

THE BOOK OF GENESIS. III.

DIVINE AUTHORITY AND INSPIRATION OF THE BOOK.

THE claim of this book, to be regarded as a part of divine revelation, is established beyond question by the authority of Christ and his apostles. It was a part of that collection of sacred writings, the Oracles of God, which were committed to the care and guardianship of the Jewish people. (Rom. 3:2.) Of these writings, collectively, the Savior and his apostles often speak as the Word of God; recognizing, and directly asserting, their divine authority and inspiration. See such passages, for example, as Matt. 5:17-19; John 5:39; Rom. 3:2; Matt. 22:43; Mark 12:36; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:21. This book, was, therefore, as a part of these divine writings (called in the New Testament the Scriptures, the Holy Scriptures, the Oracles of God), expressly recognized by the Savior and his apostles as of divine authority, and was declared to be "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." --2 Tim. 3:16.

The genuineness of the book (in other words, that it is a DIVINE BOOK; that, in this sense, it is not a spurious production) is thus established by the highest authority. It is a question of less importance by whom the book was written. In regard to many books of the Old Testament, this can not be determined with certainty. Nor is this necessary to be known; nor would it by itself prove their inspiration and divine authority, which must rest on other grounds. The authority of a writing, claimed to be divine, does not in any case rest on the particular writer or human instrumentality, but on the divine attestation given to it; and this attestation can be given, as in many cases it has been, to writings which have come to us anonymously, and of which the particular writer cannot be determined with certainty.

COMPOSITION OF THE BOOK.

The attentive reader will observe very marked peculiarities in the composition of the book.

There are striking variations of style and manner, not only in treating of subjects differing in their nature, where it might be expected, but also where the subjects are of the same general character. These variations are observable even in a translation, and still more so in the original text, where words and forms of expression, familiar to some portions, are never found in others. With these variations in the general manner of the writer are connected certain other peculiarities, which mark the transition from one portion to another. In the first subdivision of the book, for example, embracing the first chapter and the first three verses of the second, the name of the Divine Being is uniformly GOD. In the second, extending from the fourth verse of the second chapter to the end of the third, it is uniformly JEHOVAH GOD, except in the quoted words of the tempter's address to Eve, and of her reply (chap. 3:1-5), which are not the language of the narrator. In the third, contained in the fourth chapter, it is uniformly JEHOVAH, except in the quoted language of Eve, verse 25. In the fourth, contained in the fifth chapter, it is again uniformly GOD, except in verse 29 in the words quoted from Lamech.

In the subsequent portions of the book, the alterations are more frequent and less regular, but no less

distinctly marked.

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For the object of this section it is not necessary to add further illustrations on this point. But the careful reader will also observe that there are portions where the name GOD is chiefly employed, with the occasional use of the name JEHOVAH, in which the sense is complete, **[R1623 : page 60]** and the connection clear, without the passages containing the latter name. Take, for example, chaps. 6-10. If the reader will inclose in brackets the passages containing the name JEHOVAH, namely, verse 3 and verses 6-8 in chap. 6, verses 1-6 and the last clause of verse 16 in chap. 7, verses 20-22 in chap. 8, verses 20-29 in chap. 9, and verse 9 in chap. 10, he will find that the thread of the narrative is unbroken, and the sense complete, when this portion is read without these passages. They make additional statements which are important in themselves, but are not necessary to the coherency of the narrative.

The natural inference is, that the Book of Genesis consists of different revelations, made at different times, anterior to the age of the inspired writer to whom we owe its present form; and that he embodied them in a connected narrative, supplying what was wanting in one from the others and adding himself what was necessary for its completion. This in no degree detracts from the divine authority of the book, which (as already remarked) depends not on the human writer, or on our knowledge of him, but on the divine attestation; and this is given to the book itself, irrespective of the human instrumentality through which it was communicated.

This conclusion is strengthened by the character of large portions of its contents, consisting of genealogies, or accounts of births and other incidents of family history, anterior to the age of Moses, the writer of the book.

Of the date of the earliest of these divine communications there is no intimation. But it would be unreasonable to suppose that the ancient patriarchs, Enoch and Noah, who "walked with God," Abraham the "Friend of God," had no authentic and divinely attested record of these truths, on which their own relation to the Divine Being depended, and without the knowledge of which it could not be understood. We have therefore reason for holding that these earliest revelations come to us from the inspiration of the remote and unknown past, beyond the date of the writings of Moses himself.

THE WRITER OF THE BOOK.

The truths recorded in the Book of Genesis are pre-supposed as known in the books which follow it in the Pentateuch, and in all the subsequent books of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Book of Exodus takes up and continues history, from the point where it is left in Genesis, with an express reference to what had been related in that book. (Compare [Exodus 1:1-8](#).) It recognizes incidentally, as known facts, God's "covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (chap. 2:24), his relation to them as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (ch. 3:6), and their posterity as "his people" (verse 7), styling him "the God of their fathers" (verses 13,15,16), and "Jehovah, God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (chap. 4:5); his "appearing to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob," and his "covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings" (chap. 6:3-5 and 8); the charge given by Joseph (Gen. 50:25) respecting his remains (chap. 13:19); the six days of creation and the rest on the seventh.--Chap. 20:11.

These are only incidental allusions to things known, and necessarily presuppose the revelations and historical details in this book, to which they refer.

Without these revelations, the Hebrews would have had no knowledge of the God whom they were required

to worship and obey, as the Creator and Supreme Lawgiver, or of the guilt of idolatry as a sin against him. Without these historical details, the frequent allusions to their connection with the early patriarchs, and with the promises made to them, would have been an unintelligible enigma.

The Book of Genesis was therefore an integral and necessary part of that divine code, which, under the name Law ([Deut. 31:9,24](#)), Law of Jehovah ([Ex. 13:9](#)), Book of the Law of God ([Josh. 24:26](#)), Book of the Law of Moses ([Josh. 23:6](#)), Law of Moses ([1 Kings 2:3](#)), is ascribed to him as the writer. This is claimed by himself, in the body of the code. It is there said, that "Moses wrote this law" ([Deut. 31:9](#)), that he "made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished."--[Deut. 31:24](#).

That the writings which bore this general name, including Genesis, were from the hand of Moses, is thus proved by his own assertion, and by the uniform testimony of the writers nearest to his own age.

The Book of Genesis comes to us, therefore, with the authority of the inspired Lawgiver, having the same divine attestation as the writings first communicated through him.

ITS DIVISIONS AND CONTENTS.

The general divisions and contents of the book are as follows:

First division, chapters 1-3. Account of the Creation, and of the entrance of moral evil into the world.

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Second division, chapters 4-9. Account of sinful man, and of the prevalence of irreligion and immorality, from the fall to the first universal manifestation of divine justice in the destruction of the guilty race.

Third division, chapters 10,11. Continued development of its history and proof of its alienation from the true God, and of the want of a self-renovating power.

Fourth division, chapters 12-50. Initiation, and progressive steps, of the divine arrangement for the renovation of the race.