

## Select BOOKS on the Subject of this CONTEMPLATION.

A view of the judicious Method in which Dr. Calamy proceeds to state and defend the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

In Sermon I. he considers the grand advantage of God's ancient People, who were peculiarly favoured above all the World, and chiefly in having the Oracles of God committed to them.

Serm. II. explains the *Nature of Inspiration*, and produces four Arguments to prove that the Old and New Testament were really given by Inspiration of God.

Serm. III. treats of the Writings of the New Testament, and gives five Arguments to prove their divine Inspiration.

Serm. IV. contains two further Arguments in Proof of the Divine Inspiration of the Old Testament.

Serm. V. considers the ancient *Prophetic* Inspiration, with the *Apostolic* Inspiration. Here we ought to read the great John Smith on Prophecy, and Dr. Witfius on Prophetic Inspiration.

Serm. VI. answers the Objection to the Inspiration of the Scriptures, drawn from the apprehended *Contradictions* contained in them.

Serm. VII. answers the Objection drawn from the *Absurdities* and *Impossibilities* they are supposed to contain.

Serm. VIII. answers the Objection drawn from the apprehended *Meaness*, *Obscurity*, and *Flatness* of the *Style*; and the *Want of Method* in the Writings of the Bible.

Serm. IX. answers the Objection taken from some Particulars of the *Matter* of Scripture.

Serm. X. answers the common Objection, that a much better Method might have been taken for Instruction in Religion than the dull and heavy Way of a written Volume.

Serm. XI. From the Inspiration of the Bible infers the *unutterable Usefulness* of the Scripture.

Serm. XII. shews the *Errors* of the *Romish* Religion both in its Foundation and Superstructure.

Serm. XIII. draws other useful Inferences from the same Principle.

Serm. XIV. Excellent Directions for the profitable Reading the Holy Scriptures.—I must declare once more, that this Book is the first in Dignity and Excellence on the Subject I ever read. To this I would add Dr. Doddridge's three Sermons on the Evidences of Christianity, with his Dissertation on Inspiration, in the Family Expositor, Vol. 3. Dr. David Jennings, on the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, founded on Common Sense.

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The NATURE of DEMONSTRATION, EVIDENCE, and CONVICTION, clearly explained.—The WISDOM of GOD in framing our FACULTIES in such a MANNER, as to require us to use our REASON in enquiring into the EVIDENCES of CHRISTIANITY.—PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS before we enter on the DEMONSTRATION of INSPIRATION.—'Tis a matter of infinite CONSEQUENCE.—The DIVINITY of the SCRIPTURES is not to be taken as a FIRST PRINCIPLE without RATIONAL PROOF.—Every BOOK that pretends to be INSPIRED is not presently to be admitted as such.—We are not to resolve our CONVICTION of a former INSPIRATION into a fresh INSPIRATION.—We ought to be satisfied with such MORAL EVIDENCE as the nature of the subject will bear, and not require

require GEOMETRICAL DEMONSTRATION.—The BIBLE contains nothing unworthy of the CHARACTER of G O D.—It bears striking MARKS of his MORAL PERFECTIONS.—A concise view of the SOURCES of DEMONSTRATION, viz. the GOODNESS of the DOCTRINE, MIRACLES, PROPHECY, the CHARACTER of the PENMEN.—The first of these proposed more at large.

**T**HE idea of the book we style the Scripture, and the idea of the nature of Inspiration, do not instantly appear connected so clearly as the idea of existence, and the idea of our own existence; for these two appear in a moment to be so agreeing and connected, that we cannot make them plainer by any third idea whatsoever.

But the divine INSPIRATION of the scriptures will admit of proof, by making use of other ideas, or evidences, whose agreement with the idea of Inspiration is in a moment discerned by the human understanding.

DEMONSTRATION is a clear agreement of ideas founded on some self-evident truths, and proceeding, by easy deductions, to a conviction, which satisfies the mind, and silences all cavils and objections.

CONVICTION consists in feeling the force of truth in the understanding.

EVIDENCE

EVIDENCE is the clear appearance of truth to the soul, producing an assent to it as truth.

The divine Inspiration of the Scriptures demands proof by the reason that GOD has given us; and this glorious subject deserves, as well as demands, the utmost force and rigour of demonstration: and GOD has so formed our minds, as to stir us up to diligence and labour, and to prevent and cut off all laziness and presumption in religion.

This is a striking instance of the wisdom of GOD in framing our souls in such a manner, as that we are obliged to use our reason to discern the being of the GOD that made us, and to discern the Inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, which GOD has given us for our guide to wisdom, duty, and eternal happiness.

We cannot attain to mere intuition of the Inspiration of the Scriptures, but we are obliged to make use of our understanding and reason to discern their divine original, usefulness and excellence.

The most simple and easy method of demonstrating the divine Inspiration of the Bible, is by making use of ideas, drawn from the goodness of the doctrine, and the tendency of its laws and promises, to make us happy—the sensible actions of GOD, which have produced a change  
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in the order and laws of nature—the prediction of future events, which have come to pass in a most exact manner in the several parts of the natural and moral world—with the moral character of the penmen, who appear evidently to be connected with God, and to bear the impressions of his holiness in their hearts and lives.

And the agreement of the above ideas with the idea of writings inspired by God, will be unavoidably seen by the understanding of every honest man in the whole process of the demonstration.

Thus, the ideas we have of real miracles, of clear prophecies, of the goodness and purity of the doctrines, laws, and promises, and the holiness of the penmen, instantly agree with our idea of Inspiration; and it is impossible for the understanding to act as an understanding, that is, as a rational agent, without perceiving instantaneously the agreement of the Scriptures with the idea of an Inspiration from God.

We shall attempt to set before you the most striking evidences and demonstrations of this grand PRINCIPLE, on which the whole of REVEALED RELIGION is built; that the Scriptures of the old and new testament were really inspired by God.

But before we enter upon the copious and abundant demonstration of this truth, we must desire

desire every reader seriously to ponder, and attentively review the following considerations.

C O N S I D E R A T I O N I.

This is a matter of the last importance, and of infinite consequence to the souls of men. If we are uncertain here, the whole structure of our religion totters to the very basis, and threatens an opprobrious ruin, which will bury us in eternal destruction.

If we be in doubt, as to the truth and divinity of the Scriptures, we shall be able to find no safe foundation, on which to fix our faith and hope. We have infinite need of being well established here—if we fail in this point, we fail in every thing—we shall be poor, wavering, unsettled creatures all our days—we shall be always children in understanding and judgment—always wavering and doubting—tossed to and fro with every wind of scepticism and infidelity—fluctuating in our tempers, and foolish in our conduct—unprofitable in our lives, and worthless in our conversation ;—we shall live without honour, and die in darkness and despair.

Our having been trained up in a general notion of the truth and divinity of the Scriptures, by our parents, will be but a poor security in a shock of temptation, and amidst the scorn of infidels and rakes.—If you know no better argument for the  
Inspiration

Inspiration of the Scriptures, than that our parents and nurses told us so, what are we better than Papists, Jews, or Mahommedans ?

On the same terms, we might have had as great a veneration for the foolish Talmud, if we had been born among the Jews ; or the Alcoran, if we had been born of Mahommedan parents : and on the same principles, we should have been poor blind Papists, if we had been born in Spain or Portugal, Italy or France.

If the report and assertions of those, among whom we have had our education, be the only ground of our satisfaction, it will be in the power of any sceptic, or artful infidel, to unhinge and demolish our foolish faith : It is certain, we every day run the hazard of being staggered, confounded, and overthrown ; and indeed, considering the horrid neglect of parents, and tutors of youth, all through this nation, it is no wonder that Popish priests make such ravages on the British youth ; yea, upon tens of thousands of poor unprincipled ignorant wretches, in the farther advance of life.

Suppose any of you, my readers, who have, for a long time, apprehended yourselves satisfied upon this head, without searching into the solid grounds and reasons of faith, should still take it for granted that the bible is divinely inspired : how do you know how far you may be shaken,  
unfettled,



unsettled, and put to confusion and shame? and what the consequence may be, should artful men, and artful devils, vigorously assault your souls; which you ought to expect in the course of your life, in an age that is poisoned with infidelity? What would you do if you had no solid evidence of your religion? How foolish would you look if you had nothing more to say but this, I believe the bible is the word of GOD, because my mother told me so when I was a boy.

Well then, my readers, if you would not be in danger of bringing a scandal upon your profession, and of turning vile and ugly apostates from Christ, in an hour of temptation, you should see to it with the utmost ardour and attention, that you be rationally and powerfully confirmed in this principle, upon solid grounds, that will bear the shocks of the fiercest Opposition.\*

#### C O N S I D E R A T I O N II.

The divinity of the Scriptures is not to be taken as a first principle, without rational proof. 'Tis unreasonable and mean to beg the question; that is, to take it for granted, as a first principle in divinity. We do not desire this at the hands of  
infidels,

\* I cannot forbear declaring, with a degree of warmth, that borders upon bitterness, grief, and indignation, after the experience of twenty-nine years, in the province of educating youth, that, out of above five hundred young persons of all ages, from seven to twenty, who have come under my care, I have never had one youth, who had been instructed, by his parents or former tutors, in the solid evidences of the christian religion.—If my observation is a specimen of the state of the British youth in general, no wonder that the nation is going back to Popery and Atheism.

infidels, or doubters, or honest enquirers after truth; but are willing it should be examined with all the severity of sound reason. Christianity is founded upon argument, and upon argument we rest it for ever: it dreads no examination; it loves to be searched into, even to the very bottom. The damning folly and baseness of the present generation is, that they will not be honest in sifting the evidences of revelation: this is an age of luxury, levity, laziness, inconsideration, and frivolism; the people of higher and lower ranks render themselves contemptible, by refusing to use that little portion of common sense, which God has given them; and, without a very great alteration in their thoughts and pursuits, they will be contemptible, and ruined to eternity: our sacred volume invites and commands us to shew ourselves men; that is, to act with reason and understanding in all things.

When, indeed, we debate concerning things built on the Scriptures, it is rationally supposed their Inspiration is acknowledged, or owned; that being reckoned the common sense of the christian world.—But, when the QUESTION is, how we know that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God? to say it is a PRINCIPLE, and must therefore be allowed or taken for granted, will neither satisfy a disturbed and doubtful mind, convince an infidel, nor repel an opposer; who may raise objections,

objections, in order to tempt us to reject the bible altogether.

### C O N S I D E R A T I O N III.

Every book that pretends to be inspired, is not presently to be admitted as such. The Mahomedans have as great a veneration for their Alcoran, as most Christians have for our Bible; and this ought to make us blush with shame; that book of theirs offers itself to them as divinely inspired, as this Bible does to us; if, therefore, a book is to be received presently as divinely inspired, upon it's own report, the Alcoran is to be embraced as well as our Bible; and so we shall be forced to swallow the vilest nonsense, and the most absurd contradictions, that ever were conceived by the heart of man.

But sincere enquirers after truth scorn such meanness of soul; honest free-thinkers disdain to swallow nonsense and absurdity; our only way is, to search and try, that we may not be imposed on, and take a book for divinely inspired that is not so, but is the product of rascally imposture, or wild enthusiasm; and we must have some sure and INFALLIBLE MARKS to try by, or we shall not, when we have used the utmost labour, be satisfied and assured that we are not imposed on.

Among the JEWS, a prophet that pretended to come as an express from the invisible world, was

not to be admitted and owned meerly on his own report and attestation; and if he proved an impostor, he was to be punished with death. Deut. xiii. 1, 5. They were to judge of him by certain rules; because, there would be false prophets as well as true; therefore, circumstances were to be considered and compared, in passing a judgment, or final decision: and there is equal reason for the same procedure in the case of inspired writings; seeing, some may be offered too, as drawn up by divine Inspiration, when they are not, as well as some that are. Every pretence of this nature is not to be owned and justified; we must search and examine, in order to satisfaction; and the CANONS, or rules, by which we try and judge, ought to be selected with the utmost accuracy, and the severest labour.\*

#### C O N S I D E R A T I O N IV.

We are not to resolve our conviction of a former Inspiration, into a fresh divine Inspiration; for this is wild enthusiasm, 'tis absurd, or contrary to sound reason, and infinitely dangerous to the souls of men. There is an expression in an excellent divine of our own nation, (whose memory deserves respect) which we ought to look upon as enthusiastic and dangerous; 'tis an error of great consequence, and ought to be avoided by us with the utmost care—the error is in these words.

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\* See Dr. Calamy, sermon ii, page 31, 41.

“ This first principle of our faith, that the Scriptures are the word of God, is rooted in us by the immediate Inspiration of the Holy Ghost.” \* And he represents, that, the only way of our being satisfied upon this head, is for us to have this persuasion wrought in us, by the spirit of God, though we know not why, or upon what grounds ; but if a man sticks by this notion, he will be involved in endless perplexity and confusion ; in short, this absurd and whimsical notion will draw after it a thousand bad consequences.

Suppose we enquire of a man how he knows that the Scriptures are given by the Inspiration of God ? and he answers “ that he is assured of it, by the Inspiration of the same spirit, by which the Scriptures were indited ;” ’tis natural to question farther, what evidence have you that this Inspiration you pretend to is real, and not imaginary, that it is from the spirit of God, and not from a spirit of delusion ? his only answer must be this, “ I am satisfied of it, in the same way as the sacred penmen were satisfied at first, as to their Inspiration.” And if we admit this answer, as proper and just, a wide door is opened to all manner of error, enthusiasm, and absurdity ; and there is no remedy left to set us right, and secure us from the most ruinous delusions.

It is, indeed, not only freely granted, but it admits of abundant evidence, that no man will

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\* *Capel*, who has written on *Temptations*.

receive the Scriptures as divinely inspired, with a VITAL FAITH, and so as to be transformed into the christian temper, the divine resemblance, and effectually trained up for heaven, unless the spirit of GOD enlighten his mind, and impress his heart.

And this is what the greatest of our reformed divines have always meant by the TESTIMONY of the SPIRIT, which the most judicious and learned of them have represented as so necessary, to a full conviction of the divinity of the Scriptures. As the great apostle affirms, “that no man can say that Jesus is LORD, but by the Holy Ghost,” so may we likewise assert, that no man can say that the Scripture is given by the Inspiration of GOD, but by the Holy Spirit; that is, he cannot so believe it, with a faith that shall be effectual to salvation, without his gracious and powerful influence; and yet, we cannot conceive how any immediate revelation of the spirit should be necessary to a rational conviction in this case; or how we can suppose the divine spirit should, by a private suggestion, whisper it in the ear of every man that is satisfied on this head, that this book, we call the Bible, is of divine Inspiration.

The real office and agency of the divine spirit, in this respect, is, to operate on the understanding, in a way of rational illumination; assisting the judgment to lay aside prejudices, purifying the

affections from corrupt emotions, and giving an ardent love of truth, an honest impartiality of soul, a keenness of attention, and a spiritual TASTE, that we may duly regard those evidences and MOTIVES, which may, and ought to induce a firm persuasion in us, that the sacred Scriptures originated from GOD.

This kind of assistance from the Holy Spirit, is absolutely necessary, earnestly to be implored, and most carefully and gratefully improved; but this kind of aid is clearly as different from a fresh Inspiration, as a rational conviction is from a strong and enthusiastic impression.

It cannot, indeed, be denied, but that there may have been some serious and sincere Christians in all ages, who have so firmly believed the Inspiration of our sacred writings, that they could have confirmed their faith by the most dreadful sufferings, and sealed it with their blood, though they could not have disputed much for it, or given any distinct account of the rational grounds \* of it.

But, it by no means follows from thence, that RATIONAL EVIDENCE is not needful, or useful, or is not commonly used by the spirit of GOD, in producing a saving persuasion, and in preserving from temptations to doubting, fluctuations of assent, and infidelity. CON-

\* The Inward Witness to Christianity, three sermons, by Dr. Watts, are extremely useful to be read here.

## C O N S I D E R A T I O N V.

We ought to be satisfied with such MORAL EVIDENCE\* as the nature of the subject will bear, and not require GEOMETRICAL DEMONSTRATION. To demand and insist on more than sound moral evidence, is highly dishonest, captious, and absurd.

When the thing asserted is, that the penmen of Scripture were divinely inspired, to expect and demand GEOMETRICAL demonstrations to prove it, is, to declare we are resolved not to be convinced of it; for, it is to demand more than the matter could bear, supposing it eternally and undoubtedly true. That man, who, in this case, will not be satisfied with such considerations as are sufficient to out-balance any thing that can be affirmed to the contrary, does not use the understanding and reason of a man.

## C O N S I D E R A T I O N VI.

There is nothing in the Scriptures unworthy of GOD to reveal or record—nothing unworthy of the nature and dignity of GOD's moral character—nothing contrary to the shining purity of the perfections and reason of a GOD—nothing reproachful to the most consummate knowledge, wisdom, and prudence—nothing contrary to his  
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\* *On Moral Evidence*, no man in the world ever wrote better than the great and masculine Humphry Ditton, in his noble treatise on the resurrection of Christ, 8vo. 1712.—I defy all the Deists in the world to confute this treatise. I rejoice to find we shall have some memoirs of his life and experience soon published to the world.



most amiable goodness, grace, and mercy—nothing repugnant or inconsistent with his most intense aversion to all moral impurity—nothing contrary to his natural and immutable justice—nothing that can truly fling a reproach on his essential integrity, and sincerity of heart—or be a stain to the inviolable veracity of his mouth, or impeach the faithfulness of his conduct and actions, in the moral world.—In fine, we have nothing in this sacred book, that can blemish the one grand, uniform, moral character of God; a character without the least duplicity or variation, and eternal as his existence.

#### CONSIDERATION VII.

The glorious discoveries of Scripture are all holy; all the representations or ideas of facts and objects in heaven, earth, and hell, are quite consistent with the splendor and purity of God's nature and character.

The Bible discovers, with all the brightness of light and fire, the purity and rectitude of the nature of God; it displays, in the most striking manner, his invariable abhorrence of all moral disorder in his creatures, and his infinite complacency in himself, as the standard of beauty and loveliness, with his intense delight in the righteousness and goodness of his own nature, powers, councils, and operations; and it likewise declares God's complacency, in every creature in

heaven and earth, that in the least degree, resembles himself, or reflects an image of his own lovely perfections.

I now address myself to the most glorious and delightful work of proving that the holy Scriptures of the old and new Testament were given by INSPIRATION of GOD, as the rule of faith, worship, and morality, to the church of Christ on earth.

The four principal sources of evidence, or demonstration and conviction, are these, (*viz.*) the goodness of the doctrines, laws, and promises—the working of miracles—the fulfilment of prophecies—the moral character of the penmen; and especially the moral character of the great founder of christianity.

The GOODNESS of the DOCTRINE consists in the fitness of the truths and blessings revealed, to remove from us all kinds of misery, and to promote, in the best manner, our present and eternal happiness.

A MIRACLE is an ACTION of GOD, producing a SENSIBLE CHANGE in the ORDER of NATURE, done to convince his rational creatures, to silence his enemies, to confirm the mission of his prophets and apostles, and to stamp an eternal honour on his divine revelation and religion.

PROPHECY consists in the foretelling of future events in the natural and moral world; declaring,  
with