

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

which indeed it is indissolubly bound up, being only one aspect of a continuous Divine intervention in human affairs. The prophet was not an ordinary announcer of the will of Heaven, like the priest who might read and expound the law. He was an instrument of the Divine will raised up out of the order of nature, to receive communications which may be called supernatural, being imparted by an influence of the Holy Ghost sometimes called Vision, sometimes the Word of the Lord: for instance, *The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.* Whether by exhibiting to the interior eye the scene, or by lodging the word in the thoughts, there can be no doubt that the Author of revelation performed what in another domain would have been a miracle, every time that the *Man of God* or the *Man of the Spirit* was sent forth with his burden of revelation.

2. The essence of this credential of Divine revelation is this, that it represents every communication from God as directly imparted by a Divine afflatus, the influence of which the prophet could not mistake, and the reality of which the people might test. This direct contact of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man is the pervading law and the pervading glory of the Divine revelation from Moses downward. There is nothing resembling it in the history of perverted religions. So far as the oracles, soothsayers, and diviners of heathenism offer any analogy, it is only as a foil to the grandeur of this credential. It is thus spoken of by the voice of Jehovah Himself. When Miriam and Aaron murmured against the superior dignity of Moses as the prophet of the Hebrews, they said: *Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath He not spoken also by us?* and it is recorded that *Jehovah came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle; . . . and He said, Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known to him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?* Here we have, as it were, in epitome, the entire mystery of the prophetic gift and function; and in such a manner as to exhibit the strength of this credential most impressively. It is

1 Sam. iii.
1.

Gen. xx.
7.
Hos. ix.
7.
Self-
Evidenc-
ing.

Numb. xii.
2-8.

the Voice of Jehovah, jealous of His own honour and of the honour of His servants, at once describing and defending the prophetic law of revelation. We mark that there was to be a permanent order of these agents always ready—whether as a school of the prophets or still abiding in their callings—for the high service of the Kingdom. To one of them Jehovah would reveal Himself whether in a more extraordinary manner or otherwise, in such a way, however, that the receiver of the vision should have no doubt: *I the Lord will make MYSELF known unto him.* Yet the Supreme was not limited to any order of men or to any special method. Hence we find that, while the Seventy Elders received the Spirit and *prophesied and did not cease (or but not further)*, the same Spirit rested also upon Eldad and Medad *and they prophesied in the camp.* Above all minor ministries rises Moses supreme: with him Jehovah spoke face to face. Yet he was not strictly supreme: being only the type and precursor of that Prophet, like unto him yet greater than he, with whom in eternity the Father speaketh face to face: the SON *over His own house.* When this Son came, the ancient order of prophets ceased; for the Supreme Revealer made every one of His Apostles like Moses, and spoke to them face to face. Moses could never communicate the Spirit received by him; for we hear him say: *Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them.* But our Lord Himself breathed on His Apostles His own Spirit. And thus the whole sum of revelation is under the sublime law of a direct manifestation of God to His people through His servants. This is the grand and glorious claim of revelation from beginning to end, from Moses to the Greater than Moses.

3. We find everywhere, however, the most careful provision for the vindication of this credential. The interior consciousness of the prophet was the guarantee to himself that the Lord was with him; this however could not be transferred to others, and is no argument to unbelievers who regard the entire mystery of the prophetic function as a delusion. But Jehovah gave His people tests by which they might verify the claims of these prophets. Those whom God sent could appeal to the fact that the honour of Jehovah was their supreme end. What our Saviour said concerning Himself was true of all who had come before Him, and of

Numb. xii. 6.

Numb. xi. 25, 26.

Heb. iii. 6.

Numb. xi. 29.

Vindication.

all who should follow Him. *My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory.* This test may be applied to the company of the prophets, and, if applied with candour, will result in the conviction that such a body of men could never have imposed a series of delusions on their own people and on the whole world. But this is not all. These men were fortified by two other qualifications. They were sometimes armed with the power of working miracles, as in the case of Moses and Elijah. Sometimes also their credential was the utterance of prediction: *When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken.* This, however, leads to that second and more limited meaning of the word which has almost displaced the former.

John vii.
16—18.

Deut.
xviii. 22

PROPHETIC PREDICTION.

Predic-
tion.

Prophecy is thus more specifically the impartation of a Divine knowledge of the future to man: that is, it embraces the prediction of future events. All revelation from the beginning has been prediction unfolding into prediction. This, we have seen, is its law; concerning which no more can be said than that the God of revelation has so willed it. We can imagine it otherwise: every generation might have been taught its lesson, as based upon the past, but not including the future. But we are shut up to the assumption that revelation is the progressive disclosure of one great event to which the eyes of all generations, as well before it as after it, were to be directed. Moreover, according to the testimony of Scripture itself the prediction of future events followed by the accomplishment of those predictions has always been one of the Divine methods of authenticating revelation. Here then we have the general laws of prophecy proper, and its criterion as a credential.

THE GENERAL LAWS OF PROPHETIC PREDICTION.

Laws of
Prophecy.

There are a few general principles the study of which are of great importance in order to a right estimate of Scriptural prediction as a distinct and pervasive credential of revelation.