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ON

INSPIRATION.

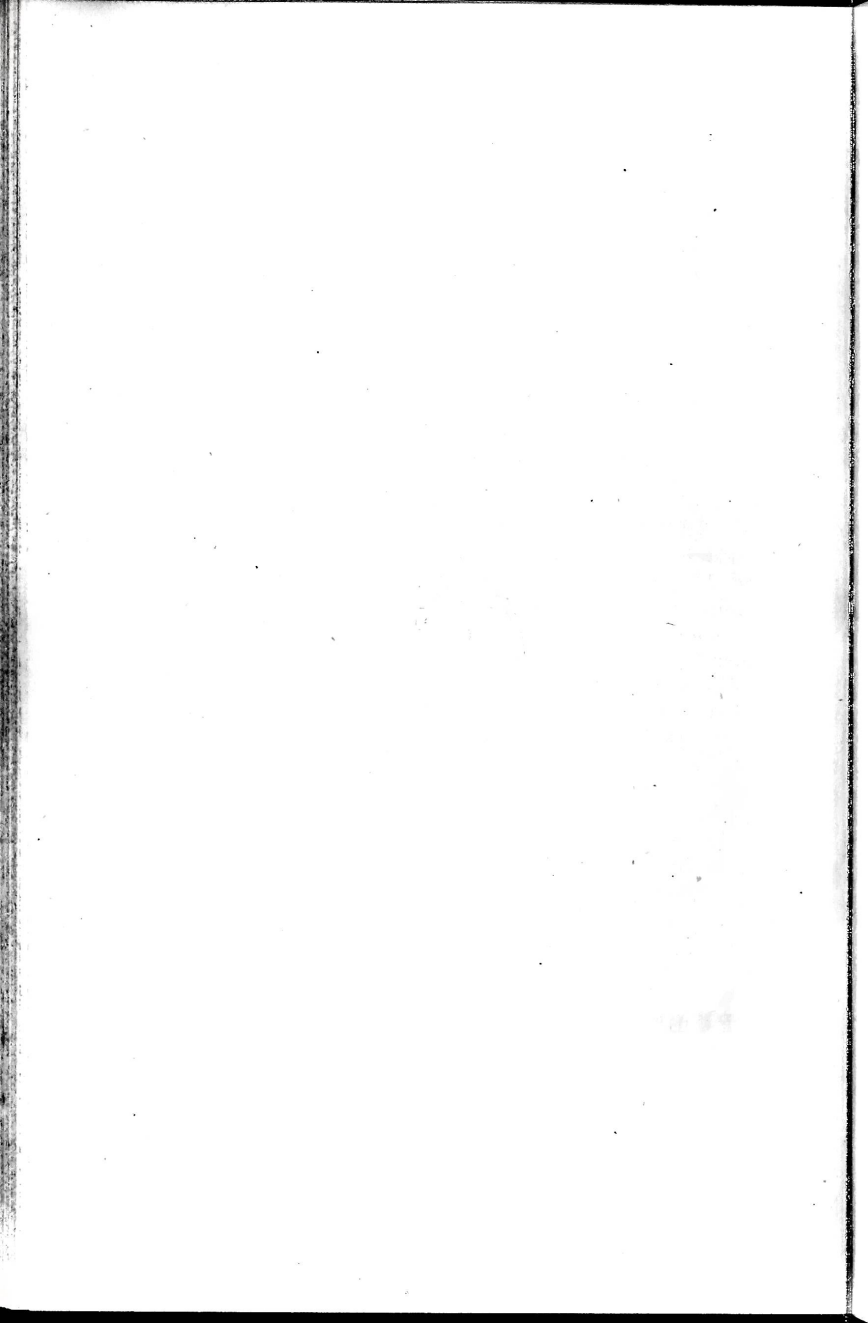


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## ON INSPIRATION.

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THERE is a certain amount of difficulty in defining the word Inspiration: it is used in so many different senses by the various schools of religious thought, that it is almost necessary to know the theological opinions of the speaker before being quite sure of his meaning when he talks of a book as being inspired. In the halcyon days of the Church, when faith was strong and reason weak, when priests had but to proclaim and laymen but to assent, inspiration had a distinct and a very definite meaning. An inspired man spoke the very words of God: the Bible was perfect from the "In the beginning" of Genesis to the "Amen" of Revelation: it was perfect in science, perfect in history, perfect in doctrine, perfect in morals. In that diamond no flaw was to be seen; it sparkled with a spotless purity, reflecting back in many-coloured radiance the pure white light of God. But when the chemistry of modern science came forward to test this diamond, a murmuring arose, low at first, but irrepressible. It was scrutinised through the microscope of criticism, and cracks and flaws were discovered in every direction; then, instead of being enshrined on the altar, encircled by candles, it was brought out into the searching sunlight, and the naked eye could see its imperfections. Then it was tested anew, and some bold men were heard to whisper, "It is no diamond at all, God formed in ages past; it is nothing but paste, manufactured by man;" and the

news passed from mouth to mouth, until the whisper swelled into a cry, and many voices echoed, "This is no diamond at all." And so things are to-day; the battle rages still; some maintain their jewel is perfect as ever, and that the flaws are in the eyes that look at it; some reluctantly allow that it is imperfect, but still consider it a diamond; others resolutely assert that, though valuable for its antiquity and its beauty, it is really nothing but paste.

To take first the really orthodox theory of inspiration, generally styled the "plenary" or "verbal" inspiration of the Bible. It was well defined centuries since by Athenagoras; according to him the inspired writers "uttered the things that were wrought in them when the Divine Spirit moved them, the Spirit using them as a flute-player would blow into the flute." The same idea has been uttered in powerful poetry by a writer of our own day:—

"Then thro' the mid complaint of my confession,  
Then thro' the pang and passion of my prayer,  
Leaps with a start the shock of His possession,  
Thrills me and touches, and the Lord is there.

Scarcely I catch the words of His revealing,  
Hardly I hear Him, dimly understand;  
Only the power that is within me pealing,  
Lives on my lips and beckons to my hand."

The idea is exactly the same as that of the pagan prophetesses: they became literally possessed by a spirit, who used their lips to declare his own thoughts: so orthodox Christians believe that it is no longer Moses or Isaiah or Paul that speaks, but the Spirit of the Father that speaks in them. This theory is held by all strictly orthodox believers; this and this only is from their lips, inspiration; hard pressed on the subject they will allow that the Spirit inspires all good thoughts "in a sense," but they will be very careful in declaring that this is only inspiration in a secondary sense, an inspiration which differs in kind as well as



in degree from the inspiration of the writers of the Bible. By this mechanical theory, so to speak, it is manifest that all possibility of error is excluded: thus, when Matthew quotes from the Old Testament an utterly irrelevant historical reference—"when Israel was a child, then I loved him and *called my son out of Egypt*," as a prophecy of the alleged flight of Jesus into Egypt, and his subsequent return from that country into Palestine, we find Dr. Wordsworth, Right Reverend Father in God, and Bishop of Lincoln, gravely telling us that "the Holy Spirit here declares what had been in His own mind when He uttered these words by Hosea. And who shall venture to say that he knows the mind of the Spirit better than the Spirit Himself?" Dr. Pusey again, standing valiantly, after the manner of the man, to every Church dogma, however it may be against logic, against common sense, against reason, or against charity, makes a very reasonable inquiry of those who believe in an outward and supernatural inspiration, and yet object to the term verbal. "How," he asks, "can thought be conveyed to a man's mind except through words?" The learned doctor's remark is indeed a very pertinent one, as addressed to all those who believe in an exterior revelation. Thoughts which are communicated from without can only become known to man through the medium of words: even his own thoughts only become appreciable to him when they are sufficiently distinct to be clothed in words (of course not necessarily *spoken* words); and we can only exclude from this rule such thoughts as may be presented to the mind through mental sight or hearing: *e.g.*, music might probably be composed mentally by imagining the *sounds*, or mechanical contrivances invented by imagining the *objects*; but any argument, any story, which is capable of reproduction in writing, must be thought out in words. A moment's thought renders this obvious; if a man is arguing with a Frenchman in his own language, he

must, to render his arguments clear and powerful, *think* in French. Now, if the Bible be inspired so as to insure accuracy, how can this be done except through words; for many of the facts recorded must, from the necessity of the case, have been unknown to the writers. Suppose for a moment that the Biblical account of the creation of the world were true, no man in that case could possibly have thought it out for himself. Only two theories can reasonably be held regarding this record: one, that it is true, which implies necessarily that it is literally true and verbally inspired, since the knowledge could only have come from the Creator, and, being communicated must have come in the form of words, which words being God's, must be literally true; the other, that it ranks with other ancient cosmogonies, and is simply the thought of some old writer, giving his idea as to the origin of the world around him. I select the account of the creation as a crucial test of the verbal theory of inspiration, because any other account in the Bible that I can think of has a human actor in it, and it might be maintained—however unlikely the hypothesis—that a report was related or written down by one who had been present at the incident reported, and the inspiration of the final writer may be said to consist in re-writing the previous record which he may be directed to incorporate in his own work. But no one witnessed the creation of the world, save the Creator, or, at the most, He and His angels, and the account given of it must, if true, be word for word divine; or, if false—as it is—must be nothing more than human fancy. We must push this argument one step further. If the account was communicated only to the man's *mind*, in words rising internally to the inward ear alone, how could the man distinguish between these divine thoughts rising in his mind, and his own human thoughts rising in exactly the same manner. Thoughts rise in our minds, we know not how; we only become conscious of them

when they are there, and, as far as we can judge, they are produced quite naturally according to certain laws. But how is it possible for us to distinguish whence these thoughts come? There they are, ours, not another's, ours as the child is the father's and mother's, the product of their own beings. If my thought is not mine, but God's, how am I to know this? it is produced within me as my own, and the source of one thought is not distinguishable from that of another. Thus, those who believe in the accuracy of the Bible are step by step driven to allow that not only are words necessary, but *spoken* words; if the Bible be supernaturally inspired at all, then must God have spoken not only in human words but also in human voice; if the Bible be supernaturally inspired at all, it must be verbally inspired, and be literally accurate about every subject on which it treats.

Unfortunately for the maintainers of verbal inspiration, their theory is splendidly adapted for being brought before the bar of inexorable fact. It is worth while to remark, in passing, that the infallibility of the Bible has only remained unchallenged where ignorance has reigned supreme; as soon as men began to read history and to study nature, they also began to question scriptural accuracy, and to defy scriptural authority. Infallibility can only live in twilight; so far, every infallibility has fallen before advancing knowledge, save only the infallibility of Nature, which is the infallibility of God Himself. Protestants consider Roman Catholics fools, in that they are not able to see that the Pope cannot be infallible, because one Pope has cursed what another Pope has blessed. They can see in the case of others that contradiction destroys infallibility, but they cannot see the force of the same argument when applied to their own pope, the Bible. Strong in their "invincible ignorance," they bring us a divinely-inspired book; "good," we answer; "then is your book absolutely true, and it will square with all

known truth in science and history, and will, of course, never be self-contradictory." The first important question which arises in our minds as we open so instructive a book as a revelation from on high, refers naturally to the Great Inspirer. The Bible contains, as might indeed be reasonably expected, many statements as to the nature of God, and we inquire of it, in the first place, the character of its Author. May we hope to see Him in this world? "Yes," answers Exodus. "Moses in days gone by spoke to God face to face, and seventy-four Israelites saw Him, and eat and drank in His presence." We have scarcely taken in this answer when we hear the same voice proceed: "No; for God said, thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live; while John declares that no man has seen Him, and Paul, that man neither hath nor can see Him." Is He Almighty? "Yes," says Jesus. "With God all things are possible." "No," retorts Judges; "for He could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, *because* they had chariots of iron." Is He just? "Yes," answers Ezekiel. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; the soul that sinneth *it* shall die." "No," says Exodus. "The Lord declares that He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children." Is He impartial? "Yes," answers Peter. "God is no respecter of persons." "No;" says Romans, "for God loved Jacob and hated Esau before they were born, that His purpose of *election* might stand." Is He truthful? "Yes; it is impossible for God to lie," says Hebrews. "No," says God of Himself, in Ezekiel. "I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet." Is He loving? "Yes," sings the Psalmist. "He is loving unto every man, and His tender mercy is over all His works." "No," growls Jeremiah. "He will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy on them." Is he easily pacified when offended? "Yes," says the Psalmist. "His wrath endureth but the

twinkling of an eye." "No," says Jeremiah. "Ye have kindled a fire in His anger that shall burn for ever." Unable to discover anything reliable about God, doubtful whether He be just or unjust, partial or impartial, true or false, loving or fierce, placable or implacable, we come to the conclusion that at all events we had better be friends with Him, and surely the book which reveals His will to us will at least tell us in what way He desires us to approach Him. Does He accept sacrifice? "Yes," says Genesis, "Noah sacrificed and God smelled a sweet savour," and Samuel tells us how God was prevailed on to take away a famine by the sacrifice of seven men, hanged up before the Lord. In our fear we long to escape from Him altogether, and ask if this be possible? "Yes," says Genesis. "Adam and his wife hid from Him in the trees, and He had to go down from His heaven to see if some evil deeds were rightly reported to Him." "No," says Solomon. "You cannot hide from Him, for His eyes are in every place." So we throw up in despair all hope of finding out anything reliable about Him, and proceed to search for some trustworthy history. We try to find out how man was made. One account tells us that he was made male and female, even in the image of God Himself; another that God made man alone, and subsequently formed a woman for him out of one of his own ribs. Then we find in one chapter that the beasts were all made, and lastly, that God made "His masterpiece, man." In another chapter we are told that God having made man thought it not good to leave him by himself, and proceeded to make every beast and fowl, saying that He would make Adam a help-meet for him; on bringing them to Adam, however, none was found worthy to mate with him, so woman was tried as a last experiment. As we read on we find evident marks of confusion; double, or even treble, accounts of the same incident, as, for instance, the denying a wife



and its consequences. Then we see Moses fearing Pharaoh's wrath, and flying out of Egypt to avoid the king's wrath, and not venturing to return until after his death, and are therefore surprised to learn from Hebrews that he forsook Egypt by faith, *not fearing* the wrath of the king. Then we come across numberless contradictions in Kings and Chronicles, in prophecy and history. Ezekiel prophesies that Nebuchadnezzar shall conquer Tyrus, and destroy it and *take all its riches*, and a few chapters afterwards it is recorded that he did accordingly attack Tyrus but failed, and that as he got *no wages* for this attack he should have Egypt to make up for his failure. In the New Testament the contradictions are endless; Joseph, the husband of Mary, had two fathers, Jacob and Heli; Salah is in the same predicament, for although the son of Cainan, Arphaxad begat him. When John was cast into prison Jesus *began* to preach, although He had been preaching and gaining disciples while John was still at large. Jesus sent the Twelve to preach, telling them to take a staff, and yet bidding them to take none. He eat the Passover with His disciples, although He was crucified before that feast. He had one title on His cross, but it is verbally inspired in four different ways. He rose with many variations of date and time, and ascended the same evening, although He subsequently went into Galilee and remained on earth for forty days. He sent word to His disciples to meet Him in Galilee, and yet suddenly appeared among them as they sat quietly together the same evening at Jerusalem. Stephen's history contradicts our Old Testament. When Paul is converted his companions hear a voice, although another account says that they heard none at all. After his conversion he goes in and out at Jerusalem with the Apostles, although, strangely enough, he sees none of them except Peter and James. But one might spend pages in noting these inconsistencies, while even one of them destroys

the verbal inspiration theory. From these contradictions I maintain that one of two things must follow, either the Bible is not an inspired book, or else inspiration is consistent with much error, as I shall presently show.

I am quite ready to allow that the Bible *is* inspired, and I therefore lay down as my first canon of inspiration, that :

“Inspiration does not prevent inaccuracy.”

I turn to the second class of orthodox inspirationists, who, while allowing that verbal inspiration is proved impossible by many trivial inconsistencies, yet affirm that God's overruling power ensures substantial accuracy, and that its history and science are perfectly true and are to be relied on. To test this assertion, we—after noting that Bible history is, as has been remarked above, continually self-contradictory—turn to other histories and compare the Bible with them. We notice first that many important Biblical occurrences are quite ignored by “profane” historians. We are surprised to see that while the Babylonish captivity left marks on Israel which are plainly seen, Egypt left no trace on Israel's names or customs, and Israel no trace on Egypt's monuments. The doctrine of angels comes not from heaven, but slips into Jewish theology from the Persian; while immortality is brought to light neither by Hebrew prophet nor by the gospel of Jesus, but by the people among whom the Jews resided during the Babylonish captivity. The Jewish Scriptures which precede the captivity know of nothing beyond the grave, the Jewish Scriptures after the captivity are radiant with the light of a life to come; to these Jesus adds nothing of joy or hope. The very central doctrine of Christianity—the Godhead of Jesus—is nothing but a repetition of an idea of Greek philosophy borrowed by early Christian writers, and is to be found in Plato and Philo as clearly as in the fourth Gospel. Science con-

tradicts the Bible as much as does history; geology laughs at its puny periods of creation; astronomy destroys its heavens, and asks why this little world took a week in making, while the sun and moon and the countless stars were rapidly turned out in twelve hours; natural history wonders why the kangaroos did not stay in Asia after the deluge instead of undertaking the long sea voyage to far Australia, and enquires how the Mexicans, and Peruvians, and others, crossed the wide ocean to settle in America; archæology presents its human bones from ancient caves, and asks how they got there if only six thousand years have passed since Adam and Eve stood alone in Eden, gazing out on the unpeopled earth: the pyramids point at the negro type distinct and clear, and ask how it comes that it was so rapidly developed at first, and yet has remained stationary ever since. At last science gets weary of slaying a foe so puny, and goes on its way with a smile on its grand still face, leaving the Bible to teach its science to whom it lists. Evidence so weighty crushes all life out of this second theory of inspiration, and gives us a second rule to guide us in our search:

“Inspiration does not prevent ignorance and error.”

We may pass on to the third class of inspirationists, those who believe that the Bible is not given to man to teach him either history or science, but only to reveal to him what he could not discover by the use of his natural faculties—*e.g.*, the duties of morality and the nature of God. I must note here the subtlety of this retreat. Driven by inexorable fact to allow the Bible to be fallible in everything in which we can test its assertions, they, by a clever strategic movement, remove their defence to a post more difficult to attack. They maintain that the Bible is infallible in points where no cannonade of facts can be brought to bear on it. What is this but to say, that although we can prove the Bible to be fallible on every point capable of proof, we are still blindly to believe it to be infallible



where demonstrated error is, from the nature of the case, impossible? As regards the nature of God, we have already seen that the Bible ascribes to Him virtue and vice indifferently. We turn to morality, and here our first great difficulty meets us, for when we point to a thing and say, "that is profoundly immoral," our opponents retort, "it is perfectly moral." Only the progress of humanity can prove which of us is in the right, though here, too, we have one great fact on our side, and that is, the conscience in man; already men would rather die than imitate the actions of Old Testament saints who did that which was "right in the eyes of Jehovah;" and presently they will be bold enough to reject in words that which they already reject in deeds. Few would put the Bible freely into the hands of a child, any more than they would give freely to the young the unpurged editions of Swift and Sterne; and I imagine that the most pious parents would scarcely see with unmingled pleasure their son and daughter of fifteen and sixteen studying together the histories and laws of the Pentateuch. But taking the Bible as a rule of life, are we to copy its saints and its laws? For instance, is it right for a man to marry his half-sister, as did the great ancestor of the Jews, Abraham, the friend of God? a union, by the way, which is forbidden by Jewish law, although said to be the source of their race. Is the lie of the Egyptian midwives right, because Jehovah blessed them for it, even as Jael is pronounced blessed by Deborah, the prophetess, for her accursed treachery and murder? Is the robbery of the Egyptians right, because commanded by Jehovah? Are the old cruel laws of witchcraft right, because Jehovah doomed the witch to death? Are the ordeals of the middle ages right, because derived from the laws of Jehovah? Is human sacrifice right, because attempted by Abraham, enjoined by Moses, practised by Jephthah, efficacious in turning away God's wrath when Saul's seven sons were offered up? Is murder right because

Phineas wrought atonement by it, and Moses sent his murderers throughout the camp to stay God's anger by slaying their brethren? Is it right that the persons of women captives should be the prey of the conquerors, because the Jews were commanded by Jehovah to save alive the virgins and keep them for themselves, except the sixty-four reserved for Himself? Is the man after God's own heart a worthy model for imitation? Are Jehu's lying and slaughter right because right in the eyes of Jehovah? Is Hosea's marriage commendable, because commanded by Jehovah, or are the signs of Jeremiah and Ezekiel the less childish and indecent because they are prefaced with, "thus saith Jehovah?" Far be it from me to detract from the glorious morality of portions of the Bible; but if the whole book be inspired and infallible in its moral teaching, then, of course, one moral lesson is as important as another, and we have no right to pick and choose where the whole is divine. The harsher part of the Old Testament morality has burnt its mark into the world, and may be traced through history by the groans of suffering men and women, by burning witches and tortured enemies of the Lord, by flaming cities and blood-stained fields. If murder and rapine, treachery and lies, robbery and violence, were commanded long ago by Almighty God; if things are right and wrong only by virtue of His command, then who can say that they may not be right once more, when used in the cause of the Church, and how are we to know that Moses speaks in God's name when he commands them, and Torquemada only in his own? But even Christians are beginning to feel ashamed of some of the exploits of the "Old Testament Saints," and to try and explain away some of the harsher features; we even hear sometimes a wicked whisper about "imperfect light," &c. Good heavens! what blasphemy! Imperfect light can mean nothing less than imperfect God, if He is responsible for the morality of these writings.

So, from our study of the Bible we deduce another canon by which we may judge of inspiration :

“ Inspiration does not prevent moral error.”

There is a fourth class of inspirationists, the last which clings to the skirts of orthodoxy, which is always endeavouring to plant one foot on the rocks of science, while it balances the other over the quicksands of orthodox supernaturalism. The Broad Church school here takes one wide step away from orthodoxy, by allowing that the inspiration of the Bible differs only in degree and not in kind from the inspiration common to all mankind. They recognise the great fact that the inspiring Spirit of God is the source whence flow all good and noble deeds, and they point out that the Bible itself refers all good and all knowledge to that one Spirit, and that He breathes mechanical skill into Bezaleel and Aholiab, strength into Samson's arms, wisdom into Solomon, as much as He breathes the ecstasy of the prophet into Isaiah, faith into Paul, and love into John. They recognise the old legends as authentic, but would maintain as stoutly that He spoke to Newton through the falling of an apple, as that He spoke of old to Elijah by fire, or to the wise men by a star. This school try and remove the moral difficulties of the Old Testament by regarding the history recorded in it as a history which is specially intended to unveil the working of God through all history, and so to gradually reveal God as He makes Himself known to the world ; thus the grosser parts are regarded as wholly attributable to the ignorance of men, and they delight to see the divine light breaking slowly through the thick clouds of human error and prejudice, and to trace in the Bible the gradual evolution of a nobler faith and a purer morality. They regard the miracles of Jesus as a manifestation that God underlies Nature and works ever therein : they believe God to be specially manifested in Jewish history, in order that men may under-

stand that He presides over all nations and rules over all peoples. To Maurice the Bible is the explainer of all earth's problems, the unveiler of God, the Bread of Life. There is, on the whole, little to object to in the Broad Church view of inspiration, although liberal thinkers regret that, as a party, they stop half way, and are still trammelled by the half-broken chains of orthodoxy. For instance, they usually regard the direct revelation of morality as closed by Jesus and His immediate followers, although they allow that God has not deserted His world, nor confined His inspiration within the covers of a book. To them, however, the Bible is still *the* inspired book, standing apart by itself, differing from all other sacred books. From their view of inspiration, which contains so much that is true, we deduce a fourth rule :

“Inspiration is not confined to written words about God.”

From a criticism of the book, which is held by orthodox Christians, to be specially inspired, we have then gained some idea of what inspiration does *not* do. It does not prevent inaccuracy, ignorance, error, nor is it confined to any written book. Inspiration, then, cannot be an overwhelming influence, crushing the human faculties and bearing along the subject of it on a flood which he can neither direct nor resist. It is a breathing—gentle and gradual—of pure thoughts into impure hearts, tender thoughts into fierce hearts, forgiving thoughts into revengeful hearts. David calls home his banished son, and he learns that, “even as a father pitieth his children, so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him.” Paul wishes himself accursed if it may save his brethren, and from his own self-sacrificing love he learns that “God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Thus inspiration is breathed into the man's heart. “I love and forgive, weak as I am ; what must be the depth of the love and forgiveness of

God?" David's fierce revenge finds an echo in his writings; for man writes, and not God: he defaces God by ascribing to Him the passions surging only in his own burning Eastern heart: then, as the Spirit moves him to forgiveness, his song is of mercy; for he feels that his Maker must be better than himself. That part of the Bible is inspired, I do not deny, in the sense that all good thoughts are the result of inspiration, but only as we share the inspiration of the Bible can we distinguish between the noble and the base in it, between the eternal and that which is fast passing away. But as we do not expect to find that inspiration, now-a-days, guards men from much error, both of word and deed, so we should not expect to find it otherwise in days gone by; nor should we wonder that the man who spoke of God as showing His tender fatherhood by punishing and correcting, could so sink down into hard thoughts of that loving Father as to say that it was a fearful thing to fall into His hands. These contradictions meet us in every man; they are the highest and the lowest moments of the human soul. Only as we are inspired to love and patience in our conduct towards men, will our words be inspired when we speak of God.

Having thus seen what inspiration does not do, we must glance at what it really is. It is, perhaps, natural that we, rejecting, as we do, with somewhat of vehemence, the idea of supernatural revelation, should oftentimes be accused of denying all revelation and disbelieving all inspiration. But even as we are not atheists, although we deny the Godhead of Jesus, so are we not unbelievers in inspiration because we refuse to bend our necks beneath the yoke of an inspired Bible. For we believe in a God too mighty and too universal to be wrapped in swaddling clothes or buried in a cave, and we believe in an inspiration too mighty and too universal to belong only to one nation and to one age. As the air is as free and as



refreshing to us as it was to Isaiah, to Jesus, or to Paul, so does the spiritual air of God's Spirit breathe as softly and as refreshingly on our brows as on theirs. We have eyes to see and ears to hear quite as much as they had in Judea long ago. "If God be omnipresent and omniactive, this inspiration is no miracle, but a regular mode of God's action on conscious Spirit, as gravitation on unconscious matter. It is not a rare condescension of God, but a universal uplifting of man. To obtain a knowledge of duty, a man is not sent away outside of himself to ancient documents for the only rule of faith and practice; the Word is very nigh him, even in his heart, and by this word he is to try all documents whatever. . . . Wisdom, Righteousness, and Love are the Spirit of God in the soul of man; wherever these are, and just in proportion to their power, there is inspiration from God. . . . Inspiration is : . . the in-come of God to the soul, in the form of Truth through the Reason, of Right through the Conscience, of Love and Faith through the Affections and Religious Element. . . . A man would be looked on as mad who should claim miraculous inspiration for Newton, as they have been who denied it in the case of Moses. But no candid man will doubt that, humanly speaking, it was a more difficult thing to write the Principia than to write the Decalogue. Man must have a nature most sadly anamalous if, unassisted, he is able to accomplish all the triumphs of modern science, and yet cannot discover the plainest and most important principles of Religion and Morality without a miraculous inspiration; and still more so if, being able to discover by God's natural aid these chief and most important principles, he needs a miraculous inspiration to disclose minor details."\* Thus we believe that inspiration from God is the birth-right of humanity, and to be an heir of God it needs

\* Theodore Parker.

only to be a son of man. Earth's treasures are highly priced and hard to win, but God's blessings are, like the rain and the sunshine, showered on all-comers.

“ 'Tis only heaven is *given* away ;  
'Tis only God may be had for the asking ;  
No price is set on the lavish summer ;  
June may be had by the poorest comer.”

If inspiration were indeed that which it is thought to be by the orthodox Christians, surely we ought to be able to distinguish its sayings from those of the uninspired. If inspiration be confined to the Christian Bible, how is it that the inspired thoughts were in many cases spoken out to the world hundreds of years before they fell from the lips of an inspired Jew? It seems a somewhat uncalled for miraculous interference for a man to be supernaturally inspired to inform the world of some moral truth which had been well known for hundreds of years to a large portion of the race. Or is it that a great moral truth bears within itself so little evidence of its royal birth, that it cannot be accepted as ruler by divine right over men until its proclamation is signed by some duly accredited messenger of the Most High? Then, indeed, must God be “more cognizable by the senses than by the soul;” and then “the eye or the ear is a truer and quicker percipient of Deity than the Spirit which came forth from Him.”\* Was Paul inspired when he wished himself accursed for his brethren's sake, but Kwan-yin uninspired, when she said, “Never will I seek nor receive private individual salvation; never enter into final peace alone?” If Jesus and the prophets were inspired when they placed mercy above sacrifice, was Manu uninspired in saying that a man “will fall very low if he performs ceremonial acts only, and fails to discharge his moral duties?” Was Jesus inspired

\* W. R. Greg.

when he taught that the whole law was comprehended in one saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?" and yet was Confucius uninspired when, in answer to the question, "What one word would serve as a rule to one's whole life?" he said, "Reciprocity; what you do not wish done to yourself, do not to others." Or take the Talmud and study it, and then judge from what uninspired source Jesus drew much of His highest teaching. "Whoso looketh on the wife of another with a lustful eye, is considered as if he had committed adultery."—(Kalah.) "With what measure we mete, we shall be measured again."—(Johanah.) "What thou wouldst not like to be done to thyself, do not to others; this is the fundamental law."—(Hillel.) "If he be admonished to take the splinter out of his eye, he would answer, Take the beam out of thine own."—(Tarphon.) "Imitate God in His goodness. Be towards thy fellow-creatures as He is towards the whole creation. Clothe the naked; heal the sick; comfort the afflicted; be a brother to the children of thy Father." The whole parable of the houses built on the rock and on the sand is taken out of the Talmud, and such instances of quotation might be indefinitely multiplied. What do they all prove? That there is no inspiration in the Bible? by no means. But surely that inspiration is not confined to the Bible, but is spread over the world; that much in all "sacred books" is the outcome of inspired minds at their highest, although we find the same books containing gross and low thoughts. We should always remember that although the Bible is more specially a revelation to us of the Western nations than are the Vedas and the Zend-Avesta, that it is only so because it is better suited to our modes of thought, and because it has been one of the agents in our education. The reverence with which we may regard the Bible as bound up with many sacred memories, and as the chosen teacher of many of our greatest minds and



purest characters, is rightly directed in other nations to their own sacred books. The books are really all on a level, with much good and much bad in them all ; but as the Hebrew was inspired to proclaim that "the Lord thy God is one Lord" to the Hebrews, so was the Hindoo inspired to proclaim to Hindoos, "There is only one Deity, the great Soul." Either all are inspired, or none are. They stand on the same footing. And we rejoice to believe that one Spirit breathes in all, and that His inspiration is ours to-day. "The Father worketh hitherto," although men fancy He is resting in an eternal Sabbath. The orthodox tell us that, in rejecting the rule of morality laid down for us in the Bible, and in trusting ourselves to this inspiration of the free Spirit of God, our faith and our morality will alike be shifting and unstable. But we reckon not of their warnings ; our faith and our morality are only shifting in this sense, that, as we grow holier, and purer, and wiser, our conception of God and of righteousness will rise and expand with our growth. It was a golden saying of one of God's noblest sons that "no man knoweth the Father-save the Son:" to know God we must resemble Him, as we see in the child the likeness of the parent. But in trusting ourselves to the guidance of the Spirit of God, we are not building the house of our faith on the shifting sand ; rather are we "dwelling in a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Wisely was it sung of old, "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it." Vain are all efforts of priestly coercion ; vain all toils of inspired books ; vain the utter sacrifice of reason and conscience ; their labour is but lost when they strive to build a temple of human faith, strong enough to bear the long strain of time, or the earthquake-shock of grief. God only, by the patient guiding of His love, by the direct inspiration of His Spirit, can lay, stone by stone, and timber by timber, that priceless fabric of trust and

love, which shall outlive all attacks and all changes,  
and shall stand in the human soul as long as His own  
Eternity endures.

