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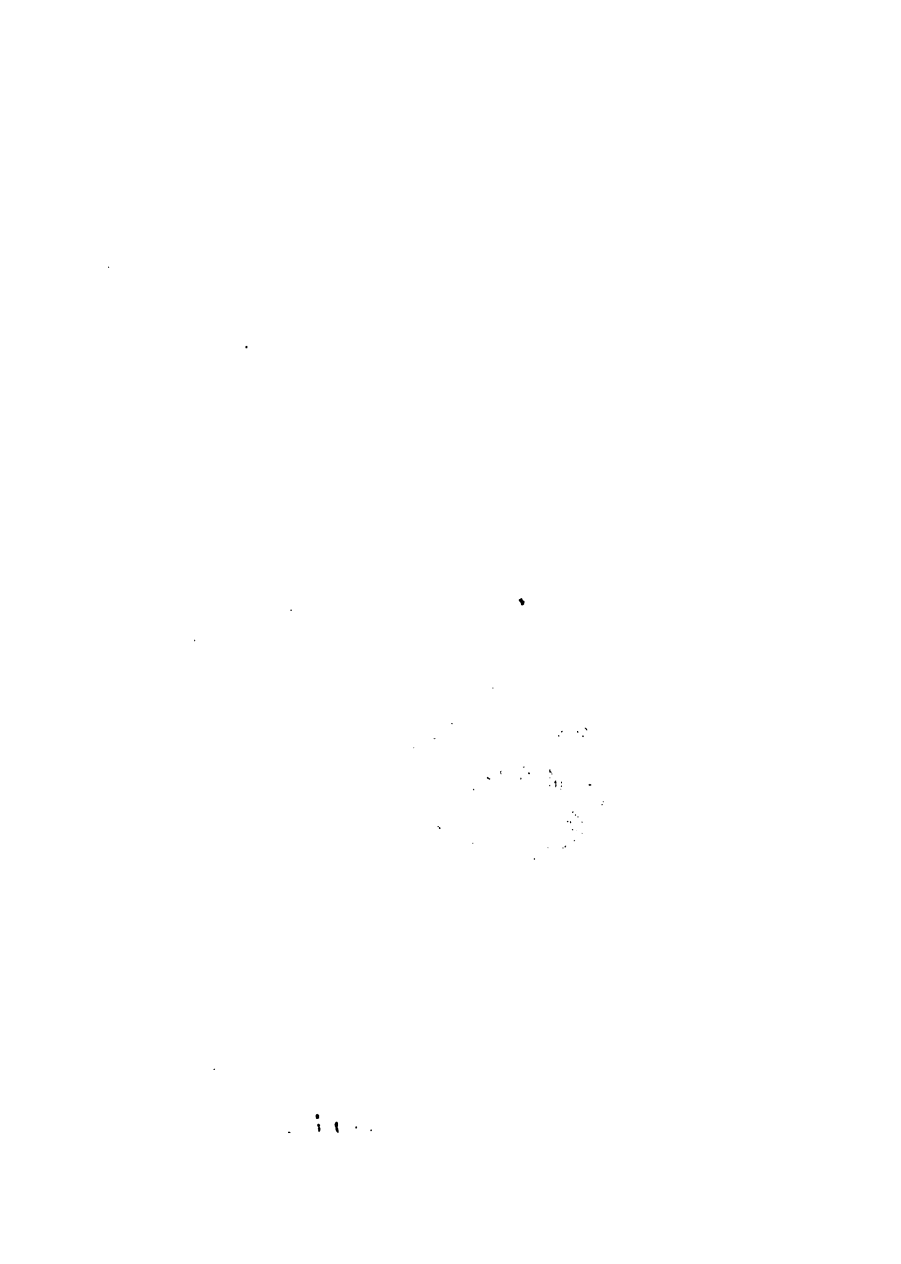
BIBLE INSPIRATION:
ITS REALITY AND NATURE.

Rev. J. C. Ryle.



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ITS REALITY AND NATURE.

BY THE

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BIBLE INSPIRATION.

2 TIMOTHY III. 16.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

How was the Bible written?—"Whence is it? From heaven, or of men?"—Had the writers of the Bible any special or peculiar help in doing their work?—Is there anything in the Bible which makes it unlike all other books, and therefore demands our respectful attention?—These are questions of vast importance. They are questions to which I wish to offer an answer in this volume. To speak plainly, the subject I propose to examine is that deep one, *the inspiration of Scripture.* I

believe the Bible to have been written by inspiration of God, and I want others to be of the same belief.

The subject is *always important*. It is the very keel and foundation of Christianity. If Christians have no Divine book to turn to as the warrant of their doctrine and practice, they have no solid ground for present peace or hope, and no right to claim the attention of mankind. They are building on a quicksand, and their faith is vain. We ought to be able to say boldly, "We are what we are, and we do what we do, because we have here a book which we believe to be the Word of God."

The subject is one of *peculiar importance* in the present day. Infidelity and scepticism abound everywhere. In one form or another they are to be found in every rank and class of society. Thousands of Englishmen are not ashamed to say that they regard the Bible as an old obsolete Jewish book, which has no special claim on our *faith and obedience*, and that it contains many

inaccuracies and defects. Myriads who will not go so far as this are wavering and shaken in their belief, and show plainly by their lives that they are not quite sure the Bible is true. In a day like this the true Christian should be able to set his foot down firmly, and to render a reason of his confidence in God's Word. He should be able by sound arguments to meet and silence the gainsayer, if he cannot convince him. He should be able to show good cause why he thinks the Bible is "from heaven, and not of men."

The subject without doubt is a *very difficult* one. It cannot be followed up without entering on ground which is dark and mysterious to mortal man. It involves the discussion of things which are miraculous, and supernatural, and above reason, and cannot be fully explained. But difficulties must not turn us away from any subject in religion. There is not a science in the world about which questions may not be asked which no one can answer. It is poor philosophy to say we will

believe nothing unless we can understand everything! We must not give up the subject of inspiration in despair because it contains things "hard to be understood." There still remains a vast amount of ground for study which is plain to every common understanding. Reader, I invite you to occupy this ground with me to-day, and to hear what I have got to say on the Divine authority of God's Word.

In considering the subject before us, there are two things which I propose to do :—

I. In the first place, I shall try to show the general truth, *that the Bible is given by inspiration of God.*

II. In the second place, I shall try to show *the extent to which the Bible is inspired.*

I trust that all who read this volume will take up the subject in a serious and reverent spirit. This question of inspiration is no light one. It involves *tremendously grave consequences.* If the Bible is

not the Word of God and inspired, the whole of Christendom for 1800 years has been under an immense delusion ;—half the human race has been cheated and deceived, and churches are monuments of folly.—If the Bible is the Word of God and inspired, all who refuse to believe it are in fearful danger ;—they are living on the brink of eternal misery. No man, in his sober senses, can fail to see that the whole subject demands most serious attention.

I. In the first place, I propose to show the general truth,—*that the Bible is given by inspiration of God.*

In saying this, I mean to assert that the Bible is utterly unlike all other books that were ever written, because its writers were specially inspired, or enabled by God, for the work which they did. I say that the Book comes to us with a claim which no other book possesses. It is stamped with Divine authority. In this respect it stands

entirely alone. Sermons, and tracts, and theological writings of all kinds, may be sound and edifying, but they are only the handiwork of uninspired man. The Bible alone is the Book of God.

Now I shall not waste time in proving that the Scriptures are genuine and authentic, that they were really written by the very men who profess to have written them, and that they contain the very things which they wrote. I shall not touch what are commonly called external evidences. I shall bring forward the book itself, and put it in the witness-box. I shall try to show that nothing can possibly account for the Bible being what it is, and doing what it has done, except the theory that it is the Word of God. I lay it down broadly, as a position which cannot be turned, that the Bible itself, fairly examined, is the best witness of its own inspiration. I shall content myself with stating some plain facts about the Bible, which can neither be denied nor explained away. And the ground I shall take up is this,—

that these facts ought to satisfy every reasonable inquirer that the Bible is of God, and not of man. They are simple facts, which require no knowledge of Hebrew, or Greek, or Latin, in order to be understood; yet they are facts which prove to my own mind conclusively that the Bible is super-human, or not of man.

(a) It is a fact, that there is an *extraordinary depth, fulness, and richness in the contents of the Bible*. It throws more light on a vast number of most important subjects than all the other books in the world put together. It boldly handles matters which are beyond the reach of man, when left to himself. It treats of things which are mysterious and invisible,—the soul, the world to come, and eternity,—depths which man has no line to fathom. All who have tried to write of these things, without Bible light, have done little but show their own ignorance. They grope like the blind; they speculate; they guess; they generally make the darkness more visible, and

land us in a region of uncertainty and doubt. How dim were the views of Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and Seneca ! A well-taught Sunday scholar, in this day, knows more spiritual truth than all these sages put together.

The Bible alone gives a reasonable account of the *beginning and end of the globe* on which we live. It starts from the birthday of sun, moon, stars, and earth in their present order, and shows us creation in its cradle. It foretells the dissolution of all things, when the earth and all its works shall be burned up, and shows us creation in its grave. It tells us the story of the world's youth, as the habitation of man ; and it tells us the story of its old age. It gives us a picture of its first days ; and it gives us a picture of its last. How vast and important is this knowledge ! Can this be the handiwork of uninspired minds ? Reader, try to answer that question.

The Bible alone gives a *true and faithful account of man*. It does not flatter him as novels and

romances do ; it does not conceal his faults and exaggerate his goodness ; it paints him just as he is. It describes him as a fallen creature, of his own nature inclined to evil,—a creature needing not only a pardon, but a new heart, to make him fit for heaven. It shows him to be a corrupt being under every circumstance, when left to himself,—corrupt after the loss of paradise,—corrupt after the flood,—corrupt when fenced in by divine laws and commandments,—corrupt when the Son of God came down and visited him in the flesh,—corrupt in the face of warnings, promises, miracles, judgments, mercies. In one word, it shows man to be by nature always a sinner. How important is this knowledge ! Can this be the work of uninspired minds ? Reader, try to answer that question.

The Bible alone gives us *true views of God*. By nature man knows nothing clearly or fully about Him. All his conceptions of Him are low, grovelling, and debased. What could be more

degraded than the gods of the Canaanites and Egyptians,—of Babylon, of Greece, and of Rome ? What can be more vile than the gods of the Hindoos and other heathen in our own time ?—By the Bible we know that *God hates sin*. The destruction of the old world by the flood ; the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah ; the drowning of Pharoah and the Egyptians in the Red Sea ; the cutting off the nations of Canaan ; the overthrow of Jerusalem and the Temple ; the scattering of the Jews ;—all these are unmistakable witnesses. —By the Bible we know that *God loves sinners*. His gracious promise in the day of Adam's fall ; His longsuffering in the time of Noah ; His deliverance of Israel out of the land of Egypt ; His gift of the law at Mount Sinai ; His bringing the tribes into the promised land ; His forbearance in the days of the Judges and Kings ; His repeated warnings by the mouth of His prophets ; His restoration of Israel after the Babylonian captivity ; His sending His Son into the world, in due time,

to be crucified; His commanding the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles;—all these are speaking facts.—By the Bible we learn that *God knows all things*. We see Him foretelling things hundreds and thousands of years before they take place, and as He foretells so it comes to pass. He foretold that the family of Ham should be a servant of servants; that Tyre should become a rock for drying nets; that Nineveh should become a desolation; that Babylon should be made a desert; that Egypt should be the basest of kingdoms; that Edom should be forsaken and uninhabited; and that the Jews should not be reckoned among the nations. All these things were utterly unlikely and improbable. Yet all have been fulfilled. Once more I say, how vast and important is all this knowledge! Can this Book be the work of uninspired man? Reader, try to answer that question.

The Bible alone teaches us that *God has made a full, perfect, and complete provision for the salvation of fallen man*. It tells of an atonement made

for the sin of the world, by the sacrifice and death of God's own Son upon the cross. It tells us that by His death for sinners, as their Substitute, He has obtained eternal redemption for all that believe on Him. The claims of God's broken law have now been satisfied. "Christ has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust." God can now be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. It tells us that there is now a complete remedy for the guilt of sin,—even the precious blood of Christ; and peace, and rest of conscience for all who believe on Christ. "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." It tells us that there is a complete remedy for the power of sin,—even the almighty grace of the Spirit of Christ. It shows us the Holy Ghost quickening believers, and making them new creatures. It promises a new heart and a new nature to all who will hear Christ's voice, and follow Him. Once more I say, how important is this knowledge! What should we know of all these comfortable truths without

the Bible? Can this Book be the composition of uninspired men? Reader, try to answer that question.

The Bible alone *explains the state of things that we see in the world around us*. There are many things on earth which a natural man cannot explain. The amazing inequality of conditions,—the poverty and distress,—the oppression and persecution,—the shakings and tumults,—the failures of statesmen and legislators,—the constant existence of uncured evils and abuses,—all these things are often puzzling to him. He sees, but does not understand. But the Bible makes it all clear. The Bible can tell him that the whole world lieth in wickedness,—that the prince of the world, the devil, is everywhere,—and that it is vain to look for perfection in the present order of things. The Bible will tell him that neither laws nor education can ever change men's hearts,—and that, just as no man will ever make a machine work well unless he allows for friction,—so also

no man will do much good in the world unless he always remembers that human nature is fallen, and that the world he works in is full of sin. The Bible will tell him that there is "a good time" certainly coming,—and coming perhaps sooner than people expect it,—a time of perfect knowledge, perfect justice, perfect happiness, and perfect peace. But the Bible will tell him this time shall not be brought in by any power but that of Christ coming to earth again. And for that second coming of Christ, the Bible will tell him to prepare. Once more, I say, how important is all this knowledge!

Reader, all these are things which men could find nowhere except in the Scriptures. We have probably not the least idea how little we should know about these things if we had not the Bible. We hardly know the value of the air we breathe, and the sun which shines on us, because we have never known what it is to be without them. We do not value the truths on which I have been

just now dwelling, because we do not realize the darkness of men to whom these truths have not been revealed. Surely no tongue can fully tell the value of the treasures this one volume contains. Set down this fact in your mind, and do not forget it. The extraordinary contents of the Bible are a great fact which can only be explained by admitting its inspiration. Mark well what I say. It is a simple broad fact, that in the matter of *contents*, the Bible stands entirely alone, and no other book is fit to be named in the same day with it. He that dares to say the Bible is not inspired, let him give a reasonable account of this fact, if he can !

(b) It is another fact that there is an *extraordinary unity and harmony in the contents of the Bible*, which is entirely above man. We all know how difficult it is to get a story told by any three persons, not living together, in which there are not some contradictions and discrepancies. If the story is a long one, and involves a large quantity

of particulars, unity seems almost impossible among the common run of men. But it is not so with the Bible. Here is a long book written by not less than thirty different persons. The writers were men of every rank and class in society. One was a lawgiver. One was a warlike king. One was a peaceful king. One was a herdsman. One had been brought up as a publican,—another as a physician,—another as a learned Pharisee,—two as fishermen,—several as priests. They lived at different intervals over a space of 1500 years; and the greater part of them never saw each other face to face. And yet there is a perfect harmony among all these writers! They all write as if they were under one dictation. The style and hand-writing may vary, but the mind that runs through their work is always one and the same. They all tell the same story. They all give one account of man,—one account of God,—one account of the way of salvation,—one account of the human heart. You see truth unfolding under

their hands, as you go through the volume of their writings,—but you never detect any real contradiction, or contrariety of view.

Reader, set down this fact in your mind, and ponder it well. Tell me not that this unity might be the result of chance. No one can ever believe that but a very credulous person. There is only one satisfactory account to be given of the fact before us.—The Bible is not of man, but of God.

(c) It is another fact that there is *an extraordinary wisdom, sublimity and majesty in the style of the Bible* which is above man. Strange and unlikely as it was, the writers of Scripture have produced a book which even at this day is utterly unrivalled. With all our boasted attainments in science and art and learning, we can produce nothing in literature that can be compared with the Bible. Even at this very hour, in the nineteenth century, the book stands entirely alone. There is a strain and a style and a tone of thought about it, which separate it from all other writings. There are no weak

points, and motes, and flaws, and blemishes. There is no mixture of infirmity and feebleness, such as you will find in the works of even the best Christians. "Holy, holy, holy," seems written on every page. To talk of comparing the Bible with other "sacred books" so-called, such as the Koran, the Shasters, or the book of Mormon, is positively absurd. You might as well compare the sun with a rushlight,—or Skiddaw with a mole hill,—or St. Paul's with an Irish hovel,—or the Portland vase with a garden pot,—or the Koh-i-noor diamond with a bit of glass.* God seems to have allowed the existence of these pretended revelations, in order to prove the immeasurable superiority of His own Word. To talk of the inspiration of the Bible, as only differing *in degree* from that of such

* Carlyle's estimate of the Koran is given, in "Hero-worship," in the following words. "It is a wearisome, confused jumble, crude, recondite, abounding in endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement, insupportable stupidity. In short nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran, with its unreadable masses of lumber."

writings as the works of Homer, Plato, Shakspeare Danté, and Milton, is simply a piece of blasphemous folly. Every honest and unprejudiced reader must see that there is a gulf between the Bible and any other book, which no man can fathom. You feel, at turning from the Scriptures to other works, that you have got into a new atmosphere. You feel like one who has exchanged gold for base metal, and heaven for earth. And how can this mighty difference be accounted for? The men who wrote the Bible had no special advantages. They lived in a remote corner of the civilized earth. They had, most of them, little leisure, few books, and no learning,—such as learning is reckoned in this world. Yet the book they com-

Owen says, "There are no other writings in the world, beside the Bible, that ever pretended unto a divine original, but they are not only from their matter, but from the manner of their writing, and the plain footsteps of human artifice and weakness therein, sufficient for their own conviction, and do openly discover their own vain pretensions." (*The Reason of Faith*. Works, vol. iv., p. 34.)

pose is one which is unrivalled ! There is but one way of accounting for this fact.—*They wrote under the direct inspiration of God.*

(d) It is another fact that there is an *extraordinary accuracy in the facts and statements of the Bible, which is above man.* Here is a book which has been finished and before the world for nearly 1800 years. Those 1800 years have been the busiest and most changeful period the world has ever seen. During this period the greatest discoveries have been made in science, the greatest alterations in the ways and customs of society, the greatest improvements in the habits and usages of life. Hundreds of things might be named which satisfied and pleased our forefathers, which we have laid aside long ago as obsolete, useless, and old-fashioned. The laws, the books, the houses, the furniture, the clothes, the carriages of each succeeding century, have been a continual improvement on those of the century that went before. There is hardly a thing in which faults and weak

points have not been discovered. There is scarcely an institution which has not gone through a process of sifting, purifying, refining, simplifying, reforming, amending, and changing. But all this time men have never discovered a weak point or a defect in the Bible. Infidels have assailed it in vain. There it stands,—perfect, and fresh, and complete, as it did eighteen centuries ago. The march of intellect never overtakes it. The wisdom of wise men never gets beyond it. The science of philosophers never proves it wrong. The discoveries of travellers never convict it of mistakes. —Are the distant islands of the Pacific laid open? Nothing is found that in the slightest degree contradicts the Bible account of man's heart.—Are the ruins of Nineveh and Egypt ransacked and explored? Nothing is found that overturns one jot or tittle of the Bible's historical statements. —How shall we account for this fact? Who could have thought it possible that so large a book, handling such a vast variety of subjects,

should, at the end of 1800 years, be found so free from erroneous statements? There is only one account to be given of the fact.—The Bible was *written by inspiration of God.*

(e) It is another fact that there is in the Bible an extraordinary *suitableness to the spiritual wants of all mankind.* It exactly meets the heart of man in every rank or class, in every country and climate, in every age and period of life. It is the only book in existence which is never out of place and out of date. Other books after a time become obsolete and old-fashioned. The Bible never does. Other books suit one country or people, and not another. The Bible suits all. It is the book of the poor and unlearned no less than of the rich and the philosopher. It feeds the mind of the labourer in his cottage, and it satisfies the gigantic intellects of Newton, Chalmers, Brewster, and Faraday. Lord Macaulay, and John Bright, and the writers of brilliant articles in the *Times*, and the humblest City Missionaries, are all under

obligations to the same volume. It is equally valued by the converted New Zealander in the southern hemisphere, and the Red River Indian in the cold north of America, and the Hindoo under the tropical sun.

It is the only book, moreover, which seems always fresh and evergreen and new. For eighteen centuries it has been studied and prayed over by millions of private Christians, and expounded and explained and preached to us by thousands of ministers. Fathers, and schoolmen, and reformers, and puritans, and modern divines, have incessantly dug down into the mine of Scripture, and yet never exhausted it. It is a well never dry, and a field which is never barren. It meets the hearts and minds and consciences of Christians in the nineteenth century as fully as it did those of Greeks and Romans when it was first completed. It suits the Dairyman's daughter as well as Persis, or Tryphena, or Tryphosa,—and the English Peer as well as the converted African at Sierra Leone.

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It is still the first book which fits the child's mind when he begins to learn religion, and the last to which the old man clings as he leaves the world.*

* "I have always been strongly in favour of secular education in the sense of education without theology. But I must confess I have been no less seriously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling, which is the essential basis of conduct, could be kept up, in the present chaotic state of opinion on these matters, *without the use of the Bible.*

"Consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this Book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history ;—that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple from John o'Groat's Home to the Land's End, as Danté and Tasso once were to the Italians ;—that it is written in the best and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form ;—and finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past, stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its effort to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning their payment for their work ?"—*Professor Huxley on School Boards (Huxley's Critiques and Essays, p. 51.)*

In short, it suits all ages, ranks, climates, minds, conditions. It is the one book which suits the world.

Now how shall we account for this singular fact? What satisfactory explanation can we give? There is only one account and explanation.—The Bible was *written by Divine inspiration*. It is the book of the world, because He inspired it who formed the world, —who made all nations of one blood,—and knows man's common nature. It is the book for every heart, because He dictated it who alone knows all hearts, and what all hearts require. *It is the book of God.*

(f) Last, but not least, it is a great fact that the Bible *has had a most extraordinary effect on the condition of those nations* in which it has been known, taught, and read.

I invite any honest-minded reader to look at a map of the world, and see what a story that map tells. Which are the countries on the face of the globe at this moment where there is the greatest

amount of idolatry, or cruelty, or tyranny, or impurity, or mis-government, or disregard of life and liberty and truth? Precisely those countries where the Bible is not known.—Which are the Christian countries, so-called, where the greatest quantity of ignorance, superstition, and corruption, is to be found at this very moment? The countries in which the Bible is a forbidden or neglected book,—such countries as Spain and the South American States.—Which are the countries where liberty, and public and private morality have attained the highest pitch? The countries where the Bible is free to all, like England, Scotland, Germany, and the United States. Yes! when you know how a nation deals with the Bible, you may generally know what a nation is.

But this is not all. Let us look nearer home. Which are the cities on earth where the fewest soldiers and police are required to keep order? London, Manchester, Liverpool, New York, Philadelphia,—cities where Bibles abound.—Which are

the countries in Europe where there are the fewest murders and illegitimate births? The Protestant countries, where the Bible is freely read.—Which are the Churches and religious bodies on earth which are producing the greatest results by spreading light and dispelling darkness? Those which make much of the Bible, and teach and preach it as God's Word. The Romanist, the Neologian, the Socinian, the Deist, the sceptic, or the friends of mere secular teaching, have never yet shown us one Sierra Leone, one New Zealand, one Tinnevely, as the fruit of their principles. We only can do that who honour the Bible and reverence it as God's Word. Let that fact also be remembered. He that denies the Divine inspiration of the Bible, let him explain that fact if he can.*

* "The Bible is the fountain of all true patriotism and loyalty in States ;—it is the source of all true wisdom, sound policy, and equity in Senates, Council-chambers, and Courts of Justice ;—it is the spring of all true discipline and obedience, and of

Reader, I place these six facts about the Bible before you, and I ask you to consider them well. Take them all six together, treat them fairly, and look at them honestly. Upon any other principle than that of divine inspiration, those six facts appear to me inexplicable and unaccountable. Here is a book written by a succession of Jews in a little corner of the world, which positively stands alone. Not only were its writers isolated and cut off in a peculiar manner from other nations, but they belonged to a people who have never produced any other book of note except the Bible! There is not the slightest proof that, unassisted and left to themselves, they were

all valour and chivalry, in armies and fleets, in the battlefield and on the wide sea ;—it is the origin of all probity and integrity in commerce and in trade, in marts and in shops, in banks and exchanges, in the public resorts of men and the secret silence of the heart ;—it is the pure, unsullied fountain of all love and peace, happiness, quietness and joy, in families and households.—Wherever it is duly obeyed it makes the desert of the world to rejoice and blossom as the rose.”—*Wordsworth on Inspiration*, p. 113.

capable of writing anything remarkable, like the Greeks and Romans. Yet these men have given the world a volume which for depth, unity, sublimity, accuracy, suitableness to the wants of man, and power of influencing its readers, is perfectly unrivalled! How can this be explained? How can it be accounted for? To my mind there is only one answer. The writers of the Bible were divinely helped and qualified for the work which they did. The book which they have given to us was *written by inspiration of God*.*

For my own part, I believe that in dealing with sceptics, and unbelievers, and enemies of the Bible, Christians are too apt to stand only on the defensive. They are too often content with answering this or that little objection, or discussing this or

* "The little ark of Jewish literature still floats above the surges of time, while mere fragments of the wrecked archives of the huge oriental empires, as well as of the lesser kingdoms that surrounded Judæa, are now and then cast on our distant shores."—*Rogers on the Superhuman Origin of the Bible*, p. 311.

that little difficulty, which is picked out of Scripture and thrown in their teeth. I believe we ought to act on the aggressive far more than we do, and to press home on the adversaries of inspiration the enormous difficulties of their own position. We have a right to ask them how they can possibly explain the origin and nature of the Bible, if they will not allow that it is of Divine authority? We have a right to say,—“Here is a book which not only courts inquiry but demands investigation. We challenge you to tell us how that Book was written, if you deny its inspiration.” —How can they account for this Book standing so entirely alone, and for nothing having ever been written equal to it, like it, near it, or fit to be compared with it for a minute?—I defy them to give any rational reply on their own principles. On our principles we can. To tell us that man’s unassisted mind could have written the Bible is simply ridiculous. It is worse than ridiculous: it *is the height of credulity*. In short, the difficulties

of unbelief are far greater than the difficulties of faith. No doubt there are things "hard to be understood," if we accept the Scriptures as God's Word. But, after all, they are nothing compared to the hard things which rise up in our way, and demand solution if we once deny inspiration. There is no alternative. Men must either believe things which are grossly improbable, or else they must accept the great general truth that *the Bible is the inspired Word of God.*

II. The second thing which I propose to consider is *the extent to which the Bible is inspired.* Assuming, as a general truth, that the Bible is given by Divine inspiration, I wish to examine how far and to what degree its writers received Divine help. In short, what is it exactly that we mean when we talk of the Scriptures as *the Word of God?*

This is, no doubt, a difficult question, and one about which the best Christians are not entirely

of one mind. The plain truth is that inspiration is a miracle ; and, like all miracles, there is much about it which we cannot fully understand.—We must not confound it with intellectual power, such as great poets and authors possess. To talk of Shakespeare and Milton and Byron being *inspired*, like Moses and St. Paul, is to my mind almost profane.—Nor must we confound it with the gifts and graces bestowed on the early Christians in the primitive Church. All the Apostles were enabled to preach and work miracles, but not all were inspired to write.—We must rather regard it as a special supernatural gift, bestowed on about thirty people out of mankind, in order to qualify them for the special business of writing the Scriptures ; and we must be content to allow that, like everything miraculous, we cannot entirely explain it, though we can believe it. A miracle would not be a miracle, if it could be explained ! That miracles are possible, I do not stop to prove here. I never trouble myself on that subject until those who

deny miracles have fairly grappled with the great fact that Christ rose again from the dead. I firmly believe that miracles are possible, and have been wrought; and among great miracles I place the fact that men were inspired by God to write the Bible. Inspiration, therefore, being a miracle, I frankly allow that there are difficulties about it which at present I cannot fully solve.

The exact manner in which the minds of the inspired writers of Scripture worked when they wrote, I do not pretend to explain. Very likely they could not have explained it themselves. I do not admit for a moment that they were mere machines holding pens, and, like type-setters in a printing-office, did not understand what they were doing. I abhor the "mechanical" theory of inspiration. I dislike the idea that men like Moses and St. Paul were no better than organ-pipes, employed by the Holy Ghost, or ignorant secretaries or amanuenses who wrote by dictation what they did not understand. I admit nothing of the kind.

I believe that in some marvellous manner the Holy Ghost made use of the reason, the memory, the intellect, the style of thought, and the peculiar mental temperament of each writer of the Scriptures. But how and in what manner this was done I can no more explain than I can the union of two natures, God and man, in the person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.—I only know that there is both a Divine, and a human element in the Bible, and that while the men who wrote it were really and truly men, the book that they wrote and handed down to us is really and truly the Word of God. I know the result, but I do not understand the process. The result is, that the Bible is the written Word of God ; but I can no more explain the process than I can explain how the water became wine at Cana, or how five loaves fed five thousand men, or how a word raised Lazarus from the dead.—I do not pretend to explain miracles, and I do not pretend to explain fully the miraculous gift of inspiration.

The position I take up is that while the Bible-writers were not "machines," as some sneeringly say, they only wrote what God taught them to write. The Holy Ghost put into their minds thoughts and ideas, and then guided their pens in writing and expressing them. When you read the Bible you are not reading the unaided, self-taught composition of erring men like yourselves, but thoughts and words which were suggested by the eternal God. The men who were employed to indite the Scripture "spake not of themselves." They "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter i. 21.) He that holds a Bible in his hand should know that he holds not the word of man but of God.

Concerning the *precise extent* to which the Bible is inspired, I freely admit that Christians differ widely. Some of the views put forth on the subject appear to me erroneous in the extreme. I shall not shrink from giving my own opinion, and stating my reasons for maintaining it. In matters

like these I dare not call any man master. Painful as it is to disagree with able and gifted men on religious questions, I dare not take up views of inspiration which my head and heart tell me are unsound, however high and honoured the names of those who maintain them. I believe in my conscience that low and defective views of this subject are doing immense damage to the cause of Christ in these last days.

Some hold that some of the books of Scripture are not inspired at all, and have no more authority or claim to our reverence than the writings of any ordinary man.—Others who do not go so far as this, and allow that all the books in the Bible are inspired, maintain that inspiration was only *partial*, and that there are portions in almost every book which are uninspired.—Others hold that inspiration means nothing more than general superintendence and direction, and that, while the Bible writers were miraculously preserved from making mistakes in great things and matters

necessary to salvation, in things indifferent they were left to their own unassisted faculties, like any other writers.—Some hold that all the ideas in the Bible were given by inspiration, but not the words and language in which they are clothed,—though how to separate ideas from words it is rather hard to understand!—Some, finally, allow the thorough inspiration of all the Bible, and yet maintain that it was possible for the writers to make occasional mistakes in their statements, and that such mistakes do exist at this day.

From all these views I totally and entirely dissent. They all appear to me more or less defective, below the truth, dangerous in their tendency, and open to grave and insuperable objections. The view which I maintain is that every book, and chapter, and verse, and syllable of the Bible was given by inspiration of God. I hold that not only the substance of the Bible, but its language,—not only the ideas of the Bible, but its words,—not only certain parts of the Bible, but

every chapter of the book,—that all and each are of Divine authority. I hold that the Scripture not only *contains* the Word of God, but *is* the Word of God. I believe the narratives and statements of Genesis, and the catalogues in Chronicles, were just as truly written by inspiration as the Acts of the Apostles. I believe Ezra's account of the nine-and-twenty knives, and St. Paul's message about the cloak and parchments, were as much written under Divine direction as the 20th of Exodus, the 17th of John, or the 8th of Romans. I do not say, be it remembered, that all these parts of the Bible are of equal importance to our souls. Nothing of the kind! But I do say they were all equally given by inspiration.*

* "We affirm that the Bible is the Word of God, and that it is not marred with human infirmities. We do not imagine, with some, that the Bible is like a threshing-floor, on which wheat and chaff lie mingled together, and that it is left for the reader to winnow and sift the wheat from the chaff by the fan and sieve of his own mind."—*Wordsworth on "Inspiration."* (P. 11.)

In making this statement I ask the reader not to misunderstand my meaning. I do not forget that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The inspiration of every word, for which I contend, is the inspiration of every original Hebrew and Greek word, as the Bible writers first wrote it down. I stand up for nothing more and nothing less than this. I lay no claim to the inspiration of every word in the various versions and translations of God's Word. So far as those translations and versions are faithfully and correctly done, so far they are, practically, of equal authority with the original Hebrew and Greek. We have reason to thank God that many of the translations are, in the main, faithful and accurate. At any rate our own English Bible, if not perfect, is so far correct, that in reading it we have a right to believe that we are reading in our own tongue not the word of man, but of God.

Now the view for which I contend,—that every

word of the Bible is inspired,—is not accepted by many good Christians, and is bitterly opposed in many quarters. I shall therefore mention a few reasons why it appears to me the only safe and tenable view which can be adopted, and the only one which is free from innumerable objections. If I err in maintaining it I have the comfort, at any rate, of erring in good company. I only take up the same ground which almost all the Fathers occupied; which Bishop Jewell, and Hooker, and Owen, took up long ago; and which Chalmers, Robert Haldane, Gaussen, Bishop Wordsworth, M'Caul, Burgon, and Archdeacon Lee of the Irish Church, have ably defended in modern days. I know, however, that men's minds are variously constituted. Arguments and reasons which appear weighty to some are of no weight with others. I shall content myself with setting down in order the reasons which satisfy me.

(a) For one thing, I cannot see *how the Bible can be a perfect rule of faith and practice* if it is

not fully inspired, and if it contains any flaws and imperfections. If the Bible is anything at all it is the statute-book of God's kingdom,—the code of laws and regulations by which the subjects of that kingdom are to live,—the register-deed of the terms on which they have peace now and shall have glory hereafter. Now, why are we to suppose that such a book will be loosely and imperfectly drawn up, any more than legal deeds are drawn up on earth? Every lawyer can tell us that in legal deeds and statutes every word is of importance, and that property, life, or death may often turn on a *single word*. Think of the confusion that would ensue if wills, and settlements, and conveyances, and partnership-deeds, and leases, and agreements, and acts of parliament were not carefully drawn up and carefully interpreted, and every word allowed its due weight. Where would be the use of such documents if particular words went for nothing, and everyone had a right to add, or take away, or alter, or deny the validity

of words, or erase words at his own discretion? At this rate we might as well lay aside our legal documents altogether! Surely we have a right to expect that in the book which contains our title-deeds for eternity every word should be inspired, and nothing imperfect admitted. If God's statute-book is not inspired, and every word is not of Divine authority, God's subjects are left in a pitiable state. I see much in this.

(b) For another thing, if the Bible is not fully inspired, and contains imperfections, I cannot understand *the language which is frequently used about it* in its own pages. Such expressions as "The oracles of God;"—"He saith;"—"God saith"—"the Holy Ghost spake by Esaias the prophet;"—"the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear His voice,"—would appear to me inexplicable and extravagant if applied to a book containing occasional blemishes, defects, and mistakes. (Acts vii. 38.; Rom. iii. 2; Heb. v. 12; 1 Peter iv. 11; Ephes. iv. 8; Heb. i. 8;

Acts xxviii. 25 ; Heb. iii. 7 ; x. 15 ; Rom. ix. 25.) Once grant that every word of Scripture is inspired, and I see an admirable propriety in the language. I cannot understand "the Holy Ghost," making a mistake, or an "oracle" containing anything defective! If any man replies that the Holy Ghost did not *always* speak by Isaiah, I will ask him who is to decide when He did and when He did not? I see much in this.

(c) For another thing, the theory that the Bible was not given by inspiration of God, appears to me utterly *at variance with several quotations from the Old Testament* which I find in the New. I allude to those quotations in which the whole force of the passage turns on one single word, and once even on the use of the singular instead of the plural number. Take, for instance, such quotations as "The Lord said unto my Lord." (Matt. xxii. 44.) "I said, ye are gods." (John x. 34.) "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of

many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." (Gal. iii. 16.) "He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren." (Heb. ii. 11, 12.) In every one of these cases the whole point of the quotation lies in a single word.* But if this is so, it is hard to see on what principle we can deny the inspiration of all the words of Scripture. At any rate, those who deny verbal inspiration will find it difficult to show us exactly which words are inspired and which are not. Who is to draw the line, and where is it to be drawn? I see much in this.

(d) For another thing, if the words of Scripture are not all inspired, *the value of the Bible as a weapon in controversy is greatly damaged*, if not entirely taken away. Who does not know that in arguing with Jews, Arians, or Socinians, the

* It would be easy to multiply texts in proof of this point. I will only name the following : Heb. ii. 8; iii. 7—19; iv. 2—11; xii. 27.

whole point of the texts we quote against them often lies in a single word? What are we to reply if an adversary asserts that the special word of some text, on which we ground an argument, is a mistake of the writer, and therefore of no authority? To my mind it appears that the objection would be fatal. It is useless to quote texts if we once admit that not all the words of which they are composed were given by inspiration. Unless there is some certain standard to appeal to we may as well hold our tongues. Argument is labour in vain if our mouths are to be stopped by the retort, "That text is not inspired." I see much in this.

(e) For another thing, to give up verbal inspiration appears to me to *destroy the usefulness of the Bible as an instrument for public preaching and instruction*. Where is the use of choosing a text and making it the subject of a pulpit address, if we do not believe that every word of the text is inspired? Once let our hearers get hold of the

idea that the writers of the Bible could make mistakes in the particular words they used, and they will care little for any reproofs, or exhortations, or remarks which are based on words. "How do you know," they might ask us, "that this word, about which you made such ado yesterday, was given by the Holy Ghost? How do you know that St. Paul, or St. Peter, or St. John did not make a mistake, and use the wrong word? That they could make mistakes about words you yourself allow." I know not what others may think. For myself, I could give no answer. I see much in this.

(f) Last, but not least, the denial of verbal inspiration appears to me to *destroy a great part of the usefulness of the Bible as a source of comfort and instruction in private reading*. Where is the truly Christian student of the Bible who does not know that words, particular words, afford a large portion of the benefit which he derives from his daily reading? How much the value of many a cherished text depends on some single phrase, or

the number of a substantive, or the tense of a verb? Alas! there would be an end of all this if we once concede that each word is not inspired; and that, for anything we know, some much-loved favourite substantive, or verb, or pronoun, or adverb, or adjective, was an Apostle's mistake, and the word of man, not of God! What others might think I know not. For myself, I should be tempted to lay aside my Bible in despair, and become of all men most miserable. I see much in this.

Now, I freely grant that many excellent Christians think that the view I maintain is open to serious objections. That the Bible, generally speaking, is given by inspiration, they firmly maintain. But they shrink from maintaining that inspiration extends to every word of Scripture. I am sorry to differ from these worthy people. But I cannot see the weight and force of their objections. Fairly and honestly examined, they fail to carry conviction to my mind.

(a) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which contradict the facts of history. Are these all verbally inspired?—My answer is that it is far more easy to assert this than to prove it. There is nothing of which we have so few trustworthy remains as very ancient history, and if ancient uninspired history and Bible history seem to disagree, it is generally safer and wiser to believe that Bible history is right and other history wrong. At any rate, it is a singular fact that all recent researches in Assyria, Babylon, Palestine, and Egypt, show an extraordinary and increasing tendency to confirm the perfect accuracy of the Word of God. The lamented Mr. Smith's discoveries at Babylon are a remarkable example of what I mean. There are buried evidences which God seems to keep in reserve for these last days. If Bible history and other histories cannot be made to agree at present, it is safest to wait.

(b) Some object that there are occasional state-

ments in the Bible which contradict the facts of natural science. Are these all inspired?—My answer is again, that it is far more easy to assert this than to prove it. The Bible was not written to teach a system of geology or astronomy, and on matters touching these two sciences it wisely uses popular language, such as common people can understand. No one thinks of saying the Astronomer Royal contradicts science because he speaks of the sun's "rising and setting." If the Bible said anywhere that the earth was a flat surface,—or that it was a fixed globe round which the sun revolved,—or that it never existed in any state before Adam and Eve,—there might be something in the objection. But it never does so. It speaks of scientific subjects as they appear. But it never flatly contradicts science.*

* "The language of Scripture is necessarily adapted to the common state of man's intellectual development, in which he is not supposed to be possessed of science. Hence the phrases used by Scripture are precisely those which science soon teaches man to consider inaccurate. Yet they are not on that account

(c) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which are monstrous, absurd, and incredible. Are they really obliged to believe that Eve was tempted by the devil in the form of a serpent,—that Noah was saved in an ark,—that Balaam's ass spoke,—and that Jonah actually went into the whale's belly? Are all these statements inspired?—My answer is that Christ's apostles speak of these things as historical facts, and were more likely to know the truth about them than we are. After all, do we believe in miracles or not? Do we believe that Christ Himself rose from the dead? Let us stick to that one grand miracle first, and disprove it if we can. If we do believe it, it is foolish to object to things because they are *miraculous*.

(d) Some object that there are things mentioned

the less fitted for their purpose, for if any terms had been used adapted to a more advanced state of knowledge, they must have been unintelligible to those to whom the Scripture was first addressed."—*Whewell's Philosophy of Inductive Sciences*. Vol. i., p. 686.

occasionally in the Bible which are so trifling that they are unworthy to be called inspired. They point to St. Paul's writing about his cloak, and books, and parchments, and ask if we think such little matters were really written by inspiration of God?—I answer that the least things affecting any of God's children are not too small for the notice of Him who numbers "the hairs of our heads." There are excellent and edifying lessons to be learned from the cloak and parchments, as Robert Haldane has shown most convincingly, in his work on the "Evidences of Divine Revelation." After all, man knows very little indeed what is great and what is small in God's sight. The history of Nimrod "the mighty hunter" is dispatched in three verses of Genesis, while the history of a Syrian dwelling in tents, called Abraham, fills up no less than fourteen chapters. The microscope applied to the book of nature, can show us God's hand in the least lichen that grows on the top of Scawfell as well as in the cedar of

Lebanon. The veriest trifles, as they seem to us in the Book of Scripture, may turn out to be most striking confirmations of its truth. Paley has shown this admirably in his "*Horæ Paulinæ*," and Professor Blunt in his "*Undesigned Coincidences*."

(e) Some object that there are grave discrepancies in some of the Bible histories, especially in the four Gospels, which cannot be made to harmonize and agree. Are the words, they ask, all inspired in these cases? Have the writers made no mistakes?—I answer that the number of these discrepancies is grossly exaggerated, and that in many cases they are only apparent, and disappear under the touch of common sense. Even in the hardest of them, we should remember in common fairness, that there are very likely circumstances kept back from us which entirely reconcile everything, if we only knew them. Very often in these days when two honest, veracious men give a separate account of some long story, their accounts do not quite tally, because one dwells

on one part and the other on another. All well-informed students of history know that the precise day when Charles I. erected his standard at Nottingham, in the Parliamentary war, has not been settled to this hour!

(*f*) Some object that Job's friends, in their long speeches, said many weak and foolish things. Were all their words inspired?—An objection like this arises from an illogical and confused idea of what inspiration means. The book of Job contains an historical account of a wonderful part of the old patriarch's history, and a report both of his speeches and those of his friends. But we are nowhere told that either Job, or Eliphaz and his companions, spoke all that they spoke by the Holy Ghost. The writer of the book of Job was thoroughly inspired to record all they said. But whether they spoke rightly or wrongly is to be decided by the general teaching of Scripture.—No one would say that St. Peter was inspired when he said, "I know not the Man," in the High

Priest's palace. But the writer of the Gospel was inspired when he wrote it down for our learning. —In the Acts of the Apostles the letter of Claudius Lysias was certainly not written by inspiration, and Gamaliel, and the town clerk of Ephesus and Tertullus were not inspired when they made their speeches. But I am equally certain that St. Luke was inspired to write them down and record them in his book.

(g) Some object that St. Paul, in the 7th chapter of the 1st Corinthians, when giving certain advice to the Corinthian Church, says at one time, "Not I, but the Lord," and at another, "I, not the Lord." And they ask, Does not this show that in part of his advice he was not inspired?—I answer, Not at all. A careful study of the chapter will show that when the Apostle says "Not I, but the Lord," he lays down some principles on which the Lord had spoken already; and when he says "I, not the Lord," he gives advice on some point about which there had been

no revelation hitherto. But there is not the slightest proof that he is not writing all the way through under direct inspiration of God.

(h) Some object that there are many various readings of the words of Scripture, and that we cannot, therefore, feel sure that we have the original inspired Word of God. I answer that the various readings, when fairly examined, will prove to be absurdly exaggerated in number and importance. Dr. Kennicott, Bengel, and others have proved this long ago. No doubt we may have lost a few of the original words. We have no right to expect infallibility in transcribers and copyists, before the invention of printing. But there is not a single doctrine in Scripture which would be affected or altered, if all the various readings were allowed, and the disputed or doubtful words were omitted. Considering how many hands the Bible passed through before printing was invented, and who the transcribers were, it is marvellous that the various readings

are so few ! The fact that about the immense majority of all the words in the old Hebrew and Greek Scriptures there is no doubt at all, is little short of a miracle, and demands thanksgiving to God. One thing is very certain. There is no ancient book which has been handed down to us with so good a text and so few various readings as the Bible.

(i) Finally, some object that occasional parts of the Bible are taken from the writings of uninspired men, such as historical chronicles, and pedigrees, and lists of names. Are all these to be regarded as inspired ?—I reply that there seems no reason why the Holy Ghost should not direct the Bible writers to use materials made ready to their hands, as well as facts which they had seen themselves, and by so directing them, invested such words as they used with Divine authority. When St. Paul quoted lines from heathen poets he did not mean us to regard them as inspired. But he was *taught by God* to clothe his ideas in the words

which they had used, and by so doing he very likely obtained a favourable reading from many. And when we read such quotations, or read lists of names taken from Jewish chronicles and registers, we need not doubt that the Bible writers were taught to use such materials by inspiration of God.

Reader, I leave the objections to verbal inspiration at this point, and will detain you no longer with them. It is vain to deny that the subject has its difficulties, which will probably never be completely solved. I cannot perhaps explain such difficulties as the mention of "Jeremy the prophet" in Matthew xxvii., or reconcile the third and sixth hour in St. John's and St. Mark's account of the crucifixion, or Stephen's account of Jacob's burial in the seventh chapter of Acts, to my own entire satisfaction. But I have no doubt they can be explained, and perhaps will be some day. These things do not move me. I expect difficulties in such a deep and miraculous matter as inspiration, which I have not eyes to see through. I am

content to wait. It was a wise saying of Faraday, that "there are many questions about which it is the highest philosophy to keep our minds in a state of judicious suspense." It should be a settled rule with us never to give up a great principle, when we have got hold of it, on account of difficulties. Time often make things clear which at first look dark. The view of inspiration which presents to my own mind the fewest difficulties, is that in which all the words of Scripture, as well as the thoughts, are regarded as inspired. Here I take my stand.

Reader, remember what I have just said. Never give up a great principle in theology on account of difficulties. Wait patiently, and the difficulties may all melt away. Let that be an axiom in your mind. Suffer me to mention an illustration of what I mean. Those conversant with astronomy know that before the discovery of the planet Neptune there were difficulties which greatly troubled the most scientific astronomers, respecting

certain aberrations of the planet Uranus. These aberrations puzzled the minds of astronomers; and some of them suggested that they might possibly prove the whole Newtonian system to be untrue! But at that time a well-known French astronomer, named Leverrier, read before the Academy of Science a paper, in which he laid down this great axiom,—that it did not become a scientific man to give up a principle because of difficulties which could not be explained. He said in effect, “We cannot explain the aberrations of Uranus now; but we may be sure that the Newtonian system will be proved to be right, sooner or later. Something may be discovered one day which will prove that these aberrations may be accounted for, and yet the Newtonian system remain true and unshaken.” A few years after, the anxious eyes of astronomers discovered the last great planet, Neptune. This planet was shown to be the true cause of all the aberrations of Uranus; and what the French astronomer had

laid down as a principle in science was proved to be wise and true. The application of the anecdote is obvious. Let us beware of giving up any first principle in theology. Let us not give up the great principle of plenary verbal inspiration because of apparent difficulties. The day may come when they will all be solved. In the meantime we may rest assured that the difficulties which beset any other theory of inspiration are tenfold greater than any which beset our own.

Let me now conclude this tract with a few words of plain application. Let us lay aside all deep discussion of hard things about the manner of inspiration. Let us take it for granted, that, in some way or other, whether we can explain it or not, we hold the Bible to be the Word of God. Reader, let us start from this point. Give me a hearing, while I say a few things which appear to me to deserve your attention.

1. Reader, is the Bible the Word of God? Then *mind that you do not neglect it. Read it.*

read it! Begin to read it this very day. What greater insult to God can a man be guilty of than to refuse to read the letter God sends him from heaven? Oh, be sure, if you will not read your Bible, you are in fearful danger of losing your soul!

You are in danger, because *God will reckon with you for your neglect of the Bible in the day of judgment.* You will have to give account of your use of time, strength, and money; and you will also have to give account of your use of the Word. You will not stand at that bar on the same level, in point of responsibility, with the dweller in central Africa, who never heard of the Bible. Oh, no! To whom much is given, of them much will be required. Of all men's buried talents, none will weigh them down so heavily as a neglected Bible. As you deal with the Bible, so God will deal with your soul. Reader, will you not repent, and turn over a new leaf in life, and read your Bible?

You are in danger, because *there is no degree of error in religion into which you may not fall*. You are at the mercy of the first clever Jesuit, Mormonite, Socinian, Turk, or Jew, who may happen to meet you. A land of unwalled villages is not more defenceless against an enemy than a man who neglects his Bible. You may go on tumbling from one step of delusion to another, till at length you are landed in the pit of hell. Reader, I say once more, Will you not repent and read your Bible ?

You are in danger, because *there is not a single reasonable excuse you can allege for neglecting the Bible*. You have no time to read it forsooth ! But you can make time for eating, drinking, sleeping, getting money and spending money, and perhaps for news-paper reading and smoking. You might easily make time to read the Word. Alas ! it is not want of time, but waste of time that ruins souls !—You find it too troublesome to read forsooth ! You had better say at once it is too much

trouble to go to heaven, and you are content to go to hell. Truly these excuses are like the rubbish round the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's days. They would all soon disappear if, like the Jews, you had "a mind to work." Reader, I say for the last time, Will you not repent and read your Bible?

Believe me, believe me, the *Bible* itself is the best witness of its own inspiration. The men who quibble and make difficulties about inspiration are too often the very men who never read the Scriptures at all. The darkness and hardness they profess to complain of is far more often in their own hearts than in the book. Oh, be persuaded! Take it up and begin to read.

2. Is the Bible the Word of God? Then be sure you always *read it with deep reverence*. Say to your soul whenever you open the Bible, "O my soul, thou art going to read a message from God." The sentences of judges, and the speeches of kings, are received with awe and respect. How much

more reverence is due to the words of the Judge of judges and King of kings! Avoid, as you would cursing and swearing, that irreverent habit of mind into which some modern divines have unhappily fallen, in speaking about the Bible. They handle the contents of the holy book as carelessly and disrespectfully as if the writers were such men as themselves. They make one think of a child composing a book to expose the fancied ignorance of his own father,—or of a pardoned murderer criticising the handwriting and style of his own reprieve. Enter rather into the spirit of Moses on Mount Horeb:—"Put thy shoes from off thy feet; the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

3. Is the Bible the Word of God? Then be sure you never read it without *fervent prayer for the help and teaching of the Holy Spirit*. Here is the rock on which many make shipwreck. They do not ask for wisdom and instruction, and so *they find the Bible dark, and carry nothing away*

from it. You should pray for the Spirit to guide you into all truth. You should beg the Lord Jesus Christ to "open your understanding," as He did that of His disciples. The Lord God, by whose inspiration the book was written, keeps the keys of the book, and alone can enable you to understand it profitably. Nine times over in one Psalm does David cry, "Teach me." Five times over, in the same Psalm, does he say, "Give me understanding." Well says John Owen, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, "There is a sacred light in the Word: but there is a covering and veil on the eyes of men, so that they cannot behold it aright. Now, the removal of this veil is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit." Humble prayer will throw more light on your Bible than Poole, or Henry, or Scott, or Burkitt, or Bengel, or Alford, or Wordsworth, or Barnes, or Ellicott, or Lightfoot, or any commentary that ever was written.

The Bible is a large book or a small one, a dark

or a bright one, according to the spirit in which men read it. Intellect alone will do nothing with it. Wranglers and first class men will not understand it unless their hearts are right as well as their heads. The highest critical and grammatical knowledge will find it a sealed book without the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Its contents are often "hid to the wise and prudent and revealed to babes." Reader, remember this, and say always, when you open your Bible, "O God, for Christ's sake, give me the teaching of the Spirit."

4. Finally, is the Bible the Word of God? Then let us all resolve *from this day forward to prize the Bible more*. Let us not fear being idolaters of this blessed book. Men may easily make an idol of the Church, of ministers, of sacraments, or of intellect. Men cannot make an idol of the Word. Let us regard all who would damage the authority of the Bible, or impugn its *credit*, as spiritual robbers. We are travelling

through a wilderness : they rob us of our only guide. We are voyaging over a stormy sea : they rob us of our only compass. We are toiling over a weary road : they pluck our staff out of our hands. And what do these spiritual robbers give us in place of the Bible ? What do they offer as a guide and provision for our souls ? Nothing ! absolutely nothing ! Big swelling words ! Empty promises of new light ! High sounding jargon ; but nothing substantial and real ! They would fain take from us the bread of life, and they do not give us in its place so much as a stone. Let us turn a deaf ear to them. Let us firmly grasp and prize the Bible more and more, the more it is assaulted.

Reader, God has given you the Bible to make you wise unto salvation, and guide you to everlasting life. Do not neglect this precious gift. Read it diligently. Walk in its light, and you shall be saved.

P.S.

THE following quotations about inspiration, from the works of four eminent British theologians, I venture to think, deserve attentive perusal. They are valuable in themselves on account of the arguments which they contain. They also supply abundant proof that the high view of verbal inspiration which I advocate in this tract is no modern invention, but an "old path," in which many of God's ablest children have walked, and found it a good way.

1. Bishop Jewell, author of the "Apology," was unquestionably one of the most learned of the *English Reformers*. Let us hear what he says :—

“St. Paul, speaking of the Word of God, saith, ‘the whole Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.’ Many think the Apostle’s speech is hardly true of the whole Scripture,—that all and every part of the Scripture is profitable. Much is spoken of genealogies and pedigrees, of lepers, of sacrificing goats and oxen, etc. These seem to have little profit in them : to be idle and vain. If they show vain in thine eyes, yet hath not the Lord set them down in vain. The words of the Lord are pure words, as the silver tried in a furnace of earth refined seven times. There is no sentence, no clause, no word, no syllable, no letter, but it is written for thy instruction : there is not one jot but it is sealed and signed with the blood of the Lamb. Our imaginations are idle, our thoughts are vain : there is no idleness, no vanity, in the Word of God. Those oxen and goats which were sacrificed teach thee to kill the uncleanness and filthiness of thine heart : they teach thee that thou art guilty of death, when thy life must be

redeemed by the death of some beast: they lead thee to believe the forgiveness of sins by a more perfect sacrifice, since it was not possible that the blood of bulls or of goats should take away sins. That leprosy teacheth thee the uncleanness and leprosy of thy soul. These genealogies and pedigrees lead us to the birth of our Saviour Christ, so that the whole Word of God is pure and holy. No word, no letter, no syllable, nor point or prick thereof, but is written and preserved for thy sake.” —*Jewell on the Holy Scriptures*. Works, vol. iv., p. 1175, Parker Society.

2. Richard Hooker, author of the “Ecclesiastical Polity,” is justly respected by all schools of thought in the Church of England as “the judicious Hooker.” Let us hear what he says:—

“Touching the manner how men, by the Spirit of Prophecy in Holy Scripture, have spoken and written of things to come, we must understand, that as the knowledge of that they spake, so like-

wise *the utterance of that they knew*, came not by those usual and ordinary means whereby we are brought to understand the mysteries of our salvation, and are wont to instruct others in the same. For whatsoever we know, we have it by the hands and ministry of men, which lead us along like children from a letter to a syllable, from a syllable to a word, from a word to a line, from a line to a sentence, from a sentence to a side, and so turn over. But God Himself was their instructor. He Himself taught them, partly by dreams and visions in the night, partly by revelations in the day, taking them aside from amongst their brethren, and talking with them as a man would talk with his neighbours in the way. Thus they became acquainted even with the secret and hidden counsels of God; they saw things which themselves were not able to utter, they beheld that whereat men and angels are astonished, they understood in the beginning what should come to pass in the last days. God, which lightened thus the eyes of their

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understanding, giving them knowledge by unusual and extraordinary means, *did also miraculously Himself frame and fashion their words and writings*, insomuch that a greater difference there seemeth not to be between the manner of their knowledge, than there is between the manner of their speech and ours. 'We have received,' saith the Apostle, 'not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are given to us of God : which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost doth teach.' This is that which the Prophets mean by those books written full within and without; which books were so often delivered them to eat, not because God fed them with ink and paper, but to teach us, that so often as He employed them in this heavenly work, *they neither spake nor wrote any word of their own, but uttered syllable by syllable as the Spirit put it in their mouths*, no otherwise than the harp or the lute doth give a sound according to the direction

of his hands that holdeth it and striketh it with skill."—*Hooker's Works*. Vol. iii., 537, 540.

3. John Owen, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, was the most learned and argumentative of the Puritans. Let us hear what he says:—

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. When the word was thus brought to them it was not left to their own understandings, wisdom, minds, memories, to order, dispose, and give it out; but they were borne, actuated, carried out by the Holy Ghost, to speak, deliver, and write all that, and nothing but that,—to very tittles,—that was so brought unto them. They invented not words themselves, suited to the things they had learned, but only expressed the word that they received. Though their mind and understanding were used in the choice of words (whence arise all the differences in their manner of expression), yet they were so guided that their words were not their own, but immediately supplied

unto them. Not only the doctrine they taught was the word of truth,—truth itself,—but the words whereby they taught it were words of truth from God Himself. Thus, allowing the contribution of proper instruments for the reception and representation of words which answer to the mind and tongue of the Prophets in the coming of the voice of God to them,—every apex of the written Word is equally divine, and as immediately from God as the voice wherewith, or whereby, He spake to us in the Prophets ; and is therefore accompanied with the same authority in itself and to us.”—*Owen on the Divine Original of the Scripture.* Vol. xvi., p. 305.

4. Dr. Chalmers was probably the most intellectual and deep-thinking theologian that intellectual Scotland has ever produced. Let us hear what he says:—

(a) “The subject-matter of the Bible has to pass through the minds of the selected Prophets

and Apostles, and to issue thence in language ere it comes forth in the shape of Scripture upon the world. Now it is here that we meet the advocates of a *partial* or mitigated inspiration, and would make common cause *against one and all of them*. There is not one theory short, by however so little, of a thorough and perfect inspiration,—there is not one of them but is chargeable with the consequence, that the subject-matter of revelation suffers and is deteriorated in the closing footsteps of its progress; and just before it settles into that ultimate position, where it stands forth to guide and illuminate the world. It existed purely in heaven. It descended purely from heaven to earth. It was deposited purely by the great Agent of revelation in the minds of the Apostles. But then we are told that when but a little way from the final landing place, then, instead of being carried forward purely to the situation where alone the great purpose of the whole movement was to be fulfilled, then was it abandoned to itself,

and then were human infirmities permitted to mingle with it, and to mar its lustre. Strange, that just when entering on the functions of an authoritative guide and leader to mankind, that then, and not till then, the soil and the feebleness of humanity should be suffered to gather around it. Strange, that, with the inspiration of *thoughts*, it should make pure ingress into the minds of the Apostles; but wanting the inspiration of *words* should not make pure egress to that world in whose behalf alone, and for whose admonition alone, this great movement originated in heaven, and terminated in earth. Strange, more especially strange, in the face of the declaration that not unto themselves but unto us they ministered these things,—strange, nevertheless, that this revelation should come in purely to themselves, but to us should come forth impurely, with somewhat, it would appear, with somewhat the taint and the obscuration of human frailty attached to it.—It *matters not* at what point in the progress of this

celestial truth to our world, the obscuration has been cast upon it. It comes to us a dim and desecrated thing at last; and man instead of holding converse with God's unspotted testimony, has an imperfect, a mutilated Bible put into his hands."

(b) "Such being our views, it is the unavoidable consequence of them that we should hold the Bible, for all the purposes of a revelation, to be *perfect in its language*, as well as perfect in its doctrine. And for this conclusion it is not necessary that we should arbitrate between the theories of superintendence and suggestion. The superintendence that would barely intercept the progress of error, we altogether discard,—conceiving, that, if this term be applicable to the process of inspiration at all, it must be that efficient superintendence which not only secures that, negatively, there shall be nothing wrong,—but which also secures that, affirmatively, there

should at all times have emanated from the sacred penmen, the fittest topics, and these couched in the fittest and most appropriate expressions. Whether this has been effected partly by superintendence and partly by suggestion, or wholly by suggestion, we care not. We have no inclination and no taste for these distinctions. Our cause is independent of them ; nor can we fully participate in the fears of those alarmists who think that our cause is materially injured by them. The important question with us is not the process of the manufacture, but the qualities of the resulting commodity. The former we hold not to be a relevant, and we are not sure that it is a legitimate inquiry. It is on the latter we take our stand ; and the superabundant testimonies of Scripture on the worth and the perfection and the absolute authority of the Word—these form the strongholds of an argument that goes to establish all which the most rigid advocates for a *total and infallible inspiration* ought to desire. Our concern

is with the work, and not with the workmanship ; nor need we intrude into the mysteries of the hidden operation, if only assured by the explicit testimonies of Scripture that the product of that operation, is, both in substance and expression a perfect directory of faith and practice. We believe that, in the composition of that record, men not only *thought* as they were inspired, but *spoke* as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But our argument for the absolute perfection of Holy Writ is invulnerably beyond the reach even of those who have attempted to trace with geographical precision the line which separates the miraculous from the natural ; and tell us when it was that Apostles wrote the word which the Spirit prompted them, and when it was that they wrote the words which the Spirit permitted them. To the result, in our humble apprehension, it positively matters not. Did they speak the words that the Spirit prompted,—these words were therefore the best ? Did they speak the words which the Spirit

permitted,—it was because these words were the best? *The optimism of the Bible is alike secured in both these ways*; and the sanction of the Spirit extended, both in respect of sentiments and of sayings, *to every clause* of it. In either way, they effectively are the words of the Spirit; and God through the Bible is not presenting truths through the medium of others' language. He in effect has made it His own language; and *God, through the Bible, is speaking to us.*"

(c) "It is the part of Christians to rise like a wall of fire around the integrity and inspiration of Scripture; and to hold them as intact and inviolable, as if a rampart were thrown around them, whose foundations are on earth and whose battlements are in heaven. It is this tampering with limits that destroys and defaces everything; and therefore it is precisely when the limit is broken that the alarm should be sounded. If the *battle-cry* is to be lifted at all, it should be lifted

at the outset; and so on the first mingling, by however so slight an infusion, of things human with things divine, all the friends of the Bible should join heart and hand against so foul and fearful a desecration."—*Chalmers' Christian Evidences*, Vol. ii. p. 371, 372, 375, 376, 396.

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