

by inspiration, to what extent? This is the question—This is the great battle field at the present moment. Shall we receive the record entire, shall we adhere to the old doctrine of plenary inspiration, or shall we only give the book a superiority of rank over the rest, and allow critics to eliminate what portions they please? The question with certain of them is not, have we received a revelation from heaven, but what are its character and extent? Thus if you allow the Bishop of Natal to cancel the five books of Moses, to say in his own phrase that they are "unhistorical," and therefore legendary and of no authority, he will accept the New Testament and portions of the Old with certain reservations; he will cleave to Jesus Christ while he parts company with Moses; and thus sets himself in a most untenable position; for the Saviour said 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?" (Jno. v., 46-47.) There can be no doubt that our Lord received the whole of the books of Moses as inspired, authentic, and authoritative; he spoke of the creation of Adam and Eve recorded by Moses as historically true; he referred to the deluge, the destruction of the world, and the preservation of Noah in like manner; he alluded in Luke xvii. to the fire and brimstone which destroyed Sodom and the cities of the plain, and to the transformation of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt; he accepted the statements of Moses respecting the appearance of God in the burning bush; the miraculous effect of looking at the brazen serpent, and the miraculous supply of manna in the wilderness; and yet the Bishop of Natal will tell us that he believes the Saviour, but regards the books of Moses as "unhistorical." But I would do him, and others of the same class, no injustice. The difficulties they feel and express will generally be found to have reference to the historical and literary portions of the word, rather than the doctrinal; and in the last century even writers upon inspiration were disposed when pressed by the pertinacity of the deistic controversialists, to yield a little to doubts in this connection; but now there is a strong reaction in religious minds in favour of the opposite view, that held by the Puritans in the seventeenth century, and I confess that I look upon this as a pleasing indication; for it yet remains to be proved, and such proof will be found impossible, that whole books are to be rejected from the Canon of Scripture. Honest and accurate criticism we allow, but reckless and bungling assaults we detest. And if it be asked, what has given rise to the foolish and precipitate conclusions adopted by some respecting the Word in the present day? Without pretending to go into the special historical statements demanded by this question, we may answer in a general way, that one cause has been a flagrant displacing or misapplication of natural laws. The rapid advances made of late in natural science have thrown before the human mind such masses of new facts, and opened on every hand such fresh fields of inquiry that we might expect to find the mind stunned, perplexed, and confused in attempting to classify and arrange these facts, and especially in seeking to ascertain their relation to Divine truth. Natural laws have indeed been discovered and displaced; they have been carried into regions where they are utterly inapplicable, and, by some, exalted to the throne of the Creator. No other power is appealed to in accounting for natural phenomena, and the