

Rev. Thomas Scott (1747-1821) wrote this Preface to his famous “Commentary on the Bible,” and it gives a fascinating insight into the scepticism of his times, which Scott faithfully opposes. It is taken from an 1825 6 vol. ninth edition, “which contains the author’s last corrections and improvements.” There are very many references to his Commentary Notes in this Preface which I have not included, but I have retained his Bible text references and comments.

A “Preface” to the 6 vol. edition of the Commentary on the Holy Bible as published in 1825 with the author’s last corrections and improvements.

Rev. Thomas Scott D.D.

on

“EVIDENCES THAT THE HOLY SCRIPTURES WERE GIVEN BY INSPIRATION FROM GOD.”

A COMPENDIOUS VIEW OF THE EVIDENCES THAT THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND EVERY PART OF THEM, AS THEY STAND IN OUR BIBLES, WERE GIVEN BY INSPIRATION FROM GOD.

WHEVER seriously reflects on the powers and capacities of the human mind, regarding them as the work of him who doeth nothing in vain, and comparing them with those of the inferior creatures, will readily perceive that man alone was created to be RELIGIOUS. Of all the inhabitants of this earth, none else are capable of obtaining any knowledge of their Creator, or of rendering him worship and praise. Man alone possesses the capacity of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, between moral good and evil; and of receiving instruction in social and relative duties, with the obligations under which he lies to perform them, and the advantages of doing it. He alone is capable of being governed by a law, and of being influenced by the proposal of rewards and punishments; of acting as under the eye of an invisible Observer, and with reference to a future season of retribution. From these premises we infer with absolute certainty, that the all-wise Creator thus constituted our minds, and conferred on us these distinguishing endowments, in order to render us capable of Religion, for the purpose of his glory, and of our own felicity in the most intimate connection with that of our fellow creatures.

When further, we consider what this word RELIGION implies, and understand it, according to its most general acceptation, to be such an habitual regard to the one, true, living, and eternal God, the Creator, Governor, and Judge of all, as influences us to seek his favour, to do his will, and to aim at his glory, in the temper of our hearts, and the regulation of our actions, both in the worship which we render to him, and the duties which we perform to man, for his sake and according to his will; we shall be constrained to allow, that it is most reasonable and excellent.—Doubtless, the exercises of true devotion form the noblest employment of the human mind, which in them emulates the angelic nature. A conscientious regard to the all-seeing eye of a righteous and omnipotent Judge is the best bond of human society, and regulator of our relative conduct; inasmuch that if this principle of action were universal and complete, human laws and tribunals would be entirely unnecessary. This would likewise most effectually moderate our appetites and passions; and produce the greatest possible proportion of peace, contentment, and felicity, personal and social, of which our nature, in its present state, is capable. And when we look forward, beyond the grave, to that immortality and future state of recompense, which reason itself pronounces at least highly probable; the absolute necessity of religion to our felicity appears evident beyond all dispute.

Hence, we determine with certainty, that religion is that great business, to which all men ought to attend. It is that blessing, after which all men should seek, whatever else be neglected, or superseded, or postponed.

While, however, it is demonstrable, that man is capable of religion, and in duty and interest bound to it by the most indispensable obligations, stubborn facts, in every age and nation of the world, undeniably prove, that, left to himself, man would never be truly religious. According to the statement above given, where shall we find religion on earth, in any age or nation, which has not possessed, in a greater or less degree, the advantage of those writings, which we will now take for granted to be a divine Revelation, and which will hereafter be shown to be so? An assemblage of the grossest idolatries in varied forms, and of the wildest absurdities in opinion, the most vain and irrational superstitions in worship, and the most dangerous mistakes, as well as the most horrible cruelty and abandoned licentiousness in morals, form that religion, (if it may be dignified by so venerable a name,) which forces itself upon our observation, wherever the light of revelation has not shone. Nor can so much as a single nation, or city, or family, be excepted from this general charge. If there have been a few individuals, who have manifested something not wholly dissimilar from true religion, and

any be disposed to allow that indeed it was such, it must be far more rational to ascribe it to the remains of original tradition, or even to a personal revelation afforded to them for their own benefit, though not authenticated for the good of others, than to make it an exception to the general rule,—*That without revelation, there never was any true religion on earth since the fall of Adam.*

Those, indeed, who live under the light of revelation and make what use they choose of that light, may draw up systems of natural religion, sufficiently plausible, and apparently rational. But it should be remembered, that this light is originally, through one channel or another, derived from the Bible; though too often, with equal absurdity and ingratitude, set up in opposition to its sacred and sublime truths: and universal experience demonstrates, that no such natural religion ever was discovered, and *delineated*, by men of any nation, who had never seen any part of the Bible, or anything deduced from that source.

However reasonable and excellent many of those truths and precepts are, which are proposed to us as *the oracles of reason*; not one of them ever was proposed by reason without revelation, with such certainty, clearness, and authority, as to become a constant principle and rule of action, in secret and in public, towards God and towards man, to any company of men on earth, perhaps not to one individual.

Indeed, after all the supposed improvements and discoveries of modern times, if we exclude the peculiar instructions of the *Bible*, what darkness and uncertainty rest upon points of the greatest imaginable importance!—Even in respect of the immortality of the soul, when Reason, at her best advantage, has done her utmost, her boasted power of demonstration fails. For even were the arguments indisputably conclusive, by which the natural immortality of the soul is supported, who knows, or can know without revelation, how it may please a just and holy God to deal with the souls of his offending creatures? ‘He can create, and he can destroy.’ —But far greater obscurity and uncertainty rests on those subjects, which relate to the nature of the future world, and the rule of judgment, with which our whole conduct, and our hope and peace, are inseparably connected. It is difficult, if not impossible, to perceive by the light of nature, the consistency of perfect justice with boundless mercy. It still remains dubious, except to those who possess and believe revelation, whether God will punish at all, or pardon at all; or by what rule he intends to punish, or pardon. Indeed, wherever we turn, a thick cloud darkens our view, and discourages our enquiries if we leave “the sure testimony of God,” and bewilder ourselves in speculations on matters

evidently too high for us.—But how much worse has the case been of almost all the nations of the earth, and generations of men! Indeed so far have they been from advancing in religious knowledge, where revelation has not been afforded, that they have evidently sunk deeper and deeper into ignorance, and several of them almost into absolute atheism. It is as if the little glimmering which once shone among them, being the effect of original tradition, was gradually expiring and leaving them in utter darkness.

The most complete information, however, respecting doctrines and duties, would be wholly inadequate to the production of the desired effect; except such information were enforced by sufficient authority, gave necessary encouragement, and proposed effectual assistance. The knowledge of duty and of its reasonableness is utterly unavailing whilst men are under the dominion of their lusts and passions. The laws and judicial proceedings of every civilised nation sufficiently manifest this. In this case there is no *disposition* to perform the dictates even of conscience or prudence. A heathen could say, *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*. The proposal of virtue as amiable and excellent, by the feeble recommendation of the moralist's pen, is infinitely inferior in energy, to the authoritative command and sanction of the Almighty denouncing his awful and eternal indignation against the transgressor. Yet facts undeniably shew, that men venture upon sin, even with the threatenings of everlasting misery sounding in their ears; nay, with the trembling apprehensions of it dismaying their hearts: for divine as well as human laws “are weak through the flesh;”¹ and, with all their sanctions and barriers, are unable to affix boundaries to the swelling tide of human depravity.

Indeed, were men fully acquainted with all the glorious perfections of God—with his holy law, with the nature and malignity of sin, with their own real character and situation as sinners, and with the rule and consequences of the future judgment; and were they, at the same time, left utterly destitute of the encouragements and assistances which the Gospel proposes, and which form the grand peculiarity of the Bible, their knowledge, so far from rendering them religious, would probably, by leaving them without hope, annihilate all appearances of religion.² Wherever any semblance of religion is found, which has no respect at all to the mercy of God, as revealed in the gospel, through the righteousness, atonement, and mediation

¹ John iii. 15

² 1 Pet. iii. 15

of Emmanuel, and to the effectual teaching and assistance of the Holy Spirit, it seems to have its foundation, not in men's knowledge, but in their ignorance of God, of themselves, of his law, and of the evil of sin; and this might easily be evinced to be the case even upon rational principles.

But the proposal of suitable encouragements and assistance is entirely out of the province of reason: these are "heavenly things," (John iii. 12-13) of which we can know nothing, except by immediate revelation; and of which we can have no assurance, but the express declaration and faithful promise of God. He alone can inform us, on what terms, or in what manner, his honour permits him, and his sovereign pleasure disposes him, to forgive his offending creatures. He alone can communicate those gracious influences which may produce a holy disposition of heart, and enable sinners to overcome all the obstacles, which retard the progress of those who endeavour to lead "a sober, righteous, and godly life."

From such considerations, the necessity of a revelation from God, in order to establish true religion among men, may be decidedly inferred. It might reasonably have been expected, that he would afford such a revelation, if he intended to accept of any worship and service from them. Indeed this expectation has been very general in the world. And as counterfeit coin proves the existence of sterling money, and the value which men put on it, so counterfeit revelations, (instead of invalidating the argument,) if they do not *prove* the existence of a real revelation, yet evince that men have felt their need of one, have been sensible that it would be a most valuable acquisition, and have been generally disposed to expect it. All the counterfeits, which hitherto have advanced a claim of being divine revelations, have also been successively exposed, and have sunk into general contempt or neglect. In this age and nation, it may be asserted, without hazard of contradiction, that there is but ONE BOOK in the world, which so much as appears to be of divine original. This we call, THE BIBLE, that is, by way of eminence, THE BOOK: and such is the internal and external evidence which authenticates its claim, that I am persuaded, were men as open to conviction on this subject as they are in mathematical investigations, they could no more reject it, after due examination, than they could contradict an evident demonstration.

It may therefore not be improper to insert, in this place, a few of the most obvious reasons which the more studious Christian is "ready to give of the hope which is in him;" and which is grounded upon this first principle, 'THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD;' in order to shew that it is highly reasonable to believe the Bible to be a divine revelation. And if so, then

equally reasonable to take all our measures of truth and duty from it, and to bow our understandings and inclinations to its teaching and governance.

Let it be here carefully observed, that the DIVINE INSPIRATION, and not merely the *authenticity, or genuineness*, of each part of the sacred writings, is intended.—Each part, and every part, may be authentic, or genuine; the work of the authors whose names they severally bear; or true and unsophisticated narratives of the times to which they refer: and yet they may be merely *human*, and of no authority in matters of doctrine and duty. The Odes of Horace, and Caesar's Commentaries, are authentic: probably the first book of Maccabees is genuine history: yet they are not, on that account, in any degree the authoritative guides or standards of our faith and practice.—Many able and admired writers, who apparently have stood forth as the champions of the Bible, appear to the author of this Exposition to have betrayed the cause (he hopes undesignedly). An ancient warrior, having murdered his predecessor, and usurped his throne, was some time after requested to permit him to be numbered among the gods; and it is said that he answered, ‘*Sit divus, modo non sit vivus:*’ ‘Let him be a god, provided he be not living.’ These apologists for the Bible seem to reverse the words, and to say, ‘*Sit vivus, modo non sit divus*’—‘Let it be *genuine*, provided it be not *divine*.’ It would, however, be a waste of time to attempt to prove either the authenticity or the genuineness of the sacred writings, unless in entire subserviency to the demonstration that they are divinely inspired. All the works and words of mere men are *fallible*, and may be erroneous. The *desideratum*, that which is especially wanted, is an INFALLIBLE STAND, to which all other books and instructions of every kind may be referred, with which they may be compared, and by which they may be judged. Now, if the sacred writings are indeed “THE WORD OF GOD,” if “all scripture is given by inspiration of God,” we have this *desideratum*; and have nothing further, in this respect, to expect or desire. But if the books, called by the apostles “The oracles of God,”³ are merely the authentic writings of Moses, David, Isaiah, and others in former times, and not the infallible word of God, we are as far off from the *desideratum* above mentioned as ever. We may indeed learn what these sages of Israel thought, as well as what the sages of China, Egypt, and Greece maintained, concerning God and religion; and we may examine the testimony of each, and bring in our verdict—some in favour of the one, and some of the other. But we are still far from *an infallible standard* as far as if the Bible had never been written, whatever value, in

³ Rom iii. 2. Heb. v. 12. 1 Pet. iv. 11.

other respects, may be attached to such ancient, venerable, and interesting records.

With this view of the subject gathering strength from year to year,⁴ the Author of this work is against any compromise. He ventures to stand forth as vindicating '*the divine inspiration of the 'Holy Scriptures.'*' He wishes indeed to see far abler champions enter the lists against the Goliath of modern scepticism: but as most of those learned and eminent men, who take up the challenge, seem in some measure to compromise the main point, or to decline the discussion of it, he takes his sling and his stone, and says, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

By '*the divine inspiration of the Scriptures,*' the Author would be understood to mean, 'Such a complete and immediate communication by the Holy Spirit to the minds of the sacred writers, of those things which could not have been otherwise known. And such an effectual superintendence as to those particulars concerning which they might otherwise obtain information, as sufficed absolutely to preserve them from every degree of error, in all things, which could in the least affect any of the doctrines or precepts contained in their writings, or mislead any person, who considered them as a divine and infallible standard of truth and duty.' Every sentence, in this view, must be considered as "the sure testimony of God," in that sense in which it is proposed as truth. Facts occurred, and words were spoken, as to the import of them, and the instruction contained in them, exactly as they stand here recorded. But the morality of words and actions recorded merely as spoken and done, must be judged of by the doctrinal and preceptive parts of the same book.—On this ground, all difference or disparity between one and another of the sacred writers is wholly excluded: Moses, Samuel, David, and Isaiah, Paul, James, Peter, and John, are all supposed to speak, or write, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." They are *the voice*, but the divine Spirit is everywhere the SPEAKER. They wrote indeed in such language as their different talents, educations, habits, and associations suggested, or rendered natural to them. But the Holy Spirit so entirely superintended them when writing as to exclude every improper expression, and to guide them to all those which best suited their several subjects: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."⁵ Many particulars, which philosophers, orators, or

⁴ This part of the preface was written above thirty years ago; and the expression, here used, may be considered as the author's present deliberate judgment.

⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 13.

critics, think inaccurate, may consist with this complete inspiration: but every kind and degree of misrepresentation, as springing from personal, popular, or national prejudices or opinions, or as calculated to mislead the humble believer, or to sanction error, must be totally excluded.

It will also appear, in the course of the work, that the few passages, (and they are but few, compared with the whole,) in which errors or interpolations have taken place, through the mistakes of transcribers, form no formidable difficulty, in thus regarding the Holy Scriptures. Nearly all such interpolations and errors may be detected and pointed out by sober and well-informed critics, in this, as well as in other books. And if a few escape detection, it is because they do not so immediately affect the sense, as to make it evident to the most acute, penetrating, and accurate student, that they deviate from the style and sentiment of the writer, in whose works they are found.

The Author has indeed, to this present time, always decidedly rejected all emendations of the sacred text which are adduced either on conjecture, or without adequate authority. Even where the authority is respectable, he has chosen to abide by the present text, when there appeared no evident necessity, nor any very cogent reasons, for the contrary: being aware, how far such alterations may, and often do, lead men from the Scriptures. How directly they tend gradually to substitute another book in the place of the Bible. Yet it is proper to observe, that if all the various readings for which any respectable *authority* can be given, were adopted, they would not alter either the standard of truth, or the rule of duty, in one material point. But whither *conjectural* emendations might head, he cannot undertake to prognosticate.

These things having been premised, he proceeds to state some of the leading reasons which any intelligent man may assign for believing the Scriptures, as we now have them, to be the infallible word of God.

I. Great numbers of wise and good men, through many generations and in distant countries, have agreed in receiving the Bible as a divine revelation. Many of them have been distinguished and generally approved for seriousness, erudition, penetration, and impartiality in judging of men and things. With much labour and patient investigation, they detected the impostures by which their contemporaries were duped. Yet the same assiduous examination confirmed them in believing the Bible to be "THE WORD OF GOD," and induced them, living and dying, to recommend it to all others, as the source of all true wisdom, hope, and consolation. In this view, even 'the tradition of the church' has great weight. For whatever abuse has been made of

the term by such as generally were no part of the true church, yet it must be allowed to be a consideration of vast importance, that the whole company of those who have “worshipped the living God in spirit and truth,” (including those who ventured and laid down their lives for conscience’ sake, and who were the most pious, holy, and useful men in every age,) have unanimously concurred in handing down to us the Scriptures as a divine revelation, and have very little differed about the books which form that sacred deposit. And I cannot but suppose, that if a being of entire impartiality, of sound mind, and holy disposition, should be shown the two Companies, of those who have received, and of those who have rejected the Scriptures, and should compare the seriousness, learning, patient investigation of truth, solid judgment, holy lives, and composure in a dying hour, without unmanly terror or indecent levity, of the one company, with the character and conduct of the other, he would be induced to take up the Bible with profound veneration and with the strongest prepossession in its favour.

II. The agreement of the sacred writers among themselves is another cogent argument of their divine inspiration. Should an equal number of contemporaries, of the same country, education, habits, profession, natural disposition, and rank in life, and associating together as a distinct company, concur in writing a book on religious subjects as large as the Bible, each furnishing his proportion without comparing notes together, the attentive reader, whose mind had been long inured to such studies, would be able to discover some diversity of opinion among them. But the writers of the Scripture succeeded each other, during the term of fifteen hundred years. Some of them were princes or priests, others shepherds or fishermen. Their natural abilities, education, habits, and employments, were exceedingly dissimilar. They wrote laws, history, prophecy, odes, devotional exercises, proverbs, parables, doctrines, and controversy. Each man had his distinct department. Yet they all exactly coincide in the exhibition which they give us of the perfections, works, truths, and will of God—of the nature, situation, and obligations of man—of sin and salvation—of this world and the next—and in short, of all things connected with our duty, safety, interest, and comfort, and in the whole of the religion inculcated by them. They all were evidently of the same judgment, aimed to establish the same principles, and applied them to the same practical purpose. *Apparent* inconsistencies may indeed perplex the superficial reader. But they vanish after a more accurate and persevering investigation. Nor could any charge of disagreement among the sacred writers ever be substantiated, for it can only be said,

that they related the same facts with different circumstances, which are perfectly reconcilable. And that they gave instructions suited to the persons whom they addressed without *systematically* shewing the harmony of them with other parts of divine truth. They do not write by concert. They bestowed no pains to avoid the appearance of inconsistency. Yet the exact coincidence, which is perceived among them by the diligent student, is most astonishing, and cannot be accounted for on any rational principles, without admitting that they wrote “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”⁶ ⁷ To this we may add, that the scriptural history accords in a wonderful manner with the most authentic records which remain, of the events, customs, and manners of the countries and ages to which it stands related. The rise and fall of empires, the revolutions which have taken place in the world, and the grand outlines of chronology, as mentioned or referred to in the Scriptures, are coincident with those stated by the most approved ancient writers. Whilst the palpable errors in these respects, detected in the apocryphal books, constitute one most decisive reason for rejecting them as spurious. But the history of the Bible is of far greater antiquity than any other records extant in the world. It is remarkable that, in numerous instances, it shews the real origin of those absurd fables which disgrace and obscure all other histories of those remote times. This is no feeble proof, that it was derived from some surer source of information than human tradition.

III. The miracles, by which the writers of the Scriptures confirmed their divine mission to their contemporaries, afford us also a most convincing proof in this matter. The narratives of these miracles may be clearly shown to have been published, very soon after the time and at the places, in which they were said to have been wrought in the most conspicuous manner, and before very great multitudes, enemies as well as friends. This constituted a public challenge to every man, to contradict or disprove them, if he could: yet this public challenge never called forth a single individual to deny that they were really performed. Nor was an attempt of the kind ever made till long afterwards.—Can any man of common sense think that Moses and Aaron could possibly have persuaded the whole nation of Israel that, they had witnessed all the plagues of Egypt, passed through the Red Sea with the waters piled on each side of them, gathered the manna every morning for forty

⁶ 2 Pet. i. 21.

⁷ Mohammed, to serve present purposes, produced his Koran by a little at a time: this occasioned an evident inconsistency of one part with another; concerning which he only said, that God had a right to change his laws as he saw good.

years together, and seen all the wonders recorded in their history, had no such events taken place? If then, that generation could not be thus imposed on, when could the belief of these extraordinary transactions be palmed upon the nation? Surely, it would have been impossible in the next age to persuade them that their fathers had seen and experienced such wonderful things, when they had never before heard a single word about them, and when an appeal must have been made to them that these were things well known among them! What credit could have been obtained to such a forgery at any subsequent period? It would have been absolutely necessary in making the attempt to persuade the people, that such traditions had always been current among them, that the memory of them had for ages been perpetuated by days and ordinances observed in every succeeding age by all the nation, and that their whole civil and religious establishment had thence originated. Nay, that the very tenure on which they held their estates was grounded on it! And could this have possibly been effected, if they all had known that no such memorials and traditions had ever before been heard of among them? The same might be shewn concerning the other miracles recorded in Scripture, especially those of Christ and his apostles, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper in remembrance of his death, and the observance of the Lord's day on the first day of the week, in commemoration of his resurrection, in all ages to this present time. If not instituted at the time, immediately succeeding the events on which they are grounded, at what subsequent period could they have been introduced, so as to persuade multitudes in very many nations, that they and their fathers and fathers' fathers had always observed them? So that it might be made evident, that the man who denies that the miracles were actually performed, must believe more wonderful things without any evidence, than those are which he rejects, though established by unanswerable proof. To evince this, as to ones most important instance, namely, the resurrection of Christ which, being once proved, undeniably establishes the divine original and authority of Christianity, let the reader consult the latter part of the note on *John xx. 24-29*.

On this subject, it may again be demanded, When could the belief of the resurrection of Christ, and the miracles wrought by his apostles and disciples in proof of it, have been obtruded on mankind, if they had never happened? Surely not in the age when they were said to have been witnessed by hundreds of thousands who were publicly challenged to deny them if they could! Certainly not in any subsequent age. For the origin of Christianity was expressly ascribed to them, and millions must have been persuaded, that they had always believed those things, of which they had never to that

time so much as heard!⁸ We may indeed venture to assert, that no past event was ever so fully proved as our Lord's resurrection, and that it would not be half so preposterous to doubt whether such a man as Julius Caesar ever existed, as it would be to question whether Jesus actually rose from the dead. What then do they mean, who oppose some trivial apparent variations in the account given of this event by the four Evangelists, (which have repeatedly been shown capable of an easy reconciliation,) to such an unparalleled complication of evidence that it did actually take place?

IV. The prophecies contained in the sacred Scriptures, and fulfilling to this day, fully demonstrate that they are divinely inspired. These form a species of perpetual miracles, which challenge the investigation of men in every age, and which, though overlooked by the careless and prejudiced, cannot fail of producing conviction proportioned to the humble and reverential attention paid to them. The prophecies of the Messiah, which are found in almost all the books of the Old Testament, when compared with the exact accomplishment of them, as recorded in the authentic writings of the Evangelists, abundantly prove them to have been written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. While the existence of the Jews as a people differing from all others upon the face of the earth, and their regard to these writings as the sacred oracles handed down from their progenitors, sufficiently vouch for their antiquity. Though that admits of full and clear proof of another kind. According to the predictions of these books, Nineveh has been desolated;⁹ Babylon swept with the bosom of destruction;¹⁰ Tyre become a place to dry nets in; Egypt the basest of the kingdoms, which has never since been able to "exalt itself above the nations."^{11 12} These, and many other events, fulfilling ancient prophecies, very many ages after they were delivered, can never be accounted for, except by allowing that He, who sees the end from the beginning, thus revealed his secret purposes, that the accomplishment of them might prove the Scriptures to be his word of instruction to mankind.

In like manner, there are evident predictions interwoven with the writings of almost every writer of the New Testament, as a divine attestation to the doctrine contained in them. The destruction of Jerusalem, with all the circumstances predicted in the Evangelists, (the narrative of which may be

⁸ The Jews, at this day, do not deny, that the miracles recorded in the New Testament history were actually performed, but they absurdly ascribe them all to enchantment.—See Answer to Rabbi Crooll, by the Author.

⁹ Nah. i, ii, iii.

¹⁰ Is. xiii, xiv.

¹¹ Ez xxvi. 4, 5.

¹² Ez. xxix. 14, 15.

seen in Josephus's History of the Jewish wars), the series of ages, during which that city has been "trodden down of the "gentiles,"¹³ the long continued dispersion of the Jews, and the conversion of the nations to Christianity, the many antichristian corruptions of the gospel, the superstition, uncommanded austerities, idolatry, spiritual tyranny, and persecution of the Roman hierarchy, the division of the empire into ten kingdoms, the concurrence of those who ruled those kingdoms during many ages, to support the usurpations of the church of Rome, and the existence of Christianity to this day, amidst so many enemies, who have used every possible method to destroy it:—all these occurrences, when diligently compared with the predictions of the New Testament, do not come short of the fullest demonstration, of which the case will admit, that the books, which contain those predictions, are the unerring word of God.

There are two further observations on this subject, which seem of great importance.

1. The predictions of Scripture, if carefully examined, will be found to contain a prophetic history of the world, as to all the grand outlines from the beginning to this present time, not to speak of such, as are yet unfulfilled. Who can deny that the history of Abraham's posterity, of Israel especially, of Judah and Joseph, the most renowned sons of Jacob, and of the Jews, in their present dispersions, and their preservation, as a distinct people, "dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations," might be clearly and particularly stated in the very words of prophecy? Does not almost the whole of ancient profane history, as distinguished from that contained in the sacred Scriptures; and also a large proportion of modern history, consist principally of the records of the four great empires, the Chaldean, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian or Macedonian, and the Roman? And are not these predicted in the book of Daniel so exactly and particularly, as to give some plausibility to the objection which is demonstrated to be unfounded, that they were written after the event? But especially, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."¹⁴ The changes which have taken place in the state of the world, in consequence of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, and of his claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God, which has by some been virulently opposed, by others zealously supported, have been great, extensive, and durable beyond comparison with all other revolutions. But is there one particular, in all the history of Jesus, and of the subsequent establishment of Christianity, with all the opposition made to it and the corruptions afterwards in-

¹³ Luke xxi. 24.

¹⁴ Rev. xix. 10.

troduced, which is not expressly predicted in Scripture? And might not a narrative, in many instances very circumstantial, of our Lord from his birth to his death, be drawn up in the words of prophecy?

2. From the preceding consideration another arises, as inseparably connected with it. The prophecies of Scripture are not detached or insulated predictions, but constitute a grand system of previous information, as to the secret designs of Providence, extending from the earliest ages even to the consummation of all things. And accompanied by such distinct notations of order, place, and time, as may well be called the *geography* and the *chronology* of prophecy. Inasmuch that anyone, in any age, who well understood the prophecies extant in his day, might have known what to expect at the specified times, and in the specified countries. As one prediction received its accomplishment, others were given connecting prophecy with history, till the Revelation of St. John concluded the whole. Events have hitherto, in every age and nation, corresponded with these predictions. This is well known to each individual, in exact proportion to the degree in which he becomes acquainted with Scripture and with historical records, and to the care and impartiality with which he compares the prophecies with those records. As it is the manifest and avowed plan of prophecy to predict events, occurring in their own place and season to the end of the world, the circumstance of several prophecies being yet unfulfilled, does not in the least deduct from the proof of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, derived from this source: for on such a plan, some must remain unfulfilled, till the end shall come.—It may also be added that, in respect of the state of the Jews, and in many other particulars, there is an evident preparation made for the accomplishment of all the prophecies which yet remain to be fulfilled. Now, I ask, is there anything in the least coincident with such a system of prediction, from age to age, in any other book in the world, except the Bible? And could so many and so extraordinary and improbable events, through so many ages and nations, have occurred, in so undeniable a manner, as foretold in the Scriptures, had not the Omnipotent God himself inspired the Scriptures? The grand outline of prophecy generally takes in all that space of time which was included between the period when the prophet wrote and the end of the world. And as subordinate predictions, concerning Israel and the nations, and which form a kind of episode to the main design, were fulfilled, other prophecies were delivered from age to age till St. John closed the whole in The Revelation. Can any reasonable man conceive that a design of this kind could ever have entered into the thoughts of an uninspired writer that he could form the astonishing idea into a regular plan, and that

during more than fifteen hundred years he should have successors, who entered fully into his views, and assisted in carrying them into effect? Or can it be conceived, that such a plan, however formed, could have been so executed as to have even a plausible appearance of being successful? He, who can believe this, has no right to call those credulous, who receive the Bible as the word of God.

V. The Bible alone, and such books as make it their basis, introduce the infinite God speaking in a manner worthy of himself, with simplicity, majesty, and authority. His character, as there delineated, comprises all possible excellence without any intermixture. His laws and ordinances accord to his perfections. His works and dispensations exhibit them. All his dealings with his creatures bear the stamp of infinite wisdom, power, justice, purity, truth, goodness, and mercy, harmoniously displayed. The description given in the sacred oracles, of the state of the world and of human nature, widely differs from our previous ideas of them, yet facts on full investigation unanswerably prove it to be exactly true. The records of every nation, the events of every age, and the history of every individual, most entirely confute the self-flattery of man in this respect. They prove that the writers of the Bible knew the human character immensely better than any philosopher, ancient or modern, ever did. Their account teaches us what men are actually doing, and what may be expected from them. All, who form a different estimate of human nature, find their principles inapplicable to facts. Their theories incapable of being reduced to practice. Their expectations strangely disappointed. The Bible, well understood, enables us to account for those events which have appeared inexplicable to men in every age. The more carefully any one watches and scrutinises all the motives, imaginations, and desires of his own heart, during a length of time, the more manifest will it appear to him that the Scriptures give a far more just account of his disposition and character than he himself could have done. In short, man is such a being, and the world is in such a state, as the Scriptures have described, yet multiplied facts, constant observation, and reiterated experience, are insufficient to convince us of it, till we first learn it from the Bible. Then comparing all which passes within us, and around us, with what we there read, we become more and more acquainted with our own hearts, and established in the belief of the divine original of this most wonderful book. To this we may add, as a most convincing internal proof that the Bible is the word of God, who "knoweth what is in man," that it is exactly suited to our *real* state, character, and wants, and proposes an adequate remedy or supply to all of them,

which in proportion as self-knowledge increases we see more and more. While others, through ignorance and self-flattery, cannot perceive that its proposals and promises suit their case, the experienced Christian is deeply convinced that he wants all that is thus proposed and promised, to render him happy, and that he wants nothing more.

The mysteries contained in Scripture rather confirm than invalidate this conclusion. For a book, claiming to be a revelation from God and yet devoid of mystery, would, by this very circumstance, confute itself. Incomprehensibility is inseparable from God and from all his works, even the most inconsiderable; such as, for instance, the growth of a blade of grass. The mysteries of the Scriptures are sublime, interesting, and useful; they display the divine perfections; lay a foundation for our hope; and inculcate humility, reverence, love, and gratitude. What is incomprehensible must be mysterious: but it may be intelligible as far as it is revealed; and though it be connected with things above our reason, it may imply nothing contrary to it. So that, in all respects, the contents of the Bible are suited to convince the serious enquirer, that it is ‘The word of God.’

VI. The *tendency* of the Scripture constitutes another unanswerable proof. Did all men believe and obey the Bible, as a divine revelation, let us seriously enquire to what tenor of conduct it would lead them, and what would be the effect on society? Surely if repentance, and renunciation of all vice and immorality, when combined with the spiritual worship of God in his ordinances—faith in his mercy and truth, through the mediation of his Son; and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as visible in the life of every true believer—were universal, they would form the bulk of mankind to such characters and would produce such effects, as the world has never yet witnessed. Men would then habitually and uniformly do justice, speak truth, shew mercy, exercise mutual forgiveness, follow after peace, bridle their appetites and passions, and lead sober, righteous, and godly lives. Murders, wars, slavery, cruel oppressions, rapine and fraud, and unrestrained licentiousness, would no more desolate the world, or fill it with misery, and bitter contentions would no more destroy domestic comfort. But righteousness and truth would bless the earth with a felicity exceeding all our present conceptions. This is, no doubt, the direct tendency of the scriptural doctrines, precepts, motives, and promises. Nothing is wanting to remedy the state of the world, and to fit men for the worship and felicity of heaven, but to believe and obey the Scriptures. And if many enormous crimes have been committed under colour of zeal for Christianity, it only proves the depravity

of man's heart: for the Scripture, soberly understood, most expressly forbids such practices and men do not act in this shameful manner because they duly regard the Bible, but because they will not believe and obey it.

The tendency of these principles is exhibited in the characters delineated in the sacred writings. While the consistency between the doctrines and precepts of Scripture, and the actions of men recorded in it, implies another argument of its divine original. The conduct of ungodly men, as there related, entirely accords to the abstract account given of human nature. It appears that believers conducted themselves exactly in that manner which the principles of the Bible might have led us to expect. They had naturally like passions with other men, but these were habitually restrained and regulated by the fear and love of God, and by other holy affections. Their general behaviour was good, but not perfect. Sometimes their natural proneness to evil broke out and made way for bitter repentance and deeper humiliation, so that they appear constantly to have perceived their need of forgiveness and divine assistance, to have expected felicity from the rich mercy of God and, instead of making a bad use of that consideration, to have deduced from it motives for gratitude, zeal, patience, meekness, and love to mankind.

But one *character* is exhibited, in the simplest and most unaffected manner, which is perfection itself. Philosophers, orators, and poets, in their several ways, have bestowed immense pains to delineate a faultless character: and they have given us complete models of their own estimate of excellence, and sufficient proof that they had laboured the point to the uttermost of their ability. But the four Evangelists, (whose divine inspiration is now frequently doubted on the most frivolous pretences,) without seeming to think of it, have done that in which all other writers have failed. They have set before us a perfect human character, by recording facts, without making any comment on them, or shewing the least ingenuity in the arrangement of them. They have given the history of one, whose spirit, words, and actions were, in every particular, what they ought to have been. One who always did the very thing which was proper, and in the best manner imaginable. One who never once deviated from the most consummate 'wisdom, purity, benevolence, compassion, meekness, humility, fortitude, patience, piety, zeal, or any other excellency: and who in no instance let one virtue or holy disposition entrench on another, but exercised them all in entire harmony, and exact proportion.'—'This subject challenges investigation,' and sets infidelity at defiance. Either these four men exceeded in genius and capacity, all other writers that ever lived, or they wrote under the guidance of divine inspiration. For, without labour or affectation, they have performed

what hath baffled all others who have set themselves purposely to accomplish it.¹⁵ This is a fact which cannot be denied. No perfect character is elsewhere delineated, and probably no mere man could have drawn one. No one would have thought of such a character as that of Jesus. This alone, I apprehend, joined to their entire consistency in this respect with one another, demonstrates that the Evangelists wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It has often been observed, that Satan would never have influenced men to write the Bible. For then he would have been divided against himself. Wicked men would not have written a book, which so awfully condemned their whole conduct;—and good men would never have ascribed their own inventions to divine inspiration, especially as such forgeries are most severely reprobated in every part of it. But indeed, it is a work as much exceeding every effort of mere man, as the sun surpasses those scanty illuminations by which his splendour is imitated, or his absence supplied.

VII. The *actual effects* produced by the Scripture evince their divine original. These are indeed far from being equal to its *tendency* because, through human depravity, the gospel is not generally or fully believed and obeyed: yet they are very considerable. We may assert, that even at present, there are many thousands who have been reclaimed from a profane and immoral course of conduct, to sobriety, equity, truth, and piety, and to good behaviour in relative life, simply by attending to the sacred oracles. Having been “made free from sin, and become the servants of God, they have their fruit unto “holiness;” and after “patiently continuing in well-doing,” and cheerfully bearing various afflictions, they joyfully meet death, being supported by the hope of eternal life “as the gift of God through Jesus Christ.” While those who best know them are most convinced that they have been rendered more wise, holy, and happy, by believing the Bible, and that there is a reality in religion, though various interests and passions may keep them from duly embracing it. What a different nation would Britain become, if all its inhabitants were rendered as upright, sincere, peaceable, beneficent, and active in doing good to mankind, as a remnant of them are on scriptural principles? How would the state of the whole earth be changed, if all men everywhere thus “denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, and lived” soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world? “This alone would do much towards introducing a state of things resembling that of the millennium.”—

¹⁵ The author’s Answer to Paine’s Age of Reason, p 66, ed.

There are indeed enthusiasts, but they become such by forsaking the *old* rule of faith and duty for some *new* imagination. There are hypocrites, but they attest the reality and excellency of religion by deeming it worth their while to counterfeit it.

VIII. *Brevity* is so connected with *fullness* in the Scriptures, that they are a treasure of divine knowledge which can never be exhausted. The things that are absolutely necessary to salvation, are few, simple, and obvious to the meanest capacity, provided it be attended by a humble, teachable disposition. But the most learned, acute, and diligent student cannot, in the longest life, obtain an entire knowledge of this one volume. The more deeply he works the mine, the richer and more abundant he finds the ore. New light continually beams from this source of heavenly knowledge, to direct his conduct, and illustrate the works of God, and the ways of men. And he will at last leave the world confessing that the more he studied the Scriptures, the fuller conviction he had of his own ignorance, and of their inestimable value.

IX. Lastly, “He that believeth hath the witness in himself.” The discoveries which he has made by the light of the Scripture, the experience which he has had that the Lord fulfills its promise to those who trust in them, the abiding effects produced by attending to it, on his judgment, dispositions, and affections, and the earnestness of heaven enjoyed by him in communion with God, put the matter beyond all doubt. Though many believers are not at all qualified to dispute against infidels, they are enabled through this inward testimony, to obey the gospel, and to suffer for it. They can no more be convinced by reasonings and objections that uninspired men invented the Bible, than they can be persuaded that man created the sun, whose light they behold, and by whose beams they are cheered.

And now, if an objector could fully invalidate more than one half of these arguments, (to which many more might easily be added,) the remainder would be abundantly sufficient.—Nay, perhaps, any one of them so far decides the question that, were there no other proof of the Bible’s being the word of God, a man could not reject it without acting in direct opposition to those dictates of common sense, which direct his conduct in his secular affairs.—But in reality, I have a confidence, that not one of these proofs can be fairly answered. At least it has never yet been done. The combined force of the whole is so great, that the objections by which men cavil against the truth, only resemble the foaming waves dashing against the deep-rooted

rock, which has for ages defied their unavailing fury. But, though these can effect nothing more, they may beat off the poor shipwrecked mariner, who was about to ascend it, in hopes of deliverance from impending destruction.

A very small part of the evidences which, with combined force, establish the divine original and authority of our holy religion, has here been adduced. Many books have, of late years, been published on some important subject. The writers of which have treated it in different ways. Yet, in general, the arguments advanced by each seem separately to be conclusive. It does not appear that any view of the subject, materially new, remains to be exhibited. But the following particulars have not, as far as the Author has observed, been as yet brought forward in that prominent manner, and to that advantage, of which they are capable.

I. Many, in these days, allow the sacred writers to have been wise and good men, but they hesitate and speak doubtfully, as to their *divine inspiration*.—Yet, do not all the prophets in the Old Testament speak most decidedly of themselves and of their predecessors, as declaring, not their own words, but the word of God?¹⁶ Do not the apostles, and other writers of the New Testament, speak concerning the prophets who wrote the Old Testament, “as holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?” Do they not adopt language which, in its most obvious meaning, claims the attention of their readers to their own instructions, as to the WORD OF GOD? Do they not thus attest and sanction one another’s writings? Do they thus attest and sanction any other books? The answer to these questions at least effectually confutes the sentiment above stated. If the sacred writers were indeed wise men, but not *inspired*, how were they *deluded* into the false imagination that they and their predecessors and coadjutors were inspired? If they were good men, but *not inspired* would they have thus confidently asserted their own inspiration, and sanctioned that of each other, knowing that this was contrary to the truth, and that they merely delivered their own private sentiments?

II. There are also very many who so far reverence the name of our Lord Jesus, as to suppose his words to be divine and infallible, and yet they speak of the writers, both of the Old and New Testament, in more hesitating language. Now our Lord himself, in numerous instances, has quoted and referred to the Old Testament, and the several parts of it, as “of divine authority,” and this in a manner which directly tended to mislead the people, if the

¹⁶ Sam. xxiii. 1, 2. Neh. ix. 30. Ps. xix. 7—11. Is. viii. 20. Jer. xx. 7—9. xxv. 3, 4. xxvi. 12—19. Ez. i. 1—3. xxxviii. 16, 17. Dan. ix. 12, 13. Mic. iii. 8—12. Zech. i. 5, 6.

passages referred and appealed to, were merely the private opinion of some venerable men of former ages, but not the infallible word of God. And his appointment of the apostles, and his giving them the power of the keys, of opening and shutting the kingdom of heaven, must imply, that in their writings, and in those which they sanctioned, his doctrine and religion might be found unmixed and genuine. Indeed, if it cannot be found there, where are we to look for it? These considerations shew that he himself has attested the divine inspiration of both the Old and the New Testament.

An argument, comprising so many and important transactions, cannot here be fully discussed. But a few specimens may not improperly be annexed of the manner in which the author supposes that the position might be maintained, with great effect, by any man who had talents and leisure for such an attempt.

When the divine redeemer was tempted by the devil, he selected all the texts with which, as ‘by the sword of the Spirit,’ he put the enemy to flight, from one of the Books of Moses. [17] Does he then quote these books as the words of man? Surely not. He says repeatedly, “It is written.” And had any one enquired, Where? Would he not have answered, “in the word of God?”—In his sermon on the mount he continually refers to the law given by Moses, declaring that “till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled,” “for he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil.” Now who can deny that our Lord came to fulfil the types of the ceremonial law, and the requirements of the moral law? And who can imagine that the Son of God was manifested thus to honour any institutions of mere human authority?—Yet many learned writers speak of the laws of Moses as if they had originated with him.

The Pharisees and Scribes in general maintained that JEHOVAH spake by Moses, and that his writings were the word of God. But does our Lord ever so much as intimate that this opinion was unwarranted, or held in too absolute and unrestricted a manner? Nay, when he saw good to expose the traditions of the elders, he charges them with rejecting and “making void the commandment of God by their traditions” —but where was that commandment of God to be found, except in the books of Moses? For he expressly referred to the fifth commandment.—Again, when the Pharisees proposed a question to him respecting divorces, he referred them to the Mosaic history of the creation, and to the original institution of marriage saying, “Have ye never read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female?” Does not this method of appealing to these records imply an ex-

press attestation to the indisputable truth of them? And does not that attestation amount to a declaration that they were written by divine inspiration?

Who was intended by the Householder that inclosed the vineyard of Israel, but JEHOVAH? By whom did he inclose it, but by Moses? What Moses enacted and performed was done in the name and by the authority of JEHOVAH. Can his writings be treated as the word of man by any who consider the testimony of Christ as “the word of God?” [18]

The Sadducees proposed a case to Jesus which they imagined inconsistent with the resurrection of the dead. But he decisively answered, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, or the power of God,” and he then referred them to the Books of Moses, as a confutation of their error. But did the Son of God in reality appeal to the writings of an uninspired man? or did he not appeal to the oracles of God? This, however, is not all. He says expressly, “Have ye not read, that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, &c.”—What Moses recorded was spoken by God.

On another occasion he inculcated a regard to the Scribes and Pharisees, as sitting in Moses seat: that is, teaching according to his law. Though, at other times, he exposed their instructions when, following their own traditions, they disannulled that law. What could this mean but that the one was a divine revelation, the other a mere human invention?

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, (if indeed it be a parable,) our Lord introduces Abraham saying to the rich man concerning his brethren, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them”: and again, “If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. [19]—But would he have thus called the attention of his hearers, and of all through revolving ages who read his words, to the writings of Moses, if *any part of them* had been erroneous and the mere opinion of a fallible man?—It is worthy of notice, that our Lord also expressly attested the truth of the Mosaic history, in some particulars which have not been most implicitly credited, in their evident and literal import: I mean the account given by Moses of the universal deluge, and Noah’s preservation in time ark while all else were drowned, and of the destruction of Sodom by fire and brimstone from heaven, with the sudden and awful doom of Lot’s wife.[20]

When discoursing with Nicodemus, he referred to the Mosaic history of the brazen serpent, in such a manner as both attested the typical import of that transaction, and the reality of the miracle recorded by Moses.

On another occasion, probably before the Sanhedrin, our Lord says to the Jews, “Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote

of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"—Hence we may infer, that an intelligent belief of the words of Moses necessarily leads to faith in Christ, and that it could not be expected, that the Jews, who did not believe the testimony of Moses in this particular, he would believe in him of whom he spake. Let this suffice, in respect of the Books of Moses.

It may be proper also to adduce a few specimens, respecting the other parts of the Old Testament. When the Pharisees condemned the disciples for rubbing the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, our Lord said unto them, "Have ye not read what David did?" "Have ye not read so much as this, what David did?"^[21] and directly referred also to the law in the same sentence.^[22] Now this surely authorises us to conclude, that he regarded both the law and the Books of Samuel, as equally "the word of God."—In like manner he called the attention of his hearers to the history of the queen of Sheba, as of undoubted authority. This is recorded both in the Books of the Kings and in the Chronicles.^[23]

When he anticipated the objection of the Nazarenes, by referring them to the conduct of the Lord in sending Elijah to Zarephath, to a Zidonian woman, rather than to any of the widows in Israel, and in cheating Naaman the Syrian, by Elisha, rather than any of the lepers in Israel, he not only authenticated the historical records of those facts as *genuine*, but *attested the miracles* recorded in them which, admitted in their full extent, can never be separated from the divine inspiration of those who wrought them.^[24] It should also be observed, that our Lord never referred to any writings in this manner, except those received by the Jews as the word of God. He opposed oral traditions, and has not once quoted the Books of the Apocrypha, some of which were then extant. It may therefore be fairly inferred, that he expressly designed to confirm the opinion of the Jews on that subject, by his repeated attestations, and to establish exclusively the divine inspiration of their sacred books.

JEHOVAH had given commandment by Moses, that the people should offer sacrifices, exclusively at the place which he should appoint: and Joshua after his death, by divine direction, as the Jews supposed, placed the tabernacle at Shiloh, where it continued till the ark was taken by the Philistines. Afterwards David removed the ark to Jerusalem, and Solomon built the temple on mount Zion, which was from that time regarded as exclusively the place appointed by God for sacrifice.—A large proportion of the Old Testament, from the Books of Moses to the end of it, relates to this tabernacle and temple, to the sins of the people in offering sacrifice elsewhere, or

in hypocritically attending on the ordinances there administered, to the judgments of God upon them for these sins, to the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans, to the rebuilding of it by Zerubbabel, and to events of a similar nature.—These things are so interwoven with the historical records of the Old Testament that to deny the divine authority, by which Joshua separated Shiloh, and David appointed mount Zion, as the exclusive place for offering sacrifice, according to the command given by Moses, would tend to invalidate the whole narrative. It would imply, that the Lord inflicted tremendous judgments on the nation, merely for violating the appointments of uninspired men.—The Samaritans indeed argued, that “men ought to worship on mount Gerizim, and not eat Jerusalem: but our Lord declared to the woman of Samaria, that the Samaritans knew not what “they worshipped; for salvation was of the Jews.”[25] Now, who can doubt, that this declaration of Jesus Christ and his own constant attendance on the worship performed at Jerusalem, fully attest the divine inspiration of those books, in which the appointment of this place and the building of the temple are recorded, as having been done by the directions and command of God himself?

Let us also very briefly consider our Lord’s testimony to the writings of the Prophets, and to the Book of Psalms. The Psalms are indeed ascribed to different writers. But it is evident that they constituted a book of the Scriptures among the Jews at that time, as they now do,[26] so that a quotation from that book, as the word of God, without adding any limitation, is in fact an attestation of the whole.

When the children in the temple cried, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” the chief priests said to Jesus, “Hearest thou not what these say?” To which he answered, “Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?”[27] Did not this attest the words of David as the language of inspiration and of prophecy?

On another occasion he demanded of the Pharisees, “how David in Spirit,” or, “by the Holy Ghost,” “called the Messiah Lord: which is equivalent to David’s declaration concerning himself; “The Spirit of God spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.” And accordingly our Lord after his resurrection declared that, “all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses,” “and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning him.” But why *must* this have been, except as the writings referred to were inspired by God himself? Could there be any necessity, that the Words of fallible men, however wise and good, should be fulfilled, in such extraordinary events as the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ?

Referring to a passage, in the Psalms,[28] he asks, “Is it not written in your law, “I said, Ye are gods?” If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken, &c Who can lead the magistrate’s gods, but JEHOVAH? And why could not the Scripture be broken, but because it is “the word of God?”

I shall only, in a general way, refer the reader, to some of our Lord’s attestations to several of the Prophets, whose writings form a part of our Scriptures. The texts referred to are surely a sufficient attestation to the prophecy of Isaiah. When our Lord says, “Well did Esaias prophesy of you”, could he mean any thing less than St. Paul did, in saying, “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet?” [29] Christ gives similar attestations to the prophecy of Daniel:[30] and to Hosea.[31] He also expressly attests the history contained in the book of Jonah,[32] which is often treated very irreverently.

He evidently refers to the words of Micah, in predicting the persecutions to which his disciples would be subjected.[33] And he explicitly attests the prophecy of Malachi.[34] Several others of the prophets are quoted by the evangelists: but none are here adduced, except those who are mentioned by our Lord himself, in a manner attesting the divine inspiration of the writers, or their language, as “the word of God”

It only remains to mention his attestation to the Scriptures in general, and to the division of them which was received at that time, into “the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.” Thus he says to the Scribes, “Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the corner?”[35] And when he adds, “*Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof,* he evidently shews, that he quoted the passage as the word of God, which “cannot be broken.”—”How then shall” the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? and again, All this was done that the Scriptures “*of the prophets might be fulfilled.*”[36]

Would we know more particularly what Scriptures he meant? Let us hear his words to the apostles: “All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me.” [37]

The words of our Lord are very remarkable: “Search,” says he, “the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.”[38] Now what could the Jews suppose Jesus to mean by “the Scriptures,” but the books which they had been accustomed to distinguish by that appellation? They had thought that in these the way of eternal life

was to be found. These testified of Jesus as the Messiah, and yet they rejected him, without whom they could not obtain eternal life!—This one testimony confirms indubitably the divine revelation of the whole Old Testament, as it stood at that time, to all who truly believe the words of Christ. But, *reversing* his conclusion in another case, we may fairly say to men who call themselves Christians, ‘If ye believe not his words, how can ye believe the writings of the Old Testament?’

When the Jews went about to stone him, because he had said, “I and my Father are one,” he quoted a passage from the Psalms, adding, “The Scripture cannot be broken.”[39] But what can we understand by “the Scripture,” in this connection, but the canonical books of the Old Testament as then received by the Jews? And who can deny this to be a complete authentication of them, as the unfailing word of the unchangeable God? Indeed all those passages, in which Christ speaks of his sufferings, death, and resurrection, with the various circumstances connected with them, as what “must be,” with reference to the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, prove, as far as men regard his testimony, that not one tittle of those sacred records could pass away, till the whole had received its full accomplishment: for which no other satisfactory reason can possibly be given, than this, that the whole is a divine revelation, “for the 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.”

But, should it be granted that our Lord’s own words demonstrate the whole Old Testament to be “given by inspiration from God,” as far as men reverence and believe his testimony, yet it may still be asked, does it follow that the books of the New Testament admit of the same kind of proof from the words of Christ himself?—Let us briefly examine this subject also. It is not indeed practicable to adduce so large a body of evidence, as has been brought in the former case, nor is it necessary. Yet I apprehend that the argument may in a short compass be made very conclusive.—When Peter confessed Jesus to be “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” He answered, “I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”—Peter had spoken in the name of the other apostles, as well as in his own. It is generally allowed that the answer included them also. Indeed this appears by other passages of similar import in which they were all addressed.

If it be allowed that this absolute promise was given exclusively to the apostles, we must next enquire, how they could exercise this power of bind-

ing or loosing, especially after their decease, except by their doctrine? And where must the church or the world look for that doctrine, if not in their writings? Should we suppose that the exercise of this exclusive authority was confined to the short time of their continuance on earth, then the church has ever since been left destitute of any rule, either for censures or absolutions, even of a declarative nature. Also of all *criteria* for the discrimination of true Christians from other men, either for the purpose of self-examination, or for the regulation of our conduct "towards the household of faith," and the world around us. But if this promise was not exclusively made to the apostles, nor the authority given by it intended to be exercised according to their doctrine, the consequence must be, either that there are in every age, ministers of religion possessed of this absolute power of binding and loosing, or that the words of Christ have not received their accomplishment. And, as it does not seem to accord with the prevailing sentiments of this age to invest ministers, of any kind or description, with such an infallible and decisive authority, we may, I apprehend, be allowed to conclude that the promise was made exclusively to the apostles. It was fulfilled when they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to deliver that doctrine to the church, according to which the state of all men, in respect of acceptance or condemnation, is and will be finally decided. If this be allowed, it will inevitably follow, that our Lord's express testimony proves that their writings are *a divine revelation*, for in them especially they delivered to the church what they received from the Lord. These have been, and will be to all subsequent generations, exclusively 'the doctrine of Christ.'

On the night before his crucifixion, our blessed Saviour repeatedly promised to send to his apostles, "the Spirit of Truth, who should guide them into all Truth," and "shew them things to come;" Who should "teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever he had said unto them," and who "should receive of his and shew it to them." There is a subordinate sense in which these promises are, in a measure, accomplished to all true Christians. But the persons, who advance doubts respecting the divine authority of the books contained in the New Testament, will scarcely deny that they are addressed in a far superior sense, to the apostles and those immediately connected with them. Now the Spirit was given to them, as well as to others, "to profit withal;" and it is undeniable, that genuine Christianity, without unremitting miracles, could be delivered down to future ages for the profit of mankind, only by writings, in which it should be stated without error or corrupt mixture, and preserved as a sacred deposit in the church from generation to generation. What then could the Holy Spirit,

promised in this energetic language to the apostles, be so rationally supposed to do for them, as to guide their minds by an immediate superintending inspiration, when they dictated those writings, by which it was evidently the design of Providence that the doctrine of Christ should be perpetuated in the church? Indeed, either they did deliver to mankind the doctrine of their Lord and Master, pure and uncorrupted, or they did not: if they did not, the revelation, which God made of himself by his well-beloved Son, has answered very little purpose. No man, without a new revelation properly so called, can or ever could distinguish the truths of Christ from the errors of the apostles: but if they did deliver their doctrine pure and uncorrupted to mankind, why should we maintain, that they were preserved from error when preaching the gospel, in which one generation of men alone was immediately concerned, yet left to fall into errors in their writings, in which all future ages and nations were most deeply interested? If when they were brought before governors for a testimony to them, it was not they that spoke, but the Holy Spirit who spake by them. We may surely conclude, that what they wrote for a testimony to all future ages and nations, was arranged under the same efficacious teaching and superintendency.

Our Lord, just before his ascension, renewed and ratified his commission to the apostles: "All power," says he, "is given unto me in heaven and earth: go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things "whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptised "shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Yet none, those alone excepted, to whom the apostles personally preached, can have any concern in this important declaration unless the doctrine of Christ, delivered to the apostles, may be *certainly* found in their writings.—Our Lord just before his crucifixion intercedes for his whole future church in these words, "Neither pray I for these alone, but "for them also which shall believe on me *through their word:*" and indeed all real Christians in every age have believed in him, not so much through the word of the ministers who preached to them, as through that of the apostles, by which their doctrine must be tried; from which, if sound, it is deduced, and to which it is properly their custom to make an unreserved appeal. In this sense St. Paul says, that believers are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief Corner Stone: for the Old Testament written by the prophets, and the New Testament by the apostles, under "the inspiration of the Holy Spir-

it," contain that doctrine, which is the foundation of the faith and hope of the whole church, as resting on Christ, and united in him into an holy temple, "an habitation of God" through the Spirit."

The several books of the New Testament were written by the apostles themselves, excepting the gospels of Mark and Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles: and these were penned by the attendants on the apostles, and under their immediate inspection, and consequently were equally authenticated by them, as if they bade themselves written them. If any should object, that Paul was not one of those apostles, to whom Christ gave his express testimony, and yet he wrote a great part of the Epistles: it may be answered, first, that there is no alternative between denying all the facts recorded concerning him, and allowing his apostolic authority in its fullest extent, or that at least "he was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles: and secondly, that Peter has attested his Epistles to be a part of the Scriptures, in these remarkable words," Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto "him, hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the *other scriptures*, unto their own destruction." If therefore, our Lord's own words authenticate the writings of the other apostles as a divine revelation, Peter, who in some respects might be called the chief of the apostles, authenticates by divine inspiration the writings of his beloved brother Paul.

Finally, the only portion of Scripture, of which our Lord can in any sense be called the Writer, is that which contains the epistles to the seven churches in Asia, which he dictated to the apostle John as his amanuensis. All his *discourses* (as well as his miracles, and the events of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension,) were written, not by himself, but by the evangelists, two of whom were not apostles. What greater assurance then have we, that they recorded faithfully his words, than that the apostles faithfully delivered his doctrine to mankind? If the evangelists were not inspired in recording his words, we are not infallibly sure, that he spoke what they ascribe to him: and why should we allow the divine inspiration of his historians, in recording his words, and yet doubt the divine inspiration of his apostles, in communicating his doctrine to the church and to the world? This opinion therefore is, in fact, both hostile to the whole of the sacred oracles, and at variance with itself.

The consequences of our present conduct, according to the Scriptures, are so immense, that if there were only a bare possibility that these were divine truth, it would be madness to run the risk of rejecting them, for the sake of

gaining the whole world. What then shall we think of those who having such unanswerable demonstrations of their being the word of God, that they cannot reasonably doubt of it for a moment, yet disobey the commands, and neglect the salvation, revealed in them, for the veriest trifle which can be proposed! Especially, as it may be shown, that, (besides the eternal consequences,) the firm belief of the Scriptures, and the conscientious obedience which true faith always produces, will render a man far happier in this present life, even amidst trials and self-denying services, than any other man can be made, by all the pomp, pleasure, wealth, power, and honour, which the world can bestow on him.

If these arguments, which certainly contain a complete moral demonstration of the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, excite in any reader a greater attention to the sacred volume, and dispose him to read it with more strict impartiality, and larger expectations of improvement, if they induce any one, who has not hitherto turned his attention to the subject, to examine it carefully for himself; if they obviate the unhappy prejudices, or confirm the wavering faith, of one individual, if they stir up any one to seek and wait for “the witness in himself,” the Author’s object, in prefixing them to this publication, will be thus far attained.

We must next proceed to consider the nature of a divine revelation, and the reception to which it is entitled.—Knowledge, in different degrees, may be acquired by us in various ways. We know some things by intuition, or the testimony of our senses, and other things by demonstration, or undeniably conclusive arguments. Many things, which do not admit of this kind of proof, may be shown to be *probable*, in so great a degree that it would be absurd to doubt of them, and madness not to regulate our conduct according to them. A very small proportion of men’s actions are directed by intuitive knowledge, by demonstration, or even by the higher degrees of probability. A moderate degree of probability is generally sufficient to excite them to activity, and to direct their conduct. TESTIMONY, especially, influences by far the greatest part of human actions. It forms the main spring of men’s vigorous, self-denying exertions, their daring attempts, and their persevering labours. By crediting the assertions, and relying on the engagements, express or implied, of one another, all the grand concerns of nations are conducted. Causes, in which life and death are involved, receive their final determination and commerce, in all its branches, is directed and influenced:

and the same regard to testimony, and confidence in our fellow-creatures, is inseparable from the most ordinary affairs of human life.

Now, “if the testimony of man be great, the testimony of God is greater,” infinitely greater. Indeed his testimony, when fully ascertained, is the highest possible degree of demonstration: and when the Bible is proved, by adequate evidence, to be “the testimony of God,” the information contained in it is *sure*, far beyond all other information, from whatever quarter or in whatever manner it is obtained.—The judge and the jury in court, the mercilant on the exchange, the commander of a fleet or army, the minister of state in council, (not to mention cases of subordinate importance,) are fully aware, that no testimony or information can be useful to direct their conduct, in their respective concerns, except it be *credited*. To appreciate its credibility and its import, is the first consideration. The next, when it is believed and understood, should be to form the plan of conduct according to it. Thus almost all human actions, and those especially of the greatest importance, are performed and regulated by *faith*, by that same principle, which is the main spring of human activity, in the great concerns of religion: with this sole difference, that belief of human testimony, and reliance on human faithfulness to promises and engagements, by word or on paper, and in very many cases, as in that of physicians, lawyers, and even those who prepare our food, by what is regarded as a *professional* engagement, influence men in their secular concerns. The belief of God’s testimony, and reliance on his faithfulness to his promises, as written in the Scriptures, influence Christians in their spiritual and eternal concerns.—These things are obvious: but they are seldom duly considered, in this connection.

The Bible is the “testimony of God” to truths and facts, many of which are not otherwise discoverable or not with sufficient clearness and certainty, to become principles of our habitual conduct. Things past, future, and invisible, truths most important, sublime, and mysterious, are thus brought to our knowledge, attested by him, who cannot make mistakes, who cannot deceive. But *faith* is the only exercise of our rational faculties, the only operation of the human mind, by which we can avail ourselves of this information. Faith, receiving and appropriating the testimony of God, is to reason, not unlike what the telescope is to the eye of the astronomer, who by it discerns objects invisible to all others. He sees, clearly and distinctly, those things, which to others appear obscure and confused. Reason, thus appropriating by faith, the information communicated by revelation from the “only wise God,” adds immensely to her former scanty stock of knowledge; possessing at the same time *certainty* instead of *conjecture*: and thus, in the

posture of a humble disciple, she receives that instruction, which must be for ever withheld from her, while she proudly affects to be the teacher. Thus, even the most illiterate of mankind, believing and becoming more and more acquainted with the sacred oracles, acquire a knowledge in the things of God and religion, far more certain and useful, than ever was possessed by the wisest and most learned unbeliever: in the same manner as the bosom friend or confidential counsellor of the prince, who is informed of his real purposes and designs, exceeds in practical knowledge of state-affairs the most sagacious speculating politician, who merely supposes that those things have been done, or will be done, which he thinks ought to be done, or in some way conjectures to be most probable.

When, relying on the veracity of God, we receive the Scriptures, as in every proposition infallibly true, the whole of the instruction contained in them becomes our own. We may consider them as a mine of precious ore, which will more and more enrich us, in proportion to our diligence in exploring them, and, so to speak, in working the mine.

But this faith differs widely from the mere assent of the understanding to any proposition, without respect to its importance, and to our own concern in it. Noah, for instance, was informed, that the deluge would come and we are informed that it actually came. But he was immediately interested in the event, we are not. We may therefore assent to the truth of it, as an historical fact, without being influenced by it in our habitual conduct. But if he truly believed the divine testimony and monition, this belief must necessarily influence his conduct. "By faith, Noah, moved with fear, prepared the ark." The truths of revelation, (wholly unlike the reports of the day, which, whether true or false, are of little consequence to us,) all relate to our eternal interests, and therefore have an inseparable connection with our practice. The Bible, received by true faith, becomes the foundation of our hope, the standard of our judgment, the source of our comfort, "the lantern of our feet, and the light of our paths;" and implicit faith always produces unreserved obedience.

The province of reason therefore, in respect to revelation, is, first to examine and decide, (with modesty and caution,) on the evidences by which it is supported; to understand and explain the language in which it is conveyed; to discern, in many things, the excellency of the things revealed to us; and to use them as motives, encouragements, and rules of obedience: and, in things evidently mysterious, to bow in humble submission to the divine teaching; to receive in adoring faith and love what we cannot comprehend; to rest satisfied with what is revealed; and to leave secret things with

God, to whom alone they belong.—Should any one indeed presume to interpret a text of Scripture, in a sense which contradicts the testimony of our senses or clear demonstration, we may venture to reject this interpretation. Nothing can possibly prove that to be true which we *certainly know* to be false. But when the doctrines of revelation, or the obvious interpretations of them, according to the common use of language, are only mysterious, but involve no real contradiction when they are merely above our comprehension, or contrary to the general notions and preconceptions, or ordinary reasonings, of mankind, but are not opposite to the testimony of our senses, or to any *demonstrated* truth: to reject, on such grounds, the testimony of God, must be *irrational* in the highest degree unless man be indeed wiser than his Creator.

Seeing therefore, that the Bible may be unanswerably proved to be the word of God, we should reason from it, as from self-evident principles, or demonstrated truths: for “His Testimony is sure, making wise the simple.”

Many parts of Scripture accord so well with the conclusions of our rational powers, when duly exercised, that either they might have been known without revelation, or else men have mistaken the capacity of *perceiving* truth, for that of *discovering* it. Hence various controversies have arisen about *natural religion*, which many suppose to be rather taken for granted by revelation, than made known by it. But the term is ambiguous: for the word *natural* includes *the propensities of our hearts*, as well as the *powers of our understandings*; and the same truths, which accord to the latter, are often totally opposite to the former. The gentiles might have known many things concerning God and his will, if they had “liked to retain him in their knowledge.” But their alienation of heart from him prevailed to keep them in ignorance, or entangle them in error. So that the term, “The religion of reason,” Would express the idea much more intelligibly, if any such distinction be deemed necessary.

This however is obvious, that many truths and precepts, which are found in the Bible, have been maintained by persons who were ignorant of that divine revelation, or who did not choose to own their obligations to it: and many others, professing to receive the Scriptures as the word of God, assent to some truths contained in them, riot so much because they are revealed, as because they think that they may be proved by other arguments while they reject, neglect, or explain away those doctrines, which are not thus evident to their reason, or level with their capacities. So that at last it comes to this, that they discard all which is deemed peculiar to revelation and refuse to

believe “the testimony of God,” if their own reason will not vouch for the truth of what he says.

It may indeed be questioned, whether those opinions, which men so confidently magnify as the oracles of reason, were not originally, without exception, borrowed from revelation, as far as there is any truth in them: and it is evident, that they cannot possess sufficient certainty, clearness, and authority, to render them efficacious principles of action, except as enforced by revelation and its awful sanctions. And the wildest enthusiast never dreamed of a grosser absurdity, than those persons maintain, who suppose that the only wise God has given a revelation to man, confirmed by miracles and prophecies, and established in the world by the labours and sufferings of his servants, and by the crucifixion of his well-beloved Son and that this revelation at last is found to contain nothing, but what we might have known as well without it! Nay, that it is expressed in such language, as has given occasion to those, who have most implicitly believed and reverentially obeyed it, to maintain sentiments and adopt practices, erroneous and evil in themselves, and of fatal consequence to mankind!

We might therefore have previously expected, that the revelation from God should illustrate, confirm, and enforce such things, as seem more level to our natural powers: and that it should make known to us many important matters, which we could not have otherwise discovered and which would be found exceedingly different from all our notions and imaginations, seeing that our contracted views and limited capacities are infinitely distant from the omniscience of God. So that it is most reasonable to conclude, that the doctrinal truths, which more immediately relate to the divine nature, perfections, providence, and government, to the invisible and eternal world and the mysteries of redemption, constitute by far the most important part of revelation, as discovering to us such things, “as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,” neither have they entered into the heart of man; and yet they are essentially connected with our present hope, worship, and duty, and with our future happiness or misery.

He therefore cannot, according to the common use of language, be called a believer, who only holds to those doctrines which he deems the dictates of reason as well as of revelation; whilst he rejects the testimony of God whenever he deems it *unreasonable*. And we may hence learn what judgment we ought to form of those, who *affirm*, without hesitation, that the moral precepts with the annexed penal sanctions, and the more evident truths of the Bible, are the only important part of it; that it is of little consequence what men believe, especially concerning those things which are in

any degree mysterious; and that none but narrow-minded bigots, and weak and ignorant people, lay any stress upon speculative opinions.—”He that believeth not, maketh God a liar;” especially “he that believeth not the testimony, which God hath given of his Son,” and of eternal life bestowed on sinners through him. This is the uniform doctrine of Scripture; and to contradict it is equivalent to a total rejection of divine revelation. Can it be supposed, that the prophets and apostles were commissioned, and that the Son of God was manifested in the *flesh*, “died on the cross and rose from the dead, merely to inform mankind, that the Lord approved honesty, temperance, truth, and kindness and disapproved the contrary vices? or, that the unnumbered testimonies which the Scriptures contain to the mysteries of the Divine Nature, the Person of the redeemer, the work of redemption, and the influences of the Holy Spirit, may, without any criminality, be disbelieved, derided, or reviled provided men are moral in their conduct towards one another? Or, that God is equally pleased with those who thus affront his veracity, as with those who implicitly submit to his teaching and credit his testimony? If this be the case, in what does the difference between the infidel and the believer consist in? All, except avowed atheists, will allow the propriety of many precepts, and the truth of some doctrines, coinciding with those contained in Scripture: but the infidel admits them as the dictates of reason, not as “the testimony of God;” and many professed believers reject all, without hesitation, that does not appear to accord to the same standard. So that both of them believe their own reasonings, “lean to their own understandings,” and “make God a liar,” when his testimony contradicts their self-confident decisions! The prevailing notion therefore, of the comparatively small importance of doctrinal truth, is subversive of revelation and in fact is only a more plausible and more dangerous species of infidelity. The decided belief of the “sure testimony of God,” on the most important doctrines of revelation and those most intimately connected with our eternal salvation, our rejoicing hope, and our adoring gratitude, is often, under the word *speculative*, or *speculation*, confounded with the boldest investigation of things unrevealed, by the most presumptuous efforts and conclusions of reasoning unbelievers. This sometimes by pious men, whose excessive antipathy to controversy will not allow them to admit the difference, or come near enough to perceive it.

If we believe the Scriptures to have been written by “inspiration from God,” and have any suitable apprehensions of his omniscience, veracity, and perfections, we must be convinced that it is the height of arrogance for us, short-sighted, erring creatures of yesterday, to speak of any doctrine con-

tained in them as false or doubtful, because it is not coincident with our reasonings or conceptions. Surely, a small portion of modesty and humility might suffice to induce a confession, that we are more likely to be mistaken, than that the only wise God should attest what is not exactly true! In rejecting his authenticated testimony, we must either advance our knowledge above his omniscience, or impeach his veracity, or deny the Scriptures, altogether or in part, to be his word, reserving to ourselves the determination, what part is of divine authority, and what is not! If, on the other hand we deem any part of the Scriptures, though true, to be of little or no importance, or of dangerous tendency, what do we, but affront the infinite wisdom or goodness of God, as if he did not know what truths were proper to be revealed to man, or as if he purposely discovered those matters, which it would have been better for mankind never to have known? And, seeing it is evident that the Lord has, in the Scriptures, required the belief of certain doctrines, as absolutely necessary to salvation, to insinuate that these doctrines are either false, doubtful, or of no value, must involve in it the grossest and most affronting blasphemy imaginable.

We do not indeed maintain, that all the truths of revelation are of equal importance because they are not stated in Scripture to be so: but none can be wholly unimportant, and We are not always competent to decide upon their comparative value. Some things are more obvious than others and such as are more hard to be understood, are not so well adapted to those persons, “who are unstable and unlearned” in the school of Christ. Yet we are not authorised to reject, or even to doubt, any of them. We may indeed demur as to the true interpretation of them, whilst, in humble, reverent teachableness and prayer, we wait for clearer light upon the subject: and we must remain for some time in partial ignorance or error, because we cannot at once become acquainted with all the truths which are revealed, even when we possess a disposition implicitly to believe them. There are some things, which relate to the very life and essence of true religion, and others are rather necessary to our stability, comfort, and holy conduct: these we must by no means reject, or treat with indifference. But it is possible, even that the teachable and diligent Christian may to the last be mistaken or ignorant about some of them, and yet be found among the heirs of salvation: “nay, there is ground to conclude, that this is indeed the case with great numbers, in one way or other.

The importance of revealed truth may be shown in another way, for it is the seed or principle in the soul, whence all inward or real holiness proceeds. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is “truth.” “Beholding as in

a glass," (namely in the person, redemption, and doctrine of Christ,) the "glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image." "Without controversy great is the mystery "of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh. "This doctrine was, in the judgment of the apostle," the "*great mystery of godliness;*" and indeed all the holy dispositions and affections towards God, all the genuine spiritual worship, all the willing obedience of filial love, and all the cheerful acquiescence in the divine will, and affiance on the divine truth and mercy, which have been found in the world since the fall of man, have arisen from a proper reception of this great truth, and the doctrines connected with it. Spirituality, which consists in a supreme valuation of the holy excellence of spiritual things, and a disposition to seek pleasure and satisfaction in religion, is intimately connected with a believing dependence on the promised influences of the Holy Spirit. And that view of the worth of the soul, the evil of sin, the justice and mercy of God, the vanity of the world, and the believer's obligations to a Saviour, "who loved him, and redeemed him to God with his blood," which the doctrine of the cross communicates, is fundamental to deep repentance, genuine humility, gratitude, patience, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, love of enemies, and other parts of the Christian temper and character. Without this, a proud morality, and a pharisaical task and form of godliness, will comprise the sum total of man's religion, except as he is brought under those impressions and that guidance, which will in due time influence him to embrace "the truth as it is in Jesus;" or as he is carried away, into the mazes of anti-scriptural enthusiasm and delusion.

The Holy Scriptures should likewise be considered as a *complete* revelation: so that nothing needs be known, believed, or practised, as essential to religion, except what may be plainly proved from them. On the other hand, it should be carefully observed, that the whole word of God is our rule, and that all preference of one part to another, (except as some parts are more immediately connected with our faith and practice, than others,) derogates from the credit of the whole and implies a latent and indulged doubt, whether the Bible be altogether of divine authority, and whether only that part of it be so, which coincides with the favourite tenets of the person concerned.—True and intelligent faith receives the whole "testimony of God; " gives every part its proper place and measure of attention, and applies it to its proper use: for "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto "all good works."

But all unwritten tradition, and apocryphal additions to the word of God, must be decidedly rejected. *Tradition* is so uncertain a way of conveying the knowledge either of truths or facts, that no dependence whatever can be placed on it, so that it is highly improbable, that, without written revelation, any one thing revealed to the prophets and apostles, would have been transmitted to us uncorrupted. Indeed there is some probability in the opinion, that the art of writing was first communicated by revelation, to Moses, in order to perpetuate, with certainty, those facts, truths, and laws, which he was employed to deliver to Israel. Learned men find no traces of *literary* or alphabetical writing, in the history of the nations, till long after the days of Moses, unless the book of Job be regarded as an exception. The art of expressing almost an infinite variety of sounds, by the interchanges of a few letters or marks, seems more like a discovery made to man from heaven, than a human invention, and its beneficial effects, and almost absolute necessity, for the preservation and communication of true religion, favour the conjecture.

But however that may be decided, all who love the Bible, will be thankful to God for this most important advantage, and also for the invention of printing, by which copies of the Scriptures are rendered cheap and plentiful, beyond all calculation, or comparison with the state of things, before printing was discovered. This gives modern Christians advantages for disseminating the knowledge of divine truth among the nations, in some respects even beyond what the apostles themselves possessed: and how noble and Christian is that grand design, which has lately been grounded on this circumstance by the British and Foreign Bible Society, which is no less, than that of causing prophets and apostles to speak to the inhabitants of every country on earth, to each in their own language. May God accomplish to its full extent this grand, pious, and beneficent purpose!

We do not need any apocryphal additions to the Scripture. Considered as *human writings*, the apocryphal books have their use: but if custom sanction any of them being bound up in the same volume with the sacred oracles, *truth* requires that we explicitly declare, that they are not THE WORD or GOD. Should it be enquired, how we may distinguish between the genuine books of Scripture, and those which are apocryphal, we answer, that not only some, but all the books, contained in our authorised version of the Scriptures, have many or all of those evidences of a divine original, which have been insisted on: but there is not one, of those called the *Apocrypha*, which may not be proved destitute of such evidence, and most of them contain internal proof that they are spurious.

The sacred Writers often express themselves in language, taken from their own habits of life and the scenes with which they were conversant. Knowledge therefore, of various kinds, must be very advantageous, and in some instances necessary, in order fully to understand them: and the knowledge of eastern manners, and the local customs of the nations, in that part of the world, is doubtless useful to an expositor, though not to that degree, which many suppose. But I own, I am *deliberately of opinion*, that what is called *Rabbinical learning*, is rather a *hindrance* than a *help* to the understanding of the sacred writings, in their spiritual meaning and practical import: and this conviction grows stronger, in proportion to the opportunity which I have had in later years, of becoming more acquainted with it. The writers, as their predecessors of old did, “make void the commandment of God, that they may keep their own tradition.”

We are, in the sacred Scriptures, addressed as rational creatures, endued with understanding,—and as required to employ it, with diligence and earnestness, in deducing instruction, both doctrinal and practical, from what we read, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” If we do not so value divine truth, as willingly to apply labour in searching for it, as for hid treasure, “revelation must be” a price put “into the hands of a fool to get wisdom, who has no heart to it.” A humble and teachable spirit is above all things requisite, for “except we receive” the testimony of God, concerning “the kingdom of heaven, as little children, we shall not enter into it.” This will head us to ask heavenly wisdom from God, by daily fervent prayer, and as “he giveth liberally to all men, and upbraideth not,” we shall in this way “be made wise unto salvation: “and this will appear in our habitual conduct, for all our researches will be found vain, unless we endeavour to practise what we have already learned.”

The Author of Revelation, “the Giver of every good and perfect gift,” has endued men with talents, differing both in their nature and degree. He has also afforded some men far more advantages, by education, by leisure, and by opportunities for study, than others have. Some of these persons, in every age, are induced, by divine grace, to devote their endowments and advantages to the acquisition and communication of religious knowledge, for the benefit of those, who are necessarily employed in another manner, whose talent is of another kind, whose time is otherwise occupied, and who

need exciting to consider, and help in understanding, those things which belong to their eternal peace.

This is, especially, the object and service of the Christian ministry, when conscientiously and ably fulfilled. Men, previously endowed with suitable qualifications of mind and heart, by the great Source of all good, giving themselves up wholly to this one thing, become “mighty in the Scriptures,” “scribes well instructed in the kingdom of God: “and are made useful, in diverse ways, in calling the attention of mankind to the sacred Scriptures, and assisting them to understand the things contained in them, and in animating them to a correspondent tenor of conduct.

The bare reading of the Scriptures, no doubt, is frequently blessed to the souls of men, in making them “wise unto salvation;” and few more egregious absurdities have by Antichrist been palmed upon mankind, than the persuasion, that unlearned men will learn heresy from the Scriptures, if put into their hand without note or comment, or without some guard to counteract the danger: yet commonly “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This is his appointed ordinance. The *general*, if not *universal*, experience and observation shew, that vital religion has uniformly prospered in almost exact proportion to the measure, in which the word of God, *unadulterated* and *unmutilated*, has been earnestly and publicly preached by those persons, whose disinterested labours and holy lives have “adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour,” which they testified.

But though oral preaching is the grand means of promoting true religion, *written* preaching, (if I may be allowed the expression,) has been rendered exceedingly useful. A large proportion indeed of the Scriptures themselves, were occasional epistles or messages, sent to those, whom the writers could not address by preaching. Many pious and eminent men, who died long since, still speak to us with great effect by the books which they left behind them.—Provided what is written is *truly scriptural*, the multiplication of religious books is not more justly a cause of complaint, than the increase of faithful ministers, and false or superficial religion is, at least, as likely to be disseminated from the pulpit, as from the press.

No method of conveying truth seems more advantageous, than that of plain expository lectures on Scripture, with animated addresses to the heart and conscience. Now if this be allowedly true in respect of preaching, it cannot be far otherwise in respect of writing. When the word of God is kept in sight, and the hearer or reader perceives that he is not amused with ingenious fancies or speculations, but instructed in the true meaning and import

of the sacred oracles, an authority over his conscience may be exercised beyond what can in any other way be obtained.

I would not be understood to deprecate *critical* comments of the Scripture. These have an important use: yet *practical* expositions are more directly suited to edification. Indeed expositions of every kind may be perverted to bad purposes, by such persons as “wrest the Scriptures themselves to their own destruction;” but the pious, diligent, and impartial commentator is no more to be blamed for this, than the labour of the husbandman is to be considered as the cause of the intemperate use, which men make of the productions of the earth. Indeed, if expositions, *really* and *fully* explaining the Scriptures, and not attempting to exalt human authority, learning, genius, tradition, reasoning, or conjecture, above the “sure testimony” and authoritative law of God, if such expositions were multiplied tenfold, there would be no redundancy: unless some one had exhausted the subject, which in fact is inexhaustible and unless this one comment was in every person’s hands, and read by all. But as it is impossible, that all men should hear the same preacher; so it is in the highest degree improbable, that all men should read the same book.

The formation of men’s minds, and their habits of thinking, are so various, that ministers of different endowments, who take diverse methods of delivering and enforcing the same truths, advantageously engage the attention of distinct descriptions of hearers. In like manner, some are suited with the style, method, and *peculiarity* of one writer, while others are more pleased and profited by another, whose *peculiarity* is very different. Every man likewise has his connections. Some will read, with candour and attention, what he writes, who have not so favourable a disposition towards others, who may be even of superior excellence.—Thus some read one man’s books, and some another’s, and a few have leisure and inclination to read and profit by many of them: and so knowledge is dispersed, and it may reasonably be hoped that good is done.

There are indeed a considerable number of persons, who avowedly disparage all commentators and their labours, and profess to read the Scriptures alone. But if knowledge, in a variety of things, be useful, (not to say absolutely useful,) in order to understand the Scriptures, and to make the best application of them to practical purposes, and if these persons have not that knowledge and despise the labours of those who have, it is not likely that they should make much proficiency, even in understanding the book to which they exclusively confine themselves. And surely, a man, who has daily and for a long course of years been traversing an intricate path through a

forest, may, without arrogance, propose to give some useful directions and cautions, to those who are beginning to explore the same path. Nor would it savour either of wisdom or humility, if such persons should contemptuously refuse to avail themselves of the experience and observation of him, who had long traced and retraced the way and determine to proceed on their journey, without a guide, or a chart of the road.

A man's main object indeed should be, to approve himself to God and to his own conscience, as to his motives and intentions in any undertaking: yet, when so many comments on the Scriptures are already extant, the bold undertaking of adding one more to them, may seem to require an apology. The preceding observations may properly introduce that of the Author. Experiencing the benefit and comfort, arising from that measure of acquaintance with the sacred oracles, with which he has been favoured, he longs that, were it possible, all others should enjoy the same felicity and he would contribute, according to his ability, to promote so desirable an object.

It is in no degree the design or this publication, to detract from the merit of former commentators, or to intimate that any thing will here be added, which has never before been advanced: but the Author having, for many years, made the Bible his daily and principal study, and having bestowed great pains to satisfy his own mind, as to the meaning of most parts of Scripture, and the practical use which should be made of them; and supposing also that his talent chiefly lies, in speaking plainly and intelligibly to persons of ordinary capacity and information, he adopts this method of communicating his views of divine truth, in connection with the Scriptures themselves, from which he has deduced them.

Some comments are far too learned for common people, and some too voluminous: while others are too compendious, to admit either any adequate explanation or application of the several subjects, which fall under consideration. Some are in very few hands, and not likely to be more generally read; and others, however excellent, are to numbers antiquated, through that fastidiousness, which disrelishes the style and manner of former and perhaps better times. Were the present attempt therefore made almost entirely upon the plan of former expositions, it would not, if duly executed, be found supernumerary. But, in arranging old truths, the Author purposes to adopt something of a new method. Not indeed entirely new: for Browne's self-interpreting Bible suggested the idea, and the improvements in Doddridge's family-expositor of the New Testament, were proposed, as, in some *respects*, models for imitation. He has often remarked, that some persons so confine their interpreting of Scripture, to its meaning and use, with respect

of those who were immediately addressed, as to leave the reader in doubt, whether he is at all concerned in it, or can derive any instruction from it:— while others, so immediately and abruptly apply to the persons whom they address, the passages which they undertake to explain and enforce, without enquiring whether they be, in character and situation, similar to those, whom the prophets and apostles taught, warned, or encouraged, that their instructions seem rather more like an immediate revelation from God, than the explanation and practical improvement of a revelation given many ages ago. As this must be unsatisfactory to men of reflection, and as it is frequently connected with inattention to the primary meaning of the passage, (if it be not a fanciful misinterpretation of it), many are ready to conclude, that the Scriptures have no precise meaning in themselves, but may be modelled almost to any thing, by men of lively imaginations and superior ingenuity. It therefore occurred to the Author, that one remedy of these evils, (if not the best remedy,) would be, to keep the two parts distinct: and first to explain in the notes, the primary meaning, as addressed to the writer's contemporaries, and then, in practical observations, to shew what we may learn from each passage, allowing for all difference in circumstances, and in every other respect. It is indeed far more easy to form a plan of this kind, than duly to execute it. But this has been the purpose of the present attempt: and if some abler hand should, either in any portion of the sacred volume, or on the whole, more completely realise the idea, he cannot but think, it would be found the best method of expounding Scripture. The applications of each chapter are entitled, *Practical Observations*; not as excluding doctrine and experience, but as referring the whole to the practical effect on the heart and life. The reader must therefore expect, that the main object of the exposition is to lead him to the true meaning of the sacred Scriptures, his own concern in them, and the proper use which he ought to make of them to his edification, and that of others connected, with him, without any attempt of the Author, to give him information on a variety of subjects, at most only collaterally connected with the right understanding and use of the Scripture.

When the Author published the first edition of this work, he proposed almost entirely to comment on the translation, without calling the reader's attention to the original languages:—but during a course of thirty years, in which he has been almost constantly employed in this work, or in studies relative to it, he has turned a considerable share of his attention to those languages, and has ventured to deviate from his first design. He hopes however, that he has done this with caution and diffidence, and in very few instances, in that measure, which can perplex the unlearned reader, or inter-

rupt his progress, or interfere with his edification. He has neither learning, nor leisure, nor inclination, to engage in merely critical discussions, and he has not gone into any investigations, concerning even chronology, history, or similar subjects, further than he thought subservient to the main design of the work.—The contents of each chapter are chiefly intended to assist the reader, in finding any subject which he wishes to consider.

Upon the whole, to store the understanding with the knowledge of divine truth, to awaken and direct the conscience, to affect and improve the heart, to promote the comfort and fruitfulness of true Christians, and to assist young students in divinity, in acquiring those endowments, which may qualify them for future usefulness, are the leading objects which the Author had in view, and which he hopes he has never lost sight of, from his first engaging in this work to the present day. He has therefore purposed avoided sharp and eager controversy, and studied exactness and consistency, choosing rather to follow the leadings of Scripture, than to press it into the service of a pre-established system, and preferring the satisfaction of promoting the edification of persons, who differ in some things from each other, to the reputation of being exclusively the approved expositor of any party.

Whatever acceptance this work may find from man, the Author hopes to be satisfied with the testimony of his own conscience, and at length to meet the gracious approbation of his Saviour and Judge: and he would conclude with entreating the reader, to join with him in praise and thanksgiving to God, who has spared and enabled him to bring this work to a conclusion and to superintend so many editions of it, and in prayers, that he would pardon all that he has seen sinful in the writer, and prevent the bad effect of whatever may be erroneous in the publication; and also render what is true and right abundantly useful, by his special grace and blessing. To Him, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the God of our Salvation, be everlasting praise and glory. Amen.

FOOTNOTES

1. John iii. 15
2. 1 Pet. iii. 15
3. Rom iii. 2. Heb. v. 12. 1 Pet. iv. 11.
4. This part of the preface was written above thirty years ago; and the expression, here used, may be considered as the author's *present* deliberate judgment.
5. 1 Cor. ii. 13.
6. 2 Pet. i. 21.
7. Mohammed, to serve present purposes, produced his Koran by a little at a time: this occasioned an evident inconsistency of one part with another; concerning which he only said, that God had a right to change his laws as he saw good.

8. The Jews, at this day, do not deny, that the miracles recorded in the New Testament history were actually performed, but they absurdly ascribe them all to enchantment.—See *Answer to Rabbi Crooll, by the Author.*
9. Nah. i, ii, iii.
10. Is. xiii, xiv.
11. Ez xxvi. 4, 5.
12. Ez. xxix. 14, 15.
13. Luke xxi. 24.
14. Rev. xix. 10.
15. The author's Answer to Paine's Age of Reason, p 66, ed.
16. Sam. xxiiii. 1, 2. Neh. ix. 30. Ps. xix. 7—11. Is. viii. 20. Jer. xx. 7—9. xxv. 3, 4. xxvi. 12—19. Ez. i. 1—3. xxxviii. 16, 17. Dan. ix. 12, 13. Mic. iii. 8—12. Zech. i. 5, 6.
17. Matt. iv. 4—11.
18. Matt. xxi. 33—46. Mark xii. 1—12. Luke xx. 9-18
19. Luke xvi. 27—31
20. Lev. xxiv. 5—9. 1 Sam. xxi. 1—6.
21. 1 Kings x. 1—13. 2 Chr. ix. 1—12.
22. Matt. xxiv. 37—39. Luke xvii. 26—32. Matt. xii. 1-5. Luke vi. 3, 4.
23. Luke iv. 23—27. John iv. 20—22.
24. Luke xxiv. 44. Acts i. 20. xiii. 33
25. Ps. viii. 2. Matt. xxi. 15, 16.
26. Luke xxiv. 44—46.
27. Ps. lxxxii. i. 6, 7.
28. Matt. xiii. 13—15. xv. 7—9. xxi. 13. Mark vii. 6, 7. Luke iv. 17—21.
29. Acts xxviii. 25.
30. Matt. xxiv, 15. Mark xiii. 14.
31. Hos. vi. 6. Matt. ix. 13. xii. 7.
32. Matt. xii. 39—41. xvi. 4. Luke xi. 29—32.
33. Mic. vii. 6. Matt. x. 35, 36.
34. Mal. iii. 1. Matt. xi. 10, &c. Luke vii. 27.—Mal, iv. 5, 6. Matt. xvii. 10—12. Mark ix. 11—13.
35. Ps. cxviii. 22, 23. Matt. xxi. 42, 43.
36. Matt. xxvi. 54—56.
37. Luke xxiv. 27 44—46.
38. John v. 39, 40.
39. John x. 34, 35.