

wisdom by which the miracle of prophecy is made permanent in the organic unity of Scripture. Now these are all of the essence of revelation: they combine in every part of it. The Scriptures, or Revelation, or the Christian faith—these three are one—have exhibited one vast and permanent miracle, one great prophecy ever in course of fulfilment, and one great result of inspiration.

3. These three may be regarded as one great continuous Miracle, and one great body of credentials commending to us the Scriptures of revelation. But these credentials for faith must have their own evidences for reason. As they belong to the supernatural order they must be received by faith. They imply, indeed they assert, the being of God, and His intervention for objects, and in a manner, before which reason sinks confounded. But as facts recorded and humanly attested, they must be received on evidence which is trustworthy and amenable to the tests of trustworthiness. These two must combine; just as in all things pertaining to religion, faith and reason must unite: being reconciled when they differ, and blended into the harmony of certitude. In examining these several evidences of God in revelation each must be viewed as distinct. But, in considering them as credentials of one great scheme professedly the revelation of a God Whose existence is admitted, we are not under the necessity of examining at length the question which touches their abstract possibility in a philosophical point of view. We regard them as the internal demonstrations of Scripture, and have only to ask what their force and meaning are as credentials, and to prove that no condition of such credentials is wanting.

One
Threefold
Miracle.

THE CREDENTIAL OF MIRACLES.

Miracles

There are many and distinct terms used in Scripture to signify what we call miracles. They are called generally the *ἔργα*, or WORKS of God; sometimes these works are referred to as acts of the Divine power that effects them, and they are then MIRACLES or *δυναμῆς*; sometimes the purpose for which they are wrought is made emphatic in their designation, and they are SIGNS or *σημεία*. A third term, *τίματα*, is occasionally connected with

these ; but, as it merely refers to the immediate effect produced on the minds of beholders, it has no theological importance. All that requires to be said as to the credentials of Miracle may be referred to these two words respectively.

**Works
of God.**

WONDERFUL WORKS OF GOD.

The former, the highest expression of which is in the Pentecostal word, *The wonderful works of God*, pervades the whole Scripture, which clearly distinguishes between the ordinary operations of Providence and these extraordinary tokens of the Divine presence. It makes miracle the special intervention of omnipotence : in this sense also there is no power but of God. Revelation shows us the Maker of the laws of the universe, which we understand only as the invariable sequence of cause and effect, introducing when He pleases a new cause : not violating His own laws, or suppressing, or arresting them ; not using the operation of more extensive laws than those known to exist, but simply bringing in new causes of new effects when He sees fit. Faith recognises the FINGER OF GOD ; and reason, admitting the existence of a Supreme Cause, assents to this. Its definition of Miracle is an act of the immediate power of God intervening in the connection of natural causes and effects. It does not argue with those who deny to the God of nature this power and freedom to use it. The preliminary objection against the possibility of miracle, and the value of any amount of evidence that might seek to establish its credibility, can never be met by any other argument than this first term. It is well that the Apologist of revelation should take a high stand here. If there is a Personal God, there can be no *à priori* reason why He should not interfere with His own laws. No continuity and unbroken order of sequence in cause and effect can be made an argument against the possibility of its being disturbed. The last word of philosophy on the subject is that our faith in the stability of nature is a primary law of human thought, as certainly bound up in our mental constitution as our consciousness of personal identity. Now we have an equally firm faith operating as a primary law of thought that an omnipotent Being can, if He

Ex. viii.
19.
Luke xi.
20.

will, put forth His Finger and regulate in a new way laws the general order of which He does not violate. On this conviction rests all the evidence that miracles need as they are manifestations of a Divine presence.

SIGNS.

Signs.

The second term, *σημείον*, *τὸν*, theologically and in our present connection the more important, is never wanting in Scripture, though used with a more limited application. It indicates that God declares Himself present in certain particular miracles, and challenges attention to His own words or the words of His messenger thus authenticated. Now, revelation has not at its great epochs been without this credential. While the Wonderful Works are literally never absent in revelation,—always in course of procedure, open or secret, known or unknown, in miracles of nature and in miracles of grace, during the ages while the Volume was constructed and since it has been finished, for ever and ever throughout the whole economy of salvation,—the Signs have been occasionally given at certain great and important epochs, and in confirmation, both to believers and unbelievers, of messages from heaven. It is needless to ask whether it might have been otherwise: in His wisdom God has seen fit to accompany all supernatural communications by signs and infallible tokens. But, though needless, it is not unprofitable to consider how absolutely necessary such signs and tokens must be to authenticate tidings so amazing as those which the Scripture brings. Here a few distinctions may be useful.

1. The grandest miracles which are the credentials of revelation are in the substance of the revelation itself. Very many of the extraordinary interpositions it records are not bound up with the nature and purpose of the economy of God's redeeming will, but have been miraculous attestations of individual missions. When, however, we rise from its appendages, circumstances, and preliminaries to the Great Redemption itself, the case is different. Christ the Author of Christianity and its Substance and its End is the supreme Miracle, and everything connected with Him is miraculous. As soon as we come within the sphere of His sacred presence the definition of miracle

Miracle
the sub-
stance of
Revela-
tion.

becomes enlarged: it is then an immediate act of Divine omnipotence which has its necessity, its reality, and its exhibition in the redeeming economy. To the central or final congregation of wonders in Him those of the Old Testament looked forward, and with them the great series virtually ended. The advent of Christ was a miracle; of which the entire history of His words and works, of His life and death, of His resurrection and ascension, is a continuation. Hence it is obvious that with regard to the Christian system as a whole miracle is essential to its demonstration. For without miracle there is no Christian revelation.

Miracles
necessary

2. But, descending from this high level, we may confidently assert that the authentication of the human agents of the Divine will required such attestations from heaven as we call miracles. It may be going too far to say that the common instinct of mankind expects that if God sends a messenger He will excite attention by signs preceding and confirm His word by signs following. No founder of a human religion has ever failed to appeal to this general expectation. Confucius and Buddha and Mohammed are sometimes said to have been exceptions; but they were exceptions only to this extent, that they did not profess themselves to work miracles. Buddha was a strange anomaly in every respect. He appeared only as a reformer of an old religion, and did not found, or rather did not claim to found, a religion of his own. In other words, he needed no credentials, for he did not profess to come from God. Confucius brought no revelation: his honest task and his honest work was to revive and classify and perfect the religious literature of his people. Mohammed pretended to no power of working miracles: wisely declining to come into competition with the true prophets of God whose revelations he appropriated and perverted. But he did bring, or assume to bring, a new revelation; and accordingly he made his appeal to miraculous messages and communications which were in the place of the miracles he could not perform. But, apart from the question of universal expectation,—which is of some importance, though not decisive,—we find that from beginning to end the Author of revelation is represented as taking this expectation into account, and as always investing His ambassadors and heralds with the credentials of miracle. The

importance of these signs by which the Divine Being has authenticated the beginnings at least of every new economy of truth is sometimes undervalued. It is said to be more in harmony with heavenly decorum to communicate truth directly to the human mind; and more consistent with the dignity of truth itself that it should depend on its own intrinsic adaptation and fitness. But they who reason thus are needlessly jealous of the Divine prerogative and of human dignity. He who knows what is in man has never offered a revelation to the race without such signs and wonders as were sufficient to establish it in the world, leaving those inexcusable who should refuse to believe.

3. This leads to the nature of the credential itself, or the value of the miracle as it is a sign. Generally, and taking revelation as a whole, it appeals to the body of evidence that God has interposed in human affairs, in a manner transcendently extraordinary, as its plenary and abiding demonstration. That is to say, in few words, the Christian Faith rests its strong claim on this among other things, that there is a series of wonderful works and supernatural acts behind it, around it, and encompassing it, which no sincere and candid mind ought to be able to resist. More particularly, every messenger, the Supreme Messenger not excepted, coming with professed revelation from above, has invariably been authenticated by miraculous endowments which God Himself has deemed necessary and sufficient to vindicate His servants' mission. Lastly, the miracles which satisfied the generation receiving these credentials are, as will be hereafter seen, committed to the documents which hand down the truths they taught; and the miracles and the documents together with those truths become matter of historical testimony.

4. Finally, it is obvious that the value of miracles as such, and apart from all other credentials, is to be found mainly in the authentication of the messengers to their own contemporaries. Their immediate effect on those who behold them is expressed by Nicodemus: *Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him*. Then follows profound attention to the messenger and the message. The Sign precedes the teaching. But to after generations there is a certain change. They have the message, and its

Value

To the
Same Ge-
neration.

John iii. 2