

LECTURE IV.

Collateral Proofs of the Inspiration of the Scriptures. 1. External : Unity, Unsystematic Arrangement, Universal Application, Impartiality, and Reserve of the Scriptures on Matters not profitable. 2. Internal : True Idea of God given only in the Scriptures—Sublime Descriptions of the Divine Character—Anthropomorphisms—Prelusive Manifestations of God—Repentance ascribed to God—Cruelty ascribed to God—Mediation of Christ—Moral Character of Christ—Idea of Sin and Holiness—Proofs of the Inspired Character of the Sacred Books.

I. THE UNITY OF SCRIPTURE.—The Jewish Scriptures, or the Old Testament, is the most marvellous monument of ancient literature in the world : for that sacred book contains, in its simple and primitive annals, an account of the origin of society, government, and the arts ; is enriched with many poetical effusions, which no efforts of uninspired genius have ever surpassed ; abounds with traits of men and manners different altogether from anything observable in our western hemisphere ; and, in short, comprehends a treasure of the most varied and valuable matter, far greater than can be found anywhere else in the same compass. But although

the Scriptures do contain these and many other things of equal or superior interest, it is not on this account it is to be regarded as the best and most precious book in the world. Its grand peculiarity and distinguishing excellence is, that it is addressed to mankind as fallen creatures, to discover to them their state of sin and misery, and at the same time to point out the only efficient remedy for that condition. All the other matter it contains is subordinate to this main design,—has been introduced merely from being connected in some way or other with its progress and extension in the world, or being calculated to illustrate and enforce its provisions. The unity of its design is one of the most prominent features of the book ; and this unity is all the more remarkable, considering the detached manner of its composition, the lengthened period during which it was in progress, and the many authors enlisted in its preparation. Individually they made their contributions, whether in plain history or animated song, whether in visioned pictures of a glorious future, or in didactic discourses about faith and duty,—each performing his part without foreseeing the great result he was helping to accomplish, or comprehending the gracious scheme which he was instrumental in

advancing; and yet how marvellous, and unprecedented in the history of human workmanship, the composite structure they severally assisted in rearing, appears in its finished state, complete in every part, redundant or defective in none. In other words, the Scriptures, as we possess the sacred volume, was not the product of one writer in a single age: it consists of a large collection of miscellaneous books or tracts, written by forty different authors, who, so far from being of a priestly profession, or even moving in the same social circle, belonged to the most opposite extremes of society; and so far from having concerted one common plan of action, were separated, some of them, from one another by the distance of many centuries: kings and priests, shepherds and herdsmen, warriors and fishermen, a tentmaker, a physican; persons in high life and a humble condition,—enjoying various advantages of education, bred under different forms of government, possessing each his peculiar cast of mind, taste, and natural temper, who wrote amid great diversity of circumstances, of prosperity and adversity, of freedom and captivity, and of the outer influences which would affect intellectual exertion in the treatment of a subject, or the sentiments and views they might entertain and express;

and yet there runs through the whole book, from beginning to end, one grand principle or leading design—the development of a scheme of grace for the recovery and salvation of men. Thus were the several books of the Scriptures composed by men differing from one another in point of time, place, talents, learning, and many other advantages and outward circumstances of social position. And is it possible that those forty authors could have produced a book so completely consistent with all the truth which reason teaches concerning the being and perfections of God, and so powerfully commending itself to the understandings, the consciences, and the hearts of the wise and good in all ages? The thing is incredible—an impossible achievement. The same uninspired author is not always consistent with himself. Men of probity and erudition, who have lived in distant periods and places, have often differed most materially on the same subject, nay, flatly contradicted and opposed each other; and some have even unconsciously contradicted their former sentiments. But here is a book, the latest penman of which lived fifteen hundred years after the first,—a book composed on a great variety of occasions, by persons differing exceedingly in natural abilities, in

education, in dispositions, and indulging from taste and habit in the utmost diversity of style; persons trained under different influences, and owing to their separation both in place and time, having no means nor opportunity of acting in concert. And yet this book which they wrote is perfectly consistent with natural theology and with itself; giving the same views of God, of Christ, of salvation,—of man in his primitive, fallen, restored, and glorified state,—the same view of the things of time and eternity. Its universal harmony, its unbroken consistency, is one of the wonders of the world. And how is so singular a phenomenon to be accounted for? Only on this principle, that the penmen of this book were under the influence and guidance of the unerring Spirit.

II. THE UNSYSTEMATIC ARRANGEMENT OF THE SCRIPTURES.—The Bible is not a large book; it is very small compared with many other books, as well as with the great number, variety, and importance of the matter it contains. But had it been arranged in the most methodical manner, and been one connected chain of ratiocination from beginning to end, what would have followed? The whole must have been read, and closely studied, before

the reader could have obtained any just and comprehensive knowledge of it as a whole, or of many of its parts, and derived much spiritual benefit to his soul. The premises and their soundness, the consecutive prosecution of the reasoning, the connection and bearings of all the parts, must have been perceived and assented to before any spiritual benefit could have been obtained. But where, in this case, is the Christian in many hundreds or thousands, to whom the Bible could have been of any use? Vast multitudes have not sufficient time thus to peruse the Bible, and far more have not the requisite ability to comprehend its plan, to understand its reasoning, and to feel the force of its demonstrative arguments. Had the Bible been written in this artistic form, it is easy to perceive that numbers of the saints now in heaven, and numbers on the way to its beatific mansions, were and are so deficient in mental capacity, in learning, and in the habit of study, that they never could have derived any real and permanent advantage from its perusal. In that case, like many books of human composition, written by men pre-eminent for talents and erudition, it would have been almost useless to the great majority of mankind, and, like those able and learned tomes, might have

been confined to the libraries of the studious recluse, or appreciated only by people of education and intelligence. But in the desultory form imparted to it, the Bible is the book that is suited to all classes of men—to the king and to the subject, to the learned and to the unlearned, to the old and to the young. Here is enough to employ the talents of the most accomplished and acute; while the great truths, most necessary to be known, are revealed in so plain and familiar a manner, that the ignorant, the weak, even young children, may learn and derive advantage from the knowledge of them. There is strong meat for those that are of full age, and milk for babes.

Every part of the Bible, it is true, is not destitute of methodical arrangement; for the books of Job and Ecclesiastes, as well as the Epistles to the Romans and the Hebrews, are remarkable specimens of regular, continuous, and even elaborate composition. But the sacred volume, viewed in its general aspect, is not a book of artistic reasoning or of abstract doctrines, but a record of facts, a collection of maxims, illustrative of the divine procedure towards man. The love of God is exhibited in the marvellous fact that He gave His Son to be the propitiation for the sins of mankind;

the love of the Son in the fact that He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; the doctrine of divine providence in the narrative of the divine government of Israel; and the necessity, the pleasures, and advantages of piety, in the examples, songs, and prayers of ancient worthies of the church. These things are scattered, like Orient pearls at random strung, over the whole extent of the sacred volume; they are placed without order or any artificial arrangement—here a little, and there a little. Like the objects of the material world, which are found everywhere in great profusion, and cognizable by the senses of all, so the truths of Scripture are level to the apprehension and instruction of every one; and a uniform experience has proved, that from such short and plain statements of great principles, the majority of mankind derive all their knowledge and impressions of religion. They open the Bible, and read a psalm, a chapter, a parable, a short notice of some patriarch, prophet, or apostle, a part of the history of Christ, or some sententious passage embodying the sum and substance of the law or the gospel; and from these divine summaries they derive more light, more conviction, and more instruction in righteousness,

than they could do from whole volumes of demonstrative reasoning, however clearly and logically conducted, however skilfully and artistically arranged.

III. THE UNIVERSAL APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.—It gives us a just and full delineation of all men in all ages. Some lived about six thousand years ago, and vast multitudes of them in all intervening ages, as well as in the present. They have inhabited all zones and regions, have been placed in circumstances the most diversified, and been occupied in the most varied pursuits; some have been savages, others civilised, rich and poor, learned and unlearned; some have been favoured with all the means of improvement and grace;—others have been destitute of any intellectual or moral guidance, except what the light of depraved reason, all but extinguished, supplied. What sage, what philosopher, has ever appeared, who has written a book that exhibits men, all men, just as they have been and are? None has appeared, and we may add with confidence, that such a writer, let his advantages be what they may, will never appear. But here is a book, written not by one, but by a considerable number of men,

who lived in very different periods, at least the great majority of them, and therefore had no consultation together, who were neither travellers nor philosophers, living in a small contracted country, separated by national institutions, and hemmed in by mountain barriers from the world beyond; yet this book is a mirror in which not the inhabitants of Judea or of the Oriental world only, but all the generations, nay, all the individuals of the human race, in the essential attributes of their nature, may see themselves exhibited faithfully and fully to the very life. None but He who is the God of truth, and who knows what is in man, could have been the author of this book, given as it was at sundry times and in divers portions.

IV. THE IMPARTIALITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.—In all ages, so strong have been the tendencies of human nature to hero-worship, that to resist and overcome these has been the continual striving of God with man; and one of the distinguishing characteristics of His revealed word is the many and various safeguards it presents to our relapse into that leading sin of Paganism. In the Bible, indeed, we have the records of men of faith from the earliest time; the records of the best and

noblest of the race that have ever lived in the world. We are furnished with full-length portraits of their characters and lives; we see their examples, we learn their reward, that we may be led to imitate their faith and holiness; but all attempts to transfer to them the honours of worship of any kind, or in any degree, would have been repressed in all good times of the Jewish church, both by the terrors of the divine displeasure, and the penalties of the civil law. The good men of the Old Testament church are too natural in their goodness, and too like ourselves, to be deified. We have the record of Abraham's lies as well as of faith; of Jacob's deceit as well as his piety; of the quarrel of the twelve patriarchs, and its consequences; of David's adultery, as well as his deep and fervent devotion; of Solomon's wisdom, as well as his weakness: all meet for instruction and admonition, but not for idolatry. The account of the patriarchal families and of the chosen nation seems a record of incessant backslidings and their punishment; yet so would that of any nation or family, were its story told with the same singular fidelity and circumstantial minuteness. In the New Testament we meet with a higher development of all

the moral and spiritual elements of character; yet still no approach to, nor encouragement of, hero-worship. The denial of Peter, and his later duplicity, the unbelief of Thomas, the vindictive spirit of James and John, the cowardice and desertion of all the apostles, the sharp contention of Paul and Barnabas, are recorded as faithfully as the treachery of Judas, or the enmity of the chief priests and scribes. Better, holier, and more disinterested they are represented than other men; yet still, men of like failings with us, to be admired and imitated only in so far as they were the faithful imitators of Him whom they proclaimed the light and the life of the world. No human history can be compared with that of the sacred volume in respect of impartiality; and whether we consider its faithful chronicles of scenes of barbarism and wickedness, calculated to reflect the blackest infamy on the national name of Israel, or the failings and errors even of apostles, as of John the apocalyptic seer, who was in danger of falling into idolatry by worshipping an angel, and who received a check from that heavenly messenger, it is an undoubted fact, that there is no book in the world that displays so honest and impartial a love of truth, in recording the errors and sins, as well

as the virtues and excellences, even of good men.

V. THE RESERVE OF THE SCRIPTURES ON MATTERS NOT PROFITABLE.—The Bible is a wonderful book, and the evidence of its divine origin and character appears as much perhaps in what it withholds as in what it reveals. Look to the foolish and absurd legends which impostors have communicated, as in the Koran of Mahomet, or the fabulous traditions of Rome relating to the intercourse of its saints and heroes with God, and the marvellous scenes to which they were admitted in the upper world; and to every sober, enlightened, and reflecting mind, their narratives appear to bear the stamp and impress of fiction on the face of them. But how different the Bible, in which all the scripture or writing that is given by inspiration of God, is such only as is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness! Thus, during the abode of Moses on the mount, what wonders he must have witnessed, what scenes of more than earthly glory and grandeur must have been disclosed to his view! And yet none of all these does he retail on his return to the people. Though, by telling his tales of

wonder, he might have made himself an object of unequalled admiration, and drawn towards himself an interest of no common intensity, he spoke of nothing that tended merely to gratify an idle curiosity, or foster a spirit of vain and useless speculation; and the grand subject which he introduced, and on which he dwelt at large, on his descent from the mount, was to announce the will of God respecting the erection of a place of public worship.

When Moses reascended the mount, he was accompanied by a select band of attendants, whom he had been instructed to bring with him on that occasion. The persons selected for this distinguished privilege consisted of the most prominent and influential parties in the Hebrew camp,—parties most conspicuous for official rank and station, whose testimony to the glorious scenes unveiled to their view within the curtain of the enveloping cloud, would encourage the people to repose their faith in the delegated character and mission of Moses. It was in conformity to divine instructions these persons were selected to accompany Moses in his second ascent to the mount, in order that they might be witnesses of the divine glory, as well as of those intimate communications

with God to which the leader was admitted ; and their report of those supernatural scenes might confirm the people's faith in the divine legation with which he was invested. There was the greatest propriety and wisdom in the arrangement of this course : for although the conspicuous part which Moses had been honoured to act, in effecting the emancipation of his countrymen from the house of bondage, and in conducting them on their subsequent journeys through the wilderness, afforded unmistakeable evidence that he enjoyed the benefit of divine counsel and divine aid, this was a very different thing from his being invested with a delegated power to enact laws for their government ; and as he was thenceforth to exercise that power, to assume the character and office of a lawgiver, and all his enactments were to be accompanied with sanctions of peculiar solemnity, it was necessary to convince them that all that he did and enjoined in his legislative capacity was stamped with the seal of divine authority. Nothing was better calculated to inspire the minds of the people with confidence in the delegated power and authority of Moses, than the scene on the mount, attested by the report of many competent witnesses, who would bear testimony

that the law which Moses gave them was no political scheme of human device, but was indeed derived from the mind and communicated by the authority of God. In the passage that gives an account of their ascent¹ to the mount, we have an account of one of the most remarkable scenes that are recorded in the whole compass of the sacred history ; and yet it is difficult whether most to admire the brevity of the record, or the simplicity of the language employed in narrating the sublime spectacle they were privileged to witness. There is no attempt at elaborate description ; no tendency to amplify, either by the selection of striking circumstances, or even by the insertion of epithets such as an excited imagination is apt to indulge in ; no expression of the feelings, whether of admiration or of awe, that pervaded the select group : and whether this omission is to be accounted for by the character of this book of Exodus, which is the brief and succinct journal of an annalist ; whether it arose from the attention of Moses being more occupied in the composition of the history, with the object for which those attendants had been associated with him, than with the incidents of their limited experience ; or whether the spec-

¹ Ex. xxiv.

tacle they witnessed was hastily passed over, as little or nothing compared to the far sublimer and fuller discoveries of the divine majesty and glory with which Moses was himself afterwards favoured,—the marked reserve he has maintained with regard to the details of a scene so far beyond the ordinary range of human experience, and on which a fictitious writer would have felt an irresistible temptation to enlarge,—this marked reserve speaks volumes as to his character as an inspired historian. The narrative bears on the face of it the stamp and impress of truth; and yet we may fairly presume, that though a very brief record of the scene has been transmitted to us, an ample detail of circumstances would be given by the delegates on their descent, which would be long and widely circulated amongst their countrymen, till it was gradually incorporated amongst the popular views of the Godhead entertained by the Jewish people. It was preserved by tradition, and seems even to have fed the imagination of the inspired bards of Israel. For the sublime and glorious spectacle to which the favoured attendants of Moses were now admitted, was doubtless the germ of many of the most magnificent descriptions, the symbolical imagery of

the prophets—in those visioned theophanies which are recorded in their mystic pages. It is, however, a very brief record that has been given us of the remarkable scene to which the attendants of Moses were admitted. It is said, “they saw the God of Israel.” Now it is a first, a fundamental principle of the true religion, that “no man hath seen God at any time.” Moreover, as it is expressly declared, that at the promulgation of the moral law the people saw no manner of similitude, it is evident that the expression, “they saw the God of Israel,” can mean nothing more than that they beheld the sign or emblem of His presence. They were favoured with a glimpse of His glory,—that form of it which is commonly spoken of in Scripture under the name of the Shechinah, exhibited on that occasion perhaps in a clearer and more vivid degree of effulgence than ever had been formerly witnessed. The Septuagint version renders it, “they saw the place where the God of Israel stood.” Whatever it was they saw, it was evidently a something of which no image or picture could be made, and yet marked by such attendant symbols as impressed the minds of all the beholders with the strongest conviction that God was there of a truth; and it will be remembered,

that all the divine manifestations to the ancient church were made by Him who is styled the Angel of the Covenant, and declared by Paul to be Christ. It is observable, however, that in the record of what the attendants of Moses saw, nothing of the sublime spectacle is described but that which was *under his feet*. Whether it was that their eyes, dazzled by excess of light, could not stedfastly look at the effulgent glory, or from a feeling of profound reverence, no attempt was made to report any part of the extraordinary scene, except the part on which the glory seemed to rest.

A similar reserve is maintained by Isaiah in describing the symbols of his famous vision. The elevated throne; the ample train or glory which filled the temple, like the long-flowing robes of oriental monarchs on grand occasions extending over the floor of the spacious chamber; the attendant seraphim, from a sense of unworthiness to behold the divine majesty, veiling their faces, and, to mark their reverential respect, covering their feet, or the lower part of their body, according to a practice in the East when persons go into the presence of royalty; their readiness to execute the behests of their Divine Master, and their delegated

occupation in praising Him;—all these are circumstantially described; but no attempt is made to depict the glory of the Lord Himself. From the awful sublimity of such a theme the prophet shrank in conscious humility. And this Person, whose glory was so transcendently great, is declared, on the express authority of the Apostle John, to have been Christ: “These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him,”¹ the Divine Word, “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person.”² This was but a visioned representation of the divine glory; for the prophet was in a state of ecstatic inspiration, and had the things signified by the symbols of the vision vividly impressed on his mind. But the apostles, long after, were favoured with a sensible manifestation of the supernatural glory of the Saviour on the Mount of Transfiguration. No one who reads the narrative of that wonderful transaction, can fail to perceive how admirably all the parts of the panoramic scene were calculated to heighten the glory of Christ, and to shadow forth the true purpose of His advent and ministry; and although the earthly spectators did not at once

¹ John xii. 41.

² Heb. i. 2.

arrive at a full apprehension of those sublime mysteries, yet when their minds were opened, and the Holy Spirit had led them into all the truth, we find them ever after appealing to the scene on the mount as affording an incontestable evidence of the character and glory of Christ. But in how simple and moderate terms is it related in the Gospels, and alluded to in the Epistle of Peter! Had an uninspired writer of talent and eloquence been called to describe such a scene, how would he have enlisted all his powers of imagination to heighten every circumstance, and have exhausted his vocabulary for superlatives to depict the surpassing magnificence of our Lord, when arrayed in His robes of celestial glory! The sacred penmen resort to no such artifices; but describe this most awe-inspiring spectacle in few and unaffected words, by saying: "He was transfigured before them; His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." The brevity and simplicity of this statement is to a reflecting mind far more significant and effective than the most elaborate description: for as the sun is the brightest object in nature, and no human eye can stedfastly endure the glare of His radiant disc, it is impossible for words

to convey a higher idea of splendour, than that the face of the Saviour shone like that resplendent orb; and as light is the pure essence of whiteness, the other statement is as little capable of being strengthened by any addition, "His raiment was white as the light."

Another instance of reserve in the relation of spiritual and divine things is furnished by the Apostle Paul, who was favoured with "visions" of the divine glory, and "revelations" of the heavenly world, to a degree beyond what mortal man ever enjoyed. He was "caught up into the third," or the highest heaven, where he heard such words as man could not speak if he might, and as it would be unlawful to speak if he could; the divine purpose being, that the discoveries which God has made of Himself in that glorious world, should not be more fully made in the present state than they have been. There the works of God are exhibited on a grander scale, the government of God subsists in a more perfect form; and creatures vastly superior to man in capacities, in intelligence, and in moral qualities, inhabit the blessed region. The apostle was favoured with a transient revelation of its economy; and yet, so far from attempting to draw a highly-coloured picture, or even to dilate on the

unknown wonders disclosed to his enraptured view, he sums it all up in the modest assertion, "It is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory."

The last instance of this kind of reserve I shall mention is taken from the Apocalypse, connected with the sublime scene of which the rainbow forms so conspicuous a feature, and forming the first of those many-pictured visions that passed before the eyes of the apostolic seer in the caves of Patmos. In contemplating the group of images which this description contains, the mind of a reader is naturally directed in the first instance to the principal personage in the picture; and every one must be struck with the admirable, the prudent, and pious reserve of John, who has said not a word about Him who sat on the throne. Upon the furniture and appendages of the throne, especially upon the symbolical "rainbow that was round about it," the sacred writer has largely dwelt, for these are legitimate and practicable subjects of contemplation; but he has entirely refrained from the least approach to a description of Him who sat upon it—thus acting as the most exalted of creatures must ever be constrained to do, filled with silent adoration and overwhelming awe of that Being who dwells in light inaccessible and full of glory.

Such is the habitual reserve, the studied caution, which the sacred writers observe in all their allusions to spiritual and divine things. They act like men who are impressed with solemn awe, as feeling that they stood on holy ground ; and this demeanour, which is common to all of them, produces a strong conviction that they spoke and wrote in the name and by the authority of God.

The same reserve is shown in other classes of subjects—such as their entire omission of all matters that are not subservient to the great ends of revelation, or are not profitable for correction and instruction in righteousness. We select an instance of this from the earliest annals of the world. Brief as is the account which the sacred historian has given of the various processes of creation, as well as of the original state and altered destiny of man, it might have been expected that he would have been more copious and minute in his details when he entered on the history of the human race, as they have ever since existed in the world. And perhaps there are few readers of the Bible, who, from the sympathies of a common nature, have not at times been conscious of a strong desire to possess a biography of the first pair. We might have wished to know something of their condition and

habits,—to see Adam employed in the operations of the field, and Eve busy with her simple cares as a wife and mother. We might have wished to obtain a glimpse into their family circle; to be furnished with sketches of its different members, and anecdotes of the infant children; to learn how they divided their day, what was the internal economy of their household,—in what manner the first parents of mankind educated their offspring, and what was the general tenor of their lives. Above all, we might have wished to possess some information as to their sentiments and feelings on a subject the most important to the well-being and happiness of intelligent, moral, and fallen creatures; to learn whether they cherished a spirit of repentance and faith, to know their devotional habits, to have a record of the time and place of their engaging in social worship, as well as of the stated ritual that constituted their primitive form of religion. But the inspired wisdom that guided the pen of Moses, led him to pass over in silence all the incidents of their personal and family history; and the only fragment of their primitive annals that has been preserved is a painful episode, which exhibits an awful proof of the sinful nature which our first parents had transmitted to their posterity.

We select another instance of this kind of reserve from the commencement of the New Testament history; and it refers to the early period of that life which possesses an intense and never-failing interest for every Christian mind. Perhaps there is no reader of the Gospels but has felt the desire rise in his bosom to know some details of the childhood and youth of Jesus,—to possess some specimens of His opening faculties and progressive education; instances of His precocious intellect, His devotional habits, His earnestness and assiduity in searching the Scriptures, and the eminent example He gave of juvenile piety; how He worked as a mechanic, whether He associated with the villagers, or kept aloof from most of them as people of a rough, bad, and uncongenial character; what were His favourite haunts in His hours of leisure, what roads He frequented in the neighbourhood of that highland hamlet; whether He courted privacy, and loved, like Isaac, to meditate in the fields; whether any and what indications were ever given of the latent wisdom and undeveloped powers He possessed. But on all these matters an absolute silence is observed. The first thirty years of His life are involved in impenetrable obscurity. But if they have been passed over by His biographers in silence, it was

certainly not from want of means and opportunities to obtain ample information. The minute circumstances recorded by Matthew and Luke at the opening of their respective Gospels show that both of them were on a footing of close, familiar intimacy with Joseph and Mary, and consequently had direct access to the best and purest sources of intelligence. When we remember that Mary, with regard to all that was said and done by her extraordinary Son, is recorded to have "kept these things in her heart," we cannot doubt that that earnest observer must have treasured up many anecdotes of interest relating to his early life; and we can as little doubt that these must have been often retailed to the evangelists, as to other friends of the family. But they have not transmitted those anecdotes, because the preservation of them would have served no purpose but to minister to the gratification of curiosity; and with the exception of some brief remarks on His subjection to His earthly parents, and His increase of favour with God and man, they have confined their evangelical narratives to the period of His public ministry. We might remark also, that there is no description given in any of the evangelical biographies of the features of our Lord, His size,

form, and demeanour,—a reserve evidently dictated by the same divine wisdom which concealed the burial-place of Moses.

We select a third instance of this kind of reserve from the close of the Saviour's ministry. A reflecting reader, who has pondered the records of His resurrection, must have often been conscious of many questions arising in his mind connected with that miraculous event, some of them perhaps trivial, others merely curious and speculative. They are such as the following: Whither did He go first on leaving the tomb? Whence did He obtain the clothes that He wore? Where did He lodge, when not with the disciples? Whence did He come, when He joined the two pious travellers of Emmaus, and whither did He go on leaving them? How did He with a real material body enter suddenly into the midst of their private assembly, and vanish with equal suddenness from the upper room? As He rose the first-fruits from the dead, and it was with the identical body in which He had suffered, did it undergo a change in His ascent, to fit it for that world which flesh and blood cannot inhabit? and how far did it differ from that spiritual body with which, according to Paul, the saints shall be invested in the future world? On

all such matters the sacred writers maintain a prudent reserve, and in this respect furnish a striking proof that the Scripture, all of which is given by inspiration of God, contains nothing but what is profitable for correction and instruction in righteousness.

II. INTERNAL PROOFS OF INSPIRATION.

The revelations made in the Scripture concerning the character and will of God afford decisive proofs of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

I. TRUE IDEA OF THE DIVINE BEING.—Of God, and of His character, we can derive no certain knowledge from created sources. No angel has descended from his high abode, and mingled with mortals to communicate the tidings. No disembodied spirit has returned to reveal the secrets of the other world. And if none has come down the bearer of such intelligence, as certainly none of the wisest and most inquisitive of men has ever been able to soar aloft with adventurous wing to the knowledge of the Divine Majesty, and bring back from his mission of exploration the much

wished-for, all-important information. We may, indeed, erect on the platform of this world a ladder to climb up by its lofty steps, and so obtain some glimpses of God as He manifests Himself in other and more elevated regions. Men did so in ancient times ; but amid the speculations of many thousand years on the being and character of God, made by the greatest and wisest minds that ever adorned our fallen humanity, mankind never advanced a step beyond vague and dubious conjecture : every successive age was obliged to content itself with the knowledge of the preceding one, just as the creatures which are guided by instinct, and one race of which never outstrips or rises higher than another. Some light, indeed, was reflected from His works and the course of His providential dealings ; but still, as through both of these men could see only through a glass darkly, the most enlightened and accomplished in the study both of nature and providence could be described as doing little else than seeking, if haply they might find God. With all the aids furnished by both departments of His works, they were still, like the blind, groping their way in uncertainty and darkness. And in weighing the opinions formed, the conclusions arrived at, by those who were not favoured

and blessed with the guiding illumination of Heaven, it is impossible not to perceive how egregiously and fatally they erred in some views, in what painful doubt and uncertainty they were involved as to other points of the divine character, which it is most desirable and important to ascertain. Instead of a perfect Being, they conceived only of an imperfect one,—a creation of their own fancy,—labouring under material defects, contaminated by debasing passions, addicted to grovelling enjoyments, or degraded by the love and practice of odious vices. Others who are further advanced in knowledge, but possessing only the light of natural reason, are sadly perplexed by the apparently jarring views of God suggested by the phenomena of the material world and the course of providence. The regular succession of the seasons, the revolution of day and night, the usually tranquil and settled order of nature, and the profuse bounty that provides for the necessities as well as the enjoyment of man, and the innumerable tribes of living creatures which inhabit the earth along with him, inspire the idea of an amiable and beneficent Being; while, on the other hand, the aspect of the heavens, black and lowering,—the outburst of the tempest, that uproots the trees of the forest,

overthrows houses, commits widespread havoc on land, and destroys navies at sea,—the roar of the thunder, the flash of the lightning, the ravages of the pestilence that walketh in darkness,—appal with the terrors of almighty power. Similar perplexity is produced by the varying course of providence : for the peace and happiness that attend the practice of sobriety and virtue, the prosperity that rewards the industrious, and the connection which experience shows to subsist between a patient continuance in well-doing and the secure enjoyment of life, tend to create a belief that the world is under the superintendence of a wise and good Being. But the moral disorders and strange anomalies that are ever and anon witnessed,—the triumphs of the wicked, the persecution of the best and most excellent persons solely for their devotedness to the cause of pure religion, and the unsuccessful struggles of honest families against the combined evils of poverty and disease,—are apt to force the conclusion, that if there is a God who loves good and hates evil, He is an arbitrary and capricious tyrant. Now it is in the Scriptures alone that the character of God appears invested with attributes suited to the majesty of the Supreme Being. It is there alone His eternity and

immutability, His unity and spirituality, His awful majesty and moral perfections, are made known in a manner calculated to secure the esteem as well as the confidence of intelligent and rational creatures. It would be easy to multiply quotations to an indefinite extent, showing the vast superiority of the inspired volume to all other sources of knowledge regarding the God with whom we have to do. We must confine ourselves to a few only:—"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end." How strikingly is the eternal and independent existence of God represented in the fact, that He was before any part of the visible creation was called into being; and that although the material universe should perish or wear away like an old piece of clothing, He would continue, unshorn of His glory, undiminished in His happiness, and unaffected in His nature! On the memorable occa-

sion of Moses requesting to see the glory of the Lord, it is said, in one of the most solemn and mysterious passages of the Bible, that the Lord, in compliance with the desire of His pious servant, descended in a cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed Himself the "Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Can anything surpass or equal the sublimity of this? A mere human philosopher would have selected some gorgeous description from the appearances of material nature, with which as a suitable train to array the Majesty of Heaven in descending upon the mount; but the simplicity of the scriptural narrative, unfolding not the full effulgence of His divine glory, which the weakness of humanity in its present state could not have endured, but enlarging only on the leading attributes of His *moral* character, at once commends itself to the minds of all as superior to aught that man could have said. In the sublime song of Moses contained in the 32d chapter of Deuteronomy, the following description is given of the Divine Being: "He is the rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is He." How infinitely does this exalt God above the empty

and false objects to whom the votaries of heathen superstition give their blind and devoted reverence ! In the song of thanksgiving offered by Hannah at the birth of Samuel, these exalted sentiments occur : "There is none holy as the Lord ; for there is none beside Thee, neither is there any rock like our God. The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." When Elijah had fled to Horeb after the slaughter of the priests of Baal, his impetuous temper having led him to dissatisfaction and despair, because all idolaters were not immediately extirpated in the kingdom of Israel, an important and most seasonable lesson was given him. The symbols of the divine power and majesty were exhibited to him in a whirlwind, an earthquake, and a fire ; yet God was not in all these terrific phenomena. There was, however, a soft murmur or whispering sound that followed, symbolizing gentleness, patience, and mercy ; and God spake in that voice. The design of this remarkable scene was to show the prophet that it was not according to the character of God to destroy or to coerce, but by the rational weapons of argument and preaching the word to persuade the idolatrous people to abandon a false and to embrace the true religion. The Psalmist has described the divine

omnipresence by the following metaphorical illustration: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell (the place of the dead), behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me."¹ This is a beautiful poetical amplification, to express in a vivid manner the common truth that evidences of divine agency are found everywhere. Jeremiah uttered a prayer in the following terms of sublime and enlightened devotion: "Lord God! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee; Thou showest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: The Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is His name; great in counsel, and mighty in work: for Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men; to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Micah breaks forth into the following animated apostrophe: "Who is a God like unto

¹ Ps. cxxxix. 7-10.

Thee, that pardonest iniquity, and passest by the transgression of the remnant of Thy heritage? Thou retainest not Thine anger for ever, because Thou delightest in mercy." And to mention only one passage more: the New Testament gives this brief and simple, but rational and sublime character of God. He is "a Spirit, who requires that those who worship Him, should worship in spirit and in truth,"—a passage which intimates clearly and beautifully, that no material walls limit His presence, no favoured spot holds an exclusive right to enjoy it; but that wherever man may go, even to wilds where the feet of the adventurous traveller have never trode, nor the voice of human suppliant has ever been heard, there the sincere worshipper may receive showers of blessing from above.

It has been alleged, however, that the early Scriptures abound with passages of a very different tenor—passages which give a very different view of the Divine Being from that which is exhibited in the New Testament. Instead of representing the Divine Being in a manner worthy the Majesty of Heaven, and in harmony with His spiritual nature, they degrade Him by the ascription of acts and feelings identical with those of man. The allegation admits of an easy and satisfactory explanation.

The face, eyes, ears, hands, back parts, are obviously figurative expressions in the anthropomorphic style, as it is impossible to conceive of a spirit but through the medium of the senses, and there is no other way of describing what He does. The soul of man being created after the image of God, it is a spirit; and yet, in the full knowledge and belief, that it is of a spiritual nature, we are accustomed to speak of seeing with the eye of the mind, of handling a subject, of taking a firm grasp of it, and of metaphorically applying various other expressions borrowed from the senses, to describe mental operations, which these aptly represent. Now, conceiving, as men generally do, that the human soul is the same in substance as the Divine Spirit, it is natural for them to describe the acts of God in the same figurative way as they represent the movements of their own minds, and endeavour to impress their imaginations with the vivid idea of His character by ascribing to Him hands, nostrils, ears, eyes, with every active function of the body and every emotion of the mind, just because it is the only way in which He can be brought into contact with the feelings of man, his hopes, his fears, his affections, his imaginative, and even his corporeal associations. What good reason, then, or

what sound authority, is there for objecting to a mode of speaking in such constant and familiar use, and for casting it away, notwithstanding the example which has been set by sacred historians and prophets, who used it in writing of the Godhead, for the dry and unsubstantial representations of it into which modern theology, borrowing from philosophy, has fallen? Atheistic philosophers and poets may talk of God as a mighty power everywhere diffused through nature, a universal motion, an unknown existence, a mysterious essence, and think it great reverence to express such indefinite notions of Him. But the same writers who tell us that no similitude of the Divine Being was beheld on the mount, are wont to represent Him to the conceptions of a rude people, as seeing, hearing, smelling, coming down, and lifting up; and conscious experience teaches us, that the human mind cannot realize the idea of God from the abstract language of philosophy so strongly and so fully as when we speak of Him as the living God, the God that judgeth, whose eyes behold and whose eyelids try the children of men.

It is further said, that the actions attributed to Him are at variance with the higher revelation He has given of Himself in the gospel; and the re-

corded instances of His direct interference in the domestic affairs of the patriarchs, and the trivial interests of the Israelitish people, are opposed to the established course of providence in the world. Now we know that the meanest creature in which the principle of life is implanted has its allotted destiny, and is cared for by the Divine Being. And as man is of more value than many sparrows, the inference is, that every human being is an object of special care on the part of Him who rules the universe, and who, though acting in the remotest regions of space, is at the same instant in this world, taking cognizance of every person, his history, his movements, and his doings, as if he were the sole inhabitant in it. Besides, if we believe that God entered into a special covenant with the Jewish people, we must also believe that this dispensation was carried on consistently with the moral government of the world at large ; and that if He had important objects to be promoted through the instrumentality of that nation, it was to be expected that He would take an interest in the personal and domestic concerns of those who were employed as the chief agents in accomplishing His will. Hence His frequent interpositions in the lives of the patriarchs, in the

history of Moses, at the birth of Samson, and in the case of Elijah. Moreover, the divine appearances to Abraham and the patriarchs formed part of the religious education by which they were trained to the knowledge and service of the true God. By these frequent and familiar manifestations to Abraham, the personality of God was seen in opposition to pantheism, His unity as opposed to polytheism, and His infinite perfections in contrast with the gross conceptions of idolatry. As it is reasonable to think that in all these manifestations there would be the same tones of voice, and the same unequivocal tokens of the divine presence, there is little room for doubting that the patriarchs possessed the amplest means of satisfying themselves that it was God who addressed them. In the long series of miracles, conversations, and appearances, the patriarchs must have acquired a distinct and accurate knowledge of the Divine Spokesman or Revealer, as a man has of a friend, or a servant of a master, when he hears his voice or beholds his features. And these manifestations, which are so frequently recorded in the early annals of the ancient church, are not, as has been alleged, inconsistent with the statement made in a later portion of the Scripture, that "no man

hath seen God at any time ;”¹ for they were made by “the Angel of the Covenant,” “the image of the invisible God,” who, as Mediator, has carried on all the negotiations between heaven and earth since the fall. The identity of character and consistency of revelation maintained by this manifested Deity during many successive centuries, are themselves sufficient to prove the truth of the narratives which relate them ; for they could not be the invention of the human mind. Nor can those who believe the wonderful fact, that “in the fulness of time” He became man, and tabernacled in the world, deem it incredible, that, by appearing from time to time to persons connected with the early church in the form of humanity, assumed at will on particular occasions, He gave prelusive intimations of His future incarnation. So clearly has the character of God been made known by Him who was the brightness of the Father’s glory, and who, being in the bosom of the Father, came down from heaven to earth to declare Him unto us, that modern infidels have borrowed indirectly, and without acknowledgment, all their ideas of the Supreme Being from the mind of Christ ; and that the humble peasant, who has no book in his possession

¹ John i. 18.

but the Bible, the very child who is learning the Catechism, has a far better knowledge of what man is to believe concerning God, than the greatest of ancient philosophers, who laboured by refined and metaphysical speculations to frame an abstract conception of the divine character.

Another objection that is brought against the scriptural idea of God is, that He is represented as *repenting*.¹ Repentance, in the literal meaning of the term, is impossible in the divine mind; and when ascribed to God, can be so only in a metaphorical, not a literal sense. In consequence of the imperfection of human language, and the purely spiritual nature of Jehovah, all descriptions of His character must, in order to be intelligible to us, be conveyed in phraseology borrowed from the operations of our own minds. In this way we feebly approximate to right ideas of His perfections. When repentance is attributed to God, it implies not a change of design, but a change in His mode of dealing with men, such as would indicate on their part a change of purpose. He allows the inward purposes of His mind, which in Himself are eternally one, for man's sake to be separated according to the order of time, that thus man may be able to

¹ Gen. vi. 7; Jer. xlii. 10, etc.

understand them. In fact, the great end and aim of the Scriptures is to reveal God to man, to give a description of His character, a history of His modes of proceeding, and an account of His laws. Now, if God were liable to repent or change, there could be no secure reliance on this revelation. In that case, the books of Scripture might be true at one time, and not at another,—true at the time they were written, and not true now. Since that time the character of God might have altered; He might have changed His mode of procedure, and framed a new code of laws. This is what actually happens amongst men: for there are few, if any persons, whose habits or manners or principles do not vary more or less at different periods of life; nor is there any Government that does not more or less alter its legislation, to adapt it to the circumstances of a more advanced age. In such cases, new descriptions of character and new codes of law become absolutely necessary. But God is always the same; and therefore the Scriptures are always a sure and unvarying expression of His will. The New Testament has now been written nearly eighteen hundred years, and some parts of the Old Testament three thousand. Yet the Bible is as faithful an account of its Divine Author at this

moment as at the first ; and it will remain so, if the world should last even millions of years to come.

But the greatest objection which has been urged is the aspect in which the Old Testament represents the character of God,—the aspect of a gloomy and vindictive Being, jealous of His honour, and ready to resent with condign punishment the giving of His glory to another. In accordance with this view of His character is the account of His proceedings, and His treatment of those who committed a breach of His laws. The whole character of His legislation, it is alleged, is draconic. But it must be remembered that, in dealing with the Jewish people, God had to maintain the discipline of a stern and inflexible sovereign ; while, at the same time, He showed on many occasions that He was full of patience and forbearance, ready to forgive the errors and sins of His people, waiting for their repentance, and remitting their punishment. The whole character of His procedure is summed up in these striking words : “ As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that He turn from his wicked ways and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ? ”

It is an interesting and instructive fact, that

these descriptions of the being and character of God were given to the Jewish people from the commencement of their national existence. At a time when religion was deeply corrupted in all other parts of the world,—when neither the astronomy of Chaldea, nor all the wisdom of the Egyptians, nor the refined taste and high civilisation of the Greeks and Romans, could preserve them from the grossest forms of idolatry and superstition,—this description of the true God was given exclusively in the land of Judea;—these views of His character were taught, not to select audiences in the schools of the prophets or the colleges of the priests, but to all classes of the common people in that country. Was not this a proof that the Jews were under the direct and special instruction of Heaven? and that the prophets who gave them religious instruction, so far superior to what a Socrates or Plato, a Cicero or Seneca, ever attained in the most enlightened times of Greece and Rome, were God-taught men?

Views of the divine character such as the preceding, so far transcending all that the unassisted mind of man could reach, evidently show that the book in which they are contained was given by inspiration of God. Who could have imagined

such lofty ideas, or described such a perfect character, but those whose minds were illuminated, enlarged, and infallibly directed from above? And when we find that none but those ambassadors of God, whose writings are contained in the Old and New Testaments, have been able to give any exhibition of His character that is suitable to, or consistent with, the divine nature, we are to judge of what men can do from what they have actually done; and to conclude, that none could have represented the majesty and perfections of God in all their glory, but those to whom He Himself was pleased to impart the knowledge. This knowledge is contained in the Scriptures; and since all that we can observe and all that we can conceive of that exalted Being conspire to prove the truth of the representations which the sacred volume has afforded of Him, we are led by the clearest dictates of enlightened reason to believe that the Scripture was given by inspiration of God.

II. We have an additional confirmation in the official character and work of Him who, in modern phrase, is the hero of the book, whose peculiar ministry and qualifications for discharging it form the principal and engrossing subject of the Scriptures.

Every one who enters upon the office of mediator must possess the qualities and belong to a station that will secure for him the confidence of both the parties whom he undertakes to reconcile. In ordinary cases, among the nations of the earth, it is not difficult to meet with individuals who are competent, from their knowledge, their experience, and their high standing, for such an enterprise; but it may happen,—in point of fact, it has often happened in all the European embassies that were sent to China, for instance,—that the ambassador, though suitable to one of the parties, was not suitable for the other: though enjoying the full confidence of the Government at home, he was ignorant of the state, unacquainted with the prejudices, and could not accommodate himself to the circumstances, of that singular people. In consequence of this unsuitability, all the efforts at mediation made by the Governments of the West were fruitless, and failed. If we may borrow an illustration of things divine from things human, the Scripture appears to be given by inspiration of God, by its revealing and describing such a Mediator as was needed to reconcile fallen man to his offended Maker. In making known a Saviour who undertook the onerous task of mediating be-

tween God and His rebellious creatures, it seems essential that He should possess all the qualifications for the successful discharge of His arduous undertaking,—that He should possess a resemblance or identity with the nature of man, at the same time that He is of sufficient dignity to satisfy the infinite claims of God. Our own judgment, which revolts at the idea of one being our surety who had no knowledge of our state, no experience of our spiritual wants, tells us, that if any should interpose in our behalf, he should unite in his own person a twofold character,—an equality with God, and a fulness of sympathy, an identity of interest, with man. Now the Saviour whom the Scriptures make known is exactly such a one as meets all the necessities of the case. He was God and man in two distinct natures, and by this wonderful constitution of His person was peculiarly qualified for His great and unprecedented commission. Possessed of true divinity as well as of true humanity, He combined all those attributes of character that enabled Him to offer a basis of reconciliation which is at once well suited both to the dignity of the Supreme Government, and to the necessities of the wretched offenders,—a basis of reconciliation worthy of God

to accept, and of man to confide in. Such a character was so utterly unknown within the whole range of human experience,—nay, it was so utterly beyond the loftiest conceptions of the human mind,—it was, in fact, such a divine original as affords plain and indisputable evidence that the Scripture which describes it was given by inspiration of God.

III. Further, the Scripture which represents the person of Christ as uniting such an unparalleled combination of properties as constituted Him a fit and acceptable Mediator between heaven and earth, has also described Him in another view that is equally striking, and that possesses no less claims to originality. I refer to His moral character, which, in the delineation of it drawn by His evangelical biographers, including the prophets,—for they also have portrayed it,—is represented in all the attributes of perfection; and this picture is not a rough draught, or a mere outline, consisting of general descriptions or loose indiscriminate eulogy, but is made up of a plain unvarnished history, illustrated by a series of incidents, and actions, and discourses, so various in the time, manner, and circumstances of their occurrence, that the character is fully elucidated and brought out; nay,

the constitutional features can be distinctly traced ; and the whole, when blended together, forms such an assemblage of moral qualities as mark Him out beyond all controversy the most extraordinary, the most exalted, the most perfect character the world ever saw. Such a character as He exhibited had never been so much as dreamed of before. At various times, indeed, men exercised their ingenuity in attempting to draw a character of ideal perfection. But the efforts were uniformly fruitless and vain ; and the most successful of all such imaginary models of excellence are so far from realizing our ideas of moral perfection, that they are generally marked by a proud and selfish spirit, or deformed by vices and defects that are dishonourable to humanity. None of the wisest and the best of pagan philosophers ever made the most distant approach to the idea of such a character as that of Christ. Nay, the wisest and the best in former ages of the church, in all their pious aspirations after purity and goodness, were not much further ahead of them in conceiving such a model of moral perfection. And we may confidently hazard the assertion, that were all the saints of the Old Testament age before the appearance of Christ to have their separate excellences combined, and

thrown, as it were, into a moral kaleidoscope, they could not furnish sufficient materials out of which a portrait of Christ might be formed. He not only rises to an immeasurable superiority above them all, but stands prominently forward to our view as altogether original. He went about in the unwearied office of doing good to the bodies and the souls of men, delivering the purest and most excellent counsels with the greatest familiarity and freedom from parade; and His daily conduct was a living commentary on the truth and excellence of His precepts. His wisdom as a teacher, though tried in the most unexpected manner and on the most difficult emergencies, was not only never at fault, but was ever bursting forth with new, unexpected, and increasing lustre on the admiration of men. And then, in His private character, He united such a combination of moral excellences,—such a piety to God, and a benevolence to men,—such an unbroken and exemplary attention to every personal, social, and relative duty; He exhibited such majesty united with so much simplicity, such greatness of soul together with so much condescension and grace, so much fortitude with so much gentleness,—such an assemblage, in short, of all the qualities that command admiration and draw forth

esteem,—that in the whole range of history there has never appeared a rival to contest or an equal to divide with Him the homage of universal regard. He is the purest and loftiest of human souls, the Man who stands morally at the head of the species ; the incarnation of all the virtues that exalt and sanctify humanity. How or from what source did His biographers derive the conception of such a character ? Not from any previous model which they might have studied, and on which they might have improved : not from the imaginative stores of their own minds ; for the most learned men, the most inventive geniuses even of that rare kind which first “exhausted worlds, and then imagined new,” had never been able to form the slightest idea of it, or to make the most distant approach to it. And yet this character, delineated in the narratives of the humble fishermen of Galilee, has commanded the admiration of the greatest and the wisest of every subsequent age. Even the bitterest enemies of the gospel have joined in this tribute ; and Rousseau, one of the leading champions of modern infidelity, has recorded it as his deliberate verdict, that if the humble evangelists had invented such a character as a fiction of their own, they would themselves be greater than the hero of their story.

But the Christ they portrayed was not a creation of the fancy. He was a real historical personage, who "tabernacled" in Judea eighteen hundred years ago. And that a number of different independent writers, including the prophets as well as the evangelists, who lived in different ages, whose minds were unpolished by learning or science, and who were strongly imbued with all the narrow prejudices of their country, should have united in contributing their several parts in presenting to the world the same portrait of the same unparalleled character, may be surely pronounced an impossibility, upon any other hypothesis than that they all were guided and influenced by the inspiration of God.

IV. The idea of sin given in the Scriptures affords additional evidence of their inspiration. Previous to the introduction of Christianity, the Greeks and Romans had not the conception of sin; and although *peccatum* in Latin, and *amartia* in Greek, are both used as equivalent to sin in our language, yet these words, as used by classic writers, were far from embodying the idea which they afterwards expressed, when adopted into the service of Christians. The heathen mind was a total stranger to

the sentiment; nor had it any channel through which it could find admission, till their views and feelings were revolutionized through the transforming influence of Christianity. They were familiar with the idea of guilt,—as a wound, a pain, a sense of moral uneasiness in the breast of an individual. But the idea of sin as a taint, an element of moral corruption, infecting the whole human race, and transmitted as a hereditary evil from the first man to all his posterity, was one to which the natural mind was utterly unequal. In like manner, holiness is an idea of which the mind of man has no natural conception. It knows well about virtue, as expressing those moral excellences which are held in common estimation by the world. But it never dreamed of such an exaltation of spiritual character as that which consists in all the intellectual powers and affections of humanity acting in perfect harmony under the sanctifying influence of true religion,—such a state of the soul as that which results from being created again after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Ideas of this kind were altogether strange and unknown to the natural mind of man; and they prove that the book from which they were derived was given by inspiration of God.

In the case of all who have imbibed the true spirit of the Scriptures, and who are living under the habitual influence of its sanctifying power, the happy effects are seen in the embodiment of its beautiful and divine morality in their character and conduct. It is true that multitudes who profess to believe and walk according to the rules of the divine word come far short of this high standard of excellence; but still, however defective or contradictory the lives of its professed disciples may often be, the principles of the Bible remain in their own pure and exalted perfection; and, while all other systems, heathen and infidel, are utterly incapable of inspiring one generous or elevated sentiment, but, on the contrary, tend uniformly to vitiate the understanding and harden the heart, the inspired word, when understood and felt in all its heavenly influence, possesses the moral power of not only shedding a grace around the most splendid and most accomplished character, but of giving to the poorest and most uneducated, principles, motives, and rules for the government, together with sources of enjoyment for the solace and the happiness of life, which the wisdom of the world, with all its pretensions, can never impart.