§ vr.] , THEIR INSPIRATION. [mnrRopucTION   
   
   
 THE Lorp? If there be one fact rather than another of which the   
 Apostles were witnesses, it was this :—and in the concurrent narrative of   
 all four Evangelists it stands related beyond all cavil or question. Yet,   
 of all the events which they have described, none 1s so variously put forth   
 in detail, or with so many minor discrepancies. And this was just what   
 might have been expected, on the principles above laid down. The great   
 fact that the Lord was risen,—set forth by the ocular witness of the   
 Apostles, who had seen Him,—became from that day first in importance   
 in the delivery of their testimony. The precise order of His appearances   
 would naturally, from the overwhelming nature of their present emotions,   
 be a matter of minor consequence, and perhaps not even of accurate   
 enquiry till some time had passed. Then, with the utmost desire on the   
 part of the women and Apostles to collect the events in their exact order   
 of time, some confusion would be apparent in the history, and some discre-   
 pancies in versions of it which were the results of separate and inde-   
 pendent enquiries; the traces of which pervade our present accounts.   
 But what fair-judging student of the Gospels ever made these variations   
 or discrepancies a ground for doubting the veracity of the Evangelists as   
 to the fact of the Resurrection, or the principal details of the Lord’s   
 appearances after it ?   
 17. It will be well to state the bearing of the opinions advanced   
 in this section on two terms in common use, viz. verbal and plenary   
 inspiration.   
 18. With regard to verbal inspiration, I take the sense of it, as   
 explained by its most strenuous advocates, to be, that every word and   
 phrase of the Scriptures is absolutely and separately true,—and, whether   
 narrative or discourse, took place, or was said, in every most exact par-   
 ticular as set down. Much might be said of the 4 priori unworthiness   
 of such a theory, as applied to a Gospel whose character is the freedom   
 of the Spirit, not the bondage of the letter : but it belongs more to my   
 present work to try it by applying it to the Gospels as we have them.   
 And I do not hesitate to say that, being thus applied, its effect will be   
 to destroy altogether the credibility of our Evangelists. Hardly a single   
 instance of parallelism between them arises, where they do not relate   
 the same thing indeed in substance, but expressed in terms which if   
 literally taken are incompatible with each other. To cite only one   
 obvious instance. The Title over the Cross was written in Greek, and,   
 being reported in Greek by the Evangelists, must represent not the Latin   
 or Hebrew forma, but the Greek form, of the inscription. According,   
 then, to the verbal-inspiration theory, each Evangelist has recorded the   
 exact words of the inscription; not the general sense, but the inscription   
 itself,—not a letter less or more. This is absolutely necessary to the   
 theory. Its advocates must not be allowed, with convenient inconsis-   
 25)