

**THE COMING MAN; OR,
MIRACLES NOT
NECESSARILY PROOFS
OF DIVINE COMMISSION**

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The coming man; or, Miracles not necessarily proofs of divine commission by Anonymous

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—
AFFORDING, INTER ALIA, A TRUE KEY TO THE MIRACLES (REAL OR PRETENDED) OF
ROMANISTS; AN EXPOSÉ OF THE SECRET OBJECTS OF MESMERISM;

AND

A COMPLETE REFUTATION OF CERTAIN INDUCTIONS
OF INFIDEL GEOLOGISTS.

BY ONE

UNKNOWN—YET WELL KNOWN.



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THE COMING MAN.

THOSE who rest upon a certain line of doctrine on the subject of *miracles* will by and by find themselves placed in a most perilous predicament.

The doctrine referred to has been, for a long time, zealously maintained and industriously propagated; and is to the effect that miracles necessarily suppose the hand of God alone; and that if any claim or doctrine be attested by miracles, it ought to be received as of God.

This line of doctrine, which appears in numberless works, has been adopted and maintained by writers of great repute. The following statement of it is given chiefly because it occurs, not in a merely ephemeral pamphlet, but in a System of Theology which is widely read both in this country and in that from which it emanated; the System of Theology, namely, of Dr. Dwight, the celebrated and most excellent American Divine.

He writes (Ser. 60, page 463): "A miracle is an act of infinite power only, and is therefore a proof of the immediate agency of God. None but he can withhold, suspend, or counteract his agency exerted according to the laws of nature. A miracle becomes a proof of the character or doctrine of him by whom it was wrought, by being professedly wrought for the support of either. A miracle is the testimony of God. From the perfect veracity of God it irresistibly results that he never can give, nor rationally be supposed to give, his testimony to anything but truth. When, therefore, a miracle is wrought in confirmation of anything, or as evidence of anything, we know that thing is true, because God has given to it his testimony."

The foregoing line of reasoning is based upon two *false* assumptions: the first is, that God must necessarily refuse to permit the exercise of miraculous powers for the support of falsehood: the second, an almost necessary consequence of the first, that miracles can be wrought only in the support of truth. Both these assumptions are diametrically opposed (as will presently be shown) to the most explicit declarations of the scriptures. They are, therefore, false; and the whole of the above, or any like reasonings, which are based upon them, must necessarily fall to the ground.

We have said that this doctrine will, by and by, place those who hold it in a most perilous predicament. It will be this: The scriptures present

the most unequivocal testimony to the future advent of a man who will claim to be received and worshipped as God manifest in the flesh, and who will be permitted to work wonders, equalling if not surpassing any that have ever been wrought, for the express confirmation of his *lie*. Wherefore, all who hold the line of doctrine summed up in the extract we have given from Dr. Dwight's works *must* bow to the claims of *that man* to be received as of God, while the scriptures distinctly declare his coming will be "after the working of Satan, with *all power*, and signs and *lying wonders*," (2 Thess. ii. 8, 9.)

This predicament will arise in due time, and it has been prepared by the great enemy of man. It will arise solely out of the undue place which has been assigned to the mere power of working miracles. The doctrine that miracles necessarily infer the hand of God alone, has been eagerly, but most unwarily, seized upon by many true servants of God; who have thus been made instrumental in fixing a chain of reasoning in men's minds which will by and by bring them under terrible trials. The doctrine emanated, of course, from an earnest desire to frame an argument which would present irresistible proof of the divine commission of Christ: and it was the one-eyed view of this, its evident value, which blinded men to its possible application to the cause of falsehood. It is this error which has ever crippled Protestants in their dealings with Romanists. They have been driven to the weak and ineffectual ground of denying, or explaining away, the alleged miracles of the latter, instead of taking the bold and scriptural stand which has been always within their reach, and would leave them without reply.

The proof of Christ's being at once the Messiah, and the Saviour of the world, does not arise out of the fact that He wrought *miracles*, but out of the fact that He wrought *the* miracles which had, by the especial appointment of God in the scriptures, been assigned to *Him alone* to do; and those especial works, having been wrought by him and by him *alone*, are *the* proofs that He is the Messiah, the Saviour of the world: they are so because they had been the *before appointed* seals of the character and office of the Redeemer alone.*

Wherefore PROPHECY is the real ground on which the claim of Jesus, to be received as the Christ, rests; and his miracles were but joint,

* It is most important to discern the perfect harmony between the miracles of Christ and his character and office. He came for the sole end (so far as man is concerned) of redeeming men from the *eternal* consequences of the entrance of sin. Now sin is, in the scriptures, called *death*, and it is *moral* death; wherefore the raising of Lazarus evidenced the actual presence of Him who *alone* can redeem from the *second* death; as he said, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and *believeth on me shall never die*," i.e. see the *second* death.

So again, blindness, deafness, dumbness, and bodily diseases in general, as they took their rise in the entrance of sin, are in the scriptures *put* for the various forms of evil in which sin *exists in the soul*. Wherefore, in healing the ailments which were outward in the flesh, Christ did but signify the infinitely more important fact of the actual presence of him who was the Saviour of *all*, who will receive him as such, from the *eternal dominion and consequences* of the spiritual disease under which the souls of all flesh labour by natural birth. Thus, his miracles were not mere *wonders*, but were *visible* tokens of, and invitations to, eternal good. The miracles, on the other hand, of the coming man will be mere *wonders*—fruitful in no present good to those who behold them, but *lying on*, by their deceitfulness, to a belief which will end in eternal ruin.

additional, and corroborative proofs. His very miracles had themselves been beforehand described in Prophecy, and were, therefore, when performed by him, but fulfilments of those prophecies which went before on him. His miracles were but *the* works which the Father had given him to do. It was to point to this that we so continually meet, throughout the Gospels, such words as "This was done that *the scriptures might be fulfilled.*" The fulfilment in Christ of *all* that Moses in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms had spoken of Him, was, from the first, presented as *the* proof that he must needs be the Christ; and we find him, after his resurrection, *not appealing to the miracles* he had wrought, but "beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded in *all the scriptures* the things concerning himself."

Nor was it otherwise during his life upon the earth. We continually find him either making direct appeals to Prophecy alone; or if he refers to his miracles at all, it is always in connection with, and as being themselves in fulfilment of, prophecy. Thus we read in Luke iv. 16—21, he first took the book of the Prophet Isaiah, and when he had found the place, he read from it the prophecy which described the character and office of the Messiah. He then closed the book and sat down, saying, "This day is this scripture fulfilled *in your ears*;" that is, they had *heard* of the mighty works he had done in Capernaum, all of which belonged to the Messiah alone, and he now pointed out to them that that Messiah stood before them. It is the joint appeal to prophecy and its fulfilment in his miracles. We see the same thing in John v. 36—47. He was reasoning with the Jews on their unbelief, and directly pointed out its source, *viz.*, that they did not remember the *testimony of the scriptures*, "Ye have not his word *abiding* in you, *for*, whom he hath sent, him ye believe not." He had referred them to the testimony of John the Baptist; but adds, "I have a greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father hath *given me* to finish, *the same* works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." That is, the especial works which the Father had given to him alone to finish, were the *very same* that he was actually doing; and the witness that the Father had sent him arose out of the *identity* of his works, with those which had been assigned as the seals of the Messiah alone. But how were the Jews to know this? How were they to know that these were the especial seals of the Messiah? He points out that to them in the words, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and *they are they which testify of me.*" The value of this passage is that Christ is seen to point to the scriptures as the true test both of his miracles and claim. He gives the scriptures the emphatic place of "*His witnesses,*" and afterwards places *them* in the very prominent position of themselves condemning the Jews for rejecting their testimony.*

* John xiv. 10, 11, bears strongly upon the same point. The Lord is there reasoning with the disciples *alone*, and he says, "Believe me for the *very works' sake.*" The words are the same in both places, *viz.* Τα εγχα αυρα. The general meaning of the word αυρα is that of *opposition to some other person or thing*; and it may be rendered in both the above passages, "the works *themselves,*" as if there was *some peculiarity* in the works of Christ which especially pointed to him who wrought them. That peculiarity can be found *only* in the fact that they were the *especial seals of the Messiah.*

And in all those places where Christ more especially adverts to his miracles, he who will analyze the passages will never fail to observe that Christ *nowhere* makes them *alone* the ground on which he rests his claim to be received. His words, in *no instance*, sanction the doctrine that because *they were miracles*, he who wrought them *must* needs be the Messiah; but he *always* adverts to them as being *the* especial and pre-appointed miracles, which were the seals of Messiahship, and which appeared in him alone. Let us consider the instance of this which is afforded by the very marked course pursued by the Lord towards the messengers whom the Baptist sent to ask this very question, viz. was he *the Messiah* or not—"Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" (Luke vii. 19—22.) He made no immediate reply in *words*, but his actions were deeply significant: "In the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight." It was *then* he spoke, and said, "Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard;" he then puts into their mouths a summary of the works in which he was habitually engaged, in a manner to *identify them* with those which had been foretold of the Messiah (see Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6, and lxi. 1), and leaves it to the Baptist to draw the obvious inference, that he *was* that "*he* who should come," and that they needed to look for no other.

But a reference to John xv. 24, will give us strong light on this point. He is speaking of his rejection by the Jews, and says, "If I had not done among them *the* works which none other man did, they had not had sin." Mark, he does not say, "If I had not done among them *works*" which none other man did; it is not an appeal to his works as in themselves surpassing the works of others who had wrought miracles; that is not at all the import of the passage; nor, as we shall presently show, was that *the fact*, but he says *THE* works, and refers to them as the especial works which had been assigned to the Messiah alone, and which no other man had ever done.

That it was in this aspect alone that Christ invariably referred to his miracles is absolutely certain, from the fact that it was not possible he could have referred to them in any other view whatever. A very moderate acquaintance with the scriptures will enable any one to perceive it was not possible the Lord could have designed to say that his miracles were either essentially different from, or in any respect greater than, those which had been performed by others. The miracles of Moses were, humanly speaking, of a far more splendid character. The raising from the dead of the Shunamite's son by Elisha, the healing of the leprosy of Naaman by the same prophet, were miracles parallel in character to the greatest of those wrought by Christ, and there are many other miracles recorded in the Old Testament, equally the works of God alone. Each of these were miracles, and were, equally with those of Christ, proofs of the immediate agency of Almighty power. It is therefore not to be supposed the Lord could have meant that his miracles transcended those which had been wrought by others. Neither can it be said that he designed to found any especial claim upon the fact that they were wrought by his own inherent power, because he is always found ascribing them to the Father, in whose name alone he had come, and whose words alone were to be in his mouth.

"The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, *he doeth the works.*"

But what he did assert, and could assert with the most perfect truth, was that all the scriptures spoke with one united voice of the coming of the Messiah; that they ascribed to that Messiah such and such a line of acting and of suffering; and that all, even the most *minute* of these, found their accomplishment in him, and in him alone; and that even the miracles which he performed were those especial miracles which, as they belonged to the office of the Messiah only, had never been performed by any other. Some of the servants of God under the Jewish dispensation had been supported and witnessed to in one way; some in another; but in none of them had met *all* that Moses in the law, the Psalms and the Prophets had spoken; neither had any of them wrought the especial works which had been fixed as the seals of the Messiah only.

But what conclusively overthrows the idea that Christ did on any occasion design to appeal to his miracles, *as miracles*, is, that the scriptures declare, not merely that God *may*, but that he *will*, and has determined to, permit of the working of great signs and wonders, in express confirmation of that which he has forewarned men, will be *a lie*. And that being the case, how could it have been the purpose of Christ to teach that the mere presence of miraculous powers, is the *true test*, still less the *sole test*, of Divine commission? How could he have meant to refer to his miracles as *the* ground on which his claim was to rest, when he, who knew all things, perfectly well knew that he would thereby give his own authority for men's reception, as *from God*, of one who, termed the MAN OF SIN, will come in the full energy of Satan's power, and with the sole purpose of exalting himself above, and opposing all that is called, God? (2 Thess. ii. 3, 4).

If we reflect upon that which is borne upon the entire face of the scriptures, viz. that man is at present in a state of *probation*; and that this is more especially true of those nations to whom God has communicated the light of the gospel, and if we consider what the word probation *means*, it will seem in nowise improbable that he, among other methods of proving what is in man's heart, whether he will obey him or not (which is his declared design in this world, see Deut. viii. 2, 16) might subject man to that especial trial which is presented under the form of supernatural works. God has given a record both of his will, and of all that he has deemed needful for man's guidance *from* the bitter pangs of eternal death, and to the inconceivable bliss of life eternal. While, therefore, he may justly expect that so precious a volume *shall* form man's sole guide in those important particulars, it seems by no means improbable that he might see fit to try, even by miracles, whether man can be prevailed upon to trust to that book, rather than to the temporary display of supernatural powers exercised in attestation of claims utterly at variance with the entire tenor of that book. It might please him to permit some, either actually to perform, or so nearly to simulate, works inferring supernatural power, that all who were not anchored on the scriptures *alone* would be carried away by the flood. It was precisely with a view to such a contingency, that it was written, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

It must be evident that so long as the scriptures remain, they must