

**GEORGE
MACDONALD**

MIRACLES OF
OUR LORD

George MacDonald
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George MacDonald

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I. INTRODUCTION

I have been requested to write some papers on our Lord's miracles. I venture the attempt in the belief that, seeing they are one of the modes in which his unseen life found expression, we are bound through them to arrive at some knowledge of that life. For he has come, The Word of God, that we may know God: every word of his then, as needful to the knowing of himself, is needful to the knowing of God, and we must understand, as far as we may, every one of his words and every one of his actions, which, with him, were only another form of word. I believe this the immediate end of our creation. And I believe that this will at length result in the unravelling for us of what must now, more or less, appear to every man the knotted and twisted coil of the universe.

It seems to me that it needs no great power of faith to believe in the miracles—for true faith is a power, not a mere yielding. There are far harder things to believe than the miracles. For a man is not required to believe in them save as believing in Jesus. If a man can believe that there is a God, he may well believe that, having made creatures capable of hungering and thirsting for him, he must be capable of speaking a word to guide them in their feeling after him. And if he is a grand God, a God worthy of being God, yea (his metaphysics even may show the seeker), if he is a God capable of being God, he will speak the clearest grandest word of guidance which he can utter intelligible to his creatures. For us, that word must simply be the gathering of all the expressions of his visible works into an infinite human face, lighted up by an infinite human soul behind it, namely, that potential essence of man, if I may use a word of my own, which was in the beginning with God. If God should *thus* hear the cry of the noblest of his creatures, for such are all they who do cry after him, and in very deed show them his face, it is but natural to expect that the deeds of the great messenger should be just the works of the Father done in little. If he came to reveal his Father in miniature, as it were (for in these unspeakable things we can but use figures, and the homeliest may be the holiest), to tone down his great voice, which, too loud for men to hear it aright, could but sound to them as an inarticulate thundering, into such a still small voice as might enter their human ears in welcome human speech, then the works that his Father does so widely, so grandly that they transcend the vision of men, the Son must do briefly and sharply before their very eyes.

This, I think, is the true nature of the miracles, an epitome of God's processes in nature beheld in immediate connection with their source—a source as yet lost to the eyes and too often to the hearts of men in the far-receding gradations of continuous law. That men might see the will of God at work, Jesus did the works of his Father thus.

Here I will suppose some honest, and therefore honourable, reader objecting: But do you not thus place the miracles in dignity below the ordinary processes of nature? I answer: The miracles are mightier far than any goings on of nature as beheld by common eyes, dissociating them from a living Will; but the miracles are surely less than those mighty goings on of nature with God beheld at their heart. In the name of him who delighted to say "My Father is greater than I," I will say that his miracles in bread and in wine were far less grand and less beautiful than the works of the Father they represented, in making the corn to grow in the valleys, and the grapes to drink the sunlight on the hill-sides of the world, with all their infinitudes of tender gradation and delicate mystery of birth. But the Son of the Father be praised, who, as it were, condensed these mysteries before us, and let us see the precious gifts coming at once from gracious hands—hands that love could kiss and nails could wound.

There are some, I think, who would perhaps find it more possible to accept the New Testament story if the miracles did not stand in the way. But perhaps, again, it would be easier for them, to accept

both if they could once look into the true heart of these miracles. So long as they regard only the surface of them, they will, most likely, see in them only a violation of the laws of nature: when they behold the heart of them, they will recognize there at least a possible fulfilment of her deepest laws.

With such, however, is not my main business now, any more than with those who cannot believe in a God at all, and therefore to whom a miracle is an absurdity. I may, however, just make this one remark with respect to the latter—that perhaps it is better they should believe in no God than believe in such a God as they have yet been able to imagine. Perhaps thus they are nearer to a true faith—except indeed they prefer the notion of the Unconscious generating the Conscious, to that of a self-existent Love, creative in virtue of its being love. Such have never loved woman or child save after a fashion which has left them content that death should seize on the beloved and bear them back to the maternal dust. But I doubt if there can be any who thus would choose a sleep—walking Pan before a wakeful Father. At least, they cannot know the Father and choose the Pan.

Let us then recognize the works of the Father as epitomized in the miracles of the Son. What in the hands of the Father are the mighty motions and progresses and conquests of life, in the hands of the Son are miracles. I do not myself believe that he valued the working of these miracles as he valued the utterance of the truth in words; but all that he did had the one root, *obedience*, in which alone can any son be free. And what is the highest obedience? Simply a following of the Father—a doing of what the Father does. Every true father wills that his child should be as he is in his deepest love, in his highest hope. All that Jesus does is of his Father. What we see in the Son is of the Father. What his works mean concerning him, they mean concerning the Father.

Much as I shrink from the notion of a formal shaping out of design in any great life, so unlike the endless freedom and spontaneity of nature (and He is the Nature of nature), I cannot help observing that his first miracle was one of creation—at least, is to our eyes more like creation than almost any other—for who can say that it was creation, not knowing in the least what creation is, or what was the process in this miracle?

II. THE BEGINNING OF MIRACLES

Already Jesus had his disciples, although as yet he had done no mighty works. They followed him for himself and for his mighty words. With his mother they accompanied him to a merry-making at a wedding. With no retiring regard, with no introverted look of self-consciousness or self-withdrawal, but more human than any of the company, he regarded their rejoicings with perfect sympathy, for, whatever suffering might follow, none knew so well as he that—

"there is one
Who makes the joy the last in every song."

The assertion in the old legendary description of his person and habits, that he was never known to smile, I regard as an utter falsehood, for to me it is incredible—almost as a geometrical absurdity. In that glad company the eyes of a divine artist, following the spiritual lines of the group, would have soon settled on his face as the centre whence radiated all the gladness, where, as I seem to see him, he sat in the background beside his mother. Even the sunny face of the bridegroom would appear less full of light than his. But something is at hand which will change his mood. For no true man had he been if his mood had never changed. His high, holy, obedient will, his tender, pure, strong heart never changed, but his mood, his feeling did change. For the mood must often, and in many cases ought to be the human reflex of changing circumstance. The change comes from his mother. She whispers to him that they have no more wine. The bridegroom's liberality had reached the limit of his means, for, like his guests, he was, most probably, of a humble calling, a craftsman, say, or a fisherman. It must have been a painful little trial to him if he knew the fact; but I doubt if he heard of the want before it was supplied.

There was nothing in this however to cause the change in our Lord's mood of which I have spoken. It was no serious catastrophe, at least to him, that the wine should fail. His mother had but told him the fact; only there is more than words in every commonest speech that passes. It was not his mother's words, but the tone and the look with which they were interwoven that wrought the change. She knew that her son was no common man, and she believed in him, with an unripe, unfeatured faith. This faith, working with her ignorance and her fancy, led her to expect the great things of the world from him. This was a faith which must fail that it might grow. Imperfection must fail that strength may come in its place. It is well for the weak that their faith should fail them, for it may at the moment be resting its wings upon the twig of some brittle fancy, instead of on a branch of the tree of life.

But, again, what was it in his mother's look and tone that should work the change in our Lord's mood? The request implied in her words could give him no offence, for he granted that request; and he never would have done a thing he did not approve, should his very mother ask him. The *thoughts* of the mother lay not in her words, but in the expression that accompanied them, and it was to those thoughts that our Lord replied. Hence his answer, which has little to do with her spoken request, is the key both to her thoughts and to his. If we do not understand his reply, we *may* misunderstand the miracle—certainly we are in danger of grievously misunderstanding him—a far worse evil. How many children are troubled in heart that Jesus should have spoken to his mother as our translation compels them to suppose he did speak! "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." His hour for working the miracle *had* come, for he wrought it; and if he had to do with one human soul at all, that soul must be his mother. The "woman," too, sounds strange in our ears. This last, however, is our fault: we allow words to sink from their high rank, and then put them to degraded uses. What word so full of grace and tender imagings to any true man as that one word! The Saviour did use it to his mother; and when he called her *woman*, the good custom of the country and the time was glorified in the word as it came from his lips *fulfilled*, of humanity; for those lips were the open

gates of a heart full of infinite meanings. Hence whatever word he used had more of the human in it than that word had ever held before.

What he did say was this—"Woman, what is there common to thee and me? My hour is not yet come." What! was not their humanity common to them? Had she not been fit, therefore chosen, to bear him? Was she not his mother? But his words had no reference to the relation between them; they only referred to the present condition of her mind, or rather the nature of the thought and expectation which now occupied it. Her hope and his intent were at variance; there was no harmony between his thought and hers; and it was to that thought and that hope of hers that his words were now addressed. To paraphrase the words—and if I do so with reverence and for the sake of the spirit which is higher than the word, I think I am allowed to do so—

"Woman, what is there in your thoughts now that is in sympathy with mine? Also the hour that you are expecting is not come yet."

What, then, was in our Lord's thoughts? and what was in his mother's thoughts to call forth his words? She was thinking the time had come for making a show of his power—for revealing what a great man he was—for beginning to let that glory shine, which was, in her notion, to culminate in the grandeur of a righteous monarch—a second Solomon, forsooth, who should set down the mighty in the dust, and exalt them of low degree. Here was the opportunity for working like a prophet of old, and revealing of what a mighty son she was the favoured mother.

And of what did the glow of her face, the light in her eyes, and the tone with which she uttered the words, "They have no wine," make Jesus think? Perhaps of the decease which he must accomplish at Jerusalem; perhaps of a throne of glory betwixt the two thieves; certainly of a kingdom of heaven not such as filled her imagination, even although her heaven-descended Son was the king thereof. A kingdom of exulting obedience, not of acquiescence, still less of compulsion, lay germed in his bosom, and he must be laid in the grave ere that germ could send up its first green lobes into the air of the human world. No throne, therefore, of earthly grandeur for him! no triumph for his blessed mother such as she dreamed! There was nothing common in their visioned ends. Hence came the change of mood to Jesus, and hence the words that sound at first so strange, seeming to have so little to do with the words of his mother.

But no change of mood could change a feeling towards mother or friends. The former, although she could ill understand what he meant, never fancied in his words any unkindness to her. She, too, had the face of the speaker to read; and from that face came such answer to her prayer for her friends, that she awaited no confirming words, but in the confidence of a mother who knew her child, said at once to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

If any one object that I have here imagined too much, I would remark, first, that the records in the Gospel are very brief and condensed; second, that the germs of a true intelligence must lie in this small seed, and our hearts are the soil in which it must unfold itself; third, that we are bound to understand the story, and that the foregoing are the suppositions on which I am able to understand it in a manner worthy of what I have learned concerning Him. I am bound to refuse every interpretation that seems to me unworthy of Him, for to accept such would be to sin against the Holy Ghost. If I am wrong in my idea either of that which I receive or of that which I reject, as soon as the fact is revealed to me I must cast the one away and do justice to the other. Meantime this interpretation seems to me to account for our Lord's words in a manner he will not be displeased with even if it fail to reach the mark of the fact. That St John saw, and might expect such an interpretation to be found in the story, barely as he has told it, will be rendered the more probable if we remember his own similar condition and experience when he and his brother James prayed the Lord for the highest rank in his kingdom, and received an answer which evidently flowed from the same feeling to which I have attributed that given on this occasion to his mother.

"'Fill the water-pots with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. 'Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.' And they bare it. 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.'" It is such

a thing of course that, when our Lord gave them wine, it would be of the best, that it seems almost absurd to remark upon it. What the Father would make and will make, and that towards which he is ever working, is *the Best*; and when our Lord turns the water into wine it must be very good.

It is like his Father, too, not to withhold good wine because men abuse it. Enforced virtue is unworthy of the name. That men may rise above temptation, it is needful that they should have temptation. It is the will of him who makes the grapes and the wine. Men will even call Jesus himself a wine-bibber. What matters it, so long as he works as the Father works, and lives as the Father wills?

I dare not here be misunderstood. God chooses that men should be tried, but let a man beware of tempting his neighbour. God knows how and how much, and where and when: man is his brother's keeper, and must keep him according to his knowledge. A man may work the will of God for others, and be condemned therein because he sought his own will and not God's. That our Lord gave this company wine, does not prove that he would have given any company wine. To some he refused even the bread they requested at his hands. Because he gave wine to the wedding-guests, shall man dig a pit at the corner of every street, that the poor may fall therein, spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not? Let the poor man be tempted as God wills, for the end of God is victory; let not man tempt him, for his end is his neighbour's fall, or at best he heeds it not for the sake of gain, and he shall receive according to his works.

To him who can thank God with free heart for his good wine, there is a glad significance in the fact that our Lord's first miracle was this turning of water into wine. It is a true symbol of what he has done for the world in glorifying all things. With his divine alchemy he turns not only water into wine, but common things into radiant mysteries, yea, every meal into a eucharist, and the jaws of the sepulchre into an outgoing gate. I do not mean that he makes any change in the things or ways of God, but a mighty change in the hearts and eyes of men, so that God's facts and God's meanings become their faiths and their hopes. The destroying spirit, who works in the commonplace, is ever covering the deep and clouding the high. For those who listen to that spirit great things cannot be. Such are there, but they cannot see them, for in themselves they do not aspire. They believe, perhaps, in the truth and grace of their first child: when they have spoiled him, they laugh at the praises of childhood. From all that is thus low and wretched, incapable and fearful, he who made the water into wine delivers men, revealing heaven around them, God in all things, truth in every instinct, evil withering and hope springing even in the path of the destroyer.

That the wine should be his first miracle, and that the feeding of the multitudes should be the only other creative miracle, will also suggest many thoughts in connection with the symbol he has left us of his relation to his brethren. In the wine and the bread of the eucharist, he reminds us how utterly he has given, is giving, himself for the gladness and the strength of his Father's children. Yea more; for in that he is the radiation of the Father's glory, this bread and wine is the symbol of how utterly the Father gives himself to his children, how earnestly he would have them partakers of his own being. If Jesus was the son of the Father, is it hard to believe that he should give men bread and wine?

It was not his power, however, but his glory, that Jesus showed forth in the miracle. His power could not be hidden, but it was a poor thing beside his glory.

Yea, power in itself is a poor thing. If it could stand alone, which it cannot, it would be a horror. No amount of lonely power could create. It is the love that is at the root of power, the power of power, which alone can create. What then was this his glory? What was it that made him glorious? It was that, like his Father, he ministered to the wants of men. Had they not needed the wine, not for the sake of whatever show of his power would he have made it. The concurrence of man's need and his love made it possible for that glory to shine forth. It is for this glory most that we worship him. But power is no object of adoration, and they who try to worship it are slaves. Their worship is no real worship. Those who trembled at the thunder from the mountain went and worshipped a golden calf; but Moses went into the thick darkness to find his God.

How far the expectation of the mother Mary that her son would, by majesty of might, appeal to the wedding guests, and arouse their enthusiasm for himself, was from our Lord's thoughts, may be well seen in the fact that the miracle was not beheld even by the ruler of the feast; while the report of it would probably receive little credit from at least many of those who partook of the good wine. So quietly was it done, so entirely without pre-intimation of his intent, so stolenly, as it were, in the two simple ordered acts, the filling of the water-pots with water, and the drawing of it out again, as to make it manifest that it was done for the ministrations. He did not do it even for the show of his goodness, but *to be good*. This alone could show his Father's goodness. It was done because here was an opportunity in which all circumstances combined with the bodily presence of the powerful and the prayer of his mother, to render it fit that the love of his heart should go forth in giving his merry-making brothers and sisters more and better wine to drink.

And herein we find another point in which this miracle of Jesus resembles the working of his Father. For God ministers to us so gently, so stolenly, as it were, with such a quiet, tender, loving absence of display, that men often drink of his wine, as these wedding guests drank, without knowing whence it comes—without thinking that the giver is beside them, yea, in their very hearts. For God will not compel the adoration of men: it would be but a pagan worship that would bring to his altars. He will rouse in men a sense of need, which shall grow at length into a longing; he will make them feel after him, until by their search becoming able to behold him, he may at length reveal to them the glory of their Father. He works silently—keeps quiet behind his works, as it were, that he may truly reveal himself in the right time. With this intent also, when men find his wine good and yet do not rise and search for the giver, he will plague them with sore plagues, that the good wine of life may not be to them, and therefore to him and the universe, an evil thing. It would seem that the correlative of creation is search; that as God has *made us*, we must *find* him; that thus our action must reflect his; that thus he glorifies us with a share in the end of all things, which is that the Father and his children may be one in thought, judgment, feeling, and intent, in a word, that they may mean the same thing. St John says that Jesus thus "manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him." I doubt if any but his disciples knew of the miracle; or of those others who might see or hear of it, if any believed on him because of it. It is possible to see a miracle, and not believe in it; while many of those who saw a miracle of our Lord believed in the miracle, and yet did not believe in him.

I wonder how many Christians there are who so thoroughly believe God made them that they can laugh in God's name; who understand that God invented laughter and gave it to his children. Such belief would add a keenness to the zest in their enjoyment, and slay that sneering laughter of which a man grimaces to the fiends, as well as that feeble laughter in which neither heart nor intellect has a share. It would help them also to understand the depth of this miracle. The Lord of gladness delights in the laughter of a merry heart. These wedding guests could have done without wine, surely without more wine and better wine. But the Father looks with no esteem upon a bare existence, and is ever working, even by suffering, to render life more rich and plentiful. His gifts are to the overflowing of the cup; but when the cup would overflow, he deepens its hollow, and widens its brim. Our Lord is profuse like his Father, yea, will, at his own sternest cost, be lavish to his brethren. He will give them wine indeed. But even they who know whence the good wine comes, and joyously thank the giver, shall one day cry out, like the praiseful ruler of the feast to him who gave it not, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

III. THE CURE OF SIMON'S WIFE'S MOTHER

In respect of the purpose I have in view, it is of little consequence in what order I take the miracles. I choose for my second chapter the story of the cure of St Peter's mother-in-law. Bare as the narrative is, the event it records has elements which might have been moulded with artistic effect—on the one side the woman tossing in the folds of the fever, on the other the entering Life. But it is not from this side that I care to view it.

Neither do I wish to look at it from the point of view of the bystanders, although it would appear that we had the testimony of three of them in the three Gospels which contain the story. We might almost determine the position in the group about the bed occupied by each of the three, from the differences between their testimonies. One says Jesus stood over her; another, he touched her hand; the third, he lifted her up: they agree that the fever left her, and she ministered to them.—In the present case, as in others behind, I mean to regard the miracle from the point of view of the person healed.

Pain, sickness, delirium, madness, as great infringements of the laws of nature as the miracles themselves, are such veritable presences to the human experience, that what bears no relation to their existence, cannot be the God of the human race. And the man who cannot find his God in the fog of suffering, no less than he who forgets his God in the sunshine of health, has learned little either of St Paul or St John. The religion whose light renders no dimmest glow across this evil air, cannot be more than a dim reflex of the true. And who will mourn to find this out? There are, perhaps, some so anxious about themselves that, rather than say, "I have it not: it is a better thing than I have ever possessed," they would say, "I have the precious thing, but in the hour of trial it is of little avail." Let us rejoice that the glory is great, even if we dare not say, It is mine. Then shall we try the more earnestly to lay hold upon it.

So long as men must toss in weary fancies all the dark night, crying, "Would God it were morning," to find, it may be, when it arrives, but little comfort in the grey dawn, so long must we regard God as one to be seen or believed in—cried unto at least—across all the dreary flats of distress or dark mountains of pain, and therefore those who would help their fellows must sometimes look for him, as it were, through the eyes of those who suffer, and try to help them to think, not from ours, but from their own point of vision. I shall therefore now write almost entirely for those to whom suffering is familiar, or at least well known. And first I would remind them that all suffering is against the ideal order of things. No man can love pain. It is an unlovely, an ugly, abhorrent thing. The more true and delicate the bodily and mental constitution, the more must it recoil from pain. No one, I think, could dislike pain so much as the Saviour must have disliked it. God dislikes it. He is then on our side in the matter. He knows it is grievous to be borne, a thing he would cast out of his blessed universe, save for reasons.

But one will say—How can this help me when the agony racks me, and the weariness rests on me like a gravestone?—Is it nothing, I answer, to be reminded that suffering is in its nature transitory—that it is against the first and final will of God—that it is a means only, not an end? Is it nothing to be told that it will pass away? Is not that what you would? God made man for lordly skies, great sunshine, gay colours, free winds, and delicate odours; and however the fogs may be needful for the soul, right gladly does he send them away, and cause the dayspring from on high to revisit his children. While they suffer he is brooding over them an eternal day, suffering with them but rejoicing in their future. He is the God of the individual man, or he could be no God of the race.

I believe it is possible—and that some have achieved it—so to believe in and rest upon the immutable Health—so to regard one's own sickness as a kind of passing aberration, that the soul is thereby sustained, even as sometimes in a weary dream the man is comforted by telling himself it is but a dream, and that waking is sure. God would have us reasonable and strong. Every effort of his

children to rise above the invasion of evil in body or in mind is a pleasure to him. Few, I suppose, attain to this; but there is a better thing which to many, I trust, is easier—to say, Thy will be done.

But now let us look at the miracle as received by the woman.

She had "a great fever." She was tossing from side to side in vain attempts to ease a nameless misery. Her head ached, and forms dreary, even in their terror, kept rising before her in miserable and aimless dreams; senseless words went on repeating themselves till her very brain was sick of them; she was destitute, afflicted, tormented; now the centre for the convergence of innumerable atoms, now driven along in an uproar of hideous globes; faces grinned and mocked at her; her mind ever strove to recover itself, and was ever borne away in the rush of invading fancies; but through it all was the nameless unrest, not an aching, nor a burning, nor a stinging, but a bodily grief, dark, drear, and nameless. How could they have borne such before He had come?

A sudden ceasing of motions uncontrolled; a coolness gliding through the burning skin; a sense of waking into repose; a consciousness of all-pervading well-being, of strength conquering weakness, of light displacing darkness, of urging life at the heart; and behold! she is sitting up in her bed, a hand clasping hers, a face looking in hers. He has judged the evil thing, and it is gone. He has saved her out of her distresses. They fold away from off her like the cerements of death. She is new-born—new-made—all things are new-born with her—and he who makes all things new is there. From him, she knows, has the healing flowed. He has given of his life to her. Away, afar behind her floats the cloud of her suffering. She almost forgets it in her grateful joy. She is herself now. She rises. The sun is shining. It had been shining all the time—waiting for her. The lake of Galilee is glittering joyously. That too sets forth the law of life. But the fulfilling of the law is love: she rises and ministers.

I am tempted to remark in passing, although I shall have better opportunity of dealing with the matter involved, that there is no sign of those whom our Lord cures desiring to retain the privileges of the invalid. The joy of health is labour. He who is restored must be fellow-worker with God. This woman, lifted out of the whelming sand of the fever and set upon her feet, hastens to her ministrations. She has been used to hard work. It is all right now; she must to it again.

But who was he who had thus lifted her up? She saw a young man by her side. Is it the young man, Jesus, of whom she has heard? for Capernaum is not far from Nazareth, and the report of his wisdom and goodness must have spread, for he had grown in favour with man as well as with God. Is it he, to whom God has given such power, or is it John, of whom she has also heard? Whether he was a prophet or a son of the prophets, whether he was Jesus or John, she waits not to question; for here are guests; here is something to be done. Questions will keep; work must be despatched. It is the day, and the night is at hand. She rose and ministered unto them.

But if we ask who he is, this is the answer: He is the Son of God come to do the works of his Father. Where, then, is the healing of the Father? All the world over, in every man's life and knowledge, almost in every man's personal experience, although it may be unrecognized as such. For just as in certain moods of selfishness our hearts are insensible to the tenderest love of our surrounding families, so the degrading spirit of the commonplace *enables* us to live in the midst of ministrations, so far from knowing them as such, that it is hard for us to believe that the very heart of God would care to do that which his hand alone can do and is doing every moment. I remind my reader that I have taken it for granted that he confesses there is a God, or at least hopes there may be a God. If any one interposes, saying that science nowadays will not permit him to believe in such a being, I answer it is not for him I am now writing, but for such as have gone through a different course of thought and experience from his. To him I may be honoured to say a word some day. I do not think of him now. But to the reader of my choice I do say that I see no middle course between believing that every alleviation of pain, every dawning of hope across the troubled atmosphere of the spirit, every case of growing well again, is the doing of God, or that there is no God at all—none at least in whom *I* could believe. Had Christians been believing in God better, more grandly, the present phase of unbelief, which no doubt is needful, and must appear some time in the world's history, would not

have appeared in our day. No doubt it has come when it must, and will vanish when it must; but those who do believe are more to blame for it, I think, than those who do not believe. The common kind of belief in God is rationally untenable. Half to an insensate nature, half to a living God, is a worship that cannot stand. God is all in all, or no God at all. The man who goes to church every Sunday, and yet trembles before chance, is a Christian only because Christ has claimed him; is not a Christian as having believed in Him. I would not be hard. There are so many degrees in faith! A man may be on the right track, may be learning of Christ, and be very poor and weak. But I say there is no *standing* room, no reality of reason, between absolute faith and absolute unbelief. Either not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him, or there is no God, and we are fatherless children. Those who attempt to live in such a limbo as lies between the two, are only driven of the wind and tossed.

Has my reader ever known the weariness of suffering, the clouding of the inner sky, the haunting of spectral shapes, the misery of disordered laws, when nature is wrong within him, and her music is out of tune and harsh, when he is shot through with varied griefs and pains, and it seems as there were no life more in the world, save of misery—"pain, pain ever, for ever"? Then, surely, he has also known the turn of the tide, when the pain begins to abate, when the sweet sleep falls upon soul and body, when a faint hope doubtfully glimmers across the gloom! Or has he known the sudden waking from sleep and from fever at once, the consciousness that life is life, that life is the law of things, the coolness and the gladness, when the garments of pain which, like that fabled garment of Dejanira, enwrapped and ate into his being, have folded back from head and heart, and he looks out again once more new-born? It is God. This is his will, his law of life conquering the law of death. Tell me not of natural laws, as if I were ignorant of them, or meant to deny them. The question is whether these laws go wheeling on of themselves in a symmetry of mathematical shapes, or whether their perfect order, their unbroken certainty of movement, is not the expression of a perfect intellect informed by a perfect heart. Law is truth: has it a soul of thought, or has it not? If not, then farewell hope and love and possible perfection. But for me, I will hope on, strive on, fight with the invading unbelief; for the horror of being the sport of insensate law, the more perfect the more terrible, is hell and utter perdition. If a man tells me that science says God is not a likely being, I answer, Probably not—such as you, who have given your keen, admirable, enviable powers to the observation of outer things only, are capable of supposing him; but that the God I mean may not be the very heart of the lovely order you see so much better than I, you have given me no reason to fear. My God may be above and beyond and in all that.

In this matter of healing, then, as in all the miracles, we find Jesus doing the works of the Father. God is our Saviour: the Son of God comes healing the sick—doing that, I repeat, before our eyes, which the Father, for his own reasons, some of which I think I can see well enough, does from behind the veil of his creation and its laws. The cure comes by law, comes by the physician who brings the law to bear upon us; we awake, and lo! It is God the Saviour. Every recovery is as much his work as the birth of a child; as much the work of the Father as if it had been wrought by the word of the Son before the eyes of the multitude.

Need I, to combat again the vulgar notion that the essence of the miracles lies in their power, dwell upon this miracle further? Surely, no one who honours the Saviour will for a moment imagine him, as he entered the chamber where the woman lay tormented, saying to himself, "Here is an opportunity of showing how mighty my Father is!" No. There was suffering; here was healing. What I could imagine him saying to himself would be, "Here I can help! Here my Father will let me put forth my healing, and give her back to her people." What should we think of a rich man, who, suddenly brought into contact with the starving upon his own estate, should think within himself, "Here is a chance for me! Now I can let them see how rich I am!" and so plunge his hands in his pockets and lay gold upon the bare table? The receivers might well be grateful; but the arm of the poor neighbour put under the head of the dying man, would gather a deeper gratitude, a return of tenderer love. It is heart alone that can satisfy heart. It is the love of God alone that can gather to itself the love of his

children. To believe in an almighty being is hardly to believe in a God at all. To believe in a being who, in his weakness and poverty, if such could be, would die for his creatures, would be to believe in a God indeed.

IV. MIRACLES OF HEALING UNSOLICITED

In my last chapter I took the healing of Simon's wife's mother as a type of all such miracles, viewed from the consciousness of the person healed. In the multitude of cases—for it must not be forgotten that there was a multitude of which we have no individual record—the experience must have been very similar. The evil thing, the antagonist of their life, departed; they knew in themselves that they were healed; they beheld before them the face and form whence the healing power had gone forth, and they believed in the man. What they believed *about* him, farther than that he had healed them and was good, I cannot pretend to say. Some said he was one thing, some another, but they believed in the man himself. They felt henceforth the strongest of ties binding his life to their life. He was now the central thought of their being. Their minds lay open to all his influences, operating in time and by holy gradations. The well of life was henceforth to them an unsealed fountain, and endless currents of essential life began to flow from it through their existence. High love urging gratitude awoke the conscience to intenser life; and the healed began to recoil from evil deeds and vile thoughts as jarring with the new friendship. Mere acquaintance with a good man is a powerful antidote to evil; but the knowledge of *such* a man, as those healed by him knew him, was the mightiest of divine influences.

In these miracles of healing our Lord must have laid one of the largest of the foundation-stones of his church. The healed knew him henceforth, not by comprehension, but with their whole being. Their very life acknowledged him. They returned to their homes to recall and love afresh. I wonder what their talk about him was like. What an insight it would give into our common nature, to know how these men and women thought and spoke concerning him! But the time soon arrived when they had to be public martyrs—that is, witnesses to what they knew, come of it what might. After our Lord's departure came the necessity for those who loved him to gather together, thus bearing their testimony at once. Next to his immediate disciples, those whom he had cured must have been the very heart of the young church. Imagine the living strength of such a heart—personal love to the personal helper the very core of it. The church had begun with the first gush of affection in the heart of the mother Mary, and now "great was the company of those that published" the good news to the world. The works of the Father had drawn the hearts of the children, and they spake of the Elder Brother who had brought those works to their doors. The thoughtful remembrances of those who had heard him speak; the grateful convictions of those whom he had healed; the tender memories of those whom he had taken in his arms and blessed—these were the fine fibrous multitudinous roots which were to the church existence, growth, and continuance, for these were they which sucked in the dews and rains of that descending Spirit which was the life of the tree. Individual life is the life of the church.

But one may say: Why then did he not cure all the sick in Judæa? Simply because all were not ready to be cured. Many would not have believed in him if he had cured them. Their illness had not yet wrought its work, had not yet ripened them to the possibility of faith; his cure would have left them deeper in evil than before. "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." God will cure a man, will give him a fresh start of health and hope, and the man will be the better for it, even without having *yet* learned to thank him; but to behold the healer and acknowledge the outstretched hand of help, yet not to believe in the healer, is a terrible thing for the man; and I think the Lord kept his personal healing for such as it would bring at once into some relation of heart and will with himself; whence arose his frequent demand of faith—a demand apparently always responded to: at the word, the flickering belief, the smoking flax, burst into a flame. Evil, that is, physical evil, is a moral good—a mighty means to a lofty end. Pain is an evil; but a good as well, which it would be a great injury to take from the man before it had wrought its end. Then it becomes all evil, and must pass.

I now proceed to a group of individual cases in which, as far as we can judge from the narratives, our Lord gave the gift of restoration unsolicited. There are other instances of the same, but they fall into other groups, gathered because of other features.

The first is that, recorded by St Luke alone, of the "woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself." It may be that this belongs to the class of demoniacal possession as well, but I prefer to take it here; for I am very doubtful whether the expression in the narrative—"a spirit of infirmity," even coupled with that of our Lord in defending her and himself from the hypocritical attack of the ruler of the synagogue, "this woman—whom Satan hath bound," renders it necessary to regard it as one of the latter kind. This is, however, a matter of small importance—at least from our present point of view.

Bowed earthwards, the necessary blank of her eye the ground and not the horizon, the form divine deformed towards that of the four-footed animals, this woman had been in bondage eighteen years. Necessary as it is to one's faith to believe every trouble fitted for the being who has to bear it, every physical evil not merely the result of moral evil, but antidotal thereto, no one ought to dare judge of the relation between moral condition and physical suffering in individual cases. Our Lord has warned us from that. But in proportion as love and truth prevail in the hearts of men, physical evil will vanish from the earth. The righteousness of his descendants will destroy the disease which the unrighteousness of their ancestor has transmitted to them. But, I repeat, to destroy this physical evil save by the destruction of its cause, by the redemption of the human nature from moral evil, would be to ruin the world. What in this woman it was that made it right she should bear these bonds for eighteen years, who can tell? Certainly it was not that God had forgotten her. What it may have preserved her from, one may perhaps conjecture, but can hardly have a right to utter. Neither can we tell how she had borne the sad affliction; whether in the lovely patience common amongst the daughters of affliction, or with the natural repining of one made to behold the sun, and doomed ever to regard the ground upon which she trod. While patience would have its glorious reward in the cure, it is possible that even the repinings of prideful pain might be destroyed by the grand deliverance, that gratitude might beget sorrow for vanished impatience. Anyhow the right hour had come when the darkness must fly away.

Supported, I presume, by the staff which yet more assimilated her to the lower animals, she had crept to the synagogue—a good sign surely, for the synagogue was not its ruler. There is no appearance from the story, that she had come there to seek Jesus, or even that when in his presence she saw him before the word of her deliverance had gone forth. Most likely, being bowed together, she heard him before she saw him.

But he saw her. Our translation says he called her to him. I do not think this is correct. I think the word, although it might mean that, does mean simply that he *addressed her*. Going to her, I think, and saying, "Woman, thou art loosed from thy infirmity," "he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." What an uplifting!—a type of all that God works in his human beings. The head, down-bent with sin, care, sorrow, pain, is uplifted; the grovelling will sends its gaze heavenward; the earth is no more the one object of the aspiring spirit; we lift our eyes to God; we bend no longer even to his will, but raise ourselves up towards his will, for his will has become our will, and that will is our sanctification.

Although the woman did not beg the Son to cure her, she may have prayed the Father much. Anyhow proof that she was ready for the miracle is not wanting. She glorified God. It is enough. She not merely thanked the man who had wrought the cure, for of this we cannot doubt; but she glorified the known Saviour, God, from whom cometh down every good gift and every perfect gift.

She had her share in the miracle I think too, as, in his perfect bounty, God gives a share to every one in what work He does for him. I mean, that, with the given power, *she* had to *lift herself* up. Such active faith is the needful response in order that a man may be a child of God, and not the mere instrument upon which his power plays a soulless tune.

In this preventing of prayer, in this answering before the call, in this bringing of the blessing to the door, according to which I have grouped this with the following miracles, Jesus did as his Father is doing every day. He was doing the works of his Father. If men had no help, no deliverance from the ills which come upon them, even those which they bring upon themselves, except such as came at their cry; if no salvation descended from God, except such as they prayed for, where would the world be? in what case would the generations of men find themselves? But the help of God is ever coming, ever setting them free whom Satan hath bound; ever giving them a fresh occasion and a fresh impulse to glorify the God of their salvation. For with every such recovery the child in the man is new-born—for some precious moments at least; a gentleness of spirit, a wonder at the world, a sense of the blessedness of being, an openness to calm yet rousing influences, appear in the man. These are the descending angels of God. The passion that had blotted out the child will revive; the strife of the world will renew wrath and hate; ambition and greed will blot out the beauty of the earth; envy of others will blind the man to his own blessedness; and self-conceit will revive in him all those prejudices whose very strength lies in his weakness; but the man has had a glimpse of the peace to gain which he must fight with himself; he has for one moment felt what he might be if he trusted in God; and the memory of it may return in the hour of temptation. As the commonest things in nature are the most lovely, so the commonest agencies in humanity are the most powerful. Sickness and recovery therefrom have a larger share in the divine order of things for the deliverance of men than can show itself to the keenest eyes. Isolated in individuals, the facts are unknown; or, slow and obscure in their operation, are forgotten by the time their effects appear. Many things combine to render an enlarged view of the moral influences of sickness and recovery impossible. The kingdom cometh not with observation, and the working of the leaven of its approach must be chiefly unseen. Like the creative energy itself, it works "in secret shadow, far from all men's sight."

The teaching of our Lord which immediately follows concerning the small beginnings of his kingdom, symbolized in the grain of mustard seed and the leaven, may, I think, have immediate reference to the cure of this woman, and show that he regarded her glorifying of God for her recovery as one of those beginnings of a mighty growth. We do find the same similes in a different connection in St Matthew and St Mark; but even if we had no instances of fact, it would be rational to suppose that the Lord, in the varieties of place, audience, and occasion, in the dullness likewise of his disciples, and the perfection of the similes he chose, would again and again make use of the same.

I now come to the second miracle of the group, namely that, recorded by all the Evangelists except St John, of the cure of the man with the withered hand. This, like the preceding, was done in the synagogue. And I may remark, in passing, that all of this group, with the exception of the last—one of very peculiar circumstance—were performed upon the Sabbath, and each gave rise to discussion concerning the lawfulness of the deed. St Mark says they watched Jesus to see whether he would heal the man on the Sabbath-day; St Luke adds that he knew their thoughts, and therefore met them with the question of its lawfulness; St Matthew says they challenged him to the deed Joy asking him whether it was lawful. The mere watching could hardly have taken place without the man's perceiving something in motion which had to do with him. But there is no indication of a request.

There cannot surely be many who have reached half the average life of man without at some time having felt the body a burden in some way, and regarded a possible deliverance from it as an enfranchisement. If the spirit of man were fulfilled of the Spirit of God, the body would simply be a living house, an obedient servant—yes, a humble mediator, by the senses, between his thoughts and God's thoughts; but when every breath has, as it were, to be sent for and brought hither with much labour and small consolation—when pain turns faith into a mere shadow of hope—when the withered limb hangs irresponsive, lost and cumbersome, an inert simulacrum of power, swinging lifeless to and fro;—then even the physical man understands his share in the groaning of the creation after the sonship. When, at a word issuing from such a mouth as that of Jesus of Nazareth, the poor, withered, distorted, contemptible hand obeyed and, responsive to the spirit within, spread forth its fingers, filled

with its old human might, became capable once more of the grasp of friendship, of the caress of love, of the labour for the bread that sustains the life, little would the man care that other men—even rulers of synagogues, even Scribes and Pharisees, should question the rectitude of him who had healed him. The power which restored the gift of God and completed humanity, must be of God. Argument upon argument might follow from old books and old customs and learned interpretations, wherein man set forth the will of God as different from the laws of his world, but the man whose hand was restored whole as the other, knew it fitting that his hands should match. They might talk; he would thank God for the crooked made straight. Bewilder his judgment they might with their glosses upon commandment and observance; but they could not keep his heart from gladness; and, being glad, whom should he praise but God? If there was another giver of good things he knew nothing of him. The hand was now as God had meant it to be. Nor could he behold the face of Jesus, and doubt that such a man would do only that which was right. It was not Satan, but God that had set him free.

Here, plainly by the record, our Lord gave the man his share, not of mere acquiescence, but of active will, in the miracle. If man is the child of God, he must have a share in the works of the Father. Without such share in the work as faith gives, cure will be of little avail. "Stretch forth thine hand," said the Healer; and the man made the effort; and the withered hand obeyed, and was no more withered. *In* the act came the cure, without which the act had been confined to the will, and had never taken form in the outstretching. It is the same in all spiritual redemption.

Think for a moment with what delight the man would employ his new hand. This right hand would henceforth be God's hand. But was not the other hand God's too?—God's as much as this? Had not the power of God been always present in that left hand, whose unwithered life had ministered to him all these years? Was it not the life of God that inspired his whole frame? By the loss and restoration in one part, he would understand possession in the whole.

But as the withered and restored limb to the man, so is the maimed and healed man to his brethren. In every man the power by which he does the commonest things is the power of God. The power is not *of us*. Our power does it; but we do not make the power. This, plain as it is, remains, however, the hardest lesson for a man to learn with conviction and thanksgiving. For God has, as it were, put us just so far away from Him that we can exercise the divine thing in us, our own will, in returning towards our source. Then we shall learn the fact that we are infinitely more great and blessed in being the outcome of a perfect self-constituting will, than we could be by the conversion of any imagined independence of origin into fact for us—a truth no man *can* understand, feel, or truly acknowledge, save in proportion as he has become one with his perfect origin, the will of God. While opposition exists between the thing made and the maker, there can be but discord and confusion in the judgment of the creature. No true felicitous vision of the facts of the relation between his God and him; no perception of the mighty liberty constituted by the holy dependence wherein the will of God is the absolutely free choice of the man; no perception of a unity such as cannot exist between independent wills, but only in unspeakable love and tenderness between the causing Will and the caused will, can yet have place. Those who cannot see how the human will should be free in dependence upon the will of God, have not realized that the will of God made the will of man; that, when most it pants for freedom, the will of man is the child of the will of God, and therefore that there can be no natural opposition or strife between them. Nay, more, the whole labour of God is that the will of man should be free as his will is free—in the same way that his will is free—by the perfect love of the man for that which is true, harmonious, lawful, creative. If a man say, "But might not the will of God make my will with the intent of over-riding and enslaving it?" I answer, such a Will could not create, could not be God, for it involves the false and contrarious. That would be to make a will in order that it might be no will. To create in order to uncreate is something else than divine. But a free will is not the liberty to do whatever one likes, but the power of doing whatever one sees ought to be done, even in the very face of otherwise overwhelming impulse. There lies freedom indeed.

I come now to the case of the man who had been paralysed for eight-and-thirty years. There is great pathos in the story. For many, at least, of these years, the man had haunted the borders of legendary magic, for I regard the statement about the angel troubling the pool as only the expression of a current superstition. Oh, how different from the healing of our Lord! What he had to bestow was free to all. The cure of no man by his hand weakened that hand for the cure of the rest. None were poorer that one was made rich. But this legend of the troubling of the pool fostered the evil passion of emulation, and that in a most selfish kind. Nowhere in the divine arrangements is my gain another's loss. If it be said that this was the mode in which God determined which was to be healed, I answer that the effort necessary was contrary to all we admire most in humanity. According to this rule, Sir Philip Sidney ought to have drunk the water which he handed to the soldier instead. Does the doctrine of Christ, and by that I insist we must interpret the ways of God, countenance a man's hurrying to be before the rest, and gain the boon in virtue of having the least need of it, inasmuch as he was the ablest to run and plunge first into the eddies left by the fantastic angel? Or if the triumph were to be gained by the help of friends, surely he was in most need of the cure who like this man—a man such as we hope there are few—had no friends either to plunge him in the waters of fabled hope, or to comfort him in the seasons of disappointment which alone divided the weary months of a life passed in empty expectation.

But the Master comes near. In him the power of life rests as in "its own calm home, its crystal shrine," and he that believeth in him shall not need to make haste. He knew it was time this man should be healed, and did not wait to be asked. Indeed the man did not know him; did not even know his name. "Wilt thou be made whole?" "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

Our Lord delays the cure in this case with no further speech. The man knows nothing about him, and he makes no demand upon his faith, except that of obedience. He gives him something to do at once. He will find him again by and by. The man obeys, takes up his bed, and walks.

He sets an open path before us; *we* must walk in it. More, we must be willing to believe that the path is open, that we have strength to walk in it. God's gift glides into man's choice. It is needful that we should follow with our effort in the track of his foregoing power. To refuse is to destroy the gift. His cure is not for such as choose to be invalids. They must be willing to be made whole, even if it should involve the carrying of their beds and walking. Some keep in bed who have strength enough to get up and walk. There is a self-care and a self-pity, a laziness and conceit of incapacity, which are as unhealing for the body as they are unhealthy in the mind, corrupting all dignity and destroying all sympathy. Who but invalids need like miracles wrought in them? Yet some invalids are not cured because they will not be healed. They will not stretch out the hand; they will not rise; they will not walk; above all things, they will not work. Yet for their illness it may be that the work so detested is the only cure, or if no cure yet the best amelioration. Labour is not in itself an evil like the sickness, but often a divine, a blissful remedy. Nor is the duty or the advantage confined to those who ought to labour for their own support. No amount of wealth sets one free from the obligation to work—in a world the God of which is ever working. He who works not has not yet discovered what God made him for, and is a false note in the orchestra of the universe. The possession of wealth is as it were pre-payment, and involves an obligation of honour to the doing of correspondent work. He who does not know what to do has never seriously asked himself what he ought to do.

But there is a class of persons, the very opposite of these, who, as extremes meet, fall into a similar fault. They will not be healed either. They will not take the repose in which God giveth to his beloved. Some sicknesses are to be cured with rest, others with labour.

The right way is all—to meet the sickness as God would have it met, to submit or to resist according to the conditions of cure. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and she who will not go to her couch and rest in the Lord, is to blame even as she who will not rise and go to her work.

There is reason to suppose that this man had brought his infirmity upon himself—I do not mean by the mere neglect of physical laws, but by the doing of what he knew to be wrong. For the Lord, although he allowed the gladness of the deliverance full sway at first, when he found him afterwards did not leave him without the lesson that all health and well-being depend upon purity of life: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee." It is the only case of recorded cure in which Jesus gives a warning of the kind. Therefore I think the probability is as I have stated it. Hence, the fact that we may be ourselves to blame for our sufferings is no reason why we should not go to God to deliver us from them. David the king knew this, and set it forth in that grand poem, the 107th Psalm.

In the very next case we find that Jesus will not admit the cause of the man's condition, blindness from his birth, to be the sin either of the man himself, or of his parents. The probability seems, to judge from their behaviour in the persecution that followed, that both the man and his parents were people of character, thought, and honourable prudence. He was born blind, Jesus said, "that the works of God should be made manifest in him." What works, then? The work of creation for one, rather than the work of healing. The man had suffered nothing in being born blind. God had made him only not so blessed as his fellows, with the intent of giving him equal faculty and even greater enjoyment afterwards, with the honour of being employed for the revelation of his works to men. In him Jesus created sight before men's eyes. For, as at the first God said, "Let there be light," so the work of God is still to give light to the world, and Jesus must work his work, and *be* the light of the world—light in all its degrees and kinds, reaching into every corner where work may be done, arousing sleepy hearts, and opening blind eyes.

Jesus saw the man, the disciples asked their question, and he had no sooner answered it, than "he spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay."—Why this mediating clay? Why the spittle and the touch?—Because the man who could not see him must yet be brought into sensible contact with him—must know that the healing came from the man who touched him. Our Lord took pains about it because the man was blind. And for the man's share in the miracle, having blinded him a second time as it were with clay, he sends him to the pool to wash it away: clay and blindness should depart together by the act of the man's faith. It was as if the Lord said, "I blinded thee: now, go and see." Here, then, are the links of the chain by which the Lord bound the man to himself. The voice, if heard by the man, which defended him and his parents from the judgment of his disciples; the assertion that he was the light of the world—a something which others had and the blind man only knew as not possessed by him; the sound of the spitting on the ground; the touch of the speaker's fingers; the clay on his eyes; the command to wash; the journey to the pool; the laving water; the astonished sight. "He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

But who can imagine, save in a conception only less dim than the man's blindness, the glory which burst upon him when, as the restoring clay left his eyes, the light of the world invaded his astonished soul? The very idea may well make one tremble. Blackness of darkness—not an invading stranger, but the home-companion always there—the negation never understood because the assertion was unknown—creation not erased and treasured in the memory, but to his eyes uncreated!—Blackness of darkness!.... The glory of the celestial blue! The towers of the great Jerusalem dwelling in the awful space! The room! The life! The tenfold-glorified being! Any wonder might follow on such a wonder. And the whole vision was as fresh as if he had that moment been created, the first of men.

But the best remained behind. A man had said, "I am the light of the world," and lo! here was the light of the world. The words had been vague as a dark form in darkness, but now the thing itself had invaded his innermost soul. But the face of the man who was this light of the world he had not seen. The creator of his vision he had not yet beheld. But he believed in him, for he defended him from the same charge of wickedness from which Jesus had defended him. "Give God the praise," they said; "we know that this man is a sinner." "God heareth not sinners," he replied; "and this man

hath opened my eyes." It is no wonder that when Jesus found him and asked him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" he should reply, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" He was ready. He had only to know which was he, that he might worship him. Here at length was the Light of the world before him—the man who had said, "I am the light of the world," and straightway the world burst upon him in light! Would this man ever need further proof that there was indeed a God of men? I suspect he had a grander idea of the Son of God than any of his disciples as yet. The would-be refutations of experience, for "since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind;" the objections of the religious authorities, "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day;" endless possible perplexities of the understanding, and questions of the *how* and the *why*, could never touch that man to the shaking of his confidence: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." The man could not convince the Jews that Jesus must be a good man; neither could he doubt it himself, whose very being, body and soul and spirit, had been enlightened and glorified by him. With light in the eyes, in the brain, in the heart, light permeating and unifying his physical and moral nature, asserting itself in showing the man to himself one whole—how could he doubt!

The miracles were for the persons on whom they passed. To the spectators they were something, it is true; but they were of unspeakable value to, and of endless influence upon their subjects. The true mode in which they reached others was through the healed themselves. And the testimony of their lives would go far beyond the testimony of their tongues. Their tongues could but witness to a fact; their lives could witness to a truth.

In this miracle as in all the rest, Jesus did in little the great work of the Father; for how many more are they to whom God has given the marvel of vision than those blind whom the Lord enlightened! The remark will sound feeble and far-fetched to the man whose familiar spirit is that Mephistopheles of the commonplace. He who uses his vision only for the care of his body or the indulgence of his mind—how should he understand the gift of God in its marvel? But the man upon whose soul the grandeur and glory of the heavens and the earth and the sea and the fountains of waters have once arisen will understand what a divine *invention*, what a mighty gift of God is this very common thing—these eyes to see with—that light which enlightens the world, this sight which is the result of both. He will understand what a believer the man born blind must have become, yea, how the mighty inburst of splendour might render him so capable of believing that nothing should be too grand and good for him to believe thereafter—not even the doctrine hardest to commonplace humanity, though the most natural and reasonable to those who have beheld it—that the God of the light is a faithful, loving, upright, honest, and self-denying being, yea utterly devoted to the uttermost good of those whom he has made.

Such is the Father of lights who enlightens the world and every man that cometh into it. Every pulsation of light on every brain is from him. Every feeling of law and order is from him. Every hint of right, every desire after the true, whatever we call aspiration, all longing for the light, every perception that this is true, that that ought to be done, is from the Father of lights. His infinite and varied light gathered into one point—for how shall we speak at all of these things if we do not speak in figures?—concentrated and embodied in Jesus, became *the*

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