

## **THE CREDENTIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.**

Revelation, which is one with the Christian Faith, which is one with its documents and records, presents its sufficient Credentials to the reason and heart and will of man as one great body of irresistible evidence. First, it comes to mankind as a response to the universal desire and expectation of communication from above: to the craving

of the human heart for communion with God. Secondly, Revelation exhibits, in its own structure, the Divine attributes as stamped upon every part of its system in the form of miracle, prophecy, and inspiration. Thirdly, it furnishes, in the Person of Christ the Revealer, its heavenly guarantee of its own truth. Fourthly, in its perfect consummation as Christianity, it appeals to the character of its influence in human history: positively in its victory over the world's evil, and negatively in its victory over all opposition. Lastly, it relies, as a Divine revelation might be expected to rely, on the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. All its credentials may without much difficulty be classed under these several heads: so far that is as they are a general apology and vindication of the Christian Faith contained in itself.

The Revelation of Christ in the Scriptures enforces its own claims, and theology must pay supreme deference to those internal credentials. These become Evidences when they are arranged in their order. What the Law was to the earlier Gospel, Evidences are to Credentials: added because of human weakness. They have their use, as it respects both the believer and the unbeliever; to the former for confirmation, to the latter for conviction.

Evidences  
and Credentials.

1. The believer is taught by them how to give a reason of the hope that is in him: to be ready or prepared, *πρὸς ἀπολογία*, for Apology. St. Luke, the Evangelist of the Evidences, sets this clearly before us: he so arranges the testimonies of the Faith that Theophilus, already instructed in the verities most surely believed, might *know the certainty of those things*: *ἐπιγνῶς*, referring to an accurate and systematic knowledge. Both for the confirmation of his own faith, and for the conviction of the gainsayer, every Christian, especially every Christian minister, should have the form of sound defence at hand to guard the form of sound words: the *ὑποτίπσις*, or systematic arrangement, is equally necessary for each.

For  
Believers.  
1 Pet. iii.  
15.

Luke i. 4.

For Un-  
believers.

2. As to the unbeliever, the Credentials must be so arranged as to form a complete body of evidence for his possible conviction:

2 Tim. i.  
13.

without either undervaluing or over-estimating their importance. They must not be despised by a transcendental reliance on the self-evidencing light. Christianity, like its Founder, has a mission to seek that it may save. Its history, both within and without the Bible, is a record of calm reasonings with the mind, even of those who turn away. Evidences or signs are for those who believe not. There may be cases in which the arguments used concerning Revelation may induce the sceptic to listen to the voice of Revelation itself. But, on the other hand, too much must not be expected from them, as they are external evidences apart from the interior demonstration of the truth. Our Lord and His Apostles have left us no instance of argument with those who held not some measure of faith to which their reasonings might appeal. As the Book of Revelation does not reason with Atheism, neither does Christianity lay any stress on reasoning with Infidelity and disbelief.

**Vocabu-  
ary of  
Unbelief.**

**Disbelief**

**Doubt.**

**Scepti-  
cism.**

3. Various terms have been here introduced : such as unbeliever, disbeliever, doubter, and sceptic. These bear their shades of meaning, which it is important to remember and discriminate in all discussions on this subject. It is well known that in the New Testament there is everywhere a clear and broad distinction between two classes : believers and unbelievers. But it is not implied that the state of unbelief is that in which nothing is believed : on the contrary, **UNBELIEF** is **DISBELIEF** and disbelief is the belief of the opposite of that which faith holds. Not that no room is left for a neutral state, that in which men muse in their hearts and remain suspended in doubt. **DOUBT** hesitates between two contradictory conclusions. It may have some degree of belief, checked by a consciousness of ignorance : in this case it is provisional, waiting for more light, and the New Testament gives several instances of this as worthy to be reasoned with. It may be definitive, and is then **SCEPTICISM**, or the surrender of the mind to a conviction of the impossibility of certainty, with a tranquil complacency in such a state. But as scepticism believes that truth cannot be found, it is itself faith in necessary ignorance, unbelief of that about which it doubts, and therefore really disbelief. Hence the bad sense which is generally attached to the word in Christian Evidences.



4. Let it be further observed that these credentials have no reference to those branches of evidences that concern the volume externally viewed : they come from the heart of Revelation as it is one great communication in Christ ; and the question of the authenticity and authority of the several parts of the Holy Scriptures must be postponed. It must be remembered also that the Apologetics of the Christian Faith accompany the several doctrines ; every article of the creed requires its own defence ; and therefore the evidences of Christianity must needs be distributed over the whole course of our dogmatic system. Again, they allow opportunity for the fair consideration of everything that can be said for or against Christianity as such, without descending, however, to innumerable subordinate questions, which have no importance in themselves. Once more, the exhibition of these credentials in all their grandeur will simplify the later evidences as to the several doctrines of the Bible, and at the same time lend those evidences their own force. Finally, this arrangement enables us to do justice to the cumulative character of the argument : it is not merely an accumulation of all that may be said on the subject, but such an orderly presentation as will make every argument, whether more or less important, both give and receive strength through its connection with the rest.

Creden-  
tials and  
Evidences