

enlightenment. It was true that many believed otherwise—regarded the Bible as behind the present age, and accuse us of an idolatrous veneration for the book. The accusation was an unreasonable one. The Bible was no ordinary book. Independently of all higher claims, it could be affirmed that it practically held its own and required no vindication other than that of actual facts open to observation. He did not think it necessary to defend the Bible for its own sake. If really God's Word it could defend itself. If he spoke in behalf of the Bible, it was for the benefit of poor human souls who could be saved only by the Word of God. Our work might be regarded as a very humble kind of Bible work. They were not as a Society, undertaking to expound the Bible, but merely disseminating it. Yet even in this he held they were engaged in one of the greatest efforts in relation to Christ's cause. There were three considerations that should weigh with them in pushing forward this work. The first was the testimony of Jesus Christ, himself, as recorded in the gospels—documents which even the opponents of the Bible must receive as historical. Surely nothing could be more striking than the witness which He bore to the Old Testament Scriptures as the Word of God, and to His own teaching and that of His apostles, as the continuance of that Word. How frequently and reverently He quoted and appealed to the Scriptures, and how steadfastly did He support their claims. If He so treated them, should not we look upon them in a similar light? A second consideration was the historical record of the Scriptures; and a third was the power they were known to exercise over the minds and hearts of men.

These considerations may well centre around the first of them, namely the testimony of Jesus himself. He announces Himself as come not to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to fulfil; and observe that in this he has especial reference to the prophetic character of the Old Testament, to its being a book not for old time merely, but for all time. Again, He says no jot or tittle of the law should pass away till all be fulfilled. Observe that in so saying He is treating the Old Testament books as written records. He never condescends to define or vindicate any kind of verbal inspiration, but can any words be stronger than these—no least letter or dot that gives character to a letter, shall be allowed by God to perish out of these sacred books. Again, how decided is the sentiment attributed to Abraham in that terrible and mysterious parable which represents the rich man in torment as asking that Lazarus may be sent to preach to his brethren. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded if one rose from the dead." It is not without a purpose that Abraham who lived before the law and the prophets, and Christ who came to fulfil them, are thus made to unite in asserting their sufficiency for the salvation of man.

In like manner our Lord places His own sayings and those of His apostles on the same high level. In that prophetic utterance in which he foretells the overthrow of the Jewish nation and the Mosaic dispensation, he uses the bold words—too bold if uttered by merely human lips,—“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” We know very well on the evidence of physical facts, that the material heaven and earth are passing away, and shall pass away unless renewed by Almighty power, but the words of the prophet of Nazareth are affirmed to be imperishable—as true in this age as nineteen centuries ago, and may they not be as true and as valuable ninety centuries hereafter. We have some evidences of this in the world of religious thought, for we see that while creeds and dogmas and ecclesiastical organizations have proved themselves to be only for a time, Christ's words still live and act upon the minds of men. In like manner He authenticated the further teaching of His Apostles, when He said, “I have given unto them Thy Word,”—with the farther assurance that it was this, and this alone,