

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

THE RESPONSE TO THE RELIGIOUS EXPECTATION OF MANKIND.

Christianity, or the perfect Divine Revelation, presents itself as the answer to a universal demand. It explains while it appeals to the innate craving of the human mind to know God, or its sentiment of religion, and accounts for the general expectation of the Race, as expressed in its traditional Religions : appealing to them by what they contain of truth, and by what they contain of falsehood. It comes with these credentials ; and, moreover, pleads as being the perfect utterance of a Revelation which has been among men from the beginning, and, therefore, as the response to an expectation kept alive in the world by its own earlier teachings. Under

Reve-
lation
Expected

this first department of credentials must be included all those preliminary considerations which are sometimes reckoned as Presumptive Evidences.

Presumptive Arguments.

In systems of Apologetics, or Evidences, presumptive arguments are commonly arranged in a threefold gradation. First, it is shown that a Divine revelation is POSSIBLE, whether as it respects the Giver of it or the recipient. Secondly, the deficiencies of reason within and the failures of human religion without are urged to establish that such a revelation is NECESSARY. Then, thirdly, the conclusion follows that it is PROBABLE: the probability, when the Divine goodness and man's desire are taken into the account, reaching the point which only falls short of moral certainty. Now this chain of propositions may be established: the argument breaks down nowhere. But, for the reasons already given, it seems better to attain the same object by first of all examining the Revelation itself. Instead of arguing over the first proposition, the affirmation of which is contradicted by a certain school of philosophy, we must assume it to be true by appealing to the consciousness of all men, the doubters included. To conduct this argument without taking some revelation for granted is a thing impossible. And it is certain that it is more after the manner of the Bible to set out with the credentials of Revelation itself than to array a number of internal and presumptive evidences in its absence.

THE DESIRE OF THE HUMAN MIND.

The Sense of God in Humanity.

Divine revelation appeals to a preparation in the human spirit which it explains and accounts for: first, the instinctive and indestructible sense of dependence on a First Cause; secondly, the consciousness of responsibility to a Supreme Authority; and, thirdly, the union of these in the deep desire to know and have fellowship with the Source and End of life. This three-one fact in human nature revelation challenges; and here is its first credential. The instinct in man and the response from God meet. From the first word of the Scriptures to the last the Voice of the Creator speaks to the still small voice of His creature: the Voice of the All-sufficient answering the cry of dependence, of the Merci-

ful Judge dealing with guilt, and of the Eternal and Invisible conversing as Man with humanity. In the Bible, as completed by Christianity, there is not a possible question of human nature to which a response is not given. The positive strength of this plea will be considered when we come to establish the existence of God. Meanwhile, it may be necessary here to obviate two opposite objections which may be urged against this most mighty presumptive argument.

1. Atheistic philosophy of every order is content to assert that the sentiment in human nature is one of the fruits of its own imagination, begotten of fear or hope; and that it has invented a revelation to satisfy the demands of its own delusion: the imaginary revelation from heaven being, like heaven itself, its most consummate delusion. With such theories of the soul it is vain to argue: at least, they do not enter into the present discussion. Save, indeed, so far as they sometimes undertake to deny that what we may term this instinct is really universal in the constitution of man. This is simply an appeal to experience and induction. No race of humanity has ever been found which does not contradict this denial. Among the very lowest tribes there are traces of a certain sense of dependence on another world: the degraded feeling which looks with awe at some fetish symbol of the unknown is the same tribute at the one pole as the philosophical speculation of Agnosticism is at the opposite pole, to a sense in man of the Infinite. The finite instinct for the Infinite, which is faith, undergoes in them the same degradation which all their other mental and spiritual faculties have undergone: no more, no less. But of this more will be said hereafter.

Atheistic
Explan-
ation.

2. Deism has another and very different kind of counter-argument. It sometimes insists that these instinctive preparations for the voice of God are themselves the revelation of the Supreme, and that there can be no other: that is to say, a transcendental Deism refuses to allow that there can be any other authenticated revelation of the Infinite to the finite than that which is direct in the consciousness of those who receive it. But it forgets that the very highest religious sentiment in man is only a desire unsatisfied; and that, as every strong and universal instinct has its answer from without, so also must this the strongest and most universal

Deistic.

of all. But it may be denied that there is any longing of the human mind for an external revelation. Many who admit that the irrepressible yearning of the human soul towards the Infinite is an argument for the expectation of a secret revelation of God in the depths of the yearning spirit nevertheless refuse to admit the force of this appeal in favour of a revelation coming from above with all the external appendages that belong to the Christian Faith. It is sufficient to reply that this style of argument ignores the fact that the relation of man to God is such as to demand an external communication as well as an internal. If he were, as he should be, at peace with the Object he seeks, the communion with his Maker might be conducted altogether within. Yet even then not altogether within; for the whole universe around him would be full of symbols, the visible revelation of his Creator. But he is, by the very supposition, estranged from God. The original conditions have ceased to exist; and no argument can be based upon them. The unutterable longing to which Christianity responds is that of a guilty spirit; not only dependent on the Supreme, but trembling before Him. Man looks up to heaven—as his Greek name, *ἄνθρωπος* or *ὁ ἄνω ἄνθρωπος*, testifies; but he looks up to an outward Judge and not within to an interior God; and expects and hopes that the Supreme will appear to him and speak to him by some being, or voice, or token. And this is the germ of all revelation. Moreover, it is undeniable that in every age and in every region men have longed for and believed in an external expression of the Divine mind. In fact, Christianity is but one of many responses to man's groaning unutterable towards God. But this leads to a further stage in our credentials, to which what has been said is only introductory.

CORRECTION OF THE RELIGIONS OF MANKIND.

The
Anticipation
of
Mankind.

Religion
in the
Race.

As Divine revelation responds to the spirit in man, so it explains and responds to the great Anticipation of the Human Race, as testified by its universal Religions. This also is a most mighty credential, which may be regarded under several aspects.

1. The Christian Religion explains the religiousness of mankind, and pays respect to the forms in which this has been