

THE INSPIRATION

OF

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

LECTURE I.

Titles of the Bible—Supreme Importance of its Contents—Loftiness of its Character and Tone—Hereditary Reverence for the Scriptures—Happy Influence of them—Assaults of Infidelity—Peculiar Character of Scepticism in the Present Day—Inspiration a Subject of Vital Interest and Importance—Word of God existed in the World before it was embodied in a Written Form—Meaning of Inspiration—Necessity of Inspiration—Inspiration of the Scriptures collectively—Evidence furnished by the Faithful Custody of the Old Testament by the Jews—And of the New by the Early Christians—Evidence of their Inspiration given by the Testimony of Christ and of the Apostles—Meaning of Canon—Formed by Ezra—Account of the Old Testament Books by Josephus—Charge against Christ and the Apostles of speaking regarding the Scriptures in accommodation to the Prejudices of their Countrymen—Groundlessness of such a Charge—All Scripture given by Inspiration—Doubts regarding some Books, as Esther and Song of Solomon—Objections answered—Infallible Authority arising from Inspiration—Scriptures an Organic Whole.

THE Bible is a communication from God to man ; and the transcendent importance of its contents is significantly indicated by the various titles applied

to it. This sacred volume is called "the Bible," *i.e.* the Book, and the Scriptures, *i.e.* the Writings, as being incomparably more valuable than all the volumes which, in a written as well as printed form, have ever appeared in the world. It is called also "the oracles of God," as containing heavenly responses on matters of highest concern to man's peace and happiness, and "lively oracles," as pointing out the way to his enjoyment of spiritual and eternal life; "the word of reconciliation," as holding out the hope as well as the means of securing favour and acceptance with his greatly offended Maker; "the word of truth," as affording clear and certain information for guidance in faith and practice; and "the word of God," as, though conveyed in the language of man, it was divine in its origin, and carries a divine authority along with it. These different names describe the distinctive properties of the Bible, which occupies the same high rank amongst books as did the sheaf of Joseph, to which the sheaves of his father and brethren were seen to bow. The Scriptures are distinguished from all other books, not only by containing a greater mass and variety of matter than is to be found within the same compass in any other book, but by the character of their contents. They are the most

ancient of all books in the world, and tell us of events and transactions in the earliest ages of which we can obtain the knowledge from no other source. But it is not their venerable antiquity, their oriental dress, their picturesque delineation of patriarchal manners, that form their great value, or that recommend them pre-eminently to our notice. It is because they communicate information on matters of surpassing interest and importance; matters bearing directly on the welfare of man, both in this world and that which is to come. Moreover, the slightest acquaintance with them is sufficient to show that they are unique in their character, and, viewed generally, bear so little resemblance to any known productions of man, as to create a strong presumption that he is not the author. The style is so much more dignified and commanding than the greatest or boldest of mortals would have dared to assume; the discoveries made in the Scriptures stretch forward in a direction so remote from the course which all human researches have uniformly taken; the principle that pervades them is so humiliating to the native pride of man, and the whole of the details are of a kind, to the invention of which the natural powers of humanity are so manifestly unequal, that every intelligent and reflecting person

must be convinced that it has had a higher than human origin. Moreover, considered in their internal character and leading aim, the Scriptures are found to breathe a spirit of such exalted purity; they display such stern opposition to every form and degree of iniquity and vice; they make such an effectual provision for the banishment of all evils, and for the growth and establishment of all true excellence; their tendency is so strong and so well fitted to elevate this fallen world to the pure condition of heaven, and to renew man in conformity to the moral image of God, as affords conclusive evidence that they contain His revealed scheme of grace for the moral and spiritual regeneration of the human race.

In this land of Christian knowledge and observance, we are born and bred with a feeling of hereditary reverence for the Scriptures. This book awakens in the minds of all far other sentiments than those connected with a venerable antiquity; and though it presents only the same common appearance, and is composed of the same common materials with other books, its very name is a symbol of sacredness, greater than what is attached to any of the highest productions of human genius or learning. Nor is this feeling of veneration con-

finer only to classes of people who may be actuated by blind superstition on the one hand, or pietistic enthusiasm on the other. It is a sentiment which animates the inhabitants of this country generally, the origin of the popular belief being traceable to the influence of early impressions. And happy it is that this idea is engraven on the tablets of the youthful mind; that the persuasion is intertwined with its tenderest associations; and that the first elements of knowledge imbibed are usually those simple but sublime and interesting truths, that are taught as the leading principles of the sacred volume. I say, happy it is that childhood and youth are imbued with such strong prepossessions in favour of the divine character and authority of the Scriptures; for every intelligent and candid observer will admit that the use of the Bible for centuries in our national system of education has been one main cause of the superior intelligence that distinguishes our countrymen generally. In numberless instances it must have produced a beneficial influence in training the pupils to the love and practice of good; and while the remembrance of its precepts and solemn sanctions must have exercised a secret but powerful restraint on the passions of many who were not accustomed

to take it as their governing principle of action, multitudes who drank its spirit, and cherished its benign influence, have looked to it as their polar star in regulating the daily course of their lives ; and felt that, to part with it, would be to deprive themselves of a hope and belief essential to their comfort, and inwrought into their very being. By its direct and indirect influence amongst all classes, it has long moulded the national faith ; and the happy effects of it upon the people are seen in all the pursuits of social life and the arrangements of civil society, making them high in civilisation, advanced in the cultivation of the arts and sciences, refined in their manners, correct in their morals, pure in the administration of justice, and always in a state of progress. It must needs be, however, that offences come ; and persons whose attachment to the Scriptures has grown with their growth, and strengthened with their strength, are liable to have their cherished feelings frequently shocked by the assaults that are made on what they have been taught to regard and are accustomed to revere as sacred. At all times there have been secret or open enemies, who have doubted or denied the claims of the Bible, from the determined infidel who scouts the idea of an external revelation

through a book, deeming the inward light of reason and conscience sufficient, up to the rationalist who, while admitting the Scriptures to contain the will of God, subjects all its statements to the ordeal of reason. The age in which we live is no exception: for although the virulent spirit with which the Deistical controversy was last century waged has long ago ceased; although a Voltaire and a Paine have happily no imitators in the present day, their place has been occupied by successors like Strauss and Renan, whose philosophical or romantic theories are as wild and mischievous as the scoffing cavils of the one or the vulgar ribaldry of the other. The old hypothesis, indeed, which represented the sacred books as forgeries has been abandoned as untenable, its abettors having been discomfited by force of superior learning and well-applied argument. But although knowledge has changed the mode of warfare, and refinement tempered the asperity of opposition, infidelity is so far from being extirpated, that from special causes, connected chiefly with the scientific character and critical tendencies of the age, a quiet but settled scepticism prevails to a wide extent among the higher class of society; and it has been reserved to the present day to witness the strange phenomenon of professed Chris-

tians declaring their conviction that the Bible is a merely human production. While recognising the fact of a supernatural revelation having been given, they assert that the men who received the communication gave an honest account of it so far as they knew, understood, or remembered it, but that, through national prejudices or personal frailties, misapprehending or misstating its meaning, their records are so imperfect, erroneous, often self-contradictory and false, that no confidence can be placed in them; and that even where they are correct and coherent, the grains of divine truth are so blended with a mass of poetical myths, of legendary fables, and popular traditions, that reason and the higher criticism must be employed to test the credibility of the narrative, and admit only what approves itself to the moral intuition. This habit of thought, which has long prevailed in Germany, and given rise to a large proportion of the errors into which the divines of that country have fallen, has been imported into Britain, and is producing its natural fruits. The old recognised boundaries of inspiration have been broken down: some contend for a partial inspiration; others reject the idea of inspiration altogether as unreasonable, or reduce it to a minimum. So that the dignity and authority

of the divine sanction are almost wholly withdrawn from the sacred volume ; and critics feel themselves at liberty to discuss both the Bible itself, and the contents of its various books, with no other restraint than they would feel in the examination of the most ordinary publication. How greatly does it tend to lower the character and destroy all confidence in the sacred volume, when, instead of receiving implicitly its statements as the word of God, an active and constant exercise of judgment is required to extract the precious ore from the earthly accretion with which it is encrusted—to select the divine from the human, and to determine in what portions God is addressing us ! How directly does it tend not only to destroy the feeling of veneration due to the pure and holy word of God, but to keep the mind of the reader in a state of painful doubt and uncertainty as to whether, in the portion accepted, his faith is resting on the word of man or the word of God ! In these circumstances, the subject of inspiration is invested with immense importance. It has become one of the vital questions of the times ; and while it may be expedient to examine the grounds of our faith generally, as we are living in an age when the foundations of all old beliefs are being upturned and

sifted, it is imperatively necessary, from its bearing upon all our religious principles and practice, to have full confidence in the breadth and solidity of the basis on which we rest our persuasion of the divine character and supreme authority of the Scripture.

To set before you the evidences of this momentous fact, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the revealed word of God, and the only supreme rule of faith and manners, is the object of the following Lectures. But before entering upon the discussion of this subject, it may be proper to premise, that in one point of view the word of God long preceded the Bible. For the gracious declaration of God concerning a Redeemer of fallen man was announced in substance many centuries before the earliest of the sacred writers was born. The antediluvian patriarchs, Adam, Enoch, Noah, and others, as well as the first post-diluvian patriarchs, Shem, Melchizedek, and Job, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were not in possession of a Bible. And yet they had the word of God, communicated to them in various ways, and containing the essence of "the gospel which is now preached unto us." Nay, the very day that man became a sinner, the word of God

came to him, convincing him of sin, and relieving his despondency or despair by the announcement of a remedial scheme of salvation which divine grace had provided. That word, thus early given, was repeated by peculiar manifestations to many good men, and maintained in the world for a while by oral tradition, till, in the course of time, the revelations it embraced, and what information relating to the origin and early condition of mankind would be subservient to their religious instruction, were embodied in the permanent form of a book. That book has during four thousand years been wonderfully preserved amid the greatest vicissitudes; and while myriads of other books, once well known and held in high estimation, have become entirely obsolete, or been long ago lost in the gulf of oblivion, it still continues abreast, or rather in advance of the age,—as suitable to the character and condition of mankind in the nineteenth century as in the earliest times. If, then, God has spoken of Himself and His purposes of grace to our fallen humanity, what He has said must be authoritative, and all our speculations on these subjects must be superseded by the transcendent utterances of the divine oracle. But to the mind of every intelligent and reflect-

ing person, it must appear that, in such a case, the proper initiative is to satisfy ourselves that the Scripture is the word of the Most High God; and then, with that "as a light that shineth in a dark place," to explore our way into the regions of faith and duty.

Now all that constitutes Christianity as a scheme, separate from all other religious systems ever known in the world, is contained in this book, which sets forth its distinctive peculiarities in a series of facts, doctrines, and duties, accompanied with a record of miraculous interpositions, which are God's attestations to those truths and duties. Assuming, as on the present occasion we must do, that the record is authentic and genuine, we lay down, and shall endeavour to establish, the position that it is also inspired. In other words, our purpose is to show that the Bible, though consisting of matter written in the language and traced by the pen of mortals, frail and fallible as other men, yet bears the impress of a divine origin and character; consequently, is of supreme, infallible authority. Inspiration signifies "a breathing into;" and although it is not, strictly speaking, a scriptural term, the phraseology is borrowed from the act of the

Creator, who breathed into the nostrils of the newly formed man the breath of life; and the same act was repeated by our Lord after His resurrection, when He breathed on His disciples, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." By this significant act, He announced to them in a metaphorical way that a power was imparted to them, by which they were to be supernaturally enlightened in the knowledge and guided in the exhibition of divine truth,—a power exercised over them by the Holy Ghost, which caused the things which they wrote to be of absolute authority. It might or might not be accompanied by a revelation of facts, or of principles of truth previously unknown; but in either case, inspiration was equally needed. For else, how could a man, however holy or wise, write authoritatively? and how could he rightly know what should be a record conducive to the instruction and profit of God's people in all ages? In the course of our Lectures, we propose to consider the subject first in reference to the Scriptures collectively, and afterwards to the separate books, taking up in succession, though not formally, such points as the following: What is the kind as well as amount of evidence which can be adduced to

prove the inspiration of the Bible? Does this supernatural quality characterize the whole Scriptures? Does it pervade the sacred volume in an equal degree throughout; or does a higher degree attach to some portions, while an inferior measure only is imparted to others? Is the nature and extent of this inspiration sufficient to stamp upon the Bible the broad seal of divine and infallible authority, as the only standard of faith and duty? This summary of topics seems sufficiently comprehensive to cover the whole field of inquiry relating to the subject; and we are persuaded that a candid, enlightened, and full consideration of them will lead to the important result of establishing the Scriptures to be the word of God.

Now, with regard to the inspiration of the Old Testament, where can we look for the evidence of the fact so naturally and properly, as to the people who were appointed to be the depositaries of the divine will, and who executed their important trust with a fidelity worthy of the highest praise? It does not appear that the Almighty gave any written declaration of His will until He had separated the Jewish people from the rest of the nations for a time, to be His witnesses, and

at the same time custodiers of the various revelations which were to be made in the progressive development of His scheme of grace. From the commencement of their national history, they were placed under the superintendence of a human leader, who had received a divine legation, and who, in discharging the duties of his high mission, was admitted to the privilege of frequent and direct communication with his Divine Master, for the purpose of receiving instructions how he should introduce and establish that system of polity which was designed for the government of the people. During the whole existence of their peculiar economy, God was pleased to maintain a close and constant superintendence of the Jewish people by extraordinary messengers, sent from time to time to communicate His will; and although numbers of false prophets appeared, who counterfeited the true, and by their artful address gained a temporary ascendancy in deluding and misleading the people, certain plain and palpable criteria were given, by which all classes might easily determine the character of the men who spoke to them in the name of the Lord. The tests of a false prophet were these—the speedy failure of his predictions, or the infliction upon

himself¹ of some sudden judgments of Heaven ; and by the application of those marks the youngest and simplest might have been enabled to decide whether and how far the persons who appeared amongst them assuming the prophetic character were worthy of confidence. As the special dispensation which God established with that nation necessitated His frequent and direct interposition in their affairs, so that miraculous incidents were occasionally intermingled with the ordinary course of their history, we are prepared to expect a class of inspired men who were ambassadors of God in communicating His will ; and by this divinely contrived system of agency, the light of truth was preserved in the land which God had chosen to put His name there. Nor was this all ; for oral discourses would have produced a very transient impression on a rude and ignorant people, and therefore some permanent means were provided for the religious instruction of the people. The communications which Moses received from God he was commanded to record in a book, which was deposited, not only for perfect security, but as the protest against the national breach of the covenant in future times by idolatry, beside the

¹ Jer. xxviii. 17.

ark in the sanctuary.¹ This book was increased by successive additions made in the progress of the Jewish nation, such as the record of Joshua,² and other portions of the Scripture,³ with a collection of Proverbs, and perhaps of Psalms.⁴ At a later period, "the book of the Lord" is mentioned by Isaiah as a general collection for religious instruction;⁵ and "the book of the law," "the former prophets," and "the books," are referred to by Zechariah and Daniel.⁶ The popular belief of the Jewish church ascribed to Ezra, on the return from the Babylonish captivity, the honourable undertaking of collecting the isolated books of Scripture for the use of the resuscitated Jewish church. That protracted exile led to a complete revolution of the Jewish mind; for, from that time, the Jews being effectually cured of their infatuated propensity to idols and idolatry, began to cherish a devoted reverence for the God of their fathers, and an adherence to the religious institutions of their native country. The church was reorganized; and to aid the celebration of public worship, the sacred canon of the Old Testa-

¹ Deut. xxxi. 25; 1 Kings viii. 9; 2 Kings xxii. 8.

² Josh. xxiv. 26.

³ 1 Sam. x. 25.

⁴ Prov. xxv.

⁵ Isa. xxix. 18.

⁶ Zech. vii. 12; Dan. ix. 2.

ment was formed under the auspices of Ezra and "the great synagogue," so that part of the divine word was read every Sabbath-day in the synagogue, and the people acquired thereby a feeling of reverential regard for it, which time tended only to deepen and confirm. This was the great advantage of the Jews, that "to them were committed the oracles of God," and their whole subsequent history showed how highly they prized the sacred treasure. No lapse of time, no distance of place, no reverse of fortune, could cool their zeal or superinduce a spirit of indifference about the preservation of the sacred books. At home or abroad, in freedom or in exile, in Judea no less than in Babylon or Persia, in times of national independence, or during the prevalence of Roman ascendancy, their conservative tenacity to the Scriptures formed one of the prominent features of the Jewish character. Amid all the aberrations and crimes with which the Jews were chargeable, an imputation of treachery in the guardianship, or of designs upon the integrity, of the sacred books was never raised against them; and rather than surrender them at the mandate of a persecuting tyrant, they were prepared to encounter death in its most revolting forms. Nay, even though destitute for

the most part of a right apprehension of their meaning, and strangers to their spirit, they cherished a superstitious veneration for the letter of the Scriptures; and it rests upon the clearest historical testimony, that they maintained a constant jealous vigilance over their sacred books, extending their scrupulous care even to an enumeration of the words and letters contained in each book, — a bibliolatriy which has often been the occasion of exposing them to ridicule. Indeed, it is very remarkable that, divided as they were, in our Lord's time, into several hostile sects, there never was any difference amongst them respecting the character and status of the Scriptures, even though these Scriptures were unsparing in condemnation of their ways. In fact, it is the grand redeeming feature in the character of this singular people, that they watched with such unvarying scrupulosity over the written word; and the transmission of the sacred books from age to age, pure, uncorrupted, and unmutilated, affords to the church a satisfactory guarantee not only for the authenticity and genuineness, but for the divine origin and authority, of the Old Testament.

As the books of the Old Testament were committed to the Jews, so were those of the New

committed to the Christians; and although they were not deposited in the inaccessible crypt of a sanctuary, they were kept in the secure custody of churches or societies of pious servants of Christ, who set the highest value upon them as sacred treasures. As no part of the ancient Scriptures existed in a written form till the providence of God had selected a nation to preserve them, so no book of the later Scriptures was brought out in a permanent form till the organization of churches, in which they were carefully kept. And as the Old Testament existed in separate books till an advanced period in the history of the Jewish nation, when they were formed into a general collection; so the Gospel histories of Christ, and the Epistles of counsel and pastoral direction, were in private circulation a considerable time before the New Testament catalogue was made out as at present. Some of them were compiled in particular localities, and some of the epistles were addressed to churches or private individuals, so that they were not generally known to the church. But wherever writings were found, and ascertained on thorough inquiry to be the work of apostolic men, they were recognised by the Christians as sacred

books. Amid all the heresies and corruptions which rose with such rank luxuriance in the first centuries, the books which were inspired were universally received by the churches without a dissentient voice. If doubts were entertained respecting some of them, and a strict investigation made into their origin, these very circumstances contributed to establish their character as the compositions of apostolic writers, and diffused throughout the church a settled opinion in their favour. Their inspired character was certified by the common consent of the most intelligent Christians, who were very numerous in the second century, and not by the decision of an ecclesiastical council; for the Council of Laodicea, held in 363, which was not of extensive authority, "rather declared," as Paley remarks, "than regulated the public judgment on the subject of the New Testament canon."

The word canon denotes a rule; and, applied to the Bible, signifies that the books comprehended in the Old and New Testaments were regarded as an authoritative rule for regulating faith and practice. The canon of the Old Testament was, as we have seen, according to the uniform tradition of the Jewish church, formed

by the united counsels of Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, at a time when the spirit of inspiration had ceased, and the minds of the people, instead of anxiously looking for new revelations, were directed exclusively to the anticipated advent of the great Messiah. As these four men were prophets, who were each honoured to take a prominent part in the reorganization of the church or the rebuilding of the temple after the restoration, as well as to contribute independent portions to the volume of Scripture, their pious labours in carefully collecting, arranging, and revising a general edition of the sacred books, were received by their countrymen as a work of inspired authority, binding them to receive it as comprising a series of precious revelations with which their nation had been favoured from the God of their fathers. From that time the Old Testament was regarded as the standard of the national religion, the confession of the Jewish faith, the liturgy of the Jewish church, the venerable authority to which the Jews appealed for the origin and sanction of their peculiar polity and distinctive institutions. We learn from Josephus that it consisted of precisely the same contents, book for book, and word for

word, as are found in the copies of the Old Testament possessed by ourselves. "Every one," says he, "is not permitted of his own accord to be a writer, nor is there any disagreement in what is written; they being only prophets that have written the original and earliest accounts of things, as they learned them of God Himself by inspiration; and others have written what hath happened in their own times, and that in a very distinct manner also. For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times, which are justly believed to be divine. And of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws, and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years. But as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes King of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets who were after Moses wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history has been written

since Artaxerxes very particularly, but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation, is evident from what we do: for, during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, or to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it is become natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and if occasion be, willingly to die for them. For it is no new thing for our captives, many of them in number, and frequently in time, to be seen to endure racks and deaths of all kinds upon the theatres, that they may not be obliged to say one word against our laws, and the records that contain them.”¹ The Old Testament then appears, on the testimony of the Jewish historian, to have been exactly the same in his day as it is in ours; and as the canon was formed by the authority of prophets who were

¹ Josephus, *Contra Apion*, vol. iv. Book i. sec. 8, Whiston's translation. See Note A.

universally acknowledged to be inspired messengers of God, it must be regarded as inspired also.

Similar remarks are applicable to the canon of the New Testament. Without entering into the detailed history of its formation, which is too complicated a narrative to be undertaken here, it may suffice to say, that although the three first Gospels were compiled for the use, and for a considerable time known within the confines, of particular localities only; although many of the Epistles, which occupy a large portion of the New Testament, were occasional and fragmentary, the collection of these isolated documents to an extent that forms a complete system of doctrine, duty, and discipline, exhibits a striking proof of the watchful providence which presided over the development of the early Christian church. Doubts were entertained respecting some of the epistles, viz. that to the Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude. But the researches of many learned and pious fathers, who earnestly and patiently traced out their apostolic origin, established the claims of these epistles to be the genuine productions of the authors whose names they bear; and the general consent with which all the western churches especially have united in re-

cognising the canon of the New Testament, is a fact which must be considered as tantamount to an acknowledgment of its inspiration. Now, such an acknowledgment rests upon the basis of tradition, and may be considered on that account as a doubtful or unsound conclusion. But it is one thing to recognise the use of tradition as authoritative; it is a totally different thing to admit it in the way of testimony; and while we decidedly object to the elevation of ecclesiastical tradition to a place of authority in regulating our faith, we value it exceedingly, when it is pure, uninterrupted tradition, as attesting a historical fact of great importance, viz. the unanimity of the early church in ratifying the canon of the New Testament.

We have now advanced the first stage in our treatment of the subject of these Lectures. For, considering the persons by whom, as well as the grounds on which, the canon both of the Old and the New Testaments was constituted, the admission of any book into the number of the canonical books is a virtual recognition of its inspiration. *Canonical* becomes synonymous with inspired; and every one book which has obtained a place amongst the sacred books, is presumably

worthy to constitute a component part of the word of God, and to demand the faith and submission of believers.

But canonical authority, though a strong, is only a presumptive, argument in favour of inspiration; and therefore we proceed to adduce "a nobler Witness still," in the person of our Saviour, followed by His apostles, who bore the most unequivocal testimony to the divine character and authority of the Old Testament. In His frequent rebukes of the lifeless formalities and gross corruptions of His age, as well as in His exposition of the principles and blessings of the gospel dispensation, our Lord was necessarily led to speak of the Scriptures; and whether the strain of His discourse required Him to appeal to them in support of an argument or in fulfilment of a prophecy, He represented these sacred books as containing the will of God, and constituting the only authoritative standard of truth. When He exhorted His hearers to "search the Scriptures," or, as it is sometimes rendered, commended them for doing so, He referred to the collection of religious documents which, according to the testimony of Josephus, the Jews held to be of divine authority. When He put to them the question, Did ye never

read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders despised, the same is made the head of the corner? He meant the Scriptures which were publicly read in their synagogues, and contained in these words an inspired prediction of His rejection as Messiah. When, in His memorable conversation with the disciples at Emmaus, He expounded to them in all the (Old Testament) Scriptures the things concerning Himself; and when, on a later occasion, He said to them, "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me,"—He described the Old Testament according to that triple arrangement of the sacred books which popular usage had introduced. When He appealed to "Moses and the prophets," and to "all the law and the prophets," as containing the fundamental principles of pure and undefiled religion, He was employing another common and familiar form of speech for the Old Testament Scriptures, and appealing to them as the tribunal to which all controversies about doctrine and practice must be brought. Nay, He not only bore testimony to the inspired character of the Old Testament in general, but at different times, and

in different ways, vouched for the inspiration of the writers separately. He attested the truth and divine authority of the books of Moses;¹ of the books of Samuel;² of the books of Kings and Chronicles;³ of the book of Psalms;⁴ of the prophets generally;⁵ of the book of Isaiah;⁶ of the book of Daniel;⁷ of the book of Hosea;⁸ of the book of Jonah;⁹ of the book of Micah;¹⁰ and of the book of Malachi.¹¹ These and several others of the prophets were quoted by our Lord as possessing in their writings the authority of the word of God. Perhaps no higher attestation to the divine character of the ancient Scriptures was given than what is furnished by the fact, that the weapons with which He encountered and vanquished the tempter in the wilderness were taken from the armoury of the Old Testament; and it

¹ Matt. v. 17, 18, xv. 1-6, xxii. 31, xxiii. 1, 2; Mark vii. 8-13, xx. 26; Luke xvi. 29, 31, xx. 37; John iii. 14, v. 45, 47.

² Matt. xii. 1-5; Luke vi. 3, 4.

³ Cf. 1 Kings x. 1-13, 2 Chron. ix. 1-12, with Matt. xii. 42.

⁴ Cf. Ps. viii. 2 with Matt. xxi. 15, 16, and Ps. cx. 1 with Matt. xxii. 41-46, Mark xii. 35-37.

⁵ Luke xxiv. 44-46.

⁶ Matt. xiii. 13-15, xv. 7-9, xxi. 13; Mark vii. 6, 7; Luke iv. 17-21.

⁷ Matt. xxiv. 15; Mark xiii. 14.

⁸ Cf. Hos. vi. 6 with Matt. ix. 13, xii. 9.

⁹ Matt. xxii. 39-41, xvi. 4; Luke xi. 29-32.

¹⁰ Cf. Mic. vii. 6 with Matt. x. 35, 36.

¹¹ Cf. Mal. iii. 1, iv. 5, 6, with Matt. xi. 10, Luke vii. 27.

may be noticed that the last act in the tragic scene of the crucifixion was the fulfilment of the only remaining prophecy connected with His personal history: "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."¹ Nay, further, He has ratified that class of facts which appear to human reason to stand most in need of confirmation, and are pronounced by rationalistic critics fatal to the idea of inspiration. The deluge, the overthrow of Sodom, the fate of Lot's wife, the burning bush, the brazen serpent, and the manna; these miracles He authenticated as actual facts, and inferentially bore testimony not only to their truth, but to the inspired character of the books which narrated them.

In like manner, the apostles bore testimony to the divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures collectively. "When Paul, according to his custom, went into the synagogue of Thessalonica, and reasoned three successive Sabbaths out of the Scriptures," the book referred to was, of course, those ancient writings of "Moses and the prophets," for which those foreign Jews professed so great a regard, and to which, in common with that people,

¹ Ps. xxii. 15, lxix. 21; John xix. 28.

the apostle appealed as his divine authority for his Christian teaching.¹ When Paul reminded the Corinthians of the fundamental principle of his gospel, that Christ died, was buried, and rose again, according to the Scriptures,² he virtually claimed inspiration for those ancient books, which so truly predicted those great crises in the Saviour's history. When this apostle, in his pastoral letter to Timothy, alluded to his young friend having known the Holy Scriptures from his childhood, there could be no doubt that he was referring to those Scriptures which were universally received by the Jews, and to which was ascribed the divine quality of "making wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." And when another apostle ranked the Epistles of Paul with "the other Scriptures," and employed terms of severe rebuke to those ignorant and unstable men who "wrested both to their own destruction," he drew a line of demarcation around the books of the sacred volume, that separated them from all literary productions of ordinary men, as the cordon that was drawn around the base of Sinai separated its holy heights from all earthly objects around. While the apostles thus bore testimony to the

¹ Acts xvii. 2. ² Isa. liii. 6, 12; Dan. ix. 26; Ps. xvi. 10.

divine authority of the Scriptures collectively, they also spoke in the same strain of the sacred writers separately. Thus Paul says:¹ "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." The same apostle writes:² "The Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn,"—referring to a precept in the book of Deuteronomy, and to that book as one of divine authority. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews³ refers to Ps. xcv. 7 in this manner: "Wherefore, as the *Holy Ghost* saith, Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." The same author says:⁴ "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past to the fathers by the *prophets*." Peter, in a discourse spoken in the primitive church,⁵ said, in allusion to Ps. xvi., "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch *David*, that being a *prophet*, he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in *Hades*, neither did His flesh see corruption." This apostle says:⁶ "The prophets inquired

¹ Gal. iii. 8.² 1 Tim. v. 18.³ Heb. iii. 7.⁴ Heb. i. 1.⁵ Acts ii. 29-31.⁶ 1 Pet. i. 10-12.

and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you ; searching what, or what manner of time, the *Spirit of Christ which was in them* did signify, when it (the Spirit of Christ which was in them) testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." And this same apostle declares in a similar strain:¹ "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."²

The writers of the New Testament themselves adopt the same style as the ancient prophets in claiming submission to their instructions as the word of God ;³ and their claim to inspiration also was attested by our Lord,⁴ who, by various expressions of His, virtually and absolutely gave the sanction of His high authority to their instructions, whether in oral discourses or in writings. Such, then, is the claim to inspiration made for the writers of the Old and New Testaments ; and resting, as that claim does, on the unchallengeable testimony of our Lord, as

¹ 2 Pet. i. 21.

² See other passages : Rom. iii. 2 ; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17 ; 1 Pet. iii. 19-21.

³ 1 Cor. vii. 40 ; 1 Thess. iv. 6, 8 ; 2 Pet. iii. 1-4, 16 ; 1 John iv. 6.

⁴ Luke xii. 12 ; John xiv. 17, 26.

well as their own high character as men of truth and piety, it would be sufficient, independently of all other considerations, to entitle them to our faith and confidence. It is an attestation to the divine authority of the Old Testament, of the most positive, unqualified nature; and, therefore, all who recognise the unerring authority of the New Testament, will admit the full weight and value of such a declaration, made by Him whom all Christians regard as "the Prophet of the Highest." But this conclusion is not universally assented to; for those modern critics who deny the genuineness and authenticity of several portions of the Old Testament, and at the same time profess their faith in the Christian Scriptures, do not hesitate, in order to evade the irresistible force of evidence derived from the testimony of Christ and His apostles, to characterize their declarations as a mere accommodation to Jewish errors and prejudices. "They maintain," to use the words of an excellent writer, "from Le Clerc downwards, that it formed no part of the mission of Christ and His apostles to instruct the Jews in matters of criticism; not considering that, though they may not have been teachers of criticism, yet they were

certainly, as Witsius remarks, ‘teachers of truth,’¹ and of criticism too,—if the term is allowable,—when the current criticism and interpretation were opposed to truth. How utterly unsupported this pretended accommodation is, must be evident to every impartial reader who considers the passages adduced above, and particularly John v. 46, 47, where belief in the *writings of Moses* and in Christ’s own words is so intimately related, that the divinity of the Redeemer’s mission is so connected with the divine authority of the law, as to constitute with it one whole.”² In short, this is a line of argument which no sincere and enlightened Christian can for a moment adopt. To maintain that our Lord, in the course of His sermons and conversations, was in the habit of accommodating His language and views to the reigning notions of His country and age, is at variance with the whole character of His ministry; to concede that He possessed no better knowledge than the rest of His countrymen, is a dishonour to the character of Him to whom “the Spirit was given without measure;” to suppose that, through the mere influence of traditional impres-

¹ *Miscell. Sac.* 115.

² Macdonald, *Introduction to the Pentateuch*, i. 366.

sions, He represented books as worthy of credit which comprised only a collection of legends, false miracles, forged prophecies, and gross exaggerations of real events, is a libel on Him who is emphatically called "the Truth;" above all, to allow that He was fallible, or mistaken in applying passages from the Old Testament as inspired predictions of His advent and ministry, would naturally lead to the conclusion that He was equally liable to err in His interpretation of other parts of Scripture, and thus, by throwing doubt and uncertainty upon all the texts He cited as evidences of His Messiahship, the inevitable result would be a disturbance of that complete harmony between the Old and New Testaments, on which depends the truth of Christianity as the fulfilment of the old covenant. Such are the consequences which apparently follow from the hypothesis that Christ "shared the common views of the Jews in His day, in regard to points ethically and doctrinally unimportant."¹ To adopt it, therefore, as a way of determining the value and extent of His testimony to the divine authority of the Old Testament, and to represent Him as speaking of that early portion of the Bible

¹ Davidson's *Introduction*.

in conformity with the current notions of His time, is a perilous argument, from which all sound Christians will shrink. His attestation must be regarded as that of the great infallible Prophet of the Church; and although a certain class of critics have declared against its enlistment into this argument, as inconsistent with the principles of scientific criticism, believers must receive His verdict as decisive upon the point.

The apostles were in this respect, as in all others, "the followers of Christ;" and being endowed with an extraordinary effusion of His Spirit, they acted upon the same principle of appealing to the Old Testament as a divine authority. So far from showing a loose and temporizing accommodation to the prejudices of their countrymen in their interpretation and application of the ancient Scriptures, they assumed a firm and unyielding attitude in maintaining that "they spake none other things than Moses and the prophets did say should come;" and the language of Paul, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other doctrine than that which has been preached unto you, let him be accursed," would have been that employed by all his apostolic brethren in reference to any party who

should have asserted that the gospel which they taught was not the just development of the scheme of grace which had been progressively revealed in "the law and the prophets." This conclusion is expressed by Paul in the classical passage in the Epistle to Timothy,—“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,”—a passage containing an affirmation which, according to the direct literal import of the words as they stand, is applicable to the whole contents of the sacred volume. The correctness of the translation, however, has been called in question, and various renderings have been proposed and supported. One of these, “Every Scripture divinely inspired is also profitable,” is strenuously espoused by the opponents of plenary inspiration, as it implies that there are some parts not inspired. Another, “the whole Scripture divinely inspired,” limits it to the books which the Jews received as canonical, founding on the assumed position that, at the time when the apostle wrote to Timothy, no part of the New Testament had been published. But that is a mistaken idea; and hence Coleridge, with a manly frankness that did him honour, made this declaration: “Here I renounce any advantage I might obtain for my argument

against plenary inspiration, by restricting our Lord's and the apostle's words to the Hebrew canon. I admit the justice, I have long felt the force, of the remark, 'We have all that the occasion allowed.' And if the same awful authority does not apply so directly to the evangelical and apostolical writings as to the Hebrew canon, yet the analogy of faith justifies the transfer. If the doctrine be less decisively scriptural in its application to the New Testament or the Christian canon, the temptation to doubt it is likewise less."¹ The fact is, to translate the passage in the manner proposed, not only does violence to the grammatical structure of the sentence, but to the course of argument pursued by the apostle, who, having urged Timothy to adhere to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, by ascribing to them the noblest of all powers, viz. being "able to make wise unto salvation," lest he might be charged with an exaggerated eulogium, reminds his beloved son in the faith, that every part of them is inspired of God. "Every portion of them," says Bengel, "is inspired of God,"² *i.e.* not merely when written,

¹ Coleridge's *Confessions*, p. 30. See Note B.

² θεόπνευστος.

God breathing through the writers, but also when read, God breathing through the Scriptures, and the Scriptures breathing Him." This famous passage, in which the divine inspiration of the Scriptures is dogmatically asserted on the high authority of an apostle, may seem decisive on the point; and were there no other from which we could discover the real character and claims of the Bible, this declaration of Paul, it might be supposed, would be considered final and conclusive in determining that the book is divine in its origin, and possessed of infallible authority. But critics of no mean name and authority contend, that to view it as susceptible of so unlimited application, is to extend it beyond the range which the circumstances of the case will warrant. They allege, that as the word "all" is used frequently by the sacred writers in a restricted sense, "all" Scripture must be considered as so limited here; and that especially, as there is reason to believe that interpolations have been made by later hands on the original text of the historical books, it falls within the legitimate province of reason to separate what is divine from what is merely human, or to winnow the spurious matter that may have been

intermixed with the text. And they maintain further, that as there is no catalogue of the canonical books, nor any express declaration made in the sacred volume concerning the inspiration of each particular book, it is quite possible that there may be some books which, although undoubtedly genuine and authentic, may possess but slight or doubtful claims to be regarded as written under the influences of the Holy Spirit, and forming a part of the rule of faith. In the number of such disputed works they place the book of Esther and the Song of Solomon; the former of which is noted for the extraordinary omission of the name, or any allusion to the name, of God from beginning to end,—an omission unaccountable, if this book emanated from a divine source; and the latter of which abounds with strange scenes and indelicate images, while it is pervaded throughout by a strain of gross and undisguised sensuousness, which it is impossible to adapt to the purposes of moral and religious edification. These books, it is alleged, are little in accordance with the rest of the Old Testament; and their title to be regarded as inspired productions is by no means so clear or strong as that it should be required of all Christians,

under a penalty of ostracism as heretics, to believe in their inspiration. To all such objections satisfactory answers are at hand. Admitting that a few chronological or archæological explanations were inserted by Ezra or his prophetic colleagues in the historical books, the addition of such supplementary notes is never considered as affecting the intrinsic character or value of the original composition; and so far as relates to the integrity of the Old Testament books, and the fact of their comprising the identical sameness of contents as of old, the extreme scrupulosity of the Jews, and the jealous vigilance of their rival sects, afford the fullest guarantee for their inviolable purity before the destruction of Jerusalem. Since that momentous era there has been no opportunity, from the opposing attitude of both Jews and Christians, of attempting, had the wish been cherished, any corruptions on the state of the Old Testament text. The Christians who appeal to the writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, in proving that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, would not have permitted the Jews to lay the daring hand of innovation upon any portion of them; while the Jews, on the other hand, inheriting the re-

verential feelings of their ancestors for the letter of Scripture, still cling with fond tenacity to "the oracles of God which were committed to them," and thus unconsciously exhibit the most extraordinary instance which the history of the world presents, of a whole people preserving with marvellous fidelity national documents which hold up continually before their veiled eyes the great sin which was the occasion of their ruin and dispersion. With regard to the book of Esther, the omission of the divine name may be considered as sufficiently accounted for by its being an excerpt from the Persian archives. The design of it is to record one of the most signal deliverances which the providence of God ever wrought for His imperilled people; and on this account, it has not only been incorporated with the history, but forms an indispensable link in the chain of records that pertain to the captivity of the ancient church. It is a book, therefore, of great importance. Its canonical authority was never doubted; and the Jews, who valued it next to the Pentateuch, placed it amongst the Chetubim or Hagiographa, *i.e.* "Holy Writings," which constituted the first in their threefold division of the Old Testament. The

objection to the Song of Solomon is the amatory strain of the poem, which seems incongruous with the character of the divine word. But it has always formed a portion of the sacred canon ; and the Christian church has, from the beginning, regarded it as a divine allegory, descriptive of the mutual love that is cherished between Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, and the church, which is the Bride, the Lamb's wife. The figure which pervades the book is a favourite one with the sacred writers ; for the books of Ezekiel and Hosea, particularly the forty-fifth Psalm, which is descriptive of the glories of Messiah, furnish eminent examples of the same luxuriant imagery. The leading idea of the Song is the exhibition of religion as a divine affection, a lively union between Christ and His people, with all the sentiments, emotions, and warm language expressive of human attachment. It is entirely in unison with Oriental taste to represent moral and religious truths in such a figurative garb ; so that, however strange it appears to our European views of propriety and taste, the strain of this Song exactly accords with the style of sentiment and feeling that prevails in the countries of the East. However mystical it may be, and difficult to apply in

the way of spiritual improvement, that obscurity is no reason in itself against the inspiration of the book, any more than against parts of Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Revelation. It may be expected to become clearer and better understood as time rolls on, just as light has been thrown on various portions of the sacred volume in these latter days. Upon the whole, the objections urged against these two books, as well as against some parts of others, cannot outweigh the uniform testimony of the church, which has always regarded them as included in the sacred canon. As they formed part of the Scriptures which were read in the synagogues every Sabbath-day, we must consider them as constituting a portion of divine truth; and we lay it down as a fundamental principle in the exercise of Christian judgment, that every book in the Old Testament must be considered inspired, if there is clear historical evidence that it was ranked amongst the Jewish Scriptures at the time when our Lord set His seal on them. The fact that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" stamps it as divine truth, and at the same time invests it with infallible authority. Such authority is indispensable in the matter of revealed religion, otherwise the benefits it was intended to confer

will not be realized. If God was pleased to give to man a special revelation of His will, and yet allowed the agents He selected for communicating it to the world to make it known in what manner and terms they pleased, mankind must have been involved in painful doubt and uncertainty whether they really possessed a true and perfectly reliable expression of the divine mind—whether in matters of the greatest interest and importance they were informed of the exact truth, or whether it might be safe for them to follow the counsels of men, who, however wise, were liable to err, and however benevolent, might undesignedly mislead. But the assurance that we have in the Scriptures, not only a revelation of the divine will, comprising all that we are to believe concerning God, and all the duty He requires of us, but an unerring record of that revelation, imparts an incomparable value to that sacred volume, and raises the authors of its several books to a supremacy above all other instructors of the world. It was not by the force of their natural talents, nor by means of profound study and extensive erudition, nor even through the influence of rare advancement in piety, they became what they were. Not one, nor all these qualities combined, could have placed them above

the condition of fallible men, and enabled them to speak the momentous truths of religion without some admixture of error. Many learned and good men have been raised up in different ages of the church to undertake the office of religious teachers, —Augustine, Calvin, Luther, and a host of others in early as well as later times,—who, by their oral discourses, performed good service while living, and left behind them in their published writings, memorials of their zeal and usefulness, by which, though “being dead, they yet speak.” None of them, however, were free from error, can be followed implicitly as guides, or were possessed of authority to demand submission. But when we go to the writers of the Scriptures, we have instructors and guides in whom we can repose the fullest confidence, and who were possessed of commanding authority. And how were they so pre-eminently qualified? Who or what enabled them to teach the highest doctrines and duties of religion unmixed with error? It was because they spoke and wrote “by the inspiration of God;” because they were favoured with such extraordinary and supernatural measures of light and assistance, as made them fully instructed in all the truth which they required themselves to know, or were called

to communicate to others—the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But it is not doing justice to the penmen of the Scriptures, to represent them in the light merely of teachers or guides to the discovery of truth. The extraordinary messengers, or ambassadors of God, furnished with credentials of a divine mission, they professed to declare truths which men could not discover by their natural faculties, and to be the bearers of intelligence which could be known only through their testimony. They made no pretensions to penetration or foresight superior to other men, or claimed credence on the ground of extensive knowledge and conscious intellectual and moral greatness. The only claim to the attention and confidence of men they put forth, was that they were the messengers of God; and appealing, in support of that claim, to the preternatural powers with which they were endowed, they demanded the reception due to men who, by the miracles they wrought, gave unequivocal evidence that “they were teachers come from God.” They did not propound the doctrine which they taught as recommended by the prestige of illustrious names, or accordant with the principles of sound philosophy: they rested it exclusively on

the ground that it was divine, and urged it on the acceptance of men, not because it was true and good, and therefore, as might be reasonably thought, came from God, but because it came from God, and therefore was true and good. This was the uniform tone they assumed, the authoritative manner in which they spoke. They laid no stress on their personal characters and positions as entitling them to attention, but put all their claim to confidence on the fact that they were commissioned legates, who uttered the words which God had bidden them.

Thus each of the sacred writers performed his allotted part; and as "God at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets," those various revelations were adapted with divine wisdom to the state and capacities of the church in successive ages, being clearer and fuller as the people were able to bear them. If Moses wrote his laws, and Isaiah recorded his evangelical predictions, if David indited his devotional songs, and Paul his pastoral epistles, they contributed, along with their prophetic and apostolic brethren, to the completion of the sacred volume. There is no evidence that they had received any revelation beyond what is embodied

in the Scriptures; and there is good reason for concluding that they were favoured with none: for if any new or unknown truths had been communicated to one or another of those men of God, the knowledge of which would have proved beneficial to the church, we may be assured that they would have been incorporated with "the volume of the book." But the era of sensible manifestations, or revelations in visions and dreams, has long ago passed away; the spirit of inspiration has been withdrawn; and since John, in the Apocalypse, completed what Moses began, there is every reason to believe that we have the mind of God as fully disclosed in the Scriptures as it was His pleasure that it should be in the present state and economy of providence. The Spirit, indeed, is still with the church, and we have a divine assurance that He will permanently abide with her. But instead of pouring His supernatural light directly into the minds of Christians now, as He did of old into those who were the chosen agents in revealing the will of God, He shines with beams reflected from the pages of the written word; and while we anticipate that, in the church of the future, religious knowledge will be greatly increased by the development of

latent and yet unperceived truths lying in the Bible, just as men have become richer in the world since its mineral wealth has been discovered, and chemical science has shown us the method of applying its products to the useful and liberal arts, no new revelation is to be expected beyond what is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. These comprehend the whole word of God, which has been revealed for our salvation. There is an entire harmony between them as to the main purpose of revelation: the one is the germ, the other is the full-grown plant; the one is the promise, the other the fulfilment; the one is the dawn of the early or advancing morn, the other the light of the full day; the one gives the history of the preparation for the kingdom of God, while the other exhibits its establishment. In this view there is a close and indissoluble connection between the Old and New Testaments,—the one is incomplete and disjointed without the other; and an enlightened perception of the relative importance of the various books of Scripture, as well as of their collective bearing on the system of divine truth, is indispensable to a full appreciation of the value of the revealed word. So remarkable is the unity of the Scriptures, so strongly

are the same great characteristics impressed upon them, that the wondrous drama which it contains, beginning in Eden, and closing with the New Jerusalem, though divided into various scenes, consisting of many successive and diversified acts, is one organic whole. The *dramatis personæ*, if we may say so, are the same throughout. Thus the opening scene describes God as having created all things in the world very good: Adam formed out of the earth, and Eve taken from his side; the serpent in paradise; man tempted,—seduced from his allegiance to his Maker, and exiled from Eden; the way of the tree of life guarded by a flaming sword; and a gracious promise made most seasonably to the fallen pair, “that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” The closing scene bears a striking correspondence to the opening portion of the book. The objects that were withdrawn from view after the fall are reproduced upon the scene; paradise is regained, the ends of the sacred history are united, and the glorious circle of revelation completed. The tree of life, whereof there were but faint reminiscences in all the intermediate time, again stands by the river or water of life, but no longer an interdicted object, and access to it guarded by a flaming

innocence would have been ; but the city, costlier indeed, more stately, more glorious, but at the same time the result of toil, labour, and pain, occupied not by a single human pair, but by a vast multitude, 'whom no man can number,' reared into a nobler and more abiding habitation, yet with stones which, after the pattern of 'the elect corner-stone,' were each in his time laboriously hewn and painfully squared for the places which they fill." (Trench.)

Such is the completed form of the divine scheme of grace that is revealed in the Scriptures ; and when we consider its nature and provisions, the manner in which it was given out by small and detached communications, and the lengthened period occupied in its progressive development, till the mystery hid from ages was disclosed, we must perceive the absolute necessity there was, that the men successively employed in announcing it should be inspired. How would an earthly government do, in conducting a diplomatic correspondence with a foreign state, when about to transmit a despatch on some delicate and important matter that has disturbed or broken their amicable relations ? Would they entrust the preparation of the document that contains their

proposals of adjustment to inferior persons, who should be at liberty to communicate it in whatever manner they chose? Would not the master mind of the ruler, if he did not dictate the precise terms, take good care that it should accurately and fully convey the views entertained by himself or cabinet? And when God, in the fulness of His mercy and love to His fallen and sinful creatures, provided a scheme of grace which He chose special ambassadors to announce to man, in the language of man, would not the same paternal wisdom and goodness guard against error in a case of such moment to their highest interests, by guiding His messengers to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? We are thus led on by the principles of reason to believe in the *necessity* of inspiration. And when we look to the character of the Scriptures,—their veracity, their fidelity, their spirit of purity, their penetrating foresight and comprehensive wisdom,—we are led to believe also in the *fact* of inspiration: the Scripture is a witness of its own inspiration. Were a rude and ignorant peasant to produce a work of profound intelligence, such as Butler's *Analogy*, elucidating the profoundest subjects in the philosophy of religion, we should

revert to his antecedents, and consider how far they justified a belief that he was equal to so great an intellectual achievement. And in reviewing all that history, observation, or experience has taught us of what men have done, what they are or have been, is there the smallest ground for believing that they were, by their unaided powers, equal to the composition of a Bible which Carlyle has pronounced "the greatest work of literature in the world"? And then, when we take into account its fitness for its purpose, its precious truths, its supernatural doctrines, its insight into the hearts of men, its selection of subjects, its manner of teaching them, its complete adaptation to the character and wants of men, together with the miraculous testimony it bears to its own truth, and the numerous prophecies to be found in every part of the Bible,—many of them fulfilled, some in the course of fulfilment, and others remaining to be fulfilled,—what are all these, but cumulative proofs of the heavenly origin, the divine inspiration of the sacred books which constitute the Scriptures? In this view, the Scriptures, in their collective capacity, appear to be the word of God; and their authority does not depend on the fact whether this prophet or

that wrote a particular book or parts of a book ; whether a certain portion was derived from the Elohist or Jehovist ; whether Moses wrote the close of Deuteronomy, Solomon was the author of Ecclesiastes, or Paul of the Epistle to the Hebrews ; but on the fact that a prophet, an inspired man, having the credentials of his high commission, wrote them, and that they bear the stamp and impress of a divine origin. Since this, then, is the general character of the Scriptures, it sufficiently exposes the folly and presumption of Rationalism, the object of which is to eliminate everything of a supernatural character from the sacred volume, by denying all miracles and prophecy, and even expunging from the historical records every fact and incident different from the natural course of things, as the fabulous legends of an ignorant and a credulous age. But those who allow themselves thus to decide what are the truths which it is fit for God to reveal, and what it is worthy of human reason to receive, invest their fallible judgment with an authority to which it is totally inadequate, and for which it never was designed. In assuming this high prerogative, they are chargeable with daring presumption ; they act on the supposition that they are

perfectly capable of judging as to the nature and degree of that illumination which God may be pleased to communicate, and that He will not reveal any truths to His intelligent offspring, whose meaning is not obvious to their comprehension. But the Bible is the record of revelation,—of a scheme of grace for the pardon and salvation of sinful men, who can obtain the knowledge of it from no other source; it exhibits the hand of Jehovah, announcing, superintending, and directing the development of this scheme in all ages of the church. It must therefore be received, not as men may think it ought to be, but as the Revealer Himself has described it in the Scriptures; and the only way to know this is to search the Scriptures, endeavouring to discover the import of their language according to the most approved principles of interpretation. Most invaluable is the knowledge they communicate; for from this book, and from it alone, we obtain information on the most important subjects which it concerns us to know and believe,—on the origin of man, the introduction of sin into the world, the method of redemption, the reality and retributions of a future world, the pure society and the perfect form of God's moral government there.

Of these and numerous other subjects,—which are of the highest interest and of vital importance to man, and utterly beyond the reach of our natural means of intelligence, nay, respecting which we do not possess the means of forming even a faint conjecture without the guiding light of revelation,—we know nothing, and have not the means of knowing anything, except they be shown to us by the Revealer. Those who acknowledge the Scriptures to be the word of God, are bound to bow to their sovereign authority in all matters of faith and duty. It is the only divine and perfect standard by which the value of all things in the world is determined; by which all characters are judged, all actions are weighed, and the lawfulness or excellence of all pursuits is tried. It is the common source from which all sects derive their distinctive principles, the ultimate tribunal to which all sects appeal for the settlement of their differences. On every work which emanates from the mind of a mere human author, we may sit in judgment with perfect propriety,—may canvass its principles or reject its conclusions at pleasure. But towards a book which bears the stamp and impress of a heavenly origin, we are bound to cherish no other sentiment than

that of reverence for its character, as well as submission to its authority; and, yielding to the supremacy of its utterances in all matters beyond the grasp of our reason, the language of our hearts should be, "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

We have thus endeavoured to show the inspiration of the Scriptures collectively, first, from the testimony of the ancient Jewish church, which reckoned the same books of the Old Testament as we have in their sacred canon; secondly, from the repeated appeals to them made by our Lord and His apostles as the word of God; and thirdly, from the internal evidence of their contents. The testimony of our Lord, independently of all other considerations, is, or ought to be, a decisive authority; for it is the testimony of Him who spoke with perfect and infallible knowledge, and therefore it would be the height of presumption to subjoin evidence additional to His for the purpose of confirming the position that the Scriptures are given by inspiration of God. But it may be interesting and useful to trace the application of this principle in the separate books or classes of books of Scripture; and this we purpose to do in the following two Lectures.

sword. God is there seated on His throne, and represented as the object of universal adoration; Christ the second Adam, and Eve in the character of the church, His bride; the dragon, that old serpent, in the deadly contest with whom Christ had been wounded in the heel (His humanity), and slain; but He "liveth for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death;" He has now bruised the serpent's head; and having chained him, opens the bottomless pit, and casts him into the lake of fire and brimstone, there to remain for ever. But though there is this unity between the early and the concluding scenes of the wondrous drama of this world's history as contained in the Scriptures, "a great advance has been made during the interval. Even the very differences of the forms under which the heavenly kingdom reappears are characteristic, marking, as they do, not merely that all is won back, but won back in a more glorious shape than that in which it was lost, because won back in the Son. It is no longer paradise, but the New Jerusalem,—no longer the *garden*, but now the *city* of God, which is on earth. The change is full of meaning: no longer the garden, free, spontaneous, and unlaboured, even as man's blessedness in the state of a first