as Chriſt himſelf has done in ſaying, 'Ye alſo ſhall bear witneſs, becauſe ye have been with me from the begin­ning@@\*. And no one that attempts to convince an un­believer of the truth of Chriſtianity, would begin his dernonſtration by preſuppoſing a doctrine which his adverſary denies, but would ground his arguments on the credibility of the evangeliſts as human hiſtorians, for the truth of the miracles, the death, and the reſurrection of Chriſt. Even thoſe who examine the grounds of their faith for their own private conviction, muſt treat the evangeliſts as human evidence; ſince it would be argu­ing in a circle to conclude that the facts recorded in the goſpels are true, becauſe they are inſpired, when we conclude the Scriptures to be inſpired in conſequence of their contents. In theſe caſes, then, we are obliged to conſider the evangeliſts as human evidence; and it would be no detriment to the Chriſtian cauſe to conſider them at all times as ſuch in matters of hiſtorical fact. We find it nowhere expreſsly recorded that the public tranſactions which the apoſtles knew by their own experi­ence, and of which St Luke informed himſelf by dili­gent inquiry, ſhould be particular objects of divine inſpiration. We ſhould even be conſiderable gainers, in adjuſting the harmony of the goſpels, if we were permit­ted to ſuppoſe that ſome one of the evangeliſts had com­mitted an immaterial error, and that St John has recti­fied ſome trifling miſtakes in the preceding goſpels. The moſt dangerous objections which can be made to the truth of our religion, and ſuch as are moſt difficult to anſwer, are thoſe drawn from the different relations of the four evangeliſts.”

Before any inquiry is made reſpecting the inſpiration of the books of the New Teſtament, it is neceſſary to determine the meaning of the term; for theologians have given to it a variety of ſignifications. Moſt of the German divines make it to consiſt in an infusion of words as well as ideas. Luther, Beza, and Salmaſius, reſtrict it to ideas alone. Doddridge underſtands by it an intervention of the Deity, by which the natural fa­culties of the mind were directed to the diſcovery of truth. Warburton and Law think it was a negative intervention to preſerve the ſacred writers from eſſential errors. Some believe every circumſtance was dictated by the Holy Ghoſt; others ſuppoſe that no ſupernatural aſſiſtance was granted except in the epiſtolary wri­tings. See Inspiration.

As there is an evident diſtinction between inſpiration and revelation, and as the origin of the Chriſtian reli­gion may be ſtill proved divine, even though it were de­nied that thoſe who record its facts and doctrines were inſpired in the act of writing, it will be moſt judicious and ſafe to employ the word *inſpiration* in that ſenſe which can be moſt eaſily defended and ſupported. By doing this much may be gained and nothing loſt. It is difficult to prove to a deiſt that the words of Scrip­ture are divine, becauſe he ſees that every writer has words and phraſes peculiar to himſelf. It is difficult alſo to prove that the ideas were infuſed into the mind of the authors while they were engaged in the act of writing; becauſe concerning facts they appeal not to divine inſpiration, but declare *what they have ſeen and heard.* In reaſoning they add their own ſentiments to what they had received from the Lord, and ſubjoin, eſpecially in their epiſtles, things not connected with reli­gion. The definition which Doddridge gives, ſeems

applicable to ordinary gifts or the uſual endowments of rational creatures, rather than to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, which were beſtowed on the apoſtles. Thoſe who maintain that every fact or circumſtance was ſuggeſted by divine inſpiration, will find it no eaſy matter to prove their poſition. The opinion of Warburton and Law, with proper explanations, ſeems moſt probable. The opinion of Grotius, that only the epiſtles were inſpired, may be eaſily refuted.

The proof of the authenticity of the New Teſtament depends on human teſtimony: The proof of its inſpi­ration is derived from the declaration of inſpired perſons.

In proving that the New Teſtament is inſpired, we preſuppoſe its authenticity that the ſacred books were written by the apoſtles whoſe names they bear, and that they have been conveyed to us pure and uncor­rupted. This we have already attempted to prove, and we hope with ſucceſs. The evidence of inſpiration is the teſtimony of Chriſt and his apoſtles, which we re­ceive as credible, becauſe they confirmed their doctrines by miracles. From the important miſſion of Chriſt and his apoſtles, we infer that every power was beſtowed which divine wiſdom thought expedient; and from their conduct we conclude, that it is morally impoſſible that they could lay claim to any powers which they did not poſſeſs. It is proper therefore to inquire into the de­clarations of Chriſt and his apoſtles concerning the na­ture, degree, and extent, of the inſpiration beſtowed upon the writers of the ſacred books.

If we conſider Chriſt’s more immediate promiſes of inſpiration to the apoſtles, we ſhall find that he has given them, in the moſt proper ſenſe of the word, at three ſeveral periods, 1ſt, When he ſent the apoſtles to preach the goſpel @@†; 2dly, In holding a public diſcourſe relating to the goſpel, at which were preſent a conſi­derable multitude; 3dly, In his prophecy of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem @@‡. When he ſent the apoſtles to preach the goſpel, he thus addreſſed them: “When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye ſhall ſpeak, tor it ſlrall be given you in that ſame hour what ye ſhall ſpeak; for it is not you that ſpeak, but the ſpirit of your Father that ſpeaketh in you.” The ſame promiſe was made almoſt in the ſame words in the preſence of an immenſe multitude (Luke xii. 11, 12.) From theſe paſſages it has been urged, that if the apoſtles were to be inſpired in the preſence of magiſtrates in delivering ſpeeches, which were ſoon to be forgotten, it is ſurely reaſonable to conclude that they would be inſpired when they were to compoſe a ſtandard of faith for the uſe of all future generations of Chriſtians. If this concluſion be fairly deduced, it would follow that the writings of the New Teſtament are the dictates of inſpiration, not only in the doctrines and precepts, but in the very words. But it is a concluſion to which ſincere Chriſtians have made objections; for, ſay they, though Chriſt promiſes to aſſiſt his apoſtles in caſes of great emergency, where their own prudence and forti­tude could not be ſufficient, it does not follow that he would dictate to them thoſe facts which they knew al­ready, or thoſe reaſonings which their own calm reflec­tion might ſupply. Beſides, ſay they, if the New Tes­tament was dictated by the Holy Spirit, and only pen­ned by the apoſtles, what reaſon can be given for the care with which Chriſt inſtructed them both during his

@@@[m]† Matt. I. 19, 20.

@@@[m]‡ Mark xiii. II; Luke xxi. 14, 15.