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THE BIBLIOTHECA SACRA

ARTICLE I.

MIRACLE AND THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BY HONORABLE F. J. LAMB, MADISON, WIS.

THE book "Religion and Miracle"¹ has been put forth, dedicated to the proposition that faithful disciples of Christ are justified in disbelieving and disregarding the Scripture miracles. That is the primary and startling contention of the work. The author, a minister of the Christian religion, informs us that he has for many years "ceased to regard" the miracles designated by him as "signs and wonders that accompanied the Lord." This primary proposition is distinctly opposed to the faith of Christians held from the beginning, and its publication without attempt to vindicate it would have been a mere *brutum fulmen*. Hence, in the chapter "The Issue Defined," the author *asserts* for such vindication this proposition, The Christian religion is independent of miracle (p. 5; see, also, pp. x, 7, and 167). But this new proposition is also contrary to the faith always held by Christians, and is without value to vindicate disbelief or disregard of the miracles, unless due investigation shows the new proposition to be true. Whether or not that proposition is true, is the problem and

¹ Religion and Miracle. By George A. Gordon, Minister of the Old South Church, Boston. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

“issue” the book presents. Its anti-Christian propositions call imperatively for investigation to ascertain the truth. The merit or demerit of the book hinges on the result of such investigation.

Here is seen the profound gravity of the “issue.” For if due investigation shall show that the proposition, i.e. “The Christian religion is independent of miracle,” is untrue, the book championing that proposition as true must be consigned to the category of things opposed to God, opposed to Christ, opposed to the Christian religion,—evil. The issue is one of fact, and is simple, viz. Is it true (or untrue) that the Christian religion is independent of miracle? The means and method of determining the issue are also simple, i.e. examine the evidence, and ascertain the facts; the conclusions which the facts justify disclose the truth sought. This is the system which science has established for ascertaining truth, for truth is conformity to fact. At page 37 Dr. Gordon sets forth the scientific method, but does not follow it. He does not examine the evidence,—he does not ascertain the facts nor the truth. He builds his book with brilliant writing in discussing speculative questions and suppositions, ignoring the evidence and facts, and by that course evades or shuns the essential “issue” of the book.

Our evidence is the Bible, and aught else that is relevant. Most obviously Christ is the paramount witness. But Christ is transcendently more than a witness. He whose atoning sacrifice, whose redemptive work, is organic and constituent in the Christian religion itself; he who revealed, taught, and founded it in the world, had regal right to judge, plan, or determine dependence or non-dependence of the Christian religion upon miracle, or any other instrumentality, and his decision thereon must be revered and accepted accordingly.

The Christian religion is the religion which Christ taught, and is component in that particular development of the Divine purpose and revelation which we contemplate as the Christian dispensation; which, commencing with the call of Abraham and wrought through his posterity, culminated in the advent of Christ, and in his work in founding his religion in the world. Because of such organic connection, any dependence of the Christian dispensation upon miracle, or aught else, is vital to the Christian religion.

There are several words of the Greek, also of the Hebrew, that stand in the Bible for deific Superhuman and Supernatural transactions, wrought by the special fiat of Deity,—transactions possible to Deity alone. By usage now common, the word "miracle" describes such transactions. For brevity in quoting them, we will write (miracle) in parenthesis. Our knowledge of the miracles in question is derived solely from the Bible. It is not candid discussion, to substitute in our investigations the skeptic's conception of miracle in place of the Bible conception. Honesty requires that the Bible presentation of miracle be given fair hearing. Dr. Gordon persistently presents the Scripture miracles under consideration, as mere "wonder," "prodigy," "portent that puzzles," "magic"; as isolate, unrelated to anything, without function—a derelict in the cosmos. The Bible, on the contrary, presents miracle as it presents other facts, i.e. in distinct relation to and in harmonious setting with situations, surroundings, conditions, facts and forces that caused its production. The Bible presents miracle as the product of the special fiat of Deity, as a transaction possible to Deity alone—as the prerogative of Deity wrought *only* "according to his own will" (Heb. ii. 4). The Bible presents miracle in organic relation with God's revelations, messages, and agents in his service. Miracle con-

forms, in function, to the intelligent purpose of the fiat by which it is produced, i.e. creation, administration, discipline, evidence, testimony of God.

The Bible records some two hundred miracles, and more than half are miracles wrought as testimony of God, to sanction and verify God's messages and agents sent by him. The book "Religion and Miracle" overlooks all this. It also overlooks the fact that *Christianity*, the religion that Christ founded, is a *Supernatural system*; that miracle in the sense of the direct entrance of God, by word or deed, into human affairs and history, is of its essence, and is component in the system. More than this, the book fails to recognize or regard the pregnant fact that the record in both Old and New Testaments shows that Deity has ordained and made objective miracle a divine instrument in administering God's economy of grace and revelation; made it the intermediary, the instrumentality, between the Divine and human, between God and men, whereby fundamental and positive truths of the Christian religion (revelations of a supernatural dispensation) are not only revealed objectively, but, by means of that intermediary, are by objective evidence given that due verification which the reason of all intelligent and normal minds instinctively and properly demands. Objective miracle satisfies these demands; and furnishes the essential sanctions, Divine and human, required by such 'intermediary.' Being the work of Deity, miracle has thereby Divine sanction. It also has due human sanction through man's ability, using his normal powers, to scrutinize, test, and know objective miracle to be reality.

We notice first the Old Testament record. After suffering forty years' exile, Moses was drawn to the Bush, burning but not consumed. There Jehovah called Moses to be his agent

in the mighty transactions of the Exodus. He required Moses to convey to Pharaoh his command as God of Israel, "Let my people go." Moses interposed objection, on the ground that Pharaoh would not believe the command. In order to understand what was decided and adjudged by Jehovah in disposing of Moses' objection it is necessary to know what the objection involved. The record shows divers purposes to be accomplished in the Exodus episode. Primary among these purposes were emancipation of the Hebrews, and that, through Pharaoh, Jehovah should demonstrate his power, and that thereby Jehovah's name should "be declared throughout all the earth" (Ex. ix. 16). Name in Scripture referring to God or Christ is used in the sense of his revealed character, essence, and power (Jer. xliv. 26; Ps. viii. 1; Ex. xxiii. 21; John xx. 31). The record shows, also, that the Divine purpose was to compel Pharaoh to act himself affirmatively in giving freedom to the Hebrews, namely, by imposing through Moses God's command as Supreme Sovereign upon Pharaoh, to let the Hebrews go; and if that was disobeyed, to hold Pharaoh guilty, and to inflict punishment for the guilt; and to repeat the command and continue the process until obedience should be secured.

Moses' objection brought before Jehovah the question Can a just Judge hold one human being (Pharaoh) guilty, and punish him for not believing a command imposing obligation, and purporting on its face to come from Deity, a superhuman and supernatural source, upon the mere *ipse dixit* of another human being (Moses)? It involved a fundamental principle of right and justice, namely, that a command or communication purporting to come from supreme or superior power must be sanctioned, authenticated by evidence that is *coördinate*, i.e. evidence that is of as high order, rank, or degree as

the source of the command or communication that requires obedience. That is, a message or revelation purporting to come from a superhuman and supernatural source requires superhuman and supernatural, that is coördinate, evidence for its authentication. Objective miracle is such evidence. The record shows that, in disposing of Moses' objection, Jehovah affirmed and established that doctrine. That divine judgment is found, as human judgments of enlightened courts of justice are found, in what is done or ordered done in carrying the judgment into effect. To enable Moses to act in carrying into effect the Divine judgment, in the case of Pharaoh, God endowed Moses with ability to call into operation the Divine power of miracle. Then God commanded Moses, thus endowed as his agent, to communicate God's command to Pharaoh to emancipate the Hebrews; and that when Pharaoh should demand, "Show a miracle for you" (Ex. vii. 9), i.e. furnish to me evidence coördinate with the command purporting to come from God, then Moses' "rod" should be cast down, and the miracle should be wrought making the "rod" serpent; that is, the Divine command should be thus authenticated by objective miracle—coördinate evidence. See, too, God's instruction to Moses:—

"When thou goest to return unto Egypt, see that thou do all these (miracles) before Pharaoh which I have put in thy hand" (Ex. iv. 21).

The revealing and verifying function and power of the 'intermediary,' objective miracle employed by Deity, is expressly and repeatedly set forth in the Exodus. The premonitions to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, in announcing the several objective miracles, were (Am. Rev.): "in this thou shalt KNOW that I am Jehovah" (Ex. vii. 17); "to the end that thou mayest KNOW that I am Jehovah in the midst of the earth"

(Ex. viii. 22); "that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth" (Ex. ix. 14); "that thou mayest know that the earth is Jehovah's" (Ex. ix. 29). The existence, the sovereignty and power, of God were given objective verification to men by those objective miracles (wrought as the testimony of God), and thereby Jehovah's name has been, and still is, "declared throughout all the earth."

In the New Testament, the same Divine doctrine, making objective miracle the 'intermediary' between God and men, is taught as clearly (as in the Exodus) by the record of Christ's dealing with the palsied man at Capernaum (Luke v. 17-26). Christ forgave the man's sins. The audience, embracing Doctors of the Law and Pharisees, for that act, charged Christ with blasphemy, because God alone can forgive sins. Christ met that charge by declaring he would produce evidence by which his accusers should know he was Deity, and had inherent in himself power and right to wield the prerogatives of Deity, the power by fiat to cure a palsy, and by fiat to forgive sin. The evidence was objective miracle. Notice the ego, "I say." Christ's fiat to the palsied man was, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy couch, and go unto thy house." Instantly he arose healed. The unanimous verdict was, "We have seen a paradox (*παράδοξα*) to-day." The audience thought they knew that Christ was merely a man. By the 'intermediary,' the objective miracle, as testimony of God, it was demonstrated that Christ was Deity, a fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion. A paradox is something which apparently contradicts some ascertained truth, but which, duly investigated, is found to be true. It seems proper to notice here that in both instances, i.e. that of Pharaoh in Egypt and of the palsied man at Capernaum, the verity of the miracle would have been challenged if possible, for opponents

of Jehovah and Christ were compelled, against their wills, to *know* the miracles were verities.

The doctrine we have deduced from the record is that which is held more or less distinctly by divines. In his standard work "The Logic of Christian Evidences" Professor G. Frederick Wright says: "It is in miracles, and so far as we can see it is in miracles chiefly, if not only, that a supernatural dispensation can subject itself to the verification which the reason properly demands before accepting it" (p. 258). May not the qualification be eliminated from the doctrine as here stated? The record shows that God has specifically made his objective miracle the 'intermediary'—the way—for the verification and authentication to men of his revelations, counsels, messages and agents in his service. We find no other shown in the record from Genesis to Revelation. No other has appeared.

We suggest further: If to-day one inquires seriously and intelligently, what knowledge (if any) we have of our continued existence after the death of the physical body, he can get no knowledge from nature or from human beings. The knowledge sought is above nature—it is supernatural. Such inquirer will find that the utterances of Christ which we quote (p. 567), and cognate utterances, purport to reveal that knowledge objectively to man. But those utterances of superhuman and supernatural matters are *prima facie* utterances of a merely human being. They give, therefore, no knowledge, unless sanctioned by evidence coördinate in quality and in instrument of communication, i.e. objectively by appropriate means. We have noticed objective miracle as such 'intermediary,' by and through which Divine sanction is given openly, objectively, to human beings. The record shows that that is

the way God the Father, and Christ the Son, have chosen and employed for such divine sanction. Also the record shows that such sanction was thus given to Christ to authenticate his utterances, revelations, teachings, and services in founding the Christian religion. At the outset, rational faith in Christ's revelations, and in the Christian religion he taught, depended on that Divine sanction then so given by objective miracles of God. Time has not changed the dependence. That Divine sanction was thus given for all men then and since; and thenceforth rational faith in Christ's revelations has always depended, and will always depend, on that sanction of objective miracles.

The Hebrews could not emancipate themselves from Egypt, nor could they secure emancipation from any earthly source. The Christian dispensation was halted, incapable of consummation while that obstacle, the slavery of the Hebrews (through whom it was to be wrought) continued. Obviously, only Divine power entering directly into human affairs (miracle), operating upon human oppressors, could remove the obstacle. The Christian dispensation, and with it the Christian religion, was dependent upon removal of that obstacle. The two miracles — (1) smiting the first-born, and (2) delivering the Hebrews, but destroying the army of Egypt in the Red Sea — terminated the slavery (the obstacle); and the Divine dispensation, and with it the Christian religion, moved on to consummation. The dependence here shown of the Christian religion, with that of the Christian dispensation, upon miracle, is direct, explicit, vital.

Although the Christian religion is a transcendent illustration of the loving-kindness of God the Father, and Emmanuel the Son, conceived and ordained as Divine means whereby souls estranged from God by sin may, through repentance

and remission of sin, be restored to true filial relations with the Heavenly Father, and to the inestimable blessings that inhere in that relation; yet the beneficences of the Christian religion cannot be bestowed upon men whether they will or not, as the Father "sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. v. 45); for, in the accomplishment of the purposes of its origin, the Christian religion is *dependent*. It is dependent upon affirmative acts of estranged souls dominated by freedom of will; dependent upon affirmative acts of such souls, in turning from sin, seeking and accepting its beneficences upon the indispensable terms upon which they are offered, viz. repentance and works meet therefor, forsaking the pleasures of sin, and turning to a righteous life,—loyalty to God. This dependence of the Christian religion is fundamental, unavoidable, vital. Hence the Christian religion is also dependent upon whatever means, influences, instrumentalities, or motives Divine wisdom employs or presents, to influence or cause free souls to believe and follow the teachings of Christ, and seek entrance (open for them) into the Kingdom of God. Whatever men to-day may speculate upon, as to motive or influence to bring souls into the Kingdom, the record discloses that Divine wisdom presents the simple, fundamental, unavoidable truth, that the blessedness, or its opposite, in immortal life, depends upon the life in this world; i.e. life in sin, or life in unity with Christ, his teaching, and his service. These dependences of the Christian religion are overlooked and ignored in the book "Religion and Miracle."

That motive could not be presented to man without miracle, for it necessitated revelation of the future of souls after physical death here, *which revelation is miracle*.

Christ grew up from infancy in ordinary life and labor

among the people of Galilee, a Roman province only twenty-five miles wide and sixty miles long, where he was known as a carpenter. When, at thirty years of age, Christ commenced founding the Christian religion, the record discloses that ignorance of immortal life was so dense that it is pictured as darkness, and that Christ brought "life and immortality," i.e. immortal life, out of darkness "to light," through the gospel of the Christian religion. This, Christ (the young man of thirty known as Jesus) did, unaided and alone (aside from miracle), by going into the synagogues of Galilee, and publicly announcing to his neighbors that God, as set forth in their Sacred Scriptures, was his Father,—not in the sense that God, as Creator, was Father of those neighbors, but that he was the only-begotten, instead of created, Son of God. He asserted, also, that an end of earthly things would come, and that in such last day he, Jesus, would call the dead from their graves, saying of himself:—

"As the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment to the Son; that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself; and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh in the which all that are in their tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John v. 21-29).

Among other things, this young man Jesus announced of himself:—

"Before Abraham was, I am" (John viii. 58); that "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away" (Matt. xxiv. 35).

Candid, intelligent souls could not believe these and like statements from any human being, unless sanctioned and authenticated by indisputable power and authority. Objective miracle, as testimony of God, is such authentication. The revelations we have quoted from Jesus are of superhuman and supernatural things and conditions, involving knowledge impossible of attainment of human beings. Those revelations are distinctly within the doctrine divinely adjudged, in dealing with Pharaoh in the Exodus, and with the palsied man at Capernaum, and require coördinate evidence, or sanction by objective miracle. According to the record, Christ dealt with his revelations as part of his work in founding the Christian religion, in distinct conformity with that doctrine. The evidence and record show that this was the mind of Christ, and was his estimate and judgment of the dependence of the Christian religion upon miracle. His judgment is conclusive. Matthew records the beginning:—

“Jesus went about in all Galilee, [1] teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and [2] healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people” (Matt. iv. 23).

Two things were conjoined — religion taught, and miracle wrought to authenticate the teaching. This was constant, until people planned for the meeting, not merely to hear, but to have their sick and diseased friends healed.

“A great multitude of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, . . . came [1] to hear him, and [2] to be healed of their diseases; and they that were troubled with unclean spirits: and they were healed” (Luke vi. 17, 18).

Christ retired to a desert place with the disciples to rest.

“The people when they knew it, followed him, and he received them, and [1] spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and [2]

healed them that had need of healing" (Luke ix. 11; see, too, Matt. ix. 35; Mark iii. 1-6; Luke xiii. 10-14).

This conjoining of his teaching of the religion with miracles wrought to verify the teaching was constant, continuous even, as we shall see, up to the night before the crucifixion.

The judgment of Christ that the Christian religion, in accomplishing the purpose of its origin, is dependent upon miracle, is seen in his ordaining, equipping, and commissioning his apostles as his missionaries. After the Sermon on the Mount, Christ conducted an extended missionary campaign (recorded by Matt. viii.-ix.). Then Christ ordained the twelve as apostles for life, and endowed them with ability to call into operation the divine power of miracle, and then commanded them:—

"Go And as ye go, [1] preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. [2] Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, cast out demons: freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. x. 1-8; see, too, Mark vi. 7-13).

"They departed, and went throughout the villages, [1] preaching the gospel, and [2] healing everywhere" (Luke ix. 6).

Christ endowed and commissioned seventy others and commanded them:—

"Into whatsoever city ye enter [1] heal the sick that are therein, and [2] say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke x. 8, 9).

Limited space compels brevity in selecting and stating instances of evidence showing the Master's judgment of, and instances of the dependence of, the Christian religion upon miracle. Nicodemus, religious (*διδάσκαλος*) (John iii. 10) teacher of Israel, hence presumably knowing the teaching of Exodus regarding objective miracle as authenticating testimony of God, testified to Christ:—

“We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (John iii. 2).

That is, the miracles were Divine authentication of Christ and his teaching. Christ at once approved of this by teaching Nicodemus accordingly.

The Christian religion cannot be independent of the testimony of God given by miracle, or otherwise, to verify the religion. The judgment of the Master, that the Christian religion is dependent upon objective miracle, as the authenticating testimony of God, is expressly shown in connection with two such miracles, wrought on the Sabbath day (1) on the impotent man at Bethesda and (2) on the man born blind. Jews challenged Christ’s Messiahship, and also his religion, “This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day.” Jews had asked John the Baptist if he was Messiah. He answered, No; and had pointed out Christ as Messiah, “The Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.” Christ testified that John’s witness was true:—

“But I have greater witness than that of John; for the (miracles) which my Father hath given me to finish, the same (miracles) that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me” (John v. 36).

After persecuting Christ for giving sight to the man born blind, the Jews said to Christ, “If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.” He had told them, and they had not believed. In view of that fact, the Master, subordinating his personal testimony to that of objective miracles, said, “The (miracles) that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me,”—and proceeded to stake proof of his Messiahship, and the verity of the religion he taught, upon the miracles he had theretofore wrought and would perform as the verifying testimony of God, saying:—

"If I do not the (miracles) of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the (miracles); that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him" (John x. 24, 25, 37, 38).

Christ dealt with men in view of their limitations and inabilities. Because, with men, miracle as the testimony of God is more potent, in engendering belief, than the spoken word of Christ, he again, the evening before the crucifixion, graciously consented that his spoken word as evidence be subordinated to the evidence of miracles he had theretofore wrought, in order that human belief in him, his mission, and the religion he taught, should be engendered in men. Thomas and Philip were perplexed over Christ's mystical statement that the Father was in him, and he in the Father, and that he who had seen Christ had seen the Father. Philip, craving objective evidence, said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." With mild reproof for lack of the disciples' faith, but graciously recognizing that lack, Christ said to Philip, "Believe me" on your knowledge of me, or "else believe me for the very (miracles') sake" (John xiv. 6-11). Other Philips, and other unenlightened souls, then in, and to be in, the world were within the love and compassion of the Master; and, as he had regal right to do, Christ exalted the 'intermediary' objective miracles *he had theretofore wrought* to be the indubitable testimony of God, for verification of Christ's teaching all things, even the mystical in the Christian religion. It was for us to-day as well as for others then.

The Lazarus episode is equally cogent evidence of the Master's judgment of the dependence of belief and trust in Christ upon miracle. The seeming cruelty of deliberate delay after receiving the sisters' appeal and in failing to heal Lazarus though absent, as was done for the nobleman's son, and the

Centurion's servant, was, according to the record, purposely allowed upon consultation between Father and Son (John ii. 2, 15, 42). At the moment of the resurrection of Lazarus, Christ announces in his audible prayer that all was done that men should "believe that thou [Father] hast sent me," i.e. to teach and found the Christian religion.

If the resurrection of Christ stood isolate, it might seem to mean no more than the resurrection of Lazarus. But the evidence shows that, by mutual counsels of heaven, it was determined that the resurrection of Jesus should be the supreme testimony of God to men, as the indubitable objective proof, and foundation for faith in Christ, and in his revelations, teachings, and promises; and that that miracle should be a constituent doctrine of the Christian religion. We do not infer this from casual expressions. The record is express and explicit. Christ came "to give his life a ransom for many," and said of that death, "This is my blood shed for many, for the remission of sins." Atonement by his sacrificial death he repeatedly stated, but *always conjoined* with it the miracle of his resurrection (Matt. xx. 19; Mark ix. 31; Luke xviii. 31-33); for leaving the *dead body* of Christ in the tomb to see corruption would be *failure*, not *fulfilment*, of David's prophecy (Ps. xvi. 10), expounded by Peter in his Pentecost sermon (Acts ii. 25, 27, 31). Christ's claim of power of resurrection of the dead, we have quoted above. Of the fact and purpose we are now considering, Christ testified:—

"I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again" (John x. 15, 17, 18).

Christ adds, as the Greek justifies, *This has been (ἐντολή) given me in charge by my Father*, i.e. the purpose proposed was

that of mutual counsel and determination of both Father and Son. In view of that formally proposed ordeal, let us suppose that Christ had failed to rise from death. What would have been the effect upon the Christian religion, upon faith in Christ and his promises, revelations, and teachings? The question has been exhaustively examined. Professor Keim concluded that, if Christ had not risen, "faith in him as the Messiah would have vanished, the disciples would have gone back to Judaism and the synagogue," and that the very survival of Christianity in the world, after the death of Jesus, depended upon the miracle of his resurrection.¹ That is obviously true, for the Christian religion is distinctly one of truth, integrity, righteousness; and could not survive demonstration that its Founder was a false pretender, especially in view of the test and ordeal he had definitely made.

The testimony of Christ affirms the same conclusion. The evening of the third day after death on the cross, Christ appeared unannounced in the midst of ten apostles and some disciples. They were terrified, supposing they saw a spirit. There is a dogma in critical circles to-day that the miracle of the resurrection of Christ was impossible, that he rose only as a spirit or spiritually. As has been truly said, "Argument with such dogma would be fruitless, but the dogma may be demolished by collision with facts." So the Master then dealt with the matter. For Christ said:—

"Why are ye troubled? . . . It is I myself: handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke xxiv. 36-39).

They did handle him. John so testifies (1John i. 1).

¹Quoted by George P. Fisher in *Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief*, p. 174 (citing Keim, *Der geschichtliche Christus*, vol. iii. p. 605).

Christ showed them the identifying wounds in his hands and feet, asked for food, and ate before them the piece of broiled fish they gave him. Then Christ reminded them that before his crucifixion he had taught them that it "must needs be" (Am. Rev.), i.e. that it was indispensable that all things that had been proclaimed of him should be fulfilled, that therefore it behooved Christ, and was indispensable for his mission in the world, that he should suffer in sacrifice, and "rise from the dead the third day." These two truths, atoning sacrifice, and resurrection of Christ from death, had four days before been only a promise then unrealized. Hence it was indispensable for the Christian religion that both should be fulfilled in fact, in order to perfect the Christian religion. These two component doctrines of the Christian religion having been actualized, Christ taught that then the essentials of the religion on both the human and the divine side—"repentance," on the human side, and "remission of sins," on the divine side—should be preached in Christ's name "to all the nations" (Luke xxiv. 47).

Christianity is also a system of fundamental principles, truths, doctrines, taught and established by Christ. As he had regal right to do, Christ, in the proceedings just examined, made the two transcendent facts, the atonement for sin, and the miracle of his resurrection from death on the cross, two of those doctrines, component parts of the Christian religion. The Christian religion cannot be independent of itself, or of its component doctrines, or of any of them: and Dr. Gordon's contention to the contrary is untrue.

His book puts forth two matters to prop his main contentions—matters which seem to us half-truth and un-truth. At page 56 the book deems miracle in producing faith, identical

with scaffolding in producing a cathedral, no more, no less; and when faith and cathedral have been produced, the book teaches that we may cast aside, as worthless rubbish, scaffolding and miracle. Miracle and scaffolding are employed respectively in producing faith and cathedral. That is the half-truth of bad odor, for there the likeness ends. Miracle in producing faith is *vera causa* — foundation — of the faith produced. Further, miracle like any fact persists after its primary purpose has been accomplished. Abraham's great faith was produced by the objective miracle oath of confirmation (Gen. xv. 17, see Jer. xxxiv. 18), i.e. God's promise that through a son (Isaac) Abraham should inherit Canaan. When, a generation later, God tested Abraham, by requiring him to surrender Isaac in sacrifice, Abraham obeyed; his faith failed not, resting with assurance (as the writer to the Hebrews says) that the miracle oath of confirmation would be fulfilled, even if it required raising Isaac from death (Heb. xi. 19).

The Master's testimony confutes the false claim that the function of miracle as divine voucher terminates when its primary purpose has been accomplished. In founding the Christian religion, Christ called into service, as evidence, the miracles of the Old Testament. We notice some by reference without comment: Flood (Gen. vii.; Matt. xxiv. 37-39); Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. xix. 23-26; Luke xvii. 28-30); Burning Bush (Ex. iii. 2-6; Matt. xxii. 31, 32); Manna (Ex. xvi.; John vi. 48, 49); Brazen Serpent (Num. xxi. 8; John iii. 14, 15); Widow's Oil (1 Kings xvii.; Luke iv. 25, 26); Naaman (2 Kings v. 14; Luke iv. 27).

At page 114, after noticing the admirableness of the personal or temporal life of the Master, and *assuming* that the apostles desired, when thinking of their heavenly Lord, to think also of their earthly Master, the author, as part of his

case, asserts: " Thus the Gospels came to be written, because the apostles wanted to preserve the precious, the divine memorials of *the temporal life* of their risen Lord " (*italics ours*). The records show that the Gospels were written in due obedience to, and in performance of, command and obligation which Christ laid upon apostles and disciples as efficient designated means which they should employ, in making the Christian religion effective in the lives of men, in executing the great commission. When about to return to the Father, Christ gave instructions to his disciples for carrying on the work he had inaugurated, viz. that repentance and remission of sins be preached in his name to all nations, teaching them to observe all things he had commanded, assuring them, " Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Christ's final instruction was given on the Mount of Olives, as the very last words before his ascension.

" Ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth " (Acts 1. 8).

The function and duty of a witness is to communicate to others evidence — that which the witness knows, has himself experienced or seen and known, and participated in — which such other person needs, or ought for his welfare to know. These disciples of Christ were Christians — regenerated men. They each knew what influence or motive it was, in all they had seen or known in Christ's ministry — miracle, teaching, revelation, superhuman power, promise of eternal life, solemn warning, etc.— that had drawn them to believe on Christ, to seek and be brought into the Kingdom of God. Witnessing to that was the work the Master enjoined, and which his disciples accepted and performed orally during their lives. Peter so witnessed on the day of Pentecost, and

miracle was its most prominent matter. That witnessing brought three thousand souls to believe on Christ, and into the Kingdom. The book of Acts is filled with illustrations of that witnessing, and its triumph. Disciples could not witness orally so widely or so long as the command required, but the command was not therefore impossible of performance. For disciples could reduce their witnessing to writing, and by copies could perform their witnessing to the uttermost part of the earth, and to the end of the world. That is what the disciples did. Each book of the New Testament, examined in the light of this suggestion, is a witnessing, a deposition, testifying to what the writer puts forth as reason to influence the reader to believe on Christ, to seek and enter the Kingdom. Paul so describes his work:—

“Testifying (witnessing) both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,” and Paul’s hope was, in spite of danger, to preach “the ministry I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God” (Acts xx. 21, 24).

John, about sixty-seven years after the crucifixion, reduced his witnessing to writing in John’s Gospel, so-called. It is filled with what John knew and had seen and known of the matters that had influenced and led him, and men, to believe on Christ and come into the Kingdom. It is generally thought that John discerned the mind of the Master more clearly than did most of the apostles. To understand the necessity and value to-day of the miracles, as vouchers of divine things essential to the Christian religion, as exhibited in John’s testimony, we must keep in mind the fact that John did not reduce his testimony to writing until more than two generations away in time from the crucifixion; and his witnessing was not of miracles then wrought, but of miracles wrought nearly

seventy years before. It was not to contemporaries of that event, but to other people and other times, i.e. for all men in all times. John had the promise of Christ that, in reducing his witness to writing, Christ would be with him. Contemplating all the influences that had wrought in causing men to believe on Christ, and in bringing them into the Kingdom, John testifies to all men everywhere, and always, why he reduced his testimony to writing; and it accords clearly with what we noted above:—

“And many other (miracles) truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John xx. 30, 31).

The Gospels were not written to be a pleasant reminiscence for the few souls that had consorted with Christ in temporal life, but to hold in human language evidence of the power, wisdom, love, and grace of God, for all men always, for power in redeeming souls to God, and conquering the world for Christ. The Gospels witness the inestimable value of Christ's miracles as vouchers of him, of his Messiahship, his revelations, power, and promise of eternal life to all who will.

But Dr. Gordon's contention at page 114 is put forth to teach and justify men in disregarding those miracles.

Has Christ spoken respecting *disregard* of his miracles? The evening before the crucifixion Christ communicated to his apostles the momentous matters embraced in chapters xiii.—xvii. of John's Gospel. Looking back over his ministry, and contemplating the many, many thousands to whom he had “spoken” the truths, invitations, and blessings of the Christian religion, and the miracles he had wrought to verify his revelation, teaching, and promises, and the course of the many

thousands in disregarding the authenticating miracles, Christ's sad condemnation was:—

“If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin. If I had not done among them (miracles) none other did, they had not had sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin” (John xv. 22, 24).

Obviously Christ does not here teach that the persons indicated were sinless in other respects. He limits the sin to the subject considered — disregard of Christ's teaching, and disregard of his miracles wrought for verification of the teaching. Christ's contemporaries, although deadly enemies, did not doubt but knew the miracles were verities, and so testified. “The chief priests and Pharisees when met in council” to destroy Christ were compelled by that knowledge to confess to each other “This man doeth many miracles. If we let him alone, all men will believe on him” (John xi. 47, 48). But they could and did, as men can do to-day, disregard the miracles Christ wrought to verify to men then and always the revelations Christ made and the religion he taught and founded; and that disregard Christ says is sin. Dr. Gordon has put forth his book “Religion and Miracle” to teach and lead men to believe that it is not sin.

Dr. Gordon puts forth again the oft-refuted contention of Hume that the miracles cannot be verified. We confidently refer the reader to the work of Professor Greenleaf, eminent jurist, foremost in the last century, and now, in the department of evidence. In his work “The Testimony of the Evangelists, Examined by the Rules of Evidence as Administered in Courts of Justice,”¹ he demonstrates that we have within human control to-day competent admissible evidence, ample to prove

¹ New York: James Cockroft and Company. 1874.

(and which, duly employed, does prove) the verity of the Scripture miracles. Also, in Professor Greenleaf's great work on Evidence the same doctrine is expounded.¹

Dr. Gordon, however, knew of, it seems, and has inserted in his book (p. 40), a canon of evidence of ancient transactions which, applied to the transactions of the Exodus and those of the New Testament, establishes to the world the verity of the miracles of those episodes. The canon is this, When facts conjoined with ideas have modified life of peoples or nations and continued to do so for long periods of time, the facts acquire such momentum in the life of the world that, as cause, they stand verified in their effects, and in the concomitant manifestations in life, customs, character, literature. In such case the rejection of the facts, Dr. Gordon says, becomes a mark of insanity.

Note the effect of the Exodus miracles. In them Jehovah is actor, conjoiner, announcing the ideas and performing the facts, the miracles, which, conjoined, modified the life of nations then and ever since. The ideas announced to Pharaoh were, that through Pharaoh Jehovah's name should be declared throughout all the earth (Ex. ix. 16). In connection with them the Passover was instituted to keep alive, by its observance annually forever, the facts and the ideas which were conjoined with the miracles. The effect of the miracles conjoined with the ideas upon Egypt was that, from a nation rich in the wealth of that age, possessing some millions of slaves, and strong in military power, it was made poor, and by the destruction of its first-born and of its army in the Red Sea, was so reduced that it could not recover one of its fugitive slaves.

¹ Vol. I. sec. 142 (12th ed.).

The Hebrews recovered from slavery were made a nation, with a country, a history, and became promoters through their literature of the knowledge of the only true God, embodying in that literature a record of the stupendous facts and miracles that wrought with the ideas, in modifying their life. Forty years after the miracles, Rahab, of Canaan, testified to the Hebrews:—

“I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your fear has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red Sea for you when ye came out of Egypt. . . . And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man because of you; for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above and in the earth beneath” (Josh. ii. 9-11).

Some three hundred years later, when Samuel was old enough to understand and record the matter, the ark of God was, without warrant, taken to battle, Hophni and Phinehas were slain, and the ark was captured by the Philistines. But their glorying was followed by plagues so persistent that they called upon their religious leaders to know what to do. They were told to send the ark back to the Hebrews and with it a trespass-offering:—

“Ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you. . . . Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had wrought wonderfully among them, did not they let the people go, and they departed?” (1 Sam. vi. 5, 6).

The Passover festival, then divinely ordained to commemorate the saving of the Hebrews, while the miracle at one midnight smote the first-born of Egypt, has lived in annual observance for more than three thousand years. It is common knowledge that it is now every year observed by Hebrews in all the world.

The New Testament miracles are equally in point. Here Christ is the actor. He is author of the ideas and performer of the facts, the miracles. The ideas are the truths, the doctrines of the Christian religion. The facts are the miracles which Christ wrought to sanction and verify to men the ideas. Christ is not conjoined to anything. He is supreme. He is the conjoiner. We have seen that, from the beginning of his work until the end of his earthly service, he constantly conjoined the ideas and the verifying miracles, and they wrought not merely upon the people of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, but to the uttermost parts of the earth, and modified and radically changed the life of the nations of the world.

Subjected to the ordeal of test by evidence and fact, the radical propositions of Dr. Gordon's book "Religion and Miracle" are shown to be untrue. Other cognate contentions of the book will be found equally fallacious by the careful reader, using with the plain common sense of a fair juror the evidence which Christ and the word of God furnish.

We have space for but one instance. At page 65, the author finishes twelve pages, written to maintain the "independence of miracle of the faith in God in the Old Testament," instancing the writers we name below. Examination of their writings, especially the verses we cite, will show that each writer, when giving reason for his "faith in God," adduces therefor the Bible miracles, especially miracles of the Exodus, viz. Amos ii. 9, 10; Hos. xii. 9, 13; Isa. xi. 11, 16; xlvi. 17, 21; Jer. xxxii. 16, 21; ii. 6; vii. 22-26; xi. 3-5; xxxiv. 12, 13; Ezek. xx. 1-44; Heb. ii. 1-4; xi; Ps. lxxviii. and cv.

Deity has made objective miracle the way for verifying to men the truths of a supernatural dispensation, including the Christian religion. It is God's way, Christ's way. The book

"Religion and Miracle," written to justify disbelief and disregard of that way, must fall under the condemnation spoken against all attempts to "climb up some other way" than Christ's.

All truth is important; but truth respecting means divinely chosen for the promotion of the religion Christ founded and taught is supremely important. The substitution of speculative questions, suppositions, fiction, for the facts of the Bible involves momentous consequences. Therefore have we spoken so freely. The unwary who accept the specious reasoning of Dr. Gordon's volume will soon find themselves suspended in mid-air, with no foundation upon which to rest the hope inspired by a risen Saviour, whose miraculous power was limited only by the reasons calling it into exercise. The inspired warning is, Let every man take heed to the structure which he rears upon the Divine foundation; "for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." If he shall build upon it "wood, hay, stubble," it shall be burnt, though he himself may be saved; "yet so as by fire."