume's *Essay on Miracles* which has led them to what he calls "the extraordinary conclusion that nothing supported by credible testimony ought ever to be disbelieved."¹ In regard to historical facts, not contradictory to all experience, simple and impartial testimony may be sufficient to warrant belief; but even such qualities as these can go but a very small way towards establishing the reality of an occurrence which is opposed to complete induction.² It is admitted that the evidence requisite to establish the reality of a supernatural Divine revelation of doctrines beyond human reason, and comprising in its very essence such stupendous miracles as the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension, must be miraculous. The evidence for the miraculous evidence, which is scarcely less astounding than the contents of the revelation itself, must, logically, be miraculous also, for it is not a whit more easy to prove the reality of an evidential miracle than of a dogmatic miracle. It is evident that the resurrection of Lazarus, for instance, is as contradictory to complete induction as the resurrection of Jesus. Both the supernatural religion, therefore, and its supernatural evidence labour under the fatal disability of being antecedently incredible.

¹ Mill, *Logic*, ii., pp. 173, 175.

² Cf. Mill, *Logic*, ii., p. 168.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AGE OF MIRACLES

LET us now, however, proceed to examine the evidence for the reality of miracles, and to inquire whether they are supported by such an amount of testimony as can in any degree outweigh the reasons which, antecedently, seem to render them incredible. It is undeniable that belief in the miraculous has gradually been dispelled, and that, as a general rule, the only miracles which are now maintained are limited to brief and distant periods of time. Faith in their reality, once so comprehensive, does not, except amongst a certain class, extend beyond the miracles of the New Testament and a few of those of the Old, and the countless myriads of ecclesiastical and other miracles, for centuries devoutly and implicitly believed, are now commonly repudiated, and have sunk into discredit and contempt. The question is inevitably suggested how so much can be abandoned and the remnant still be upheld.

As an essential part of our inquiry into the value of the evidence for miracles, we must endeavour to ascertain whether those who are said to have witnessed the supposed miraculous occurrences were either competent to appreciate them aright, or likely to report them without exaggeration. For this purpose, we must consider what was known of the order of nature in the age in which miracles are said to have taken place, and what was the intellectual character of the people amongst whom they are reported to have been performed. Nothing is more rare, even amongst intelligent and cultivated men, than accuracy of observation and correctness of report, even in matters of sufficient importance to attract vivid attention, and in which there is no special interest unconsciously to bias the observer. It will scarcely be denied, however, that in persons of fervid imagination, and with a strong natural love of the marvellous, whose minds are not only unrestrained by specific knowledge, but predisposed by superstition towards false conclusions, the probability of inaccuracy and exaggeration is enormously increased. If we add to this such a disturbing element as religious excitement, inaccuracy, exaggeration, and extravagance are certain to occur. The effect of even one of these influences, religious feeling, in warping the judgment is admitted by one of the most uncompromising supporters of

miracles. "It is doubtless the tendency of religious minds," says Newman, "to imagine mysteries and wonders where there are none; and much more, where causes of awe really exist, will they unintentionally misstate, exaggerate, and embellish, when they set themselves to relate what they have witnessed or have heard"; and he adds: "And further, the imagination, as is well known, is a fruitful cause of apparent miracles."¹ We need not offer any evidence that the miracles which we have to examine were witnessed and reported by persons exposed to the effects of the strongest possible religious feeling and excitement, and our attention may, therefore, be more freely directed to the inquiry how far this influence was modified by other circumstances. Did the Jews at the time of Jesus possess such calmness of judgment and sobriety of imagination as to inspire us with any confidence in accounts of marvellous occurrences, unwitnessed except by them, and limited to their time, which contradict all knowledge and all experience? Were their minds sufficiently enlightened and free from superstition to warrant our attaching weight to their report of events of such an astounding nature? and were they themselves sufficiently impressed with the exceptional character of any apparent supernatural and miraculous interference with the order of nature?

Let an English historian and divine, who will be acknowledged as no prejudiced witness, bear testimony upon some of these points. "Nor is it less important," says Dean Milman, "throughout the early history of Christianity, to seize the spirit of the times. Events which appear to us so extraordinary that we can scarcely conceive that they should either fail in exciting a powerful sensation or ever be obliterated from the popular remembrance, in their own day might pass off as of little more than ordinary occurrence. During the whole life of Christ, and the early propagation of the religion, it must be borne in mind that they took place in an age, and among a people, which superstition had made so familiar with what were supposed to be preternatural events that wonders awakened no emotion, or were speedily superseded by some new demand on the ever-ready belief. The Jews of that period not only believed that the Supreme Being had the power of controlling the course of nature, but that the same influence was possessed by multitudes of subordinate spirits, both good and evil. Where the pious Christian of the present day would behold the direct agency of the Almighty, the Jews would

¹ J. H. Newman, *Two Essays on Scripture Miracles and on Ecclesiastical*, 1870, p. 171. This passage occurs in a reply to the argument against admitting ecclesiastical miracles as a whole, or against admitting certain of them, that certain others are rejected on all hands as fictitious or pretended.

SUPERSTITIOUS CHARACTER OF THE JEWS

invariably have interposed an angel as the author or minister, agent in the wonderful transaction. Where the Christian moralist would condemn the fierce passion, the ungovernable lust, or the inhuman temper, the Jew discerned the workings of diabolical possession. Scarcely a malady was endured, or crime committed, which was not traced to the operation of one of these myriad dæmons, who watched every opportunity of exercising their malice in the sufferings and the sins of men."¹

Another English divine, of certainly not less orthodoxy, but of much greater knowledge of Hebrew literature, bears similar testimony regarding the Jewish nation at the same period. "Not to be more tedious, therefore, in this matter" (regarding the Bath Kol, a Jewish superstition), "let two things only be observed: (1) That the nation, under the second Temple, was given to magical arts beyond measure; and (2) That it was given to an easiness of believing all manner of delusions beyond measure."² And in another place: "It is a disputable case, whether the Jewish nation were more mad with superstition in matters of religion, or with superstition in curious arts:—(1) There was not a people upon earth that studied or attributed more to dreams than they. (2) There was hardly any people in the whole world that more used, or were more fond of, amulets, charms, mutterings, exorcisms, and all kinds of enchantments. We might here produce innumerable instances."³ We shall presently see that these statements are far from being exaggerated.

No reader of the Old Testament⁴ can fail to have been struck by the singularly credulous fickleness of the Jewish mind. Although claiming the title of the specially selected people of Jehovah, the Israelites exhibited a constant and inveterate tendency to forsake his service for the worship of other gods. The mighty "signs and wonders" which God is represented as incessantly working on their behalf, and in their sight, had apparently no effect upon them. The miraculous even then had, as it would seem, already lost all novelty, and ceased, according to the records, to excite more than mere passing astonishment. The leaders and prophets of Israel had a perpetual struggle to restrain

¹ *History of Christianity*, by H. H. Milman, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's; Murray, 1867, i., p. 84 f.

² John Lightfoot, D.D., Master of Catherine Hall, Cambridge. *Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ*, Works (ed. Pitman), xi., p. 81, cf. p. 170.

³ *Ib.*, xi., p. 299 f. Cf. Schoettgen, *Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ*, 1733, p. 474.

⁴ We do not, of course, touch here upon the results of critical examination of the writings of the Old Testament, although these completely confirm the results of this work, but simply refer to points which bear upon our argument in the common view.

the people from "following after" heathen deities, and whilst the burden of the prophets is one long denunciation of the idolatry into which the nation was incessantly falling, the verdict of the historical books upon the several kings and rulers of Israel proves how common it was, and how rare even the nominal service of Jehovah. At the best, the mind of the Jewish nation, only after long and slow progression, attained the idea of a perfect monotheism, but added to the belief in Jehovah the recognition of a host of other gods, over whom it merely gave him supremacy.¹ This is apparent even in the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"; and the necessity for such a law received its illustration from a people who are represented as actually worshipping the golden calf, made for them by the complaisant Aaron, during the very time that the great Decalogue was being written on the Mount by his colleague Moses.² It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that at a later period, and throughout patristic days, the gods of the Greeks and other heathen nations were so far gently treated that, although repudiated as deities, they were recognised as demons. In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, where "idols" are spoken of in the Hebrew, the word is sometimes translated "demons"; as, for instance, Psalm xcvi. 5 is rendered: "For all the gods of the nations are demons."³ The same superstition is quite as clearly expressed in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul, for instance, speaking of things sacrificed to idols, says: "But (I say) that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I would not that ye should be partakers with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons; ye cannot partake of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons."⁴

The apocryphal Book of Tobit affords some illustration of the opinions of the more enlightened Jews during the last century

¹ This is unconsciously expressed throughout the Bible in such passages as Deut. x. 17: "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible," etc. (cf. Joshua xxii. 22, Deut. xi. 28, xii. 2 ff., Ps. lxxxix. 6, 7, and a host of other passages).

² An admirable inquiry into the religion of the Jewish nation is to be found in Dr. A. Kuenen's very able work, *De Godsdienst van Israël*, Haarlem. Eerste deel, 1869; tweede deel, 1870.

³ Ὅτι πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια (Ps. xcvi. 5, Sept.). This is not to be wondered at, when in so many other passages the Israelites are represented in the Hebrew as sacrificing to devils when they worshipped other gods: cf. Levit. xvii. 7; Deut. xxxii. 17; Ps. cvi. (Sept. cv.) 37. In Isaiah lxxv. 11 the words translated in the English version "that prepare a table for that troop" are referred to demons in the Septuagint: καὶ ἐτοιμάζοντες τῷ δαιμονίῳ τράπεζαν. In Ps. xcvi. 7 the word translated "gods" in the English version becomes ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ in the Sept. (xcvi. 7).

⁴ 1 Cor. x. 20.

before the commencement of the Christian era.¹ The angel Raphael prescribes, as an infallible means of driving a demon out of man or woman so effectually that it should never more come back, fumigation with the heart and liver of a fish.² By this exorcism the demon Asmodeus, who, from love of Sara, the daughter of Raguel, has strangled seven husbands who attempted to marry her,³ is overcome, and flies into "the uttermost parts of Egypt," where the angel binds him.⁴ The belief in demons, and in the necessity of exorcism, is so complete that the author sees no incongruity in describing the angel Raphael, who has been sent, in answer to prayer, specially to help him, as instructing Tobias to adopt such means of subjecting demons. Raphael is described in this book as the angel of healing,⁵ the office generally assigned to him by the Fathers. He is also represented as saying of himself that he is one of the seven holy angels which present the prayers of the saints to God.⁶

There are many curious particulars regarding angels and demons in the Book of Enoch. This work, which is quoted by the author of the Epistle of Jude,⁷ and by some of the Fathers, as inspired Scripture, was supposed by Tertullian to have survived the universal deluge, or to have been afterwards transmitted by means of Noah, the great-grandson of the author Enoch.⁸ It may be assigned to about a century before Christ, but additions were made to the text, and more especially to its angelology, extending probably to after the commencement of our era. It undoubtedly represents views popularly prevailing about the epoch in which we are interested. The author not only relates the fall of the angels through love for the daughters of men, but gives the names of twenty-one of them and of their leaders; of whom Jejun was he who seduced the holy angels, and Ashbeël it was who gave them evil counsel and corrupted them.⁹ A third, Gadreël,¹⁰ was he who seduced Eve. He also taught to the children of men the use and manufacture of all murderous weapons, of coats of mail, shields, swords, and of all the implements of death. Another evil angel, named Pênêmuê, taught them many mysteries of

¹ There is much discussion as to the date of this book. It is variously ascribed to periods ranging from two centuries B.C., and even earlier, to one century after Christ.

² Tobit, vi. 7.

³ *Ib.*, iii. 7 f.; vi. 14.

⁴ *Ib.*, viii. 2 f.

⁵ *Ib.*, iii. 17.

⁶ *Ib.*, xii. 15. Origen also states that the archangel Michael presents the prayers of the saints to God (*Hom. xiv. in Num., Opp. ii.*, p. 323).

⁷ v. 14 f.

⁸ Tertullian, *De Cultu fem.*, i. 3.

⁹ Cap. lxix. i. ff., cf. vi.

¹⁰ In the extract preserved by George Syncellus in his *Chronography* (p. 11) the angel who taught the use of weapons of war, etc., is called Azæl or Azazel.

wisdom. He instructed men in the art of writing with paper (*χάρτης*) and ink, by means of which, the author remarks, many fall into sin even to the present day. Kaodejâ, another evil angel, taught the human race all the wicked practices of spirits and demons,¹ and also magic and exorcism.² The offspring of the fallen angels and of the daughters of men were giants, whose height was 3,000 ells;³ of these are the demons working evil upon earth.⁴ Azazel taught men various arts: the making of bracelets and ornaments; the use of cosmetics, the way to beautify the eyebrows; precious stones, and all dye-stuffs and metals; whilst other wicked angels instructed them in all kinds of pernicious knowledge.⁵ The elements and all the phenomena of nature are controlled and produced by the agency of angels. Uriel is the angel of thunder and earthquakes; Raphael, of the spirits of men; Raguel is the angel who executes vengeance on the world and the stars; Michael is set over the best of mankind—*i.e.*, over the people of Israel;⁶ Saraqâel, over the souls of the children of men who are misled by the spirits of sin; and Gabriel is over serpents and over Paradise, and over the Cherubim.⁷ Enoch is shown the mystery of all the operations of nature and the action of the elements, and he describes the spirits which guide them and control the thunder and lightning and the winds; the spirit of the seas, who curbs them with his might, or tosses them forth and scatters them through the mountains of the earth; the spirit of hoar frost, and the spirit of hail, and the spirit of snow. There are, in fact, special spirits set over every phenomenon of nature—frost, thaw, mist, rain, light, and so on.⁸ The heavens and the earth are filled with spirits. Raphael is the angel set over all the diseases and wounds of mankind, Gabriel over all powers, and Fanuel over the penitence and the hope of those who inherit eternal life.⁹ The decree for the destruction of the human race goes forth from the presence of the Lord because men know all the mysteries of the angels, all the evil works of Satan, and all the secret might and power of those who practise the art of magic, and the power of conjuring and such arts.¹⁰ The stars are represented as animated beings. Enoch sees seven stars bound together in space like great mountains, and flaming as with fire; and he inquires of the angel who leads him, on account of what sin they are so bound? Uriel informs him that they are stars which have transgressed the commands of the

¹ Enoch, c. lxix.² C. vii.³ C. vii. 2: one MS. has 300.⁴ C. xv.⁶ Cf. Daniel x. 13, 21; xii. 1.⁵ C. viii.⁸ Enoch, c. lx. 12 ff., cf. xli. xxxiv.⁷ C. xx.⁹ C. xl. 9 f., cf. xxxix.¹⁰ C. lxv. 6 ff.

Highest God, and they are thus bound until ten thousand worlds, the number of the days of their transgression, shall be accomplished.¹ The belief that sun, moon, and stars were living entities possessed of souls was generally held by the Jews at the beginning of our era, along with Greek philosophers, and we shall presently see it expressed by the Fathers. Philo Judæus considers the stars spiritual beings full of virtue and perfection,² and that to them is granted lordship over other heavenly bodies, not absolute, but as viceroys under the Supreme Being.³ We find a similar view regarding the nature of the stars expressed in the Apocalypse,⁴ and it constantly appears in the Talmud and Targums. An angel of the sun and moon is described in the *Ascensio Isaïæ*.⁵

We are able to obtain a full and minute conception of the belief regarding angels and demons and their influence over cosmical phenomena, as well as of other superstitions current amongst the Jews at the time of Jesus, from the Talmud, Targums, and other Rabbinical sources. We cannot, however, do more, here, than merely glance at these voluminous materials. The angels are perfectly pure spirits, without sin, and not visible to mortal eyes. When they come down to earth on any mission, they are clad in light and veiled in air. If, however, they remain longer than seven days on earth, they become so clogged with the earthly matter in which they have been immersed that they cannot again ascend to the upper heavens.⁶ Their multitude is innumerable,⁷ and new angels are every day created, who in succession praise God and make way for others.⁸ The expression, "host of heaven," is a common one in the Old Testament, and the idea was developed into a heavenly army. The first Gospel represents Jesus as speaking of "more than twelve legions of angels."⁹ Every angel has one particular duty to perform, and no more; thus of the three angels who appeared to Abraham, one was sent to announce that Sarah should have a son, the second to rescue Lot, and the third to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.¹⁰ The

¹ C. xxi., cf. xviii. 13 f.

² *De Mundo opificio*, § 48; *De Gigantibus*, § 2, cf. *De Somniis*, i., § 4 f., § 22.

³ *De Monarchia*, i., § 1.

⁴ Rev. i. 20, iii. 1, iv. 5, ix. 1, etc.

⁵ C. iv. 18. This work referred to by Origen (*Ep. ad Africanum*), Epiphanius (*Hær.* xl. 2, lxvii. 3), Jerome (in *Isaïæ*, lxiv. 4), and others (cf. Fabricius, *Cod. Vet. Test.*, i., p. 1086 ff.), as Ἀναβατικὸν Ἠσαίου, is dated variously from the middle of the first to the beginning of the third century. The work, long lost, was discovered and published by Lawrence, in 1819.

⁶ *Sohar*, *Genesis*, p. 124, p. 266; *Pirke Elieser*, xlvi.; Eisenmenger, *Entd. Jud.*, ii., p. 387 f.; Gfrörer, *Das Jahrh. d. Heils*, i., p. 366.

⁷ *Hieros. Targ. Exod.*, xii. 12, xxxiii. 23; Deut. xxxiv. 5, etc., etc.

⁸ *Chagigah Bab.*, p. 14, i. 2; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 371 ff.

⁹ Matt. xxvi. 53.

¹⁰ *Hieros. Targ. Genes.*, xvii. 2; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 363 f.

angels serve God in the administration of the universe, and to special angels are assigned the different parts of nature. "There is not a thing in the world, not even a little herb, over which there is not an angel set, and everything happens according to the command of these appointed angels."¹ It will be remembered that the agency of angels is frequently introduced in the Old Testament, and still more so in the Septuagint version, by alterations of the text. One notable case of such agency may be referred to, where the pestilence which is sent to punish David for numbering the people is said to be caused by an angel, whom David even sees. The Lord is represented as repenting of the evil, when the angel was stretching forth his hand against Jerusalem, and bidding him stay his hand after the angel had destroyed seventy thousand men by the pestilence.² This theory of disease has prevailed until comparatively recent times. The names of many of the superintending angels are given—as, for instance: Jehuel is set over fire, Michael over water, Jechiel over wild beasts, and Anpiel over birds. Over cattle Haniel is appointed, and Samniel over created things moving in the waters, and over the face of the earth; Messannahel over reptiles, Deliel over fish. Ruchiel is set over the winds, Gabriel over thunder and also over fire, and over the ripening of fruit; Nuriel over hail, Makturiel over rocks, Alpiel over fruit-bearing trees, Saroel over those which do not bear fruit, and Sandalfon over the human race; and under each of these there are subordinate angels.³ It was believed that there were two angels of Death, one for those who died out of the land of Israel, who was an evil angel, called Samaël (and at other times Satan, Asmodeus, etc.), and the other, who presided over the dead of the land of Israel, the holy angel Gabriel; and under these there was a host of evil spirits and angels.⁴ We shall presently see how general this belief regarding angels was amongst the Fathers, but it is also expressed in the New Testament. In the Apocalypse there appears an angel who has power over fire,⁵ and in another place four angels have power to hurt the earth and the sea.⁶ The angels were likewise

¹ *Jalkut Chadasch*, p. 147, 3; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 376 ff.; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 369.

² 2 Sam. xxiv. 15 f.

³ *Berith Minucha*, p. 37, 1; cf. *Tract Pesachim*, p. 118, 1, 2; *Sanhedrin*, 95, 2; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 378 ff.; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 369. The Targum upon 1 Kings xix. 11, 12, reads: "A host of the angels of the wind, a host of the angels of commotion, a host of the angels of fire; and after the host of the angels of fire, the voice of the silent singers." Lightfoot, *Horæ Heb. et. Talm.*, Works, xii., p. 35.

⁴ *Bava Mezia*, 36, 1; *Succah*, 53, 1; *Bava Bathra*, 16, 1; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, i., p. 821 f., p. 854 ff.; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xii., p. 428, p. 507 f.; Schoettgen, *Horæ Heb. et. Talm.*, p. 935.

⁵ C. xiv. 18.

⁶ C. vii. 2, cf. ix. 11; xix. 17.

the instructors of men, and communicated knowledge to the Patriarchs. The angel Gabriel taught Joseph the seventy languages of the earth.¹ It appears, however, that there was one language—the Syriac—which the angels do not understand, and for this reason men were not permitted to pray for things needful in that tongue.² Angels are appointed as princes over the seventy nations of the world; but the Jews consider the angels set over Gentile nations merely demons.³ The Septuagint translation of Deuteronomy xxxii. 8 introduces the statement into the Old Testament. Instead of the Most High, when he divided to the nations their inheritance, setting the bounds of the people “according to the number of the children of Israel,” the passage becomes, “according to the number of the angels of God” (κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων θεοῦ). The number of the nations was fixed at seventy, the number of the souls who went down into Egypt.⁴ The Jerusalem Targum on Genesis xi. 7, 8, reads as follows: “God spake to the seventy angels which stand before him: Come, let us go down and confound their language that they may not understand each other. And the word of the Lord appeared there (at Babel), with the seventy angels, according to the seventy nations, and each had the language of the people which was allotted to him, and the record of the writing in his hand, and scattered the nations from thence over the whole earth in seventy languages, so that the one did not understand what the other said.”⁵ Michael was the angel of the people of Israel,⁶ and he is always set in the highest place amongst the angels, and often called the High Priest of Heaven.⁷ It was believed that the angels of the nations fought in heaven when their allotted peoples made war on earth. We see an allusion to this in the Book of Daniel,⁸ and in the Apocalypse there is “war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.”⁹ The Jews of the time of Jesus not only held that there were angels set over the nations, but also that each

¹ *Tract, Sotah*, 33, 1; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 366 ff.; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 365, p. 374 f.

² *Beracoth*, c. 2; *Bab. Schabbath*, 12, 2; *Sotah*, 33, 1; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 22; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, i., p. 675 f.; ii., p. 392 f.

³ Eisenmenger, *ib.*, i., p. 805 ff., p. 816 f.

⁴ Gen. xlv. 27, Exod. i. 5, Deut. x. 22. Seventy disciples were, therefore, chosen to preach the Gospel, Luke x. 1 f. Of course, we need not here speak of the import of this number.

⁵ Cf. *Pirke Elieser*, xxiv.; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 370 f.; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, i., p. 810.

⁶ Cf. Daniel x. 21.

⁷ *Bab. Menacoth*, 110, 1; *Beracoth*, 4, 2; *Sohar, Genes.*, fol. 17, col. 66; *Thosaphthah Chollin*, ii. 6; *Jalkut Rubeni*, 80, 1, 92, 4; *Sevachim*, 62, 1; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 371 f.; Schoettgen, *ib.*, p. 1219 ff.

⁸ X. 10 ff., and more especially verse 13.

⁹ C. xii. 7.

individual had a guardian angel.¹ This belief appears in several places in the New Testament. For instance, Jesus is represented as saying of the children: "For I say unto you that their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."² Again, in the Acts of the Apostles, when Peter is delivered from prison by an angel and comes to the house of his friend, they will not believe the maid who had opened the gate and seen him, but say: "It is his angel" (ὁ ἄγγελος αὐτοῦ ἐστίν).³ The passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews will likewise be remembered where it is said of the angels: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth for ministry on account of them who shall be heirs of salvation."⁴ There was at the same time a singular belief that when any person went into the private closet the guardian angel remained at the door till he came out again, and in the Talmud a prayer is given for strength and help under the circumstances, and that the guardian angel may wait while the person is there. The reason why the angel does not enter is that such places are haunted by demons.⁵

The belief in demons at the time of Jesus was equally emphatic and comprehensive, and we need scarcely mention that the New Testament is full of references to them.⁶ They are in the air, on earth, in the bodies of men and animals, and even at the bottom of the sea.⁷ They are the offspring of the fallen angels who loved the daughters of men.⁸ They have wings like the angels, and can fly from one end of heaven to another; they obtain a knowledge of the future, like the angels, by listening behind the veil of the Temple of God in heaven.⁹ Their number is infinite. The earth is so full of them that if man had power to see he could not exist on account of them; there are more demons than men, and they are about as close as the earth thrown up out of a newly-made grave.¹⁰ It is stated that each man has 10,000 demons at his right hand and 1,000 on his left, and the passage continues: "The crush on the Sabbath in the synagogue arises from them, also the

¹ *Hieros. Targ. Genes.*, xxxiii. 10, xlviii. 16.

² Matt. xviii. 10.

³ Acts xii. 15.

⁴ Heb. i. 14.

⁵ *Hieros Beracoth*, ix. 5; *Bab. Beracoth*, 60, 1; *Gittin*, 70, 1; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 449 f.; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 374 f.; Moïse Schwab, *Traité des Berakhoth*, 1871, p. 169.

⁶ Passing over the synoptic Gospels, in which references to demons abound, cf. 1 Cor. x. 20, 21; James ii. 19; 1 Tim. iv. 1; Eph. ii. 2, cf. iv. 12; Rev. ix. 20, xvi. 14, xviii. 2.

⁷ Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 437 f.

⁸ *Ib.*, i., p. 380 f.

⁹ *Bab. Chagigah*, 16, 1; Schoettgen, *ib.*, p. 1049; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 415.

¹⁰ *Beracoth*, 6, 1; *Sohar, Genes.*, p. 171; *ib.*, *Numbers*, p. 291; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 446, p. 461 f.; Moïse Schwab, *Traité des Berakhoth*, 1871, p. 239.

dresses of the Rabbins become so soon old and torn through their rubbing; in like manner they cause the tottering of the feet. He who wishes to discover these spirits must take sifted ashes and strew them about his bed, and in the morning he will perceive their footprints upon them like a cock's tread. If anyone wish to see them, he must take the afterbirth of a black cat which has been littered by a first-born black cat, whose mother was also a first-birth, burn and reduce it to powder, and put some of it in his eyes, and he will see them."¹ Sometimes demons assume the form of a goat. Evil spirits fly chiefly during the darkness, for they are children of night.² For this reason the Talmud states that men are forbidden to greet anyone by night, lest it might be a devil,³ or to go out alone even by day, but much more by night, into solitary places.⁴ It was likewise forbidden for any man to sleep alone in a house, because anyone so doing would be seized by the she-devil Lilith and die.⁵ Further, no man should drink water by night on account of the demon Schafriri, the angel of blindness.⁶ An evil spirit descended on anyone going into a cemetery by night.⁷ A necromancer is defined as one who fasts and lodges at night amongst tombs, in order that the evil spirit may come upon him.⁸ Demons, however, take more especial delight in foul and offensive places, and an evil spirit inhabits every private closet in the world.⁹ Demons haunt deserted places, ruins, graves, and certain kinds of trees.¹⁰ We find indications of these superstitions throughout the Gospels. The possessed are represented as dwelling among the tombs and being driven by the unclean spirits into the wilderness, and the demons can find no rest in clean places.¹¹ Demons also frequented springs and fountains.¹² The

¹ *Bab. Beracoth*, 6, 1. In the *Tract. Gittin* (68, 2) of the Talmud, Asmodeus is represented as coming to Solomon's wives by night with slippers on to conceal his cock's feet. Eisenmenger, *ib.*, i., p. 356, p. 424 f.; ii., p. 445; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., pp. 407, 409; Moïse Schwab, *Traité des Berakhoth*, 1871, p. 239 f.

² *Sohar*, *Exod.*, f. 67, col 267; Schoettgen, *ib.*, p. 316; cf. *Ephes.* vi. 12.

³ *Sanhedrin*, 44, 1; *Megillah*, 3, 1; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 408; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 452.

⁴ *Sohar*, *Genes.*, 387; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 451 f.

⁵ *Schabbath*, 151, 2.

⁶ *Pesachim*, 112, 1; *Avoda Sarah*, 12, 2; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, i., p. 426 f.; ii., p. 452.

⁷ *Chagigah*, 3, 2; *Trumoth*, 40, 2; *Bava Bathra*, 100, 2; *Bab. Sanhedrin*, 65, 2; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., pp. 160, 170, xii., pp. 134, 349; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 408.

⁸ *Bab. Sanhedrin*, 65, 2; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 170; xii., p. 134 f.

⁹ *Bab. Schabbath*, 67, 1; *Bab. Beracoth*, 62, 1; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 449 f. Schwab, *Traité des Berakhoth*, p. 495 f.

¹⁰ *Bab. Beracoth*, 3, 1; *Pesachim*, iii. 2; *Targ. Hieros.* Deut. xxx. 10; Schwab, *ib.*, p. 227.

¹¹ *Matt.* viii. 28, xii. 43; *Mark* v. 3, 5; *Luke* viii. 27, 29, xi. 24 f.

¹² *Vajicra Rabba*, § 24; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xii., p. 282.

episode of the angel who was said to descend at certain seasons and trouble the water of the pool of Bethesda, so that he who first stepped in was cured of whatever disease he had, may be mentioned here in passing, although the passage is not found in some of the older MSS. of the fourth Gospel,¹ and it is argued by some that it is a later interpolation. There were demons who hurt those who did not wash their hands before meat. "Shibta is an evil spirit which sits upon men's hands in the night, and if any touch his food with unwashed hands that spirit sits upon that food, and there is danger from it."² The demon Asmodeus is frequently called the king of the devils,³ and it was believed that he tempted people to apostatise; he it was who enticed Noah into his drunkenness, and led Solomon into sin.⁴ He is represented as alternately ascending to study in the school of the heavenly Jerusalem, and descending to study in the school of the earth.⁵ The injury of the human race in every possible way was believed to be the chief delight of evil spirits. The Talmud and other Rabbinical writings are full of references to demoniacal possession; but we need not enter into details upon this point, as the New Testament itself presents sufficient evidence regarding it. Not only one evil spirit could enter into a body, but many took possession of the same individual. There are many instances mentioned in the Gospels, such as Mary Magdalene, "out of whom went seven demons" (*δαιμόνια ἑπτὰ*),⁶ and the man whose name was Legion, because "many demons" (*δαιμόνια πολλὰ*) were entered into him.⁷ Demons likewise entered into the bodies of animals, and in the narrative to which we have just referred the demons, on being expelled from the man, request that they may be allowed to enter into the herd of swine, which, being permitted, "the demons went out of the man into the swine, and the herd ran violently down the cliff into the lake, and were drowned,"⁸

¹ John v. 3, 4. The authenticity is fully discussed in *S. R.*, complete ed., vol. ii., p. 420 f.

² *Bab. Taanith*, 20, 2; *Sohar, Bereschith*; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 215.

³ *Gittin*, 68, 1.

⁴ Lightfoot, *ib.*, xii., p. 111.

⁵ *Gittin*, 68, 1; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, i., p. 351. Schoettgen, *ib.*, p. 1233, § iv. Schoettgen gives minute details from the Talmud, etc., regarding the *Academia Celestis*, its constitution, and the questions discussed in it, pp. 1230-1236. The representation of Satan in the book of Job will not be forgotten.

⁶ Luke viii. 2; cf. Mark xvi. 9.

⁷ Luke viii. 30 ff. The name Legion does not only express a great number, but to the word was attached the idea of an unclean company, for a Legion passing from place to place and entering a house rendered it "unclean." The reason was: "For there is no legion which hath not some carcaphelion" (*καρκαφαλὴ*); that is to say, the skin of the head pulled off from a dead person and used for enchantments. (Cf. *Chollin*, 1231; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 394.)

⁸ Luke viii. 33.

the evil spirits, as usual, taking pleasure only in the destruction and injury of man and beast. Besides "possession," all the diseases of men and animals were ascribed to the action of the devil and of demons.¹ In the Gospels, for instance, the woman with a spirit of infirmity, who was bowed together and could not lift herself up, is described as "bound by Satan," although the case was not one of demoniacal possession.²

As might be expected from the universality of the belief in demons and their influence over the human race, the Jews at the time of Jesus occupied themselves much with the means of conjuring them. "There was hardly any people in the whole world," we have already heard from a great Hebrew scholar, "that more used, or were more fond of, amulets, charms, mutterings, exorcisms, and all kinds of enchantments."³ Schoettgen bears similar testimony: "*Cæterum judæos magicis artibus admodum deditos esse, notissimum est.*"⁴ All competent scholars are agreed upon this point, and the Talmud and Rabbinical writings are full of it. The exceeding prevalence of such arts alone proves the existence of the grossest ignorance and superstition. There are elaborate rules in the Talmud with regard to dreams, both as to how they are to be obtained and how interpreted.⁵ Fasts were enjoined in order to secure good dreams, and these fasts were not only observed by the ignorant, but also by the principal Rabbins, and they were permitted even on the Sabbath, which was unlawful in other cases.⁶ Indeed, the interpretation of dreams became a public profession.⁷ It would be impossible within our limits to convey an adequate idea of the general superstition prevalent amongst Jews regarding things and actions lucky and unlucky, or the minute particulars in regard to every common act prescribed for safety against demons and evil influences of all kinds. Nothing was considered indifferent or too trifling, and the danger from the most trivial movements or omissions to which men were supposed to be exposed from the malignity of evil spirits was believed to be

¹ *Bab. Joma*, 83, 2; *Bab. Gittin*, 67, 2; *Hieros. Schabbath*, 14, 3; *Mischna, Gittin*, vii. 1; *Gemara*, 67, 2; *Sohar, Genes.*, 42; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 411 f. Eisenmenger, *ib.*, ii., p. 454; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 237 f., xii., p. 134 f. Shibta, whom we have already met with, was said to take hold of the necks of infants, and to dry up and contract their nerves. Aruch, in *Shibta*; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 237.

² Luke xiii. 11 ff.; cf. Mark ix. 25; Matt. xii. 22, ix. 32; Luke xi. 14.

³ Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 208.

⁴ *Horæ Hebr. et Talm.*, p. 474; cf. Edzard, *Avoda Sarah*, ii., pp. 311-356; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 143.

⁵ *Bab. Beracoth*, 56 ff.; Schwab, *Traité des Berakhoth*, p. 457 ff.

⁶ *Bab. Schabbath*, 11, 1; *Beracoth*, 14, 1; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 299 f., p. 163.

⁷ *Bab. Beracoth*, 55, 2, 56, 1; *Maasar Sheni*, 52, 2, 3; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 300; Schwab, *Traité des Berakhoth*, p. 457 ff.

great.¹ Amulets, consisting of roots, or pieces of paper with charms written upon them, were hung round the neck of the sick and considered efficacious for their cure. Charms, mutterings, and spells were commonly said over wounds, against unlucky meetings, to make people sleep, to heal diseases, and to avert enchantments.² The Talmud gives forms of enchantments against mad dogs, for instance, against the demon of blindness, and the like, as well as formulæ for averting the evil eye, and mutterings over diseases.³ So common was the practice of sorcery and magic that the Talmud enjoins "that the senior who is chosen into the council ought to be skilled in the arts of astrologers, jugglers, diviners, sorcerers, etc., that he may be able to judge of those who are guilty of the same."⁴ Numerous cases are recorded of persons destroyed by means of sorcery.⁵ The Jewish women were particularly addicted to sorcery and, indeed, the Talmud declares that they had generally fallen into it.⁶ The New Testament bears abundant testimony to the prevalence of magic and exorcism at the time at which its books were written. In the Gospels, Jesus is represented as arguing with the pharisees, who accuse him of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils: "If I by Beelzebub cast out the demons (τὰ δαιμόνια), by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, let them be your judges."⁷

The thoroughness and universality of the Jewish popular belief in demons and evil spirits and in the power of magic is exhibited in the ascription to Solomon, the monarch in whom the greatness and glory of the nation attained its culminating point, of the character of the powerful magician. The most effectual forms of invocation and exorcism and the most potent spells of magic were said to have been composed by him, and thus the grossest superstition of the nation acquired the sanction of their wisest king. Rabbinical writings are never weary of enlarging upon the magical power and knowledge of Solomon. He was represented as not only king of the whole earth, but also as reigning over devils and evil spirits, and having the power of expelling them from the bodies of men and animals, and also of delivering people to them.⁸

¹ See, for instance, *Bab. Berakhoth*, 51, 1; Schwab, *Traité des Berakhoth*, p. 433 f.

² Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 301 f.

³ See references, Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 301; *Bab. Beracoth*, 57, 2, etc.; Schwab, *ib.*, p. 302, p. 456 f., etc., etc.

⁴ Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 301.

⁵ *Hieros. Schab.*, 14, 3; *Sanhedr.*, 18, 3; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 301 f.

⁶ *Hieros. Sanhedr.*, 23, 3; *Bab. Sanhedr.*, 44, 2; *Bab. Beracoth*, 53, 1; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 302; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 413; Schwab, *ib.*, p. 444.

⁷ Matt. xii. 27; cf. Luke xi. 19, ix. 49; Mark ix. 38; Acts xix. 13 ff.

⁸ *Gittin*, 68, 1, 2; *Succah*, 53, 1; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, i., pp. 355, 358; ii., pp. 416, 440; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xii., p. 428.

It was, indeed, believed that the two demons Asa and Asael taught Solomon all wisdom and all arts.¹ The Talmud relates many instances of his power over evil spirits, and, amongst others, how he made them assist in building the Temple. Solomon desired to have the help of the worm Schamir in preparing the stones for the sacred building, and he conjured up a devil and a she-devil to inform him where Schamir was to be found. They referred him to Asmodeus, whom the King craftily captured, and by whom he was informed that Schamir is under the jurisdiction of the Prince of the Seas; and Asmodeus further told him how he might be secured. By his means the Temple was built, but, from the moment it was destroyed, Schamir for ever disappeared.² It was likewise believed that one of the Chambers of the second Temple was built by the magician called Parvah, by means of magic.³ The Talmud narrates many stories of miracles performed by various Rabbins.⁴

The Jewish historian Josephus informs us that, among other gifts, God bestowed upon King Solomon knowledge of the way to expel demons, an art which is useful and salutary for mankind. He composed incantations by which diseases are cured, and he left behind him forms of exorcism by which demons may be so effectually expelled that they never return—a method of cure, Josephus adds, which is of great efficacy to his own day. He himself had seen a countryman of his own, named Eliezer, release people possessed of devils in the presence of the Emperor Vespasian and his sons, and of his army. He put a ring containing one of the roots prescribed by Solomon to the nose of the demoniac, and drew the demon out by his nostrils; and, in the name of Solomon, and reciting one of his incantations, he adjured it to return no more. In order to demonstrate to the spectators that he had the power to cast out devils, Eliezer was accustomed to set a vessel full of water a little way off, and he commanded the demon as he left the body of the man to overturn it, by which means, says Josephus, the skill and wisdom of Solomon were made very manifest.⁵ Jewish Rabbins generally were known as powerful exorcisers, practising the art according to the formulæ of their great monarch. Justin Martyr reproaches his Jewish oppo-

¹ Eisenmenger, *ib.*, i., p. 361 f.

² *Gittin*, 68, 1, 2; *Sotah*, 48, 2; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, i., p. 350 ff.; Gfrörer, *ib.*, i., p. 414 f.; Buxtorf, *Lexic. Talmud.*, p. 2455. Moses is also said to have made use of Schamir. Fabricius, *Cod. Vet. Test.*, ii., p. 119.

³ Gloss on *Middoth*, cap. 5, hal. 3; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 301.

⁴ *Bava Mezia*, 59, 1, 2; *Bab. Beracoth*, 33, 34, 54, 1; *Hieros. Sanhedr.*, 25, 4; *Bab. Taanith*, 24; *Juchas*, 20, 1; 56, 2; Lightfoot, *ib.*, xi., p. 301 f.; Eisenmenger, *ib.*, i., 14 f.; Schwab, *ib.*, p. 358 ff., p. 448 f.

⁵ *Antiq.*, viii., 2, § 5.

nent, Tryphon, with the fact that his countrymen use the same art as the Gentiles, and exorcise with fumigations and charms (κατάδεσμοι), and he shows the common belief in demoniacal influence when he asserts that, while Jewish exorcists cannot overcome demons by such means, or even by exorcising them in the name of their kings, prophets, or patriarchs, though he admits that they might do so if they adjured them in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yet Christians at once subdued demons by exorcising them in the name of the Son of God.¹ The Jew and the Christian were quite agreed that demons were to be exorcised, and merely differed as to the formula of exorcism. Josephus gives an account of a root potent against evil spirits. It is called Baaras, and is flame-coloured, and in the evening sends out flashes like lightning. It is certain death to touch it, except under peculiar conditions. One mode of securing it is to dig down till the smaller part of the root is exposed, and then to attach the root to a dog's tail. When the dog tries to follow its master from the place, and pulls violently, the root is plucked up, and may then be safely handled; but the dog instantly dies, as the man would have done had he plucked it up himself. When the root is brought to sick people, it at once expels demons.² According to Josephus, demons are the spirits of the wicked dead; they enter into the bodies of the living, who die unless succour be speedily obtained.³ This theory, however, was not general, demons being commonly considered the offspring of the fallen angels and of the daughters of men.

The Jewish historian gives a serious account of the preternatural portents which warned the Jews of the approaching fall of Jerusalem, and he laments the infatuation of the people, who disregarded these Divine denunciations. A star in the shape of a sword, and also a comet, stood over the doomed city for the space of a whole year. Then, at the feast of unleavened bread, before the rebellion of the Jews which preceded the war, at the ninth hour of the night, a great light shone round the altar and the Temple, so that for half an hour it seemed as though it were brilliant daylight. At the same festival other supernatural warnings were given. A heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the Temple; moreover, the eastern gate of the inner court of the Temple, which was of brass, and so ponderous that twenty men had much difficulty in closing it, and which was fastened by heavy bolts descending deep into the solid stone floor, was seen to open of its own accord, about the sixth hour of the night. The ignorant considered some of

¹ *Dial. c. Tryph.*, 85; cf. *Apol.*, ii., 6; Acts xix., 13 ff.

² *De Bello Jud.*, viii., 6, § 3.

³ *Ib.*, vii., 6, § 3.

these events good omens, but the priests interpreted them as portents of evil. Another prodigious phenomenon occurred, which Josephus supposes would be considered incredible were it not reported by those who saw it, and were the subsequent events not of sufficient importance to merit such portents: before sunset, chariots and troops of soldiers in armour were seen among the clouds, moving about, and surrounding cities. And further, at the feast of Pentecost, as the priests were entering the inner court of the Temple to perform their sacred duties, they felt an earthquake, and heard a great noise, and then the sound as of a great multitude saying, "Let us remove hence."¹ There is not a shadow of doubt in the mind of Josephus as to the reality of any of these wonders.

If we turn to patristic literature, we find everywhere the same superstitions and the same theories of angelic agency and demoniacal interference in cosmical phenomena. According to Justin Martyr, after God had made the world and duly regulated the elements and the rotation of the seasons, he committed man and all things under heaven to the care of angels. Some of these angels, however, proved unworthy of this charge and, led away by love of the daughters of men, begat children, who are the demons who have corrupted the human race, partly by magical writings (*διὰ μαγικῶν γραφῶν*) and partly by fears and punishments, and who have introduced wars, murders, and other evils among them, which are ignorantly ascribed by poets to God himself.² He considers that demoniacs are possessed and tortured by the souls of the wicked dead,³ and he represents evil spirits as watching to seize the soul at death.⁴ The food of the angels is manna.⁵ The angels, says Clement of Alexandria, serve God in the administration of earthly affairs.⁶ The host of angels and of gods (*θεῶν*) is placed under subjection to the Logos.⁷ Presiding angels are distributed over nations and cities, and perhaps are also deputed to individuals,⁸ and it is by their agency, either visible or invisible, that God gives all good things.⁹ He accuses the Greeks of plagiarising their miracles from the Bible, and he argues that, if certain powers do move the winds and distribute showers, they are agents subject to God.¹⁰ Clement affirms that the Son gave philosophy to the Greeks by means of the inferior angels,¹¹ and argues that it is absurd to attribute it to the devil.¹² Theophilus

¹ *De Bello Jud.*, vi., 5, § 3.

² *Apol.*, ii., 5; cf. *Apol.*, i., 5, 14.

⁴ *Dial. c. Tryph.*, 105.

⁶ *Stromata*, vii., 1, § 3.

⁸ *Strom.*, vii., 2, § 6; vi., 17, § 157.

¹⁰ *Strom.*, vi., 3, § 30.

¹² *Strom.*, vi., 17, § 159.

³ *Apol.*, i., 18.

⁵ *Dial.*, 57, cf. 131.

⁷ *Strom.*, vii., 2, § 5.

⁹ *Strom.*, vi., 17, § 161.

¹¹ *Strom.*, vii., 2, § 6.

of Antioch, on the other hand, says that the Greek poets were inspired by demons.¹ Athenagoras states, as one of the principal points of belief among Christians, that a multitude of angels and ministers are distributed and appointed by the Logos to occupy themselves about the elements and the heavens and the universe and the things in it, and the regulating of the whole.² For it is the duty of the angels to exercise providence over all that God has created, so that God may have the universal care of the whole, but the several parts be ministered to by the angels appointed over them. There is freedom of will amongst the angels as among human beings, and some of the angels abused their trust, and fell through love of the daughters of men, of whom were begotten those who are called giants.³ These angels who have fallen from heaven busy themselves about the air and the earth; and the souls of the giants,⁴ which are the demons that roam about the world, work evil according to their respective natures.⁵ There are powers which exercise dominion over matter, and by means of it, and more especially one who is opposed to God. This Prince of matter exerts authority and control in opposition to the good designed by God.⁶ Demons are greedy for sacrificial odours and the blood of the victims, which they lick, and they influence the multitude to idolatry by inspiring thoughts and visions which seem to come from idols and statues.⁷ According to Tatian, God made everything which is good, but the wickedness of demons perverts the productions of nature for bad purposes, and the evil in these is due to demons and not to God.⁸ None of the demons have bodies—they are spiritual, like fire or air, and can only be seen by those in whom the Spirit of God dwells. They attack men by means of lower forms of matter, and come to them whenever they are diseased; and sometimes they cause disorders of the body, but when they are struck by the power of the word of God they flee in terror, and the sick person is healed.⁹ Various kinds of roots and the relations of bone and sinew are the material elements through which demons work.¹⁰ Some of those who are called gods by the Greeks, but are in reality demons,

¹ *Ad Autolycum*, ii. 8. Theophilus sees the punishment of the serpent in the repulsive way in which he crawls on his belly and eats the dust. This and the pains of women in childbirth are proofs of the truth of the account of the fall in Genesis. *Ad Autol.*, ii. 23.

² *Legatio pro Christ.*, x.; cf. xxiv.

³ *Legatio pro Christ.*, xiv.

⁴ It is said in the *Clementine Recognitions* that the giants were born in the ninth generation of the human race, and that their bones are still preserved in some places; i. 29. Cf. Clement, *Hom.* viii. 15.

⁵ *Legatio pro Christ.*, xxv.

⁶ *Ib.*, xxiv., xxv.

⁷ *Ib.*, xxvi., xxvii.

⁸ *Orat. ad Græcos*, 12.

⁹ *Ib.*, 16.

¹⁰ *Ib.*, 17.

possess the bodies of certain men, and then, by publicly leaving them, they destroy the disease they themselves had created, and the sick are restored to health.¹ Demons, says Cyprian of Carthage, lurk under consecrated statues, and inspire false oracles and control the lots and omens.² They enter into human bodies and feign various maladies in order to induce men to offer sacrifices for their recovery, that they may gorge themselves with the fumes, and then they heal them. They are really the authors of the miracles attributed to heathen deities.³

Tertullian enters into minute details regarding angels and demons. Demons are the offspring of the fallen angels, and their work is the destruction of the human race. They inflict diseases and other painful calamities upon our bodies, and lead astray our souls. From their wonderful subtleness and tenuity they find their way into both parts of our composition. Their spirituality enables them to do much harm to men, for, being invisible and impalpable, they appear rather in their effects than in their action. They blight the apples and the grain while in the flower as by some mysterious poison in the breeze, and kill them in the bud, or nip them before they are ripe, as though in some inexpressible way the tainted air poured forth its pestilential breath. In the same way demons and angels breathe into the soul and excite its corruptions, and especially mislead men by inducing them to sacrifice to false deities, in order that they may thus obtain their peculiar food of fumes of flesh and blood. Every spirit, whether angel or demon, has wings; therefore, they are everywhere in a moment. The whole world is but one place to them, and all that takes place anywhere they can know and report with equal facility. Their swiftness is believed to be divine because their substance is unknown, and thus they seek to be considered the authors of effects which they merely report, as, indeed, they sometimes are of the evil, but never of the good. They gather intimations of the future from hearing the prophets read aloud, and set themselves up as rivals of the true God by stealing his divinations. From inhabiting the air, and from their proximity to the stars and commerce with the clouds, they know the preparation of celestial phenomena, and promise beforehand the rains which they already feel coming. They are very kind in reference to the cure of diseases, Tertullian ironically says, for they first make people ill, and then, by way of performing a miracle, they prescribe remedies either novel or contrary to common experience, and, removing the cause, they

¹ *Ib.*, 18; cf. Tertullian, *Apol.*, § 22; Origen, *Contra Cels.*, viii. 31 f.

² Cf. Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, §§ 12, 13; Clem., *Recog.*, iv. 19 ff.

³ Cyprian, *De Idol. Vastitate*, § 7; cf. Minutius Felix, *Octavius*, § 27; Tertullian, *Apol.*, 22; Eusebius, *Præp. Evang.*, vii. 16.

are believed to have healed the sick.¹ If anyone possessed by a demon be brought before a tribunal, Tertullian affirms that the evil spirit, when ordered by a Christian, will at once confess that he is a demon.² The fallen angels were the discoverers of astrology and magic.³ Unclean spirits hover over waters in imitation of the brooding (*gestatio*) of the Holy Spirit in the beginning, as, for instance, over dark fountains and solitary streams and cisterns in baths and dwelling-houses and similar places, which are said to carry one off (*rapere*)—that is to say, by the force of the evil spirit.⁴ The fallen angels disclosed to the world unknown material substances and various arts such as metallurgy, the properties of herbs, incantations, and interpretation of the stars; and to women specially they revealed all the secrets of personal adornment.⁵ There is scarcely any man who is not attended by a demon; and it is well known that untimely and violent deaths which are attributed to accidents are really caused by demons.⁶ Those who go to theatres may become specially accessible to demons. There is the instance, the Lord is witness (*domino teste*), of the woman who went to a theatre and came back possessed by a demon, and, on being cast out, the evil spirit replied that he had a right to act as he did, having found her within his limits. There was another case, also well known, of a woman who at night, after having been to a theatre, had a vision of a winding sheet (*lintheum*), and heard the name of the tragedian whom she had seen mentioned with reprobation, and five days after the woman was dead.⁷ Origen attributes augury and divination through animals to demons. In his opinion, certain demons, offspring of the Titans or giants, who haunt the grosser parts of bodies and the unclean places of the earth, and who, from not having earthly bodies, have some power of divining the future, occupy themselves with this. They secretly enter the bodies of the more brutal and savage animals, and force them to make flights or indications of divination to lead men away from God. They have a special leaning to birds and serpents, and even to foxes and wolves, because the demons act better through these in consequence of an apparent analogy in wickedness between them.⁸ It is for this reason that Moses, who had either been taught by God what was similar in the nature of animals and their kindred demons, or had discovered it himself, prohibited as unclean the particular birds and animals most used for divination. Therefore, each kind of demon seems to have an affinity

¹ Tertullian, *Apol.*, § 22; cf. 23, *ad Scapulam*, § 2.

² *Apol.*, § 23.

³ *De Idolotria*, § 9; *De Cultu Fem.*, i., § 2.

⁴ *De Baptismo*, § 5.

⁵ *De Cultu Fem.*, i., §§ 2, 10; Cf. Commodianus, *Instit.*, § 3; Lactantius, *Instit. Div.*, ii. 16; Clem. *Hom.*, viii. 14.

⁶ *De Anima*, § 57.

⁷ *De Spectaculis*, § 26.

⁸ *Contra Cels.*, iv. 92; cf. viii. 11.

with a certain kind of animal. They are so wicked that demons even assume the bodies of weasels to foretell the future.¹ They feed on the blood and odour of the victims sacrificed in idol temples.² The spirits of the wicked dead wander about sepulchres, and sometimes for ages haunt particular houses and other places.³ The prayers of Christians drive demons out of men, and from places where they have taken up their abode, and even sometimes from the bodies of animals, which are frequently injured by them.⁴ In reply to a statement of Celsus that we cannot eat bread or fruit, or drink wine or even water, without eating and drinking with demons, and that the very air we breathe is received from demons, and that, consequently, we cannot inhale without receiving air from the demons who are set over the air,⁵ Origen maintains, on the contrary, that the angels of God, and not demons, have the superintendence of such natural phenomena, and have been appointed to communicate all these blessings. Not demons but angels have been set over the fruits of the earth and over the birth of animals and over all things necessary for our race.⁶ Scripture forbids the eating of things strangled, because the blood is still in them—and blood, and more especially the fumes of it, is said to be the food of demons. If we ate strangled animals, we might have demons feeding with us;⁷ but, in Origen's opinion, a man only eats and drinks with demons when he eats the flesh of idol sacrifices, and drinks the wine poured out in honour of demons.⁸ Jerome states the common belief that the air is filled with demons.⁹ Chrysostom says that angels are everywhere in the atmosphere.¹⁰

Not content, however, with peopling earth and air with angels and demons, the Fathers also shared the opinion, common to Jews¹¹ and heathen philosophers, that the heavenly bodies were animated beings. After fully discussing the question, with much reference to Scripture, Origen determines that sun, moon, and stars are living and rational beings, illuminated with the light of knowledge by the wisdom which is the reflection (*ἀπαύγασμα*) of eternal light. They have free will and, as it would appear from a passage in Job (xxv. 5), they are not only liable to sin, but actually not pure from the uncleanness of it. Origen is careful to explain that this has not reference merely to their physical part, but to the spiritual; and he proceeds to discuss whether their souls came into existence at the same time with their bodies, or existed

¹ *Ib.*, iv. 93; cf. iii. 29, 35, 36, v. 5; Barnabas, *Epist.*, x.; Clemens Al., *Pedag.*, ii. 10.

² *Contra Cels.*, vii. 35, cf. 5, viii. 61, cf. 60.

³ *Ib.*, vii. 5.

⁴ *Contra Cels.*, vii. 67.

⁵ *Ib.*, viii. 28, 31.

⁶ *Ib.*, viii. 57, 31 f.

⁷ *Ib.*, viii. 30.

⁸ *Ib.*, viii. 31, cf. 57.

⁹ *Hieron.*, *Epist. ad Ephes.*, iii. 6.

¹⁰ *In Ascens. J. C.*

¹¹ Cf. Philo, *De Somniis*, i., § 22.

previously, and whether, at the end of the world, they will be released from their bodies or will cease from giving light to the world. He argues that they are rational beings because their motions could not take place without a soul. "As the stars move with so much order and method," he says, "that under no circumstances whatever does their course seem to be disturbed, is it not the extreme of absurdity to suppose that so much order, so much observance of discipline and method, could be demanded from or fulfilled by irrational beings?"¹ They possess life and reason, he decides, and he proves from Scripture that their souls were given to them, not at the creation of their bodily substance, but like those of men implanted strictly from without, after they were made.² They are "subject to vanity" with the rest of the creatures, and "wait for the manifestation of the sons of God."³ Origen is persuaded that sun, moon, and stars pray to the Supreme Being through his only begotten Son.⁴ To return to angels, however, Origen states that the angels are not only of various orders of rank, but have apportioned to them specific offices and duties. To Raphael, for instance, is assigned the task of curing and healing; to Gabriel the management of wars; to Michael the duty of receiving the prayers and the supplications of men. Angels are set over the different churches, and have charge even of the least of their members. These offices were assigned to the angels by God agreeably to the qualities displayed by each.⁵ Elsewhere Origen explains that it is necessary for this world that there should be angels set over beasts and over terrestrial operations, and also angels presiding over the birth of animals, and over the propagation and growth of shrubs; and, again, angels over holy works, who eternally teach men the perception of the hidden ways of God and knowledge of divine things; and he warns us not to bring upon ourselves those angels who are set over beasts, by leading an animal life, nor those which preside over terrestrial works, by taking delight in fleshly and mundane things, but rather to study how we may approximate to the companionship of the Archangel Michael, to whose duty of presenting the prayers of the saints to God he here adds the office of presiding over medicine.⁶

¹ *De Principiis*, i. 7, § 3; cf. *Contra Cels.*, v. 10, 11. ² *Ib.*, i. 7, § 4.

³ *Ib.*, i. 7, § 5; cf. iii. 5, § 4. Origen applies to sun, moon, and stars the wish of Paul (Phil. i. 23). Tatian likewise ascribes spirituality to stars, plants, and waters; but, although one and the same with the soul in angels and animals, there are certain differences. *Orat. ad Græcos*, 12; cf. Eusebius, *Præp. Evang.*, vii. 15.

⁴ *Contra Cels.*, v. 11.

⁵ *De Principiis*, i. 8, § 1, cf. § 4; *Contra Cels.*, v. 4, 5. Cf. Hermas, *Pastor*, ii., Mand. vi., §§ 1, 2; Tertullian, *De Orat.*, § 12; *De Anima*, § 37; Clemens Al., *Strom.*, v. 14, § 92, vii. 13, § 81.

⁶ Hom. xiv. in *Num.*, Opp. ii., p. 323.

It is through the ministry of angels that the water-springs in fountains and running streams refresh the earth, and that the air we breathe is kept pure.¹ In the *Shepherd* of Hermas, a work quoted by the Fathers as inspired Scripture, which was publicly read in the churches, which almost secured a permanent place in the New Testament canon, and which appears after the canonical books in the Codex Sinaiticus, the oldest extant MS. of the New Testament, mention is made of an angel who has rule over beasts, and whose name is Hegrin.² Jerome also quotes an apocryphal work in which an angel of similar name is said to be set over reptiles, and in which fishes, trees, and beasts are assigned to the care of particular angels.³

Clement of Alexandria mentions, without dissent, the prevailing belief that hail-storms, tempests, and similar phenomena do not occur merely from material disturbance, but also are caused by the anger of demons and evil angels.⁴ Origen states that, while angels superintend all the phenomena of nature, and control what is appointed for our good, famine, the blighting of vines and fruit trees, and the destruction of beasts and of men, are, on the other hand, the personal works⁵ of demons, they, as public executioners, receiving at certain times authority to carry into effect, divine decrees.⁶ We have already quoted similar views expressed by Tertullian,⁷ and the universality and permanence of such opinions may be illustrated by the fact that, after the lapse of many centuries, we find St. Thomas Aquinas as solemnly affirming that disease and tempests are the direct work of the devil;⁸ indeed, this belief prevailed throughout the middle ages until very recent times. The Apostle Peter, in the *Recognitions* of Clement, informs Clement that, when God made the world, he appointed chiefs over the various creatures, even over the trees and the mountains and springs and rivers, and over everything in the universe. An angel was set over the angels, a spirit over spirits, a star over the stars, a demon over the demons, and so on.⁹ He provided different offices for all his creatures, whether good or bad;¹⁰ but certain angels, having left the course of their proper order, led men into sin and taught them that demons could, by magical invocations, be made to obey man.¹¹ Ham was the discoverer of the art of magic.¹² Astrologers suppose that evils

¹ *Contra Cels.*, viii. 57, 31.

² i. *Visio*, iv. 2; in the Sinaitic Codex, the name is Θερπλ. Cotelerius, in the Greek version, has Ἀγριον.

³ *Hieron.*, in *Habacuc*, i. 1, 14.

⁴ *Stromata*, vi. 3, § 31.

⁵ Cf. Matt. viii. 31 ff.

⁶ *Contra Cels.*, viii. 31.

⁷ *Apolog.*, § 22 f.

⁸ *Summa Theolog.*, I, quæst., 80, § 2.

⁹ Clem., *Recog.*, i. 45.

¹⁰ *Ib.*, iv. 25.

¹¹ *Ib.*, iv. 26.

¹² *Ib.*, iv. 27.

happen in consequence of the motions of the heavenly bodies, and represent certain climacteric periods as dangerous, not knowing that it is not the course of the stars, but the action of demons, that regulates these things.¹ God has committed the superintendence of the seventy-two nations into which he has divided the earth to as many angels.² Demons insinuate themselves into the bodies of men, and force them to fulfil their desires;³ they sometimes appear visibly to men, and by threats or promises endeavour to lead them into error; they can transform themselves into whatever forms they please.⁴ The distinction between what is spoken by the true God through the prophets or by visions, and that which is delivered by demons, is this: that what proceeds from the former is always true, whereas that which is foretold by demons is not always true.⁵ Lactantius says that when the number of men began to increase, fearing that the Devil should corrupt or destroy them, God sent angels to protect and instruct the human race, but the angels themselves fell beneath his wiles, and from being angels they became the satellites and ministers of Satan. The offspring of these fallen angels are unclean spirits, authors of all the evils which are done, and the Devil is their chief. They are acquainted with the future, but not completely. The art of the magi is altogether supported by these demons, and at their invocation they deceive men with lying tricks, making men think they see things which do not exist. These contaminated spirits wander over all the earth, and console themselves by the destruction of men. They fill every place with frauds and deceits, for they adhere to individuals, and occupy whole houses, and assume the name of genii, as demons are called in the Latin language, and make men worship them. On account of their tenuity and impalpability, they insinuate themselves into the bodies of men, and through their *viscera* injure their health, excite diseases, terrify their souls with dreams, agitate their minds with phrenzies, so that they may by these evils drive men to seek their aid.⁶ Being adjured in the name of God, however, they leave the bodies of the possessed, uttering the greatest howling, and crying out that they are beaten, or are on fire.⁷ These demons are the inventors of astrology, divination, oracles, necromancy, and the art of magic.⁸ The universe is governed by God through the medium of angels. The demons have a foreknowledge of the purposes of God, from having been his ministers and, interposing in what is being done,

¹ *Ib.*, ix. 12.

² *Ib.*, ii. 42.

³ *Clem., Recog.*, iv. 15 ff.

⁴ *Ib.*, iv. 19.

⁵ *Ib.*, iv. 21.

⁶ *Instit. Div.*, ii. 14; cf. *Inst. Epit. ad Pentad.*, 27 f.

⁷ *Ib.*, ii. 15; cf. iv. 27, v. 21; cf. Arnobius, *Adv. Gentes*, i. 46.

⁸ *Ib.*, ii. 16.

they ascribe the credit to themselves.¹ The sign of the cross is a terror to demons, and at the sight of it they flee from the bodies of men. When sacrifices are being offered to the gods, if one be present who bears on his forehead the sign of the cross, the sacred rites are not propitious (*sacra nullo modo litant*), and the oracle gives no reply.²

Eusebius, like all the Fathers, represents the gods of the Greeks and other heathen nations as merely wicked demons. Demons, he says, whether they circulate in the dark and heavy atmosphere which encircles our sphere or inhabit the cavernous dwellings which exist within it, find charms only in tombs and in the sepulchres of the dead, and in impure and unclean places. They delight in the blood of animals, and in the putrid exhalations which rise from their bodies, as well as in earthly vapours. Their leaders, whether as inhabitants of the upper regions of the atmosphere or plunged in the abyss of hell, having discovered that the human race had deified and offered sacrifices to men who were dead, promoted the delusion in order to savour the blood which flowed and the fumes of the burning flesh. They deceived men by the motions conveyed to idols and statues, by the oracles they delivered, and by healing diseases, with which, by the power inherent in their nature, they had before invisibly smitten bodies, and which they removed by ceasing to torture them. These demons first introduced magic amongst men.³ We may here refer to the account of a miracle which Eusebius seriously quotes, as exemplifying another occasional function of the angels. The heretical Bishop Natalius, having in vain been admonished by God in dreams, was at last lashed through the whole of a night by holy angels, till he was brought to repentance and, clad in sackcloth and covered with ashes, he at length threw himself at the feet of Zephyrinus, then Bishop of Rome, pointing to the marks of the scourges which he had received from the angels, and implored to be again received into communion with the Church.⁴ Augustine says that demons inhabit the atmosphere, as in a prison, and deceive men, persuading them, by their wonderful and false signs or doings or predictions, that they are gods.⁵ He considers the origin of their name in the Sacred Scriptures worthy of notice; they are called *Δαίμονες* in Greek, on account of their knowledge.⁶ By their experience of certain signs, which are hidden from us, they can read much more of the future, and sometimes even announce beforehand what they intend to do. Speaking of his

¹ *Instit. Div.*, ii. 16.

² *Ib.*, iv. 27; cf. Arnobius, *Adv. Gentes*, i. 46.

³ *Præp. Evang.*, v. 2 f.

⁴ *H. E.*, v. 28.

⁵ *De Civitate Dei*, viii. 22.

⁶ Cf. Lactantius, *Instit. Div.*, ii. 14.

own time, and with strong expressions of assurance, Augustine says that not only Scripture testifies that angels have appeared to men with bodies which could not only be seen, but felt; but, what is more, it is a general report, and many have personal experience of it, or have learned it from those who have knowledge of the fact, and of whose truth there is no doubt, that satyrs and fauns, generally called *Incubi*, have frequently perpetrated their peculiar wickedness;¹ and also that certain demons, called by the Gauls *Dusii*, every day attempt and effect the same uncleanness, as witnesses equally numerous and trustworthy assert, so that it would be impertinence to deny it.²

Lactantius, again, ridicules the idea that there can be antipodes, and he can scarcely credit that there can be anyone so silly as to believe that there are men whose feet are higher than their heads, or that grain and trees grow downwards, and rain, snow, and hail fall upwards to the earth. After jesting at those who hold such ridiculous views, he points out that their blunders arise from supposing that the heaven is round, and the world, consequently, round like a ball, and enclosed within it. But if that were the case, it must present the same appearance to all parts of heaven, with mountains, plains, and seas, and consequently there would be no part of the earth uninhabited by men and animals. Lactantius does not know what to say to those who, having fallen into such an error, persevere in their folly (*stultitia*), and defend one vain thing by another; but sometimes he supposes that they philosophise in jest, or knowingly defend falsehoods to display their ingenuity. Space alone prevents his proving that it is impossible for heaven to be below the earth.³ St. Augustine, with equal boldness, declares that the stories told about the antipodes—that is to say, that there are men whose feet are against our footsteps, and upon whom the sun rises when it sets to us—are not to be believed. Such an assertion is not supported by any historical evidence, but rests upon mere conjecture, based on the rotundity of the earth. But those who maintain such a theory do not consider that, even if the earth be round, it does not follow that the opposite side is not covered with water. Besides, if it be not, why should it be inhabited, seeing that, on

¹ "*Improbos sæpe exstitisse mulieribus, et earum appetisse ac peregissee concubitum.*"

² *De Civ. Dei.*, xv. 23. So undeniable was the existence of these evil spirits, *Incubi* and *Succubi*, considered, and so real their wicked practices, that Pope Innocent VIII. denounced them in a Papal Bull in 1484. Burton most seriously believed in them, as he shows in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (iii. 2). Similar demons are frequently mentioned in the Talmudic literature. Cf. Eisenmenger, *Entd. Judenthum*, i., p. 374; ii., p. 421 ff., 426 ff.

³ *Instit. Div.*, iii. 24.

the one hand, it is in no way possible that the Scriptures can lie, and, on the other, it is too absurd (*nimisque absurdum est*) to affirm that any men can have traversed such an immensity of ocean to establish the human race there from that one first man Adam?¹

Clement of Rome had no doubt of the truth of the story of the Phoenix,² that wonderful bird of Arabia and the adjoining countries which lives 500 years, at the end of which time, its dissolution being at hand, it builds a nest of spices, in which it dies. From the decaying flesh, however, a worm is generated, which, being strengthened by the juices of the bird, produces feathers and is transformed into a phoenix. Clement adds that it then flies away with the nest containing the bones of its defunct parent to the city of Heliopolis in Egypt, and in full daylight and in the sight of all men it lays them on the altar of the sun. On examining their registers, the priests find that the bird has returned precisely at the completion of the 500 years. This bird, Clement considers, is an emblem of the Resurrection.³ So does Tertullian, who repeats the story with equal confidence.⁴ It is likewise referred to in the Apostolic Constitutions.⁵ Celsus quotes the narrative in his work against Christianity as an instance of the piety of irrational creatures, and although Origen, in reply, while admitting that the story is indeed recorded, puts in a cautious "if it be true," he proceeds to account for the phenomenon on the ground that God may have made this isolated creature in order that men might admire not the bird, but its creator.⁶ Cyril of Jerusalem likewise quotes the story from Clement.⁷ The author of the almost canonical Epistle of Barnabas, explaining the typical meaning of the code of Moses regarding clean and unclean animals which were or were not to be eaten, states as a fact that the hare annually increases the number of its *foramina*, for it has

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, xvi. 9. The Roman Clement, in an eloquent passage on the harmony of the universe, speaks of "the unsearchable places of abysses and the inexplicable arrangements of the lower world," and of "the ocean, impassable to man, and the worlds beyond it" (*Ep. ad Corinth.*, xx.). Origen refers to this passage in the following terms: "Clement, indeed, a disciple of the Apostles, makes mention also of those whom the Greeks call *Ἀντίχθονες*, and of those parts of the orb of the earth to which neither can any of our people approximate, nor can any of those who are there cross over to us, which he called 'worlds,' saying," etc. (*De Principiis*, ii. 3, § 6). Such views, however, were general.

² The Talmud speaks frequently of the Phoenix. It is not subject to the angel of death, but is immortal, because when Eve offered it, together with all other created things, the forbidden fruit to eat, it alone refused. See authorities, Eisenmenger, *Entd. Jud.*, i., p. 371, p. 867 ff.

³ *Ep. ad Corinth.*, xxix.

⁴ *De Resurr.*, § 13.

⁵ v. 7.

⁶ *Contra Cels.*, iv. 98. The same fable is referred to by Herodotus (ii. 73), and also by Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, x. 2).

⁷ *Catech.*, xviii. 8.

as many as the years it lives.¹ He also mentions that the hyena changes its sex every year, being alternately male and female.² Tertullian also points out as a recognised fact the annual change of sex of the hyena, and he adds : "I do not mention the stag, since itself is the witness of its own age ; feeding on the serpent, it languishes into youth from the working of the poison."³ The geocentric theory of the Church, which elevated man into the supreme place in the universe, and considered creation in general to be solely for his use, naturally led to the misinterpretation of all cosmical phenomena. Such spectacles as eclipses and comets were universally regarded as awful portents of impending evil, signs of God's anger, and forerunners of national calamities.⁴ We have already referred to the account given by Josephus of the portents which were supposed to announce the coming destruction of the Holy City, amongst which were a star shaped like a sword, a comet, and other celestial phenomena. Volcanoes were considered openings into hell, and not only does Tertullian hold them to be so, but he asks, Who will not deem these punishments sometimes inflicted upon mountains as examples of the judgments which menace the wicked ?⁵

¹ "Ὅσα γὰρ ἔτη ζῇ, τοσαύτας ἔχει τρύπας. c. x.

² c. x. He also says of the weasel : Τὸ γὰρ ζῶον τοῦτο τῷ στόματι κίει. Cf. Origen, *Contra Cels.*, iv. 93 ; Clement of Alex. refers to the common belief regarding these animals. *Pædag.*, ii. 10.

³ "Hyæna, si observet, sexus annalis est, marem et feminam alternat. Taceo cervum quod et ipse ætatis sue arbiter, serpente pastus, veneno languescit in juventutem" (*De Pallio*, § 3).

⁴ Cf. Tertullian, *Ad Scap.*, § 3 ; Sozomen, *H.E.*, viii. 4, iv. 5.

⁵ *De Penitentia*, § 12. Gregory the Great gives a singular account (*Dial.* iv. 30) which he had heard of a hermit who had seen Theodoric, and one of the Popes, John, in chains, cast into the crater of one of the Lipari volcanoes, which were believed to be entrances into hell.

CHAPTER V.

THE PERMANENT STREAM OF MIRACULOUS PRETENSION

WE have given a most imperfect sketch of some of the opinions and superstitions prevalent at the time of Jesus, and when the books of the New Testament were written. These, as we have seen, continued with little or no modification throughout the first centuries of our era. It must, however, be remembered that the few details we have given, omitting most of the grosser particulars, are the views deliberately expressed by the most educated and intelligent part of the community, and that it would have required infinitely darker colours adequately to have portrayed the dense ignorance and superstition of the mass of the Jews. It is impossible to receive the report of supposed marvellous occurrences from an age and people like this without the gravest suspicion. Even so thorough a defender of miracles as Newman admits that "Witnesses must be not only honest, but competent also; that is, such as have ascertained the facts which they attest, or who report after examination";¹ and although the necessities of his case oblige him to assert that "the testimony of men of science and general knowledge" must not be required, he admits, under the head of "deficiency of examination," that "Enthusiasm, ignorance, and habitual credulity are defects which no number of witnesses removes."² We have shown how rank were these "defects" at the commencement of the Christian era, and among the chief witnesses for Christianity. Miracles which spring from such a hot-bed of superstition are too natural in such a soil to be objects of surprise and, in losing their exceptional character, their claims upon attention are proportionately weakened, if not altogether destroyed. Preternatural interference with the affairs of life and the phenomena of nature was the rule in those days, not the exception, and miracles, in fact, had lost all novelty and, through familiarity, had become degraded into mere commonplace. The Gospel miracles were not original in their character, but were substantially mere repetitions of similar wonders well known among the Jews, or commonly supposed to be of daily occurrence even at that time. In fact, the idea of such miracles, in such an age and performed among such a people, as the attestation of a

¹ *Two Essays*, etc., p. 78.

² *Ib.*, p. 81.

supernatural Revelation, may with singular propriety be ascribed to the mind of that period, but can scarcely be said to bear any traces of the divine. Indeed, anticipating for a moment a part of our subject regarding which we shall have more to say hereafter, we may remark that, so far from being original either in its evidence or form, almost every religion which has been taught in the world has claimed the same divine character as Christianity, and has surrounded the person and origin of its central figure with the same supernatural mystery. Even the great heroes of history, long before our era, had their immaculate conception and miraculous birth.

There can be no doubt that the writers of the New Testament shared the popular superstitions of the Jews. We have already given more than one instance of this, and now we have only to refer for a moment to one class of these superstitions, the belief in demoniacal possession and origin of disease, involving clearly both the existence of demons and their power over the human race. It would be an insult to the understanding of those who are considering this question to pause here to prove that the historical books of the New Testament speak in the clearest and most unmistakable terms of actual demoniacal possession. Now, what has become of this theory of disease? The Archbishop of Dublin is probably the only one who asserts the reality of demoniacal possession formerly and at the present day,¹ and in this we must say that he is consistent. Milman, on the other hand, who spoke with the enlightenment of the nineteenth century, "has no scruple in avowing *his* opinion on the subject of demoniacs to be that of Joseph Mede, Lardner, Dr. Mead, Paley, and all the learned modern writers. It was a kind of insanity.....and nothing was more probable than that lunacy should take the turn and speak the language of the prevailing superstition of the times."² The Dean, as well as "all the learned modern writers" to whom he refers, felt the difficulty; but, in seeking to evade it, they sacrifice the Gospels. They overlook the fact that the writers of these narratives not only themselves adopt "the prevailing superstition of the times," but represent Jesus as doing so with equal completeness. There is no possibility, for instance, of evading such statements as those in the miracle of the country of the Gadarenes, where the objectivity of the demons is so fully recognised that, on being cast out of the man, they are represented as requesting to be allowed to go into the herd of swine; and, being permitted by Jesus to do so, the entry of the demons into the swine is at once signalised by the herd running violently down the cliff into the

¹ *Notes on Miracles*, p. 164 f.

² *History of Christianity*, i., p. 217, note (e).

lake, and being drowned.¹ Archbishop Trench adopts no such ineffectual evasion, but rightly objects: "Our Lord Himself uses language which is not reconcilable with any such explanation. He everywhere speaks of demoniacs not as persons of disordered intellects, but as subjects and thralls of an alien spiritual might; He addresses the evil spirit as distinct from the man: 'Hold thy peace, and come out of him'; and he concludes that "our idea of Christ's absolute veracity, apart from the value of the truth which He communicated, forbids us to suppose that He could have spoken as He did, being perfectly aware all the while that there was no corresponding reality to justify the language which He used."² Milman, on the other hand, finds "a very strong reason," which he does not remember to have seen urged with sufficient force, "which may have contributed to induce our Lord to adopt the current language on the point. The disbelief in these spiritual influences was one of the characteristics of the unpopular sect of the Sadducees. A departure from the common language, or the endeavour to correct this inveterate error, would have raised an immediate outcry against Him from His watchful and malignant adversaries as an unbelieving Sadducee."³ Such ascription of politic deception for the sake of popularity might be intelligible in an ordinary case, but when referred to the central personage of a Divine revelation, who is said to be God incarnate, it is perfectly astounding. The Archbishop, however, rightly deems that if Jesus knew that the Jewish belief in demoniacal possession was baseless, and that Satan did not exercise such power over the bodies or spirits of men, there would be in such language "that absence of agreement between thoughts and words in which the essence of a lie consists."⁴ It is difficult to say whether the dilemma of the Dean or of the Archbishop is the greater—the one obliged to sacrifice the moral character of Jesus in order to escape the admission for Christianity of untenable superstition, the other obliged to adopt the superstition in order to support the veracity of the language. At least, the course of the Archbishop is consistent, and worthy of respect. The attempt to eliminate the superstitious diagnosis of the disease, and yet to preserve intact the miraculous cure, is quite ineffectual.

Dr. Trench anticipates the natural question, why there are no demoniacs now, if there were so many in those days,⁵ and he is logically compelled to maintain that there may still be persons

¹ Luke viii. 26, 33; Mark v. 12, 13; cf. Matt. viii. 28, 34. In the latter Gospel the miracle is said to be performed in the country of the Gergesenes, and there are two demoniacs instead of one.

² *Notes on Miracles*, p. 152 f.

³ Milman, *History of Christianity*, i., p. 218, note.

⁴ *Notes on Miracles*, p. 154.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 163.

possessed. "It may well be a question, moreover," he says, "if an apostle, or one with apostolic discernment of spirits, were to enter into a madhouse now, how many of the sufferers there he might not recognise as possessed?"¹ There can scarcely be a question upon the point at all, for such a person issuing direct from that period, without subsequent scientific enlightenment, would most certainly pronounce them all "possessed." It did not, however, require an apostle, nor even one with apostolic discernment of spirits, to recognise the possessed at that time. All those who are represented as being brought to Jesus to be healed are described by their friends as having a devil or being possessed, and there was no form of disease more general or more commonly recognised by the Jews. For what reason has the recognition of, and belief in, demoniacal possession passed away with the ignorance and superstition which were then prevalent?

It is important to remember that the theory of demoniacal possession, and its supposed cure by means of exorcism and invocations, was most common among the Jews long before the commencement of the Christian era. As casting out devils was the most common type of Christian miracles, so it was the commonest belief and practice of the Jewish nation. Christianity merely shared the national superstition, and changed nothing but the form of exorcism. Christianity did not, through a "clearer perception of spirits," therefore, originate the belief in demoniacal possession, or first recognise its victims; nor did such superior enlightenment accompany the superior morality of Christianity as to detect the ignorant fallacy. In the Old Testament we find the most serious evidence of the belief in demonology and witchcraft. The laws against them set the example of that unrelenting severity with which sorcery was treated for so many centuries. We read in Exodus xxii. 18: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Levit. xix. 31: "Regard not them which have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards to be defiled by them." Levit. xx. 6: "And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a-whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and cut him off from among his people"; and verse 27: "A man also, or a woman, that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them." Deut. xviii. 10: "There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or an enchanter, or a witch; 11. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard,

¹ *Notes on Miracles*, p. 165. In a note the Archbishop says that "he understands that Esquirol recognises demoniacs now, and that there could not be a higher authority."

or a necromancer ; 12. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord," etc. The passages which assert the reality of demonology and witchcraft, however, are much too numerous to permit their citation here. But not only did Christianity thus inherit the long-prevalent superstition, but it transmitted it intact to succeeding ages ; and there can be no doubt that this demonology, with its consequent and inevitable belief in witchcraft, sorcery, and magic, continued so long to prevail throughout Christendom, as much through the authority of the sacred writings and the teaching of the Church as through the superstitious ignorance of Europe.

It would be impossible to select for illustration any type of the Gospel miracles whose fundamental principle—belief in the reality, malignant action, and power of demons, and in the power of man to control them—has received fuller or more permanent living acceptance from posterity, down to very recent times, than the cure of disease ascribed to demoniacal influence. The writings of the Fathers are full of the belief ; the social history of Europe teems with it. The more pious the people, the more firm was their conviction of its reality. From times antecedent to Christianity, until medical science slowly came into existence, every form of disease was ascribed to demons. Madness, idiotcy, epilepsy, and every shape of hysteria were the commonest forms of their malignity ; and the blind, the dumb, and the deformed were regarded as unquestionable victims of their malice. Every domestic calamity, from the convulsions of a child to the death of a cow, was unhesitatingly attributed to their agency. The more ignorant the community, the greater the number of its possessed. Belief in the power of sorcery, witchcraft, and magic was inherent in the superstition, and the universal prevalence shows how catholic was the belief in demoniacal influence. The practice of these arts is solemnly denounced as sin in the New Testament and throughout Patristic literature, and the Church has in all ages fulminated against it. No accusation was more common than that of practising sorcery, and no class escaped from the fatal suspicion. Popes were charged with the crime, and bishops were found guilty of it. St. Cyprian was said to have been a magician before he became a Christian and a Father of the Church.¹ Athanasius was accused of sorcery before the Synod of Tyre.² Not only the illiterate, but even the learned, in the estimation of their age, believed in it. No heresy was ever persecuted with more unrelenting hatred. Popes have issued bulls vehemently anathematising witches and sorcerers, councils have proscribed

¹ Greg. Nazianz., *Orat.*, xviii.

² Theodoret, *H. E.*, i. 30 ; cf. Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, ii., p. 378.

them, ecclesiastical courts have consigned tens of thousands of persons suspected of being such to the stake, monarchs have written treatises against them and invented tortures for their conviction, and every nation in Europe, and almost every generation, have passed the most stringent laws against them. Upon no point has there ever been greater unanimity of belief. Church and State have vied with each other for the suppression of the abominable crime. Every phenomenon of nature, every unwelcome occurrence of social life, as well as every natural disease, has been ascribed to magic and demons. The historical records of Europe are filled with the deliberate trial and conviction, upon what was deemed evidence, of thousands of sorcerers and witches. Hundreds have been found guilty of exercising demoniacal influence over the elements, from Sopater the philosopher, executed under Constantine for preventing, by adverse winds, the arrival of corn ships at Constantinople, to Dr. Fian and other witches horribly tortured and burnt for causing a stormy passage on the return of James I. from Denmark.¹ Thousands of men and tens of thousands of women have been done to death by every conceivable torment for causing sickness or calamity by sorcery, or for flying through the air to attend the witches' sabbath. When scepticism as to the reality of the demoniacal powers of sorcery tardily began to arise, it was fiercely reprobated by the Church as infidelity. Even so late as the seventeenth century, a man like Sir Thomas Browne not only did not include the belief among the vulgar errors which he endeavoured to expose, but, on the contrary, wrote: "For my part, I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are witches. They that doubt of them do not only deny them, but spirits; and are obliquely, and upon consequence, a sort not of infidels, but Atheists."² In 1664 Sir Thomas Hale, in passing sentence of death against two women convicted of being witches, declared that the reality of witchcraft was undeniable, because "first, the Scriptures had affirmed so much; and, secondly, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against such persons, which is an argument of their confidence in such a crime."³ Even the eighteenth century was stained with the blood of persons tortured and executed for sorcery.

Notwithstanding all this persistent and unanimous confirmation,

¹ Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials of Scotland*, i., pp. 213, 223.

² *Religio Medici*, Works (Bohn), ii., p. 43 f.

³ *Collection of Rare and Curious Tracts Relating to Witchcraft*, London, 1838. Cf. Lecky, *Hist. of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, 3rd ed., 1866, i., p. 120. The reader is referred to this able work, as well as to Buckle's *Hist. of Civilisation*, for much interesting information regarding magic and witchcraft, as well as religious superstition and miraculous pretensions generally.

we ask again : What has now become of the belief in demoniacal possession and sorcery ? It has utterly disappeared. " Joseph Mede, Lardner, Dr. Mead, Paley, and all the learned modern writers " with Dean Milman, as we have seen, explain it away, and such a theory of disease and elemental disturbance is universally recognised to have been a groundless superstition. The countless number of persons tormented and put to death for the supposed crime of witchcraft and sorcery were mere innocent victims to ignorance and credulity. At the commencement of our era every disease was ascribed to the agency of demons simply because the nature of disease was not understood, and the writers of the Gospels were not, in this respect, one whit more enlightened than the Jews. The progress of science, however, has not only dispelled the superstitious theory as regards disease in our time ; its effects are retrospective. Science not only declares the ascription of disease to demoniacal possession or malignity to be an idle superstition now, but it equally repudiates the assumption of such a cause at any time. The diseases referred by the Gospels, and by the Jews of that time, to the action of devils, exist now, but they are known to proceed from purely physical causes. The same superstition and medical ignorance would enunciate the same diagnosis at the present day. The superstition and ignorance, however, have passed away, and with them the demoniacal theory. In that day the theory was as baseless as in this. This is the logical conclusion of every educated man.

It is obvious that, with the necessary abandonment of the theory of " possession " and demoniacal origin of disease, the largest class of miracles recorded in the Gospels is at once exploded. The asserted cause of the diseases of this class, said to have been miraculously healed, must be recognised to be a mere vulgar superstition, and the narratives of such miracles, ascribing as they do, in perfect simplicity, distinct objectivity to the supposed " possessing " demons, and reporting their very words and actions, at once assume the character of mere imaginative and fabulous writings based upon superstitious tradition, and cannot be accepted as the sober and intelligent report of eye-witnesses. We shall presently see how far this inference is supported by the literary evidence regarding the date and composition of the Gospels.

The deduction, however, does not end here. It is clear that, this large class of Gospel miracles being due to the superstition of an ignorant and credulous age, the insufficiency of the evidence for any of the other supposed miraculous occurrences narrated in the same documents becomes at once apparent. Nothing but the most irrefragable testimony could possibly warrant belief in statements of supernatural events which contradict all experience, and

are opposed to all science. When these statements, however, are not only rendered, *à priori*, suspicious by their proceeding from a period of the grossest superstition and credulity, but it becomes evident that a considerable part of them are due solely to that superstition and credulity, by which, moreover, the rest may likewise be most naturally explained, they cannot stand against the opposing conviction of invariable experience. The force of the testimony is gone. We are far from using this language in an offensive sense concerning the Gospel narratives, which, by the simple faith of the writers, present the most noble aspect of the occurrences of which superstition is capable. Indeed, viewed as compositions gradually rising out of pious tradition, and representing the best spirit of their times, the Gospels, even in ascribing such miracles to Jesus, are a touching illustration of the veneration excited by his elevated character. Devout enthusiasm surrounded his memory with the tradition of the highest exhibitions of power within the range of Jewish imagination, and that these conceptions represent merely an idealised form of prevalent superstition was not only natural, but inevitable. We shall hereafter fully examine the character of the Gospels, but it will be sufficient here to point out that none of these writings lays claim to any special inspiration, or in the slightest degree pretends to be more than a human composition,¹ and subject to the errors of human history.

We have seen how incompetent those who lived at the time when the Gospel miracles are supposed to have taken place were to furnish reliable testimony regarding such phenomena; and the gross mistake committed in regard to the largest class of these miracles, connected with demoniacal possession, altogether destroys the value of the evidence for the rest, and connects the whole, as might have been expected, with the general superstition and ignorance of the period. It may be well to inquire, further, whether there is any valid reason for excepting any of the miracles of Scripture from this fate, and whether there was any special "Age of Miracles" at all, round which a privileged line can be drawn on any reasonable ground.

We have already pointed out that the kind of evidence which is supposed to attest the Divine revelation of Christianity, so far from being invented for the purpose, was so hackneyed, so to speak, as scarcely to attract the notice of the nation to which the revelation was, in the first instance, addressed. Not only did the

¹ See, for instance, the reasons for the composition of the third Gospel stated in the first four verses. It was clearly intended in the first instance to be a private document for the use of Theophilus.

Old Testament contain accounts of miracles of every one of the types related in the New, but most of them were believed to be commonly performed both before and after the commencement of the Christian era. That demons were successfully exorcised, and diseases cured, by means of spells and incantations, was never doubted by the Jewish nation. Satanic miracles, moreover, are not only recognised throughout the Old and New Testaments, but formed a leading feature of the Patristic creed. The early Christians were as ready as the heathen to ascribe every inexplicable occurrence to supernatural agency, and the only difference between them was as to the nature of that agency. The Jews and their heathen neighbours were too accustomed to supposed preternatural occurrences to feel much surprise or incredulity at the account of Christian miracles; and it is characteristic of the universal superstition of the period that the Fathers did not dream of denying the reality of Pagan miracles, but merely attributed them to demons, whilst they asserted the Divine origin of their own. The reality of the powers of sorcery was never questioned. Every marvel and every narrative of supernatural interference with human affairs seemed matter of course to the superstitious credulity of the age. However much miracles are exceptions to the order of nature, they have always been the rule in the history of ignorance. In fact, the excess of belief in them throughout many centuries of darkness is fatal to their claims to credence now. The Christian miracles are rendered as suspicious from their place in a long sequence of similar occurrences, as they are by being exceptions to the sequence of natural phenomena. It would indeed be extraordinary if whole cycles of miracles occurring before and since those of the Gospels, and in connection with every religion, could be repudiated as fables, and those alone maintained as genuine.

No attempt is made to deny the fact that miracles are common to all times and to all religious creeds. Newman states among the conclusions of his essay on the miracles of early ecclesiastical history: "That there was no Age of Miracles, after which miracles ceased; that there have been at all times true miracles and false miracles, true accounts and false accounts; that no authoritative guide is supplied to us for drawing the line between the two."¹ Dr. Mozley also admits that morbid love of the marvellous in the human race "has produced a constant stream of miraculous pretension in the world, which accompanies man wherever he is found, and is a part of his mental and physical history."² Ignorance and its invariable attendant, superstition, have done more

¹ *Two Essays on Scripture Miracles*, etc., 1870, p. 100.

² *Bampton Lectures*, p. 206.

than mere love of the marvellous to produce and perpetuate belief in miracles, and there cannot be any doubt that the removal of ignorance always leads to their cessation.¹ The Bampton lecturer proceeds: "Heathenism had its running stream of supernatural pretensions in the shape of prophecy, exorcism, and the miraculous cures of diseases, which the temples of Esculapius recorded with pompous display."² So far from the Gospel miracles being original, and a presentation, for the first time, of phenomena until then unknown and unlikely to suggest themselves to the mind, "Jewish supernaturalism was indeed going on side by side with our Lord's miracles."³ Dr. Mozley, however, rebuts the inference which has been drawn from this, "That His miracles could not, in the very nature of the case, be evidences of His distinctive teaching and mission, inasmuch as miracles were common to Himself and His opponents," by the assertion that a very marked distinction exists between the Gospel miracles and all others.⁴ He perfectly recognises the consequence if such a distinction cannot be clearly demonstrated. "The criticism, therefore, which *evidential* miracles, or miracles which serve as evidence of a revelation, must come up to, if they are to accomplish the object for which they are designed, involves at the outset this condition—that the evidence of such miracles must be distinguishable from the evidences of this permanent stream of miraculous pretension in the world; that such miracles must be separated by an interval not only from the facts of the order of nature, but also from the common running miraculous, which is the simple offshoot of human nature. Can evidential miracles be inserted in this promiscuous mass, so as not to be confounded with it, but to assert their own truth and distinctive source? If they cannot, there is an end to the proof of a revelation by miracles; if they can, it remains to see whether the Christian miracles are thus distinguishable, and whether their nature, their object, and their evidence vindicate their claim to this distinctive truth and Divine source."⁵

Now, regarding this distinction between Gospel and other miracles, it must be observed that the religious feeling which influenced the composition of the Scripture narratives of miracles naturally led to the exclusion of all that was puerile or ignoble in the traditions preserved regarding the Great Master. The elevated character of Jesus afforded no basis for what was petty, and the devotion with which he was regarded when the Gospels were written insured the noblest treatment of his history within certain

¹ Cf. Buckle, *Hist. of Civilisation*, i., p. 373 ff.; cf. p. 122 ff.; iii., p. 35.

² *Bampton Lectures*, p. 206.

³ *Ib.*, p. 209.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 209.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 208.

limits. We must, therefore, consider the bare facts composing the miracles, rather than the narrative of the manner in which they are said to have been produced, in order rightly to judge of the comparative features of different miracles. If we take the case of a person raised from the dead, literary skill may invest the account with more or less of dramatic interest and dignity; but, whether the main fact be surrounded with pathetic and picturesque details, as in the account of the raising of Lazarus in the fourth Gospel, or the person be simply restored to life without them, it is the fact of the resurrection which constitutes the miracle, and it is in the facts alone that we must seek distinction, disregarding and distrusting the accessories. In the one case the effect may be much more impressive, but in the other the bare raising of the dead is not a whit less miraculous. We have been accustomed to read the Gospel narratives of miracles with so much special veneration that it is now difficult to recognise how much of the distinction of these miracles is due to the composition, and to their place in the history of Jesus. No other miracles, or account of miracles, ever had such collateral advantages.

The Archbishop of Dublin says: "Few points present greater difficulties than the attempt to fix accurately the moment when these miraculous powers were withdrawn from the Church"; and he argues that they were withdrawn when it entered into what he calls its permanent state, and no longer required "these props and strengthenings of the infant plant."¹ That their retrocession was gradual he considers natural, and he imagines the fulness of Divine power as gradually waning as it was subdivided, first among the Apostles and then among the ever-multiplying members of the Church, until by sub-division it became virtually extinct, leaving as a substitute "the standing wonder of a Church."² This, of course, is not argument, but merely the Archbishop's fanciful explanation of a serious difficulty. The fact is, however, that the Gospel miracles were preceded and accompanied by others of the same type, and were also followed by a long succession of others, quite as well authenticated, whose occurrence only became less frequent in proportion as the diffusion of knowledge dispelled popular credulity. Even at the present day a stray miracle is from time to time reported in outlying districts, where the ignorance and superstition which formerly produced so abundant a growth of them are not yet entirely dispelled.

Papias of Hierapolis narrates a wonderful story, according to Eusebius, which he had heard from the daughters of the Apostle Philip, who lived at the same time in Hierapolis: "For he relates that a dead man was restored to life in his day."³ Justin Martyr,

¹ *Notes on Miracles*, p. 54.

² *Ib.*, p. 55.

³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, iii. 39.

speaking of his own time, frequently asserts that Christians still receive the gift of healing, of foreknowledge, and of prophecy,¹ and he points out to the Roman Senate, as a fact happening under their own observation, that many demoniacs throughout all the world and in their own city have been healed, and are healed, many of the Christian men among us exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ, subduing and expelling the possessing demons out of the man, although all the other exorcists, with incantations and spells, had failed to do so.² Theophilus of Antioch likewise states that to his day demons are exorcised.³ Irenæus, in the clearest manner, claims for the Church of his time the continued possession of the Divine *χαρίσματα*. He contrasts the miracles of the followers of Simon and Carpocrates, which he ascribes to magical illusions, with those of Christians. "For they can neither give sight to the blind," he continues, "nor to the deaf hearing, nor cast out all demons, but only those introduced by themselves—if they can even do that—nor heal the sick, the lame, the paralytic, nor those afflicted in other parts of the body, as has been often done in regard to bodily infirmity.....But so far are they from raising the dead, as the Lord raised them and the Apostles by prayer, and as frequently in the brotherhood, when the whole Church in a place made supplication with much fasting and prayer, the spirit of the dead was constrained to return, and the man was freely restored in answer to the prayers of the saints,—that they do not believe this can possibly be done."⁴ Dr. Mozley, who desires, for the purpose of his argument, to weaken the evidence of patristic belief in the continuance of miracles, says, regarding this last passage on raising the dead: "But the reference is so vague that it possesses but little weight as testimony."⁵ The language of Irenæus is vague only in so far as specific detailed instances are not given of the miracles referred to; but no language could be more definite or explicit to express his meaning—namely, the assertion that the prayers of Christian communities had frequently restored the dead to life. Eusebius, who quotes the passage and who has preserved to us the original Greek, clearly recognised this. He says, when making the quotations: "In the second book of the same work he [Irenæus] testifies that up to his time tokens of Divine and miraculous power remained in some Churches."⁶ In the next chapter, Irenæus further says: "On which account also his true disciples, receiving

¹ Cf. *Dial. c. Tryph.*, xxxix., lxxxii., lxxxviii., etc.

² *Apol.*, ii. 6, cf. *Dial. c. Tryphon.*, xxx., lxxvi., lxxxv., etc.

³ *Ad Autolycum*, ii. 8.

⁴ Irenæus, *Adv. Hær.*, ii. 31, § 2; Eusebius, *H. E.*, v. 7.

⁵ *Bampton Lectures*, Note i. on Lecture VIII. (p. 210), p. 371.

⁶ *H. E.*, v. 7.

grace from him, work (miracles) in his name for the benefit of the rest of mankind, according to the gift received from him by each of them. For some do certainly and truly (*βεβαίως καὶ ἀληθῶς*) cast out demons, so that frequently those very men who have thus been cleansed from the evil spirits both believe and are now in the Church. And some have foreknowledge of future occurrences and visions and prophetic utterances. Others heal the sick by the imposition of hands, and make them whole. Indeed, as we have already stated, even the dead have been raised up, and have remained with us for many years. And what more shall I say? It is not possible to state the number of the gifts which the Church throughout the world has received from God in the name of Jesus Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate, and which she each day employs for the benefit of the heathen," etc.¹

Tertullian speaks with the most perfect assurance of miracles occurring in his day, and of the power of healing and of casting out devils still possessed by Christians. In one place, for instance, after asserting the power which they have generally over demons, so that, if a person possessed by a devil be brought before one of the Roman tribunals, a follower of Christ can at once compel the wicked spirit within him to confess that he is a demon, even if he had before asserted himself to be a god, he proceeds to say: "So, at our touch and breathing, violently affected by the contemplation and representation of those fires [of hell], they [demons] also depart at our command out of bodies, reluctant and complaining, and put to shame in your presence."² He declares that, although dreams are chiefly inflicted upon us by demons, yet they are also sent by God, and, indeed, "almost the greater part of mankind derive their knowledge concerning God from visions."³ He, elsewhere, states that he himself knows that a brother was severely castigated by a vision the same night on which his slaves had, without his knowledge, done something reprehensible.⁴ He narrates, as an instance of the continued possession of spiritual *charismata* by Christians: "There is at this day amongst us a sister who has the gift of revelations, which she receives in church amidst the solemnities of the Lord's Day by ecstasy in the spirit; she converses with angels, and sometimes also with the Lord, and she both hears and sees mysteries (*sacramenta*), and she reads the hearts of some men, and prescribes medicines to those who are in need."⁵ Tertullian goes on to say that, after the people were

¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, v. 7; *Adv. Hier.*, ii. 32, § 4; cf. v. 6, § i.; cf. Theophilus, *Ad Autol.*, i. 13.

² *Apologeticus*, § 23, cf. *De Idol.*, § 11; *De Spectac.*, § 29; *De Exhort. Castit.*, § 10; *Ad Scapulam*, § 4; *De Anima*, § 57.

³ *De Anima*, § 47; *De Idol.*, § 15.

⁴ *De Idol.*, § 15.

⁵ *De Anima*, § 9.

dismissed from the church, this sister was in the regular habit of reporting what she had seen, and that most diligent inquiries were made in order to test the truth of her communications;¹ and, after narrating a vision of a disembodied soul vouchsafed to her, he states: "This is the vision, God being witness, and the Apostle² having foretold that such spiritual gifts should be in the Church."³ Further on Tertullian relates a story within his own knowledge: "I know the case of a woman, born within the fold of the Church, who was in the prime of life and beauty. After being but once, and only a short time, married, having fallen asleep in peace, in the interval before interment, when the presbyter began to pray, as she was being made ready for burial, at the first breath of prayer she removed her hands from her sides, folded them in the attitude of supplication, and again, when the last rites were over, restored them to their former position."⁴ He then mentions another story known amongst them—that a dead body in a cemetery moved itself in order to make room beside it for another body;⁵ and then he remarks: "If similar cases are also reported amongst the heathen, we conclude that God displays signs of his power for the consolation of his own people, and as a testimony to others."⁶ Again, he mentions cases where Christians had cured persons of demoniacal possession, and adds: "And how many men of position (for we do not speak of the vulgar) have been delivered either from devils or from diseases?"⁷ Tertullian, in the same place, refers to the miracle of the "Thundering Legion,"⁸ and he exclaims: "When, indeed, have not droughts been removed by our prayers and fastings?"⁹ Minucius Felix speaks of the casting out of devils from sick persons by Christians in his own day as a matter of public notoriety even among Pagans.¹⁰ St. Cyprian echoes the same assertions.¹¹ He likewise mentions cases of miraculous punishment inflicted upon persons who had lapsed from the Christian faith. One of these, who ascended the Capitol to make denial of Christ, suddenly became dumb after he had spoken the words.¹² Another—a woman—was seized by an unclean spirit even at the baths, and bit with her own teeth the impious tongue which had eaten the idolatrous food, or spoken the words, and she shortly expired in great agony.¹³ He likewise maintains that Christians are admonished by God in dreams and by visions, of which he mentions instances.¹⁴ Origen claims for Christians the

¹ *De Anima*, § 9.² 1 Cor. xii. 1 ff.³ *De Anima*, § 9.⁴ *Ib.*, § 51.⁵ *Ib.* § 51.⁶ *Ib.*, § 51.⁷ *Ad Scapulum*, § 4.⁸ Cf. Eusebius, *H. E.*, v. 5.⁹ *Ad Scapulum*, § 4.¹⁰ *Octavius*, § 27.¹¹ *Tract.* ii., *De Idol. Vanitate*, § 7; *Ad Demetrianum*, § 15.¹² *De Lapsis*, § 24.¹³ *Ib.*, § 24, cf. §§ 25, 26.¹⁴ *Ep.*, liii., §§ 1-5; lxii., § 17; lxviii., §§ 9, 10 (ed. Migne); *De Mortalitate*, § 19.

power still to expel demons and to heal diseases in the name of Jesus,¹ and he states that he had seen many persons so cured of madness and countless other evils, which could not be otherwise cured by men or devils.² Lactantius repeatedly asserts the power of Christians over demons; they make them flee from bodies when they adjure them in the name of God.³

Passing over the numerous apocryphal writings of the early centuries of our era, in which many miracles are recorded, we find in the pages of Eusebius narratives of many miraculous occurrences. Many miracles are ascribed to Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, of which Eusebius relates several. While the vigils of the great watch of the Passover were being kept, the oil failed; whereupon Narcissus commanded that water from the neighbouring well should be poured into the lamps. Having prayed over the water, it was changed into oil, of which a specimen had been preserved until that time.⁴ On another occasion, three men having spread some vile slanders against Narcissus, which they confirmed by an oath, and with imprecations upon themselves of death by a miserable disease, of death by fire, and of blindness, respectively, if their statements were not true, omnipotent justice in each case inflicted upon the wretches the curse which each had invoked.⁵ The election of Fabianus to the episcopal chair of Rome was marked by the descent of a dove from on high, which rested upon his head, as the Holy Ghost had descended upon our Saviour.⁶ At Cæsarea Philippi there is a statue of Jesus Christ, which Eusebius states that he himself had seen, said to have been erected by the woman healed of the bloody issue, and on the pedestal grows a strange plant as high as the hem of the brazen garment, which is an antidote to all diseases.⁷ Great miracles are recorded as taking place during the persecutions in Cæsarea.⁸

Gregory of Nyssa gives an account of many wonderful works performed by his namesake Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea, who was called *Thaumaturgus* from the miraculous power which he possessed and very freely exercised. The Virgin Mary and the Apostle John appeared to him, on one occasion, when he was in doubt as to the doctrine which he ought to preach, and, at the request of Mary, the Apostle gave him all needful instructions.⁹ If his faith did not move mountains, it moved a huge rock to convert a pagan priest.¹⁰ He drove a demon out of a heathen

¹ *Contra Cels.*, i. 67, 2, 6, 46; ii. 33; ii. 24, 28, 36.

² *Ib.*, iii. 24.

³ *Instit. Div.*, ii. 16, iv. 27, v. 22.

⁴ Eusebius, *H. E.*, vi. 9.

⁵ *Ib.*, vi. 9.

⁶ *Ib.*, vi. 29.

⁷ *Ib.*, *H. E.*, vii. 18; cf. Sozomen, *H. E.*, v. 21.

⁸ Eusebius, *De Martyr. Palæst.*, iv., ix.; cf. Theodoret, *H. E.*, iv. 22.

⁹ Greg. Nyss., *De Vit. Greg. Thaum.*, iii., p. 545 f.

¹⁰ *Ib.*, p. 550.

temple in which he had taken refuge, and the evil spirit could not re-enter until he gave permission.¹ Nyssen relates how St. Gregory averted an armed contest of two brothers who quarrelled about the possession of a lake on their father's property. The saint passed the night in prayer beside the lake, and in the morning it was found dried up.² On another occasion he rescued the country from the devastation of a mountain stream, which periodically burst the dykes by which it was restrained and inundated the plain. He went on foot to the place and, invoking the name of Christ, fixed his staff in the earth at the place where the torrent had broken through. The staff took root and became a tree, and the stream never again burst its bounds. The inhabitants of the district were converted to Christianity by this miracle. The tree was still living in Nyssen's time, and he had seen the bed of the lake covered with trees, pastures, and cottages.³ Two vagabond Jews once attempted to deceive him. One of them lay down and pretended to be dead, while the other begged money from the saint wherewith to buy him a shroud. St. Gregory quietly took off his cloak and laid it on the man, and walked away. His companion found that he was really dead.⁴ St. Gregory expelled demons from persons possessed, healed the sick, and performed many other miracles;⁵ and his signs and wonders are not only attested by Gregory of Nyssa, but by St. Basil,⁶ whose grandmother, St. Macrina, was brought up at Neo-Cæsarea by the immediate followers of the saint.

Athanasius, in his memoir of St. Anthony, who began to lead the life of a recluse about A.D. 270, gives particulars of many miracles performed by the saint. Although he possessed great power over demons, and delivered many persons possessed by them, Satan tormented him sadly, and he was constantly beset by legions of devils. One night Satan with a troop of evil spirits so belaboured the saint that he lay on the ground speechless and almost dead from their blows.⁷ We have already referred to the case of Natalius, who was scourged by angels

¹ Greg., Nyss., *De Vit. Greg. Thaum.*, p. 548. Cf. Socrates, *H. E.*, iv. 27. He gave this permission in writing "Gregory to Satan: Enter."—Γρηγόριος τῷ Σατανᾷ, Εἰσελθε.

² *Ib.*, p. 555 f.

³ *Ib.*, p. 558 ff.

⁴ *Ib.*, iii., p. 561 f. The same story is related of St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, and Sozomen sees no ground for doubting the veracity of either account. He states that St. Epiphanius also performed many other miracles (*H. E.*, vii. 27).

⁵ *Ib.*, pp. 541, 551, 552, 553, 566, 567, 577.

⁶ *De Spir. Sancto*, c. 29, tom. iii., pp. 62, 63, Bened.; cf. *Ep.* 204, p. 306.

⁷ S. Athanasii, *Vita et Convers. S. Antonii*, §§ 8, Opp. tom. i., pars. ii., p. 802 ff., Bened.

during a whole night, till he was brought to repentance.¹ Upon one occasion, when St. Anthony had retired to his cell resolved to pass a time in perfect solitude, a certain soldier came to his door and remained long there knocking and supplicating the saint to come and deliver his daughter, who was tormented by a demon. At length St. Anthony addressed the man and told him to go, and if he believed in Jesus Christ and prayed to God his prayer should be fulfilled. The man believed, invoked Jesus Christ, and his daughter was delivered from the demon.² As Anthony was once travelling across the desert to visit another monastery, the water of the caravan failed them, and his companions in despair threw themselves on the ground. St. Anthony, however, retired a little apart, and in answer to his prayer a spring of water issued at the place where he was kneeling.³ A man named Fronto, who was afflicted with leprosy, begged his prayers, and was ordered by the saint to go into Egypt, where he should be healed. Fronto at first refused, but, being told that he could not be healed if he remained, the sick man went believing, and as soon as he came in sight of Egypt he was made whole.⁴ Another miracle was performed by Anthony at Alexandria in the presence of St. Athanasius. As they were leaving the city a woman cried after him, "Man of God, stay; my daughter is cruelly troubled by a demon"; and she entreated him to stop lest she herself should die in running after him. At the request of Athanasius and the rest, the saint paused, and, as the woman came up, her daughter fell on the ground convulsed. St. Anthony prayed in the name of Jesus Christ, and immediately the girl rose perfectly restored to health, and delivered from the evil spirit.⁵ He astonished a number of pagan philosophers, who had come to dispute with him, by delivering several demoniacs, making the sign of the cross over them three times, and invoking the name of Jesus Christ.⁶ It is unnecessary, however, to multiply instances of his miraculous power to drive out demons and heal diseases,⁷ and to perform other wonderful works. St. Athanasius, who was himself for a long time a personal follower of St. Anthony, protests in his preface to the biography his general accuracy, he having everywhere been mindful of the truth.⁸

Hilarion, again, a disciple of St. Anthony, performed many miracles, an account of some of which is given by St. Jerome. He restored sight to a woman who had been blind for no less than

¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, v. 28.

² *Ib.*, § 54, p. 836 f.

³ *Ib.*, § 71, p. 849.

⁴ Cf. *ib.*, §§ 55, 58, 61, 62, 63, 64, 70, etc.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 797.

⁶ *Vita*, § 48, p. 832.

⁷ *Ib.*, § 57, p. 839.

⁸ *Ib.*, § 72, p. 849.

ten years; he cast out devils, and miraculously cured many diseases. Rain fell in answer to his prayers, and he further exhibited his power over the elements by calming a stormy sea. When he was buried, ten months after his death, not only was his body as perfect as though he had been alive, but it emitted a delightful perfume. He was so favoured of God that, long after, diseases were healed and demons expelled at his tomb.¹ St. Macarius, the Egyptian, is said to have restored a dead man to life in order to convince an unbeliever of the truth of the resurrection.² St. Martin, of Tours, restored to life a certain catechumen who had died of a fever, and Sulpicius, his disciple, states that the man, who lived for many years after, was known to himself, although not until after the miracle. He also restored to life a servant who had hung himself.³ He performed a multitude of other miracles, to which we need not here more minutely refer. The relics of the two martyrs Protavius and Gervasius, whose bones, with much fresh blood, the miraculous evidence of their martyrdom and identity, were discovered by St. Ambrose, worked a number of miracles. A man suffering from demoniacal possession indicated the proximity of the relics by his convulsions. St. Augustine states that he himself was in Milan when a blind man, who merely touched the cloth which covered the two bodies as they were being moved to a neighbouring church, regained his sight.⁴ Paulinus relates many miracles performed by his master, St. Ambrose, himself. He not only cast out many demons and healed the sick,⁵ but he also raised the dead. Whilst the saint was staying in the house of a distinguished Christian friend, his child, who a few days before had been delivered from an unclean spirit, suddenly expired. The mother, an exceedingly religious woman, full of faith and the fear of God, carried the dead boy down and laid him on the saint's bed during his absence. When St. Ambrose returned, filled with compassion for the mother and struck by her faith, he stretched himself, like Elisha, on the body of the child, praying, and restored him living to his mother. Paulinus relates this miracle with minute particulars of name and address.⁶

St. Augustine asserts that miracles are still performed in his day in the name of Jesus Christ, either by means of his sacraments or by the prayers or relics of his saints, although they are not so well known as those of old, and he gives an account of many miracles which had recently taken place.⁷ After referring to the miracle

¹ Sozomen, *H. E.*, iii. 14.

² *Ib.*, *H. E.*, iii. 14.

³ Sulpicius, *Vita S. Mart.*; cf. Sozomen, *H. E.*, iii. 14.

⁴ Ambrose, *Epist. Class.*, i. 22; August., *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 8; Paulinus, *Vita S. Ambrosii*, § 14 f.

⁵ *Vita S. Ambr.*, §§ 21, 43, 44.

⁶ *Ib.*, § 28.

⁷ *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 8.

performed by the relics of the two martyrs upon the blind man in Milan, which occurred when he was there, he goes on to narrate the miraculous cure of a friend of his own, named Innocent, formerly advocate of the prefecture in Carthage, where Augustine was, and beheld it with his own eyes (*ubi nos interfuimus et oculis aspeximus nostris*). A lady of rank in the same city was miraculously healed of an incurable cancer, and St. Augustine is indignant at the apathy of her friends which allowed so great a miracle to be so little known.¹ An inhabitant of the neighbouring town of Curubis was cured of paralysis and other ills by being baptised. When Augustine heard of this, although it was reported on very good authority, the man himself was brought to Carthage by order of the holy bishop Aurelius in order that the truth might be ascertained. Augustine states that on one occasion, during his absence, a tribunitian man among them named Hesperius, who had a farm close by called Zubedi, in the Fussalian district, begged one of the Christian presbyters to go and drive away some evil spirits whose malice sorely afflicted his servants and cattle. One of the presbyters accordingly went and offered the sacrifice of the body of Christ with earnest prayer, and by the mercy of God the evil was removed. Now, Hesperius happened to have received from one of his friends a piece of the sacred earth of Jerusalem, where Jesus Christ was buried and rose again the third day, and he had hung it up in his room to protect himself from the evil spirits. When his house had been freed from them, however, he begged St. Augustine and his colleague Maximinus, who happened to be in that neighbourhood, to come to him, and, after telling them all that had happened, he prayed them to bury the piece of earth in some place where Christians could assemble for the worship of God. They consented and did as he desired. A young peasant of the neighbourhood who was paralytic, hearing of this, begged that he might be carried without delay to the holy spot, where he offered up prayer, and rose up and went away on his feet perfectly cured. About thirty miles from Hippo, at a farm called Victoriana, there was a memorial to the two martyrs Protavius and Gervasius. To this, Augustine relates, was brought a young man who, having gone one summer day at noon to water his horse in the river, was possessed by a demon. The lady to whom the place belonged came, according to her custom, in the evening with her servants and some holy women to sing hymns and pray. On hearing them, the demoniac started up and seized the altar with a terrible shudder, without daring to move and as if bound to it, and the demon, praying with a loud voice for mercy, confessed where and when he had entered

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 8.

into the young man. At last the demon named all the members of his body, with threats to cut them off as he made his exit, and saying these words came out of him. In doing so, however, the eye of the youth fell from its socket on to his cheek, retained only by a small vein, as by a root, whilst the pupil became altogether white. Well pleased, however, that the young man had been freed from the evil spirit, they returned the eye to its place as well as they could, and bound it up with a handkerchief, praying fervently, and one of his relatives said: "God, who drove out the demon at the prayer of his saints, can also restore the sight." On removing the bandage seven days after, the eye was found perfectly whole. St. Augustine knew a girl of Hippo who was delivered from a demon by the application of oil, with which had mingled the tears of the presbyter who was praying for her. He also knew a bishop who prayed for a youth possessed by a demon, although he had not even seen him, and the young man was at once cured.

Augustine further gives particulars of many miracles performed by the relics of the most glorious martyr Stephen.¹ By their virtue the blind receive their sight, the sick are healed, the impenitent converted, and the dead are restored to life. "Andurus is the name of an estate," Augustine says, "where there is a church, and in it is a shrine dedicated to the martyr Stephen. A certain little boy was playing in the court, when unruly bullocks drawing a waggon crushed him with the wheel, and immediately he lay in the agonies of death. Then his mother raised him up, and placed him at the shrine, and he not only came to life again, but had manifestly received no injury. A certain religious woman, who lived in a neighbouring property called Caspalianus, being dangerously ill and her life despaired of, her tunic was carried to the same shrine; but before it was brought back she had expired. Nevertheless, her relatives covered the body with this tunic, and she received back the spirit and was made whole. At Hippo a certain man named Bassus, a Syrian, was praying at the shrine of the same martyr for his daughter, who was sick and in great peril, and he had brought her dress with him; when lo! some of his household came running to announce to him that she was dead. But, as he was engaged in prayer, they were stopped by his friends, who prevented their telling him, lest he should give way to his grief in public. When he returned to his house, which already resounded with the wailing of his household, he cast over the body of his daughter her mantle, which he had with him, and immediately she was restored to life. Again, in the same city, the son of a certain man among us named Irenæus, a collector of

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 8.

taxes, became sick and died. As the dead body lay, and they were preparing, with wailing and lamentation, to bury it, one of his friends, consoling him, suggested that the body should be anointed with oil from the same martyr. This was done, and the child came to life again. In the same way a man among us named Elusinus, formerly a tribune, laid the body of his child, who had died from sickness, on a memorial of the martyr which is in his villa in the suburbs, and after he had prayed, with many tears, he took up the child living."¹ St. Augustine further relates some remarkable cases: "Eucharis, a presbyter from Spain, resided at Calama, who had for a long time suffered from stone. By the relics of the same martyr, which the Bishop Possidius brought to him, he was made whole. The same presbyter, afterwards succumbing to another disease, lay dead, so that they were already binding his hands. Succour came from the relics of the martyr, for the tunic of the presbyter being brought back from the relics and placed upon his body, he revived."²

Two objections have been raised to the importance of the miracles reported by St. Augustine, to which we must briefly refer.³ (1) That "his notices of the cases in which persons had been raised to life again are so short, bare, and summary that they evidently represent no more than mere report, and report of a very vague kind." (2) "That, with the preface which Augustine prefixes to his list, he cannot be said even to profess to guarantee the truth or accuracy of the different instances contained in it."

It is true that in several cases Augustine gives the account of miraculous cures at greater length than those of restoration to life. It seems to us that this is almost inevitable at all times, and that the reason is obvious. Where the miracle consists merely of the cure of disease, details are naturally given to show the nature and intensity of the sickness, and they are necessary not only for the comprehension of the cure, but to show its importance. In the case of restoration to life, the mere statement of the death and assertion of the subsequent resurrection exclude all need of details. The pithy *reddita est vitæ*, or *factum est et revixit*, is more striking than any more prolix narrative. In fact, the greater the miracle the more natural is conciseness and simplicity; and, practically, we find that Augustine gives a more lengthy and verbose report of trifling cures, whilst he relates the more important with greater brevity and force. He narrates many of his cases of miraculous cure, however, as briefly as those in which the dead are raised. We have quoted the latter, and the reader must judge whether they are unduly curt. One thing may be

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 8.

² *Ib.*, xxii. 8.

³ Mozley, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 372 f.

affirmed, that nothing of importance is omitted, and in regard to essential details they are explicit as the mass of other cases reported. In every instance names and addresses are stated, and it will have been observed that all these miracles occurred in, or close to, Hippo, and in his own diocese. It is very certain that in every case the fact of the miracle is asserted in the most direct and positive terms. There can be no mistake either as to the meaning or intention of the narrative, and there is no symptom whatever of a thought on the part of Augustine to avoid the responsibility of his statements, or to give them as mere vague report. If we compare these accounts with those of the Gospels, we do not find them deficient in any essential detail common to the latter. There is in the Synoptic Gospels only one case in which Jesus is said to have raised the dead. The raising of Jairus' daughter¹ has long been abandoned, as a case of restoration to life, by all critics and theologians, except the few who still persist in ignoring the distinct and positive declaration of Jesus, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." The only case, therefore, in the Synoptics is the account in the third Gospel of the raising of the widow's son,² of which, strange to say, the other Gospels know nothing. Now, although, as might have been expected, this narrative is much more highly coloured and picturesque, the difference is chiefly literary, and, indeed, there are really fewer important details given than in the account by Augustine, for instance, of the restoration to life of the daughter of Bassus the Syrian, which took place at Hippo, of which he was bishop, and where he actually resided. Augustine's object in giving his list of miracles did not require him to write picturesque narratives. He merely desired to state bare facts, whilst the authors of the Gospels composed the Life of their Master, in which interesting details were everything. For many reasons we refrain here from alluding to the artistic narrative of the raising of Lazarus, the greatest miracle ascribed to Jesus, which is nevertheless unknown to the other three Evangelists, who, so readily repeating the accounts of trifling cures, would most certainly not have omitted this wonderful event had they ever heard of it.

A complaint is made of the absence of verification and proof of actual death in these cases, or that they were more than mere suspension of the vital powers. We cordially agree in the desire for such evidence, not only in these, but in all miracles. We would ask, however, what verification of the death have we in the case of the widow's son which we have not here? If we apply

¹ Matt. ix. 18, 19, 23-26; Mark v. 22, 24, 35-43; Luke viii. 41, 42, 49-56.

² Luke vii. 11-16.

such a test to the miracles of the Gospels, we must reject them as certainly as those of St. Augustine. In neither case have we more than a mere statement that the subjects of these miracles were dead or diseased. So far are we from having any competent medical evidence of the reality of the death, or of the disease, or of the permanence of the supposed cures in the Gospels, that we have little more than the barest reports of these miracles by writers who, even if their identity were established, were not, and do not pretend to have been, eye-witnesses of the occurrences which they relate. Take, for instance, this very raising of the widow's son in the third Gospel, which is unknown to the other Evangelists, and the narrative of which is given only in a Gospel which is not attributed to a personal follower of Jesus.

Now we turn to the second statement: "That with the preface which Augustine prefixes to his list he cannot be said even to profess to guarantee the truth or accuracy of the different instances contained in it." We shall as briefly as possible state what is actually the "preface" of St. Augustine to his list of miracles, and his avowed object for giving it. In the preceding chapter Augustine has been arguing that the world believed in Christ by virtue of divine influence, and not by human persuasion. He contends that it is ridiculous to speak of the false divinity of Romulus when Christians speak of Christ. If, in the time of Romulus, some 600 years before Cicero, people were so enlightened that they refused to believe anything of which they had not experience, how much more, in the still more enlightened days of Cicero himself, and notably in the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, would they have rejected belief in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, if divine truth and the testimony of miracles had not proved not only that such things could take place, but that they had actually done so. When the evidence of prophecy joined with that of miracles, and showed that the new doctrines were only contrary to experience and not contrary to reason, the world embraced the faith.¹ "Why, then, say they, do these miracles, which you declare to have taken place formerly, not occur nowadays?" Augustine, in replying, adopts a common rhetorical device. "I might, indeed, answer," he says, "that miracles were necessary before the world believed, in order that the world might believe. Anyone who now requires miracles in order that he may believe is himself a great miracle in not believing what all the world believes. But, really, they say this in order that even those miracles should not be believed either." And he reduces what he considers to be the position of the world in regard to miracles and to the supernatural dogmas of Christianity

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 7.

to the following dilemma: "Either things incredible which nevertheless occurred and were seen, led to belief in something else incredible which was not seen; or that thing was in itself so credible that no miracles were required to establish it, and so much more is the unbelief of those who deny confuted. This might I say to these most frivolous objectors." He then proceeds to affirm that it cannot be denied that many miracles attest the great miracle of the ascension in the flesh of the risen Christ, and he points out that the actual occurrence of all these things is not only recorded in the most truthful books, but the reasons also given why they took place. These things have become known that they might create belief; these things by the belief they have created have become much more clearly known. They are read to the people, indeed, that they may believe; yet, nevertheless, they would not be read to the people if they had not been believed. After thus stating the answer which he might give, Augustine now returns to answer the question directly. "But, furthermore," he continues, "miracles are performed now in his name, either by means of his sacraments or by the prayers or relics of his saints, but they are not brought under the same strong light as caused the former to be noised abroad with so much glory; inasmuch as the canon of sacred scriptures, which must be definite, causes those miracles to be everywhere publicly read, and become firmly fixed in the memory of all peoples; but these are scarcely known to the whole of a city itself in which they are performed, or to its neighbourhood. Indeed, for the most part, even there very few know of them, and the rest are ignorant, more especially if the city be large; and when they are related elsewhere and to others, the authority does not so commend them as to make them be believed without difficulty or doubt, albeit they are reported by faithful Christians to the faithful." He illustrates this by pointing out that the miracle in Milan by the bodies of the two martyrs, which took place when he himself was there, might reach the knowledge of many because the city is large, and the Emperor and an immense crowd of people witnessed it; but who knows of the miracle performed at Carthage upon his friend Innocent, when he was there also, and saw it with his own eyes? Who knows of the miraculous cure of cancer, he continues, in a lady of rank in the same city? at the silence regarding which he is so indignant. Who knows of the next case he mentions in his list? the cure of a medical man of the same town, to which he adds: "We, nevertheless, do know it, and a few brethren to whose knowledge it may have come."¹ Who, out of Curubus, besides the very few who may have heard of it, knows of the miraculous

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 8.

cure of the paralytic man, whose case Augustine personally investigated? And so on. Observe that there is merely a question of the comparative notoriety of the Gospel miracles and those of his own time, not a doubt as to the reality of the latter. Again, towards the end of his long list, immediately after the narrative of the restoration to life of the child of Eleusinus, which we have quoted, Augustine says: "What can I do? The promise of the completion of this work is pressing, so that I cannot here recount all [the miracles] that I know; and without doubt many of our brethren, when they read this work, will be grieved that I have omitted so very much, which they know as well as I do. This, even now, I beg that they will pardon, and consider how long would be the task of doing that which, for the completion of the work, it is thought necessary not to do. For if I desired to record merely the miracles of healing, without speaking of others, which have been performed by this martyr—that is to say, the most glorious Stephen—in the district of Calama and in ours of Hippo, many volumes must be composed; yet will it not be possible to make a complete collection of them, but only of such as have been published for public reading. For that was our object, since we saw repeated in our time signs of divine power similar to those of old, deeming that they ought not to be lost to the knowledge of the multitude. Now, this relic has not yet been two years at Hippo-Regius, and accounts of many of the miracles performed by it have not been written, as is most certainly known to us; yet the number of those which have been published up to the time this is written amounts to about seventy. At Calama, however, where these relics have been longer, and more of the miracles were recorded, they incomparably exceed this number."¹ Augustine goes on to say that, to his knowledge, many very remarkable miracles were performed by the relics of the same martyr also at Uzali, a district near to Utica, and of one of these, which had recently taken place when he himself was there, he gives an account. Then, before closing his list with the narrative of a miracle which took place at Hippo, in his own church, in his own presence, and in the sight of the whole congregation, he resumes his reply to the opening question. "Many miracles, therefore," he says, "are also performed now; the same God who worked those of which we read performing these by whom he wills, and as he wills; but these miracles neither become similarly known, nor, that they may not slip out of mind, are they stamped, as it were like gravel, into memory, by frequent reading. For even in places where care is taken, as is now the case among us, that accounts of those who receive benefit should be publicly

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 8.

read, those who are present hear them only once, and many are not present at all, so that those who were present do not, after a few days, remember what they heard, and scarcely a single person is met with who repeats what he has heard to one whom he may have known to have been absent."¹

We shall not attempt any further detailed reference to the myriads of miracles with which the annals of the Church teem up to very recent times. The fact is too well known to require evidence. The saints in the calendar are legion. It has been computed that the number of those whose lives are given in the Bollandist Collection² amounts to upwards of 25,000, although, the saints being arranged according to the Calendar, the unfinished work only reaches the 24th of October. When it is considered that all those upon whom the honour of canonisation is conferred have worked miracles, many of them, indeed, almost daily performing such wonders, some idea may be formed of the number of miracles which have occurred in unbroken succession from Apostolic days, and have been believed and recognised by the Church. Vast numbers of these miracles are in all respects similar to those narrated in the Gospels, and they comprise hundreds of cases of restoration of the dead to life. If it be necessary to point out instances in comparatively recent times, we may mention the miracles of this kind liberally ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi, in the thirteenth century, and to his namesake St. Francis Xavier in the sixteenth, although we might refer to much more recent miracles authenticated by the Church. At the present day such phenomena have almost disappeared, and, indeed, with the exception of an occasional winking picture, periodical liquefaction of blood, or apparition of the Virgin, confined to the still ignorant and benighted corners of the earth, miracles are extinct.

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 8.

² *Acta Sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur; collegit*, etc., Johannes Bollandus, *cum contin.* Henschenii, 54 vol. fol. *Venetiis*, 1734-1861.

CHAPTER VI.

MIRACLES IN RELATION TO IGNORANCE AND SUPERSTITION

WE have maintained that the miracles reported after apostolic days are precisely of the same types in all material points as the earlier miracles. Setting aside miracles of a trivial and unworthy character, there remain a countless number cast in the same mould as those of the Gospels—miraculous cure of diseases, expulsion of demons, transformation of elements, supernatural nourishment, resurrection of dead—of many of which we have quoted instances. A natural objection is anticipated by Dr. Mozley: "It will be urged, perhaps, that a large portion even of the Gospel miracles are of the class here mentioned as ambiguous—cures, visions, expulsions of evil spirits; but this observation does not affect the character of the Gospel miracles as a body, because we judge of the body or whole from its highest specimen, not from its lowest." He takes his stand upon, "*e.g.*, our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension."¹ Now, without discussing the principle laid down here, it is evident that the great distinction between the Gospel and other miracles is thus narrowed to a very small compass. It is admitted that the mass of the Gospel miracles are of a class characterised as ambiguous, because "the current miracles of human history" are also chiefly of the same type, and the distinctive character is derived avowedly only from a few high specimens such as the Resurrection. We have already referred to the fact that in the Synoptic Gospels there is only one case, reported by the third Gospel alone, in which Jesus is said to have raised the dead. St. Augustine alone, however, chronicles several cases in which life was restored to the dead. Post-apostolic miracles, therefore, are far from lacking this ennobling type. Observe that there is not here so much a discussion of the reality of the subsequent miracles of the Church as a contrast drawn between them and other reputed miracles and those of the Gospel; but from this point of view it is impossible to maintain that the Gospels have a monopoly of the highest class of miracles. Such miracles are met with long before the dawn of Christianity, and continued to occur long after apostolic times.

Much stress is laid upon the form of the Gospel miracles; but,

¹ *Bampton Lectures*, p. 214.

as we have already shown, it is the actual resurrection of the dead, for instance, which is the miracle, and this is not affected by the more or less dramatic manner in which it is said to have been effected, or in which the narrative of the event is composed. Literary skill and the judicious management of details may make or mar the form of any miracle. The narrative of the restoration of the dead child to life by Elisha might have been more impressive had the writer omitted the circumstance that the child sneezed seven times before opening his eyes, and the miracle would probably have been considered greater had the prophet merely said to the child, "Arise!" instead of stretching himself on the body; but, setting aside human cravings for the picturesque and artistic, the essence of the miracle would have remained the same. There is one point, however, regarding which it may be well to make a few remarks. Whilst a vast number of miracles are ascribed to direct personal action of saints, many more are attributed to their relics. Now, this is no exclusive characteristic of later miracles, but Christianity itself shares it with still earlier times. The case in which a dead body which touched the bones of Elisha was restored to life will occur to everyone. "And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of Moabites; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet."¹ The mantle of Elijah smiting asunder the waters before Elisha may be cited as another instance.² The woman who touches the hem of the garment of Jesus in the crowd is made whole,³ and all the sick and "possessed" of the country are represented as being healed by touching Jesus, or even the mere hem of his garment.⁴ It was supposed that the shadow of Peter falling on the sick as he passed had a curative effect,⁵ and it is very positively stated: "And God wrought miracles of no common kind by the hands of Paul; so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."⁶

The argument which assumes an enormous distinction between Gospel and other miracles betrays the prevalent scepticism, even in the Church, of all miracles except those which it is considered an article of faith to maintain. If we inquire how those think who are more logical and thorough in their belief in the supernatural, we find the distinction denied. "The

¹ 2 Kings xiii. 21.

² 2 Kings ii. 14, cf. 8. In raising the dead child, Elisha sends his staff to be laid on the child.

³ Mark v. 27 ff.; cf. Luke viii. 44 ff.; Matt. ix. 20 ff.

⁴ Matt. xiv. 36; cf. Luke vi. 19; Mark iii. 10.

⁵ Acts v. 15.

⁶ *Ib.*, xix. 11, 12.

question," says Newman, "has hitherto been argued on the admission that a distinct line can be drawn in point of character and circumstances between the miracles of Scripture and those of Church history; but this is by no means the case. It is true, indeed, that the miracles of Scripture, viewed as a whole, recommend themselves to our reason, and claim our veneration beyond all others, by a peculiar dignity and beauty; but still it is only as a whole that they make this impression upon us. Some of them, on the contrary, fall short of the attributes which attach to them in general; nay, are inferior in these respects to certain ecclesiastical miracles, and are received only on the credit of the system of which they form part. Again, specimens are not wanting in the history of the Church, of miracles as awful in their character, and as momentous in their effects, as those which are recorded in Scripture."¹ Now here is one able and thorough supporter of miracles denying the enormous distinction between those of the Gospel and those of human history, which another admits to be essential to the former as evidence of a revelation.

Such a difficulty, however, is met by asserting that there would be no disadvantage to the Gospel miracles, and no doubt regarding them involved, if for some later miracles there was evidence as strong as for those of the Gospel. "All the result would be, that we should admit these miracles over and above the Gospel ones."² The equality of the evidence, however, is denied, in any case. "Between the evidence, then, upon which the Gospel miracles stand, and that for later miracles, we see a broad distinction arising, not to mention again the nature and type of the Gospel miracles themselves—from the contemporaneous date of the testimony to them, the character of the witnesses, the probation of the testimony; especially when we contrast with these points the false doctrine and audacious fraud which rose up in later ages, and in connection with which so large a portion of the later miracles of Christianity made their appearance."³ We consider the point touching the type of the Gospel miracles disposed of, and we may, therefore, confine ourselves to the rest of this argument. If we look for any external evidence of the miracles of Jesus in some marked effect produced by them at the time they are said to have occurred, we find anything but confirmation of the statements of the Gospels. It is a notorious fact that, in spite of these miracles, very few of the Jews amongst whom they were performed believed in Jesus, and that Christianity made its chief converts not where the supposed miracles took place, but where an account of them was alone given by

¹ J. H. Newman, *Two Essays on Miracles*, p. 160 f.

² Mozley, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 231.

³ *Ib.*, p. 220 f.

enthusiastic missionaries. Such astounding exhibitions of power as raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, walking on the sea, changing water into wine, and indefinitely multiplying a few loaves and fishes, not only did not make any impression on the Jews themselves, but were never heard of out of Palestine until long after the events are said to have occurred, when the narrative of them was slowly disseminated by Christian teachers and writers.

Dr. Mozley refers to the contemporary testimony "for certain great and cardinal Gospel miracles which, if granted, clears away all antecedent objection to the reception of the rest," and he says: "That the first promulgators of Christianity asserted as a fact which had come under the cognizance of their senses the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead is as certain as anything in history."¹ What they really did assert, so far from being certain, must, as we shall hereafter see, be considered matter of the greatest doubt. But if the general statement be taken that the Resurrection, for instance, was promulgated as a fact which the early preachers of Christianity themselves believed to have taken place, the evidence does not in that case present the broad distinction he asserts. The miracles recounted by St. Athanasius and St. Augustine, for example, were likewise proclaimed with equal clearness, and even greater promptitude and publicity, at the very spot where many of them were said to have been performed, and the details were much more immediately reduced to writing. The mere assertion in neither case goes for much as evidence, but the fact is that we have absolutely no contemporaneous testimony as to what the first promulgators of Christianity actually asserted, or as to the real grounds upon which they made such assertions. We shall presently enter upon a thorough examination of the testimony for the Gospel narratives, their authorship and authenticity; but we may here be permitted so far to anticipate as to remark that, applied to documentary evidence, any reasoning from the contemporaneous date of the testimony, and the character of the witnesses, is contradicted by the whole history of New Testament literature. Whilst the most uncritically zealous assertors of the antiquity of the Gospels never venture to date the earliest of them within a quarter of a century from the death of Jesus, every tyro is aware that there is not a particle of evidence of the existence of our Gospels until very long after that interval—hereafter we shall show how long—that two of our Synoptic Gospels, at least, were not composed in their present form by the writers to whom they are attributed; that there is, indeed, nothing worthy of the name of evidence that any one of

¹ *Bampton Lectures*, p. 219.

these Gospels was written by the person whose name it bears; that the second Gospel is attributed to one who was not an eye-witness, and of whose identity there is the greatest doubt, even amongst those who assert the authorship of Mark; that the third Gospel is an avowed later compilation,¹ and likewise ascribed to one who was not a follower of Jesus himself; and that the authorship of the fourth Gospel and its historical character are amongst the most unsettled questions of criticism, not to use here any more definite terms. This being the state of the case, it is absurd to lay such emphasis on the contemporaneous date of the testimony, and on the character of the witnesses, since it has not even been determined who those witnesses are, and two even of the supposed evangelists were not personal eye-witnesses at all.² Surely the testimony of Athanasius regarding the miracles of St. Anthony, and that of Augustine regarding his list of miracles occurring in, or close to, his own diocese within two years of the time at which he writes, or, to refer to more recent times, the evidence of Pascal for the Port-Royal miracles, it must be admitted, not only does not present the broad distinction of evidence asserted, but, on the contrary, is even more unassailable than that of the Gospel miracles. The Church, which is the authority for those miracles, is also the authority for the long succession of such works wrought by the saints. The identity of the writers we have instanced has never been doubted; their trustworthiness in so far as stating what they believe to be true is concerned has never been impugned; the same could be affirmed of writers in every age who record such miracles. The fact is that theologians demand evidence for later miracles which they have not for those of the Gospels, and which transmitted reverence forbids their requiring. They strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.

The life of sacrifice and suffering of the Apostles is pointed out as a remarkable and peculiar testimony to the truth of the Gospel miracles, and notably of the Resurrection and Ascension. Without examining, here, how much we really know of those lives and sufferings, one thing is perfectly evident: that sacrifice, suffering, and martyrdom itself are evidence of nothing except of the personal belief of the person enduring them; they do not prove the truth of the doctrines believed. No one doubts the high religious enthusiasm of the early Christians, or the earnest and fanatical zeal with which they courted martyrdom; but this is no

¹ Luke i. 1-4.

² We need scarcely point out that Paul, to whom so many of the writings of the New Testament are ascribed, and who practically is the author of ecclesiastical Christianity, not only was not an eye-witness of the Gospel miracles, but never even saw Jesus.

exclusive characteristic of Christianity. Every religion has had its martyrs, every error its devoted victims. Does the marvellous endurance of the Hindoo, whose limbs wither after years of painful persistence in vows to his Deity, prove the truth of Brahmanism? or do the fanatical believers who cast themselves under the wheels of the car of Jagganath establish the soundness of their creed? Do the Jews, who for centuries bore the fiercest contumely of the world, and were persecuted, hunted, and done to death by every conceivable torture for persisting in their denial of the truth of the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension, and in their rejection of Jesus Christ—do they thus furnish a convincing argument for the truth of their belief and the falsity of Christianity? Or have the thousands who have been consigned to the stake by the Christian Church herself, for persisting in asserting what she has denounced as damnable heresy, proved the correctness of their views by their sufferings and death? History is full of the records of men who have honestly believed every kind of error and heresy, and have been steadfast to the death, through persecution and torture, in their mistaken belief. There is nothing so inflexible as superstitious fanaticism, and persecution, instead of extinguishing it, has invariably been the most certain means of its propagation. The sufferings of the Apostles, therefore, cannot prove anything beyond their own belief, and the question, what it was they really did believe and suffer for, is by no means so simple as it appears.

Now the long succession of ecclesiastical and other miracles has an important bearing upon those of the New Testament, whether we believe or deny their reality. If we regard the miracles of Church history to be in the main real, the whole force of the Gospel miracles, as exceptional supernatural evidence of a Divine Revelation, is annihilated. The "miraculous credentials of Christianity" assume a very different aspect when they are considered from such a point of view. Admitted to be scarcely recognisable from miracles wrought by Satanic agency, they are seen to be a continuation of wonders recorded in the Old Testament, to be preceded and accompanied by pretension to similar power on the part of the Jews and other nations, and to be succeeded by cycles of miracles, in all essential respects the same, performed subsequently for upwards of fifteen hundred years. Supernatural evidence of so common and prodigal a nature certainly betrays a great want of force and divine speciality. How could that be considered as express evidence for a new Divine revelation which was already so well known to the world, and which is scattered broadcast over so many centuries, as well as successfully simulated by Satan?

If, on the other hand, we dismiss the miracles of later ages as

false, and as merely the creations of superstition or pious imagination, how can the miracles of the Gospel, which are precisely the same in type, and not better established as facts, remain unshaken? The Apostles and Evangelists were men of like passions, and also of like superstitions, with others of their time, and must be measured by the same standard.

If we consider the particular part which miracles have played in human history, we find precisely the phenomena which might have been expected if, instead of being considered as real occurrences, they are recognised as the mistakes or creations of ignorance and superstition during that period in which "reality melted into fable, and invention unconsciously trespassed on the province of history." Their occurrence is limited to ages which were totally ignorant of physical laws, and they have been numerous or rare precisely in proportion to the degree of imagination and love of the marvellous characterising the people amongst whom they are said to have occurred. Instead of a few evidential miracles taking place at one epoch of history, and filling the world with surprise at such novel and exceptional phenomena, we find miracles represented as occurring in all ages and in all countries. The Gospel miracles are set in the midst of a series of similar wonders, which commenced many centuries before the dawn of Christianity and continued, without interruption, for fifteen hundred years after it. They did not in the most remote degree originate the belief in miracles, or give the first suggestion of spurious imitation. It may, on the contrary, be much more truly said that the already existing belief created these miracles. No divine originality characterised the evidence selected to accredit the Divine Revelation. The miracles with which the history of the world is full occurred in ages of darkness and superstition, and they gradually ceased when enlightenment became more generally diffused. At the very time when knowledge of the laws of nature began to render men capable of judging of the reality of miracles, these wonders entirely failed. This extraordinary cessation of miracles, precisely at the time when their evidence might have acquired value by an appeal to persons capable of appreciating them, is perfectly unintelligible if they be viewed as the supernatural credentials of a Divine revelation. If, on the other hand, they be regarded as the mistakes of imaginative excitement and ignorance, nothing is more natural than their extinction at the time when the superstition which created them gave place to knowledge.

As a historical fact, there is nothing more certain than that miracles, and the belief in them, disappeared exactly when education and knowledge of the operation of natural laws became

diffused throughout Europe, and that the last traces of belief in supernatural interference with the order of nature are only to be found in localities where ignorance and superstition still prevail, and render delusion or pious fraud of that description possible. Miracles are now denied to places more enlightened than Naples or La Salette. The inevitable inference from this fact is fatal to the mass of miracles, and it is not possible to protect them from it. Miracle cures by the relics of saints, upheld for fifteen centuries by all the power of the Church, utterly failed when medical science, increasing in spite of persecution, demonstrated the natural action of physiological laws. The theory of the demoniacal origin of disease has been entirely and for ever dispelled, and the host of miracles in connection with it retrospectively exploded by the progress of science. Witchcraft and sorcery, the belief in which reigned supreme for so many centuries, are known to have been nothing but the delusions of ignorant superstition.

Notwithstanding the facts which we have stated, it has been argued: "Christianity is the religion of the civilised world, and it is believed upon its miraculous evidence. Now, for a set of miracles to be accepted in a rude age, and to retain their authority throughout a succession of such ages, and over the ignorant and superstitious part of mankind, may be no such great result for the miracle to accomplish, because it is easy to satisfy those who do not inquire. But this is not the state of the case which we have to meet on the subject of the Christian miracles. The Christian being the most intelligent, the civilised portion of the world, these miracles are accepted by the Christian body as a whole, by the thinking and educated, as well as the uneducated, part of it, and the Gospel is believed upon that evidence."¹ The picture of Christendom here suggested is purely imaginary. We are asked to believe that succeeding generations of thinking and educated, as well as uneducated, men since the commencement of the period in which the adequate inquiry into the reality of miracles became possible, have made that adequate inquiry, and have intelligently and individually accepted miracles and believed the Gospel in consequence of their attestation. The fact, however, is that Christianity became the religion of Europe before men either possessed the knowledge requisite to appreciate the difficulties involved in the acceptance of miracles, or minds sufficiently freed from ignorant superstition to question the reality of the supposed supernatural interference with the order of nature, and belief had become so much a matter of habit that, in our time, the great majority of men have professed belief for no better reason

¹ Mozley, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 27.

than that their fathers believed before them. Belief is now little more than a transmitted quality or hereditary custom. Few men, even now, have either the knowledge or the leisure requisite to enable them to enter upon such an examination of miracles as can entitle them to affirm that they intelligently accept miracles for themselves. We have shown, moreover, that so loose are the ideas even of the clergy upon the subject that dignitaries of the Church fail to see either the evidential purpose of miracles or the need for evidence at all, and the first intelligent step towards inquiry—doubt—has generally been stigmatised almost as a crime.

So far from the statement which we are considering being correct, it is notorious that the great mass of those who are competent to examine, and who have done so, altogether reject miracles. Instead of the "thinking and educated" men of science accepting miracles, they, as a body, distinctly deny them, and hence the antagonism between science and ecclesiastical Christianity; and it is surely not necessary to point out how many of the profoundest critics and scholars of Germany, and of all other countries in Europe, who have turned their attention to Biblical subjects, have long ago rejected the miraculous elements of the Christian religion.

It is necessary that we should now refer to the circumstance that all the arguments which we have hitherto considered in support of miracles, whether to explain or account for them, have proceeded upon an assumption of the reality of the alleged phenomena. Had it been first requisite to establish the truth of facts of such an astounding nature, the necessity of accounting for them would never have arisen. It is clear, therefore, that an assumption which permits the argument to attain any such position begs almost the whole question. Facts, however astounding, the actual occurrence of which had been proved, would claim a latitude of explanation, which a mere narrative of those alleged facts, written by an unknown person some eighteen centuries ago, could not obtain. If, for instance, it be once established as an absolute fact that a man actually dead, and some days buried, upon whose body decomposition had already made some progress,¹ had been restored to life, the fact of his death and of his subsequent resuscitation being so absolutely proved that the possibility of deception or of mistake on the part of the witnesses was totally excluded, it is clear that an argument, as to whether such an occurrence should be ascribed to known or unknown laws, would assume a very different character from that which it would have borne if the argument merely sought to account for so

¹ Cf. John xi. 39.

astounding a phenomenon of whose actual occurrence there was no sufficient evidence.

It must not be forgotten, therefore, that, as the late Professor Baden Powell pointed out, "At the present day it is not *a miracle*, but the *narrative of a miracle*, to which any argument can refer, or to which faith is accorded."¹ The discussion of miracles, then, is not one regarding miracles actually performed within our own knowledge, but merely regarding miracles said to have been performed eighteen hundred years ago, the reality of which was not verified at the time by any scientific examination, and whose occurrence is merely reported in the Gospels. Now, although Paley and others rightly and logically maintain that Christianity requires, and should be believed only upon, its miraculous evidence, the fact is that popular Christianity is not believed because of miracles, but miracles are accepted because they are related in the Gospels which are supposed to contain the doctrines of Christianity. The Gospels have for many generations been given to the child as inspired records, and doubt of miracles has, therefore, either never arisen or has been instantly suppressed, simply because miracles are recorded in the sacred volume. It could scarcely be otherwise, for in point of fact the Gospel miracles stand upon no other testimony. We are therefore in this position: We are asked to believe astounding announcements beyond the limits of human reason, which we could only be justified in believing upon miraculous evidence, upon the testimony of miracles which are only reported by the records which also alone convey the announcements which those miracles were intended to accredit. There is no other contemporary evidence whatever. The importance of the Gospels, therefore, as the almost solitary testimony to the occurrence of miracles can scarcely be exaggerated. We have already made an anticipatory remark regarding the nature of these documents, to which we may add that they are not the work of perfectly independent historians, but of men who were engaged in disseminating the new doctrines, and in saying this we have no intention of accusing the writers of conscious deception; it is, however, necessary to state the fact in order that the value of the testimony may be fairly estimated. The narratives of miracles were written by ardent partisans, with minds inflamed by religious zeal and enthusiasm, in an age of ignorance and superstition, a considerable time after the supposed miraculous occurrences had taken place. All history shows how rapidly pious memory exaggerates and idealises the traditions of the past, and simple actions might readily be transformed into miracles, as the narratives circulated, in a period so prone to

¹ *Order of Nature*, p. 285.