

to the no less important rejoinder of Professor Ed. König, entitled *Bibel und Babel* (Berlin: M. Warneck, 80 pfennigs). As Delitzsch's work is typical of a tendency that prevails at present in some quarters, we may be pardoned for returning to the subject, and for giving some account of an important review of *Bibel und Babel*, which is equally typical of the objections which the book has called forth. Delitzsch not only shows how much light has been thrown upon O.T. history by the cuneiform inscriptions, but seeks to trace many of the customs, laws, and institutions, nay some of the most essential religious notions of Israel, to Babylonian influence. His work is criticised in the *Theol. Literaturzeitung* (13th September 1902) by Dr. Volz, who compliments the author on the clearness of his exposition, and the fine get-up of his book, but takes exception to some points alike in its method and its results. To begin with, in order to impress the circle of readers to whom he appeals, Delitzsch is almost compelled to speak at times with a confidence that is scarcely justified by strict science. It appears, moreover, to Volz to be a radically mistaken procedure to seek to enlist support for Oriental studies by always approaching these Bible in hand. This is at once disparaging to the great nations of antiquity, and unfair to the O.T. itself. These

ancient peoples lived a life of their own, which has quite enough of independent interest, without having to fall back on the Bible for any charm or value. And the sooner this is learned by the popular mind the better. On the other hand, the plan followed by Delitzsch can hardly fail to be detrimental to Scripture. The meagreness of our sources readily gives rise to exaggerations like this: 'In Babylon as in the Bible, the notion of sin is the all-controlling influence.' Or we hear high-sounding words about the one God, the goal of the human heart, and are told that 'monotheism' had already its home in ancient Babylon. So, again, Volz reproaches Delitzsch with writing as if we had to do with absolute identity of religious conceptions, forgetting that not infrequently Israel borrowed only the *form* and filled this with *wholly different contents*. The latter would be the case, for instance, even if it should prove that the well-known cylinder, with its figures of a serpent, a tree, and two human figures, was intended to portray the Fall. 'That the religion of Israel grew upon the soil of Babylonian culture we are told afresh in this book; yet that religion remains an independent, and in many respects an inexplicable growth, quite as much as does Greek art.'

J. A. SELBIE.

*Maryculter, Aberdeen.*

## Miracles and the Supernatural Character of the Gospels.<sup>1</sup>

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. W. SANDAY, D.D., LL.D., OXFORD.

It may conduce to clearness if I begin by stating summarily the points to which I propose to address myself in this paper.

i. I would at the outset lay down the proposition that miracles, or what were thought to be miracles, certainly happened. The proof of this seems to me decisive.

ii. It does not, however, follow that what were thought to be miracles in the first century of our era would also be thought to be miracles in the strict sense now.

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at the Church Congress, Northampton, October 1902.

My next step will therefore be to compare the attitude of the ancient and of the modern mind towards miracles.

iii. This will lead on to the third point: How far is it possible to reconcile, or harmonize, these two different attitudes? In other words, What are the chief problems for research and thought in regard to miracles at the present moment?

iv. And lastly, I propose to ask, What would appear to be the place of miracles in the Divine Plan?

i. I start, then, from the proposition that

miracles, or what were thought to be miracles, certainly happened.

You will observe that I qualify the statement by saying 'miracles, or what were thought to be miracles.' I do not for the moment distinguish between the two things. I will come to the distinction later; but for the present I disregard it, or hold it in suspense. For the statement, thus qualified, I conceive that the evidence is nothing short of stringent.

1. I must ask leave for a few seconds to step outside the Gospels. From the point of view of historical attestation the best evidence lies outside them. But though it lies outside, it has a direct bearing upon them, because it bears upon the Dispensation of which they form part.

The Epistles of St. Paul are the best kind of evidence conceivable; because those of which I shall make use are without doubt absolutely genuine, and they bear testimony immediately to the feelings both of an actor and of spectators in the events that are called miraculous.

Take, for instance, the following: 'For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word or deed, *in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Ghost*; so that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ' (Ro 15<sup>18, 19</sup>). 'Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, *by signs and wonders and mighty works*' (2 Co 12<sup>12</sup>).

'There are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all. . . . For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom . . . to another *gifts of healings, in the one Spirit*; and to another *workings of miracles*; and to another *prophecy*; and to another *discernings of spirits*: to another [divers] *kinds of tongues*; and to another *the interpretation of tongues*' (1 Co 12<sup>6, 8-10</sup>).

'I thank God, *I speak with tongues more than you all*: howbeit in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue' (1 Co 14<sup>18, 19</sup>).

'He therefore that *supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*' (Gal 3<sup>5</sup>).

It is simply impossible that evidence of this kind for the special purpose for which it is adduced should be otherwise than true. It is given quite incidentally; it is not didactic, *i.e.* it is no part of an argument the object of which is to produce a belief in miracles; it refers to notorious matter of fact, to fact equally notorious for St. Paul himself and for those to whom he is writing; it shows that he himself was conscious of the power of working miracles, and that he had actually wrought them; and it shows that he assumed the existence of the same power in others besides himself, and that he could appeal to it without the fear of being challenged.

[I digress for one moment. I may be told, from the last volume of *Encyclopædia Biblica*, that Professor van Manen of Leyden denies the genuineness of all St. Paul's Epistles. My reply is, in brief, that Professor van Manen of Leyden does not count. It is true that there is a small school in Holland and in Switzerland who do question the genuineness of all St. Paul's Epistles. But they have been demolished again and again; by none more effectively than by critics whom we perhaps should think extreme, such as H. J. Holtzmann, P. W. Schmiedel, and Jülicher. I believe that I should be right in saying that Professor van Manen stands alone among the contributors to the *Encyclopædia Biblica* in questioning the Epistles from which I have quoted. I need not say more.]

2. There can be no real doubt as to St. Paul, and the time of St. Paul. I might go on to urge that the presence of miracles in the middle of the movement pre-supposed miracles at the beginning of the movement, to give it the impulse which it had. But we do not need to fall back upon inferences. There is evidence as to our Lord Himself that is also, I conceive, quite stringent. This applies specially to the Temptation. The argument might be stated thus. No one could possibly have invented the story of the Temptation. At the time when it was first told and first written, no one possessed that degree of insight into the nature of our Lord's mission and ministry which would have enabled him to invent it. It must have come from our Lord Himself, and from none other. But the story of the Temptation all turns on the assumption of the power of working miracles. All three temptations have for their object to induce Him to work

miracles for purposes other than those for which He was prepared to work them. The story would be null and void if He worked no miracles at all.

3. The proof in this case I believe to be stringent, as stringent as a proposition of Euclid. But besides this there is a great amount of evidence which, without being exactly stringent, is exceedingly good; and that on thoroughly critical grounds and by thoroughly critical methods. A writer at the present day who desires to proceed critically would not speak, as most of us would speak, of the first three Gospels; he would speak rather of the three documents, or main authorities, out of which those Gospels are composed. He would speak, that is to say, of the Petrine tradition, embodied substantially in our St. Mark; of the Matthæan *Logia*, or collection of discourses, which gave its name to our present St. Matthew; and of the 'Special Source,' in addition to these, which has been incorporated into, and gives its distinctive character to, the Gospel of St. Luke.

Now each of these fundamental documents contained not only a number of incidental allusions to miracles, but also express narratives of miracles. Even the Matthæan discourses, in addition to the important reply to the inquiry of John's disciples, and the discourse on the casting out of demons through Beelzebub, contained a full account of the healing of the centurion's servant. And the Special Source of St. Luke included the miraculous draught of fishes (Lk 5<sup>1-11</sup>), the healing of the crippled woman (13<sup>10-17</sup>), and the raising of the widow's son at Nain (7<sup>11-17</sup>). In other words, all the best and oldest strata of the evangelical tradition bear direct witness to miracle. To this we have to add the evidence of the Fourth Gospel, which I myself firmly believe to be the work of an eye-witness and an apostle, though this is questioned with a somewhat greater show of reason.

4. Not only so; the evidence of these convergent documents is again from a historical point of view peculiarly good in quality. There are features in it which mark it off from the great mass of other evidence for miracle. When we look into it, we see, not obtrusively or quite upon the surface, but again running through all our authorities, a remarkable self-restraint in the exercise of miraculous powers, corresponding to the self-restraint brought out by the narrative of

the Temptation. The outcome of the whole is a picture of miraculous working of the full significance of which the writers of the Gospels were only partially aware, but yet which is in itself very coherent and striking. As historical portraiture, it has a strong claim to acceptance.

ii. There is then, I conceive, practically no doubt that at the time when the miracles are said to have been wrought, there really were phenomena which those concerned in them with one consent believed to be miraculous. It would be another thing to say in what sense they were miraculous, or in what precise way we should describe them. We may lay down broadly that remarkable phenomena accompanied the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He called them miracles; His disciples called them miracles; the crowds before whom they were wrought and the patients on whom they were wrought called them miracles. What should we call them now? The common idea of miracle is that it is an interruption of the order of nature. I do not say that this is a true definition or the best definition. That is just what we are in search of. When we have found the best definition of miracle, that which most exactly expresses its true essence or *rationale*, we shall have gone a long way to solve the whole problem. We are not quite in a position to do this at present. But although what I have just given may not be the true definition of miracle, it is a very convenient one from which to start, as it brings out into sharp contrast the difference between ancient and modern ways of looking at the subject; and this difference is the real seat of the difficulty.

Starting, then, from the idea that a miracle is an interruption of the order of nature, we are at once confronted by the fact that the ancients and the moderns have a different conception of the order of nature. The ancients as well as the moderns believed that there was an order of nature; if they had not had this belief, they would not have attached the importance they did to miracle. The difference between them and the moderns lies mainly in this, that it was more easy for them to think of the order of nature as interrupted. Wherever there was any great intervention, as we call it, of God in the affairs of the world, they expected to see the regular order of things interrupted. They expected to see some

special 'sign' of the Divine Presence. The modern man of science does not find it so easy to believe in these interruptions. The uniformity of nature has been so driven into his mind by a multitude of particulars not known to or not contemplated by the ancients, that he finds it difficult to conceive of it as in any way broken. If he is a Christian, what he would say would be not that God *cannot* interrupt the order which He Himself has created, but that the presumption is very considerable against His will to do so. This presumption rests on an immense induction, covering wide tracts of space and time, to the effect that God does as a fact confine His action within regular channels.

It is, however, important to note that this induction fails just at the crucial point, because we have no experience of His extraordinary action, such as it would be according to the hypothesis. We have no induction to preclude His use of exceptional means under such exceptional conditions. If the Son of God did assume human flesh for man's redemption, that alone is an event so unique and stupendous that we cannot wonder if its accessories were also in a manner unique. Still the minds of the present generation are dominated by this fact of the regularity of nature, and it no doubt does give rise to a reluctance to believe what is really inconsistent with it.

iii. This, then, is the problem that lies before us more particularly at the present time, how we are to bring into harmony these two apparently conflicting sets of data and mental attitudes: on the one hand, the definite proof that our Lord and His apostles, not to speak of others of His disciples, did in point of fact work what were fully believed to be miracles; and, on the other hand, the strong conviction, which has become yet stronger through the scientific advance of the last century, that God does act by general and uniform laws. One thing we may say with confidence. All revelation is adapted, closely and accurately adapted, to the particular age to which it is given. We therefore cannot doubt that if it had been so ordained that the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ should have occurred in our own time, the whole surroundings of it would have been different. We must be careful not to apply to the time at which He actually came, measures and standards that are not appropriate to it.

That is our first lesson, which should not be lost sight of. But it still leaves room for some attempt to harmonize the two orders of conception; that of our Lord's contemporaries, who expected miracles, and to whom, as we have seen, miracles in some form were certainly given, and our own conception of natural law, which also has not been formed lightly or without reason.

We could conceive it possible that the miracles of the Gospels should have been so constituted as to show two sides, one to the contemporaries and the other to our own day; I mean, so that to contemporaries they might come with the force of miracle, and that to us, with our wider knowledge and improved insight into the order of nature, they might be seen to be really embraced within that order. That we should be able to see law where the ancients could not see law; and that what to them seemed contrary to nature, to us should only seem due to the operation of some higher cause within the enlarged limits of nature.

I ought perhaps to say that I have tried this to some extent in my own experience as a working hypothesis, and I am afraid that though it may carry us some way it certainly will not carry us the whole way; it may explain some of the things that meet us in the Gospels, but it will not by any means explain all.

Let us make an attempt in another direction.

The highest cause with which we are familiar, within the range of our common experience, is the human personality and will. And the nearest analogy that we possess for what is called miracle is the action of the human will. We see every moment of the day how the natural sequence of causation is interrupted, checked, diverted by the act of volition. If I lift my hand, there is something within me that counteracts for the moment the law of gravitation. That is a simple case; but the action of the will is very subtle and complex, and some of the phenomena connected with it are as yet very imperfectly explored, and are more like miracle than anything we know. At the same time the will, as we have experience of it, is subject to certain conditions and operates within certain limits. The main question is whether a higher personality, and a higher will, than ours would not transcend these conditions and limitations. Nothing would seem more natural than to suppose that it would. And that is just what on the Christian hypothesis we have. It would not

follow that even this higher Personality and Will would be without its limitations; but they would be at least different from and not so circumscribed as ours.

I do not doubt that it is in this direction that we are to seek for the true *rationale* (if so we may call it) of miracle. The miracles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in pre-eminent degree, and the miracles of His apostles in a lesser degree, were a result of the contact of personalities filled with the Spirit of God with the conditions of the outer world. That is the key to their nature, so far as we can understand it. We may apply that key to the different instances of miracle. It will help us to explain some better than others. We shall be able to understand best those which appear to be a direct extension or heightened illustration of phenomena that come within our cognisance. Such would be more particularly the healing of disease.

Of course any such explanation can be only partial. The lower cannot supply an adequate measure of the higher. And, by the hypothesis, we are dealing with causes which stretch away beyond our ken. We should therefore be prepared to exercise much caution and reserve in judging. It is natural and right that we should dwell most upon those instances which are to us most 'intelligible,' and from which we can draw the most instruction. It is also natural and right that we should read the Gospels critically, that is, with attention to the different degrees of evidence in different parts. But it would be wrong to leap hastily to the conclusion that whatever we fail to understand did not therefore happen. It is probable that our successors will be better equipped and more finely trained than we are:

and just as in the world of nature many things that once seemed incredible are now seen to be both credible and true, so also it may be in the sphere of revelation.

iv. If we thus take the Personality of our Lord Jesus Christ as the clue that we are to follow, many things will be clear to us that would not be clear otherwise. The Old Testament and the New together form a whole; the one prepares the way for, or runs up into, the other. The central point in the Old Testament revelation was that God is a *living God*; that the world is not a dead world, but instinct with life, which is all derived from Him. The New Testament takes up this, and tells us that Christ the Word was the Light and Life of man.

Life is of all forms of energy the most plastic, the most creative. When, therefore, we think of our Lord Jesus Christ as impersonated or incarnate Life, it is no surprise to us to find in Him the creative and formative properties of life reach their culmination.

There is a peculiar fitness in the fact that His career on earth should issue in the Resurrection. All other lesser manifestations are consummated in this. And that is why the early Christians, with St. Paul at their head, clung to the belief in the Resurrection so passionately. The conception of Christ as the Life seems to me central in relation to miracles. In proportion as we get away from it our difficulties increase. But if we keep in mind the broad considerations that I have stated, we shall not trouble much, and I do not think that it is wise to trouble too much about the details of particular miracles that we cannot weave exactly into our own scheme.

## Recent Literature in Comparative Religion.

THERE is no branch of study that has made greater progress in popular esteem within recent years than the study of Comparative Religion. One reason for this is the recognition that the propagation of Christianity is to be slower than had been anticipated, especially in countries which cling to an ancient and elaborate religious cult. The missionary must understand the worship

he seeks to supplant. One of the most valuable documents in existence relating to the spread of the gospel among the northern nations of Europe, is a letter written by Bishop Daniel of Winchester about the year 720, and addressed to Boniface, giving him advice regarding his mission work in central Germany. The bishop admonishes Boniface that the preaching should not be at