

on which they rest grows weaker as it recedes from the present. But that is not philosophically true. Moreover, the most evident and noblest miracles—if any such distinction may be made—are yet constantly performed; and the Finger and Hand of God are evermore at work in the hearts of men and in the heart of society. Still, the accumulating force of the prophetic credential is more conspicuous than that of the miracle. We live under a vaster amount of fulfilment than any former age; and he who shall take the historical prophecies of the Old Testament and trace their fulfilment in the course of Oriental history will have an irresistible demonstration of Christianity at his command.

Full of  
Instruc-  
tion.

3. Finally, like the miracles, the prophecies are bound up with the teaching of the Bible; and, apart from their evidential force, yield an unlimited treasure of instruction in the ways of God, the work of Christ, and the destiny of man. Neither miracle nor prophecy can easily be over-estimated as the vehicle of Divine teaching: neither can be while time lasts exhausted.

Inspira-  
tion as  
a Creden-  
tial.

#### INSPIRATION, OR THE DIVINE HAND IN SCRIPTURE.

The specific doctrine of inspiration, as the ground of the Divine authority of the Scriptures, will be considered in its place. It may here be regarded very briefly as one of the credentials of revelation, on a level with Miracles and Prophecy and completing or consummating their evidence.

Law of  
Scripture.

1. Inspiration is a distinct element of the supernatural order of revealed truth: one of its laws and characteristic attributes. As such it simply means that the sacred documents are worthy of the Divine Author; and that they are not unworthily described as GOD-BREATHED. Strictly speaking only the writers are inspired; but the last word on the subject in the New Testa-

2 Tim. iii.  
16.

ment gives the epithet to Scripture itself: *πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος*. What we have agreed to mean by inspiration is therefore the fact that God has interposed to keep a continuous and abiding record of truth in the world: this, throughout all the ages of the world's religious history, has been the Divine method of imparting and preserving the knowledge of God among men. The beginning of this interposition, so far as concerns the written

documents, is lost in the distance of ages ; but none of its fruits can be supposed to be lost. Inspiration is, in a certain sense, one with revelation, as meaning the Divine bestowment of knowledge that could not otherwise be acquired. It does not, however, entirely coincide with revelation : being either less or more : less, since much that has been revealed has not been transmitted ; more, since much is recorded and transmitted that was not given by direct revelation. But, whatever may be its limits, it indicates a specific intervention of God in human literature, through which there has always been in course of production, and has been finally produced, the permanent and authoritative revelation of His mind and will to man. And this may fairly be regarded as a credential of the whole system of revealed truth : it is worthy of the Divine wisdom, and what might have been, humanly speaking, expected, that He whose power has been known in miracle, and His knowledge in prophecy, should declare His wisdom and fidelity in giving revelation to mankind, and in making it an abiding heritage. Now revelation makes this its universal claim ; and appeals to the manifest evidences of the Presence of God, as its Author and Indwelling Spirit, in Holy Scripture. Such is the overwhelming demonstration of this, that the whole weight of the cause of Christianity might be made to rest upon it, if it be rightly stated and exhibited. The entire scope and contents of the volume of inspiration justify its pretension to have come direct from heaven. When the character of Jesus is introduced, and the moral and spiritual effects of His Gospel, we shall have to consider much that might be supposed to belong to this credential. But there remains a very interesting argument that may be briefly touched upon here.

2. Generally speaking, the records of revelation are worthy of their Divine authorship or of the Divine authorship which they claim. Dispassionately taking up the whole Bible, with the hypothesis in our thoughts that it was composed by writers under a special control of the Holy Spirit, we find nothing, or very little, to make us hesitate in admitting the claim ; but, on the contrary, perpetual demonstration that the several authors cannot have been left to themselves. The children of this Wisdom justify her on the whole ; and where they seem to do otherwise it is only

Scripture  
worthy of  
Divine  
Author-  
ship.

2 Cor. xi.  
23.  
Divine-  
human.

that we cannot penetrate the secret which makes any one of them say, in the language of St. Paul, *I speak as a fool*.

3. For, it must be remembered that the records of revelation exhibit a characteristic Divine-human excellence corresponding with the only sound theory of inspiration. They are worthy to be assigned to the authorship of the controlling Spirit: supposing that Spirit to employ human faculties and human editorship. They may not be at all points, in every line and every record, what we might expect from the immediate dictation of the Holy Ghost, or from the writing of His Finger on tables delivered to man. But, if they are below what God might be supposed to send down straight from heaven, they are certainly altogether beyond the unassisted ability of man, higher indeed than any ability of man, even assisted from above, could have produced: that is to say, there are disclosures in various parts of the Bible, and one in particular everywhere, which imply not the raising of earth to heaven but the descent of heaven to earth. We have only to contemplate their tranquil, authoritative solution of questions that no other books have attempted even to investigate; their profound and natural familiarity with God and the things of God; the simplicity and awfulness of their doctrine of sin; the supreme moral interest that everywhere reigns; and their universal, never-failing appeal to what is good in human nature, as if a Divine Voice were issuing from them for ever speaking to something in the human spirit that must hear. If God records His truth for man, this is just what He would write: whether we have respect to what is given or to what is withheld. There is a perfect Divine dignity and perfect human purity: it is both the Voice of God and the voice of man; combined in so marvellous a way as to make the claims of Inspiration rightly understood a most impressive credential of the Faith.

Supre-  
macy.

4. Hence the simple and undeniable fact of the supremacy of the Bible, as a collection of religious documents, may be appealed to as itself a mighty presumptive argument of its own truth and of the truth of the religion it propounds. There is nothing parallel, nothing similar, in human literature. Place it by the side of the most ancient religious books, the Indian Vedas, the Chinese Classics arranged by Confucius, and the other sacred writings of

the world at large, and comparison must soon give up its task. Soon give it up: not immediately; for there are undoubtedly certain outlines of primitive truth in the ancient writings of the East which show that they also were written not without a certain degree of the Divine afflatus. The Holy Ghost has ever been the Voice of One crying in the wilderness, and saying, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. In the books which treat of the Science of Religion, and give us systems of Comparative Theology, more than justice is done to this element common to the sacred books of what we call heathenism and the Holy Scriptures: so far as mere justice is done, the advocate of Christianity heartily assents; but when the other holy writings are collated with the Christian at all points it is an exaggeration of justice that becomes most unjust. The Bible refuses to form one column of a great Biblical Polyglot. There is outside of the Christian Scriptures no document extant among men which really professes to have been written under the inspiration of God: and among those which may seem to make such a claim there is not one which does not in half its contents refute the claim, common sense being the judge. Again, there is no document of the kind extant for which it may be pleaded that, though as standing alone it has no divinity, it recovers its character when placed in a collection of sacred books. But there is not a book of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures which does not vindicate its own dignity and sanctity at all points when studied as belonging to the entire volume. This leads however to a distinct argument.

5. The Unity of the Scriptures of revelation is a very strong credential in its favour as professing to be from God. It is one great vision, and its interpretation one: beginning and ending with the same Paradise, with thousands of years of redeeming history between. It has been instinctively called, what it does not call itself, the Bible: one Book divided, if divided at all, into two parts. That the New Testament as fulfilment should so perfectly correspond with the Old Testament as prophecy is in itself the most wonderful phenomenon in literature: it is evidence as near demonstration as need be of the intervention of a Divine Hand. The Redeemer made manifest in the later Scriptures answers face to face and feature for feature to the Form predicted

Unity.

in the older Scriptures. But it is not merely that the Same Being is foreannounced in one book Who comes in another. He is the sole predominant subject of many books in both departments of the Bible. One idea runs through the whole: the kingdom of God set up or restored in His incarnate Son. To this idea authors of various ages and of various races contribute in a harmony which never could be the result of accident or mere coincidence. Only the Divine power could have made so many men, of different lands, concert, without concerting, such a scheme of literature. These men belonged to no school of consecutive writers: yet they seem as if they had been, before time was, in the counsel and council-chamber of Jehovah, and to have come forth each predestined to furnish his own contribution. If they had not asserted their inspiration of God, that hypothesis must have been invented to account for the facts and phenomena of their writings. But they have asserted it: the claim is bound up with every page of the word they have left behind them.

Unity in  
Develop-  
ment.

6. There is a special aspect of this argument which will be found of great importance by those who examine it from this point of view: that is, the unity of teaching which is maintained through a long and diversified course of development. The leading doctrines which distinguish Christianity from every other system of supposed religious truth are to be traced through the many books of the Bible in a line of everwidening and ever-deepening expansion. Each prominent article of our Faith may be traced upwards to its germ in the earliest Biblical documents, and downward again as it threads its way distinct from others until it finds its full expression. And all combined converge through the older Scriptures to a consummate harmony in the New Testament. These two facts are undoubted: they ought not, at least, to be doubted by anyone who is familiar with the history of doctrine in the Bible. The Holy Trinity, with the redeeming relation to mankind of the Second Person in that Trinity, and the relation to the universe of life sustained by the Third Person; the establishment in the world of a kingdom of grace destined finally to triumph; the acceptance of every penitent sinner by God on the ground of what is called a Righteousness of Faith; the essential difference between soul and body, with the transient

separation caused by physical death; the eternal issues of the present life of probation;—these are all doctrinal truths which run through the whole Bible, so that Christian preachers may take their proof-texts from almost every book; but which run through the Bible with always progressive clearness. The development of doctrine we have to study elsewhere. It is referred to now as a clear indication of the presence—perhaps it would be better to say of the very strong probability of the presence—of a Divine Hand in the construction of the Bible. The supreme truth—that of the Sacred Trinity in the Godhead—might be shown to bear up the pillars of this argument. There is not a single reference in the Old Testament to the Messiah as a Person near to Jehovah, or as Jehovah Himself, that is not perfectly consistent with the amazing secret concerning His being which the New Testament brings to light; nor is there a single reference, among multitudes, to the Spirit of God that is not perfectly in harmony with what the later Scriptures declare as to His relation to the Father and the Son. Such is the effect produced on the devout mind of a believer in Christianity by the consideration of this wonderful harmony that he is disposed to place it among the foremost evidences of the Faith. Most certainly it is one of its most emphatic and persuasive credentials.

7. It must be remembered that the argument based upon the presence of the Divine Hand in the construction of the Bible is not exhibited as final and demonstrative: it is, as has just been remarked, only a credential hard to resist. Here a few further observations may be made which will suggest hints to be followed out by the student himself to any extent.

(1.) There is in this no more demonstration than the analogical argument generally presents. Throughout the works of God—granted that the creation is a work of God—we perceive the universal sway of a law of evolution, qualified however by a subordinate law of occasional interventions that seem to break the former. Precisely what we find in nature and in providence we find in the gradual construction of Scripture. Why it should be so, it is vain to ask. That it is an absolutely valid proof of the Divinity or supreme authority of the Bible it is vain to assert. It might by the most wonderful of all coincidences have happened

Strength  
of the Ar-  
gument.

Ana-  
logical.

that such a Book should be composed at long intervals by authors independent of each other, and retain such a character of steady, uniform, evergrowing development. But the probabilities against this would have been exceedingly great.

Qualifica-  
tion.

(2.) Again, it must be borne in mind that the Divine influence and agency in Scripture is not asserted to be absolute and unqualified. What was said as to the miracles, and might have been said as to prophecy—that residual difficulties were to be expected in the nature of the case—may be said of the credentials of inspiration. Objectors frame hypotheses of miracle and prophecy with which the facts are not found to accord: and they are offended. So, also, they frame hypotheses of inspiration with which the records of revelation cannot be harmonised: and they turn away with suspicion. This subject will be more fully discussed when we come to the doctrine of inspiration. At present it is enough to say that there is in the human elements of the workmanship of Scripture nothing utterly inconsistent with the supposition of a Divine Hand overruling and controlling and even arranging the whole compass of sacred literature.

Summary.

#### SUMMARY.

These three credentials of Miracle, Prophecy, and Inspiration ought to be united: they mutually give and receive strength, and are strongest when they are combined. The miracle is of course most demonstrative to the extant generation of beholders, the prophecy is of course demonstrative only to the generations who come afterwards. The present generation in the midst of which miracles are wrought cannot hand down to us in the fullest degree the evidence of their senses; we who behold the fulfilment cannot send back to those who heard the prophecy our vision of accomplished prediction. Inspiration embraces the two in one: it records the fact of the miracle, and, as inspiration, makes it present to every age; while, as inspiration, its record of a prophecy makes the fulfilment as if it were already come or were already past to those who hear it. This may be made plainer by applying it to the narratives of our Lord's mission. Throughout the holy Gospels Jesus is found working miracles and uttering prophecies. When His works and His words were alike approaching their