§ v1.) THEIR INSPIRATION. [1nrRoDUCTION.   
   
 testimony was out of the question, oral or documentary narratives, pre-   
 served in and received by the Christian Church in the apostolic age ;—   
 that the Three Gospels are not formal complete accounts of the whole   
 incidents of the sacred history, but each of them fragmentary, containing   
 such portions of it as fell within the notice, or the special design, of the   
 Evangelist.   
 2. The important question now comes before us, In what sense are the   
 Evangelists to be regarded as having been inspired by the Holy Spirit of   
 God? That they were so, in some sense, has been the concurrent belief   
 of the Christian body in all ages. In the second, as in the nineteenth   
 century, the ultimate appeal, in matters of fact and doctrine, has been   
 to these venerable writings. It may be well, then, first to enquire on   
 what grounds their authority has been rated so high by all Christians.   
 3. And I believe the answer to this question will be found to be,   
 Because they are regarded as authentic documents, descending from the   
 apostolic age, and presenting to us the substance of the apostolic testimony.   
 The Apostles being raised up for the special purpose of witnessing to   
 the Gospel history,—and these memoirs having been universally received   
 in the garly Church as embodying that their testimony, I see no escape   
 left from the inference, that they come to us with inspired authority.   
 The Apostles themselves, and their contemporaries in the ministry of   
 the Word, were singularly endowed with the Holy Spirit for the founding   
 and teaching of the Church : and Christians of all ages have accepted the   
 Gospels and other writings of the New Testament as the written result   
 of the Pentecostal effusion. The early Church was not likely to be   
 deceived in this’matter. The reception of the Gospels was immediate   
 and universal. They never were placed for a moment by the consent of   
 Christians in the same category with the spurious documents which soon   
 sprung up after them. In external history, as in internal character, they   
 differ entirely from the apocryphal Gospels ; which, though in some cases   
 bearing the name and pretending to contain the teaching of an Apostle,   
 were never recognized as apostolic.   
 4. Upon the authenticity, i.e. the apostolicity of our Gospels, rests   
 their claim to inspiration. Containing the substance of the Apostles’   
 testimony, they carry with them that special power of the Holy Spirit   
 which rested on the Apostles in virtue of their office, and also on other   
 teachers and preachers of the first age. It may be well, then, to enquire   
 of what kind that power was, and how far extending.   
 5. We do not find the Apostles transformed, from being men of indi-   
 vidual character and thought and feeling, into mere channels for the   
 transmission of infallible truth. We find them, humanly speaking, to   
 have been still distinguished by the same characteristics as before the   
 descent of the Holy Ghost. We see Peter still ardent and impetuous,   
 21)