

full force as truth, before they consider the miraculous attestation. We in our day include the original miracles with all other branches of evidence which are to be received on trustworthy testimony such as no lapse of ages can invalidate. But this leads to a consideration of that testimony itself, or what may be called the credentials of this Credential.

Tests.**EVIDENCES AND TESTS OF MIRACLE.**

The entire question of the trustworthiness of the testimony to the miraculous facts of revelation may be resolved into a statement of the criteria or tests to which these supposed facts may fairly be subjected.

**Worthy
objects.**

1. Such Divine interventions must authenticate missions worthy of God. And it requires no argument to prove that the miracles to which the Christian revelation appeals have a cause behind them of supreme value. As a whole—from the miraculous attributes of the trees in the garden down to the ascension of the Incarnate Son of God and the Pentecostal opening of the heavens—they sustain the grand fabric of the Divine education of redeemed mankind. Here we must divert our attention from many isolated wonderful works and think only of the One Work of God upon earth. But, descending to particulars, and sending a general glance backward through all the economies, we see that the great assemblages of miracles were wrought at crises pregnant with importance to the Great Cause in the Old Testament. The ante-Mosaic miracles were authentications, not of God's messengers only, but of His own dread Name and attributes. At the introduction of the Mosaic institute there was reason for the glorious manifestations of the Divine power, rebuking the long-endured perverseness of Egypt, authenticating the Lawgiver so slowly accepted by His own people, proving the Divinity of what we call the Mosaic economy, and confirming that proof by signs following down to the miraculous entrance into Canaan. While the Theocracy lasted, every recorded wonder attested at the critical hour that Jehovah reigned. The miracles which cluster around the persons of Elijah and Elisha asserted His supremacy when the cause of God was at stake in the chosen

land. And, finally, after long comparative cessation, there was a great, and, in some respects, unexampled renewal of miracles to rescue the sinking faith of the people during their captivity. It scarcely needs to be pointed out that the New Testament yields the same analysis. The prolonged miracle of the Divine Person, Whose deep humiliation for mankind rendered necessary the vindication of His Godhead, stands out from all wonders of the Bible as one continuous Virtue from His Divine-human presence. The Resurrection, with its infallible signs, completed the education of the Apostles' faith, and laid the corner-stone of all evidences for ever. The miracles of the Acts are exhibited only on critical occasions, but always then: witness the minor renewals of Pentecost for the conversion of the Gentiles, for Samaria, and for the relicts of the Baptist's ministry; lessening, as it were, through these several phases, according to the importance of the occasion. Not always however were they lessened. The resurrection-miracles of St. Peter and St. Paul followed hard on the Saviour's highest acts: to demonstrate by the hand of two or three witnesses, after His rising, the fact of the victory over death which He had demonstrated most effectually by His rising itself. The abundance of St. Paul's miraculous gifts were *the signs of an Apostle* which his peculiar vocation demanded. And, finally, the miracles wrought in the early churches were enough and no more than enough to attest the reality of the Pentecost; being, so to speak, the same kind of confirmations of that great day as the few resurrections of the Acts were confirmations of that other day of the Resurrection proper. It must be remembered, however, that in conclusion the Supreme has not absolutely restricted His wonderful works to the great eras of revelation: the power of God, like the word of God, is not bound. We discern a certain law of miracles which seems to limit them to great epochs; but there is nothing in it which requires us to limit the Holy One, or to render it impossible that miraculous interventions have occurred since the full establishment of the organic Church in the world. Moreover, the occasional instances in which the wonders, or *τέρατα*, have been wrought by the permitted agency of wicked men are so referred to in Scripture as to strengthen this credential of revelation. As Balaam in the Old Testament and Caiaphas in the New delivered

2 Cor. xii.
12.

Acts xiii.
11.
Worthy
Lessons.

2 Kings
vi. 6.
Josh. x.
13.

sublime predictions, so the magicians in the Old Testament wrought supernatural wonders under a Divine restraint; and Antichrist, to come with his lying wonders, is predicted in the New. But the true workers of miracles in the Scripture are its holiest men; and one of its closing records is the miracle that vindicates the sanctity of miraculous power upon Elymas.

2. It may be demanded that these wonders of the Finger of God should generally teach worthy lessons, besides asserting the power of God in the supernatural order of the world: in other words that they should be essential constituents of revelation itself, as well as being its credentials. We must not, indeed, presume to judge what in every case is the worthiness of the lesson taught: some miracles may seem too trivial, such as the recovery of the axe, others too stupendously great, such as the sun's standing still, for acceptance. With this reservation, it cannot be denied that the wonders of Scripture are most confessedly worthy of the cause they support. In all cases they pay respect to the very laws that they seem to supersede. They themselves effectually teach the lessons of the Divine will and illustrate the Divine perfections. Not a miracle in the whole Bible fails to demonstrate either the power or the fidelity, or the wisdom, or the justice, or the mercy of God. They are never, or very rarely, even liable to be regarded as merely portents. All are faithful to the character of God as otherwise revealed: mingling chastisement with mercy in both Testaments, the benevolence and mercy largely predominating in the New. As it respects the miracles of Christ, the supreme miraculous credentials, they are so ordered from the least to the greatest as to teach symbolically the whole mystery of His grace, and to give illustrations beforehand of the character of His future administration through the Holy Ghost. There are a few of His miracles which have been thought to militate against our canon, and to be merely portentous or evidences of capricious severity: for instance, the consignment of the swine to death, the withering of the fig-tree, and the vehement act of zealotry in the Temple. But, read in the light of the Divine providence in the world, these acts of Jesus will be seen not only to be in harmony with the zealous severity of the Divine justice but to be almost necessary for its illustration.

tion. Seeing that the gentle Redeemer so often predicted the desolation which impenitence would bring upon God's ancient people, it might be expected that some few of His symbolical miracles would confirm His prophecies. And these seemingly exceptional cases, in which He made inanimate and irrational creatures the vicarious symbols of His displeasure, are precisely of that character. But more of this when the character of the Lord Himself becomes our Credential.

3. It may be expected, further, that the miracles which bring the Supernatural Hand into human affairs shall, as credentials, allow of the application of fair criteria in the case of those who witnessed them, and further that they shall be supported by sufficient evidence for posterity. Criteria.

(1.) As to the former, the demand may be as abundantly satisfied as the case admits. Many of the wonders recorded in the Bible are simply matters of record, and their circumstantials are lost for ever. But these may claim the benefit of being blended with the mass of those which are as it were wrought before our eyes, in the midst of all their surroundings. If the question were of the integrity of Scripture these exceptional instances might be challenged, and must be defended. But for our present argument that is needless: it is enough to assert that the grand miraculous credentials of the two covenants were wrought openly, under the cognizance of men's senses, and amidst such circumstances as forbid the possibility of deception. The miracles which accompanied the advent and legislation of Moses were witnessed by large numbers; and the testimony of the rivals who used their enchantments is in evidence. Of course we have only the record of Scripture itself to guide us; but for our present argument that is enough. We have all the evidence the case allows that the Egyptians as well as the Israelites saw and believed things that were not done in a corner. We have not contemporary documents to which appeal can be made. But the entire history which flowed out of these miraculous interpositions speaks for them. From generation to generation the annals of the nation are full of allusions to what was steadfastly believed from the day of its occurrence. And the whole economy of Hebrew revelations was founded upon that faith. However, it is obvious For the extant Age.

John
xviii.
20.

that this question touches the Gospel miracles more particularly. With regard to them our Saviour Himself may be asked for evidence. He admitted that publicity and openness and candid invitation of criticism were to be expected from anyone who claimed to bring a special message from heaven. And what He said as to His words held true of His miracles, which were His acted words: *I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.* Even the Resurrection—the miracle above every miracle—was amenable to the same tests with all others; although in the nature of the case the interior mystery must needs be hidden. It was a supernatural event which men might investigate and be assured of: which indeed would be investigated with the utmost diligence. But it ought to be remembered here that the wisdom of the advocate of Christianity is quietness and confidence in a defensive or negative position. He is not bound to do more than challenge the opponent to prove that with regard to any of the recorded miracles of the Gospels, or of the Old Testament, there is the slightest vestige of evidence that anything was done which could give any ground for suspicion. But this leads to something that is more positive.

Posterity.

(2.) As to the latter: we are, as posterity, in a different position, and miracles are matter of historical evidence. There are no events in the past history of the human race, which have become matter of accepted history and are doubted by no sane person, more amply and circumstantially attested than the miraculous life and resurrection from death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: that is, the whole range of the central miracles of Christianity. They were not questioned at the time of their supposed occurrence; at least, the only challenge they underwent was of such a kind as to turn to their advantage. All kinds of spectators watched the more public miracles; and the only disparagement recorded was that of those who ascribed the Lord's works to Beelzebub, and His absence from the sepulchre to the cunning stratagem of His disciples. The resurrection of Jesus was the critical or crucial miracle the establishment of which would assure all the rest. Now that event was guaranteed to many hundreds of persons by many infallible proofs; it was

believed from the time by a large body of conscientious and credible witnesses, whose mental and moral character sustains every test, who, moreover, to the number of hundreds sealed their conviction by an entire consecration of life, and some of them by the sacrifice of life itself. Finally, the great miracles of revelation are connected with posterity by the existence of public monuments which owe their existence to a widespread and profound confidence in their genuineness. In ancient times the Passover attested the national faith in the deliverance from Egypt, and it has continued from generation to generation to declare the strength of the evidence based upon the faith of a whole people. Similarly, the Lord's Day has declared down to the present time the faith of an immense body of witnesses that the Saviour rose from the dead. And, in fact, the Christian Church as an institution vouches, if not for the reality of the miracle of Christ's life and death and resurrection, at least for the satisfaction with which the evidence of it was received from the earliest Christian generations. Supercilious scepticism may affirm that no amount of evidence can ever avail to enforce upon the mind the acceptance of facts which are contrary to the eternal laws of nature. The only reply which, at this stage, we can give is that this is quite true, if no God exists; but that, if a Personal Ruler of the universe is believed in, such supernatural facts are not incredible; and, finally, that these events were witnessed and relied upon by a very large number of trustworthy witnesses who have sent down their evidence signed and attested to posterity.

4. Once more, the dignity of eternal truth demands that it should not lay the main stress of its demonstration on miracles: certainly never on miracles alone. No one in all the records of revelation is represented as having made the validity of his mission depend on his works; though no one, thus authenticated, was ever known to decline producing this credential when challenged. There is no subject connected with the evidences of the Faith that requires more careful statement than this. Exaggeration on both sides is very frequent. Certainly, it might sometimes appear as if everything was staked upon miraculous intervention: for instance, the challenges of Moses and Elijah seem to confirm this notion, as also a few of the minor miracles

Miracles
never
alone.

of both Testaments. But it ought to be remembered that the wonderful works wrought in Egypt were not merely the credentials of Moses: they were also and chiefly marks of the Divine displeasure against the false gods of that land, and chastisements of the perverseness of those who refused to obey. The same may be said of the contest on Mount Carmel. The people were bidden to choose between the True God and the false gods before the tokens came from heaven; and when these came, they took the form of chastisement, as in the case of Egypt. Merely as portents, to astonish the beholders and thus enchain their attention, miracles were never vouchsafed. But at all the great crises of revelation they have been given to enlist and pre-engage the hearers by tokens of Divine goodness and power. In fact, and on the whole, as they are the Hand of God demanding attention to His Voice, the relation of miracles to the doctrine of the Teacher who performs them is always most simply stated and guarded throughout the Scripture. The tokens when rejected are very soon withdrawn:

- Mark viii.** *There shall no sign be given unto this generation* was not uttered
12. until sign after sign had been rejected. Moreover, it is observable that the performance of miracles becomes very occasional where the Gospel is established; and that by degrees they are taken up into the number of transitory and exceptional charisms, tokens of the Divine power for *them that believe not*, and instruments of usefulness to those who believed. When it is said that God confirmed the word of His servants *both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost* we must remember that the stress is laid upon the last clause. And our Lord's prediction and promise of the *greater works than these* to be wrought by His Apostles, and of the miraculous tokens to be expected by believers, were not intended to be understood of a permanent authentication of the Gospel by miraculous tokens. But this takes us back to the Supreme Witness Himself, Who has left many testimonies to the true place of miracles among the credentials of His Faith. Nothing is more certain than that He appealed to His works as fulfilment of prophecy, and as proofs of His own Divine power and authority. He also made them the vehicle of teaching His most impressive lessons, and of encouraging His servants' faith in the goodness of His heart. Our Lord also
- 1 Cor. xiv.**
22.
- Heb. ii. 4.**
- John xiv.**
12.

declared that His miracles rendered unbelief inexcusable: *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.* But the works include, if they do not mean, the words: *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin.* And accordingly His most solemn testimony as to the responsibility of His generation was: *the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day.* Finally, there are two other passages in St. John which will repay careful study. *Though ye believe not Me, believe the works:* this places the works in their due subordination, while giving them their value. Those who ought to believe because of the works, ought rather to have believed because of the virtue that proceeded from Himself. *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:* this gives the glorious Gospel, as one whole finished in Christ, its supreme place as the final and consummate evidence of the truth of revelation.

John xv.
24.

John xv.
22.

John xii.
48.

John x.
38.

John v.
36.

5. Lastly, there is a criterion or postulate which believers in revelation add to those already considered. The miracles of Scripture, in their wide variety and unbounded grandeur, are the economy of a SUPERNATURAL ORDER. As they must, therefore, be in many respects dimly apprehended by the limited faculties of men, it may be expected that there will be residual difficulties, remaining as the test of faith. Among these difficulties we do not reckon the supposed evidence of modern science in favour of a fixed and unalterable reign of law, any interference with which is in itself not to be conceived. Law implies a Lawgiver, and the Supreme Author of all laws may interpose when and how He will. Moreover, so long as man has the evidence of consciousness that he can control for a season the action of natural laws, the exercise of his own volition being independent of any previous merely natural cause, it will be impossible to persuade him that the Infinite Personal Will cannot interpose amidst the sequences of nature. But there are other difficulties. Such is the occasional want of seeming reason for a supreme intervention; concerning which, however, it is enough to say that we are not fit judges on this question. Again, the undeniable occurrence of prodigies such as witchcraft and necromancy and the performance of wonderful works through the agency of evil spirits, are sometimes

The
Supernatural
Order

a stumbling-block to faith: only however to a faith which does not admit, what the Scriptures everywhere testify, that such things as these have been permitted by God for reasons to a great extent incomprehensible to us. Finally, the question of the continuance of miraculous signs since the days of the Apostles presents a topic of difficulty. But the difficulty vanishes if it is honestly admitted that there is no reason why the Supreme should not still manifest His power in endowing His servants occasionally, whether with the gift of prophecy or with the gift of miracle. This granted, the question becomes then simply matter of evidence. All these and other seemingly unsolvable problems become to the believer in the supreme miracles of the Incarnation and the Resurrection no more and no less than trials of humility and intellectual submission and faith.

Prophecy.

PROPHECY.

PROPHECY, as one of the credentials of revelation, is, like Miracle, bound up with its very fabric. It is the Divine law of the gradual disclosure of that system of truth which is ever expanding throughout the Scriptures from stage to stage unto perfection. As such, the term has two meanings: one wider, according to which it is the immediate declaration of the will of God through His servants, whether as to the past, or the present, or the future; and one more restricted, according to which it is the prediction of future events in connection with the great economy of revealed truth.

More General Meaning.

PROPHECY MORE GENERAL.

1. Prophecy is the utterance of Divine revelation; and a prophet is one raised up and sent to communicate God's truth. The meaning of נָבִיא is an Announcer; and that of רֹאֶה is Seer, the earlier name of the same office, or one who receives what he is to utter in visions. The visions were not universally characteristic of the office; but the office itself, and the employment of it throughout the whole economy of revelation, is one of the great credentials of the Bible, as pervasive as the miracle, with