

D17 DAVIS, John. *Traethawd ar wyrthiau, yn darlunio pa beth ydynt, eu dyben, y pryd eu cyflawnir, a'u safonolrwydd i brofi dwyfoldeb crefydd.* (Treatise on miracles, describing what they are, their purpose, when they are effected, and their basis for proving the divinity of a religion.) *Merthyr Tydfil: Printed and for sale by J. Davis, Georgetown, 1851.*

12 pp. 17 cm. *Welsh Mormon Writings* 55.

Dated 5 May 1851, *Treatise on miracles* represents Davis's attempt to clarify the great confusion that existed throughout Wales with respect to miracles, a topic that was widely discussed but not widely understood. There are four basic headings, as suggested in the title: (1) "What are miracles?" (2) "What is the purpose of miracles?" (3) "Can miracles be effected after the days of Christ and the Apostles?" (4) "Are miracles a sufficient basis for proving the divinity of a religion?"

Davis uses logic and the scriptures for his arguments in the first two sections. In the third section, as a counter to the assertions of the Protestants that miracles no longer exist, Davis quotes several accounts of miracles that had been published in the religious periodicals a few years before. And in the fourth section, he concludes that miracles do not prove that a religion is of God, since even the false prophets are capable of working miracles. Consequently, if anyone wishes to know the truth of a religion, he will have to follow the advice given by the Savior in John 7:17 and do the will of the Father.

TREATISE
ON
MIRACLES,

PORTRAYING

WHAT THEY ARE, THEIR PURPOSE, WHEN THEY ARE
FULFILLED, AND THE STANDARD FOR PROVING
THE DIVINITY OF A RELIGION.

“THESE THINGS have I written unto you concerning them that seduce
you.”—1 JOHN II, 26.

BY JOHN DAVIS, MERTHYR.

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MERTHYR TYDFIL:

PRINTED AND FOR SALE BY J. DAVIS, GEORGETOWN;

ALSO FOR SALE

By the Saints in general, and many Booksellers,  
through the South and the North.

## MIRACLES.

WE do not believe that there is one age that has gone by, in which so much was spoken about miracles, than the present age; neither can we believe any less than that which has been spoken about them is more foolish than anything that was ever heard in any other age. If it is so, there is nothing wiser for us to do, together with others, if we have something to say different from what men commonly say, than to try our best to get people to a proper understanding of the matter. To that purpose, then, we can examine,

### I. WHAT ARE MIRACLES?

Men commonly say that miracles are things that are effected contrary to the law of nature; and that they are nothing but exceptions worked by God; such as the standing still of the sun and the moon in the firmament, the three young men who did not burn in the fiery furnace, &c. We cannot believe that way; because we call a miracle that which is beyond our understanding, and that which we cannot comprehend, or that with which we were not familiar. Nothing is miraculous in the sight of God, for he understands how everything works: but to us everything appears miraculous if we do not comprehend it, or if it is something with which we are unfamiliar. It is as much a wonder that the earth turns, as if it were to stand still, because we do not know how the one or the other is done; but if the earth were to stand still, we would consider that more of a miracle, since it is not a common thing, while the other would be as much a miracle, if it were not something so common. Seeing *gas* burning would be a miracle in the sight of men

who had not seen or heard anything about that before; and the same thing can be said with respect to steam vehicles, and many other things. We are acquainted with those things, and know how they work, and consequently we do not consider them anything wondrous. Thus, if we understood things as God understands them, miracles would never happen, for all things would work in a completely natural way, and in a way that we could thoroughly understand. As we are, there are many things that God works that appear as miracles to us, until we come to know how they are done, and then their wonder ceases, and they cease to be miracles after that. Many consider healings of the sick by the laying on of hands a miracle; but those who know how the Spirit of God works on the sick do not consider that any more of a wonder than the healings of the sick by a doctor's medicine, or by means of Mesmerism. Perhaps we could also say with respect to speaking in new tongues, &c.: these are not a miracle either to those who speak them, for they know how the Spirit works in them. In short, everything that is done, if it is beyond our understanding, and if it is something unusual, is commonly called a miracle. Not only God is the author of miracles, but every other being that has sufficient knowledge and power to do something beyond the common. We have plenty of examples of this in the holy scriptures. Read in Exodus vii and viii about the turning of the rods into serpents, and the waters into blood, and the creation of frogs. The magicians did that the same as Moses did; and the reason that Moses defeated them in some miracles, was because he was more knowledgeable and able. After the magicians failed to create lice throughout the land, they said to Pharoah, "This is the finger of God:" but he did not want to believe them, since he had seen so much of the talent of the magicians. There is no room to think that the miracles of the magicians were not as true as the miracles of Moses; the only difference was that the miracles of Moses were the power of God, and the miracles of the magicians were the power of the devil. The miracle of the witch of Endor in raising the dead was certainly true; and thus will be the miracles that are worked in the last days by the false prophets, when they will pull fire from heaven in the sight of men. The reason, we think, that such miracles will be called *false*, is because they are worked by the "father of lies," and not

because they do not actually take place.

Perhaps that which we said on the foregoing topic is sufficient at pre-sent, making one additional observation with respect to the word "miracles," in connection with its use in 1 Cor. xii, 10 ("And to another the working of miracles"), and in verse 28 ("after that miracles"). It is possible for God to impart to man the gift to do that which he does not comprehend, or that which others do not comprehend, through God's causing him to act however he guides him. The gift of working miracles, in the above scriptures, is different from other gifts that men are commonly ready to count as miracles in the same way. All the deeds of the Holy Ghost appear as miracles to the world, but they do not appear that way to the church: however, many things are miracles in the church, because its members do not understand how they are done; but after the church becomes an intelligent and a "perfect man," they will all cease, for everything will appear as if it is working normally, and according to that which men call the "law of nature."

## II. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES?

We can answer that miracles have different purposes, like every other thing done by God or by men. The rod was turned into a serpent, and the water into blood, &c., by Moses, in order to harden the heart of Pharaoh; but the Red Sea was opened to save the Israelites, and bury the Egyptians; manna came down, and the woman was stricken, in order to give bread and water to the Israelites in the wilderness; and the earth opened up its jaws to swallow those who opposed God. Christ fed the five thousand because they were hungry, and he opened the eyes of the blind so they would see. Peter brought sister Tabitha back to life to comfort the widows, and to show the power of God; and Paul rebuked the spirit of witchcraft in the young woman, so that she would leave him alone. Thus, we see that different purposes are in mind when miracles are worked. The purpose of soothsayers and magicians in working miracles is to earn a living; and the purpose of false Christs and false prophets in working miracles is to confirm their teachings and their Christianity, and to cause the great and the small to follow them.

It is a common belief of the theologians of this age that the purpose of miracles in the time of the apostles was to establish the religion of

Jesus Christ; and after it was once established, miracles were no longer needed after that. We beg to differ with our opinion. If miracles were needed to establish Christ's religion in the land of Canaan, then miracles are needed in the present age to establish it in distant countries. But it does not appear that that was the purpose of the miracles of Jesus Christ and his apostles; for they came to undo the deeds of the devil, by healing the sick, and doing remarkable things for good; and there is as much need for their miracles now as there ever was, since there are so many works of the devil that have not yet been undone. Christ and his apostles strove to work all their miracles, as much as they could, as secretly as possible, which they never would have done had they been establishing their religion by working them. The path that Christ took to establish his religion, was the same path that he intended to take to carry it forward, namely by preaching. God has promised to confirm the word of every one of his preachers by the "signs that follow the believers," not while the church was being established, but as long as there was preaching throughout the whole world. Wherever, and whenever the word of God is preached, he promises to work together and confirm the word, by the signs which follow, not only in the time of the establishment of the church, but until the end of the world.

Having endeavored to prove that the purpose of the miracles of Christ and the apostles was not to establish their religion, we shall strive to prove next that the main purpose of the false prophets and the false Christs, in working miracles, will be to establish their religions, and not to do good as did Christ and his apostles. The above characters are described in Math. xxiv, 24,—“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” If the different religionists of our country say that the purpose of miracles is to establish false prophets, we agree with our opinion: but they prefer to believe that false prophets cannot give signs or work miracles, in order to keep the belief that miracles constitute the criterion of the true religion. Indeed, nearly every age of the world has been of the same opinion. In the time of Jesus Christ, the whole country would have believed him (if we can believe their sayings), if they could have had sufficient proof

through signs or wonders that he was the Son of God; but Christ said that an evil and adulterous generation sought after a sign. And the present age, from the least to the greatest, is ready to believe any doctrine, if miracles are worked in their presence. Many of the famous preachers of the various religious denominations, at present, are willing to believe even the "old Saints," if someone could be found among them, like the witch of Endor, who could raise someone from the dead for them: they do not care so much about the doctrine, if they can just get some kind of a miracle. Oh, if only someone like Simon the soothsayer could come across the country, and give them a few signs; soon every one of them, from the least to the greatest, would be heard saying, as was said about Simon, "This man is the great power of God" (Acts viii, 10). It appears that Simon won more of a good name, by his signs, than Jesus Christ won; and no doubt the false prophets and the false Christs that are to come will win many more disciples than Christ and his apostles together won; for they "shall shew great signs and wonders," for which the whole country is loudly calling. "Give us a sign," they say, "and we shall believe." The believers of our country are quite satisfied; miracles are the criterion to prove every new religion; and this the false prophets know well, for they "shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." But the criterion to prove the religion of Jesus Christ is the same now as it was before: and it never was miracles; otherwise, Christ would have worked them for everyone who sought them to have proof of the truth. When a miracle is worked only to satisfy sign seekers about the truth of some religion, it is obvious that false prophets are its author; for we read in the Revelation about one who worked wonders so great, "that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men," without one purpose in mind but "to deceive those who dwell on the earth," small and great, rich and poor, free and slave. If enough attention is given to the believers of this age, proof will be had that miracles of this nature are what they ask, namely miracles of false prophets and false Christs; for if they were to ask for miracles from God, they would appear entirely differently: they would not ask for miracles to prove their religion, but for their own personal benefit, together with the glory of God. Now,

after tracing as much as that about the purpose of miracles, we can go to another topic.

### III. CAN MIRACLES BE PERFORMED AFTER THE DAYS OF CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES?

If the sectarians of the age answer this question, they say together, No, they cannot. But if the Latter-day Saints answer, they say most decidedly, Yes, they can. Who is right, the sectarians or the Saints? An assertion will not do, rather one needs to prove the matter by reason and scripture.

Well, since it is God, through men, who works miracles, it is reasonable that he can work miracles through them in these days, as well as in the days of old. And thus also it can be said with respect to the powers of darkness. No matter what the purpose of miracles was back then, there is plenty of need for them in this age for similar purposes. If it was to convince, there is yet need for them for that purpose; or, if it was to do good, there is every bit as much need for them for that purpose in this age. Every age of the world has been in need of miracles, and why are men so foolish as to think that there is no need for them the same way in these last days? Everyone who knows anything, knows that miracles have completely ceased in the world; for the resurrection of the dead is confidently awaited, and that will be more of a miracle than anything else that has ever happened. Besides that, the scriptures supply us with many prophecies of miracles to be worked in the last days. In Isaiah xi, 15, 16, we read the following:—"And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt." Also read Isaiah xxxv, 5—8; Zech. x, 11; Jer. xxiii, 4—8; together with hosts of other places we could note. The scriptures foretell also of miracles by the false prophets and the false Christs in the last days, which will be performed to seduce people into believing false doctrines. It is prophesied by John, in Rev. xvi, 13, 14: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the



beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

Now, we think we have shown enough to prove the logic and the possibility of working miracles in these last days, with no need to tire the reader with too many examples. Indeed, every man can see that those miracles that have been performed since the beginning of the world, are but little in comparison to the wondrous miracles that will be performed on this planet in the time to come. Every hill and valley shall be made flat; and the mountains shall leap from their places. The stars of heaven shall fall as untimely figs; the moon shall become as blood, and the sun shall become black. The earth shall shake as a drunkard; and all the elements shall melt with fervent heat. “Yes, but those will not be miracles,” says someone: if miracles are that which is counter to the “law of nature,” those will be miracles.

But the problem with that is that nearly all the believers of our country acknowledge the possibility of working miracles in these days; and although they deny that in word, they acknowledge it in deed. Who asserts that miracles are not needed in our days? Well, those men who meet with each other continually, either to pray for rain, or for fair weather, or for health, or the like; this is to pray for miracles, or the working of things contrary to the “law of nature.” Do these people know what they are trying to do? They are trying to open and close the heavens as did Elijah of old!! Can these possibly be the people who are persecuting the Saints because they believe in miracles? Get acquainted with yourselves, dear people, for you believe in miracles as much as anyone ever did; because your deeds prove that beyond every argument. Was it not you who put the following announcement up all over the walls of Merthyr during the time of the Cholera:—

“THE DEADLY CHOLERA IN MERTHYR TYDFIL.—It is intended to set aside next Monday (August 13th, 1849), as a day of religious fast, and humility before God Almighty, as a result of the above visit. There will be a devotional service in the church, at the usual hours of prayer, and prayer meetings will be held in all the Nonconformist chapels at

seven and ten o'clock in the morning, and two and six o'clock in the afternoon. We sincerely wish for all to provide every opportunity, so that those who are able and who wish to unite in such meetings, to implore God, in behalf of this place, so that the visit will be sanctified to our spiritual good, and that it will be removed from our midst."

The people wanted God to work a miracle, by moving the Cholera from their midst, while asserting with the Saints that the age of miracles has ceased!

Not only do the sectarians believe, by their deeds, that God can work miracles in these days, but they announce the working of a miracle in their own midst also. The following is a quotation of one of them, which has to do with a virtuous woman by the name of Dinah Davies, Rhymni, who was an instrument in first establishing Methodism in that place; see the *Star of Gomer*, Feb. 1839, page 34:—

"As a stranger, not unknown, was coming through the country, and preaching in our house, at three o'clock in the afternoon, a great number of friends from Merthyr came to listen. The woman had not baked that week; and because of this there was in her house barely half a loaf of bread. The minister and the host of strangers ate, and were satisfied; but despite that, to our enormous surprise, after they went away, we could not judge that the bread was any less; and our conclusion was that the Lord had blessed it in a wondrous and unusual manner."

We can copy another miracle from one of the volumes of the "*Evangelist*," page 64:—

"THE HEALING OF MISS FANCOURT.

"With respect to the healing of Miss Fancourt, which is considered a miracle by many, we shall put before the knowledge of our readers the story as it happened, so that no one need be in doubt about it.

"Miss Fancourt is the daughter of the Rev. J. Fancourt, of London, and was taken sick in November, 1822. There was great lamentation among all the members, and at times her pain was quite intense. Several doctors visit her from time to time, and every kind of medication was used to calm her, but completely in vain. She went to the seashore at

times, but she returned in the same condition; and she became so weak in the end that she could hardly put one foot in front of the other. And despite all the efforts to make her well, she was very sick, and suffered the greatest of pains whenever she attempted to move. Wednesday night, in October, 1830, a friend called at the house to visit her, and when the other callers left the room where she was, her friend, the Rev. Mr. G., made some excuses to remain. He sat beside her, and after saying a few things, he arose, saying, They are awaiting me for supper; he extended his hand to her, and after saying something about her illness, he added, It is a great pity to see anyone enslaved in this manner; she answered, It is sent in mercy. Do you believe that, he said, and believe that the same mercy can restore you? She answered, Yes. Do you, added Mr. G., believe that Jesus can heal as he did in the early times? Yes. Do you believe that it is unbelief that is hindering that? Yes. At that time Mr. G. appeared to be as if striving with God in a sincere prayer. Then, said he, arise, and walk, and come to your family. He took hold of her hand, and he prayed for God to glorify the name of his son Jesus. She arose in strength, and all her pains ceased, and she walked down the stairs, while Mr. G. prayed, Lord, have mercy on us; Christ, have mercy on us. All her bones came into place, and her flesh, which was loose before, tightened to be like that of a healthy person."

We believe, by now, that the matter of working miracles in these days has been decided quite obviously, so that there is no need to give further examples. We have found out that the men who profess to deny miracles in this age, in fact believe in them as much as anyone. Therefore, we shall research the question

#### IV. ARE MIRACLES A SUFFICIENT STANDARD TO PROVE THE DIVINITY OF A RELIGION?

No, they are not; otherwise, the false religions would be proved divine; for we have already shown the power of false prophets to work miracles. Those who set miracles as the standard of divinity of their religions, are open to be led by every wind of doctrine. What, then, is the correct standard to prove the divinity of our religion? Some think that the Bible is the only standard for that; but we say that that which

the Bible says is the only true standard. If we turn to John vii, 17, we can see these words; namely, "*If any man will do his will, he shall KNOW of the DOCTRINE, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*" This is the only criterion or the standard of a true religion; but the standard of false prophets is miracles, or something contrary to the order of God. There is no reason for anyone to be in doubt, after he has done the will of God, for he shall know for himself about the doctrine, whether it is divine or not: and unless every man gains knowledge in this manner, he is always open to be deceived and led astray. Men who have received knowledge in this manner will be the "elect," those it is not possible to deceive: miracles and wonders will have no effect on them, for they shall possess knowledge of the doctrine or the religion they have embraced previously. *Knowledge*, therefore, is the criterion to prove the truth, and nothing else. Is there anyone who knows better than Jesus Christ? If there is, where was he taught? not in the school of the servants of God, rather in the school of the servants of Belial. Heaven and earth shall pass away before one iota of that which the Son of God has spoken fails. The standard to prove his religion in this age, continues the same with religion itself; and that is reasonable to expect. Doing the will of God, and not depending on seeing miracles, is the correct way to prove the religion of Christ. If men saw now that miracles were the criterion at that time, they are gainsaying the words of our Lord, because he testified otherwise. One must know by revelation about religion; otherwise, we will be subject to being deceived. The best way, then, is for all to do the will of God, so they may have knowledge about the true religion, and so that can be born again, and made "elect," those who cannot possibly be deceived, although fire is called down from heaven before their eyes.

Well, before ending, perhaps someone would like to be taught further about the best way to do the will of God, for the purpose of gaining the knowledge under examination. If so, believe in Jesus Christ, not only that he is the Son of God, but that he is the one, of everyone else, whom we must believe first; and believe also that Jesus Christ uttered what he meant, and that which was true. After men believe thus, we say to them, in the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized

every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts ii, 38, 39). Fulfilling these words is to do the will of God; and doing the will of God is what gives one the right to knowledge from him about the doctrine that his servants preach. No one who has become sufficiently humble can fail to understand the words of Peter: only those who are puffed up and who are forever learning are those who fail to come to a knowledge of the truth. One does not

come to know about religion by human teaching, but through obeying the ordinances of the gospel, so as to receive the Holy Ghost, he who is the Spirit of revelation, and he who brings KNOWLEDGE, to prove the divinity of religion.

May the Lord enlighten the minds of our fellowmen with respect to his holy gospel, so they may obey it promptly, not asking for a sign or a miracle, but with "the answer of a good conscience toward God," so that they may achieve eternal life, which is to know God and his Son Jesus Christ. May it so be. Amen.

J. DAVIS.

*Merthyr, May 5, 1851.*

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