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# Redemption From This World

Or

The Supernatural In  
Christianity

A. G. HOGG, M.A.  
1922

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# REDEMPTION FROM THIS WORLD

OR

THE SUPERNATURAL IN CHRISTIANITY

BY

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(*CUNNINGHAM LECTURES*)

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“ THERE is a kingdom into which none enter but children, in which the children play with infinite forces, where the child's little finger becomes stronger than the giant world ; a wide kingdom where the world exists only by sufferance ; to which the world's laws and developments are for ever subjected ; in which the world lies like a foolish, wilful dream in the solid truth of the day.”

Dr. FLEMING STEVENSON.

## PREFACE.



THE present volume contains the Cunningham Lectures delivered at New College, Edinburgh, in November and December 1921. The fifth lecture is here represented by Chapters V. and VI., the latter containing a discussion of the relation between the will of God and events in time which the fixed limits of a lecture-hour made it necessary to omit in oral delivery. Similar omissions of a less extensive character are made good at other points in the volume, notably in the third chapter, and the concluding lecture has been recast for publication. Otherwise the lectures appear substantially as they were delivered. My thanks are due to the Editor of the *Expository Times* for permission to embody, with little alteration, a study of the "Stilling of the Tempest" and the "Walking on the Waves," which I contributed to his pages. Also into the concluding chapter I have worked the substance of a few paragraphs from a meditation on Prayer, originally printed in connexion with the visit to India of Dr. Mott and Dr. Eddy in 1912, and subsequently embodied in an article in the *International Review*

*of Missions.* This has been done with the consent of the Editor of that *Review*, for which courtesy I desire to express my thanks.

Among theological topics there is hardly one that stands to-day more urgently in need of fresh, serious discussion than that of the supernatural. For a fresh discussion the door has been opened wide by the new understanding which recent years have brought of the apocalyptical background of New Testament thought. But although it has not escaped notice that the miracle-working of Christ and of the early Church drew its sanction, at least in part, from the realm of apocalyptical conception, there has been as yet no systematic attempt, by professional theologians of note, to explore the problem of the supernatural from this point of view in a theologically constructive interest. This remissness on their part may well excuse ventures into so inviting a field by minds which are theologically less well equipped—perhaps even by one for whom, owing to the exacting demands of a philosophical chair, theology cannot be more than a hobby.

If freshness in the angle of approach is one of the clamant requirements in any handling of this subject, another is open-minded seriousness. In regard to the supernatural there still is to-day too much of what almost deserves to be called cant. When Croce, desiring to explain what he means by a defunct or superseded concept, casually

adduces "miracle" as an illustration, behind the ostensible casualness there may possibly lie some parade of his characteristic anti-theological prejudice; yet, in treating the idea of the miraculous as beneath serious discussion, he does no more than express an attitude very prevalent in modern culture. Surely it is high time that this attitude should be boldly challenged! It is a tradition which has survived the intellectual conditions that gave it dignity and seriousness. Kantianism is no longer the last word of wisdom in the realm of the theory of knowledge, nor do mechanical conceptions any longer hold unchallenged sway over the realm of positive science. Among the Christian verities the supernatural or miraculous is so far from being the most difficult of philosophical defence that, on the contrary, it is one of the easiest to construe in a philosophically unexceptionable manner. And, on the experimental plane of practical religion, there is no lack of facts which cry out for that unbiased sifting, and sympathetic but just appraisal, which only an intelligently reconstructed concept of the supernatural can render possible. Under these altered conditions an attitude of easy, irresponsible disbelief in the miraculous is simply a belated survival—the kind of survival which, when it takes the form of theological belief instead of disbelief, is commonly called cant.

Nevertheless, for this mood of incredulity, in-

defensible though it be on its own merits, there is an indirect excuse. For if there be something savouring of cant in the fashionable disdain for stories of miracle, would it be altogether easy to repel a similar aspersion upon the attitude of the orthodox defenders of the miraculous? If *a priori* scepticism regarding the supernatural is a belated survival, equally belated a survival is any religious faith that allows the halo which deservedly surrounds the creative period of Christianity to make of it a kind of spiritual fairyland, in which any marvel whatever is credible, no matter how unrelated to the possibilities of to-day. Our modern historical sense recognizes that continuity is as indefeasible a principle on the spiritual as it is on the physical plane. Either we must, like the decriers of the miraculous, level down the credited achievements of New Testament times to the standard of what modern experience can corroborate, or else we must level up our estimate of the kind of marvels which modern faith may permissibly attempt to the height of those with which we credit our Master and His first disciples. But how many defenders of the miraculous face the demand of this alternative? And if they do not, should they feel altogether surprised that some should doubt the practical reality of their belief in the supernatural? For do not they seem to be forgetting that the Christ of faith, being also the Jesus of history, lived in the same universe as

we do, and being incarnated as "very Man," had to face, with human faculties, an environment identical with ours in the bounds, or the boundlessness, of its possibilities? In degree of perfection and beauty His achievements will ever transcend ours, but ours should be the same in kind. The only "supernatural" that is worth defending, the only "supernatural" that will be not a burden on faith, but its inspiration, is the supernatural as a permanent factor in that life of spiritual adventure which is practical Christianity.

It follows that any constructive investigation of the supernatural should approach it from the standpoint of the miracle-worker. This aspect of the problem is steadily kept in view throughout this book, but it is remarkable how little attention it has hitherto received. For although, even when considered as mere events, miracles may be sufficiently strange and arresting, they are still more noteworthy and arresting when considered as deeds, as brave ventures of faith. Few even of those who hold that nothing really miraculous can ever happen will care to deny that miracle-working has been sincerely and worthily attempted. Surely, then, the mentality that can address itself to miracle-working deserves much more than it has received of patient and respectful study!

The very restricted range of the present work will be obvious to every reader. Within the limits

of six lectures it was impossible to aspire to anything approaching a complete investigation of the subject. In my own view the most glaring omissions are the absence of any study of the practice of the early Church in respect of supernatural redemption from physical ills, and my abstinence from any attempt to corroborate my argument for the permanent possibility of redemptive miracle by citing modern phenomena like the Lourdes miracles, the noteworthy recent developments of faith-healing and "Christian Science," and the very striking ways in which (as witness, for example, the biography of Hudson Taylor) God has honoured the faith and prayers of individual Christians of our own age. The necessity for the former omission I have greatly deplored. In regard to the latter I take the view that the data in question are fairly well known, and that the prime necessity is simply to break down the prejudice which hinders them from commanding open-minded attention. I have thought it well, therefore, to reserve the whole space at my disposal for the effort to undermine this prejudice by developing an historically grounded, constructive view of the miraculous or supernatural as a permanent factor in practical Christianity.

I have made no attempt systematically to acknowledge any but the directest kind of indebtedness to other writers. When a book is the outcome of years of brooding, its author's

chief obligations are apt to be to thinkers of whom he has no occasion to make frequent mention, because what he has learned from them has been worked so completely into the texture of his own thought. In philosophy I have been most determinatively influenced by Kant, Hegel, Bergson, Croce, and—in our own land—Professor A. S. Pringle Pattison; in theology I owe most to Herrmann, Kaftan, Titius, and—at home—to the conversation and correspondence of Professor D. S. Cairns. I should like also to make grateful acknowledgment of the helpful stimulus which, at a critical stage in the development of my thought on the present subject, I derived from a little book, with the conclusions of which I have seldom, in the end, been able to agree—*Christ and the Kingdom of God*, by Professor S. H. Hooke, of Victoria College, Toronto. It was in a reviewer's notice written by Dr. N. Macnicol of Poona that I met with the quotation with which the first chapter ends. He tells me that it was taken from a book by Dr. Fleming Stevenson, entitled *Praying and Working*. I could not desire an apter motto for the present work.

Possibly readers of my previous more tentative and expository venture into the same field as that, a portion of which is here more systematically explored, may desire a few words on the relation between the conclusions of the two inquiries. For the use of an Indian group of Study Circle

leaders whom, in 1910, I undertook to train, I wrote from week to week a series of studies of the epoch-making message which our Lord proclaimed. Collected, revised, and expanded, these studies were published in the following year under the title, *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*—in form, a Bible Circle textbook; in substance, a serious venture in Synoptic exegesis and theological construction. In two very fundamental respects that book and the present are at one. Both reflect a conviction that real Christianity is life upon a plane of unmeasured new possibilities, physical as well as spiritual. Also both books abstain from committing themselves to broad generalizations, such as that faith has the right in all cases to expect release from disease or physical defect. But whereas, at the earlier date, abstinence from this particular generalization was due to an instinctive shrinking, so imperfectly analysed that I wondered whether it might not be merely a lingering naturalistic prejudice, it now represents a reasoned attitude. I still conceive it possible that future Christian experience may show this generalization to have much more universal validity than it is easy for us at present to believe. But faith must always stand above rules. Its duty is to respond, step by step, to the challenge of a Providence which is ever intimately individual. The rightful task of a living theology of Redemption is to clarify principles; to generalize con-

fidently about their application would be to thrust irreverent, clumsy fingers into the responsible, loyal inwardness of the soul's life with God.

There is a second difference of a general character between the earlier book and the present work. The former was written under the exhilaration of a still recent deliverance, by fresh New Testament study, from the cramping fetters of lingering naturalistic habits of thought. Consequently, in that book, special emphasis fell on the negative aspect of Redemption; the supernatural tended to include indiscriminately everything that was non-mechanical; no pains were taken to demarcate clearly between special providence and miracle, nor was there any attempt, by aid of a distinction between principle and law, to formulate the positive character of Christian freedom. In the present work, on the other hand, the idea of the miraculous or supernatural is much more carefully and narrowly defined. Much that I was formerly willing to call "miracle" I now call only "special providence." But I should be sorry if a change of nomenclature occasioned by a clarification of theory were mistaken for a radical change of practical attitude. On the experimental issue, in its broadest terms, I must still stand where I did, unable to escape the humbling conviction that the New Testament insistently challenges the Church to daily triumphs of faith over the evils

and anomalies of our present experience — triumphs which, whether they are to be called supernatural or natural, far surpass her present achievements.

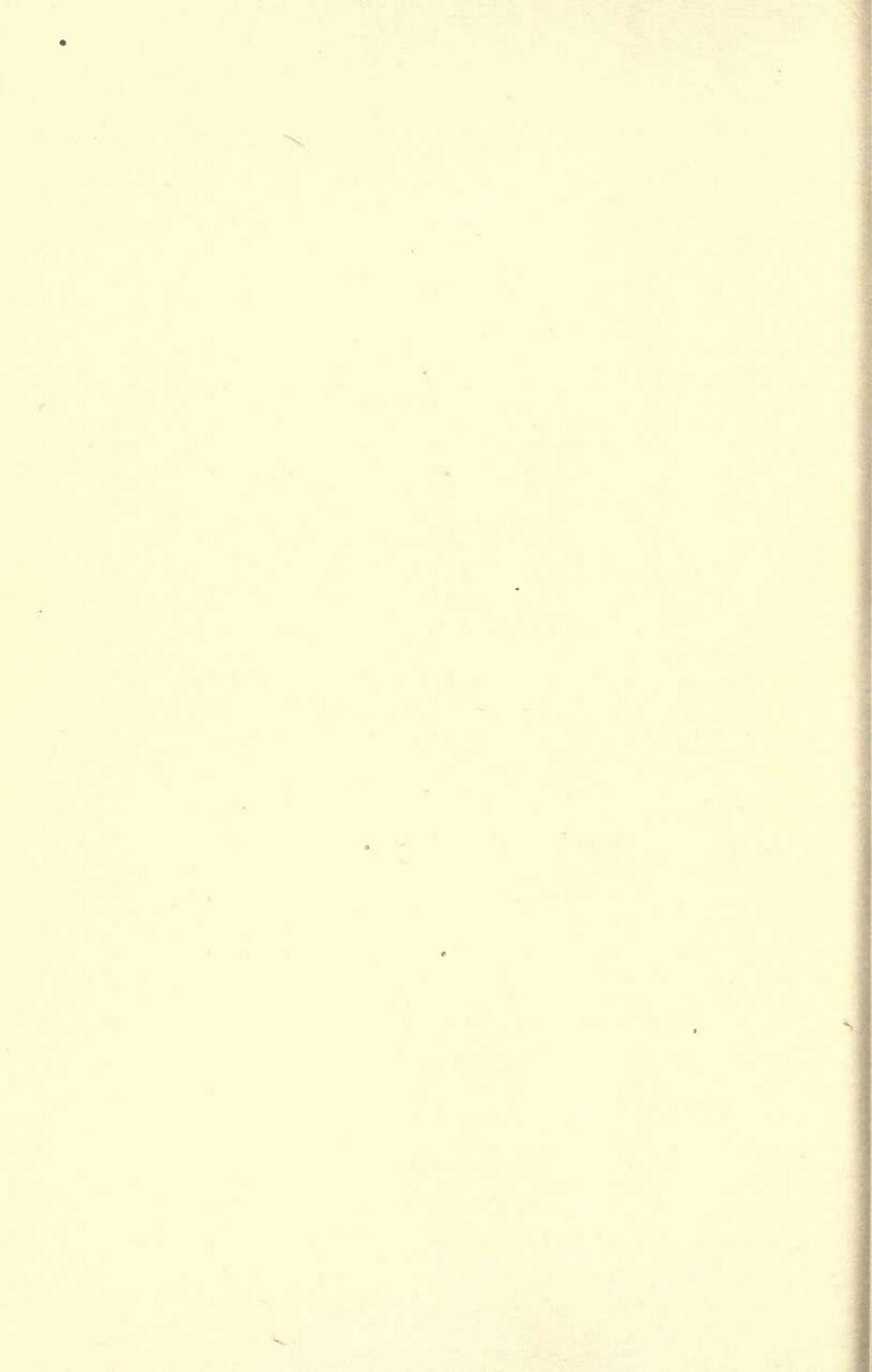
A. G. HOGG.

*22nd March 1922.*

# CONTENTS.



	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	v
CHAP. I. SUPERNATURAL BECAUSE REDEMPTIVE . . . . .	1
II. "THE TIME IS FULFILLED" . . . . .	27
III. THE DAWNING OF "THE LAST DAYS" . . . . .	63
IV. SUPERNATURAL AND NATURAL . . . . .	107
V. THE MIRACULOUS AS THE PRETERNATURAL . . . . .	143
VI. THE MIRACULOUS AS THE ACT OF GOD . . . . .	173
VII. ON THE KING'S BUSINESS . . . . .	201
NOTES AND REFERENCES . . . . .	241
INDEX . . . . .	273



CHAPTER I.

SUPERNATURAL BECAUSE REDEMPTIVE.

## SYNOPSIS.

MIRACLES studied too exclusively as events, too little as deeds. If the New Testament wonders are to be of any practical modern interest or inspiration, we must learn to regard them once again as supreme instances of that life of obedient adventure and supernatural enablement which is permanently the essence of practical Christianity. Fallacy of assuming without inquiry that the "natural" with which the "supernatural" stands in contrast is "nature" in the sense of the scientist or philosopher. For a well-grounded definition of that "natural" to which the Christian "supernatural" is superior and contrary, we must inquire what is that from which Christianity redeems. In the apocalyptic hope "redemption" was to involve the destruction or supersession of the existent world-order as such, and therefore the supernaturalism of apocalyptic was radical. If Christianity offered present redemption from sin alone, it might know only of spiritual miracles. But Christianity is a religion of redemption in a sense more far-reaching than this. Comparison of prophetic and apocalyptic Messianism. Christianity accepts substantially the same premises as apocalyptic, but from the first it possessed—what apocalyptic lacked—the courage and selflessness to draw from these premises the true conclusion. Christian supernaturalism consequently less radical. The Christian is redeemed not from "nature" in the absolute sense, but from the world of the worldly-wise into the world of the childlike.

## CHAPTER I.

### SUPERNATURAL BECAUSE REDEMPTIVE.

THE subject of miracle and the supernatural, to which I am to invite the reader's attention, is one which I make no apology for selecting as a field for fresh inquiry. It may easily be treated in such a way as to render it one of the most depressing and lifeless of topics, but that is because it is so often approached as a question concerning events of an unrepeatable past. In defiance of this long-standing Protestant tradition, it seems necessary to insist that such an attitude to miracle and the supernatural is a departure from the original and authentic Christian standpoint. Herrmann was guilty of no paradox or exaggeration when he wrote that what Jesus demanded of His followers, as practical demonstration of their discipleship, was never "that they should believe in miracles narrated of other people; what He did expect of them was that they should experience miracles and should perform miracles."<sup>1</sup> We must cease to regard the New Testament miracles from the outside as mere events; we must study them from within

as human deeds of faith, deeds of that same Christian faith which we claim to share, and therefore deeds which, upon fit occasion, it may conceivably become our own duty to emulate. So conceived, even the most striking of Jesus' miracles may cease to burden our faith, and may once again become, instead, its inspiration. For we shall begin to regard them as towering summits of that mountain-range of Christian adventure and supernatural enablement which we know to be no mere airy mirage, because our own feet are planted upon its lower slopes and find them solid to our tread.

The fact that this point of view has become an unfamiliar side from which to approach the problem we have to study, should make us doubly careful how we pick our first steps. It is so easy to stray from the path. In particular, there is one false turning which we must carefully avoid. In the English language there are two terms which are commonly treated as practically synonymous, namely, "the miraculous" and "the supernatural." I do not object to this identification as a matter of linguistic usage. Nevertheless, the latter of these terms might easily become for us the stile admitting to Bypath Meadow and leading to Doubting Castle. This will be apt to happen if we allow ourselves to assume without inquiry that we know what is meant by the second component of the term "supernatural."

Too commonly it is quietly taken for granted that what makes an event "supernatural," in the religious sense of the term, is that it is superior or even contrary to "nature" in that sense of the word "nature" which is customary in scientific or philosophical writings.<sup>2</sup> Now, whether it is indeed the case that "nature," in this sense of the term, is transcended or even contradicted by the "supernatural" is a question which we shall have subsequently to determine. But at any rate it is not transcendence or contradiction of "nature," so understood, that renders the miraculous "supernatural" in a religious sense of the term; and if we allow ourselves to suppose otherwise, the penalty is likely to be that, without the compensation of getting any nearer a religious understanding of the supernatural, we shall find ourselves at war with science and philosophy.

In accordance with its etymology "the miraculous" designates a kind of fact which no one can directly experience without an overpowering religious emotion of awe and wonder. It is primarily in the sense of this wonderfulness that the miraculous is "supernatural." For what is wonderful is necessarily contrary, or at least superior, to what is "natural" in the sense of being familiar or commonplace. This very circumstance is of itself enough to suggest that the religiously "supernatural" cannot be simply the logical contradictory of the "natural" in the

scientific sense of the term. For one cannot help observing how frequently, in the mind of to-day, the scientific or philosophic idea of "nature" is emotionally tinged with some of that awe and reverent wonder which distinguishes the religious experience of the "supernatural." Obviously, then, it will be for our inquiry the path of prudence to start from the positive element of meaning emphasized in the term "miraculous," rather than from the ambiguous negative element emphasized in the sister term "supernatural."

Now, beyond all doubt, the positive content of any religious experience of the miraculous or supernatural is that in it the man to whom the experience comes is conscious of meeting God, as it were, face to face. Merely to be mysterious, merely to go beyond, or even to contradict, our best understanding of physical or historical precedent, does not suffice to render an event miraculous or supernatural in a religious sense. In addition to this it is necessary that in the event God, whom faith *believes* to be always present, shall become *self-evidently* present.<sup>3</sup> In anything that deserves to be called experience of the supernatural or miraculous, we pass beyond mere belief to spiritual perception. But while the positive content of a religious experience of the supernatural is constituted by this direct perception of God as here and now present and active, the experience is not distinctively Christian

unless the God of whom it yields us immediate apprehension is manifestly the same God whom we know in and through Jesus Christ, and so is none other than the Heavenly Father, the redeeming God, the conquering Foe of all that injuriously threatens and cramps us. The phenomena of primitive types of religion show that it is in no wise intrinsically impossible for an experience to be genuinely supernatural, in the positive sense here indicated, and yet to awaken only solemn awe or even craven terror. But it is characteristic of Christianity that the marvels in which God breaks His way into our circle of apprehension, with a self-evidence which at the time is irresistible, are wonders of grace. The miracles of which the Gospels tell are marvels in which God is found coming to supply man's wants, to support his weakness or to succour his distress. The inward experience of the supernatural, with the joy of which the whole New Testament rings, is an experience of release—of a disburdened conscience, of reinforced energies, of clouds rolled away, of the impossible become possible. And both the outward and the inward, the physical miracles and the experience of the supernatural within, are included by New Testament thought under one compendious idea—the idea of redemption from this world through the approach of the Kingdom of God.

It may be in only one passage (Heb. vi. 5)

that miraculous gifts are directly called "the powers of the age to come," that is, of the apocalyptic Kingdom of God, but the conception permeates the Synoptic tradition. And with the more inward boons which awaken the Christian's amazed wonder and praise the case is similar. The first stage of Christian thinking explains to itself the experiences of forgiveness and regeneration by the reflection that in the death and resurrection of the Christ the Messianic era has dawned. Far be it from me to deny how transient a phenomenon was this almost purely Messianic phase of Christian thinking, whose echoes remain easily audible by the ordinary New Testament reader mainly in the early chapters of Acts. In the Messianic scheme there was really no room for a fact so contrary to expectation, and spiritually so pregnant, as the crucifixion of the Christ. Practically at once, therefore, we see early Christian reflection beginning to lay bare the spiritual kernel under the apocalyptic husk. But in the New Testament the kernel is only laid bare; it is never wholly removed from the husk. And if, in our theology to-day, we proceed by merely wrenching apart, with rough hands, the kernel and the husk, we shall sacrifice some of the essential flavour of the spiritual kernel of New Testament Christianity. In fact, the metaphor of husk and kernel is here inadequate; a better one is furnished by the analogy of fore-

ground and background in a painting. Throughout the whole New Testament the spiritual is ever the absorbingly impressive foreground; and yet always there is a background of apocalyptic conceptions, sometimes so vaguely limned that our modern eyes, even if they do not miss them altogether, have difficulty in apprehending their contribution to the picture. If our current Christianity is not to be false to its origins, it must take care to be spiritual in the New Testament sense. Its inward serenity must be the result not of indifference to external fetters, but of the breaking of those fetters. It must spring from something corresponding to the New Testament's joyful discovery that for the Christian all things are new, that he is raised to a plane of inexhaustible fresh possibilities, material as well as spiritual.

Now, if we may take it for granted, at least provisionally, that the case actually stands as I have here represented it; if the God who, in Christian experience of the supernatural, becomes manifest with all the indubitableness of immediate perception is a redeeming God; if, further, the most compendious way of summing up the positive features of Christian experience of the supernatural in terms of early Christian thought is to say that the Christian found that he was being redeemed from this world by the powers of the age to come; and if, finally, it be granted

that in this mode of conception there was something permanently valid, for which Christianity to-day must provide a new expression before it dare totally discard the old, then for our present inquiry important implications come to light at once. Instead of having to depend on etymological inferences, or even arbitrary assumptions, as to what should be understood by the "natural" with which the Christian "supernatural" stands in contrast, we begin to find a basis for well-grounded conclusions. We begin to comprehend why, in Christianity, the positively miraculous or wonderful must be also negatively supernatural. What Christian experience of the miraculous or supernatural consists of is something positive: it is acceptance with God; it is liberty; it is life on a plane of new possibilities. But in the apprehension of the man who is thus privileged the new experience always derives part of its significance from its contrast with the old. For, since his new status is one which requires to be continuously appropriated by ever fresh acts of faith, its superiority of privilege forces itself constantly upon his attention. The new liberty never ceases to be felt as the breaking of an old bondage, which had grown so habitual as to have become second nature, and into the grip of which it is but too easy to slip back. Here, then, is at least one sense in which, even if there be no other, the wonderful experience is necessarily felt as

“supernatural” ; it is supernatural in the sense of being above and contrary to the familiar, to that which has been already explored and delimited and found wanting.

There is, however, a second shade of negative meaning which now readily comes to light. The familiar bondage from which the Christian finds that he is being released is an experience which, although not by every one consciously realized, is too universally the lot of man to be grounded in conditions peculiar to the individual sufferer. Its root must therefore strike deep down into something in the cosmic order. Christianity, inasmuch as it breaks the enslaving power of this something in the nature of things, shows itself the latter's superior. It is “supernatural” in the sense that it cancels a state of bondage which otherwise appears to be a normal resultant of the nature of things. If that to which the Christian supernatural is superior and contrary is not nature absolutely, but only a natural or familiar bondage, still the familiarity of that bondage is due to the nature of things and has behind it the working of the cosmic order.

Both these respects in which we have now realized that in Christianity the positively miraculous must be also negatively supernatural, are covered by a formula which might seem to provide a safe and hopeful point of departure for the journey of exploration on which we are

entering. This formula is that Christianity is necessarily supernatural because, and in so far as, it is redemptive. Why, then, does the title which I have chosen for the present work go beyond this formula and read, "Redemption from this world"? The phrase itself is suggested by an important article contributed by Kaftan, in July 1908, to the *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, in which he tells how the history of religion had opened his eyes to the fact that in Christianity, as in other religions of redemption, redemption *from the world* is the leading and fundamental fact. "Religion consummates itself," he says, "when it develops into a longing of the soul for God, seeking life and blessedness not in anything whatever that God gives, but in God Himself. For the man who has this experience the world is no longer anything; God is everything. Accordingly religion of this kind, spiritual religion, has its most characteristic distinguishing feature in this, that it exalts a man above the world, frees him, redeems him from it, and does so precisely through his oneness with God, his communion with Him. The name 'religions of redemption' is given [by Comparative Religion] to all those faiths in which this goal of all religion is recognized and striven after, whether it be reached or only sought. Hence, in its proper signification, redemption means," Kaftan continues, "redemption from the world," and he proceeds

to raise the question how this primary meaning of redemption has come to be missed in Protestant doctrinal construction, although it can be shown to have been fundamental for New Testament thought. With the historical explanation of this doctrinal omission we need not here concern ourselves. It is the fact itself we have to note—the fact that the redemptive aspect of Christianity is usually conceived to-day in a narrower way than it was in the primitive age. Too commonly redemption means for us only redemption from sin, or even only redemption from punishment, whereas by those who first experienced redemption through Christ it was conceived of as redemption from the many-sided tyranny of an evil world-order, of which guilt and moral impotence were only factors, although doubtless the most outstanding and momentous factors. Now, if it be true, as I have contended, that Christianity is supernatural because, and in so far as, it is redemptive, may not our modern tendency to minimize the place of the supernatural in Christianity be connected with this tendency to narrow our conception of the redemption which Christ offers and begins to make effectual here and now? For example, may not the tendency to believe only in spiritual miracles be the result of believing in a present redemption from sin alone? If questions like these are to be answered in the affirmative, as I think they must be, it will surely

repay us if we proceed to open up our problem of the nature and range of the supernatural in Christianity by starting from the primitive apocalyptic way of conceiving redemption through Christ as release from the domination of nothing narrower than an evil world-order. Without admitting at first anything more than the *prima facie* likelihood that the apocalyptic forms of conception in which Christianity began by clothing itself expressed something of real spiritual value, let us examine the idea of a redemption from this world, and see how far it was ratified by Jesus Christ, and what, in so far as it was ratified, are its implications as to the place of the supernatural in Christianity.

Such, in brief forecast, is the line of attack upon the problem of the supernatural which is to be adopted in this volume. It may have the disadvantage of suggesting at the outset a more radical or absolute sense of the term "supernatural" than perhaps we can finally acquiesce in. For, if we conceive that from which the Christian is being redeemed or set free as nothing less than an entire world-order, this very obviously means that the redeeming operation of God is regarded not simply as counteracting the evils of our ordinary experience, but as contravening its whole nature. Yet this possible disadvantage will be more than com-

pensated if our chosen line of attack helps us to recover a vivid impression of the far-reaching sense in which Christianity is a religion of redemption.

It is astonishing how frequently to-day one meets with Christians who feel their faith shaken by the evils and disasters which they see around them, or by which they are personally beset. The faith that can be shaken in this way may be genuinely a religious faith, but certainly it is not specifically Christian. It would almost seem as if these troubled souls had supposed that Christianity might be summed up in the comfortable conviction: "God's in His heaven; all's right with the world." So, when they discover how manifestly all is not right with the world, it is only natural for doubts to assail them about the reality or the loving-kindness of God. But the true nature of Christianity is something very different. The essence of a characteristically Christian optimism would be much less inadequately expressed by saying: "God has come to earth, for there's something far wrong with the world." Nothing in the authentic Gospel of Christianity requires us to turn a blind eye upon the darker facts of life; indeed, the case is quite the contrary. Not the possibility of grave evils and disasters, but their impossibility—that is what would confute our Christian creed; their actual abundance is rather a confirmation of its truth

than a difficulty in its way. If space permitted, it would not be difficult to develop this assertion historically, metaphysically and psychologically.

The assertion can be argued for *historically*. For Christianity is wrongly named unless it was, and ever remains, good news about a Christ or Messiah, One Divinely commissioned to be a creative Renovator of all things; and how could this be possible unless not our souls only, but the very fabric of our common experience were so seamed and marred as to cry aloud for renovation? The assertion in question might be made good also on *metaphysical* grounds. It would be difficult indeed to regard the Christ of whom the Gospel tells as veritably God the Son, veritably a particularizing, under conditions of space and time, of an eternal redemptive reality in the Godhead, unless the evil forces which this Christ was commissioned to rob of their victory were more than the temporary misfortune of a particular historical epoch—unless they were, instead, precisely what indeed they appear to be, namely, tendencies to evil which must persist as logically inevitable constituents of any world in which spiritual values are coming to fruition. Finally—to turn from metaphysics to the homelier levels of psychology—are there any other terms on which a complete Incarnation could be at all *psychologically* conceivable? Is it not the challenge of a great task that calls forth in a man all the

greatness of which he may be capable? And to call forth in the Man Christ Jesus all the riches of the Godhead bodily, was there not needed the challenge of a transcendent task—the task of rescuing our world as a whole from an imminent finality of disaster? Incarnation and Redemption are central tenets of the Christian creed, and they are not confuted but confirmed by the dread facts of pain and loss and ugliness and sin.

It is because Christianity is a religion of redemption from this world that it can look dark facts honestly in the face and yet remain optimistic. Because it knows that the invincible God is actively their enemy, it can frankly recognize their actuality and their ugliness without loss of hope or courage. It has the burning passion of apocalypse without its pessimism. It has its passion, for it is alive to the pity and terror of daily facts which cry aloud for a world-redeemer, a Christ. But it has not its pessimism, for it knows that the Christ has come and is ever with us. It does not, in despair of the present, dwell among dreams of another age of magical renovation; for already, amid the practical actualities of to-day, it beholds redemption puissantly at work. In and upon the unredeemed or natural world it finds the supernatural already operative, a supernatural which is sufficiently akin to the natural to be able to lay hold of it with the wrestler's grip, and yet which, being at strife with the natural, is

*contrary* to it, and being victorious, is manifestly *superior* to the natural.

To understand this warfare of kinsmen between supernatural and natural is exactly our problem. We must neither stress the affinity of natural and supernatural to the obscuring of their conflict, nor stress the conflict to the obscuring of all affinity. Now if, as I have proposed, we begin our study of Christianity as redemptive and therefore supernatural by considering it in its primitive and more definitely apocalyptic form, this means that we are dealing with a type of Christian faith which is more alive to the conflict than to the kinship between supernatural and natural. It was of the essence of the apocalyptic hope of Israel that it looked for the achievement of God's redemptive purpose not through an immanent historical process, but through an impending irruption of the Creator's transcendent might. Herein it went beyond prophetic Messianism. The latter, indeed, had always conceived of God as One of whose power and grace the course of this world was not yet an adequate expression, One whose Kingdom was in some measure still to come, One whose resources the visible universe did not exhaust. And in its pictures of the coming Messianic era it was ready at times to use imagery transcending the analogies of experience. But this imagery was at first poetry rather than fairy-tale; and accordingly we are at liberty, so

far as prophetic Messianism is concerned, to regard the coming Divine reign which was to bring redemption to Israel simply as the "more" in God which had not yet come to historical expression, the unexhausted reserve of that store of power and grace of which all God's dealings with His people had been a partial spending, instead of as the cataclysmic irruption of something radically incommensurable with the past. But, as prophetic developed into apocalyptic Messianism, poetry began to give place definitely to fairy-tale.

It would indeed be quite unfair to regard the development which took place as in every respect a change for the worse. Certainly some of the contributory factors were of a regrettable type. Jewish apocalyptic was unfortunately not content to be indebted to Persian inspiration merely for the cosmical scale of its philosophy of history, but borrowed in part from that source a dualistic tendency as well.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, this dualism was doubtless reinforced by a pessimism inevitably born of the futile endeavour to retain the nationalistic colouring of Israel's religious hope in spite of the way in which world-history seemed to have resolved itself into a succession of universal heathen empires with the children of the promise for their plaything. Nevertheless this was not the whole story; for the radical supernaturalism which apocalyptic substituted for the poetry of

prophecy was, in an honourable degree, the expression of a heightened idealism and an intensified moral passion. It was faith's believing protest that not this or that feature merely of the course of things, but the whole order of human experience, in what appeared to be its constitutive fabric, was not good enough to be the worthy expression of God as He had spiritually revealed Himself to Israel.

Even for the grotesqueness of the imaginative constructions through which this protest uttered itself a good apology may be made. We may do more than point, with Dr. Shailer Mathews,<sup>5</sup> to the naturalness with which the idol-hating Jew, who would hardly dare allow himself even to look at a Greek god or goddess, might prefer to seek the models for his ventures in word-painting among the uncouth monsters of Egyptian and Assyrian art. This may well be an important part of the reason for the partiality of apocalyptic for the grotesque, but may there not be something more? In this partiality for the grotesque, is there not a subtle logic that deserves respect? Apocalyptic is an attempt to express the inexpressible.<sup>6</sup> Sadly convinced that, under the conditions of experience as hitherto known, no possible manifestation of God can be adequate to His real majesty and goodness, apocalyptical faith of necessity postulates the advent of something essentially transcending all known experi-

mental conditions. And, being picture-thinking, apocalyptic has no available tool other than the sensuous imagination to use in construing this transcendent future.<sup>7</sup> But imagination can derive its materials only from past experience. How, then, shall it construe that for which there can be no experimental analogy? Within the limits of picture-thinking there is only one way. Imagination must still take its materials from experience, but must combine them in a manner that contradicts experience. The result is absurdity, but in the absurdity there is an intelligible logic. Artistic inexperience and the influence of Egyptian and Assyrian models may be responsible for the uncouthness of the apocalyptic symbolism; but with a seriousness born of logical necessity the apocalyptic mind was bent on the incongruous, bent on fairy-tale.

Further, behind the message which the incongruous symbolism was meant to utter there was, as already remarked, a moral passion which exacts respect. Whether visions were, in the main, the real source of apocalyptic or, for the most part, only its literary form, in either case its psychical presupposition was an impassioned moral conviction that since the existent world-order was utterly unworthy of God, His tolerance of it must be on the very eve of exhaustion. Full soon must He rend the heavens and come down. Close at hand must be the day when, instead of

holding Himself inscrutably in restraint, and leaving demon-agencies so strangely free a field for playing with the destinies of nations, He would worthily release the pent-up fulness of His might in the service of His goodness and to vindicate His righteousness.

The faith which expresses itself in apocalyptic convictions of this kind easily wins our moral sympathy. It is apt to seem more uncompromising in its hatred of wrong than a faith which tries to solve the problem of evil by a philosophical theodicy. In theodicy faith allies itself with reason; in apocalypse, with imagination. Theodicy is faith schooling itself to what may sometimes become an immoral placidity by subtle excuses for God's tolerance of evil;<sup>8</sup> apocalypse is faith solacing its impatience with vivid pictures of His intolerance. Yet while rendering apocalyptic its due meed of appreciation, we cannot forget that it regarded itself not as purely imaginative art, but as prediction. It was not mere picturing but picture-thinking, philosophy of history of a rudimentary kind. And, judged in that aspect, it has small claims to consideration. Its outstanding defect is not the extravagance but the half-heartedness of its moral logic. For it is not difficult to show that whereas its premises pointed to a conclusion of a disconcertingly practical character, what apocalyptic actually inferred from those premises was only a weakened

and more comfortably theoretical form of this conclusion.

What were the apocalyptical premises? In effect they were : (1) that God is omnipotent and righteous ; and (2) that the world had come to a pass which He ought not to tolerate, and which man could not rectify without supernatural assistance. Now, from these premises the true inference surely is not that God will intervene *soon*, but that He is ready to intervene *now*, that He is ready forthwith to grant those who trust Him miraculous aid in establishing whatever better world-order He may have in view. But, for two reasons, this is a disconcerting inference. In the first place, it is much easier to accept a theoretical belief in future miracles than to stake everything on their occurrence here and now. And, in the second place, when men make practical test of God's willingness to intervene, it quickly becomes painfully evident that what He will supernaturally further is not men's programme of reform, but His own. Thus the true inference from the apocalyptical premises was one that demanded both practical belief in the miraculous there and then and also a complete surrender of self-will. Political Messianism was ready for the practical belief, but not for the surrender of self-will ; it was for a realization of the Jewish idea of what the world ought to be that it dared to expect supernatural assistance

there and then. From the failures of political Messianism apocalyptic refused to draw the true moral. It refused to make the surrender of self-will. It refused to abandon the nationalistic colouring of its religious hope. It preferred to tamper with the logic of its own moral reasoning. From its conviction that God ought not to tolerate the existing state of the world, it preferred to argue, not that He was willing to intervene there and then to establish whatever world-order He thought best, but that He intended to intervene soon to establish the world-order which the Jewish mind thought best. By this great refusal apocalyptic faith condemned itself definitely to mere fairy-tale, to belief in a coming magic which it carefully secluded from the test of present hard fact. That is why we must say that the outstanding fault of Jewish apocalyptical reasoning was not extravagance but half-heartedness.

In place of the great refusal by which apocalyptic bartered away its soul to preserve its nationalism, Christianity substituted the grand acceptance. It made the surrender of self-will, and obtained in reward the supernatural here and now.<sup>9</sup> It took over the supernaturalism of apocalypse, but for it this supernaturalism was not mere theory; it was also practice. And the result was some measure of change in the conception of *the natural*. For the supernatural cannot be seen actually at work without there

arriving, sooner or later, a realization that what can work upon the natural, to supplement and transmute it, cannot be its simple contradictory, but that the natural must have some kind of affinity with the supernatural. Our task in this volume is to seek an understanding of the transformation, within Christianity, of the radical supernaturalism of apocalypse. And by way of anticipation it may be well here to indicate the general nature of the conclusion at which we may expect to arrive.

Christianity essentially is, and must remain, a religion of redemption from the world, and, moreover, of a redemption which we begin to experience here and now. But the world from which it offers this present redemption is neither nature, in any absolute sense, nor yet exactly "the present age" of apocalyptic conception. In Christianity the redemption of which we already have experience is from the world of the worldly-wise into the world of the childlike; it is from the world of the delimited and manageable into a world of inexhaustible possibilities, a world in which many terrible things and all good things are possible; it is from a world of prose into a world of poetry. But never is it redemption from the world of fact into a world of fairy-tale. When the poetry of prophetic Messianism developed into the fairy-tale of apocalypse, with its fatally rigid division of this

world from the next, God brought it back to poetry again, but to a poetry lived and acted. He brought it back to lived and acted poetry, first of all in the herald-consciousness of John the Baptist, and then perfectly in the miracle-working of Jesus Christ. I cannot better express my conception of the new world into which the Christian should find himself here and now redeemed than in the words of a beautiful quotation I have met with from a writer with whose work I have no other acquaintance. "There is a kingdom into which none enter but children, in which the children play with infinite forces, where the child's little finger becomes stronger than the giant world; a wide kingdom where the world exists only by sufferance; to which the world's laws and developments are for ever subjected; in which the world lies like a foolish, wilful dream in the solid truth of the day." A description such as this may read like poetry rather than solid fact; but it is a poetry which Jesus lived and acted out.

CHAPTER II.

“THE TIME IS FULFILLED.”

## SYNOPSIS.

TWO features of the New Testament peculiarly disconcerting to the modern mind are its attitude to the miraculous, and Christ's prediction of an early consummation of the Kingdom of God. Neither feature can be expunged from the records except by a criticism so drastic as to destroy even their general credibility. But ought these features to be so disconcerting? Upon examination they turn out to be closely interconnected. Miracle-working looks like a practical application of—the prediction of an early victory of God's Kingdom like a natural inference from—one and the same idea, namely, that "the last days" of apocalyptic theory had already dawned. But reliance on an apocalyptic tradition would explain an attempt to work prodigies, not homely miracles of healing—would explain also a hopeful expectation, but not a solemn prediction, of an early climax. Necessary, therefore, to look outside the field of apocalyptic conception for a complete solution of the problem. The cardinal difference between the New Testament and Jewish apocalyptic a matter of attitude rather than of conception. The new note struck by John the Baptist. Three points of resemblance between him and Jesus: (1) both display little originality of apocalyptic picture-painting; (2) for both the Kingdom of God has become a practical matter and an immediate expectation; (3) both draw their main inspiration from a source other than apocalyptic tradition. First sketch of a solution of the problem presented by the two disconcerting features discussed in this chapter.

## CHAPTER II.

### “THE TIME IS FULFILLED.”

AMONG the many features of the New Testament which are apt to perplex the minds of modern readers two may be singled out, with very general consent, as the most disconcerting. These are, on the one hand, the place accorded to the miraculous, and, on the other, Jesus' definite prediction of the advent, within His own generation, of a “Kingdom of God” which it is difficult to distinguish in any sharp way from the apocalyptic “age to come.” Criticism has done its best to challenge the authenticity of both features, but in neither case with much success.

With regard to the miraculous the fact which has to be faced is not simply that the Gospel narratives are adorned with tales which, if taken at their face value, manifestly involve the supernatural. The miraculous does not merely adorn the story of Jesus, but enters into its very substance. He speaks as One who both is accustomed to work miracles Himself and expects His followers to do the same; and if we were to eliminate from the record in any wholesale

manner Jesus' deliberate use of powers which He regarded as supernatural, much of His most characteristic teaching would be robbed of its pregnancy, and some manifestly authentic sayings about the power of faith would be reduced to the level of irresponsible rhetoric.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly what we have to reckon with is something much more perplexing than a mere plethora of supernatural events ; we have to reckon with what looks like a claim to human lordship over physical nature for the ends of faith. As will be argued later, the general possibility of the miraculous is not a matter that presents any special philosophical difficulty. What is philosophically surprising is rather the usual monotonous regularity of nature than occasional breaches of that monotony. But it may well seem more perplexing that miracles should ever depend on human initiative. The modern type of religious consciousness instinctively protests against any such idea. It asks at once how it can possibly accord with the humility proper to true religious faith to instigate an abrogation by God of that natural order which He seems to have deliberately decreed. Nor is such a question wholly peculiar to the modern mind. Doubtless the average Jewish contemporary of Jesus had not our scientific conception of natural law. Yet he drew a clear enough distinction between what God had, and what He had not, placed within ordinary human control ; and he would have felt

it presumptuous to attempt to heal the sick or raise the dead by his mere word. Nevertheless the New Testament sees nothing presumptuous in such achievements being attempted by men of faith. Only when we have noted this fact do we realize the full perplexingness of the first of the two disconcerting features I have singled out, namely, the place accorded by the New Testament to the miraculous.

In claiming that criticism cannot eliminate this feature from the Gospel narratives without entirely sacrificing their general credibility, I may probably count on the willing assent of most of the readers of this book, but in the case of the other feature singled out there is likely to be more inclination to challenge its authenticity. If, in speaking of the "Kingdom of God," Jesus had in mind something which, like the apocalyptical "age to come," involved either the supersession or the sublimation of the existing world-order, how could He possibly have predicted its advent within His own generation? Hardly anything could appear, at first sight, less compatible with our Christian estimate of Jesus than to accept it as matter of historical fact that He did make such a prediction. Nevertheless, in the case of this second disconcerting feature of our records as in the case of the first, the connexion with the rest of the narrative is too intimate to allow of any confident denial of authenticity.

Even if we incline a favourable ear to the critical hypothesis that the discourse found in Mark xiii. and parallels owes its most definitely eschatological features to a "Little Apocalypse" of Jewish-Christian origin (Mark xiii. 7, 8, 14-20, 24-27, 30, 31) which has been interwoven with the more authentic material, we are still faced by other passages which are scarcely less disconcerting, and which on critical grounds have high claim to authenticity. It might be possible, indeed, to disparage their importance if we were at liberty to infer, from parables which liken the Kingdom of God to seed sown in a field, or to the mustard plant, or to leaven, that Jesus expected the consummation to arrive by way of gradual development. In that case it might seem permissible to surmise that sayings which appear to fix a definite time-limit owe their categoricalness to misunderstanding or imperfect recollection. Jesus, we might then say, knew that the consummation could not arrive till human faith was ripe; but on occasions when He met with unusually responsive faith, His hopes of a speedy ripening might rise to a high level, and might express themselves in words of expectancy so buoyant as to be mistaken for prediction.<sup>11</sup> As a matter of fact, however, the parables referred to cannot well bear the weight of such inferences. Indirectly, indeed, they may show how far from unconscious Jesus was that even the most sudden

crisis cannot be wholly discontinuous with what has gone before ; but continuity is one thing, slow, even-paced development quite another. And when we look at the direct intention of these parables, instead of at their indirect implications, we are bound to recognize that they aim at suggesting not how gradually but how mysteriously the Kingdom approaches, not how imperceptible are the stages of its ripening but how secure is its ultimate fruition, and how independent of human contrivance. Rightly understood, then, these parables supply no proof that Jesus contemplated even the possibility of an indefinitely long-drawn process of germination and growth. They do very little to mitigate the impression which numerous emphatic sayings of a contrary tendency are calculated to make upon us. *Ἀναφαίνεσθαι*, which is Jesus' characteristic word for the advent of the Kingdom, is “expressly chosen,” says Professor Scott, “in order to fix attention on the startling nature of the manifestation. There will be no slow gradations which can be traced and calculated. The Kingdom will ‘shine out’—will reveal itself instantaneously. . . . It will leap on the world as if from ambush. . . . Jesus heaps image upon image in order to make men realize this bewildering suddenness of the advent of the Kingdom, and the consequent need of entire preparedness, so that every hour will find them watching. His

language is of such a character that we cannot read into it any mere accommodation to a familiar feature of current apocalyptic theory. The accepted theory gave expression to His own belief, that the Kingdom was not to grow into being by some process of historical development, but was to break in all at once, by the direct intervention of God."<sup>12</sup> However dependent its advent might be on the realization of certain indispensable prior conditions of a spiritual kind, these conditions were, nevertheless, only the sign or occasion, not the cause, of the blessed era to follow. Compared with the great portent for which they would give the signal, they were of a character homely and inconspicuous, like the sprouting of the fig-tree—so much so, indeed, that men might be living in presence of the fulfilled preconditions of the final advent, and yet might imagine the Kingdom to be a great way off. Summer could take no one by surprise if the fig-leaves had to grow to full maturity ere the warm weather arrives. But it is otherwise if the signal is only their sprouting, for sprouting may happen in one night. Similarly, if faith had to grow to perfection of strength and stature before God can fulfil His covenant promise, it would be strange indeed if the Kingdom could break in upon an unexpectant world. But the mountains begin to move when faith is small like a grain of mustard-seed; for what tosses them

out of the way is not faith itself, but God in response to faith. The right quality of faith has only to germinate and God is free to act. And it may germinate in a single night; for, like all living things, it is the mysterious work of God. In Jesus' way of conceiving the relation between the transcendent Kingdom and its historical preconditions, there was thus nothing to prevent Him from contemplating the possibility of an early consummation. Now this is a conclusion of the first importance. For if study of Jesus' modes of thought makes it quite conceivable that He entertained the idea that the great day might be close at hand, and if in actual fact His work of preparation was characterized, as we shall see presently, by a note of urgency not found in apocalyptic writings, then mere intellectual honesty requires us to give full weight to any express prediction of an early advent which there are no specific textual grounds for calling in question.

Such a prediction meets us in Mark ix. 1 (= Matt. xvi. 28; Luke ix. 27): "Verily I say unto you, There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God come with power," a passage the reference of which to the final advent is rendered unmistakable by the preceding context. Nor does this passage stand alone. Its substantial authenticity is supported by other

sayings of a similar tendency, namely, Jesus' answer to the high priest:<sup>13</sup> 'Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven' (Mark xiv. 62), and that perplexing earlier saying:<sup>14</sup> "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come" (Matt. x. 23). Thus, by a cumulative argument of which these passages are only the culminating factor, we are constrained to a conclusion which will be unwelcome to many. We are compelled to acknowledge that Jesus entered on His public career with as strong an impression as John the Baptist's of the imminence of the transcendent Kingdom of God, that even to the end He remained confident that in no case would its advent be delayed beyond the lifetime of His contemporaries, and that this confidence of His was so assured as to give itself expression in words of solemn prediction. In arriving at this conclusion we have made no use of the suspected saying of Mark xiii. 30 (= Matt. xxiv. 34; Luke xxi. 32): "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished." But even if this passage owes its place in the records to the intrusion of a "Little Apocalypse," we have no sufficient excuse for doubting that in its prognostication of the date of the final epoch of fulfilment it faithfully reflects Jesus' own conception of the maximum period of delay.<sup>15</sup>

The present lecture opened with the remark that among the many perplexing features of the New Testament two stood out as probably the most disconcerting, namely, the place accorded to the miraculous and Jesus' prediction of an early final advent, and that both of these features have claims to a substantial authenticity which criticism has tried but fails to shake. I have now done what the brief space at my disposal permits towards exhibiting this authenticity, and must henceforth take it for granted. All the more pressing, then, becomes the duty of probing the perplexity which these inexpugnable features of the New Testament record occasion. Ought they to be, after all, as disconcerting as they appear?

The first step to be taken consists in examining how far these two sources of perplexity may be resolved into one. That there must be between them at least an indirect connexion will be readily conceded. For the expectation of an early final advent was part of Jesus' thought about the Kingdom, and it was in His conception of the Kingdom that His consciousness of a right to invoke the supernatural powers of God was rooted.<sup>16</sup> But may we not draw the connexion a little closer? May we not do more than affirm in a general way that Jesus' claim of authority to work miracles depended on His beliefs about the Kingdom? May we not assert

that this claim was specifically connected with one of these beliefs in particular, namely, with His belief concerning the early date at which the Kingdom was to be victoriously established? While it is in Jesus' conception of the *nature* of the Kingdom that we must seek the explanation of the kind of blessings He supernaturally bestowed, may not His thought about the *date* of its advent contain the explanation of His sense of a right to bestow these blessings by supernatural means?

I do not wish it to be thought that in making this suggestion I am relying on the view that Jesus drew a clearly conceived distinction between a sense in which the Kingdom of God was already present and another sense in which it was still future, and that I interpret His miracle-working as a manifestation of the actuality of the Kingdom in its present phase.<sup>17</sup> The question whether any such distinction of phases can be carried through has been keenly debated, but for my present purpose a definite decision is not indispensable.<sup>18</sup> I am disposed to concede that the Kingdom was for Jesus, so far as this earth was concerned, fundamentally a fact of the future, although of a future that was already knocking at the door. Doubtless, because it was thus knocking at the door, it might be spoken of as present, *in a local rather than a temporal sense*—present behind the scenes, as it were; and because the

community which was to inherit the Kingdom was already forming, the Kingdom might be thought of as, in the persons of its accepted citizens, already actual. But these were no more than very natural figures of speech ; in its primary and more exact significance the Kingdom belonged, I think, wholly to the near future. But I need not stay to argue this question of a distinction of phases since, even if we distinguish between the Kingdom as present and the Kingdom as future, it is with the Kingdom as future that we must connect the phenomenon of miracle-working.

Miracles, together with the other gifts of the Spirit, may be regarded as "powers of the age to come" (Heb. vi. 5), in two different senses which it is important to discriminate. They belonged to the "age to come," first of all, in the sense that the benefits which came by way of miracle belonged to that coming age, and were to constitute part of its essential blessedness. In this respect miracles belonged to the future Kingdom of God in virtue not of their miraculousness, but of the boons they imparted. The nature of these boons, that is to say, was qualitatively the same as the nature of the coming Kingdom. But there is another, and for our present purpose a more important, sense in which miracles were "powers of the age to come." This sense has to do not with the nature of the boons miraculously im-

parted, but with the miraculous manner of their impartation. They came to pass through a present operation of those transcendent forces by the efficacy of which the Kingdom of God was to be established. Those forces were not powers of the age to come in the sense of being part of its essential nature, but belonged to it in the sense of being peculiarly associated with the momentous crisis of that cosmic struggle by which the old age was to be expelled in order to make room for the new. A "regeneration" or rebirth of the universe (cf. Matt. xix. 28) cannot be effected without transcendent agencies; and miracles wrought at the instance of men of faith were nothing else than, as it were, preliminary raids upon the doomed Kingdom of the dark present carried out by these transcendent agencies. Their occurrence certainly meant that *something* had actually arrived and become present fact, but this "something" was not the final Kingdom of God. It was "the last days" (Acts ii. 17), "the end of the times" (1 Pet. i. 20), the period when the forces of Armageddon were beginning to bestir themselves. The new age was to be the result of the *finished* conflict: the miracles were incidents of a conflict that was only *begun*; and their supernaturalness was due to their being the work of the transcendent forces needed to overthrow "the Prince of this world" (John xiv. 30), and to clear the way for the peaceful "reign

of God." If the Kingdom had in any sense become an accomplished fact of the present, then in the same sense its perfections would have been a new existent "nature," and its manifestations would have been not "supernatural" but "natural," not actively redemptive but passively free. Quite evidently, then, the connexion of the miracles in their supernatural or redemptive aspect is with the Kingdom of God as a fact of the near future and not of the realized present.

In the light of these considerations it will now be clear that we are justified in looking for a close relationship between the two disconcerting features on which our attention has been directed, Jesus' prediction of the victorious establishment of God's Kingdom at an early date, and the possibility and right of miracle-working. They have the appearance of being, respectively, an intelligible inference from, and a practical application of, one and the same belief, the belief that the "Day of Jehovah" had dawned and that the period in which men were then living was "the end of the times." Both the prediction and the miracle-working suggest that apocalyptic thought had suddenly cast aside the half-heartedness for which it was criticized in our first chapter, and had acquired the courage to draw from its own premises the proper inference that God was ready to intervene supernaturally there and then.

Yet precisely for this very reason one suspects that some new factor must have entered in to produce this change of heart. In any case neither the prediction nor the miracle-working can be fully explained by regarding Jesus simply as one who had the virility to be done with mere dreaming and to take the apocalyptic tradition in practical earnest.

In the first place, apocalyptic was unfitted to supply the primary requisite for such a practical application, namely, a definite programme. It is true that in the apocalyptic writings the "Day of Jehovah," by means of which the prophets had expected God's ideal reign to be ushered in, had lengthened out "into a whole period of birth-throes, leading up to the great transition."<sup>19</sup> But neither as regards the length of this period nor regarding any other point of detail was there a universally accepted or authoritative tradition. Eschatology is a realm of conjecture and vision, and even those elements which apocalyptic writers shared in common they handled in the freest and often the most discordant way.<sup>20</sup> As an independent apocalyptic thinker, Jesus might have fixed at one generation the duration of the expected transitional period of upheaval and cosmic stress, but in doing so He would simply have been exercising the freedom of conjecture belonging to an apocalyptic tradition that was still in the making. There was no "orthodox" or

accepted view on the recognized authority of which He could lean.

If we may not seek in an apocalyptic tradition the explanation of why Jesus' forecast of the limit of delay in the final advent passed beyond conjecture to prediction, neither can we find there the full explanation of His miracle-working. The type of miracle which might conceivably have been attempted by a man who was relying upon mere apocalyptic tradition—a man who believed that "the last days" had begun, and was resolved at all costs to act upon his belief—would have been precisely the type of miracle which Jesus consistently refused to attempt. Portents, prodigies, world-shaking catastrophes — these would have been the supernatural events which such a man might have dreamed of God bringing to pass in answer to his prayers, for the sake of overthrowing the empire of darkness and establishing in its place the ideal order. But to what man who drew his inspiration merely from apocalyptic tradition would the idea ever have come that the supernatural agencies which "the last days" would bring into the arena could be fitly employed in a homely ministry of healing?

It is abundantly evident, then, that while we may recognize in the belief that "the last days" had dawned a connecting link between miracle-working in general and the expectation of an early victorious establishment of the Kingdom of God,

we need some other factor to account for the special character of the miracles to which Jesus felt at liberty to address Himself, and to explain why His expectation of an early climax passed beyond confident conjecture to definite prediction. This other factor we cannot find within the confines of apocalyptic conception. It belongs to that which renders the New Testament a fundamentally new world of religious thought.

To turn from consideration of Jewish apocalyptic to the Christianity of the Epistles is like entering a different religious climate. It is to bid good-bye to souls which believe that behind the clouds the sun is shining, and to make the acquaintance of souls which are basking in its radiance. It is to turn away from a faith which is saving itself by means of a postulate to a faith which is resting on experimental certainties. The apocalyptic seers felt that the omnipotence of God *ought* to be available without reserve on behalf of all that was good in man and good for man, and they postulated that it would be thus available soon. The writers of the Epistles are men who have found and are daily finding that God's omnipotence is impressively at work on man's behalf. It manifests its activity not only in miracles of an external kind, but even more strikingly in the transformation of the affections and impulses, in an elevation of the spiritual life and a new spontaneity

of virtue. And with this experience there is beginning to appear something which it is rather difficult to define—as it were, a new poise of spirit. The eyes are still eagerly bent—even more eagerly than were the eyes of the apocalyptists—on the anticipated advent of God’s final Kingdom. But “the last days” are proving so full of an inward gladness, the privilege which they afford of labouring for the Kingdom in fellowship with the risen Christ, and upheld by the omnipotent Spirit of God, is so contenting and of such an absorbing interest, that there is a new serenity in the eager waiting. “The last days,” although they are still regarded as only a preface to the age of glory, are yet felt to be in a real sense an epoch of fulfilment. If the “new heavens and a new earth” still lie in the future, the Christian himself is already “a new creation” (2 Cor. v. 17), new not only in feeling and outlook, but in capacity. To know God as He is in truth, to have the experience of Him through Christ as One who is free to respond to human trust with a practical and intimate Fatherliness—this is itself the essence of the “life eternal” (John xvii. 3), the life characteristic of the coming Kingdom of God. Such is the Christianity of the Epistles. It is a Christianity which has acquired the spiritual poise that will keep it still Christian even when the expectation of an early final advent fades away.

It is not only, however, the Christianity of the Epistles that presents a spiritual atmosphere different from the atmosphere of apocalyptic. In the very beginnings of the new religious movement of which the New Testament is the fruit we cannot fail to detect, amid all the close resemblances to apocalyptic teaching, a difference of accent which betokens a profound spiritual change. "The age to come" has become a practical matter and an immediate expectation. It is this alteration of attitude, rather than any changes in the conception of what the "Kingdom of God" means, that constitutes the cardinal novelty distinguishing the first stage of the new movement from its apocalyptic antecedents. Doubtless there soon begins some development of conceptions, but it is the product of the new attitude, even as the new attitude, in its turn, is itself the product of a vitalized and transformed immediate consciousness of God.

The new attitude makes its first appearance in John the Baptist. The outstanding fact here is that in John apocalyptic has passed from speculation and mystic vision to prophecy or authoritative proclamation, and that detached computation of dates and signs has given place to a practical endeavour to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the real novelty. In relation to the orthodox religion of his day John's teaching was not, to any obvious degree, a new wine that needed fresh

wineskins, and it was natural for observers to contrast Jesus' followers as much with the disciples of John as with those of the Pharisees (Luke v. 33). Although the official classes had misgivings about his activities, John was as definitely opposed as they to revolutionary Messianism (cf. Luke iii. 10-14). The Kingdom he looked for was the apocalyptic new age, and therefore something too transcendent for human contrivance or organization to bring to pass. And the apocalyptic point of view which he shared he did little if anything to modify. "We can find nothing to indicate," says Professor Scott,<sup>21</sup> "that the views of John concerning the future were in any way strange or novel to the multitude. It may rather be inferred, from the very excitement which he created, that he had an audience in full sympathy with him. He appealed to hopes and fears with which all had been familiar from their childhood, and could be sure of a response when he declared that they would presently be realized. . . . He took over the conceptions of the Kingdom, the Judgment, the office of the Messiah, as he found them; and so far from adding new features to the ordinary picture of the last days, he aimed at presenting it in its simplest form, without any elaboration of details." In all these respects we find in John no conspicuous novelty. Where, then, is the fresh departure? It lies here: the thrice-told tale has ceased to be the story of an approaching day of

magic, and has become instead the portrayal of a Divine will, envisaged as a terribly practical reality. What this Divine will intends presently to accomplish remains transcendent, something beyond the reach of human collaboration ; but in the Divine will itself, which has this transcendent intention, John makes it impossible for his hearers to feel anything remote, anything unreal, anything of irresponsible magic. It is a will which reaches down into the present, and demands an immediate, sober, difficult response. The supernatural has become the dynamic of the ethical. The fairy-tale of apocalypse has become a kind of tragic poetry, which transforms the drab world of dully accepted prose, and demands to be acted out, not in delirious schemes of revolution, but in a prostration of will before Him who is already mobilizing His heavenly hosts.

If such be the radically new feature in the work of John, what was its source? It can have had only one source. No one can awaken in the multitude a living sense of the near reality of God unless he has enjoyed direct spiritual vision himself. Few things evoke a more infallible response than the authentic note of personal religious experience ; its presence and its absence are equally easy to detect. John has been criticized for the artificial way in which he posed as a prophet, the imitative details of his dress and manner of life.<sup>22</sup> But at any rate he did not merely pose as a

prophet, he was a prophet. There had come to him that experience of which the human side is intuition and the Divine side revelation. With him there had come face to face the God whom legalism had put far away and apocalyptic had failed to bring near. And the immediate result was, as it always is, that time present, the commonplace " here " and " now " of practical fact, became pregnant with duty. The faithful in Israel had been crying pathetically to God, as though it were somehow His inscrutable pleasure to dally over the fulfilment of promise. But there came to John, in some form of his own, the same word of God as Moses heard when the Red Sea appeared to block his people's destiny: " Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward " (Ex. xiv. 15). So John became a prophet. He urged upon his contemporaries to take the first step themselves. His voice was vibrant with expectancy; yet the burden of his discourse was not description of the coming day, but the urgent need of making ready. Apocalyptic provided the form of his message; its substance was original, a direct gift from God.

What has been here said about John can in great measure be repeated about Jesus. The differences, indeed, are obvious. In John the original elements are few, although of the first importance; in Jesus they crowd upon us. Emphatically His was a teaching that needed

new wineskins. Yet it was upon the present that His originality lavished itself, not upon the future. Like His forerunner, Jesus abstained from fresh pictures of the nature of the "age to come"; like him again, He threw His whole emphasis upon the fact of its nearness and the character of its requirements; and in the case of Jesus, as in the case of John, we cannot but recognize the accents of a message which owed its essential contents to immediate religious intuition or independent revelation and not to inherited apocalyptic ideas.

To substantiate the first of these three assertions not many words are needed. Quite evidently Jesus made it no part of His primary endeavour to redefine the apocalyptic conceptions or to impart fresh ideas about the material, social and political features of the hoped-for new world-order. Such descriptive eschatological material as His teaching supplies is so conventional, and so obviously subordinate to the immediate practical message for which it provides the setting, that our curiosity goes unsatisfied. When we turn expectantly to parables which begin with the formula, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto," we find them preoccupied with accessory topics. What their analogies illumine is not the concrete nature of the Kingdom itself but the mode of its approach, the principles which hold good within it, and the conditions required of those who would

share in its blessedness. So much is this the case as to render excusable the mistake which is still common of supposing that Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God something wholly inward and spiritual. Indeed, the strongest argument for a contrary view is the argument from silence. We know enough now about the conceptions prevalent in the time of Jesus to be sure that any one who then proclaimed the Kingdom as an approaching event would inevitably be understood as speaking either in an apocalyptic sense or in the sense of revolutionary political Messianism. Jesus made it clear that He did not favour the latter tendency. Had He also been opposed to the former, He would have been bound to make the fact equally unmistakable. But, so far from doing this, He habitually assumed that every one knew what was meant by the Kingdom, and that definition was unnecessary. Current ideas on the subject were so fluid that this procedure left Him wide liberty, but not the liberty to adopt without warning an entirely new usage, by restricting the reference of the term to purely moral and spiritual values. Now it is surely a fact of considerable significance that the data which show Jesus to have meant, by the Kingdom of God, substantially the apocalyptic "age to come," should be comparatively so scanty as to make it worth our while to emphasize and turn to use the argument from silence which I have been out-

lining. That argument certainly does not stand alone. Its conclusion is borne out by the language of the Parousia predictions. Also, by paying close attention to incidental utterances, one may gain some idea of the lines along which Jesus' own imagination moved in figuring the new order. Apparently He looked forward to a miraculous perfecting and transfiguration of the existing earth, rather than to its destruction and the substitution of a new world. He expected also a transformation of human nature on its physical side; men would be "as angels in heaven." Life would continue to be of a social character, but not organized after the manner of existing institutions. Want, pain, disease and death would be done away. But all this constituted mere background in Jesus' thought. So slight is the expression it received that in regard to it we hardly get beyond conjecture. What He devoted Himself to expounding was the principles on which the new order would rest, the moral and spiritual conditions of the life eternal. Over and above this there is little else discernible than the natural assumption on Jesus' part that this eternal life would be lived under physical conditions harmonious with itself. Now, as I have said, facts like these are extremely significant. They do more than bear out the assertion made above, that Jesus was as little distinguished as the Baptist for originality of

apocalyptic picture-painting. They suggest that He either had no interest in, or—more probably—was conscious of no God-given commission to declare, the concrete nature of the coming age. The task assigned Him by His Heavenly Father was not to unveil for men its secrets, but to win for them its realization.

The second resemblance affirmed above between Jesus and His forerunner was the emphasis on the near advent of the Kingdom and on the attitude of soul which was consequently required. In Jesus' preaching we hear sounding the very same note of reality and urgency which was so fresh in John. The note has a changed quality; it is more gracious, more tenderly appealing; but fundamentally it is the same note. It awakens in the hearers the same tingling expectancy, the same sense that the time for wistful dreaming is past and that the occasion calls for immediate, soul-tasking endeavour. The endeavour must needs be soul-tasking, because the Heavenly Father, who is about to give His utmost, deserves and demands man's utmost. And the duty of this endeavour is urgent, for “the time is fulfilled.” Jesus' own mind is athrill with expectancy; that is why He begins His public career with a message so like the Baptist's as to lead the first evangelist to describe both in identical terms (Matt. iii. 2, iv. 17). It is the Heavenly Father's good pleasure to give men the Kingdom;

why should He not give it now? It is only unbelief that hinders Him. He is but waiting to be importuned. "Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find." If the disciples, travelling two and two, can only succeed in arousing far and wide as they go a spirit of believing prayer, it may be that, even before their journey is completed, their Father in heaven may find Himself at liberty to act transcendently.<sup>23</sup> God loves importunity like that of the friend at midnight or of the oppressed widow. He smiles approvingly on those who would storm the Kingdom of Heaven and carry it off as plunder.<sup>24</sup> Pain and misery is so hateful to His Fatherly love that, even before the advent of the grief-dispelling Kingdom, God is glad when a faith which, like that of the Syrophenician woman, refuses to believe that His kindly face can say "No," provides Him with an excuse for granting immediate relief. Yet it is not upon becoming the intermediaries to men of such sporadic anticipations of the coming blessedness that the Father wishes His children to concentrate their energies. Within due limits, such miracles are useful in stimulating faith; but it is the Kingdom in its wholeness that God wishes to establish; and to prepare men for that it is necessary to quicken in them the sense of need and expectancy and not to satiate them with immediate benefits. Accordingly ¶ Jesus spends Himself in the labour of

teaching and training. His commission is Messianic, not prophetic, but His preliminary task must be like a prophet's. He must stir the multitudes to hope and penitence and prayer and faith. And His own faith is not disturbed by delay. Final disappointment is impossible, for the Father has commissioned Him to win for His contemporaries the fulfilment of promise; but the result must come to pass in God's own way. Jesus' duty is to work while it is day. There is no time for fears; there is no time for speculation. By personal example, by preaching, by illustrative wonder-working, He must cure men of their paralysis of hope and faith, and get them to bestir themselves in earnest, lest the final hour strike and find them unprepared.

If the message of Jesus and that of the Baptist display these two aspects of similarity; if both exhibit so little originality of apocalyptic picture-painting, while both strike so pealing a note of reality and urgency, then in both cases we are shut up to a similar conclusion. Not in apocalyptic tradition but in an independent revelation must we seek the source of their inspiration. And to ascertain the purport of the revelation received, we must examine its reflection in the work of each. In the case of John it is evident that, in whatever form the revelation may have come, its purport was to bid the people not waste their strength in idle longing, but prepare their

hearts for an immediate manifestation of the zeal of Jehovah. What was the corresponding revelation in the case of Jesus?

Whatever may have been its complete purport, it must contain the explanation of those two features of the work of Jesus on which our attention has been fixed throughout this chapter, and which we have found it impossible to account for through His inheritance of an apocalyptical tradition. These two features, namely, the special character of the miracles which He felt empowered to perform, and the note of certainty in His proclamation of an early climax, must be grounded in that unique vocation of which Jesus attained complete assurance through revelation at His baptism. How they spring out of this consciousness of vocation will become readily manifest if we may accept as true a hypothesis which I will here briefly indicate, reserving its fuller development for the succeeding chapter. The leading idea of this hypothesis will, I trust, commend itself at once by its simplicity and naturalness, however partial may be my success in its more detailed elaboration.

We have already despaired of finding in the conception that "the last days" had dawned the complete explanation of Jesus' miracle-working and of the time-limit within which He counted on the fulfilment of His hopes. The hypothesis

which I now submit does not seek this explanation directly in that conception itself; it seeks it, instead, in a definite or concrete vocation which Jesus interpreted to Himself by means of the conception of "the last days," but which had an independent motive and sanction. I am led to this hypothesis by the answers I am constrained to give to the following questions. Was Jesus the kind of man who cannot see the trees for the wood? Did He love mankind and yet fail to love men? Could He grow up in possession of an intimacy of fellowship with the Heavenly Father unshared by any one else without developing a passionate longing to win the same blessedness not merely for humanity at large, but in particular for the very men and women among whom His lot was cast? To such questions there can surely be but one answer. In conformity with this answer, then, let us suppose that it was primarily upon a holy ambition to render His own plane of spiritual privilege accessible, not merely to the human race in general, but in especial to the men and women whom He Himself knew and loved, that the vision at Jesus' baptism set the seal of Divine confirmation. Such a supposition at once removes all strangeness from His prediction of a time-limit. For the new plane of spiritual privilege had to be won for man within that generation if it was to be accessible to the men and women on whose

behalf Jesus had longed for and received His sacred mission. From this point of view Jesus' words of confident prediction lose all appearance either of presumptuousness or of visionary fanaticism, and express only the certainty of His confiding trust in the commission laid upon Him by His omnipotent Father in heaven. And this certainty of confiding trust, in the form in which our hypothesis has so far expressed it, was not put to shame. By the Cross, the Resurrection and Pentecost there was made accessible to Jesus' generation, without limit other than the measure of their faith, a frank intimacy of fellowship with the Heavenly Father similar to that which Jesus Himself had enjoyed.

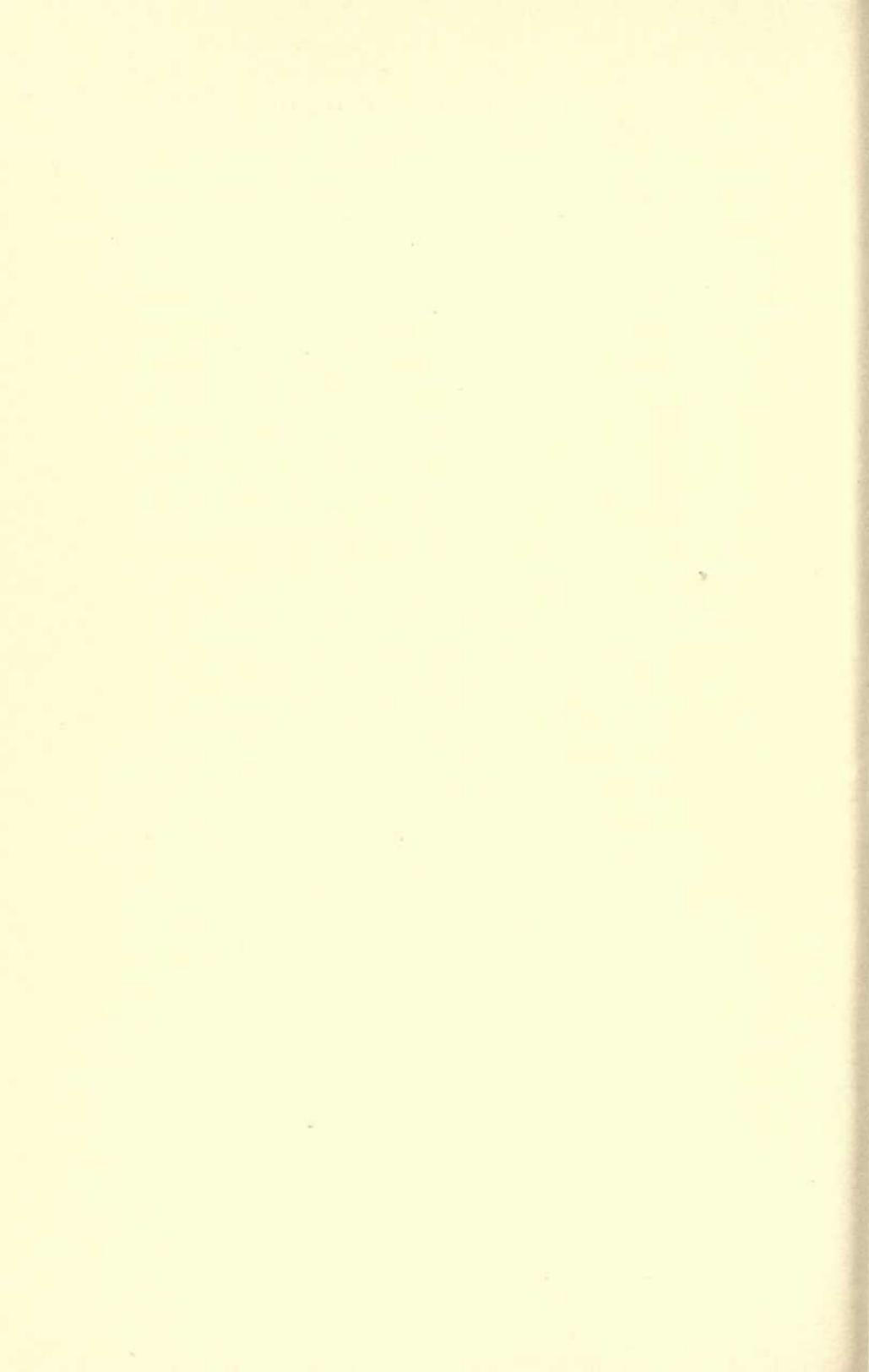
A corresponding line of approach will resolve our second perplexity likewise, the perplexity occasioned by the homely, unapocalyptic manner in which Jesus employed the transcendent agencies of "the last days." Even as He loved, and knew that His Father loved, not merely humanity but the men of His acquaintance, so He hated, and knew that His Father hated, not merely evil at large but the particular ills to which He saw men a prey. Ought it to surprise us, then, that when the hour of vocation struck which brought to Jesus, under the inherited forms of apocalyptic conception, a sense of authority to invoke transcendent forces in His Father's service, He should have broken through the trammels of

apocalyptic theory, and should have rejoiced in every fitting opportunity of employing those forces at once for the relief of individual sufferers? He could not so have acted, had apocalyptic been the source of His inspiration. But apocalyptic was merely a channel of His thought; its living fountain was His life with God.

Apocalyptic, we have said, was no more than a channel of Jesus' thought; yet indubitably it was such a channel, and our hypothesis must proceed to reckon with this fact. By that Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed to be at hand, He meant something more than a new level of spiritual blessedness. In agreement with the apocalyptic hope, He anticipated a regeneration of nature in sympathy with the regeneration of the human soul. And in respect of this genuinely apocalyptic, *and therefore imaginative and conjectural*, expression of His revealed vocation, He *was* disappointed. So little anxious am I to disguise this hard fact with soft phrases, that I find a crowning glory of the faith of Jesus in its power to survive undismayed the progressive overthrow of the apocalyptic beliefs in which it had clothed itself. Quite as notably as in any other way, it was by His manifestation of the superiority of living trust or faith *in* God to the imperfect beliefs *about* God in which it finds expression, that Jesus proved Himself, in the words of Heb. xii. 2, τὸν τῆς

πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτήν, "the pioneer and the perfection" <sup>25</sup> of our Christian type of faith. Yet it was no disillusioned and apologetic Christ who, when death had rent for Him the veils of earthly vision, "shewed Himself alive" to His disciples "by many infallible proofs." Tradition paints for us a risen Christ who explained, but not a risen Christ who retracted. The accomplished spiritual achievement was so real and so living that it was certain to receive, and might well await God's time for, its appropriate material setting. "It is not for you," we hear the risen Christ saying to His disciples—"it is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority. But ye shall receive power . . . and ye shall be My witnesses" (Acts i. 7, 8). Witnesses to a defeated Christ? Nay, witnesses to a victor! The "age to come" had still to be earned, but "the life eternal," which was its substance, was immediately to be granted. They would "receive power"; no longer for Jesus only, but for as many as believed in Him, "the last days" would now become a fact of personal experience, days of practical fellowship with God in Christ in soul-filling, triumphant adventure. For there was another "middle wall of partition" which it was Jesus' achievement to break down, besides that between Jew and Gentile. He dissolved for His Church the solid fixity of the partition between

“this age” and “the age to come.” He did so not by merely reinterpreting the present, but by transforming its character, by granting access to a “natural” or unredeemed that is penetrated at every point by the “supernatural” or redeeming, by transmuting the “present age” into “last days” of a nobler type than those of apocalyptic fancy. For those were days of a Jehovah who was King and Judge, while these were days of a Father who “sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.”



CHAPTER III.  
THE DAWNING OF "THE LAST DAYS."

## SYNOPSIS.

EVIDENCE that Jesus regarded His miracles as human deeds of faith and that He encouraged imitation. Miracle-working morally and spiritually conditioned. Had Jesus any "natural" gift of mental healing? Did the act of faith required for healing ever cost Him conscious effort? The usual impression, at any rate, which the narratives of His miracles convey is that of a regal effortlessness. A conspicuous example of this afforded by the story of the stilling of the tempest. Defence of the substantial historicity of this miracle. At the very least it has psychological truth. Further development of hypothesis sketched in Chapter II. The "either, or" of living, practical faith. Jesus unable to be content with the vague "some time soon" of apocalyptic expectation. Inevitably there would grow up in Him a longing to win for His own acquaintance and contemporaries the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy of a New Covenant, which He would recognize to be already realized in His own case. With equal inevitableness He would conjecture that with the New Covenant there would come the regenerated universe of apocalyptic hope. Poetic habit of His thought reflected in His parables, and in the story of His walking on the waves. To take seriously the apocalyptical element in Jesus' thought means to treat it as imaginative and conjectural. For Jesus Himself, therefore, the disappointment of the apocalyptic phase of His expectation would be mere disappointment and not stultification. What was central in His hope and longing was the New Covenant, not its apocalyptic setting. His synthesis of the ideas of the Messiah and the "Servant of Jehovah" should be placed earlier than the baptismal vision which brought to Him the assurance that the prophesied Messiah was none other than Himself. Nevertheless, the apocalyptic aspect of His expectation, though secondary and inferential, was undoubtedly real; and so, if ever He had any premonition of His own designation to the Messianic office, He would inevitably anticipate that, along with the call, there would come a metamorphosis of His physical nature. By its contradiction of this anticipation, even if perhaps in no other way, the vision at His baptism would introduce into His thought a novel and transforming factor.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE DAWNING OF "THE LAST DAYS."

By way of introduction to the main topic of this chapter it may be well to indicate the nature of the evidence for a view which, since it is no novelty, I have hitherto allowed myself to take for granted without argument. The assumption I refer to is that the miracles of Jesus were acts of faith, and that by our Lord Himself His own miracle-working was regarded not as the exercise of a personally inherent Divine attribute or prerogative, but as a feature of His human Messianic vocation.

To accept such a view of the matter involves no disloyalty to our Lord nor any departure from our Christian estimate of His Person. It is forced upon us by His own words and attitude. Even in His miracle-working He was "very Man." In this, as in every other aspect of His self-manifestation, we come up against a fact that baffles analysis. When, as detached bystanders, we look upon His features, as it were, in profile, considering them singly and in repose, we seem to find none that is not human, none at least that

does not belong to the nature which God designed for man. But let us move in front and catch His glance, so that the personality which lived by means of these human endowments may pierce our consciousness with a look in which its eager passion and its tender pity, its searching purity and its gracious comprehendingness, its assurance of a world-redeeming vocation and its unaffected neighbourliness, its kingly demands and its selfless devotion, make simultaneous impact on our souls, and we shall then lose all intent to measure or to classify; we shall know ourselves in presence of the utterly unique—One who exacts worship instead of submitting to appraisal. Merely look at Jesus, and you behold a Man. But meet Him face to face in the inwardness of comradeship and obedience, of faltering need and kingly succour, and you know yourself to be meeting the very Person, the very Self of God. I do not explain this; I simply testify. And I testify the more willingly because in these chapters there has to be so much of the mere looking at Jesus—so much, if certainly not of classification, still of interpretation by historical relations.

This testimony has reference to the miracle-working of Jesus as much as to any other feature of His life. When we merely look at His miracles, we have to classify them as acts of human faith. He Himself encourages us to

do so; He points to them as illustrations of the immeasurably widened reach of possibility that faith opens up to men. Yet none who, abandoning passive contemplation, has sought to emulate Jesus' attitude of faith, will wish to number his own essays in supernatural adventure in the same class with those of Jesus. In the spiritual quality of His miracle-working there is something utterly inimitable. Jesus' own attitude, however, in respect of the supernatural, is that of one who encourages imitation. Nowhere does He represent His miracles as the exercise of an incommunicable Divine prerogative. He performs them as One commissioned thereto by His Heavenly Father; He speaks of them as being wrought at His instance by the Spirit of God. "If I," He says (Matt. xii. 28), "by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you." That is to say, He invites for His miracles an interpretation vocational rather than personal, and historical rather than metaphysical. He would have us recognize in them a proof that the forces which are to establish on earth "the reign of God" are already thundering at the gates. It is in this spirit that Jesus, in reply to the Baptist's messengers, encourages him to see an evidence of His Messianic vocation in His wonderful works (Matt. xi. 4-6; Luke vii. 22, 23). From this point of view it is but a single step to the surmise

that others than the Messiah may become the intermediaries of similar marvels. The miracles are possible because "the last days" have dawned. At whose instance may they be performed? At the Messiah's certainly, because it is peculiarly His vocation to be in the forefront of the cosmic struggle through which the new age is to be ushered in. But if others are called to assist the Messiah in His vocation, may it not become their duty to share in the campaign against the malignant spirits that produce disease, infirmity and mental derangement, as well as in the campaign against the unbelief that paralyses men's souls? This would have been a plausible surmise, even had there been nothing in the records to show that Jesus lent it His sanction. But we are not left to unsupported guesswork. We are informed that when Jesus sent out disciples, two by two, to proclaim the nearness of the Kingdom, He directed them to attest their message by working miracles (Matt. x. 7, 8). And in Luke's account of the return of the Seventy from their itinerary, exultant in their victories over the demons, we read how Jesus interpreted this achievement as only the beginning of still greater things in the way of supernatural enablement. "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you" (Luke x. 19). But

perhaps the most striking evidence of Jesus' refusal to regard the right of miracle-working as a privilege peculiar to Himself is the bitterness of His disappointment when, on descending from the Mount of Transfiguration, He finds that His disciples have failed in an attempt to cure an epileptic boy. "O faithless and perverse generation!" He cries, "how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you? bring him hither to Me" (Matt. xvii. 17).

In the view of Jesus, however, miracle-working was conditioned morally and spiritually as well as historically. Faith is needed to lay hold of the redeeming forces of "the last days," and this faith can attain the indispensable vitality, and sureness of moral intuition, only through constant prayer and the surrender of self-will in perfect obedience. On one occasion Jesus suggested that the kingly ease of His own miraculous cures was due to His moral victory over the Tempter. Having bound the strong man, He could spoil his goods at leisure (Matt. xii. 28, 29; Luke xi. 20-22). And repeatedly He impressed upon His disciples that there was no limit in nature to what unwavering faith may achieve (Mark ix. 23, xi. 23, 24; Luke xvii. 6).

The suggestion has been ventilated<sup>26</sup> that the healing ministry of Jesus was not at all so exclusively supernatural as the selective account furnished by the Gospel record might easily lead one

to suppose. Jesus may easily have possessed some natural<sup>27</sup> gift of healing—perhaps some psychical endowment which, owing to the influence of mind on mind and of mind on body, was capable of effecting remarkable cures of functional disorders by the touch of His hands, assisted possibly by the suggestive power of some use of the otherwise confessedly ineffectual remedial applications then current. But He would meet with cases which lay outside the range of this natural gift of healing, and which would necessitate a more consciously intense appeal of faith to the limitless power of God. It was of one such case that He remarked to His disciples: "This kind can come out by nothing save by prayer" (Mark ix. 29). About such a hypothesis as this there is considerable plausibility,<sup>28</sup> particularly if it be allowed that the distinction which it draws between "natural" and "supernatural" cures would appear to Jesus Himself and His contemporaries merely as a difference in degree of marvellousness, and that every one of His works of healing, whether commonplace or extraordinary, was wrought in conscious reliance on the power of God. Faith or trust in the Father, born of a uniquely intimate knowledge of the Father, was the sustaining medium in which the whole life of Jesus moved.

Faith, however, is a spiritual energy of a

peculiarly social order. It is sensitive to the presence or absence of sympathy. To be absolutely and unintermittently confident of what no one else believes is so difficult as to be well-nigh impossible, while trust in God is easy when one lives among the trustful. It would be strange if the faith of Jesus, amazing as was its capacity of persisting in vital strength upon a very solitary level of elevation, had been wholly insensitive to the sympathetic or unsympathetic influence of its social environment. It nourished its strength by prolonged seasons of prayer, and the usual impression conveyed by the narratives of Jesus' miracles is that the acts of faith which they involved were accomplished with regal ease. But there is, I venture to think, some evidence that occasionally the faith required for miracle-working cost Him some conscious effort.

In advancing this suggestion I lay no weight on the fact which seems to underlie Matt. xiii. 58 and Mark vi. 5, 6, namely, that in the region where Jesus' youth had been spent He could do no important miracle "because of their unbelief." There is no necessity to assume that what hindered Him was a consciousness of practical inability, induced by the unbelieving environment. It may well have been only a scruple of principle. But there are two miracles narrated by the second evangelist, the details of which appear to me, in the one case to favour, and in the other case to

require, the supposition that at the period to which the incidents belong Jesus was finding the effort of faith involved in miracle-working less easy than was His wont.

These miracles are placed between His retirement to the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon and the incident of Peter's confession. Accordingly their occurrence was subsequent to that effort to take Jesus by force and make Him king which cost His mind so much disquiet and foreboding, and was prior to the experience on the mount in which He saw His approaching Passion transfigured. Thus the period in which these two miracles fall was one of depressed feeling and sorely tried faith. Now, in the account of the second of them (Mark viii. 22-26), we are told that Jesus cured a blind man by two stages. That this procedure was intentional, and had a pedagogic motive, seems an idea utterly artificial and far-fetched. The natural surmise would be that Jesus tried to restore the man's vision outright and, having partially failed, made a second and completely successful effort. This surmise would be out of the question, indeed, if miracle-working had been with Jesus the effortless exercise of an unsundered Divine attribute of personal omnipotence; but it is an entirely admissible surmise if He wrought His miracles by faith, and if His faith was at that time bruised and weary, but still capable of rising with an

effort to supreme achievements. In the narrative of the other miracle there is an equally unusual circumstance related (Mark vii. 32-37). Before saying to the man with the impediment in his speech "ephphatha," we are told that Jesus looked up to heaven and sighed. To the cause of the sigh we are offered no clue, but at any rate it betokened discouraged feeling; and where discouragement is, faith ceases to be effortless. Further, to both miracles there is attached another feature of an exceptional character. Jesus took the stammerer aside from the multitude privately, and the blind man He took by the hand and led him out of the village. Now, in both cases one reason for His so doing was evidently a desire to prevent popular excitement. But may there not have been another reason equally constraining? May He not have felt that it would be easier to recover the unperturbed buoyancy of trust needed for successful miracle-working away from the contagious unspirituality of the noisy throng?

If there be any truth in this conjectural reading of these two incidents in Jesus' ministry of healing, then the exceptionalness of the sense of effort which they seem to reflect in Jesus' exercise of a miracle-working faith only serves to set in stronger relief the serene confidence by which it was usually characterized. I know of no more telling example of this habitual confidence than a story

belonging to the triple tradition of which it is fashionable to entertain something more than suspicion, but the substantial authenticity of which I myself find it more difficult to deny than to admit.<sup>29</sup> The case for suspicion would be immeasurably stronger if the title under which the incident is usually referred to, "The Stilling of the Tempest," fairly represented the story's centre of emphasis; for it is well known how easily a tale of prodigy may grow up in a miracle-loving age. But in the story as preserved for us by Mark and Luke—Matthew has unfortunately altered the order of narration—the main emphasis falls not on the stilling of the tempest but on its immediate sequel, namely, the unexpected object of Jesus' astonishment and the nature of the disciples' feelings.

Let us consider for a moment the sequence of event and action as described by Mark and Luke. The elements raged; the disciples trembled; Jesus continued to slumber. They wakened Him with their weak but very natural appeal: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" Now what, under these conditions, was the obvious course for Jesus to follow? What was the course which, in virtue of its obviousness, would naturally have been attributed to Him if the story were mere legend? In the judgment of our own age the obvious action for a religious teacher under such circumstances would have

been to preach a sermon on the duty of trusting God in time of danger. To a prodigy-loving age, on the other hand, the obvious action might have seemed to be the Master's stilling of the tempest. But to no age would that sequence of deed and emotion seem obvious which, we are told, marked Jesus' behaviour. That which, to His own spiritual vision, shone out so luminously—the Heavenly Father holding in the hollow of His hand the little lake, the dangerous little tempest, the tiny boat with its specks of human creatures—this He flashed upon the disciples' natural vision by asking that Father's hand to close upon the little tempest and crush it into stillness. And then, with never a second thought for the deed that He had done, He turned to the disciples and asked in grieved surprise: "Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?"

In the peculiar play of thought, action and feeling here depicted we have, I think, something too original, too distinguished, and psychologically too true to Jesus' character, to be the product of mere legend. Let us be clear about the element of originality that distinguishes Jesus' attitude as portrayed in this story.

This originality did not consist in the idea that God would interpose to rescue men from danger, for that was an idea familiar to every reader of the Old Testament. Moreover, Jesus did not believe in the danger; in His eyes the disciples

were as safe in the storm as in a calm. Again, what was new was not the idea that God would grant a sign to strengthen hard-pressed faith. For the Old Testament chronicles many examples of that idea also; and though it was doubtless one of the conceptions which underlay Jesus' conduct on this occasion, it is not itself the feature that captures our attention. What stirs our wonder is not so much any particular idea implied in Jesus' action here as His attitude to the deed He had done—His evident lack of any feeling that what had occurred was out of the common. He did not hesitate before His own audacity in expecting of the Father so unwonted an interposition; nor is there, after the act, any pause to recover His breath, as it were, after an exceptional venturesomeness of faith. Precisely as though the whole incident had been the most commonplace thing in the world, He turns to His disciples with nothing else interesting His mind than His perplexed astonishment at their lack of faith. It is in this feature above all that the narrative seems to me to reveal its essential authenticity. It is dominated by the originality of One for whom it was indeed a commonplace of everyday life that the Heavenly Father controls the mightiest forces of nature in the interests of human faith—in the interests even of the humblest lessons which that faith needs to learn. And this attitude of Jesus toward His

own deed, His conception of the event as a simple commonplace of faith, not only stamps upon the story the hall-mark of genuineness, but has guarded the prodigy against bearing the evil fruit which is so apt to spring from prodigies.

I have confessed to the credence which, in spite of the contrary tendencies of our age, this story of marvel has gradually wrung from my own mind. For the purposes of the present inquiry, however, there is no need to insist upon its historical accuracy, but only upon its psychological truth. If we are to credit myth-making fancy not merely with imagining the storm and its miraculous stilling, but with the consummate feat of inventing for Jesus so distinguished a way of reacting upon the human situation which the storm occasioned, at least we must grant that this feat was possible only if the invention was historically inspired. It was possible only if that attitude of Jesus to the supernatural, which the supposed legend has the genius to adapt to a setting of storm and terror, was so continually displayed by Him in all kinds of situations as to enable His generation to catch its spirit and give it lifelike embodiment in an imaginary setting. This lifelikeness is, for our argument, the vital point. Jesus was the kind of man for whom it was matter of unwavering self-evident certainty that every detail of circumstance was subject to the control of a free Fatherly omnipotence. We

must hold this fact carefully in the forefront of attention if we are to hope for any success in the task now facing us of reconstructing the outlook of Jesus somewhat more concretely than was possible in the hypothetical sketch with which the preceding chapter terminated.

There is one presumption which reflection has constrained me to accept as a working principle in any attempt to interpret the career of Jesus. This is that, except where there are specific indications to the contrary, the distinctive conceptions of His thought must be presumed to have reached mature development before the beginning of His public ministry. After that date the drama of His career runs its course with such breathless rapidity as to leave no time for fresh constructive thinking. And had the teaching of events been sufficient, without the advantage of reflective leisure, to force on Jesus new conceptions, necessitating a reconstruction of His ideas, inevitably His teaching would have betrayed at times a confusion, or at least a hesitancy, of which there is no trace. Upon all fundamentals His utterances are clear and unflinching. The only problem which to the very end He had to keep on exploring step by step was a practical one. It was the question how to apply, in carrying out the Messianic commission newly laid upon Him, the insight into principle,

and into the nature of the task that would await any true Messiah, which He had gained long previously in days of unhurried reflection. Shall we, then, throw our imagination back into the unchronicled years of Jesus' earlier life, confident that in conjecturing the kind of outlook to which they would lead Him, we need do little more than subtract from His later thought any elements directly contributed by His subsequently attained certainty of Messianic vocation?

One circumstance which has often been commented on is the total absence of anything in Jesus' recorded utterances to suggest that, like many great religious teachers, He had required to win His way to spiritual illumination through an experience of personal dispeace and clouded faith. His teaching about the Heavenly Father has the accent not of a solution painfully discovered, but of an original possession. This impression is confirmed by Luke's story of Jesus at the age of twelve. The young boy's enthralled interest in the temple, which He had so often pictured but had not visited since infancy; His eagerness to get answers to those bafflingly direct questions of childhood's religion to which it puzzles the wisest to make reply, and which had doubtless been but perfunctorily dealt with by His teachers at Nazareth; His absorption in these new religious surroundings, which rendered Him oblivious or indifferent to the pilgrims'

simple preparations for departure;<sup>30</sup> His ingenuous surprise that parents who knew His interests should, upon missing Him, have needed to make a search at large, instead of going straight to the temple, confident of finding Him in His Father's house—these are notes of the little story which have a very genuine ring. They encourage us to read back into Jesus' earliest childhood that sense of intimate fellowship with God which so uniquely distinguishes His later years, and that vivid assurance of things unseen which receives so striking an expression in the story of the stilling of the tempest.

Such was the young life which, growing up at Nazareth, fell heir to the apocalyptical conceptions. In what way would Jesus' mind react upon them? Of one thing we may feel quite certain. He would never rest content with that half-hearted word "soon" at which the apocalyptical logic stopped short.<sup>31</sup> Vital religion refuses to be put off with evasive vaguenesses. The faith which gets no further than generalities is a faith borrowed at second-hand. Where faith is living, it insists on proceeding to particulars, on bringing general convictions to the hard test of concrete present fact. Is it an admitted truth that God grants to men who pray whatever is good for them? Very well! Here is something which I conceive that it would be a real blessing to receive here and now. Either I am mistaken

in so thinking, or else God will grant it immediately on my request. This "either, or" is the mark of living, practical faith. It brings to grips with each other the religious conviction that God is gracious, and the practical conviction that immediate possession of this or that would be really good; and in the case of an unanswered petition it insists that one conviction or the other must definitely give way. And when the faith is strong as well as practical, it keeps the two convictions at grips, to the great enrichment of both, until either the prayed-for boon is granted or the practical conviction discovers itself to have been mistaken. A weak or a borrowed faith quickly wearies of such an issue. It lets the unresolved "either, or" slip out of the field of attention, so that the mind may occupy itself with less taxing matters of interest. But faith that is living and practical unweariedly presses forward to certainty, certainty about God and certainty about good. So must it have been with the faith of Jesus.

Falling heir to the apocalyptic idea of an "age to come," He would find that while the assumption was everywhere current that it would be truly good if this longed-for age were immediately to be realized, the ordinary mind was content to abide in a passive puzzledness over its inscrutable deferment. On all hands men were irreligiously consenting to relegate to a vague

“some time soon” the redeeming activity of a God who is not real at all unless every present moment of our human time contains all that it can hold of His energy of self-expression. Such a situation as this Jesus would confront with the incisive “either, or” of living, practical faith. Either the anticipated “age to come” was after all something which it was not good for man to receive there and then, or else there and then the Father must be ready to give it realization. Tested by Jesus in the crucible of this “either, or,” the apocalyptic ideas of what would be immediately good for man would doubtless melt into new and purified forms. But the transmutation was not so complete as to remove for Jesus all discrepancy between what was present fact of human experience and what, it seemed, ought to be present fact. Accordingly we must suppose that through all the unchronicled years of waiting His faith would maintain its tension of expectancy, becoming ever more firmly persuaded that an immediate redeeming interposition of God was a thing for which it was right to pray, and which it was an impiety not to expect. “All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for,” Jesus said later to His disciples, “believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them” (Mark xi. 24). Should we not see in this and all His other arresting words about prayer an echo of earlier years of spiritual wrestling with the fact that the

Day of Jehovah seemed to tarry—an echo also of the assurance of petition to which He was gradually led, and of the answer with which this petition was finally honoured?

I have said that it is characteristic of living and practical faith never to lose touch with the concrete. May not this principle carry us still further in our reconstruction of the thought of Jesus during His years of preparation? The real man of God translates Divine omnipresence into a presence of God here and now. He does not solace himself with mere general reflections about God's Fatherliness, but expects present succour and support. He is not content with knowing that God requires men to do good, but seeks guidance as to the particular good endeavour which it is God's will that he himself should undertake. The redeeming love of God, with which in his measure he sympathizes and tries to co-operate, is a love not for man in the abstract, but for men. Now, Jesus was supremely *the* man of God. His faith was no mere affair of abstractions. There was never an item of life's complexity that did not mean for Him God. He never sacrificed the individual to the general mass, or the unexpected opportunity to the pre-conceived abstract programme. Without losing unity of purpose He lived from moment to moment and from individual to individual. Such was the personality with whose later years the

records make us familiar. They portray to us a soul which from moment to moment envisaged the attitude of a Heavenly Father's heart to the particular sins and miseries and the particular sinners and sufferers it beheld on every side. By carrying this characteristic of Jesus back into His unrecorded years we may find, as was claimed in the preceding chapter, a clue to the perplexing certainty of His conviction that His own generation would witness a fulfilment of their transcendent hope.

I know of no test of faith more searching and more humbling than befalls him who, living on terms of mutual liking and familiar intercourse with individuals less spiritually enlightened than himself, finds unavailing every effort to share with them that which he has spiritually received, and has to watch them missing their way in life. On behalf of humanity in the abstract it is comparatively easy to trust in God's power to save. But humanity is composed of individuals, and in the individual case one perceives in the concrete what the task of salvation means. One watches the slow atrophy of the more spiritual emotions, the definite loss of particular potentialities, the fixation of habits, the gathering downward momentum. Is a reversal of all this possible? That redeeming grace is a real fact, one may feel no doubt; but is God able to overcome the resistance of this particular soul? May one

approach God on this individual's behalf with a faith that will take no denial? That is a question to which I make no answer; it is too intricately interwoven with the mystery of human freedom. But I do know how an imperfect human faith is apt to behave under the stress of such a situation. Hope wearies; prayer flags; wakefulness to opportunity diminishes. The missionary or minister lets individual interest lose itself in vague general endeavour. The friend who has had a religious concern for his friend grows unexpectant, and among more promising subjects of solicitude forgets him over whom he has sorrowed. Such is the way in which human faith is too prone to exhibit the weakness of its love and the poverty of its vision. But instinctively one knows that it was not thus with the faith of Jesus.

Growing up in Galilee in familiar intercourse with His neighbours, He would arrive all too quickly at a realization of how solitary was His own experience of spiritual privilege. In the faith and piety of even the most spiritually minded the sensitive ear of His soul would mark the absence of important notes of the religious harmony, while in the average case it would feel not only thinness, but painful discord. And thus listening, His soul would experience much more than discomfort and loneliness, much more even than poignant compassion. He would be

oppressed by the sense of an evil, the tragic quality of which lay above all in its needlessness. On the one side He would envisage the Heavenly Father, longing for the trust and devotion of the very men whom Jesus pitied and loved. On the other side He would behold these men, misjudging that Father, thinking of Him as a Sovereign far removed and preoccupied, incurious to distinguish the individual from the throng. He would perceive how the intimacy of fellowship to which, although they dreamed not of the fact, the Heavenly Father longed to admit these very men, was precisely what they needed to set them free from the restlessness and discontent, and the particular frailties, follies and sins, over which the heart of Jesus mourned. Surely an alienation such as this was too anomalous not to be remediable! When two parties need, and one of them desires, to be at one, surely reconciliation cannot be permanently out of reach! In Jeremiah's picture of a New Covenant which Jehovah would one day make with His people, Jesus would find a promise for men of an intimacy of fellowship with the Father like that which He Himself enjoyed. Would not reflection on the fact that for Himself this promise was already fulfilled quicken in Him a surmise that He was thus blessed in order that He might pass on the blessing? So, with redoubled hope, He would give Himself to prayer, in the foremost place on behalf

of His immediate circle, then on behalf of His own nation of which they were a fragment, and finally on behalf of the wider world which they typified, and of which a dweller on such a highway of commerce as Galilee could not fail to be vividly conscious. As opportunity served Him on the homely round of daily intercourse, He would seek to share with others His own peace and joy and spiritual privilege. To a disappointing extent He would fail, just as subsequently, even with His disciples, His success was but partial. Yet one is sure that such a faith as His would never despair; it would never grow weary and cease from its quest. And, as continued meditation on His own solitariness of privilege raised to a passionate intensity His longing to end the alienation of men from God, an alienation so unjust to the Father whom He revered and so disastrous to the men whom He individually understood, one cannot think that this longing would lose its concreteness of reference. The humanity for which He yearned to win the New Covenant would be humanity as typified in the individuals He had known. When the vision came, in which He knew His aspiration accepted and confirmed, it would be to His own generation that He saw Himself appointed Redeemer. "Having loved His own which were in the world" of that day, He would love them "unto the end."

The picture of a New Covenant, however, did not express the whole range of that aspiration of Jesus which received conscious sanction at the Jordan's bank. At a later time He told men that if only they would seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness, they would find all their secondary needs supplied as well (Matt. vi. 33). It would be nothing else, therefore, than an earlier application by Jesus of the same principle if, round that spiritual centre of His aspiration which we have been considering, there hung from the first a fringe of apocalyptic hope. Could the men whom He knew and loved be made ready in soul for the New Covenant, surely all other things would be added to them by a Heavenly Father who hated pain and misery, and loved to be bountiful! Would not the glorious visions of "the age to come" be thus abundantly fulfilled? In surmises of this kind the mind of Jesus would have the support of that speculative linking together of natural with moral evil which forms one of the deepest notes of Old Testament reflective thought. The story of the Fall of Man has for its centre of interest not the origin of sin, of which it offers no explanation, but the origin of suffering. It traces the entry into the world of death and pain and the tragedy of hampered and defeated effort to a wilful disobedience, born of man's distrustful determination to see for himself whether the Divinely forbidden is really as

dangerous and hurtful as he has been taught. If, then, some son of the Heavenly Father should receive grace to lead men back from distrustful independence to filial loyalty, might not the blessedness of Eden be restored to human experience? Such a conjecture on the part of Jesus would be in thorough harmony with the whole outlook on human history and Divine providence which He had inherited from prophetic teaching. Moreover, it would be in affinity with a characteristic feature of His own habits of thought.

Jesus had the poetic cast of mind which is quick to find the invisible clothing itself in the visible, and for which the dividing line between material and spiritual is ever very thin. It was to this mental trait that He owed His genius for parable, His quick sensitiveness to analogies between the seen and the unseen, and His power of graphically exhibiting eternal truth in pictures with a local and temporal reference. But this characteristic of the mind of Jesus does not come to light in His parables alone. There is at least one incident of His life which, but for this characteristic, might appear unintelligible, namely, the story which has found a place in Matthew, Mark and John of an occasion when Jesus walked upon the waves. I venture to suggest a reading of this perplexing story which seems to me, by rendering it psychologically intelligible, to remove the

principal difficulty in the way of an admission of its substantial historicity. Even as thus interpreted, it runs sorely counter to our naturalistic habits of thought, but so does the whole of Christianity in its redemptive aspect.

The fact that the evangelists appear somewhat at a loss what to make of the incident adds, on the reading here suggested, a touch of genuineness to the narrative. They refrain from suggesting any clear motive for Jesus' action. The disciples were put to some distress by the storm, but they are not represented as in mortal peril. Nor is any definite moral explicitly drawn from the story. The narrators are content to chronicle it simply as a general illustration of the mysterious majesty of the Master. In this they are right. It was not, I think, with the design of succouring His disciples, or teaching them a lesson, or indeed with any self-conscious design at all, that Jesus trod the waves. From Mark's account it appears that "He would have passed by them," and might never have joined them at all, had they not cried out in terror. At that moment His mind was not with them, but alone with His Father. The significance of what He was doing was entirely a matter of His inward life; almost involuntarily, and certainly without didactic intention, He was expressing in the poetry of action His own absorbed thought.

The immediate antecedent of Jesus' course of

conduct on this occasion was the incident which, whatever may have been its precise nature, has come down to us as "the feeding of the five thousand." The key to an understanding is supplied by a statement made in the Fourth Gospel and corroborated by the necessity which, according to the Synoptic narrative, Jesus felt of getting rid of the presence of His disciples. This statement is to the effect that the feeding of the multitude had the disappointing consequence of stimulating the political side of their Messianic hope and leading them to canvass the idea of constraining Him to head an insurrectionary movement. Hurrying His disciples away lest their sympathy with the popular mood might render His task more difficult, Jesus succeeded in averting the immediate danger, but He did not seek to disguise from Himself the sinister significance of what had occurred. It seemed to furnish a final proof that He was going to fail in His patient effort to carry the mass of the people with Him and to render them fit to share in the New Covenant and God's Kingdom. Henceforth the vicarious death, which (as will be argued below) He had from early years regarded as destined for any true Messiah, must be darkened in His anticipations with the shadow of a national apostasy. This bitterness of realization must be our clue as, with a reverent effort of imagination, we seek to interpret the immediate sequel.<sup>32</sup>

Having prevailed upon the excited crowd to disperse, Jesus climbed the hills that He might be alone, and might wrestle in the solitude of prayer with the situation that confronted Him. But in the loneliness of that night there was no stillness. As if to give material substance to the spiritual tempest that threatened to engulf His Messianic mission, the winds arose and howled about His place of retreat. With the whirlwind of men's vain excitement, resting on no solid basis of insight, from which He had but now escaped and to which He must presently return, there linked themselves in His mind the eddying gusts of the storm, as they sprang up seemingly from nowhere and whirled so madly around. The cold blast which struck across His face seemed alive with the venomous spite of the cruel Murderer of souls, who hated the Messiah and longed to seduce the chosen people into flinging away their birthright. The scurrying clouds that raced across the face of heaven appeared one with those follies which, born of the Tempter's art, ever chased each other across the field of man's vision, obscuring from him the true countenance of God. Out yonder on the lake Jesus could picture His disciples' frail craft, tossed and threatened by the hungry waves. Was not the fair vessel of His own life-work also at sea in this very tempest, where the material and spiritual, joined in one unholy alliance, made

simultaneous war against all that to Him was dear? Far up the mountain-slopes, amid the chaos of the elements, the soul of Jesus wrestled on in solitude. And then, upon His straining faith, there fell an inward peace. He saw the tempest, both spiritual and physical, held in the hollow of His Father's hand, its noisiest fury impotent to work more than His Father's will. And Jesus arose and walked—walked down the hillside—walked right out into the waves!

I do not believe that He deliberately proposed to Himself to work a miracle; I do not think that He designed to teach a lesson; I do not find in the narratives anything to suggest such an intention. Rather would it seem that in the poet-mind of Jesus at this high-strung moment the physical storm had become inseparably one with the spiritual disturbance which imperilled His God-given mission. So it came to pass that the act of gazing calmly into the heart of that *human* tempest, with the sinister dangers of which His thought had been mainly concerned, worked itself out naturally, spontaneously, without pause for deliberation or conscious decision, into the act of breasting the *physical* storm—of exultantly fighting His way through its fiercest gusts as He descended the mountain-side, and finally walking out into the very sea, to tread down with triumphant mockery those waves which He saw tossing themselves, defiantly but

so impotently, in the grasp of His Father's hand.

So venturesome a reading of this strange narrative that has come down to us must of necessity remain conjectural. I have made room for it here simply as supplying, if true, a further illustration of a trait of Jesus' mind of which there is other evidence, and the influence of which on His thought it is important, for the purposes of the present chapter, that we should not overlook. For, if He was prone to conceive a sympathetic *rapport* between the drama of the soul and its material setting, and to be conscious of no prosaically definite boundary between the spiritual and the physical, all the more inevitably would He tend to fill in the background of Jeremiah's vision of a New Covenant with forms and colours suggestive of a sympathetic regeneration of the natural universe.

We must take quite seriously the resultant apocalyptic note in the thinking of Jesus. We do not treat it seriously if we allow ourselves to imagine that, without any creative reaction of His own mind, He took over a ready-made apocalyptical programme. That an intellect of such obvious independence and originality as His should have slavishly adhered to the letter of any apocalyptic tradition is an absurd supposition. If He shared at all in the apocalyptic impulse, it would be as One for whom imagery of an

apocalyptic type was a spontaneous vehicle of self-expression. Now apocalyptic imagery was originally and essentially the language of vision and conjecture. Hence the more genuinely Jesus had imbibed the apocalyptic spirit, the more instinctively would He reserve its forms of thought for topics on which precision and certainty failed Him. Presumably it is in this instinctive faithfulness to the genius of apocalyptic, rather than in any lack of interest in apocalyptic ideas, that we are to find the explanation why there is so little of the apocalyptic element in His public teaching. The bulk of that teaching would naturally concern itself with certainties, and speculation would here be allowed to furnish no more than the minimum of imaginative drapery required to clothe those expectations which were with Jesus matters of conviction. On the other hand, in private forecasts made to His disciples of the course of coming events, and in His own thoughts about that portion of His career in preparation for which He was to undergo the "baptism" of death,<sup>33</sup> His mind would resort freely to apocalyptic imagery, the medium appropriate for conjecture.

Considerations like these go far to relieve the perplexity with which Jesus' confident proclamation of the transcendent Kingdom of God as close at hand is apt to oppress our Christian faith. They allow us to do more than distinguish in that

proclamation, as has already been done above, between what for Jesus was primary, namely, the advent of an era of spiritual blessedness, and what was secondary, namely, the sympathetic regeneration of nature. They allow us to combine with this distinction between what was of primary and what was of secondary interest to Jesus a distinction between what was essentially content of intuition or revelation and what was an intrinsically conjectural interpretation of that essential content. In saying this I do not mean to suggest that Jesus Himself consciously rated as a mere conjecture His own expectation that in winning for His contemporaries the New Covenant, He would also be ushering in the apocalyptic "age to come." I suggest only that, unself-consciously, His hold upon the two aspects of His hope would be different. He would hold the one with a grasp for which disappointment would have meant defeat and stultification, while disappointment of the other would bring only education and further enlightenment. And this would be the case simply because, in the mind of Jesus, the apocalyptic element was genuinely apocalyptic, and was, therefore, instinctively a way of expressing that which, no matter how confidently cherished, was essentially conjectural. Accordingly, we need have no timidity about admitting how largely an apocalyptic strain of thought contributed to determine the form in

which Jesus expressed to Himself the blessing which He longed to see won for His own generation, and to the winning of which He came to know Himself ordained and set apart. We need not fear to recognize that what He looked to obtain for His contemporaries was not only a New Covenant, but also renewed heavens and a renewed earth. For if in this there was an undue foreshortening of His time-perspective, it was the perspective of His imaginative thought that was foreshortened. What He apprehended with the assured objectivity of direct spiritual vision He perceived in undistorted truth.

Not even the frankest recognition, however, of the apocalyptical setting in which Jesus envisaged the fulfilment of the promise of a New Covenant need blind us to the secondary place which this apocalyptical setting held in His thought and aspiration. It is no discovery of modern times that a change of heart is more important than a change of universe, and that without the former even the most ideal environment can constitute no paradise. Conceiving God habitually as the Heavenly Father, Jesus would instinctively feel that until His human children desisted from their wilfulness, that Father could not safely shower on them His gifts without reserve. From very early years, therefore, He would grow to regard as the only real obstacle to the advent of the "age to come" men's lack of that attitude toward God of

confiding trust and eager loyalty which He called "faith," and so His conception of the kind of undertaking that would confront any supernaturally endowed Messiah would begin to differ notably from current ideas.

By careful analysis of Jesus' recorded utterances it has been shown, in what appears to be a conclusive manner, that one of the aspects under which, in later life, He regarded His approaching death was as a fulfilment of the great picture in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. It is not uncommon, however, to suppose that this synthesis of the conceptions of the Messiah and the suffering "Servant of Jehovah" was effected by Him only at an advanced period of His career. In a book published some years ago<sup>34</sup> the present author himself subscribed to this idea, being impelled to such a hypothesis chiefly by inability otherwise to account for the note of keen disappointment, if not even of disillusionment, which becomes so distinctly audible as the tragedy thickens, and for the oppression under which the faith of Jesus appears at times to struggle at the prospect of the Cross. Any such view, however, has to reckon with the early point in Jesus' career at which Mark places the allusion to days when the bridegroom will be taken away (Mark ii. 20), an allusion which there is no independent critical warrant for post-dating. Nor is this hypothesis indispensable after all to an understanding of the

note of disappointment and oppressed faith. For, even if it had been apparent to Jesus from the first that a moral and spiritual necessity required the Messiah to fill the rôle of the Suffering Servant and to accomplish His redeeming mission only at the cost of an ignominious death, still it need have appeared in no way inevitable beforehand that this death should be compassed at the instigation of the Jewish leaders and with the tacit consent of the mass of the people. In the unstable equilibrium of the relations between Rome and Palestine there was much that might conceivably give occasion for the precipitation on the Messiah of a tragic fate, in the guilt of which His own nation would have no direct share. It was, I suggest, Jesus' gradual realization that the immediate responsibility for His Divinely appointed death would lie at the door of His own people, wilfully sinning against light, that imparted to the mysterious martyrdom to which He had long dedicated Himself a new disconcertingness of horror. And in this progressive discovery<sup>36</sup> may be found the secret also of the note of crushing disappointment or defeat. For, in so national an act of apostasy, Jesus saw what no religious patriot could witness without a breaking heart. In spite of this apostasy God's Kingdom would still come in that generation; but because of this apostasy it would be a kingdom strangely different from that of

prophetic vision. It would be a kingdom in which Israel as a nation could exercise no distinctive spiritual function, for as a nation she had now finally sacrificed her birthright by failing to recognize the time of her visitation,<sup>36</sup> and had doomed herself to political extinction.

In the sense of catastrophe under which Jesus seems to have laboured as the exact nature of the coming crisis grew clearer, there is, therefore, nothing to preclude the possibility that from the first He had identified the Messiah with the Suffering Servant of Jehovah who was to win redemption for many through an unmerited death. But if we thus carry this identification right back to that early stage of His ministry to which the saying about the taking away of the bridegroom belongs, can we refuse to carry it back still further? May not Jesus have learned to identify the promised Messiah with the Suffering Servant, and to regard service as the foundation and badge of true kingship, even before He was led, by His baptismal vision, definitely to identify the Messiah with Himself? Is not this conception of the nature of the Messianic function one of those profoundly revolutionary principles for the discovery and assimilation of which the brief months of Jesus' public career leave no room, and the development of which must accordingly belong to His earlier unrecorded years? At any rate, if there be truth in the fundamental

hypothesis of the present chapter that it was from the spiritual that Jesus advanced to the apocalyptic, and that the renewed heavens and earth of His hope figured mainly as the material background appropriate to the spiritual conditions of the New Covenant, the work of the coming Messiah must have appeared to Jesus from the very beginning as pre-eminently the task of redeeming men from unbelief and sin. And it is difficult to think that One who was so sensitive to the alienation of the men around Him from the Heavenly Father, and who steeped His mind so profoundly in all the greatest teaching of the Old Testament, could have failed of early realizing that any one who would win for that generation the fulfilment of promise must be the Suffering Servant as well as the supernatural Messiah.

Throughout the greater part of this chapter we have been venturesomely essaying to conjecture the path which the thought and aspiration of Jesus would follow during His unrecorded years of obscurity. To complete the main outlines of the picture only one touch is needed. The picture has shown us Jesus, by the very vitality of His faith, high-strung to prayer and expectancy. It has painted Him as cherishing a vision of the age of promise in which the material transfiguration of the universe served mainly as the imaginative background for an era of new spiritual privilege.

It has credited Him with the foresight that no Messiah could prevail to establish an age of promise so spiritually perfect as this, unless He fulfilled the rôle of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah. And the quiet years in which these conceptions were forming have not been set by our picture in an atmosphere of unpractical detachment or passive contemplation. We have envisaged Jesus as oppressed, both in His love of God and in His human affections, by the solitariness of His own experience of free fellowship with the Heavenly Father, by the barrier which seemed to hold at a distance from His Father every soul that it had been His lot to meet and know. This has led us to realize that Jesus' prayers for the advent of the age of promise would have concrete reference to the sorrows and sins and spiritual incompleteness of the men and women around Him. We have thought it not impossible that, in face of this universal need and His Father's longing to satisfy this need, meditation on His own uniqueness of religious privilege may have stirred in Jesus some premonition that He had so freely received in order that He might freely give, that in Him God was preparing a vessel which He might presently use to win for that generation the promised New Covenant, a Son whom He might presently anoint as Messiah to His own age. Do these rough outlines serve to make our picture a

completed sketch? May our imagination now venture, without further preparation, to run forward to that day of vision when to the soul of Jesus, longing to see won for His fellows the age of promise, stirred to supreme expectancy by the Baptist's words of urgency, and self-dedicated to whatever commission His Father might lay upon Him, there came from heaven the revelation that the Messiah and Suffering Servant was indeed to be none other than Himself?

No, our picture of Jesus before His baptism needs one other line if it is to help us to seize an aspect of the occurrence by the Jordan's bank which for our purpose it is especially important not to miss. But, unlike many of the other lines of our drawing, the line needed to complete our sketch touches off a feature which is more than conjectural. That the apocalyptic aspects of the age of promise for which Jesus longed and prayed were for Him, as we have pictured them, only secondary and inferential, is at best a hypothesis of our own, no matter how well grounded; but it is more than a hypothesis that those aspects were an actual element in Jesus' view of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom included, as part of its content, a transformation of the material universe, and its establishment was therefore a supernatural undertaking. We must not let this fact slip from our memory if we do not want to render quite unreal our con-

jectural picture of the kind of Messiah that Jesus must have learned to expect. If the Messiah for whom He looked was to fulfil the rôle of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, and must have been in that respect unlike the "Son of Man" of previous apocalyptic imagination, he must nevertheless have resembled this apocalyptic "Son of Man" in being a supernatural figure, for he had a supernatural cosmic achievement to accomplish. This characteristic of the expected Messiah must have tended to exclude from Jesus' thought before His baptism any conjecture that He Himself was to be the Messianic "Son of Man," exactly as, subsequently, it stood in the way of any popular recognition of Him in that light. If, then, in spite of this obstacle, the pressure of all the conditions which we have been analyzing in this chapter was sufficient to stir in Him a premonition that the call to be God's Messiah might one day fall upon Himself, He would at least anticipate that with the call there would come a transmutation of His human nature, fitting Him for so supernatural a vocation.

Now, the outstanding feature of the revelation by which Jesus received certainty of Messianic vocation was that it falsified this anticipation. He found Himself commissioned to a supernatural achievement without any obvious transmutation of His natural constitution into something supernatural. In all other respects,

if we may trust our very conjectural reconstruction of the outlook to which the quiet years of obscurity had led Him, the call which came to Jesus at His baptism was simply a ratification of the whole trend of His thought about the Heavenly Father and of His impassioned solicitude on men's behalf. But, whether our reconstruction be correct or whether it be mistaken, in any case there came to Jesus by revelation at His baptism the startling discovery that for a superhuman achievement God had chosen a human agent, that for a transcendent task God had commissioned One who was not conscious in Himself of anything unique except an utterness of self-surrender and a completeness of filial fellowship with the Father in heaven.<sup>37</sup> God had chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, the commonplace things to effect the transcendent. "The last days" had dawned, but, except for faith, they seemed exactly like other days. The Messiah had appeared, but to the eye of sense He was inconspicuous. In this lay "the mystery of the Kingdom." In this, too, lies the "mystery," or communicable secret, of Christian miracle-working. For only that man may dare, without presumption, to requisition the supernatural aid of God, who knows himself Divinely summoned to achieve what by merely natural means he cannot possibly accomplish. The call to which the wondering

faith of Jesus responded on that day by the bank of Jordan was a call to achieve the impossible. Should we marvel, then, at the ringing passion with which He cried, at a later date, "All things are possible to him that believeth"?

CHAPTER IV.  
SUPERNATURAL AND NATURAL.

## SYNOPSIS.

INFLUENCE on Jesus of the unexpected discovery that with His Messianic call there went no simultaneous transmutation of His natural constitution and endowments. Indications of this influence in (1) the phrase, "the mystery of the Kingdom," (2) the Temptation, (3) His conception of His immediate task, (4) His reserve about His Messianic claims. However true it may be in general that the apocalyptic element in Jesus' thinking was intrinsically conjectural in character, there was nothing conjectural about His beliefs that He was already Messiah and that "the last days" had dawned; these were certainties of faith. In this circumstance that it was faith which made "the last days" actual we reach the parting of the ways between the supernaturalism of Christianity and that of apocalyptic. Provided that we do not allow ourselves to forget that the gift of Jesus to His age was not primarily a fresh reading of long familiar fact but was access to a new plane of experience, we may permit our thought, for its own purposes, to divest His message of its time-form. In its essential or timeless significance this message was that, for faith, God's redemptive or supernatural interposition was and had always been available, and that it was lack of faith that had made the present so largely a redemption-less age of evil. Between the supernaturalism of apocalyptic and that of Christianity the critical point of divergence lies in their respective conceptions, not of the supernatural, but of the natural. For apocalyptic the expected redemption was to be from the natural order in the absolute sense of the term; according to Jesus' idea, it was only from an unnaturally insulated enclave within this natural order. Jesus did not treat the contrast between miracle and the non-miraculous as a contrast between immediate and mediated Divine action. In so far as the idea of intervention entered into His conception of the supernatural, it was the idea of an irruption into the limited familiar world of energies belonging to a wider cosmic order. It is unfamiliarity, rather than intrinsic inscrutableness, which renders the supernatural more mysterious than the natural. The faith which inspires to miracle-working is no mere spirit of general confidingness, but is the attitude of one who counts on being supernaturally enabled to accomplish a seeming impossibility, which he knows to be the one specific service Divinely required of him there and then.

## CHAPTER I V.

### SUPERNATURAL AND NATURAL.

IN endeavouring to divine the trend of thought, hope and purpose by which the soul of Jesus was prepared to hear and to interpret the supreme call which came to Him in vision immediately after His baptism, the preceding chapter ventured to what some readers may have regarded as undue lengths in the way of reading back into Jesus' unrecorded years the principal elements of the thought and attitude characteristic of His days of publicity. But there was one feature of His later insight which resisted this treatment, and for the antedating of which no sufficient ground, nor even any plausible excuse, presented itself. An instinctive application of the principle that an effect cannot be greater than its cause had led apocalyptic thought to take for granted that if God made use of an intermediary in bringing to pass the transcendent "age to come," this intermediary must needs be a supernatural figure, like the eschatological "Son of Man," rather than the human king or leader of earlier Messianic prophecy. Every probability of the case requires

us to suppose that before His baptism Jesus shared this very natural apocalyptic assumption. We may permit ourselves to surmise, if we are so inclined, that His mind had not wholly escaped occasional awe-struck premonitions of the call that was to come to Him. Such a surmise, however, if we entertain it at all, must remain the purest conjecture. But it is by no means equally conjectural, on the contrary it appears a self-evident presumption, that in such moments of premonition, if He ever experienced them, Jesus would instinctively picture Himself as receiving, along with the call to the transcendent Messianic achievement, a corresponding transmutation of His physical nature. Now the actual event seemed to falsify this very natural anticipation; it seemed to contradict the apocalyptic assumption that if "the age to come" was to be realized through a Messianic intermediary, he must be a supernatural figure. The actual event must therefore, in this most important respect even if in no other, have introduced a new element into the thought of Jesus. Without any consciously perceptible change of His physical constitution or natural endowments, He found Himself appointed as the instrument of what was to be at once the consummation of universal history and the inauguration of a new cosmic order! It has already been suggested above that we may perhaps recognize an echo of

the impression of awe and wonder which this discovery made upon Jesus in that much discussed phrase, "the mystery of the Kingdom" (Mark iv. 11), by which at a later date He described the inner meaning of parables which dealt with the manner of the Kingdom's approach. But there lies to hand a less hypothetical kind of evidence to the heart-searching occasioned by this discovery.

I refer to the inner necessity under which Jesus found Himself of immediately seeking solitude in the wilderness,<sup>38</sup> and to the story of the temptations by which He was there beset. I can see no adequate reason for questioning the historical basis of the narrative here, either in respect of the nature of the temptations described or of the occasion to which they are referred. Their character seems particularly appropriate to the situation as we have conceived it. They do not turn upon any doubt in Jesus' mind of the reality of that Messianic vocation—perhaps not altogether unforeseen—which had now been laid upon Him; they turn instead upon what was a consequence of the quite unlooked-for manner in which the call had come. Since the Messiah had now been anointed, "the last days" must have begun. But since the Messiah appointed had not undergone any transmutation of His natural constitution, so surprising a contradiction of apocalyptic expectation raised the question

whether the good counsel of God did not also intend for "the last days" a programme very different from the apocalyptic, in other respects than Jesus had already foreseen. It is on this question that the temptations hinge. They reflect the necessity under which Jesus felt Himself of considering afresh the way in which the Messiah and Servant of Jehovah should prosecute His mission in view of the unexpectedly inconspicuous manner in which "the last days" had dawned. In the inward struggle which the story symbolically describes we witness the crucial stage of the process by which "the last days," originally pictured of a Jehovah who was an inaccessible King and Judge, gave place to "last days" worthy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is not the place for entering on any detailed consideration of the temptations recorded.<sup>30</sup> Their outcome does not seem to have been any mapping out of a complete Messianic programme, but simply a clarification of the principles by which Jesus' immediate duty was to be determined. To the end of His earthly ministry He appears to have regarded as merely postponed that sensible metamorphosis of His natural constitution which had not taken place at the hour of His call, and to have expected that through death and resurrection, if not before, He would become manifestly—what already He was

really—the eschatological “Son of Man.” For true faith, however, it is enough that light should be granted for one step at a time. Before Jesus returned from the wilderness His immediate path had become clear to Him, at least in its ruling principles.

It was as a lowly Son in whom the Father was well pleased that He had been chosen to be God’s Messiah ; and both the quality for which He had been chosen, and the outwardly inconspicuous estate in which He had been left, indicated the nature of the task that must lie immediately to His hand. He had been chosen as a Son whose filial loyalty and comprehension had made Him long, as never man had longed before, to end the alienation of the men and women around Him from the Father who was eager to spend Himself upon them and to admit them to His unreserved fellowship. He had been chosen as a Son whose sympathy with the Father’s pity made Him know that God was not slack concerning His glorious promises, and raised to passionate intensity His desire to relieve the miseries which He saw on every side. He had been chosen as a Son whose vision of what the Father can make possible to him that believeth had stirred Him to dreams of becoming to His own generation the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, and so winning for them the New Covenant, and the Kingdom which should crown

that Covenant. And, chosen thus as the one true Son of the Father, He had been left outwardly undistinguished, a plain Man among men, accessible, homely, comprehending, set apart only by that sure commission which was still a secret between Himself and His Father. Was it not clear, then, that in the meantime His mission was to the individual—to as many individuals as He could reach, and that its burden was not judgment and governance, but redemption? (cf. Luke iv. 17-21). When, in the wisdom of God, the time should arrive for Him to exercise on the grand scale the judicial and cosmic Messianic functions, His Father would suitably endow Him for that transcendent rôle. But in the immediate present His task was something different. It was above all to evoke in the men and women around Him that spirit of faith, of submissive expectancy and the will to obey, without which there could be for them no participation in the New Covenant and the Kingdom. For such time as His mission continued to be thus a mission to the individual, it would be only in the service of this undertaking that the supernatural agencies of "the last days" were at His call. They were to be used as a help in overcoming the alienation of men from God by vividly exhibiting His true Fatherliness. And since it was as lowly Son that Jesus had been called to the exercise of these powers, they were to be

employed in the spirit in which a son who enjoys frank fellowship with his father makes use of his father's resources—with confiding freedom but not irresponsibly, with loyal respect for his known wishes and with a mind ever open to fresh indications of his will. But never might they be employed for purposes of mere stage effect, or for building up an organized following that rested on any foundation short of an intelligent, purposeful surrender of heart and will. Moreover, miracle-working could be, at the best, only an auxiliary instrument in what was, for the present, the task of the Servant-King. Its principal method must be that of a direct endeavour, by personal service and by the illumination of mind and soul, to win men's allegiance to Himself and to the Father whom He represented.

Even yet, however, we have not exhausted the influence on Jesus' thought of the discovery that, although approved by His Father and sent forth with the Messianic commission, He was being left in untransfigured obscurity. In the influence of this discovery we may find, I think, a clue to the main motive of the secrecy which Jesus maintained and enjoined regarding His Messianic claim. This secrecy has caused modern interpreters of His career much perplexity and heart-searching; and it is by its proffered solution of this puzzle, much more than by learned

linguistic difficulties regarding the title "Son of Man," that some colour has been lent to the far-fetched theory that Jesus' Messianic self-consciousness, at any rate in its fully developed form, does not date back to His baptism. But this is by no means the only solution that has been propounded. The motive for secrecy has been sought in avoidance of a premature collision with political authority, or in the teacher's instinct for a graded method and for rejection of ambiguous terms; and it has even been contended that both the claim and its secrecy were posthumous inventions. But does there not lie to hand a much more direct and obvious explanation? May not Jesus' primary motive for the secrecy have been simple loyalty to His Father's indicated will?

Contrary to all expectation the Father, in choosing and anointing His Messiah, had left Him veiled in the obscurity of an untransmuted human constitution. It was not for the Son to give away the secret. If the Father had wished that men should be helped to believe in the near approach of the Kingdom by knowing that the Messiah was come, He would have made that Messiah conspicuous to ordinary apprehension. Since He had not done so, He must wish their faith to tread a different road. Not even, therefore, to the question of the Baptist's messengers would Jesus answer with a plain affirmative. By

allowing His Messiah to continue for a time as a homely Man among homely men, the Father was able to use Him in a lowly mission to the individual soul. The Son must do nothing that might obstruct or cut short that mission. When this sowing of the seed was over, and the time for harvesting arrived, the Father Himself would lift the veil. Do we wonder, then, at the words with which Jesus hailed Peter's confession? "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 17). Do we wonder at the emotion with which He greeted it? The Son had loyally allowed the veil to remain drawn, but the Father Himself had begun to lift it. Surely, then, the hour must be drawing near when, in place of the commission to sow, the Messiah would receive the commission to reap.<sup>40</sup> It is in no way strange that Jesus' feeling should have been deeply stirred.

While we may see, in a loyal acceptance of the Father's indicated will, the primary source of Jesus' strict reserve about His Messianic claim, we need not therefore suppose that this reserve failed to commend itself to His own judgment as well. Without keeping close the secret it would have been impossible for Him to aim, as He did, at leading the faith of men along the path by which His own faith had travelled to its final illumination and certainty. In a vague

general way men believed that God was gracious and ready to bestow on them that which it was good to have. In a vague general way they believed also that the Kingdom of God was a boon which it would be good for them to receive there and then. Jesus therefore began His teaching by asking men to count it certain, on no other evidence than the witness with which their hearts responded to His assurance, that the Kingdom of God must be at hand. In this way He challenged them to an act of living faith by bringing them up against what, in the preceding chapter, was described as the incisive "either, or" of genuine, practical religion. He forced to a head the issue between a merely formal creed and a creed sincerely and strenuously believed, by calling upon men to count actually true what, in their heart of hearts, they believed ought to be true, and to count it actually true for no proffered reason other than the felt moral and spiritual necessities of the case. Had He proclaimed Himself the arrived Messiah, He would have been diverting their attention from the simple and faith-challenging spiritual issue regarding the Kingdom to curious reasonings about His own credentials.

For similar reasons Jesus used miracle, not in ways designed to afford proof that "the last days" had really arrived, but with a view to strengthening men's hold on their commonly expressed belief

in the goodness and power of God. Let them only take that belief in literal earnest, and it would compel them to face for themselves the "either, or" of faith. If they held to that belief in God's goodness and power, vitalized as it would be by His miracles of compassion, they would find themselves under the necessity of either expecting God to grant them the pictured "age to come" at once or else of admitting that such a gift would be no true boon. Then, as this dilemma began to sink home, Jesus betook Himself to parabolic teaching, directed to evoking and guiding their own reflections on the kind of "age to come" that would be really worthy of the Father, and on the preparation of heart that was needed before an immediate bestowal of the Kingdom could be for themselves a real boon after all.

Toward the apocalyptic aspects of that Kingdom of whose near advent Jesus was labouring to evoke a tense and practical expectation, I have argued that His own mental attitude was intrinsically, even if unself-consciously, one of hypothesis, ranging from mere conjecture to confident anticipation. But there were two apocalyptic features of His outlook which were for Him in no degree conjectural. These were His own Messianic dignity and the complementary truth that "the last days" were matter of present fact. The proof of this assertion is His own conduct.

Of His claim to be Messiah and eschatological "Son of Man" He was so certain that, rather than disavow it when challenged, He was willing to be condemned to death. And of the accomplished advent of "the last days" He was so certain that, although we have no credible evidence of His ever having undertaken, before the vision at His baptism, to work a miracle, after that event He never hesitated to act upon the belief that the supernatural agencies of "the last days" were at His beck and call. These two epoch-making convictions He laid hold of, in vision, by faith; by faith He acted upon them, without waiting for sensuous confirmation; and it was along the pathway of simple faith that He led other men forward towards fitness for their spiritual apprehension.

Now it is here that we strike at last the critical parting of the ways between the supernaturalism of apocalypse and the supernaturalism of Christianity. I have dwelt, at what may have seemed to be excessive length, upon the comparative unpreparedness of Jesus' mind for one feature of the grand event for which He had longed and prayed—for its intangibility. Without perceptible metamorphosis of His humanity a Man had become Messiah. Without audible trumpeting the portentous "last days" had supervened. I have tried to trace the impression which this

unexpected *dénouement* made upon Jesus. If even such a one as He had to seek the solitude of the wilderness in order to adjust Himself to the new discovery, do we wonder at the degree in which it baffled the apprehension of His generation? The mind of Jesus quickly responded to the significance of that which had come to pass. It appealed to the essential spirituality of His whole outlook, and with spontaneous intuition He fell loyally into line with its practical implications. For a soul in which the apocalyptical had never been more than a handmaid of the spiritual, the necessary adjustment cost no painful wrench. Nevertheless an adjustment was necessary; and if I have dwelt upon the necessity which even Jesus felt for an adjustment of His conceptions, it has been in order to quicken a realization of the radical contrast between the supernaturalism of Christianity and the supernaturalism of the less spiritual apocalyptic of Jesus' contemporaries, and a realization of the painful readjustments of conception demanded of them by the Christian message.

We are now free to face the task of seizing and developing the significance of the new point of view, the first emergence of which these pages have been laboriously tracing. And, to begin with, we may try to state it in quite general terms. What had happened was that the mind, first of all of Jesus, and then of the earliest

Christian generation, found itself summoned to accept and act upon the sensuously uncertified belief that the existing epoch was no longer "the present age" of apocalyptical conception, but had become, instead, "the last days." What had happened was, further, that in proportion as this paradoxical belief was frankly accepted and acted upon, the existing epoch began to find room, within the even tenor of its days, for unprecedented phenomena both of the inner life and of outward occurrence. This is what had happened. But what did the happening mean?

Our modern instinct will be to attempt forthwith to strip this revolution in belief and experience of its time-form. We shall feel disposed to say: What had really happened, although it was apprehended as the emergence of a new cosmic epoch, was not a change in the cosmos, but an epoch-making change in men's thought about the cosmos. Never had God been actually so passive and aloof as He had been pictured by the dualistic pessimism of apocalypse. Always He had been redemptively or supernaturally active, in whatever ways the meagreness of human faith permitted. The real novelty was in man and not in the principles of God's cosmic self-manifestation. In the person of Jesus there had come to maturity a new receptiveness of human faith, which opened to God's ever-active energy of redemption new channels of self-expression.

Now, if we give rein to this impulse to translate the temporal into terms of the timeless, we shall only be following the example of the tendency perceptible in the Johannine theology. But at the outset the spiritual revolution which developed into what we call Christianity was content to construe the temporal temporally or historically. Let speculation wait! For practical purposes "the last days" were a new phenomenon, calling for eager practical exploration rather than leisurely interpretation. The gift of Jesus to His age was not primarily a fresh reading of long familiar fact, but was access to a new plane of experience. He did not proclaim that "the present age" of the apocalyptists was, and had always been, a fiction. He taught men, instead, that "the last days" had arrived; and, by an unfaltering activity of faith in the Father who had given Him this message, He made the teaching true, and ushered in what was experimentally a new kind of world, characterized by a widened reach of possibility. He taught that in this new age the Father both exacted and rendered attainable an unprecedentedly inward and spontaneous type of goodness; and with joyful surprise those who looked trustfully to the Father, in the new way which Jesus taught them, found bubbling up in their hearts transformed affections and impulses, which made this impossibly exacting morality begin to become a light yoke and an easy burden, as Jesus

had paradoxically described it. But further, Jesus taught men that *all* things are possible to him that believeth; and those who faced, with a faith like Jesus' own, the exigencies of the life to which their share in the new age committed them, discovered that the boundaries long ago mapped out by worldly-wisdom as the limits of the practicable had become absurdly out of date. Both within and without there were "new heavens and a new earth"—new not in line and colour, as fancied by apocalypse, but new in range of potency, new not in the prosaic obviousness of completed fact, but in their glamour of a challenge unheard of and a promise without end.

To this New Testament note of an objectively new era inaugurated by Jesus we must never fail to do justice. But if we take care to do it justice—if we take care to remember that the travail of the ages, by which the eternal willingness of God becomes at length effectual, is quite as significant, theologically and metaphysically, as the eternity of that willingness—if we never allow ourselves to forget that God Himself was the source of that new receptiveness of human faith which opened, for His unresting energy of redemption, fresh channels of expression, then we may permit our thought, for its own legitimate purposes, to strip away the time-form from the revolution-making creed which Jesus proclaimed. Something new had really occurred; but we are

doing nothing more out of the way than to regard this historical event from a permissible and useful angle of vision, when we say that what had arrived had always been present implicitly, and that it was only the unpreparedness of man that had prevented it from emerging into the light of day. It was only this human unpreparedness that had rendered not altogether untrue the apocalyptists' despondent way of picturing the present as a redemption-less age of evil. Always God had been willing to act supernaturally or redemptively, to the utmost limit of man's receptiveness. Now at last, through the filial consciousness of Jesus, there was being mediated to the human race that responsive faith which would render the eternal willingness of God effectual in unprecedented manner.

We have spoken of this way of stating the case as though it consisted in stripping the message of Jesus of its time-form, or its tendency to express eternal truth as a temporal event. This message was: "'The last days' have arrived (or, as He preferred to word it, The Kingdom of God is at hand); therefore act as this new occasion demands of you." Of this message we are giving the translation: "If only you will act as though 'the last days' were here, you will find that they become present fact; and if long ago you had acted thus, you would have found them fact long ago; for their actuality depends on faith and not

on the lapse of time." To describe this translation, however, as venturing to strip from the message of Jesus its time-form is almost too strong an expression. For if it does involve something of that kind, the truth is that Jesus began this process of translation Himself. Our translation does no more than reaffirm that striking injunction of Jesus to His disciples: "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them" (Mark xi. 24). Having behind us, then, so strong a warrant for our reading of the essential or timeless significance of Jesus' message, we may advance with confidence to the task of deriving from it a general view of the difference between the supernaturalism of Christianity and the supernaturalism of apocalyptic.

The critical point of divergence lies in the respective conceptions not of the supernatural, but of the natural. Both for apocalyptic and for original Christianity the supernatural was the redeeming, and was supernatural *because* it was redemptive. By Christianity, indeed, the boons which were to be supernaturally mediated were conceived more spiritually than by apocalyptic. But the primary sense in which, both by Christianity and by apocalyptic, God's bestowal of these boons was looked upon as a supernatural act, was that these boons meant escape from a

bondage of thwarted effort and hope deferred which had long been familiar, and which was so universal as apparently to be grounded in the very nature of things.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, when we turn from the conception of the supernatural to that of the natural, we find between Christianity and apocalyptic a difference which is of primary importance.

As a first step towards expressing this difference we may say that it reveals itself in the respective senses in which the bondage from which redemption was sought was regarded as "grounded in the very nature of things." By apocalyptic the grounding was assumed to be radical; the powers immediately controlling the whole present course of nature and history were believed to be definitely hostile to man's true good. On the other hand, the message of Jesus, in what I have claimed to be its essential or timeless significance, tended to see the root of the bondage from which redemption was needed not in the existent nature of things as a whole, but primarily in one part of that nature of things, namely, the character of man.<sup>42</sup> Jesus "never ceased to regard the world as even now governed by God, who clothes the grass of the field and cares for the sparrows." For Him the present "was not a mere kingdom of Satan over against the future Kingdom of God, but an imperfect world into which evil had somehow entered and thwarted the Divine

purpose." <sup>48</sup> It was not the world without that was unclean, but the world within. Perhaps a simple figure may best convey the essential thought of Jesus. The wilderness, which possesses a haunting beauty of its own for the man whose heart is at peace, becomes for him who is lost in it a place of suffering and dismay; and, in the eyes of Jesus, sinners were men who had lost their way in God's world. For them the present was really an evil age, but this was because they had missed the clue to the true ordering of their lives. They had missed the clue of trust and eager loyalty. Even for Jesus the world was a wilderness, full of rocks and thorns; not until God's ideal reign arrived would it rejoice and blossom like the rose. And yet, walking in that very wilderness, Jesus Himself was at peace; with nothing to His hand save what its undeveloped wilds provided, He yet found that for Himself through faith all things were, even in that wilderness, possible. None of its real dangers need work actual mischief; there was in it no real menace but could be triumphed over. For, if its manifold perils gleamed clear in the sunshine of the understanding, yet the delicate touch of faith could sense in every rock and thicket the vibrant invisible rays of the redemptive energy of God. It was not from the real world that men needed redemption. It was not the real present that was an age of evil. The real

present was, and had always been, "the last days." But amid "the solid truth" of "the last days" there had long lain "a foolish wilful dream" conjured up by human petulance and unbelief, the dream of a present redemption-less age of evil. Over this foolish, wilful dream, which passed for the real world, the man of faith was certainly lord; for on his side was that true natural order which was coextensive with the whole energy of a God who was not aloof, but attentive to the faintest cry; not a Sovereign trammelled by statute and precedent, but a Father at liberty to be fatherly. But while, for the ends of faith, every true son of the Kingdom was lord over what apocalyptic took to be the order of nature, his relation to the true cosmic order, the whole unrestingly creative and redemptive energy of God, was that of humble recipient and responsive mediator.

The effort to evolve a formula which shall express the essential or timeless significance of the message of Jesus in terms relevant to the issue between supernatural and natural as conceived by modern thought, is sadly hampered by the width of the gulf which any comparison of conceptions has to bridge. When one remembers the elaborate angelology of apocalyptic, which saw both in the physical realm and in the course of history a reign not of abstract law but of super-human consciousnesses, "the angelic Rulers, the

angelic Authorities, the potentates of the dark present, the spirit-forces of evil in the heavenly sphere" <sup>44</sup> of whom Paul speaks in Eph. vi. 12—when one recalls this apocalyptic conception of "the present age" or "natural" order, it may appear absurd to assert any identity between this and what modern thought means by the natural order. Yet the contrast, great as it undoubtedly is, does not affect the point with which we are here concerned. It was from the powers or principles controlling the whole system of experienced fact that the apocalyptists desired redemption, and the powers or principles controlling the whole system of experienced fact are what modern thought means by the natural order. Accordingly, for the purposes of our needed formula we are justified in saying that by the "natural," from which the supernatural gave redemption, apocalyptic meant what we should to-day call, without qualification or reserve, "nature" in the broadest sense. The supernaturalism of apocalyptic was radical; the redemption for which it hoped was one which would operate *supra et contra naturam*, in a manner superior and contrary to the natural order understood in no relative sense, but absolutely.

Now, it is not to "nature" in this absolute sense that the message of Jesus, in its essential or timeless significance, requires us to regard the

redemptive or supernatural as superior and contrary. If by nature we understand not the course of things as our present degree of knowledge has formulated it, but nature absolutely, nature in the sense of the powers or principles actually controlling the whole system of experimental fact, then the essential teaching of Jesus is that this natural order is predominantly on the side of all that is good for man and good in man. Within this natural order there are, indeed, strong tendencies making for evil, but there are stronger tendencies making for good; and wherever faith provides the latter with a suitable field of operation, they forthwith become invincible. The existing untransfigured present, which to apocalyptic appears an age wherein evil is dominant, is really "the last days"—that is to say, is really a field of struggle between resistant forces of destruction and potentially irresistible forces of redemption.

However, that is not the end of the matter. If we stopped short here in our analysis, we should lose sight of an element in the timeless significance of the message of Jesus which we cannot afford to ignore. This element is the fact that the mode of operation of the redemptive forces is regarded as irruptive. They belong to the natural order, in the broad sense in which we are here using that term; but within this natural order they are located, as it were, on an exalted plane, from which they have to break their way

downwards to do their redeeming work. Or rather, they are like a deep ocean of God's cosmic energy which, by an embankment of human distrust and wilfulness, has been dammed off from the shallow pool that has constituted the world of our average experience. On this embankment the deep ocean has been for ever pressing, but only when a breach is made by the act of human faith can the redemptive flood pour in to fill the shallow pool and cleanse away its foulness. "The present age" of apocalyptic had always been a fiction; this, we have agreed, was the timeless significance of the message of Jesus. But what had been fictitious was not the circle of fact designated by this name. The fiction had been that the reign of these evil facts constituted a distinct epoch, with time-limits fixed by the arbitrary or at least inscrutable will of God, a sort of chronological enclave inside the age-long time-scheme of Divine Providence. But for the thought of Jesus it was no fiction that the unredeemed world of ordinary experience was an enclave of a kind other than chronological—an *imperium in imperio* the radical defects of which could only be overcome by intervention of God's wider empire of reality.

To this way of representing the case the objection may possibly be taken that it does not go far enough. The intervention in which Jesus believed, it may be said, was something more

radical than an irruption into one cosmic plane of forces belonging to another plane which, although of higher grade, is still phenomenal, still located within the cosmos. Careless of the dualism involved in the idea of a direct interference by God with the ordinary course of things, Jesus frankly conceived the supernatural, it may be urged, as an immediate activity of the Divine will, standing in sharp contrast with God's more usual mode of operation through the mediation of second causes. Such an objection, however, seems to me entirely without point. It stresses a distinction which, for Jesus, was of no moment whatever. The genuine religious consciousness, when it has attained the monotheistic level, uses indifferently the language of a naïve dualism and of a thoroughgoing monism. It can dispense with neither mode of expression, since each, when not pressed to an artificial exactness, emphasizes an essential aspect of its thought of God. In this respect the religious consciousness is entirely in line with the mental habit of Jesus. He does not sharply mark off the supernatural, as direct Divine agency, from the natural, as indirect. On the contrary, He is prepared to speak of each of them, now as an immediate, and now as a mediated form of God's activity.

When He says, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils," He is describing miracle as involving the direct participation of God; but this does not

prevent Him, on another occasion, from contemplating a still more striking kind of miraculous intervention in the light of an indirect or mediated work of God: "Thinkest thou," He said, "that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels?" And the two modes of conception which He is thus ready to apply indifferently to the interpretation of supernatural occurrence, He is equally ready to employ in speaking of the ordinary course of nature. He does not scruple to recognize a realm of second causes, although in common with His contemporaries He tends to conceive them as personal agencies, angelic or demonic, rather than as impersonal forces. Yet at the same time He is ready to see in this secondary causation an activity of the Divine will. It is God who clothes the grass of the field, who sends sunshine and rain on both just and unjust; without the Father no sparrow falls to the ground; and, according to the Fourth Gospel, even in a natural calamity such as blindness from birth Jesus is prepared to recognize a special providence, preparing a selected individual to be the medium of God's best loved kind of activity (John ix. 3).

Thus the distinction between supernatural and natural is not, for Jesus, a distinction between direct and indirect Divine agency, but is rather a distinction between a freer and more adequate

expression of God's power and goodness, and an expression which does less obvious justice to His Fatherly omnipotence. Even in representing the supernatural activity of God, in the manner adopted above, as the irruptive operation of forces belonging to a higher cosmic "plane" than those concerned in the ordinary course of things, one does little else than give a more abstractly mathematical turn to a figure of Jesus' own thought. By Him the heaven where God's will is already perfectly done (Matt. vi. 10) is conceived of not as an immaterial realm discontinuous with the known universe, nor even as a mysterious fourth-dimensional plane omnipresent within the universe, but with frank naïveté as a place high up in the third dimension of space, a portion of the heavens lying above the visible sky. It is this mode of thought that makes it easy for Him to speak of the future Kingdom of God as already present in a local sense. Although still a fact of the future, so far as the visible stage of human history is concerned, it is an already existent cosmic reality, and is even now struggling to break its way through the blue vault of the sky and, like the New Jerusalem of the Johannine apocalypse, to come down out of heaven from God. We are keeping well within the limits, therefore, of legitimate reformulation when we say that, as an element in the thought of Jesus, the idea of Divine intervention was not the idea

of an external interference by God with the universal course of things, but was a way of regarding certain events within the natural order as due to the interference of the agencies of one realm with those of another. The realm interfered with was that apparently closed system of agencies with which long experience had made man painfully familiar. The realm interfering was God's wider empire of reality, which no intelligence can know as a closed system unless it can sum up and exhaust the infinitude of Deity. Again, the realm interfered with was one in which the power and goodness of God were most inadequately mediated and expressed, while the interfering realm was one in which His omnipotence and grace were mediated without let or hindrance.

Expressed in modern terms, then, Jesus' conception of miracle is not as a breach of the natural order, but as the breach of a barrier *within* the natural order. And this barrier itself is unnatural or anomalous; it is, as it were, a pathological phenomenon. Human distrust and wilfulness has interposed the obstacle of a non-conducting medium to the more sensitive waves of God's cosmic energy, thereby walling off an enclosure within which the power and goodness of God are inadequately manifest and their operation is incompletely effectual. By consequence the possibilities of evil which logically inhere in the constitution of all real or spiritual good have

attained, within this enclosure, a deplorable degree of actualization. To sweep away this actualization is the object of redemption. It would be swept away, and redemption would become an achieved fact, if only the barrier could be sufficiently pierced. And since distrust has created the barrier, faith can dissolve it. Supernatural or redemptive phenomena involve real breaches of a very practical barrier within the natural order, but in their occurrence there is nothing irrational, nothing unnatural or incompatible with universal orderliness.

The foregoing has been an attempt to state in quite general terms the essential purport of the message of Jesus, in so far as concerns our present subject. The terms made use of have been frankly modern—sometimes semi-scientific, sometimes undisguisedly metaphorical. This mode of expression has been deliberately followed in the hope of providing religious or devotional reflection with forms of thought congenial to the semi-scientific mental habits of the age; for devotion does not breathe easily in the more rarefied atmosphere of precise philosophical distinctions. In the two following chapters, however, something must be done toward bringing the general statement offered above into a form more susceptible of exact philosophical appraisal; and in the final chapter we must seek to escape

from the external standpoint inseparable from generalized statement to an inward apprehension that shall be at once more truly universal and thoroughly individual. Before proceeding, however, it seems desirable to round off our position, in the form which has been given to it above, by briefly touching on two related topics. One of these is the element of mystery which necessarily characterizes miracle or the supernatural. The other is the nature of that faith which opens a channel for the supernatural or miraculous.

The idea that the miraculous, or supernatural, or redemptive, is the breaching of a barrier within the natural order does not of itself render the miraculous more scientifically intractable than the non-miraculous. The barrier is not breached arbitrarily, and the forces which pour in are not arbitrary forces. It is no intrinsic inscrutableness, but the *de facto* restrictedness of human powers of observation that renders miracle, as conceived above, more mysterious than the non-miraculous. Mankind has been living within the limits marked out by a barrier which has excluded the main wealth of God's store of cosmic energy. By the nature of the case, then, when that barrier is anywhere breached, and redemptive energies flow through, their mode of operation has all the mysteriousness of unfamiliarity. Moreover, their dependence on spiritual conditions for freedom of action excludes them from being the subject of

the type of experimental analysis customary in the physical sciences. Very different is the position with regard to that portion of God's cosmic energy which never fails to operate within our ordinary unredeemed world in spite of its enclosing dam of distrust and wilfulness, because it is not dependent on the conducting medium of faith. The forms of energy which are thus allowed to come under our continuous observation are, by the enclosing barrier, both limited in number and partially isolated from the disturbing influence on their mode of operation of the incalculably manifold energies beyond. It becomes not impossible for us, therefore, to acquire a working knowledge of their processes. We grow to regard them as "natural" in the sense of "familiar and intelligible"; not only so, but since their relative isolation makes them work almost as a closed system, we are tempted incautiously to identify this system with the absolute or universal cosmic order. In relation to this unredeemed world, constituted by the forces which normally operate within our ken, our attitude is prone to be that of worldly wisdom. We think we understand how to harness them to our purposes. For the most part we are confident of being able to take care of ourselves; and where obviously we cannot, we accept the fact as inevitable, without looking for redemptive forces from a greater natural order beyond. On the

other hand, for those who do look beyond and hope for redemptive or supernatural phenomena, there can be no thought of any self-competent harnessing and management of the irruptive energies. Their nature remains unexplored, and any service they render must conform to their own unfathomed mode of working, expressive of that Divine infinitude of which they are the cosmic manifestation. In relation to the supernatural or redemptive the only appropriate practical attitude is, therefore, one of confiding appeal.

Of what character, then, is the faith which releases the pent-up fulness of God's cosmic energy? It is not, according to Jesus, merely a general or undirected spirit of confidingness. It has, indeed, as its permanent precondition a confident belief that God is both able and willing, by pouring in the plenitude of His resources, to render the world, which has grown ugly and malodorous within its barrier of distrustful independence, as pure and glorious as though no such barrier had ever existed. And when this confident belief is not merely theoretical but expresses itself in an attitude of expectant receptiveness and practical loyalty, it may afford the redemptive energies of God a wider liberty of self-expression. Faith of this kind, then, may be the primary condition of miraculous or supernatural *events*, but it is insufficient for miraculous

*deeds*; that is to say, it may render possible marvellous answers to prayer for help *in God's own way and time*, but it does not justify that confident request for a *specific* supernatural occurrence *at a given time and with a particular redemptive purpose* which is the essence of miracle-working. Jesus Himself was possessed of a confident general belief in God's power and willingness to redeem long before He knew Himself at liberty to work miracles. That liberty arrived only when He had attained the certainty that, in the service of the Father's age-long redemptive purpose, He Himself was called to compass an achievement which, without miracle, was impossible. A miracle-working faith, then, would appear to be definable as the attitude of one who counts on being supernaturally enabled to accomplish a seeming impossibility, which he knows to be no private ambition but the one specific service which God here and now requires of him. Worldly-wisdom, in its outlook upon practical duty, starts from the past. It holds, quite truly, that it never can be right to spend precious energy upon quite impracticable ambitions; but it commits the error of deriving its standard of the practicable from mere past experience, more or less carefully analyzed. A miracle-working faith, on the other hand, takes its standard of the practicable not from the past, but from its independent knowledge of God's call

and purpose. That which God lays it upon me here and now to accomplish must be a link in the purpose for which the whole cosmos exists. Therefore there must lie to my hand the resources necessary for such an achievement; if they are not to be found within the barrier which bounds the world of ordinary experience, they must be ready to break in from the unfathomed deeps beyond. Such, and such alone, would seem to be the faith which may rightly dare to make confident specific demands upon the supernatural.

CHAPTER V.  
THE MIRACULOUS AS THE PRETER-  
NATURAL.

## SYNOPSIS.

DOES that Christian view of miracle, which the preceding chapter has sought to interpret in semi-scientific and semi-pictorial language, represent a standpoint that is susceptible of philosophical formulation and defence? Is miracle even theoretically conceivable? Absurdity of the idea of breaches of natural law in the absolute sense of the term. For Jesus the supernatural (1) involved the irruption into a limited enclave within the cosmic order of some of the reserves of God's cosmic energy which do not ordinarily function there, and was preternatural only in this relative sense; (2) was the act of God in a more eminent sense than the natural; (3) had human faith for its most important conditioning factor. Of these three features of Jesus' conception of the miraculous the first is so far from being difficult of acceptance that a position not very dissimilar can be established on quite general grounds. The indefeasible principle of continuity compels reflection to postulate a single cosmic order, of which, because it is by definition all-inclusive, any contravention or supplementation is unthinkable. Perception and practice, however, cannot wait for the complete ascertainment of this cosmic order; and so for perceptual and practical purposes we mean by the order of nature simply the totality of what we have experienced and formulated. Our scientific understanding of nature merely schematic. God does not act according to rules or natural laws, for His will is always individual. A thorough application of the rational principle of Ground and Consequent excludes both the popular idea of mechanical causation and the scientific substitution of the principle of Identity for that of Causality. Since this merely schematic character of scientific knowledge, and the inexhaustibility of space and time, render what passes for the order of nature far from coincident with the real and universal natural order, contraventions of the former must be always possible, and must be the more probable, the more perfect or minutely differentiated we suppose the latter to be. What should excite surprised attention is not the occasional occurrence of the preternatural, but that it should appear to be comparatively so infrequent. Good moral and spiritual reason for this infrequency. To pass beyond the position thus established on quite general grounds to a useful abstract formulation of Jesus' conception of the miraculous, all that is necessary is to recognize that other than purely intellectual conditions may co-operate to render what passes for the cosmic order something narrower and poorer than the real cosmic order. There may well be cosmic principles which science has had no sufficient opportunity of detecting and formulating, because only faith can release them into operation. Whether this is indeed the case is essentially an experimental issue, incapable of merely abstract determination; but its probability may be asserted on religious or spiritual grounds.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MIRACULOUS AS THE PRETER- NATURAL.

THROUGHOUT the preceding chapters our effort has been to explore and formulate the attitude towards the miraculous which was distinctive of our Christian origins. We have made considerable progress with this endeavour, but must return to it in the concluding chapter in order to determine more definitely the practical bearing of our results. Any such inquiry, however, into practical application can be undertaken with zest only by those who believe that the results in question have something more than historical interest, and that the view of the supernatural, which we have been trying to interpret in semi-scientific and semi-pictorial modern language, reflects an attitude that deserves to be respected as fundamentally sane and philosophically intelligible. Accordingly it may be well to turn aside for a time from exploration to apologetic, from constructive formulation to defensive argument.

It is not possible, indeed, to provide any

complete defence by mere abstract reasoning. For a complete apologetic practical experiment is necessary; and unless the Church at large recovers the belief that miracle-working ought to be a permanent note in her life, there cannot be experimental evidence on a scale substantial enough to provide a really conclusive apologetic. Nevertheless, abstract reasoning may render a real service. The question to be investigated may be divided into two: (1) Is the miraculous or supernatural to be regarded as theoretically possible at all? (2) Ought miracle-working to constitute an abiding note in the life of the Church? The answer to the latter of these questions must be mainly provided by the success or failure of acts of Christian adventure undertaken, under what is believed to be the leading of the Holy Spirit, by those who are convinced that miraculous aid is really available. But the former question, the question whether miracle is even theoretically possible, lies open to determination on purely abstract grounds. To this theoretical question we must now address ourselves.

Nothing is easier, and perhaps nothing is more common, than to settle the issue out of hand by defining the idea of the miraculous or supernatural in such a way as to render it either futile or meaningless. One result or the other follows at once when miracle is conceived as involving a breach or suspension of natural law in the absolute

sense of the term—a breach or suspension, that is to say, of what actually are the laws of nature, and not simply of what our present knowledge takes for such. Let us glance first at the form of this error which issues in futility rather than in gross logical self-contradiction.

Since natural laws are definitions and not statutes or injunctions, any one who seeks to put upon them a religious interpretation must avoid conceiving them as a code of legislation imposed by God upon something standing over against Himself, called “matter,” which would continue to be its identical self even if it disobeyed these laws or if other laws were substituted. If we allow ourselves, in our religious reflection, to make use of the idea of general laws of nature at all, we must think of them as laws imposed by God not upon nature, but upon Himself; we must conceive them as rules whereby God has defined for Himself His own mode of procedure upon that plane of His self-manifestation which we call natural phenomena. Now, from this point of view there is not, indeed, any logical self-contradiction involved in conceiving miracle as the breach or suspension of the laws of nature; for one who is competent to enunciate for himself such rules of procedure is evidently free to contravene or suspend them at discretion. To such a conception of the supernatural the valid objection is religious rather than logical. It is expressed

in the remark, familiar to the point of wearisomeness: "I do not deny that God is able to work miracles, but the question is whether He could ever wish to do so." By those who utter it, this trite observation is often regarded as sufficient to put out of court the whole case for the miraculous; and certainly it suffices to dispose of this futile way of conceiving miracle. It will be argued below that even to think of God as enunciating rules for Himself, is to detract from His supreme rationality; but to suppose that, after making for Himself rules, He should proceed to suspend or break them, is to descend to a level of conception which even the most casual reflection must recognize to be derogatory to the Divine dignity.

The absurdity of conceiving the supernatural as involving the suspension or breach of the real laws of nature becomes still more manifest when, instead of giving these laws a religious colouring as above, we take them frankly as science conceives them. A definition which is not universally valid is, in strictness, not a definition after all; and from the scientific point of view laws of nature are attempted definitions of natural process. For scientific purposes matter *is* what it *does*. Matter *means* that which behaves so and so—that which behaves in the ways which the laws of nature formulate; and if ever it did not behave in these ways, then (unless the definitions were false) it would not be the matter which it is. If

it be actually true that upon one occasion water became wine, this means for science not that the real laws of water were set aside, but that water cannot after all be only what is meant by  $H_2O$ , but must really be, in spite of the failure of chemical analysis to discover the fact, something much more complex. To affirm that matter can break, or can be made to break, what are all the time its real natural laws, is to commit the absurdity of affirming that matter can, at one and the same time, both be and not be itself. Any conception of the miraculous which involves such an affirmation is a mere counter of the verbal exchange-market, incapable of conversion into the currency of coherent thought.

It was to no such futilities of conception, however, that we were conducted by our study in last chapter of the essential or timeless significance of the message of Jesus. The result to which that study pointed included three outstanding features : (1) The miraculous does not involve any breach of the natural order itself, but only of a barrier within the natural order ; within the phenomenal or created universe, which in its completeness—if *per impossibile* it ever could be completed—would be the exhaustive self-manifestation of God, there is a partially isolated realm which very inadequately displays His wealth of resource and benevolence of purpose, and the miraculous or supernatural involves the irruption into this realm

of some of the reserves of God's cosmic energy which do not ordinarily have free operation there ; (2) Although both those familiar events which are explicable in terms of the laws of the enclosed world of man's ordinary experience, and those extraordinary events which imply an unexplored wider empire of reality, may rightly be called the work of God, yet in the latter we may recognize the act of God in a more eminent sense ; (3) The most important factor conditioning the occurrence of these extraordinary or supernatural events is human faith. Now, of these three outstanding features of the conception we arrived at, the first and most crucial is so far from being difficult of acceptance that it is possible, on quite general grounds, to make out a conclusive case for a position not very dissimilar. Christianity, we may say, does not require to invent the idea in question, but only to give it a fuller and more practical significance. To make good this assertion, in such measure as the limits of space permit, is the task of the present chapter.

If we choose to think seriously and consecutively at all, we are bound to accept the conditions without which coherent thought is impossible. One of these is the principle of continuity. Without committing suicide, thought cannot recognize any absolute discontinuity, any ultimate division of reality into entirely separate realms.

In prosecuting its effort to understand the course of events, therefore, reflection instinctively presupposes some all-inclusive rational order as the ultimate ground of all particular fact. When reflection is inspired by a religious interest, it will consider that the way of conceiving this universal order which is ultimately most adequate consists in identifying it with the active will of God, and it will regard as interchangeable expressions the phrases, "due to the will of God," and "due to the working of the real universal order."<sup>45</sup> Not even for religious reflection, then, so long as it is faithful to the principle of continuity, can there be any such thing as supernatural intervention in the sense of a contravention of the principles which really constitute the universal or cosmic order, or of a supplementation of them from outside that order. For every particular event whatever an immanent explanation must be looked for.

This is how the case stands from the point of view of reflection. From the perceptual or practical point of view, on the other hand, the position is very different. *And it must be very different if the postulate of the reflective point of view is true.* If reflection is right in denying the possibility of *real* contraventions of the universal order, then for this very reason it is bound to admit the likelihood of what, *from the perceptual or practical point of view*, are contraventions of that order. And this likelihood is the stronger,

the more perfect or integrally differentiated is supposed to be the type of order that really holds good in the universe. These assertions may not be self-evident, but no great subtlety of argument is required to commend them for acceptance.

It is quite obvious that, no matter how strenuously we may insist, in our moments of reflection, upon the idea of a single and all-inclusive rational order, and no matter how conscious we may then be of the imperfection of our acquaintance with that universal order, when we turn from reflection to applied thought and practical conduct, we are constrained to treat our imperfect understanding of that cosmic order as if it were the real truth. Perceptive judgment and practical exploitation of nature's apparent properties and forces cannot wait for a complete ascertainment of the real cosmic order. Of necessity we have to put some interpretation upon the data of sense in order to decide how to act here and now, and so we interpret those data by means of the incomplete and schematic reading of the universal or cosmic order which is all that our intellect has so far attained. Hence the actual situation is that the facts, as we interpret them, are never really fact, and that the possibilities, as we measure them, are never an accurate and exhaustive statement of the real possibilities. And so, although we are incurably prone to forget this, it is constantly on the cards that the very

next event may be something which our knowledge condemns as impossible because it would be a breach of what we take for the cosmic order. Thus there is nothing at all difficult of belief in the idea of contraventions of what, for practical purposes and for the purposes of calculation and further scientific research, we take to be the real order of nature. Our limited experience and our human need for immediate working generalizations prevent what we dignify with the name of "the universe" from being more than an illuminated patch within the dark immensity—a kind of enclave within the real universe. Contraventions of seemingly established scientific laws are nothing but interferences, on the part of the real cosmic order, with the success of our theory of that order in passing itself off as practically adequate.

The circumstance which actually calls for surprised attention and inquiry is not that such contraventions should occur, but that they should appear to be relatively so infrequent. For the whole enterprise of the natural sciences consists in applying with meticulous care what is essentially an artifice or working convention, and in developing and combining the results of its application with magnificent acumen and with brilliant practical success. Knowledge as such is interested in nothing less than fact, and fact is always individual. But our human minds, even in their most penetrating flashes of intuition,

never succeed in knowing an object through and through in its constitutive individuality or uniqueness. Accordingly, we endeavour to secure that our understanding of things shall make up in breadth for what it lacks in depth. We seek to compensate for our incomplete capacity of adaptation to the individual fact or situation by exactness of adjustment to the average case. To this end we adopt the expedients of generalization or classification, and of abstraction or the construction of conceptual fictions. In effect—to borrow Croce's piquant way of expressing these processes—the scientist says, for example, "to a rose: 'See, I draw you in my treatise on botany, and you will represent all roses'; and to the triangle: 'It is true I cannot think you, nor represent you; but I suppose that you are the same as what I draw with rule and compass, and I make use of you to measure the approximate triangles of reality.'" Described in more general terms, the working convention on which the whole edifice of the natural sciences rests consists in treating our universe, in which it seems impossible to discover even two objects *exactly* alike, as if it abounded in identical constituents. I do not mean, of course, that science wilfully shuts its eyes to the existence of differences. On the contrary, it does its very best to take accurate note of them. But the only way in which the uniqueness of any object can be grasped for

purposes of scientific computation is to regard this uniqueness as consisting merely in the selection and arrangement of features which it shares in common with some other objects. The result is that the universe is treated as if it were made up not of an infinity of objects or parts of objects, each possessing a unique nature of its own, but of an unmeasured number of classes of objects, or of parts of objects, such that any specimen of a class may, for purposes of calculation, be regarded as identical in pattern and behaviour with any other. Now it is so far from being obvious that the universe contains multitudes of identical factors that in the realm of what is perceptible by the senses we cannot get beyond standard types, which the particular specimens of the classes reproduce with more or less negligible variations. If we are to suppose that the universe contains any absolutely identical constituents, they must be looked for in that realm of the infinitesimally small which baffles even the microscope, and where belief in absolute sameness may be unsusceptible either of direct verification or of direct confutation. That they are to be found even there, philosophy has its own grounds for doubting. Evidently, then, the convention on which the natural sciences depend has very slender claim to be anything better than a working device of method. What deserves to provide occasion for surprise is not that in parti-

cular cases the actual course of nature should sometimes contradict the conclusions about the limits of natural possibility which we may have drawn from well-established scientific formulæ, but rather that sciences which proceed by the methods of abstraction and generalization should be able to present us with an idea of the cosmic order of which there occur few obvious contraventions.<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps the essential contention of the preceding paragraph may be expressed more popularly as follows. Science, we may say, sets itself to discover the rules by which we suppose the Divine Mind to proceed in its cosmic self-expression—not, indeed, rules which God imposes on matter, but rules which He imposes upon Himself in expressing Himself through natural phenomena. Since our human minds, in dealing with a vast multiplicity of detail, can proceed in an orderly manner only by classifying the immense mass of fact under general headings, and formulating for ourselves general rules in accordance with which we shall act, we incautiously assume that the Divine Mind in nature cannot be orderly or rational unless God directs the course of things in accordance with fixed rules which He decided upon from the beginning and maintains intact. But the real truth is that the orderliness attained by acting according to rule is a very imperfect kind of orderliness. Rules are

abstract : facts are concrete or individual ; and no possible number of rules can ever be adequate to the concrete individuality of the facts. It is a perception of this truth that makes people talk of preferring to decide a case on its own merits instead of being content to dispose of it on general principles. The essence of a rule is that it enjoins sameness in spite of differences. No event or action can take place which is not due to a particular agent possessing particular characteristics, and which does not occur under particular conditions, at a particular time, in a particular place, and with particular results. But a rule prescribing this event or action is not a rule at all unless it requires the event or action to take place in spite of differences in some or all of these respects, namely, characteristics, conditions, times, places or results. Meticulous obedience to rules, that is to say, implies that in the action carried out some of the wealth of detail which constitutes the actual situation, and makes it individual or unique, is being ignored or treated as of no account. But surely for God there is no detail of His universe that is insignificant ! Therefore God can never be content to adopt the clumsy finite device of submitting to the guidance of rules—of mere generalizations like those, the sum-total of which we regard as the order of nature ; each new event He must decree on the individual merits of the situation out of which it springs.

Because the orderliness of a system of rules is a rough mechanical imitation of the living and spontaneous orderliness of a perfect intelligence, the system of rules or natural laws which our investigation seems to spell out in the workings of the universe approximates in some degree to providing an account of the path along which the living wisdom of God makes the course of things to run. But the wonder is that it approximates to this with any closeness at all. It is in no degree surprising that contraventions of what we take to be a system of rules or natural laws imposed by God upon Himself should sometimes occur.

Probably enough has now been said by way of showing that, even on quite general grounds, miracles—in the narrow sense of preternatural events or contraventions of what we take to be the cosmic order—must be regarded as always possible. They are possible, as has been shown, precisely because the real cosmic order, the true orderliness of things, is necessarily something wider, richer and more living than what our thought has at any time spelled out of the cosmic order and is compelled, for practical purposes, to treat as the actual nature of things. But there was a further assertion which has still to be made good. It was observed that while any kind of reflective belief in a single and all-inclusive rational order constrains us to admit the possibility of

what, from the perceptual or practical point of view, are contraventions of the cosmic order, this possibility becomes an increasing likelihood, the more perfect is the type of universal or cosmic order which we reflectively postulate. How is this additional contention to be established?

That which the reason is impelled to reach after as its ideal of a detailed explanation of things is an understanding of why, at each particular time and place, there is to be found precisely the one peculiar feature or occurrence which experience shows to be there. Our ideal of a perfection of order is the ideal of a universal system so minutely systematic that its every humblest member is required by all the others to be exactly its own peculiar self, and also requires all the other members to be precisely what they are. When the universal orderliness which reflection necessarily believes to characterize the cosmos is supposed to be of this ideally systematic type, and is envisaged under the forms of space and time, the implication is that a perfect understanding would comprehend how every object in space is required to be what it is by every other object in all space, and how every event in time is required to fall out so and not otherwise by every other event in all time.<sup>47</sup> In short, such a perfect understanding would recognize in every individual entity the unique way

in which alone the cosmic whole can, at this particular point, express its essential genius or significance.

Now this principle of seeking the explanation of each part of the universe in nothing less than the whole is already accepted by popular semi-scientific reflection so far as space is concerned. It has become a commonplace that each atom in the universe is acted upon by every other, and that consequently the behaviour of any particular atom could be fully explained only by taking into account the whole expanse of matter in every direction throughout space. But when we turn from space to time, we have to acknowledge how very one-sided is the manner in which this principle of looking for the explanation of the part in nothing less than the whole is apt to be here applied by popular reflection.<sup>48</sup> The common belief is in a chain of causation stretching back from the present into the immeasurable past, and of a character such that each link in the chain requires, for the complete explanation of its nature and occurrence, all the preceding links *ad infinitum*. That is to say, the common belief is that for the complete explanation of any event in time it is necessary and sufficient to take into account all the other events stretching back into the immeasurable past, but not any of the events that stretch away in front into the immeasurable future. But so

high-handed a bisection of the demands of the ideal of explanation is entirely arbitrary. No one who holds that what the present requires to be depends upon the past, can reasonably deny that it depends also on the future. If he objects that the future is not yet real and so cannot affect the real present, he has to face the question of how the past, which is no longer real, is in any better position. If the past, although it is no longer actual or existent, has yet reality enough to determine the present, why should not the future possess an equally effectual kind of reality in spite of being not yet actual or existent? The truth is that to believe in mechanical causation, or the determination of the present by the chain of events taken merely in one direction, is theoretically as indefensible as it would be to believe that the behaviour of an atom could be fully understood by considering all the other atoms behind it in space but not any of those in front, or of all those beneath it but not any of those above. The fond belief of our impetuous, scheming human minds in the possibility of completely understanding and mastering the present by study of the mere past is, in fact, just a "foolish, wilful dream." In mere self-consistency popular reflection ought to admit that every event without exception, whether apparently natural or apparently supernatural, can only be fully explained or "caused" by that totality of the past,

the present and the future which, if it could be completed, would be the exhaustive phenomenal self-expression or will of God. The logical necessity for admitting this is in no way set aside by the experimental fact that a very large proportion of the actual course of events seems capable of being explained, for practical purposes, by study of the past alone. For this experimental fact may quite possibly signify nothing more than that the plan or system of the cosmos as a whole requires for its realization long stretches of occurrence so monotonous that *within these stretches* the attempt to explain the present by the past alone does not lead to practical miscalculation. But at any moment the special reason which calls for this monotony in the self-expression of the whole may cease to apply, and then at once the monotony will be interrupted, the calculations of what is to come next will be stultified, and there will occur what will wear the aspect of a miraculous or preternatural breach of the supposed law of causation by the mere past. And this result, which on any rational interpretation of the principle of order must be always possible, is the more likely, the more complex or coherently differentiated is the orderly system by which past, present and future are bound together into one inter-related whole.

Strictly scientific thought, being much less naïve than the popular semi-scientific reflection

which we have been criticizing, has done its best to cut itself clear from this quite irrational belief in causation by the mere past. In a most useful way of its own it endeavours to show how the present is grounded in, or explained by, a super-temporal whole. This method has defects, indeed, which prevent it from supplying an explanation of the world that can be regarded as philosophically ultimate. For the super-temporality of the cosmic system which it traces out for us is an absolute timelessness, and the utterly timeless can never completely explain our human time-conditioned experience. Nevertheless the method avoids the extreme irrationality of cutting the course of time in two, and according preferential treatment to one section. The method followed by modern science consists in trying to reduce all that takes place to a complex of continuous processes, the nerve of each of which can be expressed in mathematical equations or identities. These equations are adequate to "explain" the processes by showing that what happens at *any* stage is the same as what is happening at *every* stage. Thus, by resort to timeless equations there is provided the same apparent power of calculating the future, and the same extrusion of the idea of contraventions of the natural order, as is provided by the more popular resort to the past and to mechanical causality. Yet in its practical application this procedure of strict

science can only lead to conclusions which have the same kind of logical weakness as those which depend on the more popular and mechanical idea of causation. For in practice it is only by inspection of the present and past that science can devise the timeless equations of which it is in search. And to suppose that timelessly true formulations of the laws of process can be reached by an analysis of that portion of the process which has so far run its course, is once again to rule out quite arbitrarily the possibility that in the nature of the cosmic whole there may lie reasons for long stretches of monotony, which are calculated to mislead the investigator into taking for a formulation of the total potentialities of the process what is only a reasonably adequate formulation of those potentialities which the process has so far revealed. On this basis too, therefore, we must grant the permanent possibility of miracles, in the narrow sense of contraventions of the laws of nature as at any time mathematically formulated. And this possibility will have the greater degree of likelihood, the more intricately we suppose the future to be bound up with the present and the past in one integrated orderly whole.

It seems fair now to claim that the main contention of the present chapter has been sufficiently made good. Not by any precariously long and

involved chain of reasoning, but by a single and fairly obvious line of argument, repeated and developed in different forms, it has been shown that there is no logical difficulty at all about admitting the constant real possibility of events which contradict our most scientifically grounded conceptions of the natural order. The argument has not made use of any specifically Christian premises. Entirely on general grounds it has been pointed out that there must always be room for the occurrence of miracles, in the sense of interferences by the real cosmic order with what our scientific knowledge, with its limited range and schematic methods, represents that order to be, and what our need for immediate action requires us to treat as if it were the actual cosmic order. Moreover, while still proceeding on quite general grounds, we may surmise the existence of a good moral and spiritual reason for the apparently strange fact that our careful scientific generalizations, although too artificial in method to be part of the philosophical or ultimate truth about reality, yet work so well on the whole. In other words, we may surmise a good reason why miracles, in the narrow sense of contraventions of accepted scientific law, while always possible, are not obviously of very frequent occurrence. In order that man may grow up a responsible self-directing agent, he must have some power of planning and choosing his ways; and in order

that there may be any moral virtue in that self-surrender to the will of God which is a vital aspect of genuine religion, man must have some independence to surrender. Now the adequate development of this responsibility and independence seems impossible unless to a very great extent nature works with a degree of monotony that will place within man's grasp far-reaching generalizations of a high degree of validity. For the sake of our moral and spiritual education the cosmic order, although it is not capable of being truly represented as a system of general laws, must in a very considerable degree operate as though it were such a system.<sup>49</sup> If we regard nature as the phenomenal self-expression of God, we may put this contention in a popular form by saying that so-called natural events are, as it were, nothing else than God, for the sake of our spiritual education, playing at being a machine, and that miracles or contraventions of natural law are God interrupting that make-believe, and reminding us that really He is something greater and more mysterious than our knowledge has discovered.

This is how the case stands so long as, in the investigation of the idea of contraventions of natural law, we keep to quite general grounds. We must now consider the special contribution of Christianity. It was declared above that in order to a useful abstract formulation of Jesus' view of miracle it would only be necessary to

take the idea to which the foregoing general considerations have pointed, and to give it a fuller and more practical significance. This idea is that miracle is a breach not of the real or ultimately true cosmic order, but of what might be called an enclave within that order. The conditions which we have seen to prevent what our knowledge takes for the cosmic order from coinciding with the real cosmic order, and to render it comparable to an enclave within the latter, are the limited range of actual human experience at any given time, and the schematic character inseparable from scientific knowledge. These conditions are purely intellectual; they are inevitable consequences of our human finitude. But what if there be other conditions, producing a similar effect, which are not inevitable but due to moral and spiritual faults? What if there be principles of the real cosmic order which have not merely happened hitherto to escape our ken because of the incompleteness which the nature of space and time never ceases to impose upon our finite knowledge, but have remained unknown because our moral and spiritual unfitness prevents us from having sufficient experience of their operation? In that case the cosmic order as scientifically apprehended would be a mere enclave within the real cosmic order in a much more radical and practically important sense. For in that case a mere change of spiritual attitude in

one man or another might at any time release into redemptive activity cosmic agencies whose principles of operation science has had no opportunity of studying, and which might occasion seemingly inexplicable departures from routine in the natural processes which have long been familiar. Now we need do nothing else than affirm that this undeniable possibility is something more than a possibility—that it is indeed plain matter of fact, in order to reach a useful abstract formulation of what we have been led to regard as Jesus' view of the miraculous in its aspect of a contravention of the natural order.

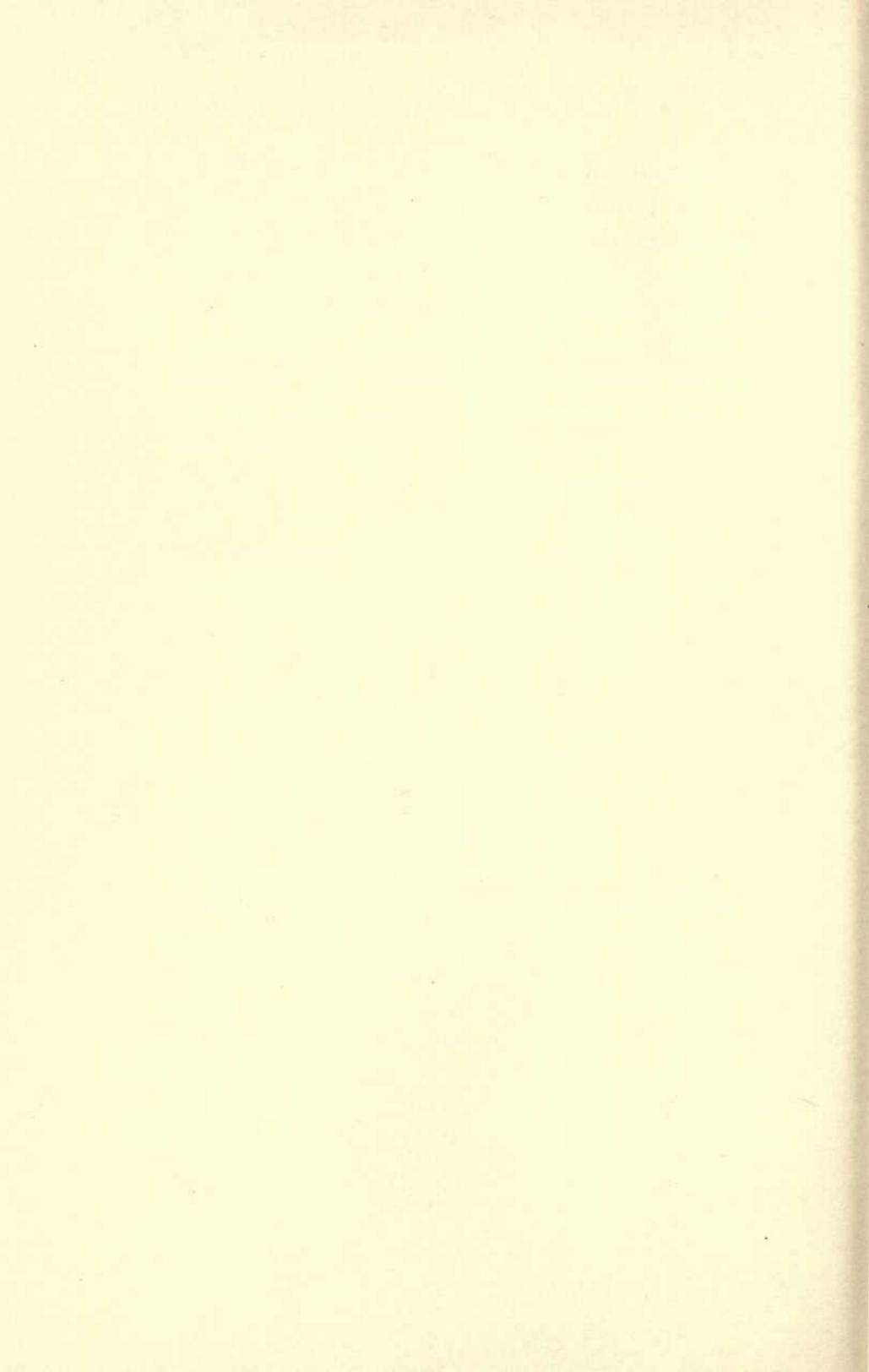
Whether this possibility is no mere possibility but actual fact, is fundamentally an experimental question. This is not to say that it can be submitted to the exact tests which characterize the experimental method as practised by the physical sciences. Scientific experiment of that kind can provide no evidence either for or against Christian miracle, for the simple reason that Christian miracle depends on what Jesus meant by "faith"; and that, as shown by Jesus' reply to the temptation to fling Himself down from the temple parapet, true faith can never consent to gratify the legitimate, but self-defensively critical, purposes of scientific experiment by attempting a miracle in order to prove the effectual presence of the supernatural. Miracle (not as the merely preternatural, but in the full sense of the term) is

the response of nature's God to the uniquely personal need of the self-surrendered soul. Now it would indeed be unjust and absurd to deny that the scientist may pursue his scientific toils in the spirit of religious self-surrender, and may enjoy a supernatural enhancement of his powers of rational intuition, application and critical self-restraint. But at the same time what such a scientist is seeking, in a religious spirit and with supernatural aid, is to discover how far nature may be harnessed hard and fast to the service of finite thought and will; and the very same benevolence which inspires God to respond in a uniquely individual way to the personal need of the self-surrendered soul, must lead Him to respond to the broad human need which animates scientific experiment—man's need to be capable of self-direction, and of an independence which he can surrender—only by natural phenomena with the control of which it is good for men in general to be trusted, and which, therefore, the God of nature is willing to repeat without limit in approximately identical manner.

Quite evidently, then, it is impossible to submit to exact scientific experiment the question with which we are here concerned, the question whether faith brings the individual into commerce with a greater cosmic order, a realm of wider possibilities, than that familiar to average human experience and ordinary scientific knowledge.

Nevertheless, being a practical question, it is in a broader sense of the term fundamentally one to be experimentally determined. What is needed is that the Church, casting aside the theological prepossessions which hinder her from sharing the primitive Christian attitude toward miracle-working, should restore to the New Testament miracles their demonstrative experimental value by exhibiting broadly analogous modern triumphs of faith. Because of the very sensitively social nature of faith it is supremely difficult for the individual, no matter how honestly persuaded he may be that miracle-working ought to be a permanent note of the Church's life, to act upon this belief with the necessary unfaltering conviction so long as it is not shared by the Church at large. But while we may therefore have to wait for adequate experimental demonstration, this does not imply that in the meantime we are restricted to unsupported guesswork. That faith should bring into perceptible operation cosmic principles which otherwise lie outside human experience may be, in the abstract, only an undeniable possibility. But there are broad religious grounds which render it much more than a bare possibility, which render it, indeed, extremely probable. For the spirit of faith is a childlike spirit, and the wisdom of the Divine Father can trust the childlike with tasks and resources which may not fitly be committed to

the hands of the wilful and self-confident. If the evolution of sons of the Heavenly Father be a central feature of the purpose of creation, surely the subtle texture of the cosmic order must be shot through with potencies which only the touch of filial fingers can evoke, and which only a spirit of confiding trust and eager loyalty is competent to direct!



CHAPTER VI.  
THE MIRACULOUS AS THE ACT OF GOD.

## SYNOPSIS.

THE second of the features above singled out in Jesus' conception of miracle was that in the supernatural we may recognize the act of God in a more eminent sense than in the natural. To vindicate this aspect of His conception of miracle is the object of the present chapter. But some Christians will be disposed to raise a prior objection: are not natural events the work of God only in the remote and indirect sense of being due to a cosmic plan which God decreed "in the beginning," and must not miracles, therefore, be the work of God in a sense not merely more eminent, but different altogether, if there is to be any immediate, active presence of God in the realm of events at all? Argument to show that, even if there be something remote about the sense in which natural events are the work of God, it certainly is not remoteness in time. God's way of ordering events is utterly misrepresented if it is conceived as a decreeing of them long before they happen. His eternal willing of current fact is not a timeless willing; and though it is doubtless not in our kind of time, it is best figured as the present activity of a Will which is even more on the spot than our will. God's will accompanies ours in the immediate "now" of present fact, though this immediate "now" has for Him none of the fretting limitations by which we are beset. Nevertheless there is, after all, something artificial about describing as the act of God events which we construe as natural. This is because the way in which we scientifically construe the events is very different from the way in which God regards them when He wills them. We construe them as cases of general laws or applications of rules of Divine government, whereas God decides every event, as it were, on the individual merits of the situation out of which it springs. Upon occasion, however, even our human minds are able, by intuition, to discern in particular events (or combinations of events) which transpire a peculiarly immediate fittingness which constrains us to regard them as occurring not for the sake of their conformity with general laws, but for their own sake. In such instances our intuition approximates to God's own way of apprehending events. Religion gives the name of "special providences" to events or combinations of events which we apprehend in this way. If by "natural events" we mean events as we scientifically construe them, then "special providences" are acts of God in a more eminent sense than "natural events." Miracles are preternatural special providences. By their preternaturalness they render perceptibly evident the infinity of God, and by their character as special providences they render perceptibly manifest the individuality of His wisdom and grace. Even more eminently, therefore, than special providences they are the act of God. Analogy between special providences and the beautiful, and between miracles and the sublime.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MIRACULOUS AS THE ACT OF GOD.

FROM the first of the three outstanding features which, as pointed out near the beginning of last chapter, characterize the conception of the miraculous which is implicit in the essential message of Jesus, it is time now to turn to the second. This is, that although both those familiar events which are explicable in terms of the supposedly closed system of man's ordinary experience, and those extraordinary events which imply an unexplored wider system, may rightly be called the work of God, yet in the latter we may recognize the act of God in a more eminent sense. No very elaborate argument should be necessary to commend this view to those who are ready to accept the position implied in the concessive clause. If it be admitted that "natural" events are the work of God, it should not be difficult to show that "supernatural" events are so in a fuller sense. On the other hand, if it be denied that "natural" events can, in any true sense, be described as the work of God, the argument required to refute the denial would be

long and laborious indeed ; for it would have to include the reasoned exposition of a monistic type of theism. Such an undertaking it would be quite out of place to attempt in a work engaged, like the present, with a specifically limited problem. Accordingly the author must crave liberty here to take for granted the religious and philosophical position that a Divine Heavenly Father is the ultimate meaning of everything that is real ; that every phenomenal fact contains or expresses, as it were, as much of God as it can hold ; and that the only question is whether the "supernatural," in the sense already defined, can be a more adequate expression of God than the "natural," and not whether either of them can be an expression of God at all. Nevertheless it may be well to postpone direct consideration of this question for a little, in order to prepare the way by dealing with a difficulty which is not infrequently felt.

Many Christians, while willing to concede that natural events may legitimately be called the work of God, have an uncomfortable feeling that they are so only in a remote and far-fetched sense—in a sense so indirect, indeed, that if they had to regard the "supernatural" work of God as differing from the "natural" in degree alone, this would seem to them equivalent to denying the possibility of any effectual immediate presence of God in the world of events whatever. One

main source of this feeling appears to lie in the common but erroneous assumption that anything which takes place because the order of things requires it—whether that order be the seemingly closed system of commonplace experience or the unexplored wider system revealed in miracle—has to be thought of not as the present act of God, but as only the execution of a plan decreed by God in the immeasurably distant past. This mistaken idea is to many a source of real hindrance to the freedom of their practice of prayer, and is certain also to reduce the spiritual value of the conception of the supernatural as here expounded. Hence it may at this point be of real service to discuss, in as brief and popular a manner as the case admits of, the relation in which our human minds should conceive the will of God as standing to events in time.

We may begin by taking note of the language of religious intuition. On the one hand, the Bible speaks of God as One who inhabiteth eternity, One who changeth not, One who seeth the end from the beginning, One for whom one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. But, on the other hand, we find the Bible equally accustomed to conceive of God as One who perfectly sympathizes with man, and who must accordingly be able to understand an experience that is in time; as One who marks

the fall of each sparrow, and who is therefore able to follow events as they happen one after another; and again as One to whom men may rightly and freely make petitions because He is glad to grant any reasonable request—in other words, as One in whose way of ordering events our prayers may at any time make a difference. Now, when we put together these testimonies of religious intuition, we are bound to recognize that they do not really convey that implication of absolute changelessness which some of them suggest when considered in isolation. What they seem to be rooted in is simply an instinctive certainty that God is free from those limitations which, in human experience, a life in time appears to necessitate. Their implication is that, even if change enters into the texture of the Divine experience, at any rate it brings with it no fickleness; that even if God has to wait, like man, for His purposes to come to gradual fruition, He is never impatient; that even if, for Him as well as for us, the world-process presents itself as reaching back into a past and forward into a future, at any rate He is never caught unprepared nor troubled by forgetfulness, so that His action is never rendered unwise. On the whole, then, religious intuition appears to point to the view that God's life is not timeless in the strictest sense of the term, but is timeless only in the sense that its temporality is of a

different type from ours; that eternity is to be conceived as a kind of time that imposes none of the limitations with which we are so familiar.

The only way in which the human mind might approximate to some helpful conception of a time-experience qualitatively different from its own is the method of analogy. It is not here my purpose, however, to enter on a search for suitable analogies, by considering what types of human experience are least infected with the hampering limitations connected with temporality.<sup>50</sup> The practical aim of the present discussion will be better served by conceding frankly that the religious consciousness requires to employ some translation of the eternity of God into terms of time as we know it, and by confining the argument chiefly to an endeavour to show how ill-chosen are two natural but religiously harmful ways of effecting this translation.

One of these follows the simple expedient of using the language of time with a negative attached; God's eternity is regarded as absolute timelessness, the complete negation of temporality. Now, the idea of a completely timeless existence begins, upon consideration, to look suspiciously like nonsense. For anything which exists in time there are but two alternatives: either it must be changing or it must be lasting unchanged. Change and lastingness are thus the two possible phases of temporal existence, and in fact it is

only relatively that they can be distinguished. In order that a being may be completely timeless, it therefore seems necessary that it should neither change nor last unchanged; and to make this simultaneous denial regarding any real existence is very like using words without meaning. Truth is timeless. It does not change: but neither does it last unchanged, except when some mind is thinking it; and then it is the thinking that lasts and not the truth which is being thought. Truth is timeless because it does not exist at all; it only has validity, not existence. Whatever exists must either last or change. To speak of God as timeless is consequently a most misleading way of expressing His eternity in the language of time, since it reduces His reality to the level of a mere abstract principle.

Another religiously disadvantageous method of trying to construe the eternal consciousness of God in terms of time, is to think of it as exhibiting one of the possible phases of time without the other—as lasting but not changing. Against this expedient of thought, if carried out in any thorough manner, it is easy to urge what appears to be a fatal objection. For it would seem that even if consciousness be possible without the element of change, at any rate a Deity who possessed such a consciousness could not be our sympathetic Heavenly Father. In order to be Himself entirely untouched by change, He must have no acquaintance

with our changing world ; for to perceive change, and to have a changing perception, appear to be one and the same thing. And even if this objection were to be disallowed, on the score that it argues too confidently from the psychological conditions of merely human cognition, the expedient under criticism still lies open to the charge that, at the best, it offers what is, for our human minds, a very misleading translation of the eternity of God. For to us the changeless is apt to seem the dead and impotent. It is when we are experiencing changes of an unwelcome kind that we admiringly picture, by contrast with these, the changelessness of God. It is the experience, in ourselves or others, of fickle transformations that inclines us to attribute to the Divine experience no modifications whatever. On the other hand, we can hardly avoid despising as tedious and dull an experience really without changes of any sort ; persistence without development we can only conceive as lifelessness.

It is scarcely worth while, however, to spend our critical ammunition upon the expedient under review in this its most complete or logically thorough form. When God is spoken of as merely lasting, or entirely without change, it is not usually meant that He does not, by experiencing the changing, have a changing experience. The meaning is only that, while His experience may change, this makes no difference

to His knowledge or to His will. He knows every detail in advance, long before He experiences it—knows and has known it for ever. He wills every detail in advance, long before it comes to pass; for, however varied be the sequence of stages through which the Divine purpose attains its fulfilment, God's mental picture or programme of this sequence is superior to change, and is lastingly willed by Him as a fully conceived design, unchangingly the same in every smallest particular.

When the attempt is made to conceive in this manner the eternal nature of the Divine life, by crediting it with a changing content of experience but excluding from God's thought and will any element of responsive self-adjustment, serious difficulties come to light at once. Since the supposed Divine purpose is a fixed plan, God's continuous willing of it has, from the point of view of our human interests, the same implications as a single fiat issued away back in the immeasurable past, a mere act of preordination. We are thus led to think of our human life as a kind of puppet-show, of which God is at once the contriver and the spectator. Now, if the puppets were unconscious, such a view of the relation between Creator and created might seem to credit the former with nothing worse than a rather inane kind of amusement, derogatory to His dignity. But when we remember that, so far from being

unconscious, the puppets are endowed with a type of consciousness which makes them imagine themselves under no slavery to past decrees, but free by labour, endurance and uprightness on the one hand, or by sloth, cowardice and wrong-doing on the other, to determine the issue for good or ill, then a Deity who could enjoy being the contriver and spectator of such a puppet-show begins to look like an unfeeling monster, not a Heavenly Father. All the amusement of looking on is for Him; all the labour and agony is for us. Surely, if God's programme for the world is a fixed one, long decided on, it could have been brought to pass by more completely mechanical means! So, to have endowed the puppets with a moral consciousness appears a piece of gratuitous cruelty.<sup>51</sup>

In order to avoid this consequence of the view of God's changelessness which we are examining, the device has been ventured of denying complete freedom of preordination while retaining foreknowledge in its entirety. God has bestowed on men, it is suggested, real freedom of choice, and has thus made Himself dependent on their volitions in time in respect of the detailed manner in which He wills to accomplish His eternal purpose. Nevertheless, since He foreknows, or has always been aware of, what they will choose to do, His changeless plan has always stood in such an adjustment to these foreseen choices as to be

certain of achieving its object in spite of them when it cannot achieve it directly through them.

In this modified form the conception under discussion does indeed escape the difficulty previously noted; it does not suggest that God is a monster of cruelty. Yet it lies open to an objection of an almost equally fatal kind. For it seems difficult to ascribe real Divinity to such a being as this hypothesis represents to us—a Being who has to watch, without being able to prevent it, the coming to pass of a foreknown human act of will which He morally abhors, and from the necessity of counteracting which He would fain have been relieved. Would such a Being really be free from finitude? Would He not be subject to even more fretting limitations than ourselves? In such a position we human spectators would be free from the galling certainty that the abhorred act of choice was actually going to be perpetrated by the human agent in question. Until the crisis of his decision arrived, our feelings would be tempered by hope for the best. But the God of this hypothesis could have no such soothing hope. He would require to watch a moral tragedy which He knew to be certain and could not prevent.

Complete futility thus seems to attend upon every application of the expedient under consideration—the expedient of trying to construe the eternal quality of the Divine consciousness

by denying or minimizing in it the time-feature of change while retaining the time-feature of lastingness. In its most thorough application it yields the conception of a lifeless Deity; in its other and less thorough applications it yields us either a God who is not Fatherly or a Father who is not God-like. Nor is it moral and religious consequences alone that call for the rejection of this expedient. On purely intellectual grounds it is equally inadmissible. For it is not even theoretically legitimate to regard the volitional life of God, in the manner required by this expedient, as consisting in the constant presence to His mind, and the constant acceptance by His will, of an unchanging representation of the whole time-process, simultaneously complete in every detail. Such a representation would necessarily distort time into a kind of space; it would inevitably be static, while the actual time-process is fluent and dynamic. Now it has been shown by Bergson<sup>52</sup> that any attempt to arrive at an instantaneous or static way of expressing the time-process, in its whole content or volume, necessarily fails to seize and express what is utterly vital to the quality of that process, namely, its rate of change. How quickly or how slowly the total course of things slips by makes all the difference in the world to our happiness or misery; but this all-important factor would have to be thought of as something purely contingent,

and not within God's power to determine, if His hold upon the current of change were exerted by continuously reaffirming a decision that was changelessly complete from the beginning. Now since, in respect of any all-inclusive developmental process, preordination is thus inherently or necessarily an incomplete determination, it follows that the idea of preordination fails precisely in the very point which used to commend it to its theological advocates; it fails to do justice to the complete sovereignty of God over the course of time.

Evidently, then, there is no escape from the conclusion that the eternal cannot usefully be translated into temporal terms simply by excluding one of time's constituent phases while retaining the other. Lastingness in which there is no element of change is as absurdly impossible as change in which there is no element of the lasting. If we are to speak wisely about the eternity of the Divine will, we must retain the dual quality of time. We must recognize that it is not by mere changelessness but, somehow, by means of change that God is eternally the same. We must remind ourselves that it is the meagreness of our capacity for contemporaneous intuition and instant self-adjustment that makes us mortals fall back upon prevision, and upon plans formed in advance, as a rough device for escaping unwisdom in conduct. What we call foresight is really nothing more than knowledge of the

timelessly valid; it is knowledge of permanent tendencies which, since they are not dependent on time, have as much bearing on the future as on the present or past. So-called foresight is, therefore, inevitably a thin, abstract or schematic kind of knowledge. If God enjoys a contemporaneous intuition that is perfectly penetrating, what need has He of such human make-shift aids to rational decision? Without foreseeing or pre-ordaining (in the only sense we can give to these terms) the will of God enjoys all that we attain, and more than we attain, by foresight and by plans sketched in advance; and to this it adds all that we attain, and more than we attain, by our contemporaneous insight and resolve.<sup>58</sup> God lives and acts along with us in the immediate present. He is preserved from the finitude which location in time imposes on us by being more on the spot, not less on the spot, than we are. Our feeble faculties get so little below the surface of the stream of time that we need, as it were, to soar up into the air for a bird's-eye view of its future channel ere we can wisely adjust our course. And then, incautiously, we construct a Deity in the likeness of our own finitude. In order that He may be able to make the maximum use of our makeshift device for apprehending the drift of time, we suppose Him to steer the barque of His purpose, as it were by wireless, from a position at an infinite height above. It were a

much truer figure—since we must use figures—to think of Him as Himself aboard that barque of His purpose, in the very same reach of time's river where we are steering ours, but as preserved from errors of navigation by faculties sensitive to the message of every tremor of the flowing waters, down to their most hidden depths.

We may now retrace our steps and pick up, with heightened confidence, the interrupted thread of our general argument. In the preceding chapter it had been shown that not in spite of, but because of, the all-embracing sweep of the intricate orderliness of fact there is a permanent likelihood of contraventions of what current thought has inevitably taken to be the order of nature; and further, that, on broad religious grounds, it is reasonable to believe that faith may provide the occasion for contraventions on a wider scale and of a redemptively purposive character. To take such a view of miracles, however, is to regard them as, in a legitimate sense, simply preternatural occurrences. But in the very first chapter of this book attention was drawn to the fact that, in order to be miraculous or supernatural in the religious sense of the term, an occurrence requires to be more than preternatural. It requires to be also self-evidently the act of God. Accordingly our argument proceeded, at the beginning of the

present chapter, to raise the question whether the supernatural, in the sense of the preternatural, could be also supernatural in the sense of being more truly the act of God than the natural. But to propound such a question is to state the issue badly unless it be cordially admitted that natural events themselves may be appropriately described as the work of God; and there are many Christians who feel that such a description has little point, because they regard natural events as having their source in God only in a very indirect and remote manner. Our argument therefore turned aside in order to show that, if there be such remoteness, in any case it is not remoteness in time. God's way of ordering events is utterly misrepresented if it is conceived as a decreeing of them long before they happen. God's eternal willing of current fact is not a timeless willing; and though it is certainly not in our kind of time, it is best figured as the present activity of a Will which is even more on the spot than our will. God's will accompanies ours in the immediate "now" of present fact, though this immediate "now" has for Him none of the fretting limitations by which we are beset.

At this point, however, the suspicion may naturally suggest itself that this conclusion, although adduced in the service of our purpose, really goes too far for our purpose. It seems to make all fact, without exception, directly the

expression of the Divine will. And if so, how can the supernatural be the act of God in a more eminent sense than the natural? Our reply to this objection will bring to the fore all that remains to be said by way of completing our philosophical defence of the Christian conception of the supernatural.

God is actively present with us here and now ; every event helps to utter a Divine will which is by us more truly to be conceived as contemporaneous with this its expression than as a fiat at an infinite remove in the past : such is the conclusion we have reached. But do all events serve *equally* to utter this present Divine will which they help to express? As we apprehend them, they certainly do not.

In the first place, our apprehension is very fragmentary or piecemeal. "All things work together for good" to those who, since they love God, are able to appreciate and lay hold of what is truly good. But it is their "together-ness," their total conjoint meaning and influence, that is good ; in themselves many of them are bad. A painful tragedy or a wicked deed certainly does not, in its immediate and independent significance, express a will of love and goodness. Of such events in their singleness we can only say that they are "permitted" by God and not that, in any sense, they are "wrought" by Him. They can begin to reveal or express to us a

Divine will only when we learn to apprehend them in a broader light—as, for example, when we recognize in them the actualization of possibilities which it seems right for the world-order to contain. And ordinarily we do not perceive such events in the illumination of their larger setting. They hold our attention in their repellent self-containedness; and, so apprehended, they do not render self-evident God's active presence with us here and now.<sup>54</sup>

It is not merely the fragmentariness of our apprehension of the course of things, however, that renders the world of daily fact, as we understand it, very unequally worthy of being called the work of God. Even when we labour hardest to perceive the interconnectedness of events, they seldom make evident to us an active Divine will; they seem to us, instead, nothing more than what we call them, the working of a natural order. This result is due to the abstract or schematic character of our way of construing the unity of experience.

As was pointed out in the preceding chapter, our scientific understanding of an event necessarily falls short of the uniquely individual manner in which the Divine consciousness must be supposed to apprehend and will it. Our human science can construe the event only as a case of certain general laws; and when we proceed to speak of the event, which we have construed in this way, as the work

of God, we are speaking as though, in His cosmic self-manifestation, God proceeded according to rules which He has laid down for the orderly control of His conduct. Now, control according to rule is an impersonal kind of control. No possible number of rules can ever be adequate to the complexity of fact. Meticulous enforcement of rules always leads to hard cases; and when these arise, the person who enforces the rules always pleads that it is not himself personally, but the system which he obeys, that is responsible for the hardship. The plea is a valid one; conduct according to rule is indeed something impersonal, a kind of conduct incompletely individuated. A merely scientific understanding of events, therefore, cannot apprehend them as, in any living sense, the work of a personal God, but only as His impersonal application of a system of abstract laws.

If we are to be in earnest with the idea of a personal Divine will in nature, we must concede that the order which science spells out there is only a rough mechanical approximation to the living orderliness of the Divine government. God decides events not according to rule, but, as it were, on the individual merits of the situations out of which they spring. A perfect orderliness is the orderliness of a system which is so integrally differentiated that each event is the one unique possible way of expressing, then and

there, the genius of the whole system—a genius which is incapable of adequate definition in general terms and can be adequately expressed only in these its concrete embodiments. In a system of perfect orderliness each individual member of the system seems to exist for its own sake alone, and appears to be thus self-explanatory precisely because, in a complete unique way of its own, it expresses the genius of the entire self-sufficient system to which it belongs.

Now, by the way of science, which rests upon generalization, we never get near apprehending so living an orderliness in the world of daily fact. But in another way we sometimes do. Now and again there occur events, the perfectly unique appropriateness of which to the peculiar needs of some individual human situation seems to leap to the eye. This recognition of a unique appropriateness is matter of intuition; it is neither helped nor hindered by the degree in which we are able to discern in the event an exemplification of general laws. No matter how many be the laws to which such an event conforms, we realize intuitively that it was not for the sake of such conformity, but for its own sake, or to render its own uniquely individual service, that the event took place. Even in the case of occurrences like these our apprehension of an absolutely unique appropriateness doubtless falls short of the full truth; had the event been different in some

minor detail, we might still have felt in it an equally peculiar fittingness. Even here, therefore, our intuition falls short of quite adequately apprehending the perfect orderliness of the Divine will. Nevertheless, in these cases, intuition approaches much closer to this apprehension than the mind can get along the path of science.

In speaking thus, I am taking no account of mere errors of judgment in particular instances. Our intuitive or individual type of apprehension may go astray as easily as our scientific or generalized apprehension may, and probably it errs more frequently and more seriously than the latter. It is in the quality, not the inerrancy, of its grasp that it is superior. It apprehends events in an individual manner, less unlike the manner in which God apprehends them when He wills them. And therefore to describe the events which we apprehend in this manner as the work of God, has far more truth than to apply the same description to events as science construes them.

Religion has its own name for events which we seem able to understand in this intuitive or individual manner. It calls them "special providences." "General Providence" is a name for the broad purposiveness or teleology which we discern in the course of things at large. It emphasizes the degree in which this broad purposiveness renders it self-evident to us that, in its ultimate significance, the universe is no

impersonal system, but the manifestation of a Personal will. By a "special providence," on the other hand, we mean an event or disposition of events which, in its own immediate significance, shows itself so brimful of worthy purpose as to appear self-evidently the work of a Divine will—of a Divine will, moreover, which is dealing with the situation on its individual merits and not on mere general principles. A perfect mind, which apprehended in its real significance all that transpires, would see "special providence" everywhere; but it is not so with our minds. And if by "events" we mean "occurrences as *we* perceive and understand them," we may say that "special providences" are acts of God in a much more direct or obvious sense than other events; in them the ever-present, ever-active will of God comes out into the open, as it were, instead of screening itself from our living apprehension behind a system of general laws.

Now the miraculous or supernatural, in the religious sense of the term, is a particular kind of "special providence." "Special providences," it has been said above, are events or dispositions of events, the unique appropriateness of which to the peculiar needs of some individual human situation leaps to the eye at once. And it was added that, since our apprehension of this appropriateness is by way of intuition, it is independent of the degree in which we are able to discern in

the event, or the disposition of events, an exemplification of general laws. Now a miracle is a "special providence" in which we not only fail to discern an exemplification of general laws, but perceive the very opposite; it is a "special providence" in which we perceive a contravention of what our best knowledge has hitherto taken to be laws of the cosmic or universal order. We describe as miraculous, or religiously supernatural, whatever impresses us as at once a "special providence" and a preternatural phenomenon.

In itself the preternatural affords occasion only for surprise and perplexity and not for a worthy kind of religious awe. It demonstrates nothing more than that nature is richer and more mysterious than we had supposed. Again, a "special providence" which is merely such, and not also, at the same time, a preternatural occurrence, comes short in one respect of making perceptibly self-evident the activity of a personal Deity. For, since it is entirely in harmony with known general laws, what prevents us from interpreting it as simply an instance of their general working, and from treating its intimate appropriateness to the individual human situation as a pure coincidence or accident, is merely a rational instinct of our minds. In order that this rational instinct may receive backing from sense-perception it is necessary that the occurrence, besides having a unique individuality of appropriateness, shall be

perceptibly contrary to seemingly established general laws. When the preternatural, on the one hand, and the uniquely fitting or appropriate, on the other, are thus combined in one and the same occurrence, the mysteriousness which the preternatural renders perceptible becomes personal, and the personal agency to which the appropriateness of the occurrence points becomes perceptibly mysterious. Thus miracles, or preternatural "special providences," render perceptually obvious both the personality and the infinitude of the Divine will. I am far from denying that real infinitude is individuality rather than transcendence of any possible measure, but it is only under the guise of transcendence of all measure that infinitude can make itself perceptible in the objectivity of space and time. Consequently, for minds conditioned like ours by space and time, it is a real help to perception of the infinite God that He should at times express Himself in what is for us the preternatural, that is to say, should express Himself in ways transcending our current measure of the possibilities of the cosmic order. "Special providences" render self-evident for us the grace and wisdom of God; miracles, or preternatural "special providences," render self-evident His infinitude as well. Events which we apprehend as miraculous or supernatural are, therefore, acts of God in a sense that is altogether pre-eminent.

Is it necessary to add anything by way of bringing out the practical appositeness of these somewhat abstractly expressed conclusions? Any one who has had vital experience of the life of prayer, and of answers to truly serious and child-like petitions, should easily realize the relevancy of what has here been said about "special providences." He will remember how certain he has felt that something which occurred was really an answer to his prayer, really an act of God; and he will also remember how difficult he has felt it to give any one else adequate grounds for believing that his certainty was justified. The certainty was an intuition, born of the uniquely individual appropriateness with which what happened fitted into the context of his own peculiar needs and of the idiosyncrasies of his spiritual attitude. And the incommunicableness of this certainty was due to the impossibility of conveying to any other mind an understanding of those needs and idiosyncrasies intimate enough to make it evident how uniquely appropriate was the event, and how unthinkable is the idea that so perfectly individual an adaptation could be the outcome of merely general laws.

Again, is not our abstract statement about the supernatural entirely apposite to the miracles of Jesus? Regarded in detachment from the concrete human setting, any one of them is a mere preternatural occurrence, and with the advance of

scientific knowledge may conceivably become susceptible of classification under general laws and so may earn the name of "natural." What makes it impossible for us to interpret them, at the time and place of their occurrence, as other than supernatural, is (1) that for the knowledge of that day they were preternatural, and were achieved by a humble faith, instead of by a self-reliant application either of scientific formulæ or of established rules of art; and (2) that they were events so uniquely adjusted to the needs which they relieved, and to the spiritual attitude of the miracle-worker, as to render any explanation by the convergent operation of merely general laws obviously inadequate. In the supernatural the active will of God, which in its motive is always benevolent and in its real inwardness is always both universal and individual, becomes obviously beneficent, perceptually transcendent, and transparently individual.

There is an interesting analogy between the Divine self-manifestation here under discussion and the beautiful; for to the responsive spirit God makes Himself perceptually evident in the beautiful, if not as will, at least as a presence. Both in the supernatural and in the beautiful that universal fitness of things which faith postulates becomes individualized and self-evident. Perhaps one may say that a "special providence" is what corresponds, in the realm of events, to the

beautiful in nature, and that a miracle is what corresponds, in the realm of events, to the sublime in nature. In the sublime and in miracle, and to a lesser degree in natural beauty and in "special providences," God makes Himself object of intuition, of an immediate spiritual perception which, like sense-perception, varies in form and reach with the aptitude of the beholder. "Blessed are the pure in heart"; for it is they who, most frequently and most penetratingly, "shall *see* God."

CHAPTER VII.  
ON THE KING'S BUSINESS

## SYNOPSIS.

SURVEY of the foregoing apologetic. Have not needed to recognize any difference between the problem of physical and that of spiritual miracles. To affirm the supernatural involves no conflict either with the legitimate claims of science or with the philosophical postulate of the rationality of the real. May consequently regard the question of the truth of the message of Jesus in its supernatural aspects as entirely an experimental issue. Relation between our results and current movements of thought (faith-healing, mental therapeutics, the psychically supernormal). In this concluding chapter we must pass beyond the attempt we have been pursuing to formulate the supernatural in general terms, and must endeavour to apprehend it in a way at once more individual and more truly universal. If the Christian is utterly freed from rules, whether moral or natural, it is only upon condition of being Divinely inspired to be an imperative to himself. Must realize to the full this sharp contrast of aspects by which the life of supernatural enablement is characterized. The principle that for faith all things are possible means that the Christian is not to measure his duty by past experience of the practicable, but is to estimate the practicable by his independent knowledge of what God lays it upon him to undertake. In seeking to determine what are the supernatural ventures to which he is summoned, he must not be content to rely on alleged general rules, such as that by faith it is always possible to obtain release from pain or disease, for rules or general laws belong entirely to the natural plane. In the realm of the ultimately real, with which in experience of the supernatural we attain a perceptual kind of contact, there is room for universal principles, but no room for the rough human expedient of simplifying their concrete application by transforming them into rules bearing indifferently on all cases of a defined class. It is only along the soul-tasking path of intuition that we may hope to pass from the universal principle that faith gives God greater freedom to act redemptively or supernaturally to knowledge of the individual achievement for which we may rightfully ask supernatural enablement. Intuition no more inerrant than any other rational faculty. Without it no possibility either of creative discoveries in science and philosophy or of ordinary autonomous moral judgment. How may this indispensable faculty be stimulated into religious exercise, so that the Christian may never lack true intuition of the next adventure of faith in which the genius of the Divine universal order seeks expression at his hands? Need for prayerful reflection on daily life, for disciplining the will to the obedience of Christ, and for patient Bible-study. Confident asking, which is the New Testament ideal of prayer, is possible only through an intuition conditioned by community of aspiration with God. The Church as a whole inherits Christ's vocation, accomplishment of which necessarily involves the supernatural. And even when there is nothing preternatural about the particular achievement to which an individual Christian knows himself summoned, he is called to achieve it absolutely sinlessly, which is impossible without supernatural enablement. The true practical importance of our reaffirmation of the supernatural.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ON THE KING'S BUSINESS.

BEFORE returning from the abstract realm of philosophy and apologetic to which, in the two preceding chapters, we have been paying all too brief a visit, it seems desirable to take some survey of our conclusions.

There is one point in regard to which it is particularly important to run no risk of misunderstanding. Throughout our discussion of "natural" and "supernatural" we have taken no cognizance whatever of one narrow sense to which the term "natural" is often restricted in modern speech, a sense in which by "nature" is meant the realm of purely physical phenomena alone. Since modern science attempts to apply the method of abstract generalization in the realm of the conscious as well as of the unconscious, we have proceeded throughout on the assumption that the problem of the supernatural is fundamentally the same in the case of spiritual as in the case of physical miracles. In discussing the question of contraventions of the cosmic or "natural" order, therefore, we have intended by

the "natural" whatever is in accord with that which passes current at any time as the ascertained laws of the whole universe of conscious and unconscious being. Speaking as Christians for whom God is essentially the Heavenly Father, we have assumed it to be self-evident that the orderliness which really characterizes the universe cannot be the finite or imperfect orderliness of abstract laws of nature or abstract rules of Divine government, but must be a thoroughly individuated orderliness, one in which every event is, as it were, determined on the individual merits of the situation out of which it springs. Since it is impossible for our human minds to construe with any adequateness a universal order of this ideally perfect type, science prefers to seek an inclusive understanding of a more approximate kind. It prefers to seek generalizations which are valid enough for scientific and broadly practical purposes, although not for the intimately individual issues of the life of faith and personal duty. Now it is because this has been the standpoint from which our discussion has proceeded that we have been justified in ignoring the question of the relation between physical nature and the realm of consciousness. For us that is a purely technical scientific question, of no direct religious importance. Whether physical nature may be most conveniently treated as a closed system running parallel with the realm of con-

sciousness, or whether mind and body may be more conveniently treated as capable of interaction, is from our point of view merely a question of what is the least misleading way of bringing into relation the results of particular ways of applying, in these two contrasted realms, the artificial but necessary method of construing the facts of experience in terms of class-concepts. A decision of this question may doubtless react upon current habits of thought in ways that may prove religiously important, but it is difficult to see how it can have any direct bearing on the problem of the supernatural as conceived in these pages.

A second point which calls for emphasis as we look back at the results of the two preceding chapters, is that from our point of view there can be no talk of a conflict between a recognition of the supernatural and the legitimate claims of science—the claims, that is to say, of a science that does not mistake itself for philosophy. Upon our reading of the situation, the two standpoints are so different that they can neither clash nor support each other. In our view a miraculous or supernatural event is to be regarded, from the scientific standpoint, simply as an unclassified phenomenon which threatens to entail some revision of accepted classifications, and which, accordingly, until classified, appears preternatural. Again, in our view, what science calls a “natural” event is, from the religious standpoint, merely a

very abstractly apprehended part of the self-expression of the Divine will—a part of this self-expression into the living heart of which we have so slightly penetrated as to see in it nothing more than conformity to quite general rules.

If there is thus no room for conflict between the results of science, rightly understood, and belief in the supernatural, neither is there, on our view, any conflict between this belief and the fundamental philosophical postulate of the rationality or orderliness of reality. So far from asserting that miracles are, in any ultimate sense, breaches of the cosmic order, it has been by postulating an ideally rational type of cosmic order that we have deduced the inevitableness of that class of events within which, as a subordinate species, the religiously supernatural falls, namely, events which at the time of their occurrence seem preternatural, because contrary to the then accepted generalizations about the cosmic or “natural” order. Without being troubled, therefore, by any pricks of his philosophical conscience, the Christian may turn an open ear to the joyous Gospel message that faith places him in touch with what is, for practical purposes, the transcendent.

An open ear, an attitude of unprejudiced attentiveness! such is the spirit in which the results of our incursus into the realm of philo-

sophical analysis permit us to resume that constructive investigation of the permanent and practical significance of the message of Jesus which the demands of apologetic required us to interrupt. We find ourselves set at liberty to regard the question of the truth of that message as, in the broadest sense, purely an experimental issue, incapable of being decided in the negative on merely *a priori* grounds. Does faith bring men into practical relations with what, without prejudice to the purely immanent order which a perfect mind might be able to recognize in all things, is for practical purposes the transcendent?—that is the issue. Only one thing can avail to decide it convincingly in a positive sense, namely, believing experiment; but in this concluding chapter something may be done to set the issue in a clearer light.

It may be helpful to begin by considering the relation in which our conclusions stand to certain current movements of life and thought. For popular reflection recent developments in faith-healing, mental therapeutics and research into the psychically supernormal, have done a good deal to mitigate the prejudiced incredulity which had become so widespread an attitude toward all that savoured of the supernatural. Now, from our point of view, exact research, whether experimental or theoretical, into the realm of supernormal psychical phenomena and into the

possibilities of mental healing, is quite different from an attempt to explore the reaches of the supernatural. It is, in fact, quite the contrary; it is an effort to explore the reaches of the "natural," to discover whether phenomena, which at present are preternatural and consequently incapable of control with a view to calculated achievements, may not be brought within the range of competent human manipulation and even of precise scientific formulæ. Any one who propounds to himself such a problem as, for example, that of ascertaining whether, by practising with sufficient abandon the attitude of the Christian Scientist, or the special faith of the faith-healer, or even a general confidingness of trust in the Heavenly Father, it is always possible to bring to pass such and such apparently preternatural results, is taking up the attitude of science rather than of religion. He is asking himself a perfectly admissible question, but it is a question the answer to which would give him further knowledge of the "natural," not of the "supernatural." For he is seeking to arrive at a generalization, to arrive at an abstract rule of Divine government, to arrive at something which, if it could be reduced to terms of a measured relation between a defined mental or spiritual attitude and definite results of an otherwise unattainable kind, would deserve to rank as a scientific law of the cosmic or "natural" order.

Now, from our point of view, the factor which deserves the name "supernatural" and which (whether it be given that name or not) it is religiously important to assert as possible and real, is always both thoroughly individual, or superior to all generalizations, and disconcertingly mysterious, or contrary to some contemporaneously current generalizations. In the supernatural we come face to face with God as a transcendent, spontaneous and personal Will, and not as the mere administrator of a system of rules of world-government from whom we may count on securing what we want by conforming to the relevant regulations. In converse with the supernatural we do not bid farewell to reason, but we cease to place implicit confidence in the scientific understanding. We do not sacrifice belief in a God of order, but we believe in an order which must transcend and may conflict with our scientific insight into its nature, both because it covers reaches of reality unexplored by us as yet, and because it is too livingly individual in type to be capable of adequate expression in abstract formulæ resting on generalizations. Precisely in so far, therefore, as we succeed in bringing mental healing of any kind to the rank of an applied art or in expressing supernormal phenomena in well-tested formulæ, we establish for these data of experience a place on the "natural" plane.

To say this is not to disparage these endeavours to throw scientific light on apparently preternatural phenomena or to deprecate their further extension. On the contrary, when prosecuted intelligently and in a worthy spirit, they are to be welcomed not only in a scientific interest, but from the standpoint of religion as well. For although, when successful, their immediate result is to prevent certain occurrences which may have previously served as occasions of a religious experience of the supernatural from ranking, in the future, as anything more than "special providences," yet they may have the indirect effect of rendering the mind more open to expectant belief in the supernatural. This indirect result is due to the fact that each fresh discovery of an orderliness in phenomena which transcends and runs counter to our previous ideas of the natural order, helps the imagination to conceive it possible that the will of God may be able to work in ways transcending all our scientific ideas of order without thereby ceasing to be an orderly will. To prove, for example, that physical nature is not a closed system free from the interference of hyper-physical factors, may be an achievement very different from a demonstration of the reality of the supernatural. Nevertheless, the shock which such a proof would administer to the overweening confidence of those who had believed physical nature to be a closed system, might well serve to quicken their latent conscious-

ness that the real cosmic order must always transcend all seemingly established generalizations—even the newly established generalizations about the hyper-physical.<sup>55</sup>

Having now sufficiently apprized ourselves of how little the problem with which certain current movements of thought are busy is to be identified with the issue with which our own conclusions bring us face to face, we must turn to define the latter more directly. Throughout our investigation we have been considering the supernatural negatively, but if our results are to have any practical value, we must learn how to explore the supernatural positively. If the supernatural is the redemptive, we must understand not only *from* what, but *to* what we are redeemed. That which, as miracle, contravenes the natural order as current science construes it, is a wider order more ideally perfect in type, and only those who imbibe and voluntarily subject themselves to the spirit of this wider and more living order can possess either the capacity or the right to profit by its freedom. Miracle-working and irresponsible licence are poles apart. On our view miracle is, as it were, the cosmic Reason become sense; the supernatural, so far from being the irrational, is the intimately individual reasonableness of the infinite making itself for a moment immediately perceptible. And he who would know himself at

liberty to invoke the supernatural must be learning to live the life of the infinite God, which is victory through self-immolation, life through death; he must sanctify himself to taste of the cup of which our Lord drank and to share the baptism where-with He was baptized. For if Jesus regarded miracle, negatively, as the preternatural, the clashing of "the age to come" with "the present age," positively He defined it as interpenetration by the life Divine—"I, by the Spirit of God, cast out devils."

To grasp the nature of this life eternal on which the Christian is summoned to enter here and now, we must realize to the full its sharp contrast of aspects. The Christian is utterly freed from rules, whether moral or natural, but it is only upon condition of being Divinely inspired to be an imperative to himself. He is endowed with limitless resources, but only upon condition of a spontaneous exactingness of loyalty to the Spirit of Christ, which is the living will or personality of God.

In seeking a fuller realization of these contrasted aspects of the truly Christian life, let us begin by reverting to the negative aspect which we have already considered, namely, the redemption offered from the world of the already delimited, the world of worldly-wisdom. Our abstract philosophical analysis has shown that in the real cosmic order there must always exist an unexhausted margin of Divine energy beyond what our know-

ledge at any time has discovered and construed as the order of nature. But as Christians, for whom Jesus' intuition of the infinite Father is authoritative, we must believe much more than this; we must believe this margin to be an inexhaustible reserve which so widely transcends the range of what our knowledge has mapped out that it provides the means of rendering all things possible to him that believeth. In this book we are concerned with the miraculous element in the New Testament only in its broader aspects, and not with the relative claims to historicity of the particular miracles recorded. No demonstration of the credibility of the supernatural in general can ever excuse the student from weighing critical arguments against the authenticity of particular stories, or from considering any critical evidence pointing to a tendency to heighten the preternatural aspect of the striking achievements narrated. But there is one outstanding impression left by the Synoptic story which not even the completest readiness to surrender belief in this or that miracle, or to admit an unconscious tendency to exaggeration of the marvellous, can avail to shake. However cautiously one may hold one's judgment in suspense as to the details of Jesus' exercise of the miraculous, it seems plain that in deciding what boons He might supernaturally bestow He never paused to weigh the "natural" possibilities. While quite unmoved by

the demand for prodigies as credentials of His mission, He was also never deterred from attempting any achievement which might redound to His Father's praise by mere thought of its preternaturalness. This regal indifference to the distinction between natural and preternatural agencies, in its combination with the sureness of His intuition as to the fitting use to be made of the latter, is a feature of the Synoptic picture that appears self-evidently authentic. It touches off a personal trait too distinguished and original to be an invention; it must be copied from life. And this attitude of sublime indifference to the teachings of past experience about the limits of the possible was not merely an attitude which Jesus adopted for Himself, but was one which, in well-known utterances of characteristically startling boldness, He repeatedly enjoined upon His followers. Not in degree, then, but absolutely the Christian is set free from subservience to past measures of the possible. He may learn wisdom from the past as to the difficulties to be faced, and the sufficiency or otherwise of tested ways of dealing with them, but He must never treat the past as capable of indicating with authority the limits of possible achievement. It is not for him to measure his duty by past experience of the practicable, but to estimate the practicable by his independent knowledge of what God lays it upon him to undertake.

Further, in seeking to discover the undertaking which God lays upon him, the Christian must never let his visions of the possible and permissible be curbed by the idea that the present life is meant to be a vale of tears. If there is one truth that the miracles of Jesus reveal more clearly than another, it is that in this world pain and disablement and tragedy are intruders hateful to the Heavenly Father. As has been strikingly said by Professor Cairns in a recent impressive article,<sup>56</sup> the New Testament story is an account "of the greatest attack in all human history on sin and on death. It is only in this double context that we can really understand the story, or see the place in it of the miracles and the Resurrection. Not only unbelief, hatred, and despair, but disease, famine, storm, and death itself go down before the 'Prince of Life.'"

Now at this point in our exploration of the negative aspect of the Christian life, its aspect of redemption or liberation, it will be strange if the following question does not present itself. If the Heavenly Father regards disease and pain and tragedy as hateful intruders into His world, is He always willing to expel them when once, against His desire, they have obtained a footing there? Is it always possible, by the appeal of faith, to obtain relief from pain, and the cure of disease, deformity and disablement? Yet, however natural such a question may be, to raise it is to

enter on a bypath which, as was pointed out above, leads away from the effort to understand and explore the distinctive Christian life of obedient adventure and supernatural enablement. It may or may not be true that disease or deformity may always be cured by faith. Whether it be true or not is a perfectly admissible question, and well worthy of careful investigation in view of the practical importance of the answer. But to establish such a conclusion as a valid generalization would be to remove the fact from the sphere of the supernatural, in the proper sense of the term. In experience of the supernatural we attain a perceptual kind of contact with the realm of ultimate reality; and while, in this realm of the ultimately real and true, there is room for universal principles, there is no room for the rough human expedient of simplifying the concrete application of these universal principles by transforming them into rules bearing indifferently on all cases of a defined class. Science aims at discovering universal principles of the cosmic order; but in seeking for them she has to begin by classification, and in order to make her results of any practical use, she requires in the end to treat them as applicable to classes of cases. In our investigation of the supernatural we, too, have aimed at discovering a universal principle, and in the message of Jesus that the Kingdom of God is at hand, or that for faith "the last days"

are already present, we have found implicit the universal principle that human faith gives God greater freedom to act redemptively or supernaturally. But unless we are willing to descend from the plane of ultimate truth to the level of those approximate generalizations which permit human self-will to go its own independent way with some measure of success, we must leave the principle we have discovered as universal as we found it. Faith gives God greater freedom to act redemptively or supernaturally, but the action which He will choose must depend on His own utterly intimate comprehension of the individual to whose faith He is responding and of the situation with which that faith is faced.

It is not by the path of generalization, then, that we shall succeed in passing, as we must now do, from the negative to the positive aspect of our subject. Positively regarded, miracle-working consists in achieving results by the Spirit of God (Matt. xii. 28), and there is no rule of thumb by which he who would invoke the supernatural may know in what specific object of immediate aspiration and endeavour he may count on the full sympathy and unstinted aid of God. If the Christian is redeemed from the limitations of the world as we know it, it is in order that he may, with complete abandon, unharassed by worldly-wisdom's "impossibles" and predictions of

disaster, serve God alone and serve Him in the world.<sup>57</sup> He has to lose himself in the will of God in order to find there a new individuality and an undreamed-of freedom. But how shall he enter into that will, and know it with definiteness, step by step? There is but one way. He must patiently tread the soul-tasking path of intuition. If by an intuitive type of apprehension it is possible, as was claimed in discussing the idea of "special providences" in the chapter preceding, to perceive in what has already occurred the individual intent of the Divine will, it should be equally possible, in regard to what ought to occur next, to win to intuition of the will of God. "Intuition," however, is a term which certain past developments of philosophy, particularly in Scotland, have infected with a bad odour, and possibly some readers of the present volume have been uneasily suspecting that history is repeating itself, and that once again this unfortunate term is being dragged in to cover up an incoherence of theory. In order to dispel any such suspicion it may be well to show grounds for holding that "intuition," in the sense here intended,<sup>58</sup> is a real mental function with a wider range of application than concerns our present subject. Intuition is involved in scientific discovery; it is involved also in every independent judgment about personal duty, even when such judgment is untouched by religious thought or emotion.

Whatever may be our opinion as to the success or failure of Bergson's attempt to discover the universal principle of the realm of physical and psychical fact, it seems to me necessary to admit his contention that only by intuition is it possible to discover the true universal in things—the real orderliness of fact, as distinguished from the abstract or schematic order which is so convenient for the practical purposes of applied science. "Intuition" is Bergson's name for the capacity to which the human mind owes all its most fruitful or creative hypotheses.<sup>59</sup> Any fruitful hypothesis appears to synthesize or reduce to intelligible unity a great variety of previously unconnected observations, and to lead to other observations equally harmonious. But Bergson insists that this result is really no case of a mere synthesis or putting together. Were it only this, no genius would be required for the discovery of the hypothesis; any patient plodder could have arrived at it by simply piecing together the observations. In order to the synthesis the supposed observations require something more than mere combination; they have to be critically examined, adjusted and reinterpreted ere they will fit together. And to effect this adjustment and reinterpretation before the combining hypothesis has even begun to dawn upon the mind, is as impossible as it would be to discover what poem a confused heap of printer's type represents by any other method

than first thinking of a possible poem and then trying whether the type will serve to compose it.<sup>60</sup> Modern logic is, so far, in agreement with Bergson here. It has long recognized that fruitful hypotheses, in science or in practical life, are not obtained by mere synthesis in the literal sense of a "placing side by side." It has therefore ascribed their invention to the scientific imagination. But were imagination the creative agent, surely true and fruitful hypotheses would be far rarer even than they are, for their truth would be a mere accident! Bergson contends that they are due to "intuition." A mind which, by dialectic, has purged itself of false conceptions and modes of thought, and which, by long brooding over the growing mass of observed facts and by skilful use of the imagination, has attuned itself to sympathy with the real, may at length attain to an intuition—an individual or integral perceiving—of the universal principle which animates the observed facts—a principle which only their individuality, and not any abstract formula, can adequately express. In Bergson's opinion, it is to insight thus attained that the first formulation of all really fruitful hypotheses in science or philosophy has been due.<sup>61</sup>

Now, this rational capacity for integral or non-sensuous perception which, under the name of "intuition," Bergson postulates as necessary both for philosophically true knowledge of fact and for fruitful advances in that practical handling

of fact which the ordinary sciences subserve, it seems equally necessary to postulate in the realm of morals. For the irreligious quite as much as for the religious mind, it is only by means of an individual or intuitional type of apprehension that independent decision regarding immediate personal duty is possible.

Duty is always an utterly individual matter. At any given moment my duty is to act in the single way in which, by a man like myself situated as I then am, loyalty may be most adequately expressed to all that I hold truly precious. For another person at that moment, or for myself at another moment, the immediately binding duty would be different in some measure, whether great or small. Duty is thus ever uniquely single or individual. And yet, with all this individual definiteness, duty is always universal. Precisely by means of the individuality of its adaptation to persons and occasions it remains identical in spirit for all men at all times. For true universality is not opposed to definiteness; on the contrary, it is the soul of definiteness. This is why the will of God can be universal or orderly, even though it is so individual as to slip through the meshes of any number whatever of intersecting rules or generalizations.

Because duty is individual, it can never be deduced from a system of moral laws, or from any moral ideal conceived as a pattern of conduct.

In practical life no one really allows moral rules to prescribe to him the path of duty. No one does this, because really it is a thing impossible. For a rule can prescribe only a class of actions, while duty is always a particular act.<sup>62</sup> Rules can only *sanction* individual actions, that is, abstain from forbidding them;<sup>63</sup> they cannot *prescribe* them. Doubtless many men imagine that they are doing all that morality requires when they confine themselves to actions which are sanctioned by moral rules. They suppose themselves at liberty to choose any particular way of behaving for which they feel inclined, so long as it falls within the classes of action approved by moral rules. But this is a very imperfect kind of morality—a morality of mere limitation or constraint. Morality should be the creative source of our concrete purposes and not merely a restraining limitation upon our conduct.

In genuine morality moral laws serve as mottoes rather than as rules. They afford reminders of points of view which the conscience of mankind has discovered to be indispensable to truly moral decisions about individual duty. Consider as an instance the law of truthfulness. When treated as a rule, this law in its negative form, "Thou shalt not lie," is far too loose, since it sanctions any deception that does not depend on verbal inaccuracy; and in its positive form, "Speak the truth," it is far too sweeping, since it enjoins

complete disclosure of all that is known. The law of truthfulness is properly a motto, reminding us of whatever moral worth we have learned to recognize in sincerity of speech. It should remind us that, although we cannot escape the moral obligation of judging freely for ourselves how we ought, then and there, to speak, there is no chance of our making this judgment rightly unless we keep before our attention both the destructive influence of deception upon the all-important human relationship of mutual trust, and also the moral claim of other personalities not to be managed from without, by the concealment of relevant information, but to be allowed to choose their own conduct with full intelligence. This is the whole service that the law or motto of truthfulness may rightly render to our moral judgment. Its function is to enlighten or inspire our free moral deliberation and not to exact a slavish obedience. Together with any other mottoes that bear upon the particular situation, it helps to raise our mentality to that level at which there becomes possible a correct exercise of a more concrete or individual type of insight than merely abstract reasoning can supply. No matter how elaborate be the preparatory processes of analysis and comparison which may often be required, an act of genuine or autonomous moral judgment is, in the last resort, the expression of an immediate, intuitive insight into the individually

fitting. Like all judgment, it is liable to error ; but true judgment about individual duty can never occur at all, unless it is at least possible for the human mind to rise to an intuition of the uniquely individual demand which, in a given situation, is made upon it by the moral universal.

A human capacity for intuition, then, a capacity for divining, with a variable degree of penetratingness, the universal principle in its individual expressions, is no desperate hypothesis invented to cement a dangerous crack in the structure of our theory of the spiritual right of miracle-working. Without it scientific discovery and autonomous moral judgment seem alike unintelligible. We may pass on, therefore, to consider briefly how this capacity for intuition may be stimulated into religious exercise. If I am really, and exclusively, on the business of the Divine King—and as a Christian I have no right to be on any other business—and if, further, I go upon that business in the capacity not of a mechanical or manipulated instrument, but of a son, trusted to use with eager loyalty my powers of thought and decision—and for me to fear to go in that capacity would be, under the terms of the “New Covenant,” to wrap my talent in a napkin and bury it—then all the resources of our Father’s empire of reality must needs be at my call for the legitimate requirements of my errand. That he who is on the

King's business should have the right to work miracles at need is thus no subject for surprise or incredulity. The real marvel is elsewhere; it lies in the fact that we mortals should be more than *used in*—that we should be actually *entrusted with* the King's business. And this fact, spite of all its marvellousness, what man will challenge who has met in Jesus Christ the distinguishing, individual love of God? In the truth of this fact the whole Gospel is at stake. For it tells us, "Now are we children of God" (1 John iii. 2); it discharges us from law that we may "serve in newness of the Spirit" (Rom. vii. 6); it bids us gaze "into the perfect law, the law of liberty" (Jas. i. 25); it calls on us to abide in Christ, so that we may ask whatsoever we will and find it done unto us (John xv. 4, 7), and it singles out such asking and receiving as pre-eminently the kind of fruit-bearing for which the Christian has been individually chosen and appointed (cf. in John xv. verse 16 with verses 7, 8). For the Christian, then, on the King's business, no needful requisitioning of supplies or facilities can be presumptuous. But how shall he know what particular errand is the King's business for him, and how shall he win to sure judgment of what is really needful for its execution? How shall he let the Spirit of God so fill him that his mind, moving with its own freedom and individuality, may never lack true intuition of the next ad-

venture of faith in which the genius of the Divine universal order seeks expression at his hands ?

It is but asking the same question in other words to say, how shall we attain to the New Testament ideal of prayer? (I restrict the term "prayer" here to its proper sense of petition, instead of using it to cover all forms of devotional exercise.) For, according to that ideal, prayer is *confident* asking; and between addressing a confident request to nature's God, and issuing orders to nature in humble reliance upon God, the difference is merely formal—a matter of outward expression rather than of inward attitude. The former mode of expression will spring more naturally to the lips of him who reaches assurance of expectation only with effort; but where intuition of the Father's mind was as habitual and seemingly as effortless as it was with Jesus, expression in words of command would be at least equally natural. Much of what, in ordinary devotional practice, passes current as definite petitionary prayer is not really petition at all, unless perhaps in verbal form, but is a mere expression of desire. It is one thing to tell a friend what you would like to have; it is quite another thing definitely to request him to procure for you the object of desire. Now it is to the latter act, the act of definitely and even confidently requesting our Father in heaven to occupy Himself in achieving specific objects of our desire,

that Christ exhorts us. And such definiteness and confidence of petition, so far from being a crude and almost unworthy form of prayer as many people seem to imagine, requires for its possibility the highest development of filial intuition—requires this, at least, for those who have entered, as every prayerful mind must, into the spirit of Abraham's words: "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes!" (Gen. xviii. 27).

It is misleading to say that none but spiritual blessings can be the object of definite, confident petition. There might be some excuse for thinking so if the redemption which Christianity offers here and now were from sin alone. But if, as the Gospel of a Christ or cosmic Redeemer implies, our Father in heaven is yearning, by releasing redemptive forces, to purge this familiar world not only of its sin but of its tragic futilities, then we cannot be true children of that Father unless we long for transformations of experience and circumstance as well as of spiritual attitude. And poor and constrained indeed would be our fellowship with Him if these longings must never find utterance in definite, confident petition!

There is a sequence of petitions which Christ, in response to a request, taught His disciples as a model of what petitionary prayer should be. As One in whose heart love of the Father took precedence of all else, Jesus makes the model

prayer begin with the expression of a longing that men might cease to misjudge that Father and might learn to hallow His name. Out of this first aspiration the second follows by natural development. For what is it that provokes men to be unjust in their thoughts of God? Very largely it is the anomalies of the present life, so full as it is of pain and defeated aspiration and the power of evil. So the desire first uttered passes naturally into the second, a longing of the heart for the day when these anomalies shall be ended, the day of God's self-vindication, the day when the Kingdom shall have come. But what hinders its coming? No inscrutable Divine decree, but simply man's unreadiness of will. So that which presses its way next into the foreground of consciousness is a longing for the removal of this hindrance: "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." From this point onwards the manner of the model prayer changes. In place of the utterance of longings after what the Heavenly Father also longs for, but may not be at liberty to bring to pass as yet, there now appear confident requests for immediate particular blessings. It is the oneness of mind with the Father which the child has attained to through the preceding fellowship of aspiration that now guides him into unhesitating petition. Because this prayer is a model for all, it can deal only with the particular needs that are common to all—

daily bread, daily forgiveness, daily admission to the higher plane of a spiritual joy and peace which garrison the heart and thoughts against the allurements of temptation, so that we are delivered from the evil one. Yet in voicing these specific universal needs the model prayer sanctions all specific requests which spring, as these do, out of the child's communion with the Father in aspiration. Conscious of a unity of purpose with God, and finding ourselves trusted by Him with another day to live, we ask with confidence for the bread needed to fit us for using the day in His service. Yet the very request reminds us how, perhaps but the day before, having made the same petition with the same purpose and having been trusted with a bountiful provision, we failed nevertheless to fulfil perfectly the obligation thus accepted. So we pray, "Forgive us our debts"; and realizing at once how liable we are to fail again, we continue: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Of the very many instructive features of this model prayer one which is too seldom noticed is the confident manner of the asking. There is no conditional retractation of the requests for food, remission of debt and release from temptation, by a qualifying phrase like "If it be Thy will." To represent this as a merely incidental feature, due simply to the obvious nature of the needs concerned, would be an unwarrantable proceeding,

for it reflects a prominent characteristic of Christ's ideal of prayer. We have had occasion already more than once to quote His striking saying: "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them"; and in a similar spirit He counted it natural for the man who in faith and prayer works miracles to lay his commands upon nature unhesitatingly: "Whosoever shall say to this mountain, 'Be thou taken up and cast into the sea'; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it." Now if we desire a pointed way of expressing the apparent significance of this feature of Christ's conception of prayer, we might say that prayer according to His ideal begins where that which too commonly passes for petitionary prayer is apt to end. Average prayer, when it ventures to be specific, is apt to end upon a note of uncertainty. We make our requests; we remember how liable we are to ask amiss; and breathing the words, "If it be Thy will," with more or less of resignation, we cease our prayer not knowing whether we have received what we have asked. Driven to our Father's footstool by the needs and defects of the strangely unsatisfying world in which He has placed us, we have trusted Him with our longings and our ideas of how it may be bettered. But, soothed by the simple telling of our secrets, we have not

troubled to tarry at the footstool until by continued communion we develop the receptiveness necessary for an intuition of our Father's mind upon our expressed ideas and wishes. So we go away, soothed and comforted for the time, but without having made any fresh advance in our knowledge of our Father, and without the strength and liberty that come of achieved fellowship with Him.

Very different would appear to be the New Testament ideal of prayer. The Apostle Paul continued to pray for the removal of that "thorn in the flesh" which seemed such a hindrance to his work, until it was shown him that in this case it was the Lord's will to make of natural incapacitation the occasion for a special display of supernatural enablement (2 Cor. xii. 9). Again, according to the first evangelist's account of the wrestling in Gethsemane, it was only after the "if" of uncertainty had changed into the "if" of knowledge (Matt. xxvi. 39: "If it be possible, let this cup pass"; 42, "If this cannot pass away, Thy will be done"), that our Lord was ready for the great act of surrender to the betrayer. These are cases where continued waiting upon God brought the knowledge that the request was refused. Instances of the opposite kind of certainty are furnished by Christ's words to Simon Peter: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when [not 'if'] thou art con-

verted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32), and Paul's assured expectation: "I know that I shall abide, yea, and abide with you all" (Phil. i. 25). In the early Christian view, then, which these passages seem to reflect, prayer should be much more than a breathing out of our perplexities and desires into an irresponsive silence; it should amount, in effect, to question and answer, request and consent or, if need be, refusal. In harmony with this ideal of prayer, the model which Christ imparted passes from the communion of out-poured longing into the purposeful, responsible simplicity of definite petition.

Besides holding up the ideal of confident asking, the model prayer indicates how this confidence is developed. For the three specific petitions which form its second part do not simply follow the three broad aspirations with which the prayer begins. On the contrary, they manifestly presuppose them and grow out of them. It is only he who is conscious of whole-hearted longing for those ends for which God also longs, who can attain humble boldness of petition. In the life of prayer, therefore, the intercourse of question and answer, request and consent, must be preceded and maintained by periods of communion of aspiration. Further, even this conscious realization and expression of community of aspiration between ourselves and God has often to be worked up to by another

and more elementary exercise of the praying soul. In the ideal case it would not be so, and therefore the model prayer does not make provision for such preliminary discipline. Yet how frequently it is necessary, when the stress of life has disturbed our singleness of purpose! For as we then approach the throne of grace, the urgency of our particular desires is apt to interfere with concentrated communion of aspiration. And when such is the case, true prayer can scarcely begin with the great aspirations which stand first in our model. For above all, Christ insists that prayer shall be spontaneous and free from vain repetitions or words with no feeling behind them; and it is not spontaneous if we begin by using words which express longings that, for the time being, have ceased to rule our hearts. Accordingly if, as we address ourselves to prayer, our interest is dominated not by these great aspirations but by particular desires for objects which may or may not be in harmony with our Father's will, our first step must be to utter these our present longings in His sympathetic ear: not yet to ask Him confidently for their fulfilment, for we cannot yet know whether they deserve His approval, but simply to tell Him of them, to think them over in His solemnizing presence, to reflect how unimportant their fulfilment must be if it would not further, and how disastrous if it would actually

hinder, His Kingdom. As we thus utter our particular desires in the quieting stillness of God's presence, there will come a change. The desires will lose something of their impetuous urgency ; surging up and overflowing them will come the greater longings for the hallowing of the Father's name, the coming of His Kingdom, the doing of His will on earth. And with this result there will begin to arrive true spiritual receptiveness and, for those who have steeped their minds in the historical revelation of God in Christ Jesus, something of their Master's sureness of intuition. Only along this path may the right be won to confidence of asking, whether for things natural or things supernatural. He that willeth to do His will, he shall know of the visions that come whether they be intuitions of the mind of God or creations of mere desire : he shall know whether the mountains which he finds blocking his intended path are God's finger-post, prescribing a change of route, or are God's challenge to his faith to cast them into the sea.

“Intuition,” as here employed, is purely a descriptive term. It is not chosen for any suggestion which may lurk in it of how the possibility of this kind of knowledge may be theoretically construed, but simply in order to focus attention upon two features in which the act of intuition resembles sense-perception. It

resembles the latter in the element of receptiveness which must be combined with the more active aspects of the process of intuition. It resembles sense-perception also in that its object is not the general and abstract but the unique and concrete. Attainment of intuition may be assisted by abnormal experiences, such as dream or vision or mystic rapture, but these seem in no wise indispensable. What is indispensable is the schooling of mind and heart, the habit of prayerful reflection on daily life, the disciplining of the will to the obedience of Christ, and patient study of the Word. For while intuition adds something which the other rational functions cannot supply, without their collaboration it can never reach the truth.

All Christian intuition of vocation will fall within the limits of the great commission laid upon our Lord. For, since the "new heavens and a new earth" which He prevailed to establish were—to repeat the description we formerly employed—new not in line and colour but in range of potency, new not in the prosaic obviousness of completed fact but in their glamour of a challenge unheard-of and a promise without end, His achievement remains real only as the faith of His Church explores the potencies, accepts the challenge and appropriates the promise. That which He won for His own generation we have to maintain or reaffirm for ours, so that "the

last days" may not withdraw themselves but, through the good hand of God, may merge into "the age to come." The vocation which the Church as a whole thus inherits from her Lord is one, the accomplishment of which necessarily involves the supernatural. For, since the "age to come," or the ideal reign of God, qualitatively transcends all present and past experience, the process of its achievement must involve the experimentally unprecedented or what, for our knowledge, is the preternatural. And since the phases of its advent are not haphazard but conditioned by faith in the distinguishing or individual Divine love, they are not preternatural only, but supernatural in the genuine, religious sense of the term.

In the Church's fulfilment of her vocation there can be no room for random miracle-working, any more than in the life of her Lord. If the occasioning motive of Christ's use of the supernatural was spontaneous compassion, its legitimating and controlling purpose was, by a trust-compelling revelation of the Father's love and power, to toss out of the way of His Kingdom the obstructing mountain of human unbelief. It were a tempting of God to ask for miracle, save as the way is blocked to natural means; and it were an impious absurdity to attempt to reveal our Father save as we are inspired by an intuition of His will. Nevertheless obstructive mountains

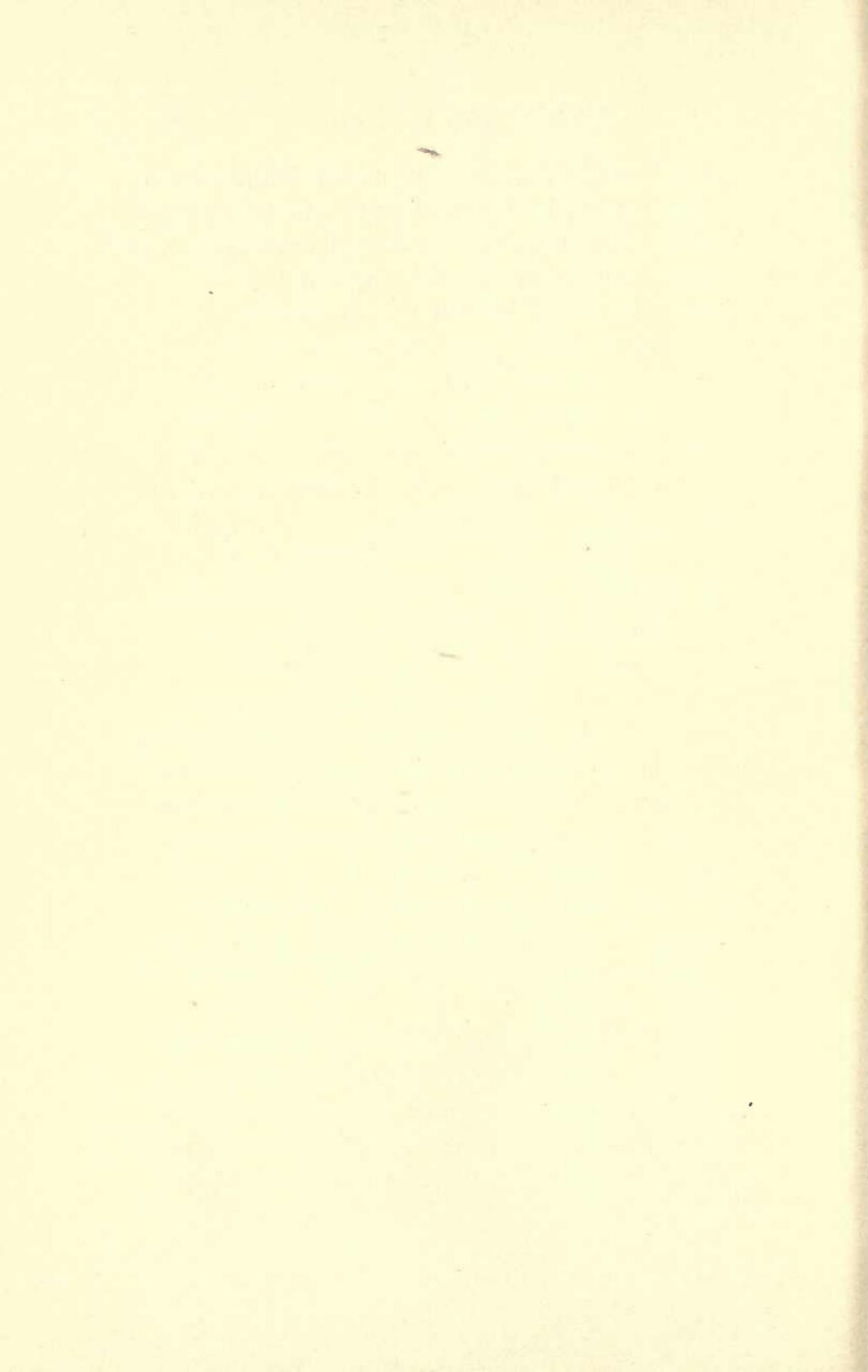
still abound, and to those that wait upon Him the Father will still grant intuition; and were the original meaning of Christ's message to-day less forgotten, were there also a more humbly importunate faith, might not the occasions be more frequent when Christians would know themselves called to what even the average observer would regard as miracle-working?

Even when the object of endeavour to which the Christian is called to address himself has about it nothing unprecedented or preternatural, the enterprise of achieving it as it ought to be achieved cannot well appear to him as other than supernatural if he understands how high is the level of Christian duty and privilege. For we are called to achieve *sinlessly* whatever is laid upon us—to achieve it, that is to say, without conscious consent to evil impulse or inclination. I do not speak of moral perfection, or the expression in conduct of a fully developed character; for that is intrinsically a matter of degree, in respect of which progress must be gradual. But between sin and sinlessness, in the sense here bespoke for the terms, the relation is not one of degree but disjunctive—a sharp “either, or.” In our execution of any particular task with which our Heavenly Father has charged us there is either a dallying with such evil solicitations as arise, or there is none. It is our duty that there shall be none. And since it is our duty on each

occasion to discharge sinlessly the particular trust committed to us from above, such sinlessness must be possible. For it is of the essence of the Gospel of the Kingdom, the Gospel of "the last days," the Gospel of Redemption, that we are not to measure our duty by past experience of the practicable, but are to estimate the possible by knowledge of our God-given duty. We are not called to and guaranteed in a sinlessness at large; but we are called to execute sinlessly whatever is at the moment our Divinely entrusted task, and during its fulfilment we are offered such an indwelling of the peace of Christ as shall garrison our hearts against effectual solicitation by evil. Our constant calling is to one sinless step at a time; and being well aware how insufficient are the understood and analyzed tendencies of our nature to ensure the fulfilment of this calling, we needs must feel that a truly Christian achievement of any enterprise whatsoever involves the supernatural. To be genuinely Christian is to be "a new creation" — one which, like the cosmic Creation, is no finished product but a perpetual outgoing of God, a continuous regeneration.

What is the practical value of that reaffirmation of the supernatural which has been the burden of this book? There is nothing particularly glorious or uplifting in being the instrument of a preternatural manifestation. "In this rejoice not,"

said our Lord, "that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." The joy and peace of believing spring from the consciousness of being on the King's business; from the knowledge that, whether we can perceive it or not, all our experience is matter of "special providence." We can afford to be supremely indifferent, like our Master, as to whether these special providences involve what is, for our knowledge, the preternatural, and so deserve to be called miraculous. Nevertheless, while we may well care little whether what has actually transpired be supernatural or only providential, it is of supreme importance to maintain the constant, permanent *possibility* of the supernatural. For only the assurance that the measure of the practicable is never past experience, but is always God's call, can redeem us from the anxieties of the worldly-wise to a fearless life of fellowship with Christ in ever fresh adventures of faith.



## NOTES AND REFERENCES.



<sup>1</sup> W. Herrmann, *Offenbarung und Wunder* (Töpelmann: Giessen, 1908), p. 34. From the context it appears that the "miracles" which Herrmann has here primarily in mind are events or experiences which come in answer to petitionary prayer. But it seems quite permissible to generalize the reference as I have done, because to believe in answered petitions is, on Herrmann's view, to believe in something which is *supra et contra naturam*. In making this citation, however, I am far from intending to imply acceptance of Herrmann's way of conceiving the supernatural.

<sup>2</sup> A conspicuous example of the unfortunate results of making such an assumption is furnished by Bushnell's otherwise impressive treatise on the supernatural. Among works composed in English it is by far too rare an instance of a handling of this theme which, while apologetic in purpose, is at the same time great in conception and instinct with a reverent enthusiasm. Nevertheless, for the reader of to-day, Bushnell's pages are helpful indirectly rather than directly. They stimulate our faith by their robust confidence that God is One who must fulfil Himself in many ways, all of them orderly, so that in the great empire of God the system of mechanical causation may well rank, after all, as only a very subordinate principality. But if we look to Bushnell for help of a more direct kind, in the

way of a permanently fruitful statement of the issues, we are bound to be disappointed. And this disappointing result appears to me to be directly traceable to a tactical mistake to which Bushnell is led by the very assumption which I am criticizing in the text at this point.

Incautiously he takes as the starting-point of his positive construction a definition of the "natural" which he has developed on merely etymological and philosophical lines; and, having done so, he proceeds to determine, by contrast with this conception of the "natural," what is to be understood by the "supernatural." Now any such method is bound to imperil the relevancy of the whole subsequent discussion, by tending to substitute a philosophical for a religious distinction. The consequence in Bushnell's case is that he seems to me never quite to reach the concept of the supernatural in its properly religious significance, and that on cardinal issues, like the definition of miracle and the kind of relation between supernatural agency and the laws of nature, he has little of real value to contribute.

As a result of the very narrow meaning which he gives to the concept of the natural, the supernatural becomes, in his pages, a term which includes everything that is hyper-mechanical. Hence it is not until we reach the term "miracle" that we get near to what is intended by the "supernatural" in a more ordinary and useful sense of the phrase. But not even in Bushnell's definition of miracle do we quite reach the concept of the supernatural in its properly religious connotation. For by a "miracle" he understands the working of any free or hyper-mechanical agent who, besides being hyper-mechanical or "supernatural," is also superhuman. Among superhuman agents God is only

one, and Bushnell does not appear sufficiently to realize that the hyper-mechanical activity of God raises any problem different from that involved in the hyper-mechanical activity of finite consciousnesses. This partial obliviousness to what surely constitutes the central difficulty of his subject is doubtless connected with the easy-going way in which Bushnell, accepting a very indeterministic type of libertarianism, postulates an unresolved plurality of "powers" or uncaused causes. One is puzzled to conceive how so extremely contingent a realm of the hyper-mechanical can possibly, even through the mediation of an absolutely determinate realm of the "mechanical" or "natural," form part of a perfectly systematic totality, "the one system of God."

As to the special problem of whether the "supernatural" (or hyper-mechanical) can act upon the system of the "natural" (or mechanical) without any breach or suspension of the laws of the latter, Bushnell's discussion travels in an apologetically useful direction, but is prevented from reaching a really satisfactory outcome by his uncritical attitude to the concept of "natural law." As a result, he is led to the naïve expedient of clinching his rejection of the idea of breach or suspension by appealing to the analogy of precisely those phenomena which a more critical philosophy regards as patently conclusive *against* the validity of mechanical categories, namely, the relations between "life" and "matter," and between "mind" and "brain"!

In spite of such defects, however, Bushnell's treatise is still a book to be read—one to be commended, at any rate, to any student who feels attracted by its title. For I know of no volume with an apter title-page: *Nature and the Supernatural as together con-*

*stituting the one System of God.* In that title is reflected at once the strength of the book and its weakness ; its grandeur of conception, and its irrelevancy to what I take to be, after all, the central issue.

<sup>3</sup> To this extent I would agree with Herrmann (*op. cit.*, p. 31), as against Stange, that faith is rather a result than an indispensable precondition of an experience of the supernatural (although it is, of course, indispensable to any human initiative in invoking the supernatural). But when Herrmann says: "Certainly we experience miracles because we believe in God ; but only the fact that we experience miracles enables us to believe in God," this word "only" appears to me to involve a disadvantageous broadening of the concept of the miraculous or supernatural, which would make it inclusive of all "special providences." I freely grant that faith, as a trustful attitude of will, can be maintained in vitality only by repeated religious intuitions—that is to say, by meeting with experiences of the inward or outward life in which, while they last, God's presence, agency or fellowship has the kind of indubitableness which is characteristic of sense-perception and which, although it is no sufficient guarantee of truth, makes proof seem, for the time being, superfluous. But it is not self-evident that, in order to be the vehicle of such an intuition of God, an experience needs to be one which, in itself or independently of intuitive religious insight, is out of the ordinary. In the text I have said that to the miraculous or supernatural character of an event it is necessary that in it God's presence shall be self-evident ; I have not said that every event in which God's presence becomes self-evident deserves, for that single reason, to be described as supernatural or miraculous.

<sup>4</sup> For a brief statement of this relationship, cf. Bousset, *Die jüdische Apokalyptik* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1903).

<sup>5</sup> *The Messianic Hope in the New Testament* (University of Chicago Press, 1905), p. 22 f.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. W. Manson's Bruce Lectures on *Christ's View of the Kingdom of God* (James Clarke & Co.), p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> It is instructive here to compare Jewish apocalyptic with Indian mysticism. In the comparison which follows I have in mind especially the most extremely monistic trend of Indian philosophical thought, that which received its classical systematization in the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkarāchārya. The problem of which apocalyptic Messianism was an attempted solution was fundamentally the same as that which has persistently forced itself on Hindu religious attention, namely, the problem of unmerited disaster and suffering. In India the problem has been conceived individualistically, while by the Hebrews it was, in the main, conceived socially, but in principle it is the same issue. Again, in both cases the religious solution was attempted not by way of analogy, nor by a constructive transformation of the facts of experience into the unity of an intelligible system, but by an intuitive condemnation of the whole system of existent experience as irrational and bad, and by postulating an Infinite which transcends all known conditions. In the motivation, however, of this method of solution there was a difference. What has chiefly constrained the Indian mind to acquiescence in the necessity of a leap of philosophical faith from the known to an unknown and unimaginable, has been belief in the principle of *karma*,

a principle which makes it impossible to reach true spiritual satisfaction by any natural means, since good deeds as well as bad involve the doer in the necessity of being reincarnated to consume their morally deserved fruits, and so prolong the chain of unsatisfying finite existence. What mainly impelled the Jewish mind to a similar mental leap was, on the other hand, something more practical. It was the growing contrast between the insignificance of the Jewish people and the might of the world-empires which followed one another across the page of history in discouraging succession, a contrast which made it seem absurd to expect national deliverance and exaltation unless by an overwhelming intervention of the supernatural. There is a second difference which it is impossible to overlook. The Indian mind, being predominantly speculative, effected its intuitive leap by the aid of the philosophical imagination, the Hebrew mind by the aid of the sensuous. Yet that which the latter attempted by the aid of the sensuous imagination was really nothing less than what India attempted with the help of metaphysics. It was an attempt to conceive of a kind of experience absolutely transcending the conditions of that human experience which had proved itself so finite and unsatisfying. The Vedāntin transcends those conditions by postulating an experience from which the distinction of subject and object shall be absent; the Jew transcended them by postulating an experience for which the physically impossible should be possible; but both were acting under a similar spiritual impulse and were seeking a similar satisfaction. The Vedāntin followed the clue of immanence, the Jew the clue of transcendence; but both condemned the existing system of experience in its entirety as being only imperfectly divine, and both did so from the same motive.

To complete this comparison between Indian monistic philosophy and Jewish apocalyptic it is necessary to remark how inevitably each of them arrives at the same kind of logical cul-de-sac. Each in its flying leap to the Infinite shirks the task of accounting for the finite, and by the finite is justly brought to grief. That by which the Vedāntin satisfies his quest for the truly infinite is postulated to be the timelessly real, and to be single and universal, "one only without a second." But what, then, of the world of finite experience? That unfortunately has experimental actuality and therefore seems to constitute a second. The Advaitin boldly meets this difficulty by denying the genuine reality of the finite world. It is mere *māyā*, a sort of magic show, nothing more than a quasi-reality of a merely practical kind. But this solution is a boomerang which flies back to lay low its propounders. For if the finite be *really* deceptive, then the deception itself is real fact; and so the absolute is no longer "one only without a second," no longer the absolute; for there is now a second, namely, the deception itself. Very similar is the plight of apocalyptic thought. What it sets out to reach is a God whose self-expression is worthy of His infinitude. It finds such a Deity in the God who ushers in "the age to come" with its supernatural splendours. But now, if "the age to come" is alone worthy of God, what about "the present age" of actual experience? Like the Advaitin, the apocalypticist tries to evade the difficulty of experimental facts by minimizing their significance. He has not the metaphysical audacity to call "the present age" mere illusion, so he has to be content with insisting that it is merely temporary, and that very soon the supernatural age will dawn. But just as the Advaitin's method of evasion leaves thought

with the unanswerable problem of why, if the finite actual is not truly real, it should possess even phenomenal actuality, so the apocalypticist's expedient leaves thought with the difficulty of explaining why "the present age" should have even temporary existence, why "the age to come" is not here already and has not been here always. And if, in face of this difficulty, apocalyptic attempts to give any reason whatever why it is good that "the age to come" should still be future, this amounts in principle to a real surrender of that sharp distinction of the two "ages" which marks off apocalyptical from prophetic thought. For if there be a worthy reason why the satisfying supernatural is still future, then it is *not* unworthy of God that there should exist just now this unsatisfying, non-supernatural present age. Thus the radical opposition, characteristic of apocalyptical thought, between "this age" and "the age to come" would be transformed into a complementary relation of mutually indispensable phases in a time-whole. What deserves to be pronounced good would no longer be simply "the age to come," but each "age" in its own place and function. What would be unworthy of God would be "the present age" if it were not the already active potency of "the age to come," and also "the age to come" if it came before "the present age" had completed its function.

<sup>8</sup> With "theodicy" in the perfectly general sense of an attempt to justify the ways of God to man, I have of course no quarrel. What, in the text, I unfavourably animadvert on is a theodicy which is preoccupied with the idea of Divine government to the neglect of the still more vital idea of an eternal Divine activity of redemption. The proper endeavour of a

moral theodicy is to win for faith a point of view from which not evil itself, but the fact of its occurrence may begin to lose its intolerableness. The attempt is made to understand how, in a world that is vulnerable to evil, there is available a kind of good which would be for ever out of reach in a world from which evil was necessarily excluded. That there must be some such point of view seems evident, unless the evilness of evil is after all illusory. For if evil is truly evil, God must hate it; and if, at the same time, evil is actual, then God, while hating evil itself, must tolerate its occurrence. Thus our very faith in God's goodness itself challenges the reason to construct a theodicy which shall show why He is right in permitting the occurrence of the thing that He hates. The result is a brave effort to prove that the world contains no needless evils, none whose possibility is not the necessary price of a world of spiritual values. But, however right and inevitable such a line of thought may be, it easily degenerates into a heartless optimism repellent to the earnest conscience. The case might be otherwise if the necessary evils bore but a small proportion to the spiritual values of which they are the price, but the position at least seems to be very different. So closely knit is the texture of our world that at no single point can evil enter it without quickly infecting its every part. Hence it begins to appear as if the necessary price of good were a universality of evil; and a theodicy which produces such an impression as this can hardly support a profounder type of optimism than that which merits Mr. F. H. Bradley's gibing definition when he says that, for the optimist, the world is the best of all possible worlds and everything in it is a necessary evil! (*Appearance and Reality*, p. xiv). Such an outcome, however, is not really the inevitable

result of all theodicy as such, but only of theodicies which lay no stress on the idea of redemption. The truth about evil is not merely that God rightly allows its possibility. That is a half-truth which, when taken by itself, receives a misplaced emphasis amounting to error. The full truth is that the evil which God permits, He also continuously works against and transmutes, at a cost which is not only ours but His.

<sup>9</sup> I am disposed to believe that, to an extent greater than it has been customary to recognize, the tragic note in the life of Jesus was connected with the progressive disappointment of His patriotic hope that the coming era of fulfilment which He called the Kingdom of God would include in its scope some kind of transfigured accomplishment of the nationalistic features of prophetic and apocalyptic vision. It was in respect of this hope, above all, that He made "the surrender of self-will."

If objection be taken to my entire representation here of the logical relationship between apocalyptic and Christianity on the ground that it imports an artificial self-consciousness of reasoning into religious developments whose genius was anything but ratiocinative, I freely admit a certain justice in the criticism. It is a very implicit logic that I have been trying to lay bare—so implicit that to isolate it for purposes of emphasis is hardly possible without some appearance of artificiality. Apocalyptic was no creation of mere logic. Still less, as will clearly appear in the next chapter, did Christianity have its source in a mere rectification of the logic implicit in apocalyptic.

It is probable, however, that in the minds of many readers a more radical criticism may be taking shape, directed not merely against an over-emphasis on

logical reasoning, but against the nature of the implicit logical relationship suggested. For to represent it as a merit in Christianity that it drew from the apocalyptic premises the conclusion which they logically required, implies that those premises were true and worthy. But there must be not a few who will be disposed, on the contrary, to urge that in premising that God had allowed the world to come to such a pass as only supernatural intervention could adequately deal with, Jewish apocalyptic was guilty of something worse than simple error—was guilty, indeed, of something not unlike impiety. If God is really *good*, must not His world be always a good world? And if God is really *God*, must He not be so immanent in the world-order as never to need to “intervene”? And did not this apocalyptic premise, therefore, do scant justice alike to the goodness and the divinity of God?

I have thought it well not to interrupt the argument of the text in order to take note of and deal with this possible objection, because my real answer to it is nothing less than the whole view of things that this book is to expound. That view rests upon the principle that our intellect, in its discursive working, never can seize and express to itself the whole meaning of presented fact—neither its whole meaning in the sense of its complete “Why?” the purpose which completely justifies it, nor its whole meaning in the sense of its complete “How?” its real cause or ground. From this principle it seems to me to follow (1) that the *real* goodness of any broad stage of the world-process must ever be, for us, partially inscrutable, so that this stage, *as our incomplete data constrain us intellectually to construe it*, may rightly appear to us not quite worthy of God; and (2) that the causality which *really* operates in the process of things may at any moment

deserve (from the point of view of *our reading of* the natural order and of history) to be described as "intervention," since it must always transcend what our intellect has laid bare of the immanent causal nexus. Now, if these positions be conceded, there ceases to be room for any wholesale rejection either of the apocalyptic condemnation of the present or of the apocalyptic postulate that the ultimate or perfect order cannot make itself perceptual fact save by way of "intervention." The chief flaw in the apocalyptic presuppositions is something more superficial. It is the hard and fast separation of the two "ages." The "present age" which the apocalypticist condemned he regarded as a rounded world-order, instead of simply as the artificial picture yielded by isolating a fragment of the time-process. From this (intellectual rather than moral) defect Christianity at once began to cut itself clear. For, in inferring from the apocalyptic premises that the supernatural must be here and now available, it was implicitly abandoning the apocalypticist's assumption of an absolute discontinuity, while leaving untouched what was sound in the apocalyptic presuppositions.

"World" is a term which is quite as ambiguous as "nature," and attention should be paid to this ambiguity by all who feel it difficult to understand how condemnation of God's "world" can be combined, in any mind, with faith in His goodness. In one possible sense of the term I myself am able to agree that, if God is good, His "world" must be good. For I hold that our thought requires to translate God's eternity into a present doing or living. When this translation is attempted, it becomes necessary to postulate that a moral Deity can be serenely at home in the present—at home in the present, however, only as it really is,

and that is as a process or life. If, on the contrary, like the apocalyptist, one makes a cross-section through that flow of creaturely activity and Divine response which constitutes the time-process as religiously apprehended, inevitably the "world," in the sense of this cross-section, is found to display so many tangles, so much tragedy and wickedness, that it cannot possibly be pronounced good. But to say this is simply to admit that the world is tragic and bad when thus artificially and falsely contemplated as static. On a more intimate view, the world, we may say, is process, and the present therefore truly *is* what through the past and future it *means*, and not what it momentarily imprints upon the snap-shot camera of our perceptive faculty. Taken thus in the reality of its full significance the "world" must be postulated good. From the same point of view the formula that evil is and must be "unreal" acquires a true and intelligible meaning—the meaning, namely, that evil is never an entity, never a genuine individualization of the universal "real," but is always fragmentary, always incapable of being understood by itself; and that, when artificially contemplated in itself as if it were a solid or independent *fait accompli*, evil can never be a true expression or embodiment of the significance of the real, but must, on the contrary, give the lie to that significance. Between approbation of the "world," in the sense of the term to which views such as these conduct us, and condemnation of the "world," in the sense of the apocalyptist's "present age," there is so far from being any vital disagreement that the former really involves the latter. Evidently, then, the ambiguity of the term "world" is a factor that needs careful watching.

By way of further illustration we may ask the

question whether the apocalypticist included, among the factors of that present "world" or "age" which he condemned, his own attitude of condemnation. Probably he did not, and yet it was an important constituent. A world which, when it gives birth to evils, at the same time gives birth to a spirit of protest against these evils, is a world of which we cannot think so hardly as of a world in which no such protest is included.

<sup>10</sup> "Faith and miracle go together, so that to eliminate miracles from the Gospels is simply to eliminate precisely the most characteristic element in Christ's system of doctrine, that by which He was distinguished from the Baptist, whose watchword was not *believe* but *repent*, and which could not fail to be prominent in the teaching of One who came announcing the advent of the kingdom of grace" (A. B. Bruce, *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, 3rd ed, p. 118).

<sup>11</sup> This was substantially the view which I suggested in *Christ's Message of the Kingdom* (T. & T. Clark, 1911). Had Christ, however, regarded the date of the crisis as thus depending on the widespread ripening of faith (as distinct from its germination), He could not have laid such emphasis as He did on the possibility that the advent of the Kingdom might take even believers by surprise.

<sup>12</sup> E. F. Scott, *The Kingdom and the Messiah* (T. & T. Clark), p. 103.

<sup>13</sup> I accept the view that the Marcan form of this saying is the more authentic. It preserves a vivid recollection of the hostile circle to whom the prediction was immediately addressed, and whose incredulous

vision would certainly recognize no exaltation of Jesus other than that which was to become sensuously manifest at His Second Advent. On the other hand, if in Matthew the thought of the immediate audience addressed in the words, "Ye shall see," has fallen into the background, and the second person plural has been given an indefinite application, then the addition of the unauthentic phrase "henceforth" becomes readily intelligible. For in it there comes to expression the Church's consciousness that, for believers, the promise of Christ's perceptible exaltation had, in a sense, received fulfilment from the time of His resurrection and ascension onwards.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-135. "Mark and Luke," says Professor Scott, "have eliminated this prophecy, apparently disproved by the event; and Matthew himself introduces it awkwardly, in a manner which shows that he was perplexed by it. The saying is indeed one of the most difficult in the Gospels; and in our ignorance of the precise circumstances in which it was spoken we must be careful not to press it too literally. Jesus does not necessarily assert that the Kingdom was to come within the few days or weeks required by the disciples for their mission. His object—so far as we have any means of judging it—is simply to urge upon them the imperative need for haste. They were to feel that the great consummation was in some way dependent on their work; and under the spur of this conviction they were to travel without rest from city to city. The more speedily they overtook their mission, the sooner would the Kingdom arrive." The mission on which the disciples were dispatched "was intended not merely to assure all Israel of the imminent approach of the Kingdom, but to hasten its

coming. The whole nation together was to turn to God, with a prayer and desire that should be irresistible ; and He would 'shorten the days.'" The pages which I have cited provide a suggestive and persuasive discussion of an admittedly difficult passage. On the other hand, I find it hard to accept Professor Scott's further suggestion, at p. 201, that Matt. x. 23 implies that Jesus had not yet, at that date, definitely identified the predicted "Son of Man" with Himself.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Manson, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>16</sup> For some indication of the grounds for this assertion see the opening paragraphs of Chapter III.

<sup>17</sup> In *Christ's Message of the Kingdom* I tried to formulate a distinction between the Kingdom as present and the Kingdom as future, and I definitely held that Christ regarded miracles as manifesting the actuality of the Kingdom in its present phase. Rejection of this interpretation of miracle constitutes the cardinal difference of constructive theory between the present work and that book. It may appear a merely formal point, and yet it has considerable importance. I now realize that the book referred to failed to distinguish between the features characterizing the Kingdom of God itself and those characteristic of its collision with the old order. The argument of the book rightly distinguished the "supernatural" as unprecedented, from the "natural" as preceded, Divine self-expression. But there is traceable in it a tendency—due to the fact that the Kingdom, for any one looking forward to it, figures as an age perfect beyond precedent— incautiously to treat miracle, or breach of precedent, as its essence. To yield to this tendency would have

the practical result of exaggerating the range and the importance of the miraculous, and in point of theory would involve the absurdity that the Kingdom could not maintain itself in being save by constant contraventions of its own perfect precedents! The essence of the Kingdom is not miracle but perfection. It can be only during its struggle to establish itself that the agencies of the Kingdom can be unprecedented or miraculous. Once it has been securely established, by the expulsion or transformation of the old order, its perfections must constitute a new "Nature."

<sup>18</sup> What appears to me a judicious summing up may be found in Shailer Mathews, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-82.

<sup>19</sup> E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 17; cf. also p. 244.

<sup>20</sup> For piquant illustration of this characteristic of apocalyptical thought, cf. J. H. Leckie, *The World to Come and Final Destiny* (T. & T. Clark), p. 14 ff.

<sup>21</sup> E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *supra*, note <sup>14</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Matt. xi. 12, of which passage Professor Scott's discussion (*op. cit.*, pp. 139-143) appears to me very convincing.

<sup>25</sup> I borrow Professor Moffatt's neat phrase.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the discussion in Titius, *Die neutestamentliche Lehre von der Seligkeit*, pt. i. pp. 52-55.

<sup>27</sup> If I here follow the inexactly defined ordinary usage in respect of the terms "natural" and "supernatural," it is without prejudice to my right subsequently to determine them more precisely.

<sup>28</sup> It has the advantage, for example, of rendering it much more intelligible why the Pharisees should regard Jesus' ministry of healing as a kind of "work," and so as involving, when exercised on the seventh day, a breach of the Sabbath law.

<sup>29</sup> In what follows I reproduce with little change my discussion of this miracle in *The Expository Times*, xxix. 2.

<sup>30</sup> How simple and quickly effected these might be, the complicated habits of our modern civilization makes it difficult for us to realize. In India to-day a European proposing to himself a journey likes to have the date and hour of departure fixed considerably in advance, and is apt to be appreciably inconvenienced if, at the end, it is altered by even a few hours. On the other hand, the average Indian, with his simpler life, feels no necessity for fixing the day of departure in advance with any great definiteness, but will advance or—almost up to the last moment—retard the date with surprising equanimity.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *supra*, Chapter I. p. 23 f.

<sup>32</sup> What follows is again a reproduction, but slightly modified, of my discussion in *The Expository Times*, xxix. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Mark x. 38 and especially Luke xii. 50, on which see E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 229 f.

<sup>34</sup> *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*, 4<sup>2</sup>, 14<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> "Before He left Galilee," writes Dr. A. T. Cadoux, "Jesus seems to have accepted the presage of His death, but He was determined to choose the issue upon which to die. Hence His flight from death in Galilee to death in Jerusalem. He would so engage the authorities in a final conflict that they must either obey His truth or be driven to such an act on such an issue as would annul their influence over the nation." The issue which He selected was the commercial desecration of the temple courts. But it "was essential to the success of His attempt that the matter at issue should be unambiguous and unobscurable, should appeal directly and strongly to the best moral and religious feelings of the people. Had Jesus stood before the multitude merely or chiefly as the Purger of the temple courts there is little doubt that He and not Barabbas would have had their voices. The hierarchy might still have compassed the crucifixion, but hardly without incurring the contempt of the nation." But Judas, by betraying to the authorities the secret of Jesus' Messianic claim, gave them the opportunity they so desperately needed of confusing the issue (article on "The Cleansing of the Temple and After," in the *Constructive Quarterly*, viii. 1). This article, with its improved way of turning to account Schweitzer's suggestion as to the nature of Judas' treachery, seems to deserve more attention than I am aware of it having excited. While wondering whether, in the attitude of Jesus as therein portrayed, the element of statecraft, however noble it may be, is not too self-conscious, I find the article most suggestive for the better understanding of how it was possible for the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration to be followed by the

agony in Gethsemane. The treachery of Judas had destroyed our Lord's last hope of preventing the Jewish apostasy from being on a truly national scale.

<sup>36</sup> Luke xix. 41-44 ; cf. also xxiii. 28-31.

<sup>37</sup> "As Christians we worship Christ as 'God the Son.' This thought is different in meaning from the term 'Son of God' as that meets us in the Synoptics, for there 'Son of God' and Messiah or Christ seem to be used interchangeably (cf. Matt. xvi. 16 ; Mark xiv. 61). Moreover, we believe that Christ was *always* God the Son ; but although it is evident that He was from the first intimately conscious of God as His Father and after the baptism knew Himself as 'the Son of God,' we do not find, at least in the Synoptic narratives, any proof of His ever having been conscious of Himself as 'God the Son.' On the contrary, we find that, while He was conscious of a right to exact from man the most absolute surrender and devotion to Himself, yet toward His Father He felt the same humility and religious awe that is our duty. . . . But ought we to be surprised at this? That He was truly God Incarnate is the interpretation of Him forced upon our thought by the wonderful facts of His character and life and by our religious experience. But might He not have been *really* this without having been *consciously* this? In fact, does not our Christian belief that He was our perfect Pattern itself imply that He, like us, must have constantly felt toward the Father that lowly reverence which we are told that He once expressed in the saying, 'The Father is greater than I'?' (John xiv. 28)." *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*, 12<sup>b</sup>, and cf. *supra*, Chapter III. p. 65 f. In this matter I do not think that the Fourth Gospel,

rightly estimated, leads to a different conclusion. While myself recognizing in Christ, with full conviction, a unique metaphysical Divinity, I regard it as evident that His own thoughts about Himself moved on a religious and historical, not a metaphysical plane. I conceive that the vaguely defined augustness of the apocalyptic idea of the Messiah allowed so much scope to the spontaneous regality of His self-consciousness as to leave no incentive for metaphysical constructions.

<sup>38</sup> It seems not unfair to claim that this retirement furnishes some incidental confirmation of the principle relied on in the preceding chapter, that Jesus must be presumed to have worked out the main conceptions of His religious and Messianic thought during His unrecorded years. Had His outlook been subjected, after His public activities began, to the fundamental changes and developments with which it is credited by some interpreters, must not the record of His ministry have been dotted with many intervals of completely solitary retirement like that which followed His baptism?

<sup>39</sup> The discussion offered in *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*, 5<sup>2</sup>, still represents my understanding of the two temptations concerned with the use of the miraculous.

<sup>40</sup> Of His own motion Jesus never, I think, made public the secret. On examination the so-called "triumphal entry" reduces itself to very modest dimensions, and the acclamations hail the anticipated Kingdom and not an arrived Messiah, while the decision to enter, riding upon an ass, no matter how deliberate

may have been its symbolism, was anything but a departure from the principle of reserve. To maintain this is not, of course, to deny that in the closing days there is a marked change of policy in other respects. Having long avoided a crisis, Jesus now does His utmost to precipitate it. But He chooses to precipitate it, not on a theological issue, but on one directly moral and spiritual (cf. *supra*, note <sup>35</sup>).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *supra*, Chapter I. p. 10 f.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. W. Manson, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>43</sup> E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>44</sup> Again I borrow Professor Moffatt's rendering.

<sup>45</sup> It will be observed that in this apologetical excursus I am proceeding frankly upon monistic presuppositions. It happens that such a line of attack upon anti-supernaturalism is one which I can develop *con amore* since my own philosophical tendency is toward a theistic or non-Singularist type of monism. But quite apart from personal predilections of this kind it seems to me that, since current unbelief in the supernatural is largely due to over-hasty types of monistic thought, a line of apologetic purporting to show how monistic principles, when applied with sufficient breadth and thoroughness, themselves provide a place and function for the supernatural, is calculated to win a hearing in quarters that might remain inaccessible to arguments which, like those of Joh. Wendland (in the able work which Professor H. R. Mackintosh has translated under the title *Miracles and Christianity*), have some appearance of

being incompatible not only with over-hasty applications of monistic principles, but with these principles altogether. Readers who may feel nervous about the implications of so frankly monistic a line of apologetic as is here pursued are invited to regard it as an *argumentum ad hominem*. If, in its remoter consequences, it involves difficulties which appear to them insuperable, for example, in respect of human freedom, it is fair to remind them that these further problems are at least as difficult for the hastier types of monism here assailed, and so do not weaken the impact of the attack.

Wendland finds two main features in miracle: (1) "the amazing and unexpected, often rising to the inexplicable"; and (2) "that in the event which we designate as miraculous, *God is working*," from which second feature it follows that the event must have reference to the supreme end of all Divine activity, namely, man's salvation. Now between Wendland's contentions and the philosophical construction here attempted the principal difference of tendency appears to be connected with an incomplete agreement as to the philosophical consequences of admitting and emphasizing the second of these two features. Anxious fear of excluding from our interpretation of experience anything really deserving to be called the direct working of God, makes Wendland lay what seems a dangerous degree of emphasis on the fact that without exception all attempted rational explanations of the actual course of nature and history are found upon examination to fall short of completeness by leaving an unresolved surd of contingency. Now I have no intention of questioning the alleged fact; indeed it is part of my own case. But surely this contention requires to be counterbalanced by emphasizing (what

Wendland at least appears to question) that this surd of contingency is the mark of our finitude of apprehension. It is difficult to see how, in the long run, any genuine religious end can be served by maintaining that the course of nature and history is in the least measure ultimately inexplicable or irrational. It is not in disorder but in order that God becomes manifest. As a matter of principle Wendland would doubtless concede this, but his line of reasoning appears at times in danger of starting in the reader a contrary tendency of reflection. Witness his recurrent refusal to equate the range of the two conceptions of a universal order and of the will or activity of God. Doubtless such an equation would negate Divine transcendence if the world-order were regarded as inherently static, so that, for an adequate understanding of the present and past, the future could have in store no surprises. But if we keep in memory the inexhaustibleness of spatial and temporal experience and take in earnest the fact of life or development, then the real world-order must always transcend the world-order as at any time experienced and known; and to equate the will of God with such a self-transcending world-order is to keep that will transcendent as well as immanent.

The equation to which Wendland objects leads to irreligious consequences only if by the cosmic order which constitutes one of its terms we understand the order of the universe as formulated by the degree of insight current at some particular time. As a matter of principle we must hold that for a perfect reason the whole activity of God would display itself as the realizing of a universal cosmic order, and this universal cosmic order would be manifestly nothing less than the perfect self-expression of the mind, heart and will of God. But it is necessary to add that, since *our*

theory of the nature of this cosmic order must necessarily be an induction from only that portion of it which has already been unrolled in time, there must ever be room for the occurrence of events which, from the point of view of our understanding of their process, are not necessary but contingent, and even for events which, from the point of view of our then current theory of nature, are preternatural or transcendent. The equation in question leads to Pantheism only if the cosmic order is construed in a manner that does insufficient justice to the individuality of its members. To avoid this danger is, in the nature of the case, supremely difficult, and theory after theory will doubtless come to shipwreck; but this is not to say that the attempt should or can be abandoned.

<sup>46</sup> The vaunted principle of the constancy or uniformity of nature is (except when by "uniformity" is meant simply orderliness or rationality) nothing but a translation of the working convention described in the text into a postulate of belief. This widely acclaimed constancy is, says Croce, nothing but that "*practical necessity* which leads to the neglect of differences and to the looking upon the different as uniform, the changeable as constant. The postulate of the uniformity of nature is the demand for a treatment of nature made uniform for reasons of convenience. *Natura non facit saltus* means: *mens non facit saltus in naturæ cognitione*, or, better still, *memoriæ usus saltus naturæ cohibet*" (B. Croce, *Logic as the Science of the Pure Concept* (translated by Douglas Ainslie: Macmillan & Co., 1917), p. 338). The fragment of a sentence which I have quoted from Croce in the text may be found in the same work at p. 34.

<sup>47</sup> This principle does not render ethical Determinism

inevitable unless, in its application, attention is concentrated on continuity with the past to the exclusion of continuity with the future.

<sup>48</sup> The argument which follows is suggested by Professor A. E. Taylor, *Elements of Metaphysics*, II. v. §§ 4, 5: Methuen & Co., 1903. I am led to embody it here because, in my experience with students in India, I have found it a very effectual means of opening the eyes to the lack of any claim, on the part of the principle of mechanical causality, to logically axiomatic validity.

<sup>49</sup> Of deliberate intent I insert the phrase, "in a very considerable degree." The argument here drawn into service is one which it has been too fashionable to exaggerate into the claim that a rigid actual uniformity of nature is the price to be paid for the possibility of knowledge. It certainly is the price which would have to be paid for knowledge *of the scientific type* and *omniscient in range*; but since we have not, and never shall have, such omniscience, it would be rather hard if we had actually to pay the price of it. Uniformity of the kind required for generalizations is only a regulative principle, an ideal necessarily presupposed by knowledge of the scientific type, but with no title to absolute validity.

<sup>50</sup> On the practical side we get nearest, I think, to supertemporality when the intent of our activity is the creative development of an object of attention which is itself only on condition of continuing to develop. Cf. Professor Pringle Pattison's beautiful working out of the analogy supplied by a work of dramatic art (Gifford Lectures on *The Idea of God*, p. 361 ff.).

<sup>51</sup> The views expressed in this chapter obviously involve a rejection of the letter of Calvinism, but it is a rejection of the letter for the sake of loyalty to the spirit of Calvinism—loyalty to the Calvinistic principle of the sovereignty or infinitude of God. In the interests of that principle it is necessary, as argued below, to deny both preordination and foreknowledge, in the human sense of these terms. On the other hand, if the choice really lay between affirming both and affirming foreknowledge without preordination, it would be necessary to prefer the former alternative.

<sup>52</sup> Cf., e.g., *Time and Free Will*, pp. 115, 116, and *Creative Evolution*, pp. 9, 10.

<sup>53</sup> None of our human tenses of speech can express without serious distortion the eternity of the Divine consciousness; but if we must select one, it should be the present tense. We commit a smaller error if we think of God's eternal knowing and willing as a cognitive and volitional activity contemporaneous with its object, than if we use any other single form of expression. For in what is for us human beings the vivid immediate present, the two phases of time, namely, change and lastingness, come together into a felt unity with which we have no acquaintance otherwise. Psychological investigation has revealed that our consciousness of time is built around an immediately experienced span or interval, within which there is a scientifically measurable lapse of time, but which we feel as a single, indivisible "now." Within this immediate "now" we are conscious of a difference between the "earlier" and the "later"; but what is distinguishably felt as earlier is not "gone-by," nor is what is felt as later a blank "not-yet." Thus in our immediately

experienced time-span we catch a glimpse of a kind of lastingness which is possible by means of, rather than in spite of, change. We commit a smaller error, therefore, when we figure the eternal consciousness of God as alongside us in the immediate "now" in its judging and resolving, than when we attribute to the Divine knowledge and will a frozen rigidity of permanence in which there is not only no "gone-by" or "not-yet," but also neither a real "earlier" nor a real "later."

<sup>54</sup> In connection with the topic of this paragraph, cf. *supra*, note 9.

<sup>55</sup> It is a service of the same indirect kind (though religiously on a much higher level) to belief in the supernatural, as the term is here defined, that I conceive may be rendered by the attempts made in *The Spirit* (edited by B. H. Streeter: Macmillan & Co., 1919) to explore psychologically the workings of Divine grace. The inquiry pursued is of real religious value; but just to the extent in which it succeeds in formulating analogies to well-understood psychical processes, the element of the supernatural, in what I take to be its proper sense, is being eliminated.

<sup>56</sup> "The Gospel Miracles and Modern Thought," in the *Contemporary Review*, No. 667, p. 70.

<sup>57</sup> It is one of Kaftan's most striking suggestions in the article quoted from above (Chapter I. p. 12), that the point in which Christianity most sharply differentiates itself from other religions of redemption is that it releases man *from* the world only in order the more effectually to bind him to service of God *in* the world,

thereby achieving a unique fusion of the mystical and the ethical.

<sup>58</sup> The speciality of the "sense here intended" is that intuition is not assumed to be inerrant, and that its function is to perceive the universal in the particular or, conversely, to perceive the appropriate individualization of the universal. The vice of the older "intuitionism" in ethical theory was that, by postulating the inerrancy of intuition, it elevated this mental activity into a mystical faculty, by appealing to which ethical theory might elude the duty of demonstrating the rationality of the moral imperative. This assumption of inerrancy also rendered it impossible for intuitionists to continue to assign to the faculty of moral intuition its true function, namely, cognition of individual duty, and made them employ it instead for a purpose for which it is demonstrably superfluous, the explanation of the ordinary moral individual's unreasoned acceptance of the abstract standards and maxims of his day and generation.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 59 f., 76 ff.; *Creative Evolution*, p. 251 f. I am persuaded that this is the root-significance of the term "intuition" in Bergson's conception, and that only by starting from it does a sympathetic understanding of his use of the term become attainable.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 25. Note the significant words which I italicize in the following quotation: ". . . I begin by thinking of some plausible meaning. *I thereby give myself an intuition.*"

<sup>61</sup> Bergson has unfortunately allowed himself to be

seduced into an attempt to explain the possibility of intuition in terms of his theory of the tensions and detensions of the *élan vital* (cf. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 53 f.); and with his eye upon this explanation he has emphasized and described the effort or strain of the act of intuition (cf., e.g., *Creative Evolution*, p. 250 f.) in a manner that affords his commentators some excuse for the strange interpretations sometimes offered of the term "intuition" as he employs it. In reality, by "intuition" he means a widely (though very imperfectly) possessed and quite unmystical capacity for "integral" knowing—for directly perceiving the truly universal in the individual, as distinguished from the mere genus to which it belongs. And far more profound, and more dominant in Bergson's thinking, than his attempted explanation of the possibility of intuition is his view that knowledge is an ultimate fact which no theory should try to explain, and that what calls for explanation is the absence of knowledge and not its presence, its failures and defects and not its successes and its truth (cf. *Matter and Memory*, p. 26 ff.; *Creative Evolution*, p. 189). Fundamentally Bergson's own theory of knowledge is simply an attempt to explain why sense-perception is so incomplete and so far from being "pure perception" (cf. *Matter and Memory*, especially pp. 17-71), and why, instead of each real existent possessing intuition of every other, there is so much of blank unconsciousness (cf. *Matter and Memory*, pp. 28-31, 297 f.), so much of mere "instinct" (cf. *Creative Evolution*, chap. ii.), and so much of mere "intelligence" or abstract understanding (cf. *ibid.*).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Croce, *Philosophy of the Practical* (translated by D. Ainslie: Macmillan & Co., 1913), p. 497 ff.

<sup>63</sup> Laws, says Croce, "are volitions of class, they impose groups of single acts—groups that are more or less rich, but always contingent: hence a law always leaves all the other actions and classes of action that can be the object of will unwilled (that is, neither commanded nor prohibited), and, therefore, *permitted*" (*op. cit.*, p. 487).



## INDEX.

- Abstraction, 154, 156.
- Advent, final, 29, 31, 32-36, 37, 38, 41, 43, 45, 52, 53-55, 56, 60, 102, 119, 254, 255.  
phases of, 236.
- Age to come, 9, 31, 39, 45, 46, 47, 50-52, 60, 81, 88, 96, 97, 109, 110, 119, 212, 236, 247, 248.  
as culmination of "the last days," 236.  
powers of, 39, 40; also 8, 9, 67.  
relation to present age, 60, 61, 212, 248, 252, 256, 257.  
relation to New Covenant, 88, 94, 96, 101.  
(Cf. also "New Heavens," etc.)
- Ainslie, D., 265, 270.
- Angelology, 129.
- Apocalyptic—  
compared with Indian mysticism, 245-248.  
debt to Persian influence, 19.  
dualism, 19, 122.  
genius of, 20, 22, 42, 59, 95, 96, 250.  
grotesqueness, 20, 21.  
half-heartedness, 22, 23, 24, 41, 80.  
inconsistency, 42.  
"Little Apocalypse," 32, 36.  
logic of, 21-24, 80, 250-254.  
moral passion, 17, 20, 21.  
pessimism, 17, 122.  
rigid division of "ages," 25, 252.  
self-will, 23, 24, 250.  
use of vision, 21, 46.  
(See also under "Jesus.")
- Apostasy, 91, 99, 260.
- Baptismal vision, 57, 87, 88, 104-106; also 56, 100, 103, 109, 110, 120, 260.
- Baptist, 46-49; also 26, 36, 50, 52, 53, 55, 67, 103, 116, 254.
- Barrier within nature, 136-140, 142, 149.
- Beautiful, the, 199, 200.
- Bergson, H., 185, 219, 220, 267, 269, 270.
- Bird's-eye view, 187.
- Bousset, 245.
- Bradley, F. H., 249.
- Breach of natural law, 30, 146-149, 153, 162, 164, 167, 206, 243.
- Bruce, A. B., 254.
- Bushnell, H., 241-244.
- Cadoux, A. T., 259.
- Cairns, D. S., 215.
- Calvinism, 267.
- Causation. (See "Mechanical.")
- Change, 178-182, 185, 186, 267, 268.
- Changeless, changelessness, 177-186.
- Childlike, 25, 26, 170.
- Christ, 7, 8, 16, 17, 26, 45, 60, 212, 227, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 260, 261.  
(Cf. also "Jesus.")
- Christian Scientist, 208.
- Christ's Message of the Kingdom*, 254, 256, 259, 260, 261.
- Church and miracles, 146, 170.  
her vocation, 236.
- Classification, 154-158, 216; also 66, 199, 205.

- Consummation. (See "Advent.")
- Continuous, continuity, 150, 151 ;  
also 33, 163, 266.
- Covenant, New, 87, 91, 102, 113,  
114, 224.  
already realized in Jesus, 86.  
relation to "age to come," 88,  
94, 96, 101.
- Creation, new, 45, 238.
- Critical, N.T. Criticism, 29, 31,  
32, 35, 37, 74, 98, 115, 116,  
213.
- Croce, B., 154, 265, 270, 271.
- Cross-section, 253.
- Day of Jehovah, 41, 42, 83.
- Divinity of Christ, 65-67, 72, 260,  
261.
- Dream, 26, 129, 161.
- Dualism, 19, 122, 133.
- Duty, 221-224 ; also 49, 141, 204,  
218, 237, 238, 260, 269.
- "Either, or" of faith, 80-82, 118,  
119.
- Eminent, 150, 175, 190, 197.
- Enablement, supernatural, 4, 68,  
123, 124, 141, 216, 231.
- Enclave, 132, 153, 167.  
(Cf. also "*Imperium in im-  
perio*.")
- End of the times. (See "Last  
Days.")
- Epistles, 44, 45, 46.
- Equations, timeless, 163, 164.
- Eternal, eternity, 177-189, 252,  
267, 268 ; also 89, 124,  
125.
- Evil, 15-17, 127-129, 131, 132,  
136, 137, 215, 227, 237, 238,  
249, 250, 251-254 ; also 13,  
14, 22, 54, 58, 88, 125, 130,  
228, 245, 246.  
unreality of, 253.  
work of God? 190, 191.
- Experiment, experimental, 168,  
169 ; also 20, 21, 131, 139,  
146, 162, 170, 207, 236,  
247.
- Fairy-tale, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25, 48.  
(Cf. also "Magic.")
- Faith, 97, 98 ; also 4, 6, 10, 15, 20,  
22, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 40,  
44, 54, 55, 58, 59, 67, 70,  
71, 73, 75, 76, 77, 80, 81,  
82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 93, 95,  
101, 106, 113, 114, 116, 117,  
118, 120, 122, 123, 128, 129,  
141, 170, 199, 204, 226, 230,  
231, 234, 235, 236, 237, 239,  
244, 245, 252, 254.  
all things possible by, 67, 69,  
106, 124, 128, 213.  
as conditioning supernatural, 140-  
142 ; also 4, 32, 34, 35, 40,  
54, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71-  
73, 106, 113, 123-126, 131,  
132, 137, 139, 150, 168, 169,  
199, 206, 207, 215, 217,  
244.  
as stimulated by miracle, 54, 55,  
244.  
"either, or" of, 80-82, 118, 119.  
faith and beliefs, 59.  
faith of miracle-worker, 140-142.  
social character, 70-73, 170.  
Faith-healing, 207, 208, 215, 216.
- Finitude, 167, 184, 187, 246, 247,  
265.
- Foreknowledge, foresight, 183, 184,  
186, 187, 267.
- Generalization, 154-158, 216, 217,  
221, 266 ; also 138, 153,  
165, 166, 193, 203, 204, 206,  
208, 209, 211.
- Grace, 268.  
Cf. also "Enablement, super-  
natural.")
- Herrmann, W., 3, 241, 244.
- Hyper-mechanical, 242, 243.
- Hyper-physical, 210, 211.
- Identity, principle of, 163, 164.
- Immanence, immanent, 18, 151,  
207, 246, 252, 264.
- Imperative, 212.
- Imperium in imperio*, 132.  
(Cf. also "Enclave.")
- Incarnation, 16, 17, 260, 261.
- Infinitude, 136, 197, 211, 247, 267.
- Interaction, psycho-physical, 205,  
210.

- Intervention, irruption, etc., 131-137, 251, 252; also 18, 19, 23, 24, 34, 41, 76, 82, 140, 149, 151, 153, 165, 210, 246.
- Intuition, immediate apprehension, 193, 194, 218-227, 234, 235, 269, 270; also 6, 9, 48, 49, 50, 69, 97, 121, 153, 169, 177, 178, 186, 187, 195, 198, 200, 211, 213, 214, 231, 236, 237, 244.
- Intuitionism, 218, 269.
- Jesus—
- anticipated metamorphosis, 104, 110-113, 114, 117, 120.
  - apocalyptic note in His thought, 50, 51-55, 59-61, 80-84, 94-97.
  - as patriot, 99, 250.
  - attitude to miraculous, 29, 30, 37, 38, 41-44, 54, 55, 58, 59, 65, 66-70, 75-77, 115, 118, 119, 120, 123, 124, 125, 126, 129, 236.
  - baptism of death, 95.
  - baptismal vision, 57, 87, 88, 104-106; also 56, 100, 103, 109, 110, 120, 260.
  - boyhood story, 79, 80.
  - conscious of spiritual solitariness, 85, 87, 102.
  - effort of faith, 71-73.
  - foreshortening of imaginative perspective, 97.
  - interest in individual and concrete, 83, 84, 86, 87, 102, 113.
  - Messianic reserve, 115-118, 261, 262.
  - "Mystery of the Kingdom," 105, 111.
  - New Covenant, 86-88, 91, 94, 96, 97, 101, 102, 113, 114.
  - note of defeat and disillusionment, 72, 91, 98-100, 250, 259, 260.
  - originality of God-consciousness, 79, 80.
  - particular miracle-narratives, 71-73, 74-77, 89-94, 213.
  - poetic cast of mind, 89-94.
  - prediction of early consummation, 29, 31, 35, 36, 37, 41-44, 56-58, 84, 87, 99, 118.
- Jesus—
- reflective development, 78-121, 261.
  - relation between spiritual and apocalyptic, 59, 60, 88-97, 101, 103-106, 121.
  - relation to Baptist, 26, 36, 47, 49-56, 103, 254.
  - "Son of Man," 104, 109, 113, 116, 120, 256.
  - "Suffering Servant," 98-101, 103, 104, 112, 113.
  - temptations, 111-115, 168, 261.
  - timeless significance of message, 122, 125, 126, 127-137, 149, 150, 175, 207, 216, 217.
  - unconscious of metaphysical Divinity, 105, 260, 261.
  - uniqueness, 56, 66, 67, 102, 105, 113.
  - (See also "Christ," "Divinity.")
- John. (See Baptist.)
- Judgment. (See "Moral.")
- Kaftan, 12, 268.
- Karma, 245, 246.
- Kingdom of God—
- as future or present? 18, 38-41, 135, 256.
  - as not merely spiritual, 31, 51, 52, 59, 103-105.
- Last Days, 40, 41, 43, 45, 56, 60, 61, 68, 69, 105, 111, 112, 114, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 125, 129, 131, 216, 236, 238.
- Lasting, lastingness, 179-182, 185, 186, 267, 268.
- Laws of nature, 30, 146, 147, 150, 153, 158, 164, 166, 193, 196, 197, 198, 199, 204, 208, 243.
- as definitions, 147, 148, 149.
  - as rules of God's working, 147, 148, 191, 192, 209.
  - (Cf. also "Breach.")
- Leckie, J. H., 257.
- Legalism, 49.
- Licence, 211.
- Life eternal, 45, 52, 60, 212.
- "Little Apocalypse," 32, 36.

- Logic, logical, 21-24, 220, 247, 248, 250, 251, 266.
- Lordship over nature, 30, 129, 226.
- Lord's Prayer, 227-234.
- Machine, 166.
- Mackintosh, H. R., 262.
- Magic, magical, 17, 24, 48, 247.  
(Cf. also "Fairy-tale.")
- Manson, W., 245, 256, 262.
- Margin, 212, 213.
- Mathews, Shailer, 20, 245, 257.
- Māyā, 247.
- Mechanical causation, 160-162; also 163, 164, 241, 266.
- Mental healing, therapeutics, 207-209.
- Messiah, Messianic, 8, 16, 18, 47, 55, 65, 67, 68, 78, 79, 91, 92, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 260, 261.
- Messianism, 18, 19, 24, 25, 47, 51, 245.
- Miracle—  
analogy with the sublime, 200.  
particular narratives of, 71-73, 74-77, 89-94, 213.  
physical, 203; also 7, 8, 9, 44, 45, 54, 124.  
spiritual, 203; also 7, 8, 9, 13, 44, 45, 123.
- Miracle-working, 3, 4, 29-31, 37-44, 54, 55, 58, 59, 65-73, 105, 115, 118, 119, 120, 140-142, 168-171, 211-218, 224-226, 236, 237; also 26, 56, 146, 199.  
as note of the Church's life, 146, 170.
- Miraculous. (See "Supernatural.")
- Moffatt, James, 257, 262.
- Monism, monistic, 133, 176, 262-265.
- Monotonous, monotony, 30, 162, 164, 166.
- Moral judgment, 221-224; also 218, 269.
- Mottoes, 222, 223.
- Mysteriousness, 138-140, 196, 197, 209; also 5, 6, 166, 263.  
"Mystery of the Kingdom," 105, 111.
- Napkin, 224.
- National, nationalism, 19, 24, 250, 260.
- Natural, 203-205, 209; also 5, 11, 17, 18, 24, 30, 61, 70, 105, 112, 126, 127, 129, 130, 131, 139, 146, 156, 166, 168, 169, 175, 176, 189, 190, 199, 200, 208, 213, 231, 234, 236, 238, 242, 243, 246, 256, 258.
- Nature, 5, 6, 10, 11, 203, 204; also 30, 41, 69, 76, 127, 129, 131, 134, 147, 152, 153, 156, 158, 164, 169, 192, 200, 210, 211, 226, 242, 252, 257, 263, 264, 265.  
human lordship over, 30, 129, 226.  
inclusive of angelic agency, 129, 130, 134.  
uniformity of, 265, 266.  
(See also "Barrier," "Breach," "Order, natural or cosmic.")
- New Covenant. (See "Covenant.")
- New Creation. (See "Creation.")
- New (or renewed) heavens and earth, 45, 97, 101.  
as already actualized, 123, 124, 235.  
as unfulfilled hope, 45, 60.
- Optimism, 15, 17, 249.
- Order, 20, 151, 152, 158, 162, 177, 209, 210, 211, 219, 252, 257, 264.  
natural or cosmic, 11, 30, 110, 129, 130, 131, 136, 137, 139, 149, 152, 153, 156, 157, 158, 159, 163, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 171, 188, 191, 196, 197, 203, 206, 208, 210, 211, 212, 213, 216, 252, 264, 265.  
(See also "World-order.")
- Orderliness, orderly, 156-164, 192-194; also 137, 204, 206, 210, 219, 221.
- Parallelism, 204.
- Parousia. (See "Advent.")
- Pattison, S. Pringle, 266.
- Persian, 19.
- Pessimism, pessimistic, 17, 122.
- Peter's confession, 72, 117.

- Petition, assurance of definite, 83, 85, 226-234.
- Poetry, 18, 19, 25, 26, 48, 90.
- Pray, prayer, 226-234; also 43, 54, 55, 69, 70, 71, 80, 81, 82, 85, 86, 92, 101, 102, 126, 141, 177, 178, 198, 235, 241.
- Preordination, 182, 183, 186, 187, 267.
- Present age, 25, 61, 122, 123, 130, 212, 247, 248, 252, 253.  
as evil, 125, 128.  
as fictitious abstraction, 128, 129, 131, 132, 252.  
relation to "age to come," 60, 61, 212, 248, 252, 256, 257.
- Principles—  
abstract or general, 157, 167, 170, 180, 195.  
genuinely universal, 151, 216, 217, 219, 220, 224; and cf. also "Universality."
- Prophecy, prophetic, 18, 19; also 20, 25, 48, 49, 55, 89, 100, 109.
- Providence—  
general, 194; also 89, 132.  
special, 194-200; also 134, 210, 218, 239, 244.
- Psychical, 21, 70, 207, 219, 268.
- Puppet-show, 182, 183.
- Redemptive—  
as coextensive with "supernatural," 7, 10, 12, 13, 18, 126, 211.  
Christianity as redemptive, 12, 13, 15, 16, 227, 268, 269.
- Regeneration—  
cosmic, 40, 59.  
spiritual, 59, 238; and cf. also "Creation, new"; "Enablement, supernatural"; "Miracles, spiritual."
- Revelation, 49, 50, 55, 56, 103, 105, 234, 236.
- Rules, 156-158; also 147, 148, 192, 199, 204, 206, 208, 209, 212, 216, 217, 221, 222.
- Schematic, 152, 165, 167, 187, 191, 219.
- Schweitzer, 259.
- Science, scientific, 153-158, 162-164, 191-193, 203-206, 216, 218-221, 266; also 5, 6, 148, 149, 165, 167, 168, 169, 194, 199, 208, 209, 210, 211, 224.
- Scott, E. F., 33, 47, 254, 255, 257, 258, 262.
- "Servant of Jehovah," 98-101, 103, 104, 112, 113.
- Sinlessness, 237, 238.
- "Son of Man," 104, 109, 113, 116, 120, 256.
- Sovereignty of God, 186, 267.
- Spirit of God, 45, 67, 133, 212, 217, 225.
- Stange, 244.
- Stevenson, Fleming, quoted at p. 26.
- Streeter, B. H., 268.
- Sublime, the, 200.
- Supernatural—  
affinity with "natural," 17, 18, 25.  
ambiguity, 4, 5, 6, 10.  
analogous to the sublime, 200.  
as conditioned by faith, 140-142; also 4, 32, 34, 35, 40, 54, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71-73, 106, 113, 123-126, 131, 132, 137, 139, 150, 168, 169, 199, 206, 207, 215, 217, 244.  
as powers of "age to come," 39, 40; also, 8, 9, 67.  
as preternatural special providence, 195-197.  
coextensive with "redemptive," 7, 10, 12, 13, 18, 126, 211.  
enablement, 4, 68, 123, 124, 141, 216, 231.  
false definitions, 146-149.  
fundamental Christian meaning, 7, 10, 11, 126, 127.  
mysteriousness, 138-140, 196, 197, 209; also 5, 6, 166, 263.  
N.T. attitude to, 7, 8, 9, 10, 29-31, 37, 39-41, 44, 45, 225; and see also under "Jesus."  
not identical with the unmediated, 133-137.  
positive religious meaning, 5, 6, 7.

- Supernatural—  
 practical value of asserting, 238, 239.  
 primitive Christian conception of, 7-14, 170.
- Supernaturalism—  
 of apocalyptic, 19, 24, 25, 120, 121, 126, 127, 130.  
 of Christianity, 24, 25, 120, 121, 126-137.
- Supernormal, 207, 209.  
 Super-temporal, 163, 266.
- Surrender, 23, 24, 69, 105, 115, 166, 169, 231, 250, 260.
- Taylor, A. E., 266.
- Theodicy, 22, 248-250.
- Therapeutics, mental, 207, 208, 209.
- Timeless, timelessness, 163, 179, 180; also 123, 126, 127, 129, 130, 131, 132, 149, 178, 187, 189.
- Time-span, 267, 268.
- Titius, 257.
- Transcendence, transcendent, 5, 17, 18, 20, 21, 35, 36, 40, 47, 48, 58, 95, 105, 109, 110, 114, 197, 199, 206, 209, 210, 211, 213, 236, 245, 246, 264, 265.
- Truth-speaking, 222, 223.
- Truth timeless, 180.
- Uniformity, principle of, 265, 266.
- Universality, true, 138, 216, 217, 221, 270; and see also under "Principles."
- Vale of tears, 215.
- Vocation, 56, 57, 58, 59, 65, 66, 67, 68, 79, 104, 111, 235, 236.
- Wendland, Joh., 262-265.
- Wilderness, 111, 113, 120, 128.
- Wilful, wilfulness, 26, 88, 97, 132, 136, 139, 171, 217.
- Wireless, 187.
- World-order, 13, 14, 21, 23, 24, 31, 191, 252, 264.
- Worldly-wisdom, worldly-wise, 25, 124, 139, 141, 212, 217, 239.

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